



# Control Versus Cancelled



Mark Jeftovic wrote a book on cancel culture, even as the situation grew steadily worse. Hear how to protect your business name in our interview.



**Mark Jeftovic**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 807. And we are going to be talking about deplatforming cancel culture. The big shift that's happening on the internet; the battlegrounds for control. And to do that I've brought along a bit of an underground expert/specialist on this. A good friend of mine from way back, and we have a really great mutual friend, of course, Tamas. I'm bringing along my special guest, Mark Jeftovic. Welcome.

**Mark:** Hey, James, thanks for having me.

## A time when the unthinkable is happening

**James:** Now you got a website, [EasyDNS.com](https://www.easydns.com). You've published a book that really centers on this topic that has become a big deal. As we're recording this at the beginning of 2021, we've just seen a lot of movement in the market. We've seen a president scrapped from Twitter, we've seen a similar thing happen on other platforms, kind of like dominoes, you know, one fell over the rest, they all migrate to different platforms.

Some platforms completely purge the whole system of terms they don't like. We see big companies like Facebook, for example, have particular preferences for topics that you can or cannot post about. And if it's in the cannot, then good luck with that.

It's a topic dear to my heart. Because when I came to the online world, I didn't understand why people were building on other people's platforms so many assets that could be taken away. And every time it happens, and it's happened a lot since I've been online - but often small, you know, like, YouTube videos get blocked, or a Facebook group gets deleted overnight - people always say, Oh, you know, James, you talk about [own the racecourse](#). This is exactly what you're talking about, isn't it? I'm like, Yes, yes, it is. But I want to go deeper than that.

So just firstly, own the racecourse really was always about owning assets, and controlling what you can. And my first sort of primary steps for that word, it's ideal if you have your own domain name, or, you know, as you're going to explain, we kind of lease the domain name and we get to point it somewhere. And then it's good to have your own website, where you're sort of the mayor of the town, and you can say what content you want on there or not.

And then of course, whether that gets ranked on search engines like Google or not is sort of up to how well you want to play their game. But what some people have been doing is building out, like, they want to become a YouTuber, or they want to have their whole Facebook group, maybe a massive group on a particular topic, maybe on a health topic. And then all of a sudden, it gets removed. In just one night, Facebook says, Sorry, this is no longer permitted, or you know, We've removed your access, we've closed the group.

And I've even heard in some cases, they'll give someone's group to someone else. So I don't know if that's true. But that sounds fascinating. Now, what I've come to understand through talking to you, Mark, is there are different levels of control, even within what we think we can control. Because one thing that was really interesting was with the presidential situation, I made a bit of fun about it on the Facebook post. I said, Well, I hope he's got an email database. But then I discovered his email system got blocked as well.

How is this possible? And can you give us a sort of a layman's understanding of how our websites and domains actually work, and what the risks are or not? Because you're just like, you're a world expert on this. I want you to give us a bit of an understanding of it. And then we might just go a layer deeper than that.

**Just so you understand domain names...**

**Mark:** Sure, well, we'll start with the domain name. And I'll just really basically, we'll just cover that domain names map human-readable web addresses to Internet Protocol (IP) addresses under the hood. And everyone's probably seen cases of the latter, they just look like a bunch of numbers with dots between them. And that's how computers route packets to each other across the internet. They look, they break those down.

And it's really hard for people to remember all those numbers, so we create these human readable labels. They're called web addresses, a lot of times domain names. And so SuperFastBusiness.com, EasyDNS.com - you can remember that, you type it into a browser.

But every time you type an address like that into a browser or click on a link or send an email or even send chat messages back and forth, anything that happens to one of those addresses, those labels, a bunch of computers around the world have to have a very quick conversation. It takes like 25 milliseconds or 100 milliseconds, about a quarter of the time it takes you to blink.

And they have a question and answer session with each other that's along the lines of, where does the email destined for this label go? Where is the server that wants that email? Where's the internet host that is holding the document at this address? Where is the endpoint for this Skype session? Where is the Java server for this text message? And that, they do that very quickly. And then it goes.

And those servers that have that conversation, they may have nothing to do with the web host that holds the document or the email server that captures your email. They could be completely removed from the picture. So it gets confusing, because sometimes there's overlap. And sometimes it's a monoculture. It all happens on one server. And sometimes it's very fractured and Balkanized and happens all over the place. So it's a bit of an art form in itself to debug some of the problems that happen at this level.

