



## YS UP GOVERNANCE AND BOARDS PODCAST

### Episode 14 – Customer engagement, risk vs. value creation & go-to-market with Craig Manson

#### Transcript

**Intro:**

Welcome to YS Up Governance and Boards podcast brought to you by 3YS Owls Governance Consultants. Covering hot topics in governance, risk, latest regulatory changes and issues keeping directors and executives awake at night. Here are your hosts Ainslie Cunningham and Deb Anderson.

**Deb:**

Welcome to this episode of YS Up. Today we're joined by Craig Manson. Hi Craig. Welcome.

Craig is an experienced Company Board Director and Advisory Board Chair with over 10 years board experience across the private sector and 20 years' experience at Managing Director/CEO level in Technology, Consumer Goods, FMCG and Financial Services. This included 5 years on the Global Strategic Planning team for a \$35bn global tech company. Craig's key areas of expertise include: commercial 'go to market'; strategy development and delivery; M&A and capital raising; culture and leadership; customer engagement; change, growth and transformation.

Craig currently sits on the Boards of Marketboomer Pty Ltd, Toustone Pty Ltd, Alex Pty Ltd (interim Chair) and Respond Global Pty Ltd. Craig is also on three Advisory Boards.

In addition to the Board roles Craig owns a boutique advisory firm specialising in commercialisation and go-to-market, strategic transformation, and general advisory work across Australia, Europe and Asia.

Craig mentors start-ups in the local community at the Peregrin Tech Hub and globally through Earth Tech Ventures and sits on the Earth Tech Ventures Investment Committee.

**Deb:**

One busy man.

**Craig:**

Very busy.

**Ainslie:**

So, tell us a little bit about yourself, Craig.

**Craig:**

I really work at the intersection of culture, customer and commercialisation. I guess commercialisation for me is about creating value, so that's what I do. It's what I've done my whole career. I've been in change and transformation for years, and I bring that to boards, and I think it's a different view on boards, compensated risk and uncompensated risks and those types of things. And sitting on the value creation side helps get a really nice balance on a board.

**Deb:**

So, for those listeners of ours that don't understand the difference between a governance board and an advisory board, how would you explain that Craig?

**Craig:**

Yeah, the key difference is a governance board. You've got fiduciary duties; you get to make decisions and you're part of the decision making process. Advisory board, you don't have the same duties, you are not a decision maker. You get to advise so I guess it's a level down from responsibility. But you still do have an accountability to make sure the business performs and those types of things. But it's not as structured as a governance board.

**Ainslie:**

So, tell us a little bit about that value creation piece Craig, that you sort of bring to the table.

**Craig:**

Sure, a lot of people call it commercialisation. It's about the customer. If you think that a fiduciary duty of a board, it's about to create value for the company, for the benefit of all shareholders and all stakeholders, if you take it out further. And for me, it's about actually creating value to new products, new markets, new customers to actually drive that the true value of an organisation. I am always quite interested, in lots of companies are always doing capital raisings. Those types of things now I'm argument is well, are you taking care of revenue and are you driving revenue forward? And the only way to drive revenue forward a profitable manner and to have competitive advantages is to create value for end customers, end users, consumers and that creates ultimate value for all stakeholders.

**Ainslie:**

So, do you work more in the customer experience space as well, Craig, when looking at strategies and strategic direction for businesses.

**Craig:**

I always like to look through the eyes of the customer or the consumer in everything I do and try and walk a mile in their shoes. In terms of deep customer experience and user experience, there is a whole set of professionals that are far better than I. From a high-level strategic perspective, absolutely. All day long? There should always be a customer conversation in every session in every meeting. However, in terms of the deep CX stuff, that's a pretty deep field in its own right.

**Ainslie:**

So, when I guess this recent pandemic has hit the boards that you're on, how have you had to change in strategic direction? Or what sort of things have you had to focus on to really articulate value for those businesses?

**Craig Manson:**

It's been really interesting. I think the diversity of how COVID has impacted different businesses is quite remarkable. When you go through a GFC, it's an unpacking of the structural parts of business. When you go through COVID, there's businesses that are structured beautifully and are strong and will power through it, and others, just through the fault of being in a certain industry, get hit in a much harder way.

