

**Leading Strategically Through the Recovery**  
**Marrying Compliance and Innovation to Meet the Needs of Today's New Environment**  
**5/21/20**

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:00:04](#)):

Welcome and thank you all for attending today's insideARM round table series as part of our Leading Strategically Through Recovery series. We want to thank our special guests and sponsors of this series, LiveVox, today. We really appreciate partnerships, especially those like ours with LiveVox. They help us bring really great content to all of you. Like what we're going to cover today. Today we have Jim Lynch of LiveVox. He's joined by Alicia McKeighan, Chief Compliance Officer for Afni; and Jason Collins, Chief Operating Officer for Spring Oaks Capital. They'll be introducing themselves more in a minute. But before I get to that, I have a few housekeeping items and then we'll get to the good stuff. First, I want to mention that throughout today's webinar you can submit questions at any time in the Questions Box; it's available to you. All of your mics are muted, but please, if you have questions, submit those questions at any time. We're saving time at the end to be able to address those. Also we want to let you know that the replay of today's webinar will be made available on insideARM.com. We'll also be sharing that on LinkedIn if you follow us there. So if you missed a portion of this or think others will benefit from this, please feel free to share. The final bit of housekeeping is a little bit of legalese and it's just to say that the information shared in this webinar is not intended to be legal advice and can't be used as legal advice. I can't speak for everyone on this panel today, but I can speak for me. You should never take anything I say as legal advice. Having said that, I am going to hand it over to Jim for introductions and we'll go around the table and then we'll get started.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:01:41](#)):

Sure. Thanks Amy. I agree with your last statement too. Definitely don't take anything I say as legal advice. That would be a bad move, but thanks everybody for joining today. My name's Jim Lynch. I'm the Senior Director of Product Marketing here at LiveVox. It looks like many of the names are definitely familiar names of people that I've run across at other insideARM events over the past many years. So I've had about 20 years already, which sounds crazy. Twenty years of ARM experience, whether it's customer experience management accounts receivables management and really blend together, you know, an operations background with technology. So it gives us a little bit of a unique position today to team up with, Alicia and Jason. I'm pretty excited about this panel. But also other insights that we might see from some of our other clients. So thanks for having me.

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:02:31](#)):

Hi, I'm Alicia McKeighan. I am with Afni. I've been in the industry for 12 years. Afni is a third-party debt collector and call center services provider with expertise in telecommunications, cable, medical, financial services and subrogation collections. And I just want to say thank you to insideARM arm and LiveVox for having me today. Looking forward to the presentation.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:02:53](#)):

Hey, good afternoon everyone. I'm Jason Collins. I'm the cofounder and Chief Operating Officer of Spring Oaks Capital. Spring Oaks Capital is an industry leading national debt buyer. I joined the team last year

after a 20 year career at NBNA and Bank of America. And along with Alicia I'd like to thank LiveVox and insideARM for having us today. Look forward to the discussion.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:03:15](#)):

Great. No lack of experience here. So I say we go in and share some of that with our audience. So Jim, if you're ready, it's all yours.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:03:21](#)):

Awesome Amy. I appreciate it. So you know, everyone, we think about some of the topics that we discussed or we're going to discuss today. We've obviously discussed it in the past and that's really: How do we marry compliance with innovation? It's just a little bit different. I mean this is something that Amy and I probably talked about, you know, even at the beginning of the year that we're going to have a panel just like this, but the topic was going to be something way different. It was going to be more about, you know, maybe a new piece of technology that came out and how we can implement that in our workflow. Or maybe it's a new regulation that we just got hit with. Maybe something came out of the CFPB or one of the States' attorney general might've released something. But that's not what happened. So now we're all dealing with COVID-19 and hopefully we're starting to see the curve starting to flatten. People are getting back to normal, if you can call it normal. And contact centers are really been impacted. So you know, you think about if it's your business -- a small business, maybe a large enterprise like we have Alicia on from Afniyou know, how people are impacted; I think it's going to be really, really important to understand that. So before we dive into a bunch of the content, but I like to do is give Alicia and Jason both a chance to explain kind of where they are in terms of how COVID's affected their business and how they're operating today. So Jason, maybe let's kick it over to you. So there might've been some rulings that come out, maybe some social distancing guidelines. Maybe they closed down your contact center. Let's let everybody know where you're at today. Sure.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:04:44](#)):

Thanks Jim. Yeah, we're, we're in a unique position. We are still in the office and operating full capacity in our contact center. We're fortunate that we have the room in our facility. We positioned ourselves for really aggressive growth over the next 18 months. So we have the space available to continue to operate our call center as we were. So we took steps, you know, very early on to space our people out. Really an abundance of caution before it became part of the orders. So this spread out across our entire contact center. We already had cleaning crews coming in regularly, but we enhanced that as well. We take additional steps ourselves to clean the home, our workspace, our keyboards or mice every day before we start our shift. But we were in a unique environment of we're still in the office and, and working through it every day, doing everything we can to keep our people safe first and foremost. Okay. And productive.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:05:51](#)):

That's pretty interesting Jason. So even though you say it was almost business as usual, all of us on the line today know that that's really not the case. I mean, you touched on a couple of things that you had to do, increasing space between agents, new cleaning procedures, a lot of those things. So I think you're going to be able to provide an interesting perspective on today's panel because some people are going to get back to what, what could be the new normal. And I think a lot of the things that you deployed there, we're going to talk about it a little bit later. So then they understand maybe some of the things

that they've already thought about. Maybe they haven't thought about it yet. So I think it's gonna provide a unique perspective. How about you Alicia? Let's talk a little about how Afni is today.