But at the basic building block of everything you're going to do online is the domain name. You're going to go, you're going to register a domain name, and from that, you can start building your online presence. And you hinted to it in the opening comments. Depending on your jurisdiction, it's a bit nebulous whether a domain name is a series of rights, like here in Canada a .ca domain is really just a series or it's like a lease. You don't own that .ca, you have the rights to it for a year.

There's been some court cases in the US that ruled that dot coms and domains there were property. So it depends on the jurisdiction. So I just sort of refer to it in my head, or in my shorthand as whoever has the ultimate control over that domain name, whether we call it the owner, or the registrant, for lack of a better term for it.

And so what happens, you hit on this in your opening comments as well. And the biggest example of it, the cognitive dissonance I see, is someone will hand you a business card, and it'll say SuperFastBusiness.com, come visit me at SuperFastBusiness.com, or email me at jamesschramko@gmail.com. And I just do one of these, and I'm like, don't hand out Gmail. Even though you have this domain name, like, if you don't run your own mail server, then just use mail forwarding, at the very least, because every registrar will support that.

## Most people are doing it completely wrong

And so people do what you were talking about, they go out and they create these huge YouTube followings or they get these huge Facebook groups. And they might just use their, they have it completely backwards. They might use their domain name to redirect to a Facebook group or a YouTube channel. And it should be the other way around.

Because all of those users, all of the followers you have on Twitter, all of the likes you have on Facebook, all of the people following you on, Clubhouse is the latest thing - those aren't your users, right? They belong to Twitter, they belong to Facebook, they belong to Clubhouse or whoever. And they're just letting you access that audience as long as you play by their rules.



And the second, the other complicating part about all this, is the rules seem to change, pretty quickly, on a dime. What was okay to say yesterday is suddenly going to get you unpersoned today, and it changes. And it's really Orwellian in that respect.

What you should be doing is using all of those platforms - I mean, some of those platforms make it so easy to build and monetize an audience. It's almost irresistible. But you've got to do the extra work and use those platforms as tentacles, you're bringing them back, and you always use that phrase "own the racecourse", which I mentioned specifically in the book. You're bringing them back, and at the very least capture their email.



And the rule of thumb is, a user or a customer or a prospect or a lead, they belong to the person whose database they reside in. Okay? If you have them in your database, they're your customer. If they're on Twitter, they're in Twitter's database and their Twitter's user, not yours, even though they're following you.

### **When even email is not safe from cancel culture**

You alluded to, even mail services are moderating your content, something I think is a little, I mean, I say all of this tech moderation, especially when they're trying to moderate content based on what happens off of their platform, is the height of grandiosity and hubris. I'll just sort of say that and say it's kind of its special, unique brand of delusion, but we're stuck with it. So even email servers are blocking your content and moderating what you put out.

So even if you have your customers' email addresses, you can still run into a problem, which is why the other part of this that is so important is to have your data backed up. So you have your own domain name, you have all your data backed up, and you have that portability so you can move to another provider, import your email addresses into another system, or even run your own server, because email is a pretty open protocol.

**James:** Yeah, that's an interesting one for me, because obviously, I use a software as a service email service. But what we do is we export the CSV records, and we store them somewhere else as a backup, in case that gets wiped off the face of the earth. I'd like to be able to take those emails and set up my own server or import them into somewhere else, and be able to access them.

So I mean, this could sound a bit alarmist, how concerned should we be? And I ask this with reference to something that's going on at the moment, especially where I am in Australia. We're seeing some massive changes to what internet content we're going to be able to get access to.

We've just saw a deal struck up between Google and I think Nine, which is a big media provider here, it's owned by Murdoch. Like, a multimillion dollar deal to provide content. The Australian Government, I think, is forcing some of these big platforms to pay news providers. Now I just saw recently, Facebook is restricting people like me from seeing news content. So it seems like it's something we should be aware of.