**Craig Manson:**

So there's been a whole range of different things that have had to happen right through from in the worst instance sending staff down for a part of the weekly work, to be able to afford to keep everybody on deck as you work out how you're going to balance through it. And those companies is

about finding new income streams or finding ways to add value to customers longer term so that you can actually keep people on and you've actually got a brighter future.

**Craig Manson:**

One example is in the hotel industry where working with hotels to actually see the value of cost saving initiatives for the future that they can actually do during COVID. So COVID isn't down-time for them. All of a sudden, COVID is a resetting time for them so they come out stronger than how they went in.

**Craig Manson:**

Right through from the data company which is busier than ever because people are grappling with what to do with their data and there's gold in their data and it's like you can create value for that at any time. And again, when you're not so busy with activity, front-end activity, there's the opportunity to actually take care of some of those things.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, in terms of, you talk about compensated versus uncompensated risk, can you talk us a little bit through that?

**Craig Manson:**

Yeah, sure. Uncompensated is the usual characters, isn't it. It's financial, work, health and safety, those types of risk. Cyber risks, brand risk, reputational risk, those types of things, which boards 100% have to be all over all the time. And there's no escaping the fact that those uncompensated risks have to be managed and mitigated incredibly well. That's the board's role.

**Craig Manson:**

It's the compensated risks that I often see boards not really focusing on, which is the value creation bit. Drucker was always talking about you have to take certain kinds of risks because you've got to take risks to grow a business. And it's the uncompensated risk that lead to higher revenue, higher profits, better ways of doing business, high valuations for organisations by doing different and unique things.

**Craig Manson:**

They're the compensated risks that I feel don't get enough attention on boards and deserve a lot more attention. Not saying you're going to stop paying attention to the uncompensated clearly.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, in terms of I guess trying to get that point across in the board room, do you find it challenging to deliver a new perspective or change mindsets around the board table?

**Craig Manson:**

Boards like all teams are all about trust. And underlying trust and diversity of thinking really means that the good boards, and luckily the boards I'm on, they're open to different conversations and new conversations. And sometimes being called the sales guy in the corner, which I'm not, but that's what you're called, that's okay. That's okay so long as everybody's open to having the conversation and actually working out how you do something different to do the value creation.

**Craig Manson:**

And I think when there's clear heads and probably urgent minds, I think those conversations actually really make sense. So, it's about having the right conversations at the right time. And I've been lucky enough to find every board I've been on has been open to those ideas. They're often new, they're often quite challenging, but everyone is always open to them.

**Deb Anderson:**

What are some of the challenges that directors and boards are facing at the moment that you're seeing?

**Craig Manson:**

The big challenges at the moment are around uncertainty. A lot to do with culture because staff are nervous. Staff are worried about coming back into the office. Staff are worried about what the future looks like for their roles. So, one of the big challenges is around a culture definitely and actually how to stay upbeat, how to stay future-focused.

**Craig Manson:**

And really good CEOs, good leaders have got boards supporting them, are working away through those things. But it's not simple. And there's so much media conversations going on that really do confuse and blur the lines on a lot of things. So that's one of the really big challenges.

**Craig Manson:**

And then it's working out strategically where to go because things will change. And there's a lot of conversation around COVID. We had everything set for six months until the end of September. COVID doesn't listen to government rules, right? It's going to do its own thing. And I'm very confident that it's going to go longer and we have to be prepared for that and what does that mean and what does that look like. And you can't try and second guess reactions, but you do have to actually find a way to have a vision forward that looks like and that's a really big challenge in the current environment.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, in terms of I guess a lot of your experience prior to being a full time professional director in that sort of executive role space, has it been from predominantly the same sort of industry?

**Craig Manson:**

I've had a varied background. I started my life in pharmaceuticals and then went to spend some time at FMCG, and then across to health and beauty. And then 15 years ago, I moved into technology and I've been in tech ever since. And I think my most recent form is in tech and I think that's where the boards that have picked me up have been interested in my tech background and my tech understanding. And it certainly helps.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, in terms of I guess your technology experience, has there been some, I guess, adoption of accelerated digital transformation strategies as a result of COVID?

