

insideARM

Think Differently: Numeracle

Transcript of conversation between Stephanie Eidelman, CEO of The iA Institute
and Rebekah Johnson, CEO of Numeracle
Published May 12, 2020

Stephanie Eidelman

Hi. I'm Stephanie Eidelman, CEO of insideARM and the iA Institute. I hope you are all safe and healthy. One of the things I spend a lot of my time on is managing our Innovation Council. Even before the pandemic, organizations in the Innovation Council understood that their ability to survive would depend on thinking differently and being at the forefront of communications, analytics, payments, and compliance technology. Last fall we started an article series called Thinking Differently, to feature thought leadership in these areas by our staff and by members of the Council. We've now expanded this series into video format, as I interview various members of the Council to share with you how they are thinking differently about their businesses, and about the future of the industry. I hope you'll listen in.

[Brief video animation introducing "Think Differently"]

About three years ago, just as we were hearing the first whispers of calls being blocked and labeled by a new category of company called call analytics, I was referred to Rebekah at the time as one of the very few experts in the field. Of course, I can't even tell you how much has happened since then, and the world looks completely different now. And Rebekah has been extremely busy since then building a company. So I'll say, welcome, and why don't you start by giving us a brief explanation of what Numeracle is?

Rebekah Johnson

Yeah, thank you. It definitely has gone by very fast. So Numeracle, very simply, we're here to verify and identify business entities of any industry that they are who they say they are, and we strongly believe that that matters and means something when it comes to your communications, your voice calls terminating on to a carrier. As you know, we all want the bad robocalls to stop. I don't want to receive the IRS scam calls. I don't want to hear about the social security scams that are coming after me. So the carriers had to do something, but unfortunately, the tactics that they used caught up good legal businesses and labeled them as a fraud, and that is devastating to your voice communication channel. So we help identify who you are, and that identity is trusted, shared within the network, and then the carriers treat the calls appropriately. It's a very simple way to clean up the mess that's been made and improves the algorithms for the carriers as well.

Stephanie Eidelman

All right, before I get into asking you about thinking differently and how you're thinking differently going forward, I want to just know—you're in touch with so many clients from so many different sectors. What are you hearing? What are your clients experiencing today?

Rebekah Johnson

It's been really interesting from Numeracle's perspective, because one thing that has increased is the value of communications. Right? With all of us at home, the only way to communicate is via tools such as this and voice and text. So we actually are using those more often. So we saw an

increase in some industries and a decrease on others. Where we saw a decrease on the use and the value of the channel is in the industries hit. The fact that people are not traveling, they're not getting out, they're staying home, so our travel industry clients really saw a decrease in need for their call centers.

On the flip side, those who are in healthcare, that's made a huge shift over to the telehealth side. So we absolutely need to protect those communications to ensure that they're not labeled fraud or scam. Because what happened with all of this is the traffic patterns and the volumes completely changed, and that threw the algorithms a little bit for a loop. So where we saw a [downcrease] in the need for our solution at Numeracle, we saw an increase in other industries where we hadn't seen it before. So that's been interesting to see from our perspective. I'm very hopeful people get back out to traveling again. I'm anxious to do that. So hopefully those industries have a rebound.

Stephanie Eidelman

Yeah, we all certainly hope that that's the case. So you have always been a different thinker, as long as I've known you, which is not super long, but that certainly is something that characterizes you for me is thinking differently. So how have you always been thinking differently, and maybe how has that changed now that you've even had to pivot, as a pivoter yourself?

Rebekah Johnson

Yep. So I think everybody had to go into survival mode, and that required all of us to look at our business differently, look at our clients differently. What are their needs? Because their needs changed. Their needs shifted. So being able to survive when the targets are moving, your clients are leaving, you have a whole new set of clients potentially coming on, how do you service them, that is a challenge that everybody has faced.