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:06:25](#)):

Yeah, sure. So Afni, as I said, is, is out of Illinois. And for everybody that is curious to where Bloomington is, it's two and a half hours South of Chicago. Everybody always asks that. The state is kind of ruled by Chicago, so we're one of the States that's still on pretty heavy lock-down. I think probably one of the last two in the article that I read. So pretty early on in, in March, we went to a stay at home order through an executive order through our governor. And we kind of knew it was coming; we were planning for it and the weeks before and so we got the notice on a Friday and by Monday we had to have everybody positioned to work from home. So all of our employees are work from home at this time. We are talking about plans to go back to the office, but we've not finalized anything yet. Prior to being required to work from home, we did have some of our more mobile individuals already working from home. We had different signs posted in the centers about proper washing of hands. We had increased cleaning that was already occurring. So we were already starting to do some of the things that you're hearing about other companies doing as people start to work back in the office. We do have some essential employees that are still in our corporate office. Some of our employees that are running payroll, finance, etc., some of our correspondence-handling employees. And so they've already started early on practicing social distancing and spacing desks six feet apart and proper cleaning of common areas. We kind of have a hybrid because we do know what it will take when we have employees back in the office and to have proper space. But right now for the most part, our workforce, our workforce is completely digital and work from home.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:08:20](#)):

That's awesome. And I think that aligns with most of the clients that we deal with here at LiveVoxops too. A lot of them have implemented some type of work from home. Many of them have actually just closed their contact centers all together. Amy, is that something? You speak to a range of different businesses for anywhere from a creditor to a BPO provider. Is that kind of the theme that you've heard as well these days?

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:08:41](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I mean I think everybody's trying to find the mix that suits their business model the best. I think where people could migrate people to work from home they have, but there are certainly some functions that just, it just don't work well working from home or are possible. You know, like for example, you know, processing mail or a lot of back office functions that just require someone to be on site. So I think what I've heard in most cases is where companies could, you know, with the job function, move that out and allow people to work from home that they have. If not, they've taken precautions. Like what Alicia and Jason have mentioned to try to balance safety with. I'm making sure that the business still can produce.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:09:28](#)):

I think it's, it's interesting that most people are somewhere on this weird curve and they're still not quite sure where we're going to navigate when all this is over.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:09:37](#)):

I will just add that, you know, I think with the work from home, it's a good example on this topic. You know, one of the reasons why collections wasn't migrated to a lot of work from home offices, even though it's a call center; you don't need to be in-person sort of thing. One of the hangups had been compliance, you know, and people saying, Oh, we don't know if we can do that. But you know, necessity is a good catalyst I guess. So now a lot of companies have been able to do that and figure out how to do that compliantly and, and share those best practices about how to do that. And I think Jim, you know better probably than anybody. That's how I've advocated for innovation and collections for a long time, which is we sort of have to step into it and do it and, and be brave and take the risk and learn our lessons and continue to tweak that to make sure we address any concerns that were there. So it's interesting, right? How those things seem to work.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:10:28](#)):

I think it's right. I know Alicia's organization at Afni, they do a lot of, you know, customer care-type calls. A lot of inbound traffic comes in. We've seen spikes in the traffic go up because consumers might need some type of assistance right now. Maybe some forbearance, something with some repayment schedule. I remember being in operations for a long time, and clients were like, "No, no, no, no one's, no one's going to go work from home." But you know, you thought it might work. So I think Alicia I'll kind of turn you; this has been a spot that you've really had to work hand-in-hand with your operations team. And I would say the cool thing about the two people that we have on the panel today: both of them are used to working hand in hand, compliance and operations perspective. But maybe talk about that for a second. Alicia was there some concern with sending people at home before the pandemic that maybe slowed it down a little bit?

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:11:23](#)):

You know we've kind of had some advantages I would say from a work-from-home perspective. You know, we have Afni Philippines, which is a subsidiary of Afni, and we've done training with those individuals virtually. We've had different systems set up for, for those individuals to be able to function off of our system. So we did have a little bit of an advantage in that regard in that, you know we already had systems in place to be able to execute on remote employees and in some capacity; you know, employees that were not sitting in Bloomington. But as we started to talk, you know, as the operational partners, we really turned to more of the concerns around ensuring that we have proper security protocols and looking at all the client contracts, ensuring that we have those addenda executed or, you know, proper affidavits with all of our employees. So I would say it was more on compliance in terms of the contract side and our BCP and our security protocols and our PCI data and all of that than it was regulatory CMS hurdles because we have a lot of systems in place that have enabled us to operate in that manner. My team, when we were physically sitting in a building, has not been with the operations for some time, even though we both reside in Bloomington; we're about a mile and a half away from each other. So because of LiveVox, we've had the ability to go through monitoring and use LiveVox Assessor and access the recordings and even videos when we need it. So we were set up in a manner that allowed for us to monitor properly, even before this "work from home." And you know, my operational partners, they're just excellent. So I'm fortunate because they brought up some of the things that I perhaps wouldn't have thought of. And some of that included some of the client contracts, but we also looked at some of the reporting we needed to set up pretty quickly. You know, what, what information do we need to know that's going to be essential to having us continue to monitor our collectors effectively. We have Call Miner; I call it analytic software. And so we set up some different coding on that to be able to push us calls to review. We set up reporting for some of the accounts that

we're coding with a "COVID-effected" smart code. So we had a lot to kind of analyze and start in the beginning. That kind of laid the foundation for proper audit and monitoring as things continued.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:14:00](#)):

Jason, It sounds like a lot of the steps that Alicia took to go to a work-from-home, you also have prepared for and actually deployed inside your office even though they're still inside your contact center because you didn't know if an order was going to come down immediately shutting down your center. So you also had to put these steps in place. So maybe you could take a second and expand a little bit on some of those things that you were hearing on the phone. We're living in a new world now. There's new objections that you're hearing on the phone from the, from the consumers. So you know, she brought up, she brought up utilizing speech analytics, maybe some new reporting. Did you give everybody an idea on some of those things that you put in place? You know, and just think about you don't put your innovative hat on for a second. How you expanded some of that functionality.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:14:52](#)):