**Craig Manson:**

There will be. Once we're through the gee-what's-happening-now to the how-do-we-move-forward, there'll definitely be an adoption of more digital technologies and more digital solutions. I think we'll see everything from highly regulated industries, like banking as an example. It's moving very digital,

of course, but even some of the things about how mortgages work and some of those things I think will see a greater adoption of digital examples of those types of things.

**Craig Manson:**

Right through to how consumers interact. We've seen e-commerce really boom. And I think we'll see that embedded more in the long-term future. Even down to click and collect in the grocery store. It's a thing now, right? And I see those types of things growing and prospering.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So in terms of your customer experience background and sort of focusing on those, that sort of unique perspective on culture and leadership and change in strategic direction around customer-centric strategies, do you think there's some top examples of where businesses have got that right?

**Craig Manson:**

There's plenty. We've got to talk about Amazon don't we, but Amazon really have got it right in terms of everyone says that they're a great tech player. I think they're a great operational player to be honest. But they've got it really right in terms of actually how they've gone to market. There's plenty of people that haven't of course. But I think Amazon is a great one to call out. And I still think Apple is interesting.

**Craig Manson:**

And if you look at what Microsoft have done, Microsoft was always the difficult child of the big tech. But if you look at recent times how they've changed their platform, how they've changed the way they interact, you can pick up their cloud platform on any device now. With 365, they've really got in the game. So, there's been a massive shift in terms of technology for them as well. So, I think they're really good examples of the big brands for sure.

**Deb Anderson:**

I think Elon Musk made a \$7 billion profit last night because of the share increase.

**Craig Manson:**

Really?

**Deb Anderson:**

That's tech, but anyway.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, in terms of I guess your skillset, Craig, it's really quite broad in terms of your key areas of expertise. What would your top three tips be to organisations and boards right now that they really should be focusing on to kind of survive this next phase of potential second wave of the pandemic, coming out the other side, making sure that they've got a viable business model to go forward with?

**Craig Manson:**

I think the answer you always give to the questions like that is always people. It's always culture. Because it's the difference, right? Business models can move around and if you've got a bad business model, then you just need to move it. It's relatively black and white. And business models are moving and we're seeing the change with digitisation to those new business models, which are leaner, faster, in real time, and actually give really nice value creation back to the consumers.

**Craig Manson:**

But if you don't have the people to deliver and execute on those changes, then it's never going to happen. So, I think the key thing is to take care of your people. And the leaders to take care of their people and the organisations.

**Craig Manson:**

And for the board because the board has a hand to play in culture. They definitely do. And the tone is set from the top. And yeah, the executive really own it, but the board have to play a role in setting culture and making sure that what are the values and what are the behaviours that are to be accepted and what's modelled. So, that would be one of the key things to look at, definitely business models, which I think you highlighted.

**Craig Manson:**

But also, to really double down on value creation. It's really easy to go, well, we're actually going to tighten up, we're going to drop costs, we're going to really shrink down to ride our way through this. And an element of that has to be true. You can't ignore that. But if you're not doubling down on value creation and really driving value right now, I think that's foolish to not do it.

**Craig Manson:**

And I think the businesses that really drive value for their customers now will come out winning with greater brand equity when we come out of this as well because people will remember them for it. So those brands that act with a bit of compassion and empathy to their customers I think will really win the day when we come out the other side of this.

**Deb Anderson:**

So, with some of boards that you're sitting on, are they paying more attention to cyber risk with the recent activity that's been going on? Have they been impacted by that?

**Craig Manson:**

No one's been impacted by it, touch wood. But I'd like to think they've always been careful around cyber. Being predominantly tech businesses as they are, cyber is always on the table, it's always a discussion point. So, it's always been hyphenated.

