

Purpose and Direction

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.

Active International is a purpose-driven firm with a long history of supporting its employees, clients and communities. How has Active adapted its business and the way it works during this unprecedented time in order to continue to effectively support its employees, clients and communities?

There will always be a crisis on the planet, either imminent or on the horizon. Whatever crisis the future may hold, we - as a company and as a people - must never lose sight of our purpose and direction. Our purpose and direction have remained the same. However, in any crisis, the first thing companies must do for

survival is to consolidate their position and protect their people from the threat. In this manner, Active has continued in the best way it can. The pandemic is a "once-in-100-year" crisis. We needed to design protocols to protect the health of our staff and families, and we did in very short order. We left our offices and commenced working from home, all the while maintaining productivity at the highest possible level.

Active is a creative company providing innovative solutions for its clients. How challenging is it to continue to be creative and innovative when working remotely?

Notwithstanding the logistical difficulties of a rapid transition to work-from-home, we came to the realization that without the day-to-day bureaucracy and office politics, we were able to be as, if not more, productive. The COVID-19 crisis forced us to come up with creative work-arounds for operations that were once handled exclusively in-office. As a result of our pre-pandemic decision to embrace technology within our office environment, we were able to transition to working from home, literally overnight, while maintaining innovation and creativity throughout our global organization.

Active is headquartered in New York. What are the keys to New York's recovery?

New York City is, to me, the best city in the world. It's my hometown. However, the lack of proper government policies in recent years has left my beloved city in shambles. The streets are dirty, garbage is piled high, and it is no longer safe to walk around. This outcome is unacceptable and must immediately change. The key to New York's return to success boils down to a return to the rule of law. It is the local government's job to make the citizens of their city feel safe and to be able to walk their streets without fear, day or night. Our New York City government has failed its citizens and, consequently, the citizens are leaving in droves. Gangs, anarchy and socialism have decimated the city's rich culture. The city's government cannot and should not erase its history, and yet they are doing just that. The history and culture of New York is rich with so many nationalities. Yet the "woke" environment would like to cancel it all. The city needs to be cleaned up and restored to order: garbage off the streets, homeless people appropriately sheltered, police force funded. "Defunding the police" is an initiative that has failed miserably. State and local governments need to support their police forces - the people who fight crime and protect their citizens every day. These changes are what is needed to restore our city to "world's-greatest" status.

How critical is it for there to be a strong public/private partnership to ensure a safe and effective reopening of New York?

For a successful government to work, it must support private industry. Working together and collaborating and finding resources to establish new areas of opportunity is essential to the growth of any city or state. Bolstering its private industry sector will help New York re-emerge as the greatest city in the world.

How concerned are you about New York's future and its ability to remain the leading global city?

At this time, it is important to recognize that New York City has lost its "world's greatest city" standing. It is dirty. It is unsafe, both day and night. Crime has skyrocketed and people are afraid to go to stores, restaurants and cultural hubs - the very things that are the lifeblood of New York. Until the rule of law is reestablished, New York City will no longer be safe and will lag behind as a world city.

The country is also dealing with issues of social injustice and racism. How critical is it for Active to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you highlight your efforts in this regard?

Active International is a global company. By our very definition, we embrace all nationalities. We believe that great ideas come from all people, no matter their color, race or religion. We have always believed in and promoted diversity and inclusion.

What do you see as a company's responsibility to the communities it serves?

We at Active International have always believed in the importance of giving back to the communities that house our worldwide operations. We have always been and remain highly involved with supporting education and with feeding our poor and infirm. In my opinion, companies must always look to give back to their communities. No company or person is an island. Our communities are integral to our success and we are grateful for their support.

What are the keys to effective leadership during challenging and uncertain times?

A leader needs to exhibit a positive and calm demeanor throughout a crisis. The leader is required to show compassion and empathy while also forging a path through and out of the uncertainty. We need to enter into a deeper relationship with our people, and to show empathy and compassion. During a crisis, fear of the unknown needs to be understood and remedied. Great leaders need to embrace and promote hope. They must continuously reassure their constituents that the crisis will pass while empowering them to stay the course. ●