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Newsweek

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

BER 23, 2020 _ VOL.175 _ NO. 11



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FEATURES

AT YOUR SERVICE
When things are supremely uncertain, it is especially nice to be able to rely on something. These companies will make your life a little easier. After all, isn't the customers always right?

COVER CREDIT
Illustration by **Britt Spencer** for *Newsweek*

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Can Science Stop QAnon?

Hope to save America from misinformation and conspiracy theories may come from the study of how diseases spread.

BY DAVID H. FREEDMAN

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Best Customer Service 2021

Newsweek and research firm Statista team up again to track down the retailers and service companies that take the best care of their customers.

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EXCITING THE BASE
Strategy for both parties hinges on the fact that it is nearly impossible to clinch the election without securing Pennsylvania's 20 electoral votes.

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Trevor Noah

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FROM TOP: JEFF SWENSEN/GETTY; GAVIN BOND

Centum Investment Company - Powering Kenya's Growth

Although Kenya has felt the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, its economy remained resilient despite global volatility. Finance Minister Ukur Yatani recently announced that the country's GDP growth will be slightly less than 2.5% this year, meaning Kenya will not fall into recession, unlike much of the northern hemisphere. A strong rebound is anticipated in 2021, when GDP growth is forecast to hit 6.4%.



Dr Christopher Kirubi
Chairman – Centum Investment Company

Growth will be driven by the country's powerhouse local industry, making companies like Centum Investment Company and its indomitable Chairman of the Investment Committee board and significant shareholder, Dr. Christopher J Kirubi, the lynchpin to a robust recovery.

Established in 1967 as a Nairobi-based investment company with just KES2 million ($18,450) of paid-up capital, the company has since risen to become a leading vehicle for growth and diversification in East Africa. It is listed on exchanges in Nairobi and Kampala.

CEO James Mworia says the company has remained healthy despite the pandemic.

"Even with Covid situation I think we'll still have some growth; the Kenyan economy has proved to be quite resilient. We anticipate annual growth could hit between 5% and 7 % post-Covid. As the economy grows, market opportunities expand in tandem, especially since we are serving the domestic market," he said.

Through its core focus is on four key areas – real estate, private equity, marketable securities, and greenfield infrastructure projects – the company is active in sectors including retail, power, education, financial services, and agribusiness.

During the 2019/20 fiscal year, Centum recorded $97.7 million of pre-sales in its real estate business, while land sales hit $25.8 million. Its private equity assets amounted to $86.6 million by the end of the year, while marketable securities and cash assets stood at $82 million. Centum's performance over the period FY14-FY20 is equally impressive: overall portfolio return of 32.8% in private equity, with 9 exits realizing $292.2 million in proceeds and $228.3 million in gains; an overall portfolio return of 37% in real estate; a gain of $32.8 million in marketable securities; and last but not least successfully raised two corporate bonds totalling $93.1 million both of which were redeemed using internally generated funds.

Centum benefits from East Africa's best leaders at its helm. One of Africa's most prominent businessmen, Kirubi is a well-known name across the continent. The investment magnate and titan of industry got his start as a salesman at Shell before becoming an administrator at the state-owned transportation company Kenatco.

He moved into real estate investment in 1971 and his successes snowballed over the following decades. Today he chairs big-name brands including DHL Express Kenya, Haco Industries, and 98.4 Capital FM, among many others. He is also non-executive director of Bayer East Africa and Beverage Services of Kenya Limited. As the investment arm of his business acumen, Centum is also an important part of his portfolio.

Kirubi attributes much of his success to Kenya's open and liberalised economy.

"The biggest formula to success is commitment to what you do and the country you're in. If your politics are stable and the foreign exchange has freedom, it is a very big factor for wanting to invest in that country. Other countries are very restrictive and make investors think twice before going there," he said.

Anticipating trends and diversifying his portfolio has also played a critical role in his success, and Kirubi has set his sights on several emerging industries including renewable energy – Kenya offers significant geothermal, solar, and wind resources with high potential for future growth and investment.

Already experienced in coffee production, Kirubi is also currently working to expand and diversify his agriculture business. He's focused on increasing production and export of bananas and avocados because domestic and international demand for both cash crops is rising, which should feed future growth.

This has created opportunities for new partnerships and international investors, including export partners for the avocado business, and food processing firms that could capitalize on Kenya's rich agricultural base to produce and manufacture fast-moving consumer goods.

"It's not enough to invest in our own resources, we need other support, and we believe that by creating an environment that is conducive to foreign business. I believe this country is open for investors, and within Africa, Kenya is the best investment destination. None of our neighbouring countries can compete with us. The future is in Africa, simply because the population is young and growing and demand levels are very high. The market is not yet saturated, and we expect to continue on an upwards growth trajectory," he said.

CENTUM
tangible wealth

The Archives

2005

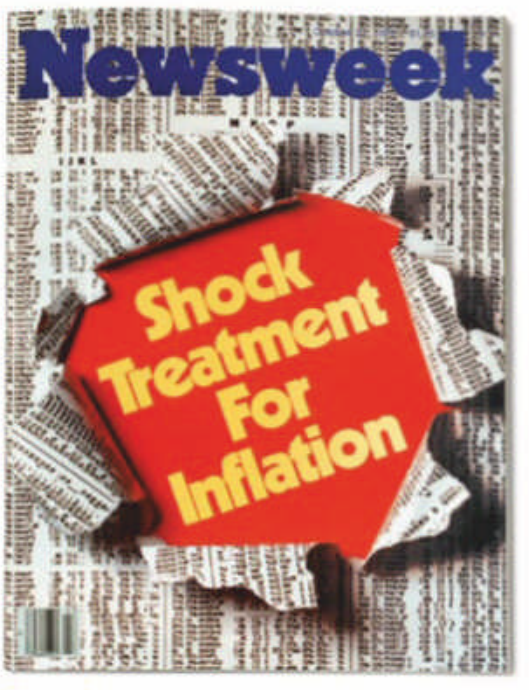
"When will the real world catch up?" asked *Newsweek*, referring to the many movies and shows that portray women in power. Some fear that "those glass ceilings have been broken for naught, and younger women...have decided that the struggle just isn't worth it." Women are now half of the U.S. college-educated workforce, but only 7.4 percent of Fortune 500 company CEOs and have never gotten key leadership positions like president or vice president. This year, perhaps, that might change with the selection of Kamala Harris, the first Black woman to be nominated for VP by a major party.





1966

According to *Newsweek*, Senator Robert F. Kennedy emerged as a strong advocate, giving "a bravura performance" to the Senate pushing for a $750 million anti-poverty bill. Last year, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another fresh face in Washington, proposed a similarly expansive package seeking to reduce poverty by expanding access to resources.



1979

Newsweek reported "a selling panic...hit Wall Street" triggered by a rise in interest rates to curb inflation. "The big question is whether inflation will fall enough to be worth" the resulting unemployment. Last month, the Federal Reserve announced it will keep interest rates near zero until 2023 to help fuel the U.S. recovery.

NEWSWEEK ARCHIVE (3)

Iceland: Transcending global challenges

What can the world learn from sustainable, innovative and resilient Iceland?

Its exceptional rebound from economic collapse after 2008's financial meltdown stunned the world. Can the Atlantic island's unique socioeconomic model help it transcend the current global crisis in the same way?

The signs are that it can. Having brought COVID-19 under control early, its economy performed better in the first half of 2020 than many others in the European Economic Area. "A lesson we learned from 2008 is that you need to be financially prepared for a crisis. We had created cushions," explains Bjarni Benediktsson, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs. This allowed quick implementation of support measures for businesses and a workforce with the world's highest level of gender equality—protecting an open economy lying only a few hours from the U.S. and Europe. "We have access to the larger part of the world through free and bilateral trade agreements, trade is extremely important for us," notes Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation.

Iceland is also benefiting from a singular sense of society within its young, international and educated population of only 360,000 who enjoy an enviable quality of life. Two-thirds of them live in Reykjavik, which has leapt to the top of the bucket list for tourists and filmmakers wanting to experience its pristine, wide-open and spectacular landscapes. The land of fire and ice is the global leader in sustainability, with its impressive recent growth based on an environment-friendly approach to transforming existing industries and diversifying into new ones. The country's 100-percent renewable energy is key to supporting this move. "All our electricity is produced by geothermal and hydropower plants," states Eyjólfur Magnús Kristinsson, CEO of Advania Data Centers, the market leader in a sector that is mushrooming as clients realize they save costs and the planet by storing digital data in Iceland. More exciting advances to combat climate change include power and utility company Reykjavik Energy's technology that turns carbon dioxide into stone underground.

> **"I'm optimistic Iceland will overcome the current global crisis. We've overcome greater challenges and have a history of rebounding strongly."**
>
> Bjarni Benediktsson, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

A self-sustaining model has also made Iceland's fishing sector one of the globe's most successful. Led by quality and technology, Icelandic seafood groups have revolutionized catching, transporting and processing fish to achieve zero waste. The best illustration is biotech firm Kerecis that uses fish skin to regenerate human tissue. On its abundant land, pure water and green energy are being exploited to boost food production through activities such as vertical farming.



SHUTTERSTOCK: MIHAI ANDRITOIU

How has Reykjavik become the world's most sustainable city?

First-class education and research institutions, such as the Universities of Iceland, Reykjavik and Akureyri, support industrial innovation. "Iceland offers tax incentives such as a 25 percent reimbursement for research and development (R&D) expenditure, which goes up to 35 percent for some startups," points out Pétur Þ. Óskarsson, CEO of national investment agency Promote Iceland. As a result, a multitude of cutting-edge companies have flourished in Iceland that are making a global impact in diverse sectors. Some of the trailblazing businesses are biopharmaceutical firm deCODE Genetics, whose rapid-response test was vital to Iceland's COVID control; Össur, the first bionic prosthetics company; blockchain pioneer Monerium; and CCP Games, Iceland's flagship video game developer. Benediktsson is optimistic Iceland will overcome the current global crisis. "We've overcome greater challenges and have a history of rebounding strongly," he says. But will the economy continue to be driven by innovative sustainability in light of COVID-19? "Yes. We are not changing direction," Óskarsson asserts.

To discover more about what makes this small nation such a big and influential role model, read or download our exclusive full-length special report on Iceland. Access it now on Newsweek.com using the QR code or visit www.newsweek.com/newsweek-country-reports.

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CREOLE, LOUISIANA

Storm Sequel

An aerial view of floodwaters from Hurricane Delta on October 10, surrounding structures destroyed by Hurricane Laura. Delta made landfall near Creole as a Category 2 storm in Louisiana, initially leaving some 350,000 customers without power two days after the storm hit. The hurricane struck only six weeks after Laura—a Category 4 storm that landed in the state at the end of August and left catastrophic damage in its wake.

MARIO TAMA



MARIO TAMA/GETTY



NOW OR LATER? Early voting started in Pennsylvania on September 14. Ballots will be accepted until November 6 as long as they are postmarked by Election Day, November 3.



GETTY

POLITICS

Inside the Fight for Pennsylvania

With less than a month to go until Election Day, both presidential campaigns are sharpening their tactics to win this key battleground state

ALL SUMMER LONG, JOE BIDEN SURROGATES in Pennsylvania lived in fear of a rerun of 2016's Nightmare on Election Night, when the Democratic candidate for president, after leading in the polls for weeks, lost the state to Donald Trump by less than one percentage point, clearing his path to the White House. Their biggest concern was tactical: By avoiding in-person campaigning during the pandemic, Biden insiders worried, the former VP was ceding a big advantage to Trump, who, coronavirus be damned, was holding boisterous rallies across the Keystone State and, by proxy, knocking on millions of doors, just as he'd successfully done four years before. Fast forward to early fall, though, and suddenly Biden was everywhere—on a tour of western Pennsylvania with whistle stops in Pittsburgh, Latrobe, Greensburg and Johnstown; delivering a unity speech in Gettysburg; and authorizing door-to-door canvassing to drum up support and get out the vote, not just in PA but across other battleground states as well.

BY

STEVE FRIESS
@SteveFriess

What convinced "Basement Biden," as Trump mockingly refers to his opponent, to so dramatically reverse course—ironically, just before the president was forced by his COVID-19 diagnosis to pull back from the campaign trail? In a word: Pennsylvania.

The tipping point, sources within the campaign say, was a September 26 ABC News/*Washington Post* poll showing much softer support among the state's Biden voters than among those backing Trump. Echoing the campaign's own disquieting internal data, the survey found that, despite an overall nine-point lead for the former VP, only 51 percent of Biden backers were "very enthusiastic" about their candidate vs. 71 percent of those who supported Trump. That "rang the alarm," a top Biden insider says.

"Pennsylvania is driving everyone's strategy," the source tells *Newsweek*. "We can't leave any tactic off the table." The insider adds, "We'll probably win here. But if we don't, we are so screwed."

The outsized political influence of Pennsylvania is partly pure math:

Photograph by PETER DAZELEY



The state's 20 electoral votes are must-haves in almost every likely path to the necessary 270 for either Trump or Biden. The website FiveThirtyEight, which uses statistical analysis to forecast outcomes, calls it "the single most important state of the 2020 election," and the likeliest to provide the decisive vote in the Electoral College. Its modeling gives Trump an 84 percent chance of remaining in the White House if Pennsylvania goes red and estimates there's a 96 percent chance of a new occupant—at 1600 *Pennsylvania* Avenue, mind you—if the state flips to blue instead.

The numbers game, though, is only part of the story. The composition of the state also makes it a reasonable stand-in for the American electorate writ large, all jammed into one vast geographic rectangle. It has a nearly even mix of non-Hispanic white voters without college degrees (particularly in the heartland) and more diverse and educated voters (particularly in and around Pittsburgh and Philadelphia). It also has a large number of high tech and healthcare professionals as well as blue-collar workers, once likely to toil in the coal or steel industries and now often employed in natural gas production.

"Pennsylvania is this microcosm of the nation where Democratic support has become more and more concentrated in highly populated areas and Republican support is becoming concentrated in less populatd areas," says David O'Connell, a political science professor at Dickinson College in Carlisle, in the south central part of the state. "The outcome [here] will determine the fate of the nation itself."

It's not exactly surprising then that, with less than four weeks to go before voting ends, both candidates are amping up efforts and strategizing fiercely to map out the road to victory in Pennsylvania. For Biden, that means heeding the lessons from Hillary Clinton's losing campaign in 2016 and, in some respects, doing the opposite. For Trump, on the other hand, it's more of the same—to the extent that he can follow the same path amid a pandemic. Meanwhile, legal challenges to the voting process by both parties (but especially Republicans) mean that Pennsylvania could lead the nation in another way: as a symbol of election chaos in an already-turbulent year.

The Trump Way in PA

IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT ABOUT HOW seriously the Republican ticket is taking messaging in Pennsylvania, consider how often they talk about fracking—bound to resonate in a state that is the nation's second largest producer of natural gas (after Texas).

