



Taking Your Offline Business Online



Wondering how to take your traditional business into the virtual realm? Kyle Meades' speech and physical therapy service has been operating online since the global reset. Hear his story and be inspired.



Kyle Meades

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 730. And we're going to be talking about taking your business that is in a traditional offline world to the online world. And I'll just give you a little bit of background as to how this episode came about. But first, I want to introduce my guest, Kyle. How are you going, Kyle?

Kyle: Hey, James, how are you doing? Greetings from Tucson, Arizona.

James: That's it. Now, Kyle Meades, you've got a really interesting business. You do speech therapy, speech, sound development. You work with expressive and receptive language deficits, help people with fluency challenges like stuttering, voice clarity issues, reading and comprehension issues. I've been having a read of your website.

And you've been a member of the SuperFastBusiness community for a long time, I'm thinking at least five or six years.

Kyle: Oh yeah.

James: You've come out to SuperFastBusiness Live, we've had a few coffee shop interactions together. We've stayed in touch over that time, and I've watched you grow your business.

And originally, we were going to have a chat about how you've been running your team, because over the years, you've built out a couple of clinics, you've purchased a commercial building, you've been working on non-work activities like getting a pilot's license. You have done an amazing job with your team. You've got quite a lot of employees. You've built up their retirement accounts. You've been a good employer. You've been featured in the Arizona Daily Star, about your success in that community.

When you suddenly have to adapt...

And then of course, there's big changes come along, and you've been forced into a situation where we've got the great team, you've got the great clinics, and life's ticking along beautifully, and now you've had to have a big transition. I'd love it if you could just tell me a little bit about the transition you've been through. With 45 plus employees and a few physical locations, how have you been able to adapt to the online world? And do you think having been in our online world has been an advantage for you?

Kyle: Absolutely. And you know, not only do we provide speech therapy, but we also provide occupational therapy and physical therapy to our patients. We see kids and adults. And like, with occupational therapy, we see kids who have sensory integration problems. We see kids who are picky eaters, kids who have chewing and swallowing problems, kids who have the diagnosis of autism.

So we not only see those speech and language kids, but we also see those kids who have fine motor problems and gross motor problems. Like, they go see the physio, too. And you know, like you said, James, it's incredible. We're sitting there trucking along, seeing 3800 patients a month, and we've got 48 people and everything's great, you know? We just get out of Christmas and moving along through the year, and boom, the coronavirus. You know what I mean? And it's quick. And I mean, we're talking in a matter of five days, I'm looking at thousands and thousands of patients, and all these employees who want to get paid, and they're looking at me for answers. And you know what my first thought was? I'm like, hey, let's just move online. And that's what we did.

I really liked the article I read from the founder of Zoom. He was working his own support tickets and helping schools. And my own son, he's 14 years old. He's doing online school now through Zoom. And I remember, the owner of Zoom, he was giving away free minutes to universities and schools around the United States, and the world for that matter. And I liked that guy's approach. And I'm like, this is somebody I want to do business with. So I got my Zoom account, and off we went.

James: Yeah. To their credit, you know, for so long, there was nobody who could touch GoToWebinar in our industry. I've been on GoToWebinar from about 2007, 2008 maybe, a long time. And no one could touch it. Everyone had copies of it or versions of it, but never lasted the distance. And then out of nowhere, Zoom just appeared. And it's really that perfect combo of Skype and GoToWebinar or GoToMeeting, where it's just got so much traction. I've seen the share prices have doubled since the end of last year.

Kyle: Oh yeah, absolutely.

James: Obviously, they've been dominating. So good job, Zoom. But what does that mean for you? You've got a lot of staff, and you've got a lot of customers.

The details of transitioning from physical to virtual

Kyle: Oh, yeah.

James: And I imagine you might have gone through a few phases, maybe a phase of panic, a phase of fear, and then a realization that, you know, there is a way. What was sort of some of the action steps that you took to make that transition, and where does it sit now? And as we record this, like, we're still, predominantly most countries are in lockdown. So that means no physical office possibility. How does it work for you?