What I think what I'm proud of with regards to the Numeracle team is something I learned that, for the companies I think that come out of this are not the ones that just survive, but the ones that thrived while surviving. And in order to thrive while surviving, it requires you to not only keep the ship running, but you're also looking for opportunities of where your technology stack that you have today or the services that you offer can be repurposed.

And Numeracle saw that opportunity through the Critical Calls Registry that we launched. When we heard from the FCC saying, hey, we're going to mark these COVID-19 communications as emergency, they qualify under the TCPA, we knew that it was great that they did that, but that doesn't help the calls actually when it comes to the carriers knowing which of these millions and millions of calls are actually emergency related. So Friday the FCC puts out a ruling. Monday morning Numeracle launches the Critical Calls Registry. Because we looked at our technology, we looked at our services that we had in play, repurposed just a little bit, reached out to our partners, hey, are you on board to handle this? And we all shifted and moved.

So that's a part of thriving, I think, that a lot of companies don't take the time to do because they're so stuck in the surviving. You still have an opportunity to thrive if you just think about the situation differently by looking at the market and the industry. Who would have ever thought I'd look at the FCC to get the ideas for that? You don't know where they're coming from. The CFPB might put out something. The FTC might put out something. They do need help. They do

need assistance. And they'll put things out through rulings, but it's really up to us, the industry, to respond to it.

And I think especially in the accounts receivable management, look at the banks that reinvented themselves. These solution providers who are usually offering out loans, they've changed their identity to support the PPP loan process. So that's another great example of they could've just closed up shop when their credit lines just tanked, with all of their customers going I can't pay my bills. But they realized we have a great technology. We can solve the next problem that everybody's facing. And they shifted. They moved over into the loan application process for the PPP loans. So I think that's another example of how you thrive while you're surviving.

Stephanie Eidelman

Yeah, great examples. It's also taught me that it's so important to have a process. Of course, you really have to start this, ideally, when there's not a crisis, but among your leadership team, you have to have a level of trust and communication that you can just slide that crisis into, and you already have a communication loop that is productive and allows you to take on things that are way more difficult and challenging. And it gives you a place, a platform where you can see those opportunities and can possibly execute on them, as you say, while you're maintaining the ship, which is hard enough as it is.

Rebekah Johnson

Yep. Stephanie, you have hit the nail on the head of why I think a lot of America's small businesses are going to do amazing during this time, because we started off as survivors. If you're a founder, like myself, there was no VC with a pocket full of money going, hey, go do this. Right? No. I had to fight in order to get to where we are, and that's just the mode of operation.

So really, the Numeracle team, this time brought us together. The bond was stronger. I was highly impressed with how my team handled not only from keeping the business going, but the mental health aspects. That is extremely important within Numeracle. We have to acknowledge that some days are tough. Some days I just can't operate. Some days I can't think. Talk about thinking differently. The depression can hit. It's a lot to take in every single day, and we're looking at the news and getting overwhelmed. So balancing all of that and recognizing we're humans at the end of the day doing the best that we can allows us to get rid of some of the stress.

And when you relieve that stress, that's when the creative thinking can come in. You cannot be a creative thinker when you are overwhelmed with stress. So small businesses are used to that. We're very creative under a lot of pressure. And I've just been really impressed with what I've seen from some of our clients that are small businesses and just what I'm seeing out in the news around the area.

Stephanie Eidelman

Yeah. Terrific message. I love it. I think that's a great message to end on.

Rebekah Johnson

Yep.

Stephanie Eidelman

We'll keep it short and sweet and a lot of value.

Rebekah Johnson

I'm good, Stephanie. I've got to go to work.

Stephanie Eidelman

That's right. Rebekah, thank you so much. I really appreciate it. As always, I look forward to talking with you the next time, and have a great rest of your day and weekend, even though the weekend may not look that much different than the week.

Rebekah Johnson

Yep. I know.

Stephanie Eidelman

But thank you.

Rebekah Johnson

Thank you. My pleasure.

Stephanie Eidelman

Take care.