Less than a day after returning to the White House following his hospitalization, Trump took a moment during a particularly hectic tweetstorm to ponder and predict: "How does Biden lead in Pennsylvania Polls when he is against Fracking (JOBS!), 2nd Amendment and Religion? Fake Polls. I will win Pennsylvania." The next day, during the debate, Vice President Mike Pence hit hard on fracking as well, insisting his predecessor as VP wants to ban the practice, even though Biden has explicitly said otherwise. The following day, Trump was back on the frack attack, tweeting: "The Great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania would absolutely die without the jobs and dollars brought in by Fracking. Massive numbers! Now Biden & Harris, after Radical Left Dem Primaries, are trying to change their stance."

Speaking to Pennsylvania voters in struggling rural and industrial regions of the state, many of them lifelong Democrats who felt ignored and degraded by their party, was critical to the surprise Republican win in 2016. Trump spent his first campaign crisscrossing those areas, blasting both parties for international trade deals that had brought misery upon manufacturing and agriculture and promising Pennsylvanians he would bring back steel mills and coal production, protect the natural gas industry from environmental regulations and improve the fortunes of farmers.

It worked. While Clinton led in and around Philadelphia and Pittsburgh on Election Day, exit polling showed Trump won rural and ex-urban voters by 71 to 26 percent, with 63 of the state's 67 counties voting Republican by wider margins in 2016 than they had in 2012.

Trump's strategy for 2020 is to continue doing what worked four



BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY

RALLY ON Social distancing wasn't a priority for the crowds who came to see Donald Trump at a campaign event at Pennsylvania's Harrisburg International Airport on September 26.

years ago, only with better organization and hundreds of additional field organizers. The campaign frequently brags about its canvassing prowess—1 million door knocks a week, it says, although there's no way to verify that—and claims to have held more than 4,000 meet-ups involving some 38,000 people. Until COVID sidelined him, Trump made personal appearances as well, visiting Pennsylvania 24 times as president—the most to a state where he doesn't own a golf resort—including three rallies in September in crowded airport hangars in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Latrobe.

The state's Republican Party has benefitted too, says RealClearPolitics editor Charles McElwee, who oversees Pennsylvania coverage. As of September, every county with fewer than 100,000 voters has more registered Republicans compared to 2016. Democrats still maintain a nearly 800,000-voter statewide edge, but that lead is down more than 16 percent from four years ago.

"The enthusiasm is greater in 2020 for the Republicans than it was in 2016," says Lisa Buckiso, chair of a subcommittee of Pittsburgh's Allegheny County Republican Party. "It's going to be a close race in Pennsylvania."

"You still have those secret Trump voters who won't say they're supporting the president but when it comes to Election Day, they'll pull that lever."

That's not exactly what recent polls show. The latest RealClearPolitics survey of state polls has Trump down by an average of 7.1 points, vs. just 3.2 percentage points a month ago. But Buckiso isn't buying it: "So many polls were wrong in 2016. You still have those secret Trump voters who won't say they're supporting the president but when it comes to Election Day, they'll pull that lever."

The campaign's TV game reflects a desire to pan for votes in every region. For the rural and small-town voters who came to Trump's side in 2016, there's a garage owner in Scranton, Biden's hometown, who attests, "Until COVID hit, Trump had the economy booming" and "Jen," a fracking technician, warning about Biden's less gung-ho stance on the practice.

For suburbanites, Trump stokes fear of racial unrest by painting Biden as pro-rioting and anti-police. "Joe Biden empowers these people," says one cop, referring to Black Lives Matter demonstrators. "The more you empower them, the more crimes they go to commit." And, in a gambit to peel away some Black voters, Trump is also airing a spot with retired NFL player Jack Brewer warning: "Joe Biden's America was mass incarcerating black men. President Trump set them free."

Still, the bread and butter is the same as 2016. "How the Republicans are going to win is to further increase their margins in rural and ex-urban Pennsylvania while holding down their losses in various suburbs," says

GOP strategist Christopher Nicholas. "It remains to be seen if they can."

Biden: Not Trump. Or Hillary

BIDEN HAS ALSO BEEN PAYING ATTENTION to Pennsylvania from the start of his run. In 2019, he gave the first speech of his third bid for the Democratic nomination at a union hall in Pittsburgh, saying, "I came here because, quite frankly folks, if I'm going to be able to beat Donald Trump in 2020, it's going to happen here."

Biden's Pennsylvania campaign director Brendan McPhillips insists the lack of in-person campaigning until the final month and a decision not to set up traditional field offices has not hobbled the cause. In a mid-September memo laying out the campaign's endgame, McPhillips noted staffers and volunteers had made phone calls and sent text messages to nearly 5 million prospective voters over the prior three months. He also suggested the 44,000 votes that Clinton lost by in 2016 could easily be found in the Philadelphia suburbs where anti-Trump sentiment was so high that Democrats flipped three House seats in 2018. And the campaign made clear it has no intention of ceding small towns as Clinton did, maintaining it has "held over 250 events and engaged 140,000 supporters in rural areas that voted for Trump in 2016."

The central lesson: "We aren't taking a single Pennsylvanian for granted."

In an interview with *Newsweek*, McPhillips elaborated. "We're making a real, intentional effort to go everywhere and talk to everyone, including campaign stops in deep red counties where for a long time Democrats have struggled," he says. "We believe we can win back a lot of those voters by just having an honest conversation and giving them the respect of asking for their vote. We're not going to win all the time, but we will close the margins and it's going to be a difference-maker."

Biden echoed that sentiment during his post-debate whistle-stop tour. "Look, a lot of people around here voted for Donald Trump last time. I get it," said Biden, standing in front of a massive CAT rig at a training center for heavy machinery in New Alexandria, after picking up the endorsement of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the International Union of Operating Engineers. "I've been asked many times in recent years, 'How did we get to a place where the people who teach our kids, take care of our sick, build our bridges, operate our trains, who race into the burning buildings and don't ask who's in there, people who, in fact grow our foods, how do we get to a place where they think we don't see them or hear them or respect them?' Well I see 'em. I hear 'em. I respect 'em. I know 'em. They're family. It's gonna change. It's gonna change with me."

Biden, unlike Clinton or Trump, also cultivated ties with the state's union and industry leaders over his 36-year Senate career representing neighboring Delaware, and was sometimes referred to as Pennsylvania's third senator. "There's a real comfort level talking to Joe Biden," says Bobby "Mac" McAuliffe, Pennsylvania director of the United Steel Workers, which endorsed the Democrat at that first campaign stop in 2019. "He understand our issues. Donald Trump appealed to some of our members by talking about tariffs and about how that would revitalize the steel industry. But we saw so many jobs still that went overseas."

Of 2.4 million mail-in ballot requests in Pennsylvania through September, 66 percent came from Democrats versus 24 percent for Republicans.

"Pennsylvania is looking like a lot of other states where Trump is underperforming among whites who have a college degree, among women, among seniors and in the suburbs," says O'Connell, the Dickinson professor. "That's a lot of who lives in those counties in the Philadelphia region, which makes up about 20 percent of the state population. It's not enough to win, but if Biden runs up huge margins there, more so than Clinton did, it's going to be very tough for Trump."

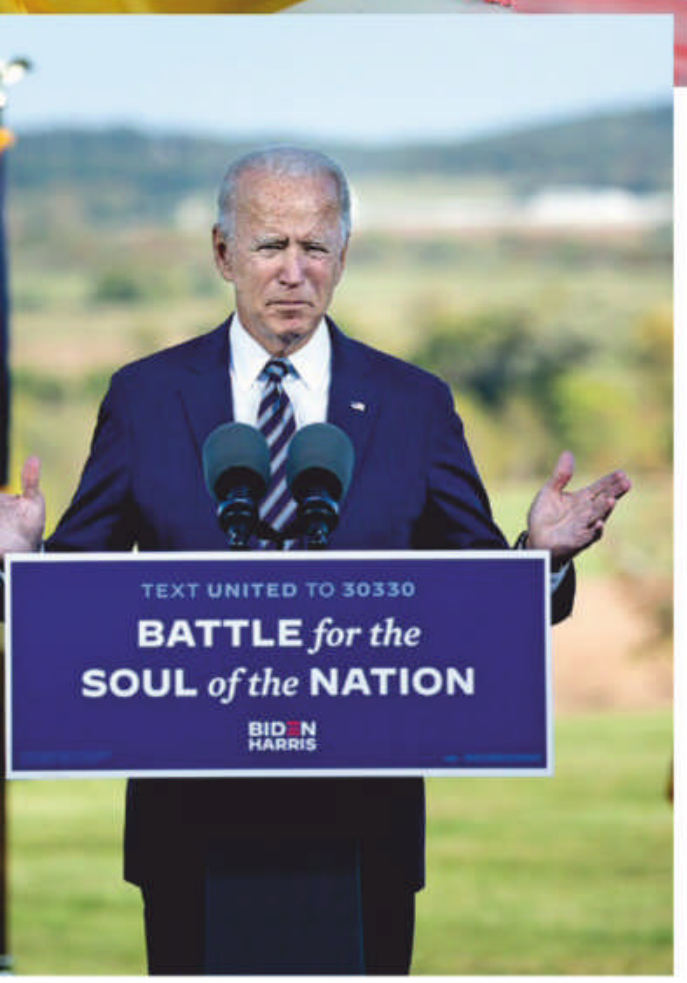
The Biden campaign has mounted an aggressive advertising effort in Pennsylvania, spending $27 million between April and mid-September, which is more than double the Trump spend, according to Kantar/CMAG, a market research firm that collects data on TV buys. For the final six weeks before Election Day, Trump had reserved $11.5 million to Biden's $10.1 million in TV time for the state. Also playing are ads from the Lincoln Project, a group of Republicans supporting Biden, which spent $380,000 in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Erie and Philadelphia in September featuring L.A. Clippers coach Doc Rivers slamming Trump's attacks on demonstrators protesting police brutality against Blacks.

The upshot? Most observers think Biden's lead in the polls is more authentic than Clinton's was four years ago. Back then, O'Connell says, "State-level pollsters weren't weighting for education level, which turned out to be a predictor of individual votes, and weren't weighting for education because it wasn't as important until



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JASON REDMOND/AFP/GETTY; JEFF SWENSEN/THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY; BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY







KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON
Clockwise, from top: Election workers practice safe handling while sorting mail-in ballots; Biden, back on the campaign trail this fall, at events in Latrobe and Gettysburg.

you saw this re-alignment of voters with college degrees towards Democrats. That will be remedied this time."

Legal Battles Looming

ONE MEASURE OF THE PRIMACY OF Pennsylvania to both sides is the phalanxes of lawyers lining up to file suits over virtually every piece of the 2020 election process. Most of the challenges revolve around legalities regarding absentee voting in a year when registrars expect some 3 million mail-in ballots from voters who prefer not to risk contracting COVID at polling places on Election Day.

Already, the Democrats have lost a battle to count so-called "naked" ballots, or mail-in ballots that are not sheathed properly in the security envelope when they're returned. Meanwhile, the GOP lost a case in which the state's highest court ruled that county election boards can count mail-in ballots postmarked by November 3 that arrive by November 6. In yet another matter, Republicans are suing in federal court to overturn Pennsylvania Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar's decision to allow ballots to be counted even if signatures are inconsistent.

The legal attack on mail-in ballots is an extension of Trump's repeated false claims that they are subject to widespread fraud. "They're going to try to steal the election," Trump groused at his Harrisburg rally last month. "The only way they can win in Pennsylvania, frankly, is to cheat on the ballots." At the debate with Biden, he also brought up an incident in which a handful of military ballots were found in the garbage in Luzerne County and another in which Trump supporters were not permitted to be poll-watchers in a Philadelphia precinct. There isn't any evidence of illegality in either case, but he nonetheless memorably proclaimed that night: "Bad things happen in Philadelphia."

McPhillips says the Biden camp has "the largest voter protection team that a national campaign has ever had in the state" in anticipation of a flurry of lawsuits aimed at throwing ballots out in Democratic strongholds. Meanwhile, Buckiso wishes her party would focus more on encouraging mail-in voting than litigating over it. Of 2.4 million mail-in ballot requests in Pennsylvania through September, 66 percent came from Democrats versus 24 percent for Republicans.

Both sides say the public should brace for a slow count and no clear winner on November 3 due to the mountain of mail-in ballots that cannot be processed until polls open on Election Day. And if, as so many prognosticators believe, the fate of the presidency hinges on the Keystone State, the result of all this haranguing could be a protracted legal fight that keeps Americans in suspense.

"If it winds up being a decisive state, we've already had concerns raised about the ability of state election officials to administer this election," O'Connell says. "I worry about Pennsylvania in 2020 becoming Florida in 2000. What a mess that would be."

The hidden champions of *Monozukuri*

Working in the background, Japan's small, agile and technology savvy SMEs are the silent heroes that form the backbone of the nation's reputed manufacturing industry.

> "There is an undeniable essence of devotion and sacrifice to work that forms the foundations of *Monozukuri*"
>
> Masahiko Suga, President, Magtronics

From cars and electronics, to high-tech engineering components and machines, Japanese manufacturers are renowned for delivering the highest quality, ensuring the longstanding reputation of the 'Made in Japan' brand worldwide.

In recent years, Japan has faced stiff competition from regional competitors that try to replicate the nation's manufacturing standards. And while these competitors may surpass Japan in terms of quantity and price, they often fail to capture the true essence of Monuzukuri, the Japanese manufacturing philosophy grounded in dedication, skill and the pursuit of innovation.

Monozukuri production has always been focused on the highest manufacturing standards, where painstaking attention to detail in every part of the production process results in products of unrivalled quality and reliability.

Monozukuri (a combination of 'mono' meaning thing and 'zukuri' meaning the act of making) is often equated to 'craftsmanship' in English. However while craftsmanship often puts emphasis on the craftsman, Monozukuri is more about reverence for the thing being made, thus defleting attention away from the person doing the making. Stemming from a centuries-old Japanese culture based on a deep respect for both animate and inanimate objects, Monozukuri not only focuses on crafting the highest quality products, but also on sustainable manufacturing and working in harmony with the surrounding environment.

Toyota has long been the global face of Monozukuri. But the philosophy is also rooted at the core of all Japanese SME manufacturers, who are often hailed as the "hidden champions" of the nation's reputed industrial sector.

"Everything about Japanese Monozukuri is highly related to the national character of the Japanese people. There is an undeniable essence of devotion and sacrifice to work that forms the foundations of Monozukuri," says Masahiko Suga, president of Magtronics, which supplies machine tools, control panels for industrial equipment, as well as cables and harnesses to clients in Japan and across the globe.

"Companies come to us with a specific design. By following this design, we elaborate on the final product. Even though we have features of an SME, we stand out due to our capability to deliver on time and the optimal quality that meets our clients' expectations."