Kyle: One of the reasons I chose Zoom was because it was HIPAA-compliant in the States. You know, we have that health information portability act, and so we have to make sure that our information that we share with other people is HIPAA-compliant. So Zoom gave us that HIPAA compliancy certification.

And so, you know, when our employees said, "We need to get paid," and our patient said, well, "We need the service," and like you said, James, we're locked down. I mean, I did choose to close the clinic a week early, just to be safe, because I want to make sure that our employees are safe and that our patients are safe. But we took that last week when we were in the clinics, with the help of some really good staff, to train and educate all of our therapists on Zoom. You know, everybody's got a smartphone in their hand these days, right? So we kept it simple. We said to our patients and to our families – we have staff that answer our phone calls and reschedule families and things like that – but I just instructed all of our families to use their smartphone to download the Zoom app. And each therapist, well, we gave them a unique ID, and from there, each unique ID was locked. It was secure. And that way no one could enter their session early. Kind of like a room, like a clinic room, but online. A virtual clinic room.

And so that's what we did. We trained and educated our staff. There's another company in the States. She's an online teletherapy expert. So I reached out to her. I was on one of her podcasts about three years ago. And she gave us a great deal, \$10 a member, if we had 15 members or more, to subscribe to her online company, where she has all of the materials and all of the worksheets and everything, crash courses on how to how to do teletherapy if you're a speech therapist. And I gave every one of my team members a free membership for a couple of months to her community, and off they went.

Reactions and hurdles

So we just made that transition. Like you said, there was a little bit of what they call the grief wheel. You know in psychology, they have that. It's called the grief wheel. If you Google it, you'll find it.

James: Yeah. I've seen that. I'm experiencing that as I go through my rounds between my clients. I've seen everything from hiding-in-a-dark-corner panic, you know, like one person left the program just out of sheer panic. No valid, logical reason, because their business is solid and sound. And they just, like, scuppered. And then other people, they've passed all of that. And they're in the optimistic hope side of things where they can see this is the greatest opportunity to get things, you know, a new way. It's like a reset and a fresh start.

Kyle: Absolutely.

You know, for us, it was the grief wheel. You had that loss. You had, you know, the coronavirus, and then you had the shock. And then, you know, some people were protesting. We went to each therapist one-on-one and had a meeting with them, and some people were just still protesting and in denial and disorganized. And then, finally, you could see people, you know, getting into that reorganization phase and then in the recovery phase where, you know, you have to take action.

And you know, we were really fighting with a lot of state organizations. We had one of the local occupational therapy licensing boards change some of their stance on their ability for their therapists to provide teletherapy. And they had no stance whatsoever until yesterday. The board said, Oh, the occupational therapist cannot provide telehealth services. And of course, that put a lot of people out of work immediately. And finally, the governor of Arizona, he signed in a bill this morning at 9am and put everybody back to work. So it just goes to show you how vulnerable people in certain industries can be when it comes to government and things like that. But, you know, we're now into the reorganization mode and in recovery mode. We're moving forward, and I know we're going to get through this, and I know we're going to be a better company for this.

Placing a priority on people

James: I love how heart-centered you are. You know, when you said you closed a little early because you were concerned, I got to tell you, when I was riding up to that week of my live event, I was deeply concerned. Like, I've got guests coming to this from different places. There were only just a handful of cases in Australia at that time, but I was extra-sensitive to it. We just got through that event. And I know that if my event was even a day later, I would have had to cancel it.

But then, just like, a week and a half after that, people in the event industry, they're posting on their Facebook, oh, you know, you can still run events. And they're showing a picture of people running smaller events with like, under 100 people, with the chairs spaced one and a half meters away from each other.

Kyle: Social distancing.

James: And I just thought, you guys are so stupid. This is one of the dumbest things I've ever seen on social media, like just trying to be clever and just for a few dollars to skirt around the rules.

Kyle: It's not worth it.

James: They don't understand.

I'm on the same side of the table as you, Kyle. You're a good person, you care about your team.

