

Matthew Hoke

Jason Greco

Junior Year Freestyle English

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Corona on SBOS!

In March of 2020, COVID 19 had Jason Strubing's stomach in knots. COVID shut down his business, Skateworks, which is a small business based in Santa Cruz that sells skateboards. Skateworks has been running for many years now, jumping from city to city. They finally settled down in Los Altos for good. They've been there for the past 10 years. Business has always been pretty good for Strubing, until they got shut down. They were down from mid March to mid May and Strubing wasn't sure if his business was going to survive. Strubing says "You know, with not knowing what was gonna happen and with not knowing how long we were gonna be closed for, everyone kinda just froze up on things." Despite the closing of small businesses from May to March, the demand for outdoor recreational activities has been through the roof.

Right after Strubing reopened his sales were doing shockingly well. Strubing says "I think that there's the short term, it has been amazing, it was a surge on top of a surge, as they keep saying in the industry." Strubing thinks the reasoning behind his "surge" was because of people wanting to move, or as Strubing says "people realized when they got cooped up there was a lot of pent up demand to like get out of the **** house and do stuff." After Covid hit and with shelter in place people were looking for something to do. Not only did skateboarding sales do extraordinarily well, but other outdoor activities also "surged". According to the Washington Post, bike sales were 120% higher than the sales from the previous year. People wanting to go

outside and doing something that is COVID safe seemed to be the reasoning behind all the sales for recreational equipment.

Skating has been gaining lots of traction recently. With the hype of the Olympics and the growth of skateboarding, people have been getting interested. Prior to COVID 19, a large part of the Skateworks revenue was their lesson program. Lessons are 60 dollars an hour and run 2 per hour from 10-6 daily. The main appeal was learning how to skate the ramp in the back. However, Strubing didn't let anyone on the ramp at all. This was due to Covid safety, Strubing says "Of course no ramp usage, no bathroom usage, and nobody in the back... All lessons outside and at Rengstorf [park]". Their lesson revenue took a huge blow and they lost many customers because of it. "But our lesson revenue was about 25% less than normal", Strubing says. But because their sales of skateboards was so high their revenue was exceptional. Strubing says "So overall sales were actually higher than the previous year."

Sales were so high this year they were running out of things to sell. Strubing needed materials to put skateboards together. He ended up resorting to brands that weren't as popular. Some of the most popular brands like Indey, Ace, and Thunder were selling out unbelievably fast. Resorting to brands like Ruckus, Orion, and Venture was a last resort. Nobody really wants these brands, but are willing to skate them if nothing else is in stock. The high demand of skateboard products led to many problems with the manufacturing. In March of 2020 the manufacturing for the big companies went on a temporary shut down. Strubing explains that "The manufacturing is having a hard time keeping up because you are pre ordering with what you want 6 months in advance". There were many difficulties on the manufacturer's end. They had to keep the number of employees inside the building low. According to Forbes Magazine people had to stand a few meters further apart than they had in the past due to COVID. Having

fewer employees makes the assembly line exponentially slower at a time when demands are higher than ever. With the demands so high and the manufacturing struggling to keep up people weren't getting the supplies they needed. This is why Strubing was looking for other brands to sell at his shop.

During COVID 19 the demand for skateboards, along with all outdoor goods, has been peaking. With the difficulties with covid many small businesses struggled with orders, and had to adapt. According to The U.S Chamber Of Commerce, 11% of small business owners created an online shop and 15% created curbside pick up. Strubing had a similar idea: he had curbside pick up and delivery at the start of quarantine. With delivering peoples orders and curbside pick up only Strubing was struggling with sales. However, it didn't really matter what his thoughts on it were because he needed to adapt to survive. Strubing says, "We kinda just eliminated the whole "shopping" experience and made it more like a purchasing decision." By doing this Strubing gained some customers and his shop became more efficient. Many people walk in, look around and buy nothing. By eliminating the factor of browsing they would spend the majority of their time with customers that wanted to buy something.

Even though there were so many hurdles to jump and so many obstacles along the way, Strubing still managed to come out of quarantine with more loyal customers. Strubing's sales went through the roof, getting many new people into skateboarding as well as making his business more profitable. He adapted to the change very quickly and got back on his feet right away to keep his business afloat. By changing the product line, changing the way they do business, and staying loyal to their customers they managed to surpass the previous year's sales. This is just one example of a small business adapting and changing for the difficulties of COVID-19.

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