Magtronics has taken big steps towards becoming a globally leading engineering company, offering bespoke solutions, from contract manufacturing services and hardware/software design to value engineering proposals and construction support.

"We have numerous advantages over our competitors, but I would like to emphasize two. First is the cost merit and second is the business network that we have built through maintaining high levels of efficiency and superior quality."

With a growing international base of satisfied clients, Magtronics is quickly becoming a worldwide ambassador of Monozukuri quality with its high value-added products and services.

MAGTRONICS
www.magtronics.co.jp

Crestec's game-changing technology for 5G/6G optical device manufacturing

On the back of unfettered expansion in global internet services and the demand for ever faster bandwidths, the market for optical communication devices grew 14% CAGR between 2015 and 2019. DFB LDs (distributed feedback semiconductor laser diodes) are essential to the manufacture of optical devices. And with the advent of 5G (and later 6G), the market for high-performing DFB-LDs is predicted to grow 30% CAGR through 2025.



Such growth represents big opportunities for Crestec Corporation, which develops Advanced Productive Electron Beam Lithography (ELB) Systems for customers across the world. Crestec's latest EBL model CABL-AP boasts superior operational features that will allow for greater speed and efficiency, higher precision and performance, and lower costs in the manufacturing of the latest DFB-LDs for 5G/6G, cloud services, medical sensing and LiDAR.

"We believe that our EBL can be useful for the production of not only DFB-LDs, but also new multiple high-value-added compound semiconductor devices used in these industries," says Crestec president, Hideyuki Ohyi. "We are excited about the development of new markets that offer us new challenges."

"The introduction of 5G is expected to contribute to the creation of new industries and the resolution of social issues through collaboration among various industries. In particular, we believe that our EBL can contribute to the creation of new cutting-edge semiconductor devices used in smart cities, autonomous driving, telemedicine, AR/VR, etc."

Anticipating rapid growth in the Data Center, IoT, 5G/6G, AI and robotics markets, Crestec is eyeing global growth through the provision of the highest quality machinery for DFB-LD devices and high-performance compound semiconductors.



> "Our EBL system can minimize the manufacturing cost of DFB-LD devices and create high-performance products with high-yield rate"
>
> Hideyuki Ohyi, President, Crestec Corporation

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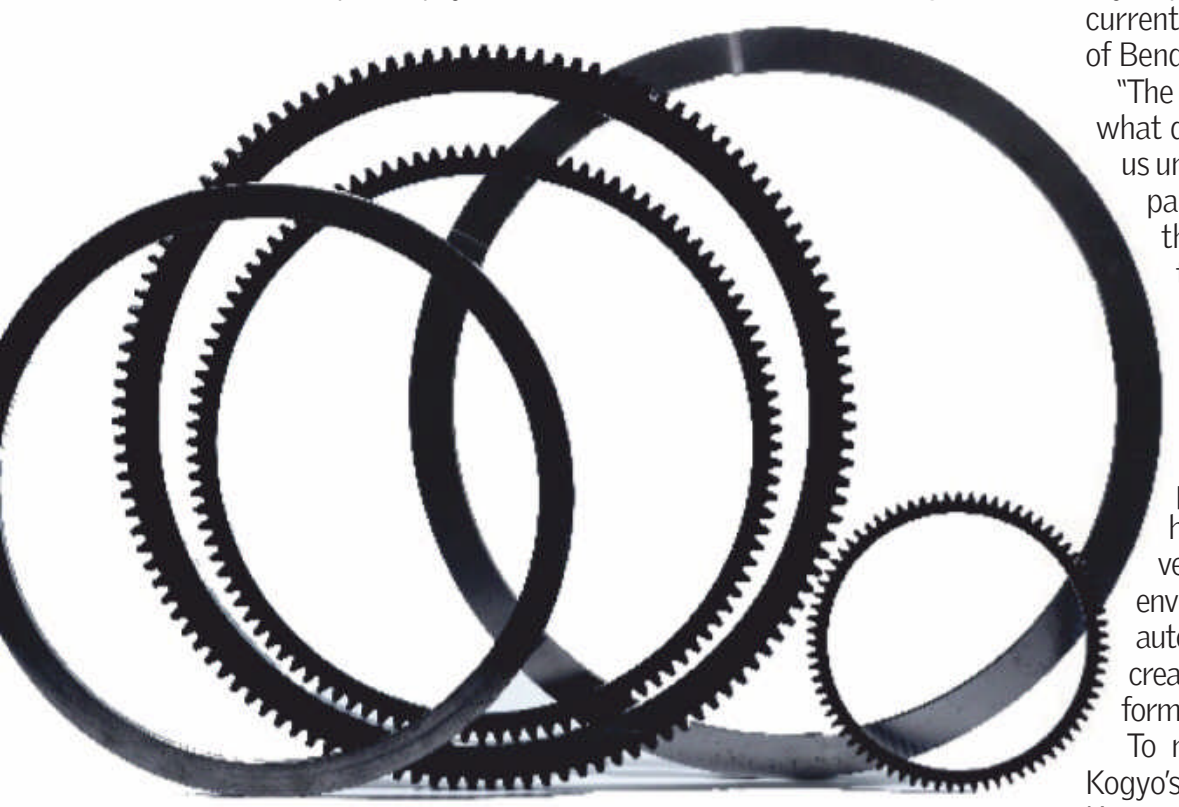
Spreading 'Made-in-Japan' technology across the world

A leading developer of high-performing ring gears for cars, trucks, ships, constructional and agricultural equipment, Benda Kogyo is developing groundbreaking products for the next generation of automobiles.



A well-built car may carry the logo of Toyota or Honda on the bonnet. But on closer inspection, you will find that a high-performing automobile comprises of thousands of parts and components made by smaller, lesser – known companies – all of which must work in perfect unison to ensure the best and safest driving experience.

Carmakers like Toyota, famed worldwide for its dedication to the tenets of *Monozukuri* (Japanese craftsmanship), depend heavily on smaller Japanese manufacturers to supply these parts, which essentially ensure the high quality and performance of their vehicles. As such, these specialized SME manufacturers are themselves proponents of the *Monozukuri* philosophy and the constant pursuit of innovation – often creating groundbreaking products to meet the demands of one of the world's most technology-intensive industries.



Established in 1964, Benda Kogyo is a small company that has made an enormous impact with its manufacturing technologies, and today aims to spread 'Made-in-Japan' technology across the world. A leading manufacturer of ring gears, inertia rings, drive plates and flywheels essential to the operation of automobiles, this Hiroshima-based firm made a name for itself with the development of its proprietary 'Benda Method' – a cold bending process used to manufacture metal rings for which Benda Kogyo held patents in nine countries after its launch in 1975.

This revolutionary metal ring-forming method – which the company has constantly improved over the years – enabled 95% material yield and drastically raised productivity and efficiency, ensuring products of the highest quality with little-to-no material waste.

With such products, Benda Kogyo subsequently rode the wave of motorization that hit Japan, becoming a top company in the manufacture of starter ring gears used for automobile engines, as well as for trucks, ships, construction and agricultural equipment. In recognition of its manufacturing prowess, the company won the 'Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Award' at the 'Manufacturing Japan Awards' in 2009 for making "perfectly round rings a reality when no one else could". Today, Benda Kogyo holds 20% of the global market for its number one product, the ring gear.

> "Our revolutionary 'Benda Method' led to the establishment of high-quality, high-yield metal ring manufacturing technology that produces an extremely small amount of material loss"
>
> Kazunari Yashiro, President, Benda Kogyo Co., Ltd.

"*Monozukuri* excellence is born in our factories as a result of the technologies utilized in the process. These techniques were introduced by my grandfather, Kazuyoshi Yashiro, who was the founder of Benda Kogyo and the Benda Method," says a proud Kazunari Yashiro, the current third-generation president of Benda Kogyo.

"The cold-bending method is what distinguishes us and makes us unique. We are the only company capable of performing this process on the domestic market. The excellence of *Monozukuri* allows us to exceed the quality standards set in the national and international market."

In line with the growing proliferation of electronic, hydrogen and autonomous vehicles, as well as higher environmental standards for automobiles, there is an ever-increasing demand for higher-performing parts and components.

To meet this demand, Benda Kogyo's R&D Centre in South Korea has worked tirelessly to create next-generation products, such as a new product currently in development that is aimed at a major carmaker's hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs). On the back of its commitment to constant innovation, the company will establish a second R&D centre in Japan next year.

"After 2030, electric automobiles will grow their presence in the market. For that reason, we have adopted this vision to create more innovative products," adds Mr. Yashiro. "We must adapt quickly and take advantage of market opportunities. Particularly with our new R&D Centre in Japan, we can focus on the new age dawning in the automobile industry."

Another focus for Benda Kogyo over the coming years will be further diversification into new industries while at the same strengthening its presence in overseas markets. The company has identified the construction, agriculture, shipping and robotics industries in its strategy for future growth – sectors in which it currently has a presence but not a significant one.

"We might be small, but we are a very ambitious company and we have a long road of growth ahead of us," concludes Mr. Yashiro. "We are already present in many countries through the establishment of local companies or large suppliers. And we want to continue to strengthen the bonds throughout the group, to strengthen the role of each company, and capture a greater share of global markets. We are aiming to become a global-tier corporation that develops cutting-edge technology."

www.benda.co.jp



Maintenance with the *Monozukuri* touch

With a 99% repair success rate, Kyosai Technos utilizes its advanced technological know-how cultivated over many years of manufacturing experience to offer unrivalled maintenance services for old electronic equipment no longer supported by the original manufacturers.

Japan has long held a deep reverence for machines and the art of manufacturing. As such, *Monozukuri* craftsmanship is not only concerned with the creation of new products of the highest quality, but also the restoration and upgrading of older machines and equipment.

That is certainly the case for Kyosai Technos, which offers repairs and maintenance services for various types of electronic devices, mainly in the fields of medical care, communications and measuring equipment.

As a "Total Multi-Vendor Service" provider, Kyosai Technos boasts a unique business model – the Kyosai Life Extension Service (KLES), which is oriented around the repair, redesign and upgrade of older devices no longer supported by the original manufacturers.

Strategically located at the free trade zone at Kansai international airport, the company's 'Global Repair Service' center comprises of the bonded factory, in which the company's skilled technicians repair devices and equipment from all over the world, while also offering clients calibration of measuring instruments.

Since its establishment, Kyosai Technos has repaired more than 30,000 units and proudly maintains a 99% repair success rate; while its 90-day warranty scheme and "preventative maintenance" practices are testament to the company's commitment to client satisfaction.

"When a defective device appears, we have accumulated know-how by thoroughly investigating the cause and thoroughly preventing recurrence," says president, Tsutomu Usui.



> "We have transformed our business into a leader in the maintenance service industry with the highest level of technology"
>
> Tsutomu Usui, President, Kyosai Technos, Co., Ltd.

"We believe that our maintenance service has reached a level where it can be highly evaluated all over the world, and which cannot be easily imitated elsewhere. Using the know-how cultivated in the manufacturing industry, we have transformed our business into a leader in the maintenance service industry with the highest level of technology."

Today, IoT technology is enabling Kyosai Technos to offer state-of-the-art diagnostic and maintenance services, as well as to monitor and control the operating status of devices 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"We aim to evolve our 'Total Multi-Vendor Service' by incorporating new technologies such as AI, IoT, and robotics," adds Mr. Usui. "Furthermore, we strive to become a major player by making our unique KLES model well known globally."

This year, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry selected Kyosai Technos as one of the nation's '100 Global Niche Top Companies', in recognition of its unique position within the maintenance services industry.

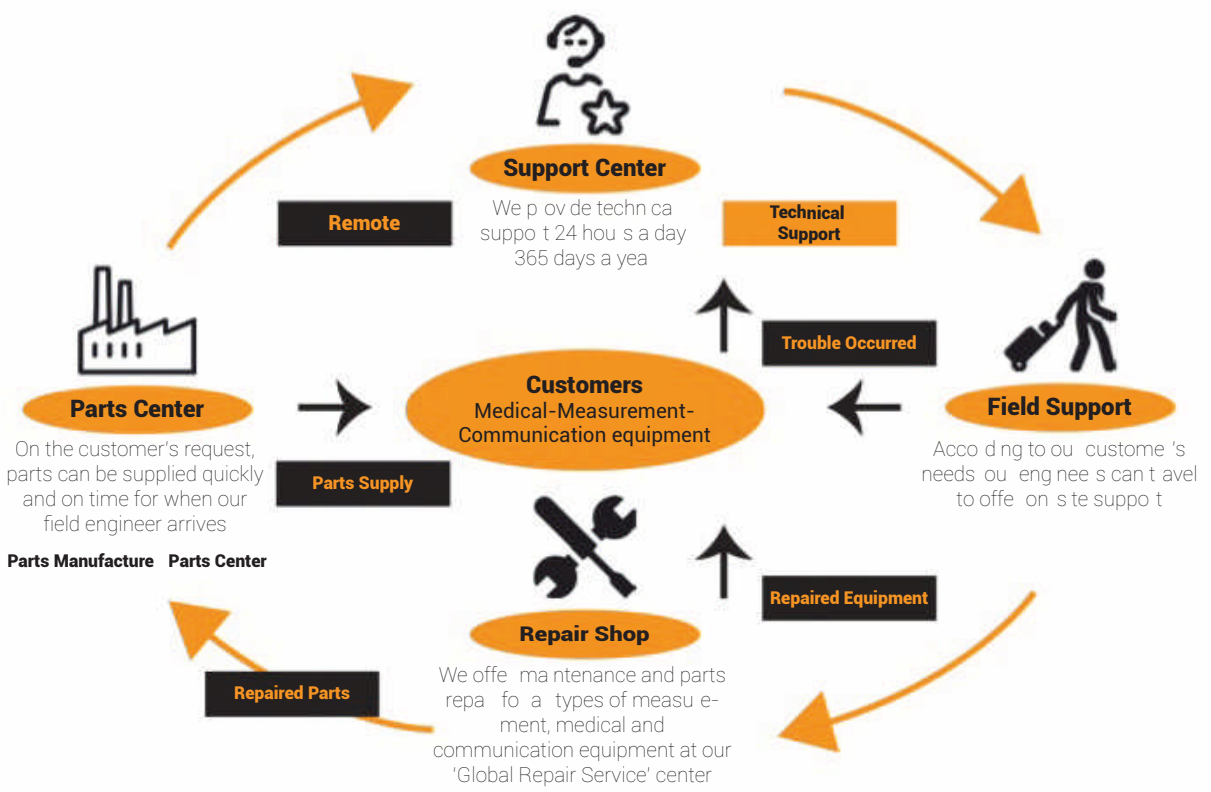
Quick repair with Japan quality "Laundry Service"

G R S Global Repair Service



Kyosai Technos repairs devices from around the world at bonded factories at Kansai International Airport

Total Multi-Vendor Service



We support customers by providing total engineering services with our Call Center, Field Service, Repair Shop and Parts Center

KYOSAI
www.kyosaitec.co.jp

Nabtesco and the technologies setting the Industry 4.0 era in motion



"We are devoting a lot of our energy to enhancing added value through the development of mechatronic and systematized products, under the keywords 'motion control'"

Katsuhiro Teramoto, President & CEO, Nabtesco Corporation

With the emergence of Industry 4.0 technologies such as advanced robotics, automation, Big Data, IoT, and electronic vehicles, a new era of *Monozukuri* manufacturing has begun.