We're in a situation with my business, which is very different to yours, obviously, because I have pretty much only online services. And most of my customers have online businesses with online customers. A few of them don't, and you're one of them. And I've also got family members who have had in-person businesses and have had to close the doors on that, and I've been helping them behind the scenes. And in just a matter of days, they went from delivering physical services in a studio, to buying a domain, setting up [10XPRO](#), start streaming on Zoom, and setting up a billing system and an email system from scratch.

The advantage of being in the community

Now, how helpful was it for you to have been in the [SuperFastBusiness community](#) and have more context and awareness of this online world? Because what I have discovered with some of the people I'm helping, they don't really know this world that we're in, this online world. It's alien and foreign to them. Like, they have a big, steep learning curve, right?

Kyle: Absolutely.

I've been a member of that SuperFastBusiness community for years now. And it's just something, you know, just goes to the credit card and I pay it. I've met a lot of good friends. I used to live and work in New Zealand years ago as a speech therapist. And soon as I moved back to New Orleans, that's where I'm from, you know, Hurricane Katrina happened. So I'm kind of used to this whole crisis thing.

So we moved to Arizona, I started this business. But I just knew I wanted something more in life, and that's when I discovered you online. I was familiar with people down under, and people in Australia, because I lived in that part of the world and I got the humor. You guys have a great sense of humor. But you know, I love SuperFastBusiness. I still have some friends in there that I speak to on a regular basis.

I mean, not only have I learned how to really set up and set up online, but what I've done is I've created my own membership site. It's called [PrivateSLP.com](#), where I actually coach SLPs like myself, speech language pathologists, on how to start, grow and run a speech therapy private practice, and I'm just kind of showing them what I'm doing now. And so I've got my webinar tomorrow with my members, and we're showing them how to do the same. And like you said, it's a very steep learning curve for someone who doesn't even know how to register a domain name. But you know, what I like about it is community. People really stick by us for the community, because that's where you get most of your information. I mean, you know, you can pay somebody to set up a domain name or something like that, but you know, when you start talking to hundreds of people about the same thing, you know, you're going to get some gold nuggets.

James: That's great. You've got a diversified income there as well, a little bit of protection. Because that part of your business, I imagine, will skyrocket right now. I'm seeing across the board with my members, the people who are in education are flying, because people want to be educated.

I have also noticed across my two memberships, people are drawing in really close. Like, normally in my top-level program, they're more like prized jungle cats, you know? Leopards and jaguars and tigers, they're off doing their own thing half the time. But they're all coming back in right now. They're coming back in, catching up, swapping ideas, coming to the group calls, increasing their call frequency and getting close to the source. And I really love that we can be helpful and valuable to them during this transition.

Will it ever return to the way it was?

So one thing I'm curious about is, what do you think will happen? You know, in six months down the track, do you think you'll continue to provide some telecoaching to your patients as well as the in-person? Do you think this is an expansion? Or will you just contract back to the way it was?

Kyle: Absolutely not. This is exactly what you just said, it's an expansion. We just changed our business model overnight. And it's going to make us better and stronger over the long haul.

Because the more I think about it, you know, sometimes in the summertimes, you know, we have rodeo break here in Arizona. Go think. But you know, we have a break for rodeo, and a lot of patients want to take off because their kids want to go to the rodeo and they want to participate in the cultural activities. And, you know, for the longest time, we had this hard stance where, you know, we have reserved appointment times when we pay therapists to be available to our patients. We want patients to show up. That way, the therapists can get what they need, and the patient gets what they need, and everybody's happy.

But I'll tell you what - now, when we have holidays, and especially the summertime when kids around here are out of school, we can now deliver those services when they're at Disneyland; when they've got a moment in their vacation or their holiday when they can take a break, and they can have their speech therapy session online. So that way, those families can keep their appointment times, and everybody's happy. You know, we are going to change. That's just the way it's going to be now.



James: Yeah, I believe this will have permanent consequences, this change, and it can be so much for the better. I mean, I've been helping offline businesses go online for more than a decade. When something like this forces your hand, it's like my family member who I'm helping in particular. I've worked with her for many years to have the conversation, but there's never been the time, never been the right energy and resource put towards it. But now there's no other option, and it's happening. And I think this is going to be a permanent shift.