## **A situation that just kept getting worse**

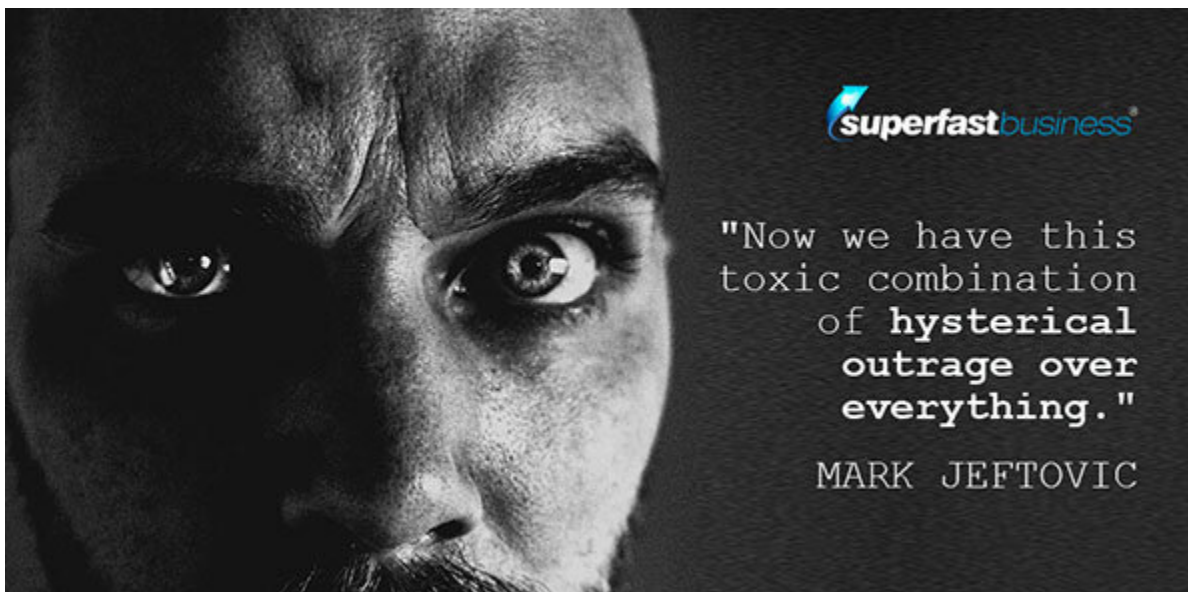
**Mark:** Yeah, it is stunning, how quickly and aggressively this all accelerated in the last year, when I was writing the book. So the book was originally supposed to be just a five or 10-page ebook, a free report that I was going to give as a subscriber magnet, to just get on the Easy DNS list. I mean, we have this weekly tech digest called Access of Easy, and it was just going to be a subscriber magnet for that.

And then, as the summer of 2019 went on, I kept coming across all of these additional deplatforming incidents and cancel culture. It was just getting worse. And I kept adding more chapters and sections and suddenly I thought, Okay, this has to be a full book now.



But to be honest, by the time I put it out, in early 2020, I thought it had peaked. And this has been a couple of times over the years, I've thought, this has to be peak outrage. This has to be peak cancel culture. This has to be peak censorship. It has to calm down from here. And I thought by putting out this book, I was ringing the bell at the top. I missed the most intense episodes of it.

And then Coronavirus hit. And suddenly, this idea of medical misinformation became this overarching specter over everything. And people were putting out stuff and getting knocked off of Facebook for saying the wrong thing that was not within medical authorities, even though medical authorities were contradicting themselves over periods of months.



So anyway, once April came, I thought, Okay, I'm going to put the book out for free. And I saw it getting worse and worse over Coronavirus. And then after the election, I thought things would calm down. And they have anything but calmed down. And so now we have this toxic combination of hysterical outrage over everything. Okay?

So there's this cancel culture and just everything is offensive to somebody. And people think that if they're offended that they have the right to knock you off, like no one else should be able to say here anything you have to say, because I'm personally offended by it.

And now what you're talking about, there's also this institutional impetus. And it's big tech platforms and government policy platforms, they're colliding in some places but they're coalescing in other places, and the small guy, the small business and people who are just trying to get the facts or read what they want to read are being crushed between these gigantic juggernauts of big tech and big government. And then off there on the third wave is these roving bands of cancelholics. And it's really, it's really hard to maintain a footing.

