

Stagekings: The Australian Business Pivot Story

The Background Story – In Their Words

“On Friday 13th March 2020, the Prime Minister announced measures that lead to the immediate shutdown of our entire industry, by placing impossible restrictions on all events. It was the first national industry to completely fall over due to the COVID-19 crisis, and it happened very, very quickly.

We were half-way through building a massive set for Formula 1 in Melbourne; we were half-way through constructing possibly the largest truss structure in the country for Channel 9’s Ninja Warrior live film set; we were bumping out our incredible giant stainless steel spherical cricket balls from the T-20 World Cup. We were having discussions with dozens of event companies and agencies about creating some really awesome stuff.

In the space of just 48 hours, our entire income and job list for the remainder of 2020 (and beyond) was completely cancelled, and we had no choice but to make massive and instant cuts to our business.”

“The mix of emotions I felt was impossible to put into words” says CEO Jeremy Fleming. “Letting all of our hard working, loyal staff go was too much to bear. I felt sick to the core. We pretty much decided there and then that we had to - HAD to - come up with something to survive”

Time to get Creative – The Product Pivot

“We gathered our talented team together, and we brainstormed. But this time, it wasn't to impress a client - it was for survival of our business. This had to be our best work yet.

We thought about what people would need at a time like this and realised that tens of thousands of Aussies would have to start working from home with almost immediate effect. We had a CNC router (specialised cutting machine), a large and well-kitted out warehouse set up to custom make pretty much anything, and an unbelievably talented team on tap, so we decided to produce super-simple but beautiful work-from-home desks - *Stagekings* style.

Overnight, our Head of Production came up with a design that has rapidly expanded into the now expansive and iconic ‘IsoKing’ home furniture range. Flat-pack, fast-to-assemble slot-together designs made from beautiful Birchwood ply, with no need for fixings, tools or DIY skills to put them together.

It was an instant hit with the Australian public, and we started to receive an onslaught of media attention, which were desperate for a feel-good story in amongst the public despair of COVID. Three months later, and Jeremy was still doing media interviews every single day! We were even invited to represent the Australian Event Industry and meet the Prime Minister in person to show off our new IsoKing products and discuss the impact of COVID-19 on our much-loved industry.

In just the first three months we made nearly 10,000 IsoKing products and sent them across Australia to thousands of new awesome customers. We quickly expanded the product range to more than 40 items, and we are releasing new products every week. It’s been good for business, great for morale, and has kept us afloat and busy during some strange times.