Combining their industrial, technological and innovative prowess, Japanese companies have positioned themselves at the global forefront of Industry 4.0 – building high-performing products, parts and components for these new technologies, while also incorporating them into their *Monozukuri* manufacturing practices.

"Japan's advanced technology cultivated from *Monozukuri* and years of basic research, will work as advantages towards creating products using information technologies like Big Data and IoT," says Katsuhiro Teramoto, president and CEO of Nabtesco Corporation.

"We are currently striving to create 'smart factories' by leveraging data, analyzing it and bringing in digital transformation throughout the production system. Since 2017, after conducting some research on AI and *Monozukuri*, we saw the rewards of the development within the company."

A reputed leader in motion control, Nabtesco develops cutting-edge products and technologies that will support the Industry 4.0 era over the coming decades, from precision reduction gears for industrial robots, to components and systems for the next-generation of automobiles, trains, aircraft and marine vessels.

Comprising of diverse business domains – such as precision reduction gears, hydraulic equipment, railroad vehicle equipment, aircraft equipment, commercial vehicle equipment, marine vessel equipment, automatic doors and platform doors, packaging machines and welfare equipment – Nabtesco currently holds approximately 100% of the Japanese market for flight control actuation systems; while globally it has secured a share of approximately 60% for precision reduction gears for the joints of medium- and large-sized industrial robots, and an approximate 25% market share for traveling units for hydraulic equipment.

Its transport solutions, such as railroad vehicle equipment, aircraft equipment, commercial vehicle equipment and marine vessel equipment, grow and expand on its OEM sales, while providing continuous and stable services with the MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul) business. And last but not least, the automatic doors business will experience stable and gradual growth as its value may be reassessed due to a desire for non-contact in the post-COVID-19 era.

With growing trends towards electrification and automation, and increasing demand for industrial robots over the coming years, Mr. Teramoto expects production of precision reduction gears at Nabtesco's existing Japan-based factory to increase from 680,000 to 900,000 units, while the company has also acquired another factory site in Japan to complement its existing Japanese and Chinese factories.

"Industrial robots with our precision reduction gears will contribute to stability in quality, in addition to automation and labor-saving," says Mr. Teramoto, who sees major potential for the company's precision reduction gears in other areas where electrification is required. "Our greatest advantage would be our co-creation with clients. We understand our clients' demands, and then develop a product that meets those demands," he adds.

Indeed innovation through co-creation will be crucial for Nabtesco moving forward, which is why the company continues to seek partnerships and M&A opportunities that can unlock further development of its existing technological areas of expertise.

"Our R&D center in Kyoto implements CAE analysis, additive manufacturing technology, digital transformation, and intellectual property strategies. Through this center, we connect with companies and universities which provide engineers for deeper and greater discussion. We have developed a win-win relationship with them," adds Mr. Teramoto.

"We are devoting a lot of our energy to enhancing added value through the development of mechatronic and systematized products, under the keywords 'motion control'."



Maximizing value through testing

A reputed and longstanding authority in its field, VALTES helps clients raise product value by offering high-quality software testing solutions for a wide range of sectors.

One of the key tenets of *Monozukuri* – the Japanese manufacturing philosophy of craftsmanship behind the nation's high-quality products and services – is quality control through testing. As such, *Monozukuri* focuses not just on the final product, but also the development of high-quality testing solutions – be they for a car, a semiconductor, a factory machine, or a piece of software.

Software is becoming ever more present in business, industry, and our day-to-day lives. In the new 'smart' era, almost all electronic products we use – from phones, laptops and watches to cars, fridges and even light fittings – are highly dependent on software. And with the emergence of IoT, Big Data, lightning fast 5G/6G internet, more sophisticated factory automation and robotics, demand for high-quality testing solutions will continue to grow.

With an expanding international customer base, VALTES offers *Monozukuri* quality through software testing and consultancy services for both products and processes, enabling clients to provide the best possible products to the end-user.

Offering services such as QA Process Consulting, Software Testing & QA Training, Vulnerability Diagnosis, Other Quality Assurance and enhancement of Software Quality Services, this Osaka-based firm has proven to be the ideal partner for companies in Japan and across the world, with its current business mainly focused on Industry Business Systems, web services, smartphones and IoT.

A reputed and longstanding authority in its field, VALTES – which is one of just eight companies to have been awarded the title of Certified Global Partner by the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB) – has written books on the art of testing that even its competitors have relied upon.



> "To our clients, we propose and implement efficient and optimal testing with the use of the VALTES method, which has been established based on the latest testing theories and our combined practical experience"
>
> Shinji Tanaka, President, VALTES Co., Ltd.

"We are entering our 17th year of specialization in software testing and we have accumulated rich know-how in this field" says VALTES president, Shinji Tanaka. "Furthermore, we have developed a greater standard in alignment with the global standards, offering greater quality to our clients. Our major advantage is the fact that the service we provide meets the pre-established quality standards and we also add an innovative service that other companies do not. Thus, our clients acquire even more added value."

In its early years, VALTES worked with major Japanese electronics manufacturers, providing black box testing for their digital TVs, digital cameras, video recorders, VCRs and multifunctional printers. Around the time of the financial crisis and Lehman crash, which coincided with the dawn of the smartphone, the company moved from Embedded Software Testing to Web and App testing and has since become a leader in this field – providing services to companies from different sectors – such as logistics firms, financial institutions, insurance companies and streaming service operators.

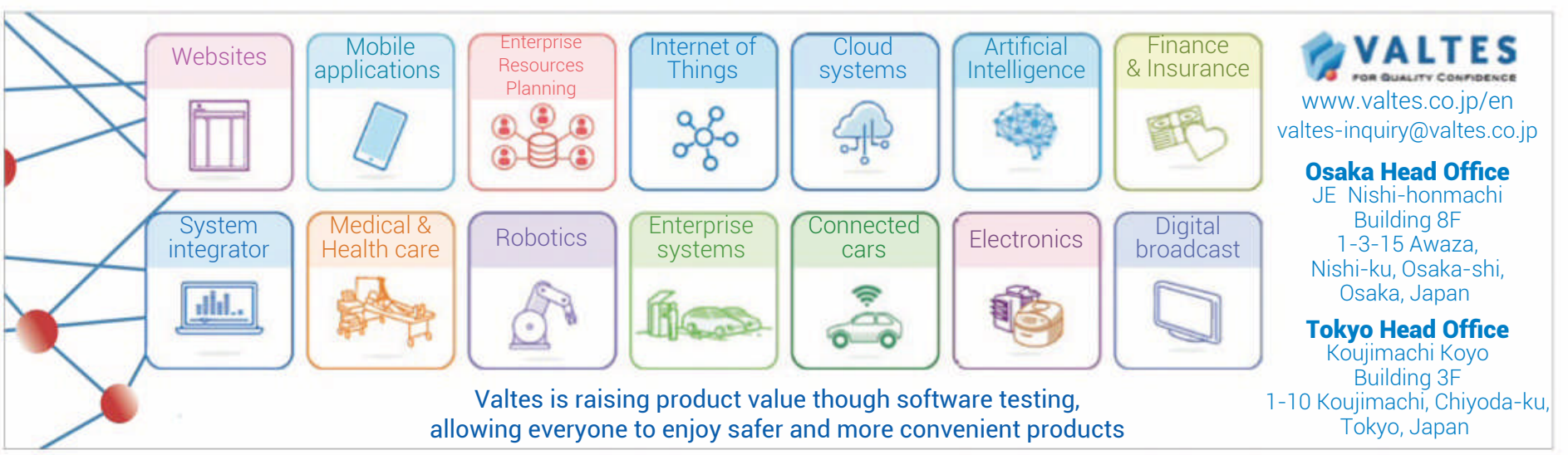
More than a decade since the birth of the smartphone, and the ICT industry is once again witnessing a major turning point, this time driven by fourth industrial revolution technologies. And as it looks to respond to the ever-changing needs of clients, VALTES aims to cease the opportunity by offering superior-quality testing solutions and consultancy services for companies looking to make the best use of these new technologies.

"Our highest value is our commitment to quality. We contribute to the realization of a secure and safe ICT Society. To our clients, we propose and implement efficient and optimal testing with the use of the VALTES method, which has been established based on the latest testing theories and our combined practical experience."

"To our end users, we provide support through the delivery of high-quality products. In today's ICT landscape – which is drastically advancing with technological innovations such as AI, IoT, automated driving, Fintech, and Blockchain – we contribute to the realization of a secure and safe ICT Society through testing – based on our policy focused on the responsibility for the quality of clients' software and proactive involvement in having high-quality objectives."

As VALTES looks to grow its international base through the formation of partnerships or M&As with other leading companies, it will continue on its longstanding mission to help its clients maximize value through testing.

"We are looking to transform the Philippines into the hub of our offshore operations so we are able to support all the work done there from Japan," adds Mr. Tanaka, who sees opportunities in catering to growing Asian markets such as China, Vietnam and the Philippines. "To give you an idea we have only been able to penetrate 2% of this market, so the future of this company is long and bright because we have a long journey ahead of us."



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The best hope for saving America's democratic institutions from a tech-fueled EXPLO





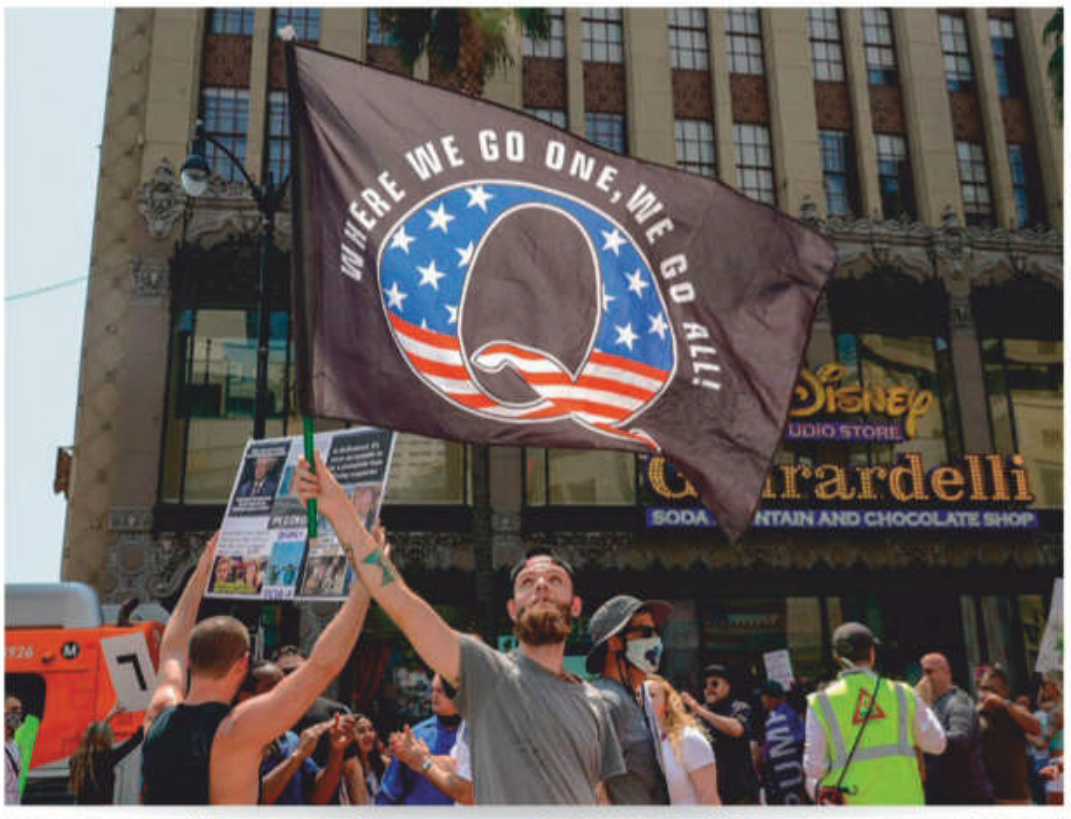




Can Science

GETTY (8)

SION OF DISINFORMATION may come from the study of disease. » *by* DAVID H. FREEDMAN









Stop QAnon?

THE FIRST THREE "NODES" OF the conspiracy-theory network known as QAnon arose in 2018 in the persons of founders Tracy Diaz, Paul Furber and Coleman Rogers.

They had figured out how to profit from promoting the posts of "Q," a mysterious figure claiming to have inside information on a mass arrest, undertaken with the blessing of President Trump, that nabbed Hillary Clinton and others for running a pedophile ring. They interpreted, analyzed and amplified Q's cryptic ramblings of a massive Satanic child-sex-trafficking, blood-drinking cult run by prominent Democrats, among other dubious stories, on YouTube, Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, 8chan and other social media outlets. Over several years, they racked up hundreds of millions of "follows," "likes" and "shares"—each connection extending their reach outward, like spokes in a wheel, to new followers, each of whom became another node in the network.

QAnon is now a firmly entrenched and quickly growing force of disruption in the American information landscape. President Trump, perhaps QAnon's most influential promoter, had as of August retweeted or mentioned 129 different Twitter accounts associated with QAnon, according to non-profit research group Media Matters for America. QAnon distributes conspiracy theories and other forms of disinformation and foments violence. In the "Pizzagate" episode in 2016, a man burst into Cosmic Pizza in Washington, D.C., firing an AR-15 assault rifle, to rescue child sex-slaves (only to find people eating pizza). QAnon believers have committed at least two murders and a child kidnapping, set one California wildfire ablaze, blocked a bridge by the Hoover Dam, occupied a cement plant in Tucson, Arizona, and plotted to assassinate Joe Biden. One man now facing charges for plotting the kidnapping of Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer posted QAnon conspiracy theories on his Facebook page.

The tech industry's efforts to contain QAnon have failed to slow its spread. The FBI declared QAnon a terrorist organization in May 2019, even while Facebook remained one of the network's principal enablers. The company's own internal investigation, the results of which were leaked in August, had identified more than three million members and followers on its platform, though the true number might be substantially higher. Yet it took until October 6 for Facebook to ban all QAnon groups and pages,as well as QAnon-associated accounts from Facebook-owned Instagram. What's more, the ban doesn't affect individual Facebook profiles that traffic in QAnon-related posts, a gaping loophole certain to leave the platform wide open to QAnon misinformation.