**James:** It's crazy. I mean, this might sound too obvious, but it seems like the news is all bought or paid for now.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**James:** If Facebook's not allowed to distribute news unless they pay the media, then surely we start to get bias in that, you know, the source or the deal with Google and their source. Like, unless they can get a hybrid vigor of different sources, there might be an agenda. And definitely there's a big tie between politics and media and the tech platforms.

### **Damned if you do and if you don't**

It does leave me wondering. I mean, I've seen cheese products taken off the shelves, because they're offensive. I've seen, there was a guy who ran a conference, a financial conference, who did a tweet, I think, to his friends saying that he's having a pretty reasonable time during COVID. And he got completely decimated for that. That was like, Wow. Then you had all these people who were very, very scared to type anything. And you had things like a Black Lives Matter situation, where if you didn't have a stance or support the thing, then you'd be canceled out for not saying something.

So it's like, Oh, hang on a minute. Are we supposed to say something and risk if just one word of that is taken out of context or twisted that we're gone, wiped off the face of the earth? What if we don't say something, and then we're taken to task by people for not saying something?

It just seems it's actually hard to put your point of view across, and you could easily be wrongly labeled or misunderstood. So it makes it very, very hard for my audience to know what to do. What do you think?

## How to protect your business

Firstly, can you tell us the name of the book and where to get it? Because I mean, we're hanging off the edge of our chair, if we're listening this far. What's it called? Where do we get it?

**Mark:** Sure. It's called *Unassailable: Protect Yourself from Deplatform Attacks, Cancel Culture and other Online Disasters*. It's available on the big tech platform of Amazon, which we call the company store. But I made it available for free as well, if you go to I think it's [unassailablebook.com](https://unassailablebook.com). You'll get to the landing page, and you can get a PDF or an ePub version of it. Because I just thought, this is getting so crazy that I just wanted to put the book.

**James:** We could use a guide to this. This is new territory.

And yes, we've had COVID, we've had an election. I've for the longest time said, like, control what you can. And then it was like, what your book and our conversations have revealed to me is that I may not even have as much control as I thought I had control.

I may not just be able to hit send on an email broadcast if my social media account gets hit. Because maybe someone, maybe even not my email service provider who are awesome and I love, maybe someone down the line doesn't like it and they block it there. Because it's outside our little territory. So we have to be pretty careful.

I think there's a good argument for, you know, I'm going to rattle off a couple of terms that I've talked about, I know you'll be familiar with. I literally talked about the octopus method of putting your tentacles out there to grab the fish and then feed the head of the octopus. That's using everyone else's platforms or everyone else's racecourses, put your horse out to race, and then send the prize money back to your racecourse.

There is the list guarantee I talk about, which is, if you get someone on social media, like if you are spending a lot of time on [Clubhouse](#), drive people to something they can go and get and exchange an email for. Get a custom subscribe on multiple platforms. Have them subscribing to [YouTube](#) videos, have them following you on [Instagram](#), have them in your email service provider, have them on a Facebook page or whatever, so you can actually reach them.

We also, and we haven't mentioned this, there's a huge shift in now they're going to change, you know, other tech giants are changing how they allow pixel tracking and the ability to get data on what your campaigns are doing. This is not going to affect me in any negative way, but it's definitely going to affect a lot of people.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**James:** All these shifting sands. Mark, tell us, what can we do about it?

**Mark:** That's such a great question. Because, you know, I was on a podcast when the book first came out and I had, you know, a pat answer that I thought would stand the test of time. And then a year later, I'm like, I wonder if that's even going to work anymore.

And it was just the simple, make sure you own your own domain name; there's some tips I put, there's a chapter in the book about just fortifying your domain name. Because even there, there's always some place where somebody else can exert external pressure over you and for your domain. It's your registrar. Right? That's the final place where you have to stick a flag in the ground somewhere and say, this is where our center of gravity emanates from.

So have the domain name, have your data backed up. But I still, after all of this, think that the most reliable way to stay in touch with your customers is via email. That's still the way.

**James:** I'm with you. As a listener, you would know this. I reckon it comes up on one in three episodes.

**Mark:** Yeah.

**James:** Isn't it funny? Like, [email, it's not going anywhere at the moment](#). It's still as good as anything. It's such a strong communication channel and conversion path. And it's extremely behavior-segmentable and can be very intelligent and relevant. It's still our main thing. So that's a big takeaway - tech guy says email.