**Craig Manson:**

From my perspective, I think some people haven't paid close enough attention to it. But it's a real thing and it's something that ... And you can never rest from it. And it's going to be with us for as long as we've got digital I think.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So with the benefit of hindsight, has there been any, I guess, really big examples in your corporate career that with hindsight that things could've been done differently, whether it was either yourself or other boards or management teams that you've witnessed where things could've been done differently?

**Craig Manson:**

Where do you start with that question? You opened that one up nicely. Of course, absolutely, plenty of examples.

**Craig Manson:**

I guess if I come across it, one of the biggest things that I find where you look back with hindsight and you go, "We wish we done something different." One of the most common things is not moving fast enough. I think that's always something that people look back on and go, "I wish I just moved a bit quicker and had a bit of confidence and been ready to take, I guess, a heightened risk to actually move faster."

**Craig Manson:**

So, I think that's really one of the main things. And I think the other one, which I think we touched on just before as well, is it's really easy to grip down in tough times and bunker in. And I think if you can see your way through into more value creation about doing more activity, about engaging better with the market, even though it's harder and it's tougher and the risk profile's slightly higher, I think that the reward for that is greater.

**Craig Manson:**

And I know there's been times with my career where we've had going through transformations and we've probably bit down a bit hard on pulling things back in, and just given ourselves the opportunity to go a bit further in the value creation part or the go-to-market piece. I think we would've been better off in the long term certainly.

**Deb Anderson:**

Have you been doing any capital raising in the current environment? Is that proving to be challenging at the moment?

**Craig Manson:**

Capital raising is challenging at the moment.

**Deb Anderson:**

At best of times.

**Craig Manson:**

There's still money there but it's much more careful. Especially when COVID first hit, everyone went, "We just want to take a break." And that's pretty understandable. I got a couple of emails last week out of the US talking about the fact that they've got capital that they have to spend and they're under pressure to spend. So, they're looking for opportunities in this part of the world. So, two of those just last week.

**Craig Manson:**

So, capital definitely tightened up really hard. Feels like in some sectors it's coming back. But it's always the same thing. It's always about what is a quality asset, what's a quality business that's going forward well. They always attract good capital.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

And so, is that in terms of a private equity of venture capital investment?

**Craig Manson:**

Private equity firms, they're the ones talking about they've funds that they need to do something with.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

I think a lot of the challenges you see with start-ups sort of heading to the US, they do kind of lack that sort of robust governance framework because they're quite early on in their life cycle. Do you find that some of the boards that you sit on have I guess a strong appetite for governance?

**Craig Manson:**

Yes and no. Definitely yes when things are a bit tougher. And I think for emerging companies and those in unregulated industries ... Regulated industries have a very strong appetite for governance of course. The unregulated organisations, less so. But especially as they're going through stages of maturity, through cycles of maturity.

**Craig Manson:**

But in general, I found really good appetite for governance, a strong desire for governance, and actually working through governance models and actually how they can operate and perform better. So, I would say there's definitely a positive attitude towards governance.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

And I guess from a risk management perspective, Craig, where there is that challenge between the compensated and the uncompensated risks, do you think that there's particular standout risk factors that boards tend to focus on? Is it predominantly financial risk?

**Craig Manson:**

Definitely. And I guess it comes back to regulated and unregulated industries as well. Banking's completely different than an unregulated industry. But in general, it's financial because, rightly or wrongly, company directors are held to account financially first and foremost. And then work health and safety. So, I guess where the penalties lie is where our attention goes often. Rightly or wrongly, that's the way it is.

**Craig Manson:**

Especially in Queensland with some of our workplace health and safety laws. Stronger than other parts of the country in the world, so we focus really hard on those. And that's a good thing, right? That's the way it should be. People should be safe in the workplace, absolutely.

**Craig Manson:**

But they're the big two, I think. Workplace health and safety and financial are the big two. I always keep a really close eye in terms of brand risk and reputational risk because that's really hard to come back from. And I think if you look at reputational risk, it covers so many different things on the board agenda that's always good to have an eye towards that.

**Deb Anderson:**

There's been a lot of talk about employees, mental health. I don't think there's been so much talk about the mental health at the senior exec and board level. How are you guys sort of managing that?

