

Video Segment 5: Leading a Brand During Uncertainty

NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

"The first five or six years as CEO, I was dealing with a broken business and doing a turnaround. But the uncertainty that the pandemic caused changed me as a leader."

-Chip Bergh, former CEO, Levi Strauss & Co.

Chip Bergh says that when the pandemic hit in 2020, Levi Strauss & Co. suddenly closed stores for six weeks on up to 12 weeks, depending on the region of the world in which they were operating. He made the decision early-on to do three things as they navigated the pandemic. Take notes on what they were and how they worked:

1. Employees:

2. Staying afloat financially:

3. The Levi's brand exiting the pandemic stronger:

According to Chip Bergh, “The creativity that came out during the pandemic was something that I just wanted to bottle up and say let’s not lose that.” How does Levi Strauss & Co. use the concept of *restraint* to enhance innovation elsewhere in its operations? Don’t forget to check out the vocabulary list to support your exploration.

Reflection: Did your brand emerge from the pandemic stronger? How did you fuel your creativity during those challenging months and years? What sparked innovation for you? If you did not feel creative, then how did the pandemic help you learn to navigate uncertainty?

THE LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS

(Linked terms are defined in the Wharton Global Youth Video Glossary)

[Brand](#)

[Emotional Intelligence](#)

[Branding](#)

[Layoff](#)

[Brand Loyalty](#)

[Marketing Strategy](#)

[Brand Manager](#)

[Health care Benefit](#)

[Cash Market](#)

[Revenues](#)

[CEO](#)

[Supply Chain](#)

[Company](#)

[Sustainability](#)

[Competitive Strategy](#)

[Team](#)

[Competitor](#)

[E-commerce](#)

Americus Reed: The Whitney M. Young Jr. Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Reed's primary research and consulting areas are in brand equity and identity loyalty, the study of creating and fostering brand communities. He is also a co-host of the podcast, *Marketing Matters*.

Balance Sheet: A financial statement reflecting a company's assets (land, equipment, buildings), liabilities (debts that it owes) and other financial information at a given time.

Barbara E. Kahn: The Patty and Jay H. Baker Professor of Marketing at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Kahn is an internationally recognized scholar on retailing and brand loyalty. She is also the co-host of the podcast, *Marketing Matters*.

Charles “Chip” Bergh: Former president and CEO of Levi Strauss & Co. who is credited with the company's turnaround. He is also a legendary “brand guy” who previously spent 28 years at Proctor & Gamble, managing iconic brands like Old Spice.

Corporate Turnaround: Reviving a business that has declined in sales or underperformed for a period of time, with a goal of making it successful.

Empathy: When you're able to care about and understand how someone else is feeling.

Employee: A person working for a company who earns wages or a salary.

Forecast: A technique used by companies to estimate what their earnings will be in a given quarter. Economists forecast the health of the future economy.

IT Organization: The organization within a company that manages the internet technology systems and services. Basically, the tech team.

Levi Strauss & Co.: An American clothing company trading under the stock symbol LEVI that is known worldwide for its Levi's brand of denim jeans. The company was [founded](#) in 1853 by Levi Strauss.

Levi's Innovation Program: Efforts within Levi Strauss & Co. to find [new ways of producing their clothes](#) and operating the company.

Levi's Jeans: Blue denim jeans made by Levi Strauss & Co. Levi's 501 jeans are particularly iconic and known for their straight leg and button-down fly.

Levi's Stores: The physical retail locations where Levi's jeans and other Levi's products are sold. As of November 2023, Levi Strauss & Co. operated 1,172 company-owned retail stores worldwide.

Manufacturing: The process in which people and machines produce goods (like jeans) that are later sold to consumers.

Marketing Matters: A weekly podcast hosted by Wharton School marketing professors Barbara Kahn and Americus Reed that discusses marketing and advertising trends, consumer behavior, data and analytics, the latest in retail marketing and brand building.

Open Source: A model of innovation that encourages open collaboration.

The Pandemic: The global epidemic caused by the infectious disease known as COVID-19 that shut down society around March 20, 2020, and forced people around the world to isolate in their homes. As a result, many businesses struggled because customers could not get out to buy available products and services.

Remote Work: Working from your home or another space other than the office.

The Wharton School: The Wharton School, also referred to as just Wharton, is the business school of the University of Pennsylvania, a private Ivy League university based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wharton is a world leader in business education and a hub for academic research in all areas of business.

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