**Mark:** There's some open source packages that let you get pretty sophisticated. Like, you might think, Well, yeah, I use email. But I have to use one of these third party software as a service one, so I can do the segments and the A/B testing and all of that stuff. But there's an open source thing, we switched to it recently, called Mautik, which I do mention in the book, and we just started using it because one of our weekly newsletters, we got shut down by our email provider, because it contained the word Bitcoin.


And it was just this automated algo that just, oh, it contains the word Bitcoin. We're shutting down. We're a tech company, we report on tech happenings, it's kind of hard not to say the word Bitcoin over the period of several months. And so our spend with this company was in the 1000s of dollars a month. And here you are using an automated algo to terminate a company that's got that large of a spend with you. We just found, we can't operate this way.

**James:** It's a super common theme. I hear people talk about their ad campaigns get shut down by whichever provider, often because of the algo. And the big tail to this, the thing that they don't discover till it's too late, is there's virtually no recourse. They will usually give you a very vague reason why, in an automated message, and there'll be literally nobody you can speak to about it. They'll say, this matter is final. Don't bother getting in touch with us. You're out.

## **Why money should come direct from the user**

**Mark:** So, you talk a lot about building businesses. So here's another tip, because you asked me about this.

**James:** Yes.

A photograph showing a person's hands pointing at a laptop screen. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with a laptop and a white mug.

"Do not build businesses whose model revolves around somebody else deciding whether or not you get paid. **The only person that decides whether or not you get paid should be your direct customers.**"

- MARK JEFTOVIC



**Mark:** Do not build businesses whose model revolves around somebody else deciding whether or not you get paid. The only person that decides whether or not you get paid should be your direct customers. Go for that kind of a business model. So people, they set up on Patreon. And so all of their money is coming from Patreon, not from the end users. They set up on Google AdSense, and they make these made-for-AdSense sites.

And I think Amazon is another pretty, you know, they're the biggest company in the world, almost, and they just changed. Like, I had some, like, side projects with newsletters and sort of the main way of monetization. Not that I was too serious, but it was like, I read voraciously, so I will write in newsletters and link to these books on Amazon and just get this steady stream of Amazon books.

And they suddenly sent an email out saying, we've changed our rules for affiliates, you must do this, this, this, this, this, you have five days to comply or we're going to shut you down. There's no appeal, the usual thing.

And I just realized, it's the company store. And it's their rules. And that's who I'm working for as long as they're my main paycheck on this thing. So I just stopped. I just shut those down in terms of the revenue model. It's like Okay, that was a bad revenue model. And I'm glad I came to my senses about it before I came to rely on that revenue.

So a lot of people, they'll build a business that is all Facebook, Facebook, Facebook, or Amazon, or fulfilled by Amazon, or Google, AdSense, all of that stuff. If you're getting your check from one place, that's showing you right there that your center of gravity is in the wrong place. You should be worried about all of these little payments, like comparatively, your many payments coming in directly from your customers. And I do talk about that in the book, about like good business models, and bad business models.

**James:** That was my first strategy. When I stopped my job, where I was getting paid by one person, my goal was to get paid by many people. And yeah, you've really nuanced something there - directly.

**Mark:** Yes.

**James:** So if you're dealing with middlemen, then you're probably getting fewer pay sources. You know, you might get an Amazon or a Google check, or whatever, but there's not many. Or an Apple revenue as a royalty or whatever. Like, even my current, my most current business model, the one I'm most excited about, and the one that's performing the best for me, is I am a partner in 11 other businesses. So I'm getting [revenue share](#) from 11 partners, and I'm helping them directly with their customers.

And so I've got some massive protection against variances in the market. I'm in different geographic footprints. I'm not just getting money through my own Stripe or my own PayPal. I'm getting wire transfers from 11 separate people, from their business.

So I think this is actually the most important lesson that we can share today, is if you are listening to this episode, and you're currently got all your chips on red, you know, and the roulette wheel is spinning, you're going to leave the casino in tears and unhappy. It's not a question of if, it's a question of when.

So please, if you are single-source dependent, if you rely on any one income source, one big fat paycheck, you've got one massive whale client, or you're playing on someone else's platform, expect that to disappear. Build your model around that not being there. And then think about, what would you do if you got a notice saying your account is closed?

