

The Next Normal

An Interview with Alan S. Elkin,
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Active International

EDITORS' NOTE Alan Elkin co-founded Active International in 1984. Elkin began his career at Kaiser Broadcasting which, under his direction as Senior Vice President of Sales, later became Field Communications and then a subsidiary of Katz Media Group. He has received the Entrepreneur Of The Year™ Award by Ernst & Young and the British American Business Inc. Award in recognition of Active's global accomplishments. Additionally, he received the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award at the Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Fame annual gala. Elkin believes that community involvement is as important as business leadership and through the company's Active Cares program, contributions have been made to over 600 charities since 1997.



Alan S. Elkin

COMPANY BRIEF Nearly four decades ago, Active International (activeinternational.com) disrupted the marketplace by developing an innovative, market leading, client-centric approach to corporate trade. The development of best-in-class solutions has led Active to evolve into a commercial innovation company. Active's purpose is to transform data into insights, strategy into action, and vision into value. With the entrepreneurial spirit of a startup, and the capabilities of a global corporation, Active continues to redefine what's possible and turn possibilities into positive business outcomes. Active drives performance through industry expertise, its Corporate Trade Model and portfolio of companies with a core competency in media, to create and deliver value for leading brands throughout their business life cycles. With a global team comprised of business innovators, industry leaders, media mavens and finance experts, Active is dedicated to delivering new levels of financial flexibility and custom solutions. An employee-owned company, Active's client success comes first, as well as the betterment of its people and the communities in which they live.

The world is facing an unprecedented crisis that is impacting all countries and their citizens. The pandemic is being fought on the front lines by healthcare workers, first responders, those providing supplies and meals, transportation workers and all other

essential workers. What do you say to these true leaders and heroes that are risking their lives to protect others?

Thank you for what you are accomplishing. What you are doing is unprecedented. Through your ingenuity, grit, determination and bravery, you are forging a pathway through completely uncharted territory. You're risking your lives each and every day, only to return to the same front lines the very next day. You are the modern "soldiers" of this century, fighting an

invisible enemy and winning the battle. Thank you for being heroes and protecting our lives.

Active is a company that has a long culture and commitment around community engagement and addressing societal need. What do you see as the role that Active can play in waging this battle?

Supporting the first responders. They need our support now more than ever before. Additionally, we need to be able to feed those in need. We must not forget the many people

in our community who, due to circumstances way beyond their control, are unable to feed themselves and their families. Active is a long-time supporter of our local food pantry and has significantly stepped-up that support to help families directly impacted by the pandemic. We are also continually educating our workforce on how to best mitigate Covid-19 risk across all of our relationships.

Active was built with an entrepreneurial spirit and an ability to be nimble and adapt. How is Active addressing its business during this challenging time in order to succeed in this difficult environment?

Over the past decade, Active has embraced new technology in order to make us more efficient and effective. Absent any prior knowledge of an impending pandemic, Active's technological currency prepared us very well to be nimble and adapt to the new circumstances. Over a mere 24 hours, we left our office environment to shelter in place in our homes. Thanks to our technological expertise, we were able to seamlessly continue our business. Each one of our employees became an overnight entrepreneur.

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The old “command and control” model has given rise to enhanced collaboration, communication and cooperation, and as a result, Active has continued to thrive amidst a very challenging world environment.

How have Active’s employees changed the way they work in order to be effective with the changes that have been necessary for all businesses to make?

Active’s people were prepared to adapt to new methods of working. Active’s employees have embraced the new technologies that were offered and become individual change-agents, making decisions and creating a new way of doing business.

There is a great deal of discussion about businesses reopening in a “new normal.” What is your outlook for what this new normal may look like and how is Active preparing for the next stage in this crisis?

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We have educated our staff and we all understand that when we do return to the office, the coronavirus will still be among us. Accordingly, we have collaborated globally to create protocols that we all believe will mitigate the risk of contracting/spreading the virus, thereby protecting the safety of our employees and their families.

You are a business leader who has always focused on your people and believed that talent makes great companies. How proud are you to see how Active’s workforce has risen during this most difficult time and what do you say to your team about their perseverance and resilience?

I could not be any prouder of Active’s team, both domestically and internationally. They have risen to a level greater than any I – or they – could ever have anticipated. They have faced the Coronavirus enemy head-on and sought ways to innovate around the challenges. We have since learned that working from home can and does succeed, anywhere there’s Wi-Fi. Our team’s productivity has been as high – in fact, higher – than it was

pre-pandemic. Despite the present challenges, Active’s message to our team throughout this pandemic has remained, first and foremost, to be safe and stay healthy.

Leading companies in all industries have changed the way they operate and have been engaged in providing talent, resources and supplies to those on the front lines of this crisis. This has provided an example of the role that business plays as a force for good in society. Will you discuss your views on the responsibility that leading companies have to address societal need?

I’m a great believer in the government and private industry cooperating to make this world a better place. The government with its “rules & regs” has certain limitations. By the same token, companies need to stay accountable to certain guidelines. When symbiotic balance exists between the government and private industry, the true capabilities of a free democracy are unleashed.

You are known to be an optimistic person. During this difficult and uncertain time, what are you telling your people and what would you say to young people across the country who are deeply concerned and scared about the future?

We as a people have lived through a myriad of epidemics, climate challenges, wars, and uncertainty. The world will continue to hit us with things that are beyond our control, and we will always need to adapt in order to deal with those challenges. All the while, we must understand that with time and perseverance, we can overcome these difficulties. We have and will continue to prevail as we figure out the best approach to our “next-normal.” Over the years, I’ve witnessed people survive terrible disasters. They have invariably emerged from those challenges stronger because of their innate ability to endure, adapt and innovate.

As for those deeply concerned and harboring some fear about the future, that’s actually a good thing. We are now beginning to harness that fear into solutions that will allow us to conquer this current enemy and emerge stronger. We must never lose sight of the fact that new challenges will always be on the horizon and we must trust the strength of our species to overcome those challenges. Isn’t that what life is about, after all? ●

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