First I'd like to just address some of the points that Alicia made. We went through the same thing. And while we're still in the office, you stay close to the updates. And every time the governor spoke, you're tuned in live, listening and wondering what the new order is going to be. And Alicia mentioned how quick the turnaround time was from the time of the order she had to comply with to when they implemented their at home agent program. We were sitting there ready to do the same on our side and continuing to challenge ourselves to say, are we 110% ready yet? If not, what are we missing? What do we need to do? Because really it was every day you come in wondering if today's a day that we're going to pull the trigger and execute our at home agent strategy. So I relate with a lot of what she shared cause we were going through it, although we still haven't executed it. We've done a lot of planning and we're prepared to do so. As far as our agents and some of the enhancements, we've done a lot there, but I think the first thing is just remembering that our agents are in a tough spot. The job they do is tough enough. But then asking them to make outbound phone calls, in the middle of this crisis is really, really challenging. They're coming in. Dealing with this on a personal level, dealing with our family. Everybody's situation is a little bit different. It's wearing on them and then we get on the phone and they're dealing with consumers that may not be excited about receiving the phone call; and then some are and it's business as usual. So we spent a lot of time just talking to our people, making sure, "Yeah, they're okay. Personally, first and foremost, is there anything that you need that we can do to help you out personally? Are you comfortable here? Is there anything else you need? Do you have any concerns? Let's talk about, you know, the call and the environment and any updates from local within our state or just national that they should be aware of." And just continuing to have that conversation every day and investing that time. Forgetting the lost production of it, investing in them, and making sure they're as prepared as they possibly can be to get on the phone and do their job every day and continuing to be there to support them. We're also glad to be a LiveVox client, so we utilize all the tools available to us. They're LiveVox and yeah, we're monitoring calls more than, more than ever. Personally clearing my calendar as much as I can to allow time to live-listen, coach, and really just hear the voice of the consumer so that we can in those daily huddles revisit it with our employees and talk to them about what we may have learned the day before or something that worked really well or recognize someone who did a great job executing what we talked about the prior days. So, yeah, I think all of us have a tremendous amount of experience and managing through various levels of crisis. But this one, it's really uncharted territory for all of us and it is for our employees too. So we really took the approach of we don't know what we don't know. And let's do what we can to stay close to our people so we understand what they're thinking and what they're feeling and let's stay as close as we can to the consumer. And if

we do those two things really well, then it will guide us in how to move our business forward appropriately. In the best way.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:18:32](#)):

I think it's important that you raise, you raise a lot of important points there. And one of them that really speaks to me is that you care about your people. And I think that that's what we've really seen. It was really a shift towards how are your employees feeling. Because if they're not feeling good, if they're not feeling secure, look, it's scary out there for some right now. People don't want to leave the house. Maybe they're not allowed to leave the house and they're not sure about their job. I mean, you know, a lot of people have been laid off, you know, through this pandemic. So it's one thing that's definitely, you know, scary and top of mind for a lot of people. Jason, you're fortunate that you're able to, you know, huddle up your team every day. And I'm curious, before I shift to Alicia, what's some of the basic concerns, and I'm not talking about from a productivity standpoint, well let's just talk about some of the concerns that your employees might be bringing up during those huddles and then a shift that kind of over. Alicia, if you could comment on what Jason's responses and how you're utilizing technology and innovation to address these issues, because Jason's still huddling his team while you're still having to do that from a remote situation. So, Jason, what are some of the things that you're hearing from your people out there?

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:19:36](#)):

I think the top two are health and safety, right? And that's where I started getting their feedback on talking: "Hey, we're going to space this out. We're really going to spread the people across the floor." And then how are we going to manage in that environment, why we're doing it? Talking about some of the enhanced cleaning throughout the day and why we're doing it and why it's not optional. And helping them understand that it's for their protection and protection of their, their peers. And then I think the second thing they're really concerned about is no job security. Is this going to lead to layoffs? We're hearing about layoffs and no other businesses in the area, other businesses and industry. What's your plan? I think that's just another opportunity know for us to talk to them and be honest and say, "Hey, here's where we are. Here's our plan. Well, let me tell you about plan B and plan C and I want you to know that we're not just flying by the seat of our pants. We're planning for it, and we'll keep you guys informed as things change." And they knew we were prepared to go work from home. We talked about what those steps will be and what the timelines would be. And you know, that was a question we got a lot early on from them. It was interesting we heard from a lot of them that they wanted to stay here, they wanted to be in the office. And, they felt comfortable with what it was. We took any feedback they had and you tried to implement it again to make them as comfortable as possible. But I really think it came to those two things is, "Am I okay to be here? Is it safe when I come in?" And then, "Am I going to be able to keep my employment. We are fortunate. We have just an incredible team of people here. We're a fairly new company. So, you know, we have these individuals that are family to us and we show them that every day. We put them first and we want to make sure they're comfortable with, they're doing, they feel secure on the job, they have enough stress going on. COVID just adds to that worrying about whether I'm going to be on this remain employed. It just is something we don't want them to have to worry about. We want them to, to be able to block it out, come in and do what they're great at doing every day.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:21:50](#)):

Yeah. I think you hit on a couple of important points: safety and security; those two words mean a lot of different things to a lot of people. So Alicia, why don't you touch on that a little bit, how are you guys



sharing some of the safety measures that you're putting in place? If you do indeed open up your contact center again, maybe security looked a little bit different from a compliance standpoint. You brought up things like PCI and those things. So first, let's focus on the employees and then maybe we focus a little bit on the security aspect of how you're able to be innovative.