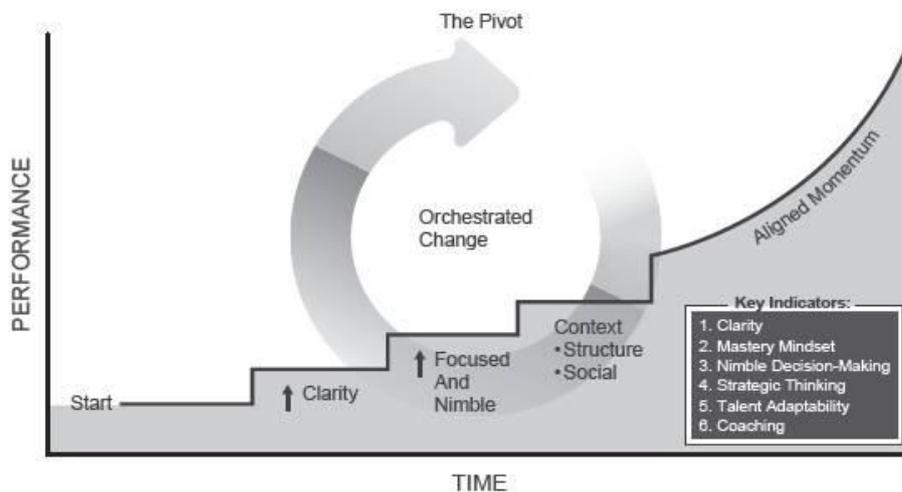
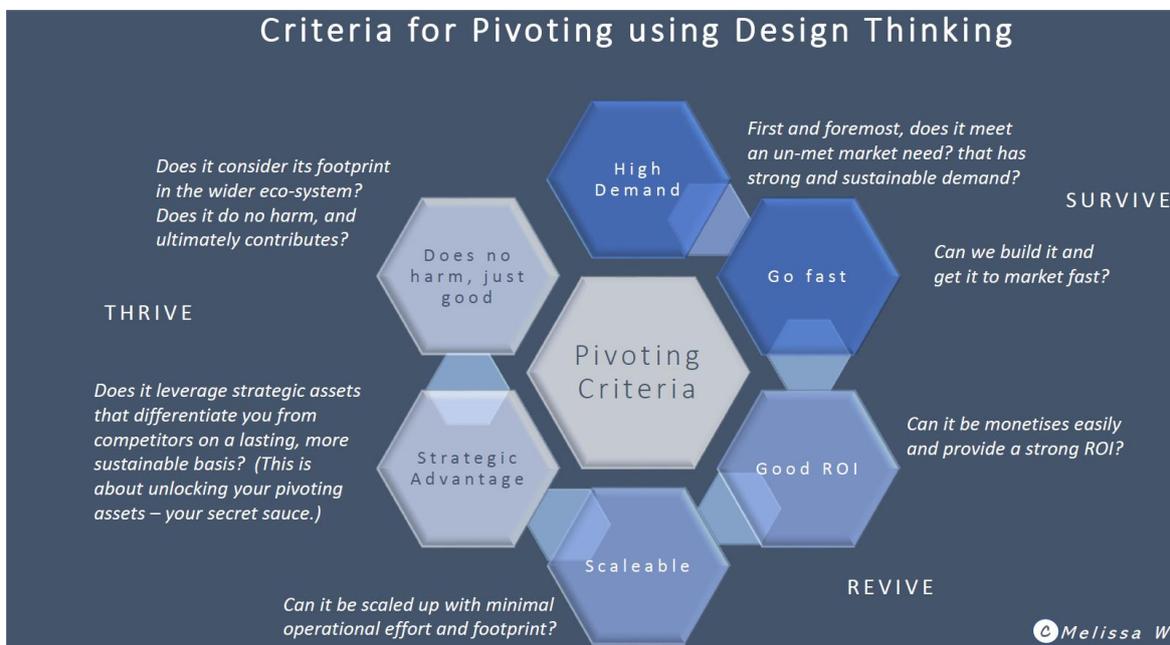
But by far the best bit for us is how the knock-on effect of this success has been helping out our legendary event colleagues at a time when they really need it. We increased our workforce from twelve to over fifty people working across four states, re-employing our entire staff base and quickly adding to the team with all kinds of highly skilled event freelancers who found themselves out of work due to COVID-19. It was pretty much a dream team that you may never have had the chance to hand pick during more normal times.

Best of all, right at the start we decided that we would donate a portion of sales to [Support Act](#), the Aussie charity that is the heart and hand of the event & entertainment industry. We are very, very proud to say that we were able to donate more than \$35,000 to them in just the first three months of IsoKing, and we are looking forward to continuing to support them into the future.”

Approach to an Effective Business Pivot

The *Stagekings* story is a wonderful example of the implementation of an effective **business pivot**- a term used to describe a quick turnaround, usually in response to a changed external environment – in this case the impact of COVID on selective industry operators because of direct or indirect business restrictions imposed by the government. **This external change (a “crisis”) then creates a need to turn away from one customer segment and focus on a new one – if it can be found in a very short timeframe.**

The diagrams below provide a good summary of the key components required to be addressed for a successful pivot to happen.



(c) Lori Michele Leavitt

Find additional resources at ThePivotBook.com

Source: Book – “The Pivot” – LM Leavitt

If you require assistance with turning around your business post-COVID, please contact Lyall Bear, our Business Advisory consultant at CBSW.

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