**Craig Manson:**

How am I sorry?

**Deb Anderson:**

How are you managing that at a board and exec level?

**Craig Manson:**

So, we talk a lot about the wellbeing and the mental wellbeing of our people at the moment because it is tough. And it's interesting, in normal times you worry about certain types of individuals that struggle in the corporate environment. What's really interesting with COVID is I actually think it's the extroverts that have struggled big time because they get their energy from external factors and that hasn't been there.

**Craig Manson:**

So, I think it's watching the changes across people. It's about sitting frameworks in place so that there are outlets for people. There are things happening across the organisation culturally to keep people engaged, to make them feel like they're part of the team, to worry less, really strong messaging. Communication and over-communicating in these times is critically important. And how you get your message across and the right messages across is super important, so definitely over-communicating.

**Craig Manson:**

But even the small things. And you see it on LinkedIn a lot with different, like Friday drinks via Zoom and those types of things, and still the weekly stand up via Zoom, wear a hat day or a funny shirt day or whatever. But I think those small things that might seem small and material, I think they actually matter because it puts a bit of normality back across what are quite crazy times.

**Deb Anderson:**

And how are the virtual board meetings going?

**Craig Manson:**

Great. I'm loving them. I live in a place where I don't want to leave it, so I'm pretty happy with the virtual board meetings. There's one board I'm on that we've never met and I feel like I'm as engaged with that board as any of the boards I've been on for a lot longer. And we will meet. We definitely will. We were planning to until something happened to Melbourne recently.

**Craig Manson:**

But in saying that, I think it's really good. I mean, this technology is quite incredible and I'm finding it quite amazing at how well we're getting on in virtual board meetings.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

With your experience in change, growth, and transformation, Craig, what would you say are the key drivers to a successful change or transformation strategy roll out?

**Craig Manson:**

There's some fundamentals embedding lasting change that just have to be done right. For me, the cornerstones are making sure you've got a sound strategy that has actually got the best chance of working. There's never any guarantees in life. If you've got your business model right, you've got your revenue models right, you've got key insights into your market so you know what you're delivering will have a demand to it. You're not trying to sell something that's got no demand to it.

**Craig Manson:**

So, get the fundamentals of the strategy right. And then for me, it's about engaging people, hearts and minds. And I think it's really important a lot of businesses engage the minds. I'm super keen on making sure we engage the hearts so that people really feel like they're part of the journey. There's

some real storytelling and some rituals and some deep cultural things happening through those organisations.

**Craig Manson:**

And then it's about delivering it. It's about executing it really, really well and going for your maximum. I really believe in going for maximum for the best you possibly can achieve at any point and never having a mindset where you settle for anything. So I think they're some of the fundamentals for change and embedding lasting change.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

And what do you see as some of the common pitfalls that see transformations not succeed?

**Craig Manson:**

If I look at my own backyard over the years, I think it's trying to go too big too fast too early. It's about not putting all the right stages in. I think that's a really big pitfall. And making sure that the bite-size chunks of going through change are simple and understandable enough and it's easy to see the next thing that you can get too and it's easy to see the next thing. So, I think that's a really important part of change and one of the big pitfalls I've certainly experienced in my career.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

And how do you manage resistance and people who don't really want to go on that journey straight away?

**Craig Manson:**

It's always about trying to understand people's motivators and drivers I think. And if you've got a whole group of people that don't want to go with you and what's driving that, what's the issue? Or if it's a few people, what's driving them? Is it something personal? Is it that they just can't get with the program? Is it that they just don't want to go in that direction?

**Craig Manson:**

But normally it's a personal driver and there's Maslow's hierarchy of needs or even Robins is the character is what drives people. There's always intrinsic drivers of why people don't want to change. And it's normally nothing to do with the head, it's normally everything to do with the heart. And it's about understanding what they are. And working really hard to get people on board, to get them across the line.

**Craig Manson:**

Because leadership, it's about leading from the front, but it's also about serving from behind as well. And I think if you can take care of both sides of leadership, that's super important and that helps. And then sometimes people just can't get with the program and it's time for some for change for them as well.