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:22:18](#)):

I heard Jason say a lot about communication and I think that's just essential to have any successful businesses, communication, but even more so when you have employees that have unique situations and that are now in a different environment, expected to still hit the KPIs that they were hitting before and maintain productivity and produce this product when they're in the midst of these life circumstances. But, you know, only some of us can imagine. So, you know, one of the things that we really implemented early on and that we were, were highly concerned about was the level of communication with our agents. We ensured that we had daily huddles with management all the way down to our coaches and our agents. We have ensured that they're getting the proper training and information that they need to do their job successfully, whether it relates to modifying our talk-off and feedback and follow up related to that. We're a client of LiveVox, too, so being able to monitor when an agent's on a phone and coaches being able to talk to the agent in between phone calls and have conversations about, you know, tell me how that conversation went with the consumer and what you thought and let's talk about ways maybe that we could modify that or, you know, just great job handling that situation because that's just a tough conversation to have. We've been very thankful for that particular tool because it enables us to use just those few minutes in between calls -- or sometimes seconds -- to pat the agent on the back and just have kind of a constant stream of communication. We're obviously usually utilizing email blasts to kind of keep all of our employees updated on, from a corporate standpoint, here's what we're doing and here are the different things that we're looking at. You know, conference calls constantly on kind of the state of the union and different things that we're looking at from our center. In terms of distribution of compliance information, we're handling a lot of that with our learning management system and computer based training and kind of acknowledgements that are going out in that regard. So we have kind of some formal tracking associated with that. So it really is just all surrounding communication and keeping our employees well-being at the forefront, providing them some flexibility when they need it. You know I have some children at home right now. I know a lot of our employees have children at home and so that's, that's another challenge. And in addition to all of this, that makes it a little bit harder to work from home. So being flexible as well. And you know, we're able to monitor call traffic and understand when placements are going to come in and predict when we're going to need more agents on the phone at what time. So some of our technology in that regard has allowed us to plan a little bit better and provide a little bit more flexibility when it's needed.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:25:10](#)):

So Alicia, let me ask you a question about that. When you're forecasting it now that you have people at home, have you guys taken any steps to incorporate more of a flex schedule or an on-demand schedule? Is it a little bit easier now if you see traffic start to go up that you can blast out to your employee base and say, "Hey, you know, we have a lot of calls coming in, are you able to take on some additional hours?" And they're actually able to immediately log onto the platform at that moment? Essentially if traffic's going high, which we don't really have that benefit when everyone's in the office, there's no, "Hey can you guys log in real quick?" Cause then they'd need to travel in. Have you guys done anything around that aspect with workforce scheduling?

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:25:47](#)):

Absolutely. It's kind of like the Uber/Instacart for Afni. Just kind of send out the call and people come. And you know, I think that that's something that's forced us kind of back to Amy's point early on to think about innovation and the future and how does this work even when we can return to the office? What can we do from a work-from-home perspective? So when we do have those calls sites and we have individuals that are available, they don't have to drive maybe 30 minutes to the office and waste time and production trying to get ready to come into the office and then drive and come into the center. So absolutely we've been able to do that. And again, it's forcing us to kind of think outside of the box and examine, okay, we've had this flexibility and it's meeting our needs. How can we look to the future to be able to continue that type of practice?

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:26:37](#)):

That's right. And Amy, you've had to do the same thing. I mean, if I think about insideARM events that we've already missed -- kind of the in person events. I mean you guys had to become innovative right away. It's one of the things, one of the reasons why we're on this call today, but maybe you could talk about that too. What are some of the ways that insideARM has been affected? And then talk about just some of the innovative ways that you've overcome this as well because I think a lot of people in the audience are interested and maybe they can take some of those best practices that you've put in place.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:27:06](#)):

Yeah. So for us conferences are a big part of what we do. It's a big part of our brand, and bringing people together to network and exchange information; and clearly not being able to travel anywhere has put a big cost on that. So we quickly had to figure out, "Am I'm doing conferences or will we pivot and figure out a new way?" And we're excited that our Strategy & Tech Conference that was originally slated to be in June, in person, in Austin, is now going to be virtual, in July, July 21st through 23rd. And we have a great platform that's been built to be able to do that in the most engaging and interactive way. And so I think we're similar to all the companies that are out there. I've had to try to figure out how to remain viable and relevant when technology sort of had to be forced to to come up and help support us in ways that we hadn't leveraged before. But I think that's the case across the board. I think that, for example, last year at the First Party Summit, we talked about how important strategic planning is and how long-term thinking is so important, especially in the area of technology. And at that time we were talking about it because consumer preference is going to continue to change and how they want to interact is going to change. Or we were talking about it because of efficiency or effectiveness, you know, continuing to drive down the cost to collect and those types of things. But this is just another example of why thinking strategically about how to continue to reevaluate your business and evolve your business is so, so important because I think those companies now, who didn't have plans in place or who hadn't started earlier, bringing up some of those non-calling type contact channels to their consumers are really in a situation now where they're having to hustle and figure out how to very, very quickly stand those things up before this bubble really starts to come through in the September/October time-frame. So I think that this is just really a testament. To me, I think, one of the big learnings here is that in business, you can't ever just sit and say, "Hey, this is our BAU and we're just gonna keep executing wonderfully. And everything will be fine." Well, you need to execute in a great way, but you always have to be thinking about next year, two years, three years. Nobody could have anticipated a pandemic; we all knew a reduction in calling was happening. This just accelerated that. So I think that's what sort of separating the, I don't want to say winners and losers, but you know, those who are thriving and figuring out how to thrive and adapt in this situation. It's separating those who are sort of sitting empty-handed, figuring out where to even start. And I think it's unfortunate for those companies, but I know they're



working and they're going to make it happen and they'll figure it out. I just, I know they're coming in at a disadvantaged place.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:30:13](#)):

I think it's important. I mean, you bring it up, those people that are able to utilize and launch asynchronous communication are the ones that are able to handle the increased volume of interactions with the customer base. I mean, there's no way that anyone's gonna be able to staff up enough to handle all the calls that are about to come in. I mean, we saw calls already start to continue to rise, but I think what we're going to have happen, you know, with such a high unemployment rate, because we're going to continue to see inbound calls come in, especially over the next couple of months. So Jason, maybe you could touch on that for a second. Are you guys thinking about that from an innovative standpoint on how to play some of the digital channels or asynchronous communication channels?