So, it's really a great opportunity when you think about how most things will restore. I mean, we will see corrections in the stock exchange, we'll see the people will change what they're doing for a living in some cases. And there could be a lot of positivity out of this. The only reason I have this business is because of the last financial setback in 2008. I realized having a job was dangerous, and I wanted to have my own online business. And the reason I'm so protective of building up assets, is because of the recession that was on in the late 80s, early 90s. You know, so these things come around.

This is your opportunity. You've taken advantage of the conditions. You've seen, how can I help my customers? How can I help my team? You're being a massive contributor, you've got a big heart.

So in short, you've got the technological gear, the Zoom platform, you've got the templates and check sheets and education for your practitioners. You've been probably relying on email to communicate with your customers to some extent.

Kyle: Yeah, we have a platform that we use for electronic medical records. And that platform sends out text blasts and phone messages. And so it's highly automated. It's for the medical industry that we're in. Yes.

The surprises along the way

James: Great. And what other things have you sort of discovered along the way in the last week or so, as you've made these transitions?

Kyle: You mean, just like, communicating with patients?

James: Yeah, like things that you wouldn't have expected or that surprised you? Or that you've been able to overcome. Well, put it this way. What would I advise my family member to expect, because she's like, she's in day three of the transition right now.



Kyle: You know, one of the things that I've learned going through Hurricane Katrina, when I moved back from New Zealand, I was working as a speech therapist, I came back and I got settled back in our hometown of New Orleans and boom, you know, Hurricane Katrina happens. And there I am, up and moving again. So I'm really, I'm not new to the whole crisis thing. But it's amazed me how I have just been able to think clearly, you know, get a lot of sleep, take care of myself, drink a lot of water, communicating effectively with my team. And one thing that I've noticed is, when you save your money, and you don't have to rely on credit and banks to float your business, I mean, you sleep a lot better at night.

But you know, just like all these crises, this will pass. I know it's going to pass, and we're going to be a better organization after the fact. But I'm so glad I've got everyone online at SuperFastBusiness.com to help me. And I can ask anybody, any topic, in that community and there's always going to be a great answer

James: They do everything, don't they?

Kyle: Oh, my God. Everything, anything you want to know about is in there.

James: I like the off-topic one. There was a whole gluten-free challenge once, and I kind of ignored it. And then like a year and a half later, I got tested and discovered I'm intolerant to it. And I went rapidly racing back. Okay, I should have paid attention to that.

Kyle: Tamas, I think his name was. Yeah, he's got the diets.

James: Tamas. He was just at my live event. He's such a legendary guy.

Experiencing the AU health system

Kyle: Oh yeah, he's great. I hung out with him. I've been to your events twice in Australia. I don't know if you remember, but I was at the Novotel and I was the crazy one who walked through that glass and I had to go get stitches in my forehead. And I just bumped it, you know, and the doctor he walked in and he said, "Oh, we need to sew you up, mate." And I said, "Sew it up." And when they gave me the bill, you know if that would have happened in the States, that would have been a \$2,000 bill. I put it on my credit card. I think the total was like 98 bucks or something like that.

James: Yeah. Welcome to Australia.

Kyle: Absolutely.

James: We have a fantastic medical system. I remember, I was surfing out the front of the Novotel, and I was due to go and pick my kid up from the airport, who was flying back from a school trip to Japan. And it was only small waves, but I'd just come back from the Maldives. And I'd worn out my left shoulder socket, like just from paddling so much for two weeks over there. And I was just sort of half-assing my paddle, and I couldn't quite get into the wave. And the wave just pitched me. So, it just picked me up and then crunched me into the sand. So my board hit the sand, my face hit the board, and the wax on the board sort of made my eyebrow separate a little bit from my forehead. So I had this nice gash. It was just spurting out blood. I went out to the shower, I'm showering off, and people were looking at me with, like, that horrified look. "Man, are you okay?" It's like my head's been bitten by a shark or something. I went back and I put some gauze on it and taped it up, drove to the airport, picked my kid up, brought him back home. And then I went up to the local hospital here in Manly, went into the emergency section.