Twitter claims to have suspended 7,000 or so QAnon-associated accounts by invoking violations of standard rules such as distributing spam. These measures, says a spokesperson, "have reduced impressions on QAnon-related tweets by more than 50 percent."

The moves are may be too little too late. "The technology has generally done more to help those who purvey this misinformation than those trying to defend against it," says Travis Trammell, an active-duty Army lieutenant colonel who earlier this year received a science and engineering doctorate from





SUPERSPREADER President Trump may be QAnon's most influential promoter. As of August, he had retweeted or mentioned 129 different Twitter accounts associated with the conspiracy-theory network. Top to bottom: President Trump addresses a campaign rally in North Carolina; physicist Neil Johnson of George Washington University.





FROM TOP: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY; COURTESY OF NEIL JOHNSON

now threatens its democratic institutions has given rise to a new branch of science called "infodemiology." Inspired by epidemiology, the study of how diseases spread through a population, infodemiology seeks to understand how misinformation and conspiracy theories spread like a disease through a free-wheeling democracy like America's, with the ultimate goal of understanding how to stem its spread.

If Big Tech can't stop QAnon, perhaps the scientists can.

A Map of the Battlefield

NOBODY KNOWS HOW BIG QANON REALLY IS—OR, in the parlance of network analysts, how many nodes and "edges," or connections between nodes, the network encompasses. Diaz alone has a 353,000 followers and subscribers on Twitter and YouTube and generates tens of millions of edges a month throughout the "multiverse" of social-media platforms that QAnon uses. David Hayes, former paramedic and now full-time QAnon promoter, has a combined 800,000 followers and subscribers. Seventy candidates for Congress are QAnon nodes. More than 93,000 Twitter users mention QAnon in their profiles, and many times that number spread its messages on the platform. The network's most influential node, of course, is President Trump.

> **"This is a problem that's bigger than the individuals in these communities, and BIGGER THAN ANY EFFORT of a platform to control it. It's a huge challenge, and it absolutely requires new science to deal with it.**

Stanford. "I can't think of anything that has had such nefariously disruptive impact on the United States."

Neil Johnson, a George Washington University physicist, agrees. "This is a problem that's bigger than the individuals in these communities and bigger than any effort of a platform to control it," he says. "It's a huge challenge and it absolutely requires new science to deal with it."

Johnson and Trammel are part of a cadre of scientists who are at the forefront of efforts to map QAnon and understand how it works. The explosion of disinformation that has upended American life and

As a starting point, scientists are assembling data about QAnon and effective ways to analyze it. Among the promising tools are data visualizations compiled by researchers like Erin Gallagher, an independent social-media expert. Almost from QAnon's earliest days, Gallagher has been training an array of software tools on members' activity on Facebook and Twitter, helping to illuminate the group's online anatomy and uncovering a variety of insights. "It's hard to fight a battle if you can't look at a map of the battlefield," she says.



Gallagher means that almost literally. Her specialty is producing QAnon "network maps," visual representations of which social-media accounts are spreading the misinformation and where it's flowing. That's where nodes and edges come in, providing a means of visually representing the spread of bad information among online accounts. Fed by software that can "scrape" Twitter and Facebook for data on public posts and Tweets (it can't get at private posts and messages) the maps appear to the uninitiated like swirling works of colorful abstract art. But to the trained eye they are an at-a-glance guide to the key sources of disinformation and their followers.

The results have helped Gallagher and her collaborators uncover a number of characteristics of QAnon. One surprising insight: QAnon is unusually decentralized, with new ideas and conversations constantly springing up throughout the membership,without much boost from "bots," or software masquerading as social-media accounts that pump out misinformation. Another insight: While the pedophilia and human-trafficking claims remain the heart of the QAnon fantasy, the movement is drawing a lot of its members from the antivax movement and more recently from "plandemic" followers,who believe "elites" plotted to cause the current pandemic. "A big theme among people who go down these rabbit holes is they're inclined to mistrust authorities," says Gallagher. QAnon seems to make room for all of them, she adds.

Plenty of other tools are springing up to help in the battle. A search engine of sorts called "Hoaxy" spots new assertions from low-credibility sources that seem to be catching on,and tracks their spread. It also allows anyone to root out dubious claims in their own Twitter feeds. "We can look at the trending of new narratives in real time," says Filippo Menczer, a computer science professor at Indiana University, where he directs the school's Observatory on Social Media (OSoMe). Menczer and his OSoMe colleagues are also tracking QAnon and other conspiracy and misinformation-oriented communities; they're developing a series of software tools and apps available to help anyone gather data on these groups.

Menczer has used the data from these tools to put together an anatomy of a typical popular QAnon post or Tweet. It's usually tied to a current controversial news topic, such as protester violence, or mask-wearing; it throws in an element of truth; it's framed around a claim that will make people angry; and it fits the community's existing beliefs and delusions.

> "Groups like QAnon weaponize the platforms into tools for helping people VULNERABLE TO CONSPIRACY theories to find each other. The more they share, the more these ideas seem credible to them."



For example, QAnon network maps lit up in August with word that 39 missing children had been found in a Georgia trailer and their kidnappers arrested. Was this a real-life Pizzagate? Was this the start of "the Storm," the move, long-anticipated in the QAnon world, by Trump and his loyalists to smash the deep-state child-sex-trafficking rings? Hundreds of thousands of posts and tweets made this claim. "To people who are believers, these stories sound like they should be true and it makes them feel they need to mobilize," says Menczer. The truth, however, was somewhat different. A state-wide, two-week effort by Georgia law enforcement recovered all 39 of the missing children. The cases turned out to be mostly unrelated to one another.

The obvious solution to the spread of QAnon is to take down accounts that spread its nonsense and other potentially dangerous misinformation—in other words, removing the network nodes. But that's



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF FILIPPO MENCZER; RICK LOOMIS/GETTY

FREE THINKING
Facebook and most other social-media platforms remain slow to remove members for sharing untrue, delusional or even dangerous information. Top left: computer scientist Filippo Menczer of Indiana University. Above: Trump supporters and a QAnon believer at a rally in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

not happening, says Menczer, as witness Facebook's unwillingness to remove QAnon-related profiles in addition to a ban on groups and pages, which experts expect will have limited effect. Facebook and most other platforms remain slow to remove someone for sharing untrue, delusional or even dangerous information. Labeling posts as such doesn't help, because believers see such censorship as part of the conspiracy. (Facebook did not respond to a request for comment.)

A more feasible approach might be cutting down the network edges, or connections, says Menczer. To do that, Facebook, Twitter and other social-media platforms could add "friction" to the sharing of posts, so that conspiracy thinking doesn't spread as quickly or widely, giving people room to hear more grounded opinions and think things through more clearly instead of reacting from the gut.

The Facebook ban on groups and pages takes a step in that direction, by depriving members of some of their established channels for sharing on the platform. But it leaves them free to find others, which is exactly what happened when Facebook enacted a narrower ban in August against 3,000 specific QAnon groups and pages. A potentially more effective way to add friction would be to get the platforms to hide "engagement metrics," that prominently displayed tally of likes, retweets and reposts and indicate at a glance which posts are most popular. "Seeing those high metrics make people more likely to believe a false narrative and more likely to re-share it," says Menczer.

Another step to culling the network edges would be getting the platforms to dial back their mechanisms for calling users' attention to accounts and posts that match their interests. Those pointers are helpful for those who like to swap posts or tweets on cats, French cooking or parenting, but they leavethose who click on QAnon propaganda ever more deeply steeped in the community and less exposed to more sensible mainstream thinking that might be protective. "Groups like QAnon weaponize the platforms into tools for helping people vulnerable to conspiracy theories to find each other," says Menczer. "The more they share, the more these ideas seem credible to them."

The Pleasure Hit

COUNTERING THE PULL OF QANON REQUIRES understanding the nature of that pull, contends Jennifer Kavanagh, a political science professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School in Santa Monica, California, and director of RAND's Strategy, Doctrine and Resources Program. In other words, what do QAnon members get out of joining up?

One thing they get is dopamine, the brain's pleasure chemical. Brain studies have shown that when people see information that confirms their belief in something that isn't true, they get a large dopamine hit. QAnon also provides a simple way to look at an otherwise baffling world and confers ready acceptance into a community. "Conspiracy theories make sense of the world," says Kavanagh. "And they provide that feeling of belonging to a group just by believing what the group believes."

To amplify those benefits, QAnon traffics in



claims that tend to evoke strong emotional reactions in anyone who's ready to believe them. Enslaving children, pedophilia, bizarre anti-Christian rituals and a vast hidden empire of rich and powerful people pulling the strings—these are crimes and threats that strike deeply in minds that are open to accepting them as facts.

Understanding how rewarding and resonant QAnon's wild-sounding assertions can be to adherents makes it clear that it's a lost cause to combat the movement's spread with facts. Facts don't replace the powerful feelings and sense of community that conspiracy-theories provide. Instead, a better strategy is to offer alternative narratives that can likewise deliver emotional benefits—but that are woven around the truth instead of delusion and push people to behave in productive, benign ways instead of lashing out with hate, disruption and violence.

Scientists are trying to come up with truth-based, emotionally resonant narratives to combat delusion and misinformation, but they have a long way to go, says Kavanagh. Even a winning narrative will be a tough sell if it comes from scientists and other establishment types that QAnon adherents have come to mistrust. Instead, the narrative must come from "trusted messengers who think like they do"—perhaps a local cop or member of the clergy—"whom they see as an authoritative source," she says.

Sherry Pagoto, a psychologist and social-media expert at the University of Connecticut, has been developing solutions built around those very strategies of resonant messages delivered by trusted messengers. She hasn't tackled QAnon head on, but instead has focused her lab on winning over those who have been taken in by health misinformation—a group that has some overlap with QAnoners, given the latter's ties to the antivax and COVID-is-a-hoax communities.

In one study, Pagoto and her colleagues zeroed in on mothers who allow their teenage daughters to go to tanning salons in states where parental permission is required. Public-health pleas to keep children out of those salons due to skin-cancer risks have largely been ignored. But Pagoto's team took a roundabout route to getting the message across. They set up a Facebook group for mothers of teenage daughters, making it a forum for swapping all kinds of advice, complaints and support. "Instead of

PLEASANT OUTRAGE
When people see information that confirms their belief in something that isn't true, they get a large hit of dopamine, the brain's pleasure drug. Above: a clinical trial for a COVID-19 vaccine in Worcester, Massachusetts. Top right: Jennifer Kavanagh of RAND. Bottom right: a protest in August at the Massachusetts State House in Boston against the governor's mandate that all school-age children be inoculated against influenza.







FROM TOP: CRAIG F. WALKER/THE BOSTON GLOBE/GETTY; DIANE BALDWIN/RAND; JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP/GETTY

> **If we can call attention to the points of possible disagreement, we may be able to PULL THEM APART so that their behavior becomes less correlated. It's basically the opposite of conflict resolution."**

trying to give them health information they probably weren't ready to hear," says Pagoto, "we created a community that was relevant to their lives."

Her team had also researched how different types of online messages evoke different feelings, looking for clues as to what messages make people feel better instead of angrier or more upset. Armed with those insights, Pagoto's group started working in conversations about tanning salons, eventually salting the chatter with references to the health risks, while keeping the tone upbeat. Sure enough, some of the mothers ended up changing their minds about permitting their daughters to hit the salons.

Getting through to QAnoners and other victims of disinformation and conspiracy theories is a much bigger challenge, concedes Pagoto. But she insists the same basic approach ought to work. "If we can better understand what shapes their beliefs, we can do a better job of getting the right messages into their communities," she says. That might involve, for example, recruiting people to reach out to and engage with QAnon members in a friendlier way, gently nudging them in questioning the movements claims.

Superspreaders and Quarantines

LOOSE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE SPREAD OF QAnon belief and the spread of infectious disease are the inspiration behind Trammell's approach to curbing the movement. In his research at Stanford, he borrowed mathematical models from epidemiologists to calculate how different conditions speed or slow the rate of infection spread in a population.

Trammell's work has shown, for example, that QAnon has "superspreaders"—people who connect widely online, pulling in large numbers of converts. But online superspreaders have much more reach than their real-world disease counterparts because they don't have to limit their infectiousness to those they're physically near. As with COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, quarantines can help, according to his research. As a result, Trammell proposes that social-media platforms consider "quarantining," or walling off, some of the most active parts of QAnon and other conspiracy-theory communities so that quarantined members can continue to communicate with each other but can't reach outside to "infect" the non-quarantined.

Preventive measures may be more effective than trying to "cure" those who have already succumbed

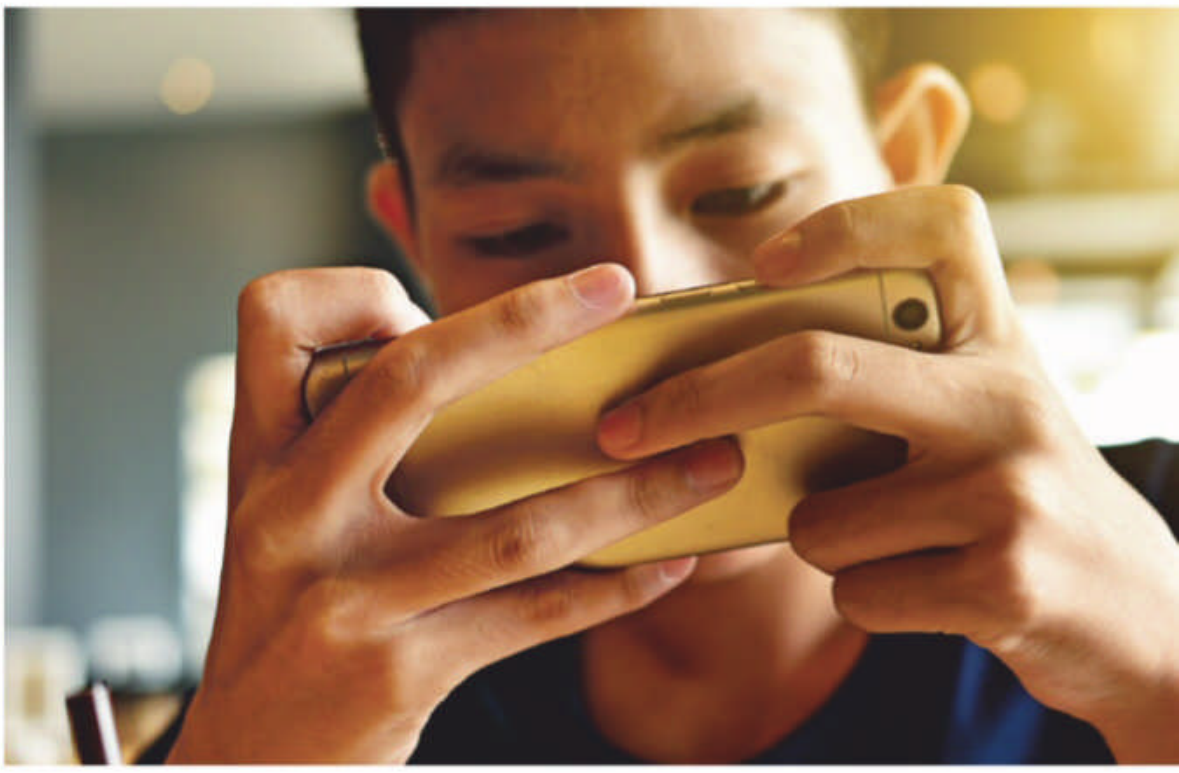
to conspiracy theories. "Once the ideas take hold in someone, extracting them is extremely difficult," says Trammell. Instead, he advocates for aiming the strongest efforts at non-QAnoners, so that those who are more vulnerable to conspiracy thinking can avoid infection if exposed. For example, social-media platforms could broadly issue warnings about certain false narratives that are pulling people in—a technique he calls "prebunking" conspiracy theories and which is roughly analogous to vaccination.