Mike Bevel, insideARM ([00:30:55](#)):

Jim, before you do that, I was just, I wanted to ask a quick question of the audience itself while, and then certainly start talking Jason, but I'm curious from a people in the audience, how comfortable do you feel, if you were asked to traveled to a conference in July, would you feel comfortable? Like what month feels good to you as a, when you think, yeah, I can start being in groups of people again, I'm just curious. Back to you, Jason Collins.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:31:27](#)):

Oh, he put you on the spot, Jason, this is all for you. You can go first on this.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:31:34](#)):

Yeah. that's a good question, Mike. No time soon would be my answer. I think you know what's interesting with this whole pandemic is we just learn more every day. Right. Think of how much we spent sanitizing desktops and surfaces. And then there was a report yesterday from the CDC saying, well, that might not really help that much. Right. Neat. Same time, you can't find Clorox wipes anywhere. Right. So I think we take it day by day and learn as much as we can and take all the best practices from the Department of Health, the CDC, others in the industry we participate in. Weekly CRC meetings. That's just really fantastic and allows us to bounce thoughts and ideas off of impactful leaders in the industry and kind of learn to help each other navigate through these crazy time. So my answer would be: talk to me in the fourth quarter. We'll come back to it. I think we have a lot on our plates now. We continue to make sure we're keeping our people safe, make sure we're hitting our business objectives, make sure we're continuing to grow the business on schedule as much as we can responsibly. And we'll reevaluate it. Look, there's a brightest minds in the world working on trying to find a path forward for us all. A lot of money being thrown at it and I trust that they will get there. I think the use of technology, right. This type of meeting, similar meetings that we're all part of, I think we could still leverage the technology in the short term to have these effective communications and continue to learn and grow together. And then when it's appropriate, get back in person. I agree with Amy. I always enjoy going out to the conferences. Going through the different demos, learning about the new technologies out there, sitting down, having a drink with colleagues in the industry and and just learning from the great content. But I think we're still a little ways away from that.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:33:44](#)):

Yeah. Can't wait to see you guys.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:33:49](#)):

I feel the same way. But to your question, Jim, on the technology side, look: technology is core to everything we do. We're still continuing to utilize alternate means other than the call, email, etc., to communicate with our consumers and drive volume to our self-service payment portal. That's core to who we are as an organization that we're going to continue to do that. And obviously supplemented with our staffing and our talented team to continue to hit our business objectives.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:34:21](#)):

And Alicia, is this something that you're really expanding on? Afni has done this for a long time. They've actually, maybe I wouldn't call it, I don't know if I would say "pioneered," but you're probably one of the first providers to actually have a large center that was focused just on web chat when that was the big deal before we saw a big rise in two-way messaging. So it's just something that I wouldn't call it right. I daren't call it an opportunity because it's really not. But at the same time, all of your clients and the creditors are struggling with this same problem: that they're having an increase in traffic coming in. They don't know what to do with it. They couldn't hire people fast enough. They might not have partners that are able to do it. Is this something that you're going out to maybe some of your clients and speaking about on how people are utilizing some of this asynchronous communication, how they could even get started as soon as today if they utilize a service like yours?

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:35:09](#)):

Yeah, and we've been having those conversations for months and years. We're utilizing email to contact consumers as many agencies are. We're pushing consumers to our website where it's self service information regarding their accounts for doing that. Even more so now because of the PCI concerns, there are some clients that say, absolutely your agents are not taking credit card information from home. So I'm pushing pushing consumers to that website. I think one of the things that we have to consider now is how are we going to use those same tools that we previously had available to us, you know, if it was through chads or through our website, how are we gonna use them a little bit differently to leverage them during this time? And you know, right now at the current time, we've seen actually a lot of call volume and we've seen consumers that want to have longer conversations. And I don't know if that's just because we're all isolated. So just, you know, human/human contact is great and even if it's a debt collector, right? But you know we've seen some success and still those incoming calls and outbound calls, but I think, you know, if we're going to look at our long-term game, we really need to look at what technologies do we have in place, how are we going to use them a little bit differently and leverage them for the current environment in the future environment. And then, you know, what technologies do we want to add? So, you know, this isn't specific to consumer outreach, but one of the things that we're looking at is, so as we look to see if our agents are going to continue this work from home environment, as I said earlier, you know, technology that would enable us to have AI that's looking at their cameras and ensuring our collectors, Susie Smith, is Susie Smith sitting in front of that that camera and that her desk is free from pens and paper. Right? And so that all goes to assurances to our clients that if we do leverage this technology and we continue and we find success in this kind of area that we have some security assurances for them. We've had that technology for some time, but not from an AI perspective. So we've had, you know, individuals that would have to manually review those recordings and say, "Oh, yep, that was Susie Smith. She doesn't have any pens and papers on our desk." So from our perspective, as I said, it's more looking at what we need to change and what we need to do differently with what we currently have.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:37:45](#)):

