

What Hawaii Businesses Need to Recover. Right Now.



PRESENTED BY:



MODERATED BY:



Adversity. If we could describe in one word what small businesses are facing in today's economic climate, it is trying to show courage through difficult times.

Business owners and managers have the overwhelming task of implementing a recovery plan. Even if the government's own reopening strategy is unclear, businesses need direction. And they need it *now*.

That's why discussing the critical needs for local businesses, big and small, was the topic for our latest webinar [What Businesses Need to Recover. Right Now](#), which featured:

- **Micah Kane**, President and CEO, Hawaii Community Foundation
- **Paul Kosasa**, President and CEO, ABC Stores
- **Monica K. Toguchi Ryan**, President and Owner, Highway Inn
- **Ben Godsey**, President and CEO, ProService Hawaii
- **Moderated by Bill Dorman**, Hawaii Public Radio

Here were our top insights and takeaways:

Empathy goes a long way

The complexity of the pandemic has paralyzed everyone. Leaders are asked to provide a framework to unpack the complexities of it all. But let's face it, this is uncharted territory. Even so, our experts explained that any framework is going to have a high degree of imperfection. But, as all the sectors of society navigate through "what's next?," our panelist reminded us that empathy can go a long way when preparing ourselves for the unexpected. Every employer, every landlord, every vendor, and every employee is dealing with their own set of complexities that have resulted from this crisis. **Listening** to others may provide clarity and answers for you...but it can also be a commonality that connects us together.

Insert yourself into conversations

Our panelists shared that **making your voice known** or making your business struggles public, can often help paint a more realistic picture for government leaders and legislators to see what is really happening. It may not feel comfortable but your story may just be what lights a fire for change.

With that in mind, they encouraged listeners to consider joining vocal advocacy groups such as trade and member organizations who are actively involved in framing local business policies, such as the *Hawaii Restaurant Association* or the *Chamber of Commerce Hawaii*. Another proactive group mentioned was the *Hawaii Agricultural Foundation*, who helped spearhead the soon-to-be launched Hawaii Restaurant Card, which utilizes CARES Act money to pre-load a \$500 card for people who have received unemployment benefits to dine at local restaurants that are participating in the Card's program.

A unified voice is often a strong one. It's not your job as a business owner to create policy. But it may be beneficial for you to lend your voice to help shape plans that affect you.

Data-driven decision making

We all want the perfect solution. But your reality is often coming up with the best solution at the moment designed from the best information available to you at that time. Our experts asked listeners to heed the fragility in their ability to handle a crisis based on emotion. The best decisions will be those that are born from data. Data-driven decision making can provide a framework and the ability to develop a contingency plan

based on estimated margin of error. **Take emotion off the table and work with data** that can lessen the uncertainty and better prepare your expectations.

Design with COVID in mind

COVID-19 is here to stay. Our experts shared that a comprehensive and practical approach to living (and working) with COVID is what you should be focused on. Design business strategies thoughtfully and with the pandemic front and center. Take stock of the elements you can control (i.e., mask wearing, social distancing policies, sanitation plans) and move with your best foot forward. Building around the inevitable helps take the guesswork out of many issues. Acknowledge COVID, control what you can, then adapt and coexist with it. Managing the uncertainty is best done when you're prepared to do so. Remember, **it's all about progress, not perfection.**

In conclusion

"The most successful entrepreneurs are optimistic. It's part of the job description." This quote was shared by Monica Toguchi Ryan, owner of Highway Inn. If you watched Monica's [video](#) you will understand that owning a business right now is hard. But like our panelists have shared throughout this webinar, hope is out there.

There are people advocating for you, there are opportunities for you to pivot and adapt, and there are ways to make your voice heard. Direct input from the business community is what is most needed, now, more than ever. Find those channels for yourself, and stay optimistic.