Kyle: That's the place, yeah.

James: They put, like, six or seven stitches in. And obviously, because we're Australian, we get this Medicare card and it's all covered. Like, you don't have to put your hand in your pocket for anything like that.

Kyle: Yeah. I was at the Novotel there and I walked to the restaurant right there, and the lady, she looks at me, she goes, Sir, you're bleeding. I'm like, Oh, Lord. So I went up to that Manly hospital too. Some of the nicest people up there.

James: Well, you know what? They've closed that, and they merged it with another one up from Mona Vale, and they've put a brand new hospital in between. That's where my little daughter was born. The hospital was so new, they didn't have enough patients. And they put everyone in the private section, because they had to keep it sort of working so it didn't gather cobwebs. A luxury experience.

Kyle: Yeah.

James: Yeah, it's good to know the levy they charge goes towards medical.

An opportunity for further growth?

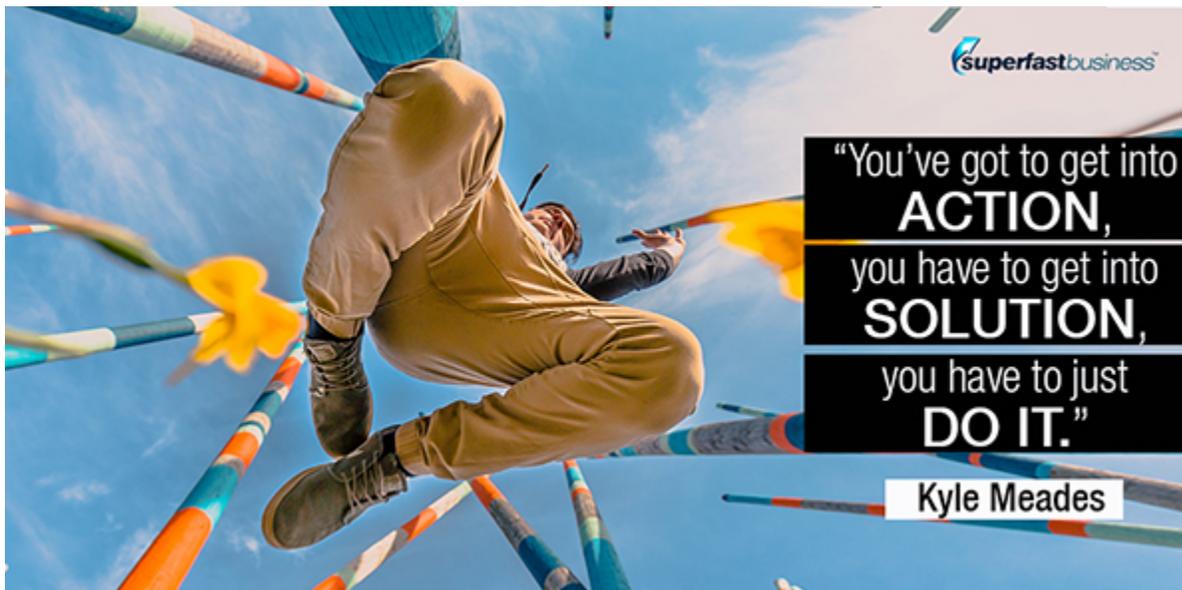
Now, I'm just thinking what else I should ask you, because this is, you know, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to really make the best of the online. Do you think you could almost counter it and go to the next stage and start growing the business? Do you have enough demand where you could service people outside your local region, for example?

Kyle: You know, they do have some players in our space that do that already. But you know, I think there is a market just for the convenience factor. And look, people don't want to get in their car and drive across town. I mean, you know, you could live four or five miles away in this town, but it still takes you 45 minutes because of traffic. And you know, with kids, you know how it is with children. You know, everyone and their mother wants speech therapy after school. So our busiest times are from 3:30 to seven in the evening. So, you know, people would pay a premium just to say, Okay, let's just do this. They have this certain space around their table that they use for therapy services or homework or whatever it is. Alright, Johnny, get over there, and let's do your speech. And they'll pay for it. Absolutely.