As with real vaccines, the prebunking messaging must be carefully designed and tested to avoid side effects. One of those potential side-effects is that when people keep hearing cautions about bad information, they can become as skeptical of legitimate, factual assertions from trustworthy sources as they are of conspiracy theorists.

Whatever strategies are adopted to combat QAnon, they're bound to fail if they're limited to only a few of the major social-media platforms. That's what George Washington University physicist Johnson worries about. Johnson's specialty is unraveling the mechanisms behind complex, chaotic systems, a technique he has applied to such daunting phenomena as superconductivity and electrical patterns in the brain. But in recent years he has been more focused on unraveling the hidden patterns in the online spread of QAnon and other extremist movements, analyzing them in terms of physics concepts such as multiverses, phase transitions and shock waves. "The complexity of these communities makes them difficult to control," he says. "It's their key advantage."

That complexity stems in part from the many online platforms that QAnon and other conspiracy-theory and terrorist groups use. QAnon activity has blossomed at different times across Reddit, 4chan, 8chan, 8kun, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and many other outlets. That creates what he calls a multiverse of QAnon followers, with each platform's community developing its own followers and patterns of behaviors. Even worse, each community changes over time and members hop between them, sometimes individually and sometimes en masse, defying any one platform's efforts to rein them in. "Like cars trying to get around traffic, members switch platforms to get around new restrictions and moderators, taking followers with them," says Johnson. That's exactly why Facebook's ban on groups and pages is likely to be little more





> **Online behavior changes faster than the usual speed at which scientists understand things and then POLICY-MAKERS CAN PASS A LAW. The things we've figured out so far are only likely to have small effects."**

than a bump on the road to ever-wider streams of QAnon misinformation.

Because QAnon is so decentralized, going after individual members is "like trying to find the molecule in a pot of water that's made the water boil," Johnson says. What matters is the behavior of the collective, which is a strength of QAnon and other conspiracy-theory movements. But it's a strength that could be turned into a line of attack. When water is close to boiling, small bubbles form along the sides and bottom of a pot. By breaking up those bubbles—perhaps a hundred to a pot—it's possible to prevent water from boiling. Likewise, an effective strategy to contain QAnon might be to target specific small clusters of QAnon members whose behaviors are closely influencing one another and whose activity threatens to trigger potentially more dangerous behavior in the larger community.

How exactly to break up QAnon "bubbles" is a subject of Johnson's current research. QAnon members in a cluster tend to focus in on their shared attitudes toward certain things they think are happening the world, whether it's particular elements of a conspiracy theory or certain recent news events. At the same time, they tend to ignore topics they may disagree on, be it religion, politics, health or others. That may create an opportunity to drive a wedge between these members. "If we can call attention to the points of possible disagreement, we may be able to pull them apart so that their behavior becomes less correlated," says Johnson. "It's basically the opposite of conflict resolution."

Other research suggests that if you change the opinions of a third of a community, the rest of the community is likely to follow. By sowing discord in the right clusters of members, it might be possible to bring QAnon down.

An Ongoing Challenge

NO SCIENTIST CLAIMS TO YET HAVE A READY-TO-GO solution to the problem of QAnon and other troubling on-line communities. Part of the reason progress is slower than it should be is that scientists can't get all the data they need to fully analyze the online behavior of these communities—because the platforms refuse to share it all. "We've been very unsatisfied so far with some of the platforms holding back data," says Menczer. "It's a very large puzzle, and we're not being given access to all the pieces." Most scientists point straight at Facebook as being the biggest offender when it comes to restricting access to data. But some note that the company has been moving in the direction of providing more data, if slowly, and some platforms like Twitter have been relatively forthcoming. Twitter says it has been setting up new tools specifically aimed at helping academic researchers gather and analyze data on the platform's traffic.

Even with better data, the challenge will remain steep, because scientists are aiming at a moving target. "Online behavior changes faster than the usual speed at which scientists understand things and then policy-makers can pass a law," says Menczer. "The things we've figured out so far are only likely to have small effects."

The experience of COVID-19, and the misinformation around it, has been a disappointment to the infodemiologists. "We had hoped COVID-19 would help people have a better appreciation of how facts matter," says Kavanagh. "But we've only seen conspiracy-theory thinking continue to get worse. And I don't think we've hit bottom yet."

The infodemiologists may have to follow the lead of their epidemiologist siblings and set modest, achievable goals. "Epidemiologists usually know they can't eliminate a disease," says Trammell. "But they look for ways to slow the spread to sustainable levels. We should be able to get to a manageable level of disinformation."

At the moment, a manageable level of disinformation sounds pretty good. N





FROM TOP: AL DRAGO/BLOOMBERG/GETTY; SURIYO HMUN KAEW/EYEEM/GETTY; NOAH BERGER/AFP/GETTY

WORK WITH US, ZUCK

Scientists don't yet have a ready weapon in part because Facebook and other social-media platforms refuse to share the data needed to fully analyze the online behavior of QAnon. Top left: cutouts of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on the lawn of the Capitol building before his Senate testimony in April 2018. Bottom left: a teenage boy on his smartphone. Below: Facebook's "war room" for monitoring disinformation.



Newsweek

AMERICA'S Be SERVICE C

est CUSTOMER OMPANIES

A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, WILDFIRES, RACIAL PROTESTS AND A POLARIZING election: at this moment, a ranking of stores that offer a satisfying shopping experience might seem completely irrelevant. And if that's what you're feeling, we won't argue. But still, if there were ever a time when one wanted to feel listened to and accommodated, it's now. ¶ For the second year, *Newsweek* has partnered with respected global data research firm Statista to identify the stores that consistently provide the Best Customer Service 2021. Whether it's an intuitive website, a generous return policy or a friendly voice on the other end of the phone, these companies have found a way to put you, the consumer, first. ¶ Even amid this ongoing pandemic and its resulting restrictions, our families still want—and need—things. And don't forget that the holidays are fast approaching! We hope our *Newsweek*-Statista rankings of the Best Customer Service 2021 companies will help make your shopping an easier, more efficient and more pleasant experience—at a time when even a little bit of satisfaction goes a long way.

→ **NANCY COOPER,** *Global Editor-in-Chief*

METHODOLOGY

→ The 2021 America's Best Customer Service rankings were identified from the results of an independent survey of more than 25,000 U.S. customers who have either made purchases, used services, or gathered information about products or services in the past three years. Customers evaluated several brands: in total,160,000 evaluations were collected. The awarded brands each received,on average close to 100 evaluations from customers.

The survey was conducted on retailers and service providers from 160 categories, providing results for customer experiences in traditional retail, online and service segments. For each category, the most relevant brands were included in the scope of the survey according to reputation, turnover or market share.

The final assessment and rankings were based on the Likelihood of Recommendation (50% of the final score) and five evaluation criteria (also 50% of the final score):

1. **Quality of Communication**
   Measures whether the contact (via e-mail, telephone or face to face) was friendly or polite.
2. **Professional Competence**
   Measures the quality of information received and whether questions were answered correctly and in sufficient detail.
3. **Range of Services**
   Measures the variety of solutions available to fulfill one's personal expectations.
4. **Customer Focus**
   Measures whether the customer feels acknowledged and important.
5. **Accessibility**
   Measures the availability of customer service in a shop or on a helpline.

The top 3-5 brands based on category size receiving the highest scores in each category were awarded as America's Best Customer Service 2021.

The survey was conducted using online access panels, providing a representative sample of more than 25,000 American customers. Each of them gave an evaluation of several brands.

For the full methodology, see newsweek.com/abcs-2021.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: FOXYS GRAPHIC/GETTY

BRICK & MORTAR

CLOTHING

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Apparel	Hollister	8.06
	White House Black Market	8.02
	Nordstrom Rack	7.88
	Anthropologie	7.86
	Zara	7.82
Baby and Children's Products	Carter's	8.40
	OshKosh B'gosh	8.18
	Buybuy Baby	8.17
	The Children's Place	8.15
	Justice	8.07
Bridal Fashion	Camille La Vie	8.22
	Bella Bridesmaids	8.05
	BHLDN	7.86
Department Stores	Nordstrom	8.71
	Dillard's	8.68
	Belk	8.66
	Bloomingdale's	8.51
	Boscov's	8.46
Fashion Jewelry & Accessories Retailer	Brighton	7.96
	Alex and Ani	7.92
	francesca's	7.65
Footwear	Merrell	8.46
	Toms	8.35
	Red Wing	8.06
	DSW	8.05
	Skechers	8.03
High Jewelry Retailer	Helzberg	8.99
	Bulgari	8.71
	Cartier	8.58
Jewelry Retailer	James Avery	8.48
	Kay Jewelers	8.06
	Swarovski	8.05
Lingerie	Intimissimi	8.22
	Victoria's Secret	8.20
	Soma	7.88
Luxury Fashion & Accessories	Gucci	8.86
	Louis Vuitton	8.77
	Dior	8.59
Outdoor and Athletic Apparel	Columbia	8.46
	Eddie Bauer	8.43
	Under Armour	8.35
	Patagonia	8.33
	Lululemon Athletica	8.26
Plus-Size Fashion	Torrid	8.10
	Cato Fashions	8.03
	Catherines	8.01
Premium Apparel	JoS. A. Bank	8.40
	Levi's	8.27
	Men's Wearhouse	8.20
Second-Hand Clothing & Products	Red, White & Blue Thrift Stores	8.01
	Once Upon A Child	7.97
	Clothes Mentor	7.84

→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021

Sporting Goods Retailer	Academy Sports + Outdoors	8.18
	Scheels	7.88
	DICK'S Sporting Goods	7.78
Women's Apparel	LOFT	8.38
	Madwell	8.08
	J.Jill	7.92

FOOD, HEALTH AND BEAUTY

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Chocolate and Candy Stores	See's Candies	8.49
	Lindt	8.40
	Ghirardelli Chocolate Company	8.25
Convenience Stores	Wawa	8.33
	QuikTrip	8.23
	Sheetz	8.18
	Pilot Flying J	8.02
	Kum & Go	7.88
Eyewear Retailers	MyEyeDr.	7.95
	Vision Source	7.77
	Visionworks	7.73
	America's Best Contacts & Eyeglasses	7.73
	Warby Parker	7.70
Hearing Care	Hear	8.51
	Hearing Tracker	8.29
	Amplifon	8.01
Perfume and Cosmetics	Bath and Body Works	8.47
	Sephora	8.44
	Ulta Beauty	8.41
	L'Occitane	8.33
	M·A·C	8.30
Pharmacies and Drugstores	Giant Eagle Pharmacy	8.02
	Walgreens	7.98
	Good Neighbor Pharmacy	7.89
Supermarkets	Publix	8.79
	Wegmans	8.62
	Trader Joe's	8.57
	Sprouts	8.54
	The Fresh Market	8.35
Superstores and Warehouse Club Stores	Costco	8.68
	Meijer	8.44
	Sam's Club	8.21

HOME GOODS

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Arts and Crafts	Blick	8.34
	Hobby Lobby	8.25
	Michaels	8.14
Bookstores	Barnes & Noble	8.60
	Books-A-Million	8.25
	Half Price Books	8.09
Furniture Retail	American Signature Furniture	7.94
	Rooms To Go	7.86
	La-Z-Boy	7.85
Home Goods & Decor	HomeGoods	8.21
	Bed Bath & Beyond	8.09
	CB2	7.91
Home Improvement Stores	True Value Hardware	8.58
	Ace Hardware	8.29
	Home Depot	8.24
Outdoor Sporting Goods	L.L.Bean	8.52
	REI	8.42
	Cabela's	8.37



Pet Care	PetSmart	→	8.27
	Pet Supplies Plus	→	8.19
	Petsense	→	8.12
	Pet Supermarket	→	8.09
	PETCO	→	8.03
Premium Furniture Retail	Ballard Designs	→	8.28
	Havertys Furniture	→	7.93
	Pottery Barn	→	7.93
Toys	LEGO	→	8.49
	Disney Store	→	8.45
	American Girl	→	8.24

CATERING, RESTAURANTS AND LEISURE

CATEGORY	BRAND		SCORE
Bagel and Sandwich Chains	Jason's Deli	→	8.14
	Jersey Mike's Subs	→	8.02
	Corner Bakery Cafe	→	7.98
	Potbelly Sandwich Shop	→	7.91
	Penn Station East Coast Subs	→	7.85
Buffet Restaurants	Pizza Ranch	→	7.81
	Western Sizzlin	→	7.74
	Hoss's Steak and Sea House	→	7.72
Casual Dining Restaurant Chains	Bonefish Grill	→	8.57
	LongHorn Steakhouse	→	8.57
	Texas Roadhouse	→	8.49
	Maggianos	→	8.48
	Outback Steakhouse	→	8.40
Coffeehouse Chains	Starbucks	→	8.15
	Tim Hortons	→	8.06
	Dunkin' Donuts	→	8.03
Doughnut Chains	Duck Donuts	→	8.39
	Krispy Kreme	→	8.32
	Dunkin' Donuts	→	7.88
Fast-Casual Restaurant Chains	Freddy's Frozen Custard & Steakburgers	→	8.39
	Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen	→	8.38
	The Habit	→	8.38
	Firehouse Subs	→	8.17
	Panera Bread	→	8.14
Fast-Food Restaurant Chains	Chick-fil-A	→	8.77
	Whataburger	→	8.70
	In-N-Out Burger	→	8.66
	Zaxby's	→	8.65
	Culver's	→	8.59
Ice Cream and Frozen Yogurt Stores	Rita's Italian Ice	→	8.39
	Dippin' Dots	→	8.32
	Kilwins	→	8.30
	Häagen-Dazs	→	8.30
	Ben&Jerry's	→	8.19
Movie Theaters	Marcus Theatres	→	8.18
	Cinemark	→	7.93
	Regal Cinemas	→	7.84
Pizza Chains	Papa Murphy's	→	8.29
	Hungry Howie's	→	8.14
	Marco's	→	8.12
	Blaze Pizzeria	→	8.11
	Dominos Pizza	→	7.85
Upscale Chain Restaurants	The Capital Grille	→	8.32
	Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House	→	8.26
	Ruth's Chris Steak House	→	8.21
	Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar	→	8.21
	Morton's The Steakhouse	→	8.18

statista publishes worldwide established rankings and company listings with high profile media partners. This research and analysis service is based on the success of statista.com. The leading data and business intelligence portal provides statistics, business relevant data, and various market and consumer studies/surveys.