That's really interesting to me because if you think about a facial recognition technology is in every single device that everybody has today, it's there and it's widely available. So that's pretty innovative for you guys to think of it that way. I've heard clients go as far as, you know, before they send an agent home, they made them take a picture of what the agent workspace was going to look like to make sure that they were actually able to, you know, provide somewhere that was semi secure and safe for them to work instead of them just plop it down on the couch and knocking out calls. So I think it's very interesting and, and that point of taking payments, you know, it's on top of everyone's mind, especially with PCI certifications, it's going to throw a wrench in the works, right? How has a PCI audit kind of go if, if you're just allowing your agents to take a payment from home. So some are looking at other technologies that are out there. I'll speak of one like secure payment capture where you know, you actually come on then essentially you're bridging bridging in what would seem to be an IVR where they're taking the payment but the agent never disconnect from the call, but it still allows the agent not to receive the information and still allows a payment to be processed. So yeah, no, that's another piece of technology that people are utilizing in order to, you know, satisfy the clients from that perspective. I'm sure Amy, this is all top of mind to you, right? I mean, you're hearing things that are going from Jason, why he loves to come to the conferences. You're hearing about some of the technology that Alicia's, you know, bringing to the table and talking about. So I'm sure in upcoming webinars, something you're going to talk about, you know, some of these technologies that some are deploying to give them the ideas and the feelings that, you know, some of us might miss from going to a conference as we used to know it.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:39:19](#)):

Yeah, we really have. And you know, I think the compliance and innovation piece is so important to, you know, just talk about together. So glad we're covering that today. I think this is a lesson of risk tolerance, right? Because you know, the point I made earlier about it, we're not ready to go work from home. We'll boom this happened and we're ready to work from home. You know, but I think about that across all the technology that's been out there for a long time within collections. But the reason why it's adopted at such varying rates really comes down to risk tolerance. So nothing, nothing says with the technology that's out there that's actively being sold in use, that it's set up to follow the rules. But internally we sort of digest that and say, ah, one lawsuit is too many. Or you know, if we somehow make a mistake or what have you, something that causes us to then break a rule, we can't do it. And so I think that that level of perfectionism and that zero risk tolerance around you know, maybe a hiccup along the way as we're adopting and deploying things. I think our risk tolerance is really getting broader and broader. And I'm happy to see that for collections and recovery mostly for our consumers because they're the ones who have been telling us, "Hey, if I have to interact with someone about a past due account, I'd love to just go to a website and negotiate a settlement or learn what a settlement is," or go to a website and learn what forbearance means or those types of things. And so I'm so happy for the consumers in our space that that risk tolerance is changing and that we're reevaluating those technology solutions to help them through it. Because I think about the volume of consumers that are going to be coming through to us, you know, later this year that have never ever dealt with a past due account. They've never been out of work maybe, or they've never been at a position where they couldn't get themselves back to a good place. And so those are people who are used to interacting with companies and all the ways and then they're going to come into debt collections for the first time and be more stressed than ever probably. And find out that the main ways to interact with us on a whole are pretty antiquated. So if something good can come out of this, I hope it's an accelerated adoption of some of those things in a broader risk tolerance doing it the right way. It's just that projection of risk is what I'm talking about is sometimes we want it to be zero.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:41:44](#)):

I couldn't agree more and I've heard that from Jason. Jason, one of the things that you've brought up, and actually before I go into that, I didn't want to pause. We still have ton of people online and if you guys do have some questions that you want to hear the answers from any of the panelists, please just enter that in the QA box down there. We'll definitely make sure that we're addressing all those questions and get some really good answers and insights for you. So Jason, when I think about what she just said we've always talked about how you're putting the customer experience at the very forefront of everything you're doing. So we need to talk about that. It's not, it's not really all about "I need to collect as much as I can everyday." Obviously that's the goal of everyone on the line: how do we maximize our recoveries. And this isn't a new topic, either, because the topic of customer experience and treating people the right way is long what industry leaders have stood for for a very long time. You know, there's an old school bad rep that, you know, collections might have from many, many, many, many years ago compared to now. But you really thought about that, you know, on how you can utilize some of this technology to really make the customer experience even better as they start to interact with your agency. So maybe you could talk about that a little bit.

Jason Collins, Spring Oaks Capital ([00:42:55](#)):

Yeah, I think you said it really well. I think the bar just continues to be raised, right? Customer treatment is at the core of what we all do. I think through this pandemic, you just continue to raise the bar, right. And, and help them understand what that means as it relates to your expectations for that call, for their performance, etc. So I'll come back to the technology in just a second; we're asking to cut our plays at the beginning of the day. What are you thinking? How are you feeling? And they're sharing that and then remind them that that's what your consumers are dealing with as well. So keep an open mind to that. Be patient with them if they express some frustration. Listen without interruption. Let them finish. Stop and acknowledge sincerely, you know what they said, let them know. I can understand that these are very difficult times and we're all going through this together. And my only goal here is to yeah. To try and help you out or at least understand, know how you've been impacted through this so we can figure out what that path forward may look like. But I think you talking about just the consumer experience and what that means is it's raising the bar collectors continue to get better and better at effective listening and they're responding appropriately to consumers and letting them know that they truly understand. They can relate to what they're going through. And then we're here to find a path forward and a solution that works for them. And as Alicia mentioned earlier, we found that through this consumers are answering the phone. They want to talk to us. They come in a little bit upset, but it's because they want to be heard. They want that interaction and giving them that that platform to do that and having a caring person on the other end to hear them out and let them know they're not in it alone and then have the conversation we need to have, cause we still need to produce them. We still need to perform. That's what we do. And yeah, we're all professionals. We expect our employees to be professionals. And yeah, I think they've gotten so much better through this. We'll all be better, you know, for the tough times that we're enduring. That's the one thing I keep bringing myself back to is we're so much better today as a company than we were three months ago. Fast forward three months, six months, whatever it is, we're going to be even stronger. Our team is that much stronger. And you know, we're just continuing to raise the bar and trying to get better every day. I mentioned earlier, we're seeing a lot more volume to our self service payment portal, which is awesome. We continue to give that option to our consumers through our letters, through our emails, through our phone calls. That's an option for them if they are not wanting to talk to people that want to have that conversation; they can visit us there and we're seeing more and more consumers respond to that. Open rates on emails are increasing, visits to our website are increasing, and performance has been really strong over

the last few months. A lot of that is us continuing to listen and learn and applying what we've learned through this time. And like I said, I think it's just going to make us so much better as a company and I think so much better as an industry. There's a lot of people looking at what we're doing and have, you know, varying opinions on whether we should even be doing it at all. And I think we're just really representing very well as an industry and showing you can do this in the right way and really help people out during a tough time.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:46:26](#)):