So, you know, there's opportunity everywhere. And this is where you really find opportunities, where, you know, some people might call this a really, it is, it's a crazy event. I mean, it's a sad thing that's going on in the world today. But there's always opportunity. There's always a positive. I'm a firm believer in that.

James: Well, you can't have light without shade, and from this will come opportunities. And I think that the key point here is, we get to choose how we react to it. I can't change the fact that someone decided to munch on a bat, right? I can't change that. The virus is out there. I didn't cause it, but it's happening. So I can decide, am I going to react to that negatively? Am I going to get consumed in media hype? Am I going to batten down the hatches and kick myself for not liquidating some of my 401 retirement fund into cash investments, etc? The time for that's passed. It's like, what do we do with what's left?



Kyle: You've got to get into action, you have to get into solution, you have to just do it. And you said something very powerful. You didn't cause it. I've been saying the same thing to all my employees. You know what, I didn't cause this, I can't cure it. I'm just doing my best. And I'm just showing up.

James: Yeah. Like, literally, our grandparents had to go off to battle with a gun. Like, we're just being told to sit on our ass, you know, on the couch, and use a telephone and a computer. I can do that. I can do that for my countrymen. If I need to stay at home for a while, skip a few surfs, then that's okay. But I tell you what, I'm doing what I can to help others right now. And I'm getting out there.

A call like this, I think, is going to be profoundly helpful for anyone with an offline business. That's my intention with this call, is to say, if you have a traditional business, have a look at what possible ways could you serve your audience in an online capacity. I've been helping gym owners. I've been helping yoga studios. I've been helping traditional businesses, even people with surfboard-shaping businesses.

Kyle: That's right.

James: I mean, they can go and lock themselves in their farm barnyard, and crank out custom orders during this time. Like, it's actually a distraction-free time for some people, where they've never had a moment to actually sit there and think about their future and plan for it.

And of course, we're all able to connect. I did a world tour yesterday – I spoke to eight people yesterday, all around the world. And we're more connected than ever, even if we're sitting in our own homes. So it's the time to get up.

A sign of a big heart

I think we've finished this episode on a high. But Kyle, I think as a human, you're a great example. I've loved our interactions, I think you've got such a big heart. The first thought you had was that you are keeping all your employees. And that is a true mark. And you know, when I ran a team of 65, the most important thing for me was to always respect that responsibility that I had. Where, you know, there's a billionaire out there, who owns an airline, and his first thought when the crisis comes is he'd like the government to bail them out. And then he sacked most of his staff.

Kyle: He just lays everybody off. Exactly.

James: His whole mantra's about how important your team is and everything. And I'm thinking, what? That doesn't seem consistent.

Kyle: It's not what you said. That's right. It doesn't add up. You know, you have to look at people's actions. Talk is cheap, mate. Talk is cheap.

James: That's it, and I had an opportunity to sell my SEO business before I sold it to someone else, but they didn't want my team. They just wanted the customers; they already had a team. And I declined, because the livelihood for my team is far more important and valuable to me than the dollar. And I'd like to see more of that out there. So that's why I was ticked off about the event seminar people being clever, and not taking into account the safety and responsibility of the position they have.

So there you go, Kyle, keep doing what you do. I would love to check in with you down the track and see how things are going, because I really feel like this is part one of a fabulous story for you.

Kyle: You got it. We'll do Part Two whenever you're ready. Let me know. Time will tell.

James: There you go. This is Episode 730 of [SuperFastBusiness.com](https://www.superfastbusiness.com).

I've been chatting with Kyle Meades. He is just a good human. He runs a website called [PrivateSLP.com](https://www.privateSLP.com). If you happen to need speech therapy, maybe that's a good option for you right now. If you happen to teach people, if you've got any kind of practice, maybe get in touch with Kyle, and he might be able to help you with his education arm as well. So there you go.



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