→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021

ONLINE RETAILERS



CLOTHING

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Apparel (Online)	Lands' End	8.48
	Blair	8.17
	Hanes	8.08
Baby and Children's Products (Online)	Primary	8.35
	Agatha Cub	8.23
	The Honest Company	8.23
Footwear (Online)	Easy Spirit	8.82
	6pm.com	8.19
	Zappos	8.12
Jewelers (Online)	Ross-Simons	8.57
	Etsy	8.38
	Anjolee	8.29
	Allurez	8.28
	Ice.com	8.25
Luxury Fashion Accessories (Online)	Mytheresa	8.44
	Moda Operandi	8.26
	Shopbop	8.19
Members-Only Sales (Online)	HauteLook	7.84
	Gilt	7.83
	Zulily	7.82
Men's Accessories (Online)	Tiemart	8.15
	Sam Hober	7.98
	Beau Ties	7.98
Occupational Clothing (Online)	Uniform Advantage	8.55
	USA Scrub	8.40
	Uniform City	8.30
Plus-Size Fashion (Online)	Roaman's	8.47
	KingSize	8.44
	Rebdolls	8.40
Women's Apparel (Online)	Christopher & Banks	8.31
	Venus	7.69
	Net-a-Porter	7.53

FOOD, HEALTH AND BEAUTY

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Adult Beverages	Total Wine & More	8.54
	Marketview Liquour	8.33
	Quality Liquor Store	8.32
Contact Lenses (Online)	1-800 Contacts	8.25
	ContactLensKing.com	8.23
	Contacts Direct	8.16

VPANTEON/GETTY

Eyewear Retailers (Online)	Zenni Optical	8.51
	Coastal	8.47
	GlassesShop	8.35
Groceries (Online)	AmazonFresh	8.26
	FreshDirect	8.15
	Shipt	8.10
Meal Kit Services	Home Chef	8.41
	Martha and Marley Spoon	8.28
	HelloFresh	8.16
Medical Supplies (Online)	Allegro Medical	8.19
	Medical Supply Depot	8.09
	Express Scripts	8.06
	AliMed	8.03
	East Coast Medical Supply	7.95
Perfume and Cosmetics (Online)	Estée Lauder	8.63
	Clinique	8.56
	Lancôme	8.53
	Tarte Cosmetics	8.45
	L'Oreal	8.39
Restaurant Delivery Services	BeyondMenu	8.25
	delivery.com	8.24
	Gopuff	7.81
Shopping TV Channels	Gemporia	8.65
	QVC	8.56
	America's Value Channel	8.40
Subscription Boxes (Clothing & Other)	Trunk Club	8.45
	Society Socks	8.41
	Bespoke Post	8.35
Subscription Boxes (Makeup & Cosmetics)	BoxyCharm	8.96
	Macy's Beauty Box	8.73
	Allure Beauty Box	8.63
Vegan and Vegetarian Products (Online)	VeganEssentials	8.39
	Live Super Foods	8.37
	Vegancuts	8.24

HOME GOODS

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Booksellers (Online)	Powells	8.63
	Amazon	8.57
	ThriftBooks	8.53
Consumer Electronics (Online)	Bose	8.77
	Apple	8.70
	Samsung	8.41
Flower Retailer (Online)	Florists	8.50
	fromyouflowers.com	8.42
	Fifty Flowers	8.29
Home Furnishings (Online)	Magnolia	8.13
	Lighting Direct	8.06
	Joss & Main	8.04
	Dash&Albert	7.98
	Caitlin Wilson	7.92
Lighting (Online)	Circa Lighting	8.51
	Build.com	8.16
	Lumens	8.14
Office Supplies (Online)	Poppin	8.38
	Shoplet	8.09
	Quill	8.03
Online Home Stores	Hayneedle	8.34
	ABC Carpet & Home	8.33
	Wayfair	8.31
Second-Hand Products (Online)	eBay	8.36
	Gazelle	8.32
	OfferUp	8.18

→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021

SPORTS AND LEISURE

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Bicycles (Online)	Bike Nashbar	8.81
	Jenson USA	8.58
	Blue Sky Cycling	8.33
Costumes and Accessories (Online)	Halloween Costumes	8.17
	Buy Costumes	8.08
	Halloween Express	8.02
Electronic Cigarettes (Online)	180 Smoke	8.51
	MyVaporStore.com	8.45
	eJuice Deals	8.24
Fishing Equipment and Clothing (Online)	Tackle Warehouse	8.74
	Fishing Tackle Unlimited	8.31
	Monster Fishing Tackle	8.29
Hobby Store, Model Making (Online)	Free Time Hobbies	8.42
	Gundam Planet	8.16
	Hobbylinc	8.13
Hunting Gear & Equipment (Online)	Natchez	8.52
	MidwayUSA	8.43
	Sportsman's Guide	8.29
Musical Equipment (Online)	World Music Supply	8.83
	U.S. Music Store	8.39
	Sweetwater	8.37
Party Supplies (Online)	Beau Coup	8.48
	M&N Party Store	8.45
	Koyal Wholesale	8.30
Pet Food and Pet-Related Products (Online)	Chewy	8.90
	PetCareRx	8.58
	1-800-PetMeds	8.27
Photo and Video Equipment (Online)	Nikon	8.67
	B&H	8.33
	Adorama	8.22
Sports and Fitness Nutrition (Online)	Vitacost	8.57
	Optimum Nutrition	8.53
	Bodybuilding	8.11



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TRANSPORTATION

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Auto Parts Retailer (Online)	RockAuto	8.41
	Car Parts Discount	8.35
	1A Auto	8.34
Automotive Marketplace (Online)	Cars for sale	8.15
	CarGurus	8.12
	AutoTempest	7.92
Motorcycle Parts and Accessories (Online)	Revzilla	8.23
	MotorcycleGear.com	7.98
	J&P Cycles	7.88



Tire and Wheel Manufacturers (Online)	Tirebuyer	→ 8.39
	Tire Rack	→ 8.15
	Discount Tire Direct	→ 8.11

ONLINE SERVICES AND DIGITAL PRODUCTS

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Book Printing Services	Blurb	→ 8.07
	Snapfish	→ 7.93
	DiggyPod	→ 7.91
Business Printing Services	Vistaprint	→ 8.49
	GotPrint	→ 8.30
	PrintRunner	→ 8.12
Cloud Storage and Cloud Computing Services	OneDrive	→ 8.19
	Google Drive	→ 8.00
	iCloud	→ 7.99
Email Services	Gmail	→ 8.12
	Inbox.com	→ 7.92
	GMX	→ 7.75
Employment Search Engines	Jora	→ 8.31
	LinkedIn	→ 7.84
	Indeed	→ 7.74
Internet Service Providers	CenturyLink	→ 7.43
	Frontier	→ 7.06
	Spectrum	→ 6.84
Language E-Learning Platform	Rosetta Stone	→ 8.11
	Babbel	→ 8.11
	Duolingo	→ 7.60
Mobile Carriers and Telecommunications	Consumer Cellular	→ 8.79
	T-Mobile	→ 8.13
	Verizon Wireless	→ 7.64
Music Streaming Services	Apple Music	→ 8.47
	Amazon Music	→ 8.43
	Spotify	→ 8.24
Online Dating Sites	BBPeopleMeet	→ 7.84
	ChristianCafe.com	→ 7.78
	Badoo	→ 7.77
Pay-Per-View Services and Video-On-Demand	Netflix	→ 8.57
	Amazon Video	→ 8.57
	Hulu	→ 8.47
Price-Comparison Websites	Shopping.com	→ 8.06
	Google Shopping	→ 7.90
	Honey	→ 7.68
Ticketing Services	Vivid Seats	→ 7.87
	StubHub	→ 7.60
	Ticketmaster	→ 7.47
Wedding Registries	Blueprint Registry	→ 8.08
	Wayfair	→ 7.91
	MyRegistry.com	→ 7.73

→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021



SERVICES

BEAUTY AND WELLNESS

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Fitness Centers	YMCA of the USA	8.05
	World Gym	7.85
	Planet Fitness	7.82
	24 Hour Fitness	7.64
	Workout Anytime	7.62
Hair Salons	Hair Cuttery	8.06
	Fantastic Sams	7.74
	Famous Hair	7.66
Nutrition and Weight-Loss Programs	WW (Weight Watchers Reimagined)	8.29
	Medifast	8.20
	myfitnesspal	8.09
Spas, Wellness and Beauty	The Woodhouse Day Spa	7.76
	Massage Green Spa	7.70
	Hand and Stone Massage and Facial Spa	7.69
	Massage LuXe	7.62
	Planet Beach	7.51
Department Stores	Hollister	8.06
	American Eagle Outfitters	8.02
	GAP	7.88

EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Child Care Services	Montessori Kids Universe	8.09
	Primrose Schools	8.09
	Lightbridge Academy	8.07
	KidsPark	7.91
	KLA Schools	7.85
Language Schools	LAL Schools	8.11
	ELC (English Language Center)	8.06
	Berlitz	8.00
Nanny and Au Pair Agencies	Agent Au Pair	7.95
	Nanny Connections	7.88
	British American Household Staffing	7.45
Temporary Employment Agency	Adecco	7.57
	Allegis Group	7.45
	Apprantice Personnel	7.44
Tutoring Services	The Tutoring Center	8.20
	Superprof	7.59
	Kumon	7.58

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INSURANCE

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
AD&D Insurance (Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance)	MetLife	8.18
	Mutual of Omaha	7.97
	Fidelity Life	7.85
Auto Insurance	USAA	9.12
	State Farm	8.35
	GEICO	8.31
Disability Insurance	MetLife	8.04
	Mutual of Omaha	7.79
	Aetna	7.33
General Liability Insurance	USAA	8.88
	State Farm	8.50
	GEICO	8.25
Health Insurance	Kaiser Permanente	8.52
	Health Net	8.32
	Aetna	8.24
Homeowners Insurance	USAA	9.16
	The Hartford	8.98
	Erie Insurance	8.66
	State Farm	8.47
	Allstate	8.35
Life Insurance	Haven Life	8.68
	Pacific Life	8.64
	Assurity	8.55
Retirement Planning Solutions	Vanguard	8.83
	Prudential	8.81
	USAA	8.71
	AIG	8.70
	Allstate	8.64
Supplemental Insurance	Aflac	8.34
	Aetna	8.23
	UnitedHealthcare	8.08
Travel Insurance	TripAssure	8.06
	Allianz Global Assistance	7.95
	Generali Travel Insurance	7.90

PERSONAL SERVICES, HOME CARE & MAINTENANCE

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Automotive Repair	Brake Masters	8.26
	Pep Boys	8.05
	O'Reilly Auto Parts	7.88
	NAPA AutoCare Center	7.74
	Firestone Complete Auto Care	7.63
Car Washes	Detail X Perts	7.96
	Quick Quack Car Wash	7.62
	Super Wash	7.59
Dry-Cleaning Services	Martinizing Dry Cleaning	7.91
	Tide Dry Cleaners	7.78
	CRDN	7.76
Handyman Referral Services and Home Repairs	Handy	7.37
	Thumbtack	7.13
	Angie's List	7.10
Home Security	Ring	7.99
	SimpliSafe	7.84
	Protect America	7.80
Home-Care Services For Seniors and Disabled	Senior Helpers	8.07
	Visiting Angels	7.63
	Bright Star Care	7.51
House Cleaning and Maid Services	Housekeeper	7.60
	MaidPro	7.57
	The Cleaning Authority	7.28

→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021

Storage Centers	SmartStop Self Storage	8.05
	SecurCare Self Storage	7.96
	StorageMart	7.72
	Life Storage	7.67
	Extra Space Storage	7.60

REAL ESTATE AND BANKING

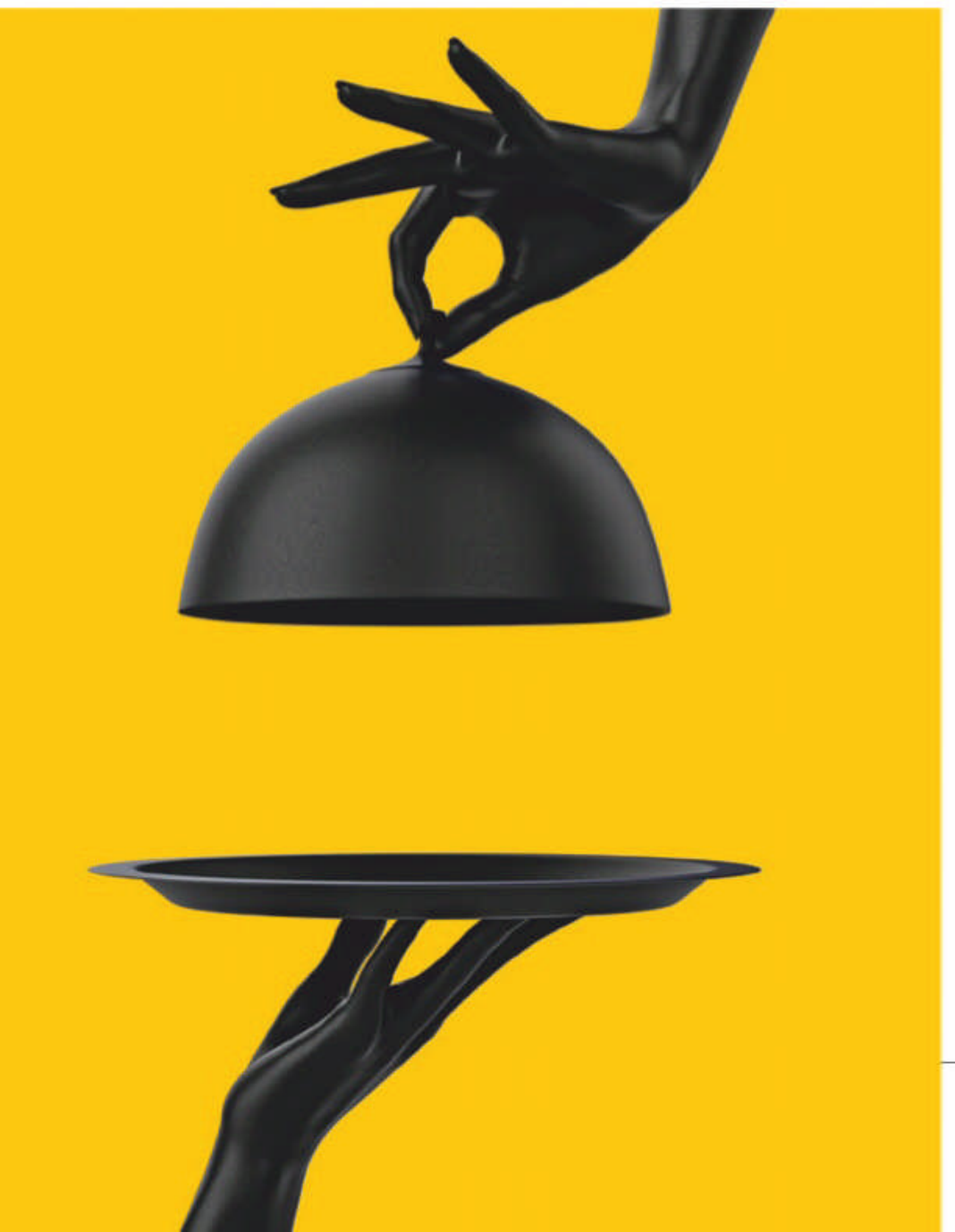
CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Asset Management	Vanguard	8.67
	Fidelity Investments	8.44
	J.P.Morgan	8.41
Commercial Banks	SunTrust	8.65
	U.S. Bank	8.20
	Capital One	8.18
	Citibank	8.13
	BB&T Bank	8.03
Crowdfunding Platforms	Kickstarter	8.49
	Indiegogo	7.79
	GoFundMe	7.53
Online Banking	Barclays Bank Delaware	8.52
	Charles Schwab Bank	8.49
	Discover Bank	8.38
Payment Services	Apple Pay	8.72
	Zelle	8.66
	American Express	8.62
Real Estate Agencies	Keller Williams Realty	8.00
	Better Home	7.69
	Century 21	7.65
	Realty One Group	7.54
	RE/MAX	7.46
Real Estate Database	RE/MAX	8.67
	Camden	8.18
	Apartments	8.06
Trading and Brokerage Services	Vanguard	9.01
	Edward Jones	8.91
	TD Ameritrade	8.69