That's right. Alicia, are you excited about some technology or something that you see even on the horizon that you're doing at Afni? You can speak about it from a compliance standpoint. You could speak about it from an operational standpoint. So it's really open to you how you want to answer that question.

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:46:41](#)):

Yeah, sure. I just wanted to hit on something that Jason and said in terms of innovation and moving forward and you know, our front-line collectors, and our collectors are the ones having these conversations. And so, you know, when we talk to them, when we have discussions with them about what they're hearing on the phone, we're learning as a business and evolving and changing, but so are our collectors. You know, our collectors are going to be better as a result of the situation, you know, if you can look for positives and all of this. And so I just kind of wanted to point that out that our employees who are having these conversations, who are communicating with these consumers, have been essential to us evolving and understanding how we're going to use this technology and what the communications are going to look like and how frequent we're going to provide those communications and in what formats. And just understanding, you know, overall, what the consumer wants. So I thank you for making that point, Jason. I concur. You know, our front-line employees are absolutely essential to us continuing to learn and grow. In terms of emerging technologies or just even compliance in general, one of the things I'm really excited about, and I've talked about this earlier, is kind of post-COVID. What does our company look like? And you know, when I'm talking to my operational partners, one of the things that they've always gone back to about, you know, their major concerns from a work from home environment was: Number 1 licensing, right? Like, "Oh guys, don't pin that on me. Come on." You know, they're like, "No, really." Our subrogation side of our business has had a large work-from-home component, our call center side. We've had a lot of work-from-home agents, but with a lot of our third-party receivables management we've been pretty isolated because being able to take calls from, from different States for one client and being able to route calls appropriately when certain States don't allow that, that work from home, it gets difficult. And so we've just chosen for the most part to keep those collectors in the building. But I'm excited about what that's gonna look like post COVID and you know, kind of what the States are going to do in terms of some of their regulatory rules regarding work-from-home and if they're going to maybe modify their position knowing that we've all been through this and maybe we've provided them some reassurance that we can do this in a compliant manner. The oversight is not changing of our agents. And just because they're working from home doesn't mean that their demeanor is changing or, you know, what they're doing is being affected. So, I mean that's not a specific technology, but that is something that I'm excited about; is to partner with operations to figure out what post-COVID looks like. And especially for our employees. Kind of back to what Mike was talking about earlier with when would you feel comfortable going to a conference? When are employees really gonna feel comfortable coming back to the office? You know, it's especially some of the vulnerable populations. So even if everybody says it, it's all good. It's clear, you know, that COVID never coming back, right [ed. note: wrong]. Which we all know is not going to happen [ed. note:

it is] for some time, if ever. You still are going to have people that there's no way I'm going to do that [ed. note: meet me]. You know, I need to socially distance. I need to protect my family, I need to protect my own health. So, you know, understanding how we can meet the needs of our employees. And then from last point on this from a recruiting standpoint, being able to recruit kind of outside of the radius that we would normally recruit from. Because now we have a little bit flexibility and the people that we hire, you know that perhaps the demographic looks a little bit different because you know, you don't have you know, your typical like college students age, you know, maybe you can recruit some people that traditionally would have been in retail. So I think that I'm really excited about that, just seeing how, how our business is going to change and modify over the next couple of years because this has forced us into a position to think about these things. And for some it's some of the regulatory oversights, think about things a little bit differently.

Mike Bevel, insideARM ([00:50:59](#)):

If I could jump onto something that Alicia -- well, tag on to Alicia's comment -- and this is, this is anecdotal and not, I'm not giving you a thing you should quote in your blog or however you are communicating these days. But I manage insideARM's Research Assistant program, and we have both regular peer calls and then we've been having weekly COVID-19 calls to sort of talk through this. And one member mentioned that he was looking into, like, once certain States went back to normal, what we're going to say is normal, they are going to revisit the licensing thing. Because you have to be licensed to work as an agency in your house. And he did some back-of-the-envelope calculating and it was going to cost him \$6,500 per collector to keep them working in their house. And that number has been kind of reverberating in my brain for a while now. That's a significant outlay and it seems a ridiculous expense to expect of a business. And I just thought along with what you were talking about, Alicia, with getting back in if you can, but those who don't, who may want to stay at home, that ultimately may not be up to them. There's just hard decisions for everyone at that point,

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:52:36](#)):

Right? Absolutely. I think, you know, it's one of the things that we're fortunate to belong to -- a little bit of a plug here -- insideARM's Consumer Relations Consortium. And so that's one of the things that we've been talking about on those calls is how, how can we proactively reach out to regulators and explain some of these opportunities and difficulties that our culture is going to experience that our customers are going to experience and kind of get ahead of that and see if maybe we can influence a little bit of the modifications that they might make to their licensing position.

Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:53:11](#)):

Look at other industries are there, right. This is not a new concept. There are a lot of large industries that operate this way every day. But Mike, I think you're right. This is really the barrier for entry for our industry, right? I think it starts with licensing first. We've got to solve that. The economics don't work. Yeah. That person's numbers are right. And I think, yeah, we just got to continue to push it. Hopefully that's one of the things, one of the positives that comes out of managing through this pandemic: that we realized we can look at what we've done with the cows successful. Yeah. We've done as an industry with not a lot of time to even plan for it. Right. I mentioned earlier it starts with does your employee have a suitable work environment even at home? So, so do it to me. Yeah. There's some of these orders. We were forced to rush in and do this very quickly. Wherever we can eliminate some of these barriers to . We can properly plan it and it was so much more effective. Again, I think the industry has done an amazing job and, and managing through this and just showing, what we're all about: really incredible, incredible group of people.



Jim Lynch, LiveVox ([00:54:17](#)):

I think this ties in well, like we did have a question, Mike, and I'm probably going to throw it over to you and that was, "Has it been challenging for compliance and ops with state restrictions?" So Alicia just hit on it, you know, there's something to be said about the CRC, but maybe you can just touch on that a little bit. Like how can we really move forward as an industry and what tools are out there to help us get it done.

Mike Bevel, insideARM ([00:54:39](#)):

So one of the first things that I noticed is a lot of non-collection-agencies, a lot of media companies like insideARM, certainly might give -- I would say ACA and RMA -- but people started putting out really great COVID-19 support pages. insideARM has one, it's right at the top of our mast, COVID-19. And you are able to see state by state and in chronological order what each state has done in response to the pandemic that directly affects collections. That's a challenge to keep up with. And it's not necessarily my job. Like, I'm not a compliance person in a collection agency. But just keeping up with it so that I can make sure our readers are up to date has been really challenging. And I think it shows a couple of things. I think it shows that all of us are just making it up as we go because it's been a hundred years since a pandemic has hit. So none of us has a memory to draw on to figure out what to do. And States don't know what to do. Like, they want to protect business and they want to protect consumers. And I think it's, I think everything right now is still being done with a tiny sense of fear behind it. And I think that's super normal. So anybody out there who's feeling a tiny sense of fear behind anything in your life right now, you should be feeling that that's an okay feeling because boy is this not the right time. This is a time of great strangeness. And so I think finding a resource like insideARM is one way. Certainly Google alerts on States on different state names and COVID-19 will keep you up to date as well if you're doing something like that. Through the Research Assistant, insideARM members have a chance to send in questions, which I then send out to our entire membership to get sort of a spectrum of the answers. And that can be helpful too, especially when it comes down to terms of art or questions of interpretation to get a bunch of different ideas of how people are thinking this through.

Alicia McKeighan, Afni ([00:57:27](#)):

Mike, if I can just piggyback on that last point. You know, especially as it relates to the interpretation and just in terms of your overall CMS management during COVID is documented. Document, document, document. Because you're not going to remember, and I've said this a few times, to a few different people, you're not going to remember in two or three months what you did at the beginning of March. I mean when I just, when I was preparing for this webinar, I had to go back and say, okay, when did, when did work from home start and when did we start putting, you know, these codes in place, right? Cause it's all a blur. I mean, I was surprised it was Thursday at the beginning of the day. So it's Thursday, right? Alright. So, but seriously though, I mean there are so many times that I've gotten burned by, "I'm going to remember that I don't need to, you know, put it in a OneNote or put it in a formal report. It's not that important." And not that this isn't that important, but don't think that even the smallest thing that you do, the smallest adjustment, you don't need the document because number one, it's great for you to understand what you've done. So if you need to unwind some of this stuff, you can. But also regulators are going to ask questions when all of this kind of subsidies. They're going to come back and say, "Okay, you know, we put this, this and this restriction in place. How did you manage that?" We've already started to get some of those questions. And, and they're following up on those questions. Has anything changed or are you doing anything differently? So just, you know, I know that you didn't ask me for this, and it's not legal advice as we said at the beginning, but, okay. One important piece of advice I would give all of our viewers is overly document what you're doing on COVID.

Mike Bevel, insideARM ([00:59:07](#)):

Just a really quick anecdote here, Alicia, on top of that, which is: My husband hid his parents' wills somewhere in our house and left a note for himself, saying, "It's where you think it's going to be." And we have lived in this house now 15 years. We have no idea where that thing is. When you still don't know, it's the world's most grim Easter egg hunt in the world. They're both alive, thank God.

Amy Perkins, insideARM ([00:59:38](#)):

Yeah, well, good luck finding that. I agree with you Alicia. I mean, the closing thing I'll say on this is, you know, if I was still out in the operational areas or strategy and tech, I think right now I would be really buttoning up change control processes in general. You know, documentation is an element of that. But speed, being able to quickly make changes when these new things come out, the better change control process you have, the better supporting documentation. Clarifying who the decision makers are so you can get to them, get it done and make it happen quickly. I think companies who don't have those things in place are probably really struggling, not with finding the information about what the rules are, but actually executing those changes and doing so compliantly. So I would recommend, you know, even broadly saying: revamp your change control processes, cut out what isn't necessary, bolster up what's extra important. And then clarify those decision makers. But I think with that, I think we're out of time Jim and the rest of our teams. So if you guys are good, I'm gonna bring us home here. All right, great. Well thanks again to all of you who attended today and I want to say again thank you to LiveVox for their sponsorship of this entire series. It's meant a lot to our audience and it's meant a lot to us at insideARM. Also thank you to Jim, Alicia, and Jason for joining us here, your expertise, and sharing that with the group. I will say that if you have any questions that you didn't submit through the chat or if you have other ideas for webinars, you can email us anytime about anything. I'm an editor@insidearm.com and we'll get back to you as quickly as we can. But otherwise, I think that is a wrap and we can all safely disconnect. And I hope you have a great rest of your day. Bye.