**Deb Anderson:**

Tell us about some of the new tech start-ups that you've been touring. Up and coming ones.

**Craig Manson:**

There's some really exciting things on the go. There's one which I just love and it's talking about artificial intelligence. And we see AI coming across the world and all the big techs have got their AI and they're actually gathering data and pushing suggestions and ideas to us.

**Craig Manson:**

This flipped it on its head and said, well, everyone's got their own preferences. What if they even had their own AI with their own preferences and they pushed that back out? So, it's reversing, I guess, the balance of power and I'm pretty excited by it. It's a really interesting concept, really interesting idea.

**Deb Anderson:**

In your own advisory practice, what sort of advisory work are you providing?

**Craig Manson:**

So, at the moment it's what needs to change in strategy, how to create change in these times, and a lot of executive coaching at the moment. So, it's really focusing on delivery right now. They're the key things in the advisory business at the moment.

**Deb Anderson:**

So, anybody looking for your services, where do they find you?

**Craig Manson:**

They can find me online at [mansonco.com.au](http://mansonco.com.au).

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

Great. So in terms of, I guess, growth strategies, Craig, like some businesses when they go through an enormous amount of M&A in terms of growth and they add on bolt-on businesses and you go through that whole due diligence piece and you look at all the synergies. And have you seen, sort of off the back of that, where those synergies may not necessarily have come into fruition that they thought they were going to be there?

**Craig Manson:**

I think M&A, it's rife with over-hyped expectation of synergies. And when M&A, someone's going through a synergistic M&A process, it's really important to be really honest about what the synergies can and can't be. And it's really important to test them in the market.

**Craig Manson:**

And then it's about the model of how you actually put them together. I've seen in the past M&A around let's bring two synergistic companies together. And if you put them together and one in front of the other, that might work. Put one on top of the other, it won't work. So you've actually got to be really careful of how you go to market and how you build that kind of go-to-market model with those synergies.

**Craig Manson:**

And then of course it always comes back to culture. M&A always wins or loses on the culture of the organisations and how they can work together.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, what would your top three tips be to organisations to build a really strong, amazing culture within a workplace?

**Craig Manson:**

Three top tips. Definitely put diversity first. And I'm talking not just about physical diversity, I'm talking about cognitive diversity, spiritual diversity, all the different parts of how people are different and actually put that front and centre and celebrate it because I think that's actually what drives competitive advantage. It's all those different ideas and those different concepts.

**Craig Manson:**

I definitely over-communicate all day long. I think if you've got a really sound message, your narrative is right, you're telling stories. It's not just cardboard facts< it's really beautiful storytelling. If you can communicate with great storytelling, then that's a really important part to drive culture.

**Craig Manson:**

And then I would just talk about leadership and making sure it's the things that you walk past every day that causes you the problems. What are the small things that you need to take care of on a daily basis, what's happening around what was the water-cooler in the hallway and is now in the zoom meetings. But what are those culture, those small things that happen every day that you've just got to take care of. They are probably the three big things.

**Deb Anderson:**

Have you seen an example of a culture that was challenged that had a really good turnaround success story?

**Craig Manson:**

There's been plenty. I was in one many, many years ago back in New Zealand and took on a business that had a really difficult culture. The culture was pretty selfish. It was all about the individual. It was the individual ahead of the company. Customers are kind of a pain and all those types of things.

**Craig Manson:**

And we engaged some professionals and some pretty serious workaround culture and around what it actually means to serve, the customers, why they're important, what they need, how to create value for them. And what it means to be a team and what it means to have teammates and to actually go the extra mile.

**Craig Manson:**

And the real thing was about everyone being able to raise the potential together, to realise their potential together rather than separately. It was really interesting. When I got them together pre-separate, we set up a group incentive at the end. And what was really interesting, the whole team agreed that it was all or nothing in the end. That if everyone didn't get across the line, then they'll all forego it. So that was a real testament of a powerful culture. And the thing was that they actually got through and that actually all got across the line for the incentive.