By the way, Amazon was one of the very first affiliate programs that I got banned from. I still don't know why or what I did, but evidently, they didn't like something I did. I put reviews on my site and a link to their thing. I don't know what caused it, but that was back in, like, 2007.

And just expect this to happen. It's more likely than not. And as you said, Mark, you're the expert on it, and when you thought it had all been done and run, it still exceeded your expectations. And, you know, as recently as half an hour ago, like, just before or during this call, when we lost connection, you know, the news comes out that my entire country is being blocked from a certain thing.

So it just goes to show, you know, maybe we're not paranoid if we put a little piece of sticky tape over our webcam. Maybe we should pay attention to where we're communicating with people and what we're communicating about. And maybe what we thought was control is just the first steps towards control.

### **What does Mark do for his clients, exactly?**

Just sort of in finishing up, I'd love it if you can tell me about what your service is providing, and who's on it and why.

**Mark:** Sure, I mean, our main business is EasyDNS.com. The easiest way to understand this, is a domain registrar. But we started off as a DNS provider before we were a domain registrar, when it was still the Network Solutions monopoly, you had to fill out that email template to register domains. We were just running name servers.

We've been doing that since '98, we became an ICANN registrar in 2003. And since then, we've added web hosting and email hosting. And then this year, we're launching, like, a spinoff business called DomainSure.com, for very high-value domains. Like, for domain names that are holding up a piece of the internet or have to secure very protected membership bases or assets like cryptocurrency exchanges, that sort of thing. That is there to just defend your domain on all possible perimeters.

**James:** So if I registered my domain through you, you're going to fight for me to stop someone shutting it down.

**Mark:** Oh, absolutely. That's a basic. That's even part of the Easy DNS core philosophy.

**James:** You know, a lot of my clients would be dealing with the very big popular domain registrars. And I've heard specific examples where they don't hesitate to stop someone. Like, if they get one letter from a lawyer, they just, like, shut down.



**Mark:** Yep. Because it's easier when you're operating at a scale of the large registrars, it's just simpler to terminate the customer.

**James:** And how do I get my domain across to you?

**Mark:** You just head to the website, you start on Transfer a domain. We even will do all the heavy lifting for you. I can give a coupon code for any of your listeners, if you want me to do that. Or if you're cool with that.

**James:** It'd be crazy not to ask.

**Mark:** Let's call it SuperFastBusiness 50 Percent Off Initial Offer.

**James:** Yeah. I'm not even asking you about the price, because it's almost irrelevant. The domain could cost a lot more per year for me to register. If it means I can protect a multimillion dollar income, it's still a good offer.

**Mark:** Exactly. That's what the Domain Sure side of things are at, where it's like, Look, we're not even having this conversation of Oh, I can get this for 10 bucks at GoDaddy. We're talking about 100 percent DNS uptime, and no one's going to hijack your domain. That's what we're talking about over there.

**James:** So if anyone's in a slightly non-core field, or they can't afford to lose their pipeline, they should be having a chat to Mark Jeftovic.

**Mark:** Sure, yeah, markjr@easydns.com, or head on over to the website.

**James:** Thank you, Mark. I know this has kind of been an introductory. And in full disclosure to our audience, halfway through this call, my computer completely, catastrophically rebooted and took forever to reload. And we lost a bit of our allocated time. But I wanted to keep going, because I felt like we were scratching the surface of where we're at. And I have a feeling that we've got another episode in us, Mark, and I'd love you to book another time for us to do our part two, if you're up for it.

**Mark:** I'm definitely up for it. Happy to.

**James:** And what I'd like is, if you listen to this, and you've got a question for Mark, can you just flick me an email james@superfastbusiness.com? And let's get Mark up there on the stand, answering our security questions, our control questions. Mark is obviously very knowledgeable about this. A lot of this is not in our core sphere as an online marketer, so we need to know about it. And we found the right person to tell us

So that's my plan. I want to thank you for sharing your time with us. We can go and grab your book from Amazon or from your website. And I'll be chatting to you about domains as well.

**Mark:** Okay, great. Thanks for having me on, James. All right. Take care.

**James:** Okay, this is Episode 807 at SuperFastBusiness.com. And I look forward to catching up with you on Part Two, Mark.

**Mark:** Thanks.



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