



Reimagining Success Beyond 2020

*By Clark Lindsay
CEO and Founder*

What a year this has been.

The way we work and socialize has fundamentally changed. As businesses and communities have wrestled with the obstacles and opportunities of 2020, commercial real estate has been at the epicenter of some of the most significant change. Change we have not fully understood yet.

At Pacific Program Management (PPM), we have had the opportunity to come alongside a variety of industries — from healthcare and retail to technology and research — with a seat at the table to unravel what the implications of our still evolving workspace might be.

It is against that backdrop that we have gone through our own self-reflection.

As the seriousness of the pandemic became evident, we were inspired to ask ourselves simple but difficult questions.

What is the underlying purpose of our business? What drives us, regardless of the season or the situation? What is the north star that we can point to that will guide our ship as we chart our course?

Here's what we learned. While we are in the business of commercial real estate, assessing, advising, and implementing on the future of the workspace, we are in the business of innovation and looking around the corner for our clients.

We lead clients through the process of reimagining and unlocking the potential of their workspace in response to their changing business environment and their focus on their own employee experiences. Because while we focus on space — both fixed and virtual — it is people that drive our every decision and recommendation.

In centering our attention on people, with an understanding of how the human experience informs business goals, our approach is by definition focused on the larger program of the expansive projects and initiatives inherent in all workspace strategy. Rather than leading with the specific projects that are the outcome of programmatic initiatives, we've pivoted our focus to the people first as central to all business. In doing so, we lead with the strategic program management, followed by the execution of the projects necessary to realize that strategic program.

So, we changed our name — from Pacific Project Management to Pacific Program Management. A small, but significant difference. And so much of 2020 has been about small but significant differences.

As I look back on how we have adapted to the evolving workspace and how we've counseled clients to do the same, it is less about what businesses are choosing to do with their workspaces and more about how they are approaching these challenges that I think is the most telling.

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Four key trends I've seen with businesses finding a foothold in this chaos are also trends that I hope will continue well into 2021 and far past this pandemic.

1. Communicate. Frequently.

The businesses we've seen find success have been those who shifted their communications to listen more to their employees and clients. At the start of the pandemic, we met daily with our team across the nation over Zoom. We listened. We responded to their concerns with solutions like home office stipends and diverting some of our travel budget to additional dependent care funds. While the financial support was helpful, what was more important was employees knew we were thinking about them, that they were valued, and that we were invested in their success as a measure of the success of our business.

2. Do your best. Different.

It is impossible to achieve the same things in the same way when nearly every aspect of “how we do things” is on shifting sand with no end in sight. By focusing on our purpose, we were able to change how we “normally” do things to unlock new opportunities. Some of the most ingenious adaptations I've witnessed during this pandemic have been restaurants who have transformed their food delivery systems, and in some cases, such as the iconic Canlis in Seattle, actually broadened their business model to introduce an online community college focused on culinary arts. Continue to be the best, just be the best different.

3. Don't worry. Be focused.

Worry may be the most useless emotion in the universe, but it is tempting and easy to succumb to in difficult times. It can be tempting in an unpredictable atmosphere to constantly worry about the financials of business. The irony is that the more you worry about the bottom line, the more you risk it. It's an age-old problem for businesses that try to shift their model to meet the latest fads. It rarely works. The businesses we've seen work best are those that take the time to figure out what they do best, define their purpose, balance decisions with data and intuition, track performance, and put trust in their people to carry them through. The reason why the community college worked for Canlis is because it is true to who they are and consistent with their brand. Teaching others how to cook would of course be something the best chefs in Seattle would be able to do — it is a result of a relentless focus on their purpose that allowed the restaurant to launch the concept.

4. Give back.

While self-reflection and figuring out why you do what you do is critical, sometimes the best way to assure your ability to do it is to step away from yourself and focus on helping others. We've continued to commit 1% of our revenue and have provided paid time for our staff to give back to their communities across the country. This year we determined that from now on, every Juneteenth we will donate all of our profits for the day to organizations that support Black communities and provide our entire team the day off to reflect and give back. Not only does community service feel good — and is arguably a responsibility for any business that is a part of the fabric of community — but by serving others we are able to draw our employees closer together and engage our clients more authentically. Which in turn allows us to have more meaningful communication and derive more confidence in our purpose.

This isn't some groundbreaking revelation. But these four trends have been noticeable with the businesses we work with who are finding opportunity in the challenges of 2020. While these concepts are hardly isolated to a pandemic that has disrupted nearly every aspect of our lives, they are critical to survive it.

What a year this has been.

After more than a decade in business, we've weathered all times — good and bad. I know we will have challenging times in our future, and we will have more times of growth and prosperity. I hope that we will remember what we've learned as we've walked the gauntlet of 2020 with our clients and peers.

Communicate
Do our best
Focus
Give back

It is easier said than done. But it is essential, and it is what will allow us to continually reimagine our potential.



About Clark

Clark Lindsay is Pacific Program Management's Chief Executive Office and founder. Working from a philosophy that successful real estate programs are rooted in people-centric workplaces, he drives PPM's corporate strategy, provides creative direction for business development, leads growth initiatives and the evolution of the client service platform, and inspires a culture aimed at realizing the potential of every employee. Clark can be contacted at clark@pacificpmg.com.