**Craig Manson:**

And that team's still together. I'm talking 15 years later; the bulk of that team is still together and they're still thriving.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

It's amazing.

**Deb Anderson:**

Great example.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

And do you think the strength of the leadership team plays a part in that?

**Craig Manson:**

Critical. Leading and serving are the same thing and they're two sides of the same coin. And I really believe that engaging people to get to raise their human potential is what leadership's all about. And you're not always leading at the front. You're sometimes serving from behind. And I think if you can actually understand that and get it, live with it, embrace it, and enjoy it, that's the real strength. That's where the real joy comes from.

**Deb Anderson:**

And the boards that you're sitting on, are they spending quite a bit of time revisiting strategy at the moment?

**Craig Manson:**

Not revisiting strategy. I'd say tweaking strategy perhaps. I think the long-term strategic approach is right. The fundamentals of those businesses are all right and they're all heading in the right direction.

**Craig Manson:**

COVID's difficult and that's changed the environment in a different way than we've all experienced before. And so definitely revising strategy, saying how do I tactically work through this time while still keeping my strategy intact. I mean, none of the businesses I'm involved with have got a business model that just doesn't work. The business model had worked and over time, we've worked really hard on getting those business models right.

**Craig Manson:**

Because of COVID doesn't mean the business models aren't right. It just means that the way you navigate through executing is different for now. There's been no ... The boards I've been on, we haven't moved from distilling vodka to making hand sanitizer. We haven't been one of those. And good on those companies who've done it. I think there's been wonderful stories. But for us, it's about how do we just take slightly different path towards the same strategy, towards the same end goals because we felt like we still had it right.

**Craig Manson:**

There'll be some tweaks post-COVID. There are some lessons for some companies around perhaps we've been a bit narrow in the markets we've focused on. And we did that purposefully and that was good strategic intent was to go really narrow in your market focus. Maybe at lesson from COVID is go a bit wider because there's a bit more protection in that. So I think some of those conversations will happen when we come out at the other side.

**Deb Anderson:**

And how was the implementation of the BCPs?

**Craig Manson:**

Great actually, really good. I was really delighted with all of them. There were moments where computers were hard to get. People were taking monitors home. Big, heavy monitors, not laptops. But everyone got through it. Everyone pitched in. And the overarching BCPs were set up really well and it worked and it's working really, really well. We've been really fortunate. I guess you create your own fortune in those senses though don't you.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So in terms of, I guess, some challenges that are presented for businesses at the moment and they might not have access to an advisory board or a board per se, what are the sorts of things that you would recommend to them right now to, I guess, just survive at the moment?

**Craig Manson:**

If you don't have access to a set of advisors, I mean, it's tough. There's often plenty around, mentors in the community. But for me, it's like be careful of your cash flow. Used to watch P&L's pretty carefully six months ago. Now we watch cash flow far harder and balance sheets. So just watch those. Make sure you've got enough power to store it up to get through. And if you don't, have a way to navigate through those.

**Craig Manson:**

Look after your people and look after your customers. Those fundamentals of business hasn't changed. It's just I guess we've heightened our focus in some really specific periods.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

So, before we wrap up today, Craig, is there anything else you want to share with the listeners from your experience?

**Craig Manson:**

From my perspective, it's about don't stop creating value. Don't stop going for maximum. I think even at tough times, you've still got to keep doing those things. The fundamentals of what we do as boards and as business leaders don't change. We've got a responsibility to our community and all our stakeholders. And those things don't move one iota. In fact, they do get heightened during these times. So, I'd say keep going and go deeper and don't give up on the maximum and creating value.

**Ainslie Cunningham:**

Thank you very much, Craig. Really great important message to share as we wrap up. So I think that's all we have time for today. So, thank you so much for joining us and thank you to all our listeners for tuning in for another episode of YS Up.

**Craig Manson:**

Thanks, Ainslie. Thanks, Deb.

**Outro:**

That's all for today. Until next time, happy podcasting. And remember if you're enjoying the show, check out our other episodes and all things governance at [www.3ysowls.com.au](http://www.3ysowls.com.au).