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

CATEGORY	BRAND	SCORE
Airlines	Alaska Airlines	8.53
	Delta	7.97
	American Airlines	7.45
Amusement Park Experience	Disney Parks & Resorts	8.93
	Universal Parks & Resorts	8.93
	Hersheypark	8.84
Apartment Hotels, Extended Stays	Residence Inn by Marriott	8.10
	Homewood Suites by Hilton	8.00
	Staybridge Suites	7.94
Budget Hotel (1 to 2 stars)	La Quinta Inn & Suites	7.78
	Candlewood Suites	7.64
	AmericInn	7.60
	Baymont Inn	7.58
	Comfort Inn	7.58
Bus Carriers	Peter Pan Bus Lines	8.08
	Amtrak Thruway	7.47
	Megabus	7.31
Car Rental	Enterprise Rent-A-Car	8.10
	Sixt	7.95
	National Car Rental	7.75
Carsharing	Car2go	7.88
	Maven	7.38
	Enterprise CarShare	7.29
Cruise Operators	Viking Cruises	9.20
	Disney Cruise Line	8.85
	Celebrity Cruises	8.83

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Economy Hotel (3 stars)	TownePlace Suites	→ 8.55
	Hampton by Hilton	→ 8.55
	Embassy Suites	→ 8.54
	Drury Hotels	→ 8.47
	Springhill Suites	→ 8.46
Flights, Hotels and Holiday Deals Search Engines	TripAdvisor	→ 8.15
	Google Flights	→ 8.06
	Priceline	→ 8.00
Gas Stations	QuikTrip	→ 8.29
	Chevron	→ 7.79
	Shell	→ 7.76
Low-Cost Airlines	Southwest Airlines	→ 8.85
	JetBlue	→ 8.57
	Allegiant Air	→ 7.35
Luxury Hotel (5 stars)	Waldorf Astoria	→ 9.12
	Four Seasons	→ 9.03
	Park Hyatt	→ 8.99
Moving Services	U-Haul	→ 7.80
	IVL	→ 7.50
	Penske	→ 7.44
	Allied Van Lines	→ 7.38
	American Van Lines	→ 7.31
Music Festival	Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival	→ 8.51
	Austin City Limits Music Festival	→ 8.39
	Burning Man	→ 8.06
Premium Hotel (4 stars)	Hilton	→ 8.62
	Hyatt	→ 8.58
	Marriott	→ 8.55
Ridesharing, Taxi	Lyft	→ 8.13
	Uber	→ 7.85
	Curb	→ 7.70
Shipping and Delivery Services	FedEx	→ 8.32
	UPS	→ 8.30
	DHL	→ 7.77
Spa Resort & Retreat	LakeHouse Spa at Lake Austin Spa Resort	→ 9.03
	The Lodge at Woodloch	→ 8.84
	Spa Desert Springs at JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa	→ 8.19
Travel Agencies	Expedia	→ 7.98
	Travelocity	→ 7.73
	Hotwire	→ 7.51
Travel Management	Allure Travel	→ 7.80
	BCD Travel	→ 7.35
	Carlson Wagonlit Travel	→ 7.24
Vacation Rental	Airbnb	→ 7.99
	VRBO	→ 7.97
	Hotels.com	→ 7.75



→ *For the full methodology, see* NEWSWEEK.COM/ABCS-2021

UNCHARTED

Day and Nights Under Glass

Pitching a tent in a forest may fit the bill for some, but there are far more comfortable ways to vacation surrounded by nature. Ever dreamt of spending the night in a treehouse? How about a bubble under the stars? Or underwater? From a treehouse in a Swedish forest to an igloo under the Northern Lights, spending a night at one of these immersive hotels is an adventure in itself. —*Alexandra Schonfeld*

KEVIN PAGES

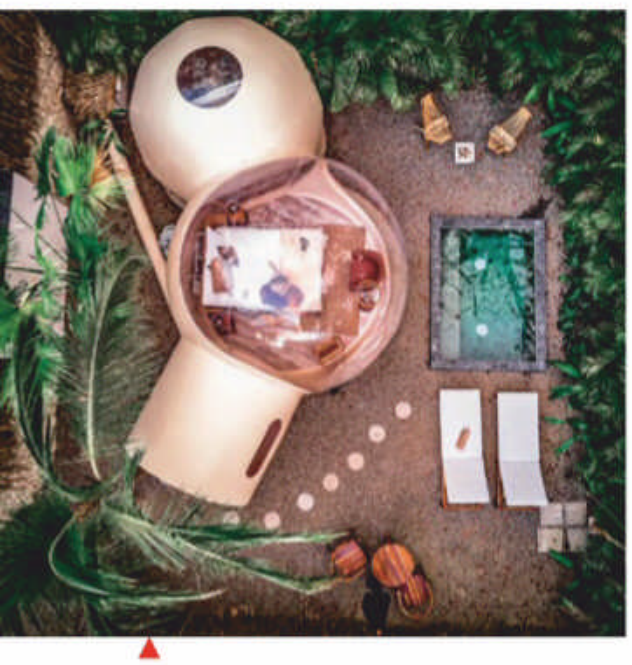


TREVOR NOAH ON STAYING SANE
"Jokes have a duty to the truth." » P. 48

BUUBBLE, ICELAND
Living in a bubble never looked as good as it does in these transparent structures surrounded by towering pine trees in the Icelandic wilderness. If you time your stay just right, you will be able to rest your head beneath panoramic views of the Northern Lights.



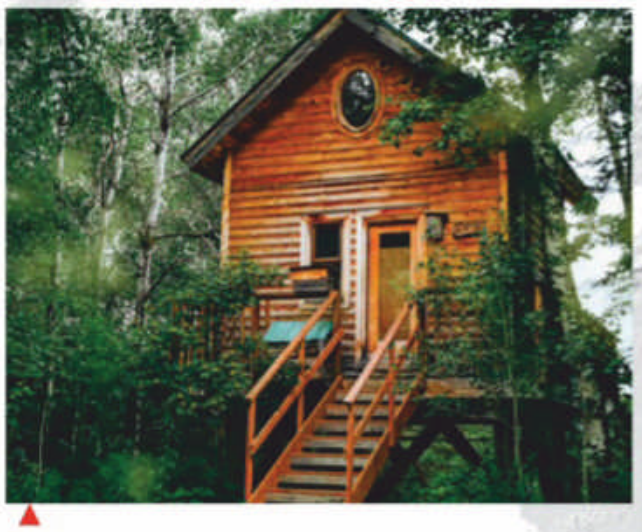
01 Campera Hotel
Baja California, Mexico
Unplugging is easy in the Valle de Guadalupe in Baja California, Mexico, a region filled with wineries and less than an hour from the rugged Pacific coast. These 12 bubbles are plopped right in the middle of rows of grape vines.



02 Satori Bubbles
Costa Rica
Sleeping in the jungle doesn't need to be uncivilized. These bubbles come with a private pool and fire pit and are a short walk from a beach where you may spot sea turtles. You may even pick up a tip or two to add a few years to your life: This area in the Nicoya Peninsula is one of the world's "blue zones," where the longest life spans have been recorded.

03 Sky Lodge
Peru
Spending a night on the side of a cliff? Voluntarily? Not for the faint of heart, these completely glass rooms hang off a cliff in the Sacred Valley in Cuzco, Peru. Checking in, though, is no easy feat; it requires either some serious rock climbing or trekking up a trail that features a zipline.





04 Canopée Lit
Quebéc, Canada
Leave life on ground behind with a night at this hotel in the trees. An expansive campground of hiking trails, cabins and transparent bubbles on 15-foot stilts, this is a nature lover's dream. Nearby is Saguenay Fjord National Park, a great spot for kayakers to explore the dramatic cliffs that frame the Saguenay River.

05 Buubble Hotel
Iceland
(See previous page)

01: CAMPERA HOTEL BURBUJA; 02: SATORI BUBBLES; 03: SKY LODGE; 04: MYRIAM BARIL TESSIER;



8



7

06 Miluna
Toledo, Spain
An hour away from the hustle of Madrid, this bubble hotel is secluded from any light pollution and has uninterrupted views of the stars every night. In the heart of the countryside of the Castilla la Mancha region, this place is a world away from city life.

07 Starlight Room
Italy
Unlike other hotels that have dozens or hundreds of rooms, this resort in the Dolomite Mountains has only one. The windows around the bed are all glass and the entire room can be rotated for the best view.

10



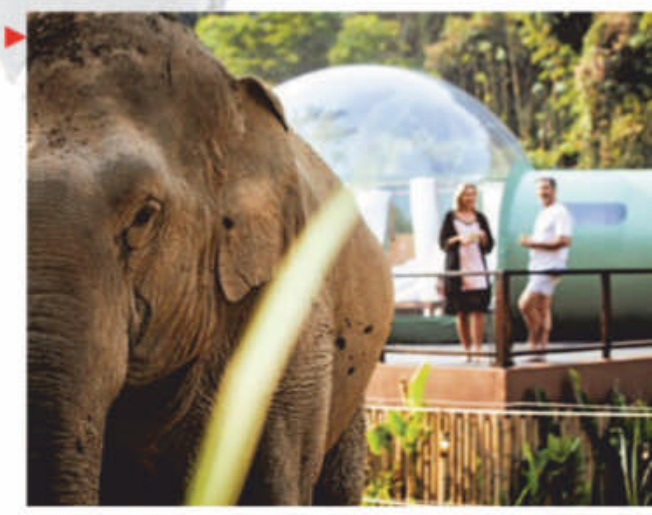
08 Tree Hotel
Sweden
Though not-so-easy to get to, this treehouse hotel in the northernmost part of Sweden is worth the trek. These unique rooms (one is shaped like a UFO, another is a cube whose outer walls are mirrors) allow you to take in forest life from above, including passing snowmobiles and moose. Accessible only by ramps or ladders, getting to these rooms is an adventure in itself.

9



09 The Muraka
Maldives
Glass hotels can be found not only above ground, but also underwater, like this one in the Maldives. Spending a night under the sea at the Muraka lets you be completely surrounded by colorful fish and maybe even a passing sea turtle. During the day the room shimmers as the light reflects off of the ocean and into your bedroom.

10 The Jungle Bubbles at the Anantara Resort
Thailand
Go on your own private safari. These "jungle bubbles" put you right in the action —watch elephants in the wild from the comfort and safety of our own living room. After the sun goes down, the bubbles offer unobstructed views of the entire night sky.



06: MILUNA; 07: GIUSEPPE GHEDINA; 08: JOHAN JANSSON; 09: JUSTIN NICHOLAS/CONRAD MALDIVES RANGALI ISLAND; 10: JASON GORDON/ANANTARA GOLDEN TRIANGLE ELEPHANT CAMP & RESORT

PARTING SHOT

Trevor Noah

IF THERE IS ONE COMEDIAN UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO CONTEXTUALIZE THE chaotic events of 2020, it's *The Daily Show*'s Trevor Noah. From COVID-19 to the Black Lives Matter movement, Noah has been a voice for those stuck at home trying to make sense of it all: "I don't believe that the world is ending but I do believe that keeping the world moving forward is a team effort." Noah says he's most comfortable doing the show when things aren't going smoothly, noting, "Finding my groove is less important than creating an honest show where we're doing our best to inform the audience and still remember to laugh whenever we can." With the election upon us, Noah thinks there's one thing that both the left and the right can agree on: Social media is making things worse. He says, "We can all agree that social media is inflaming tensions, inciting hatred and insulating us in bubbles that don't reflect the nuance of the real world." That said, Noah feels 2020 has also shown that "we're more connected than we've been made to believe and we can do more if we raise up the most vulnerable in our society."



"I do believe that keeping the world moving forward is a team effort."

ROBBY KLEIN/CONTOUR/GETTY

Do comedians have a duty to be political?
Comedians have a duty to tell jokes, and strangely enough, jokes have a duty to the truth. Comedy is the spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine go down and in 2020 there's more medicine than ever.

Are you eager to get back to the studio?
We're really lucky to still have the ability to make a show from home and so right now I don't think about the studio, I think about the election, I think about coronavirus, I think about Black Lives Matter, I think about people's jobs and I think about what we can do to help keep people sane while living through one of the craziest periods in human history.

Does BLM shares anything with the anti-apartheid movement?
The fight for freedom in South Africa was a fight to secure equal rights for people of color in a country where their rights had been suppressed. Black Americans from the very inception of America have been fighting for the very same.

How has Trump affected comedy?
I don't think he's had that much of an impact. If anything, Donald Trump has completely subsumed the news cycle and so everyone everywhere is always talking about Trump, which isn't great because that means a lot of other issues slip through the cracks. *—H. Alan Scott*

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