



VOICE

Keeping Abreast with
Human Resource Management



Interview with Mr. Kihmo Astaphan, Manager, Platinum Security

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We thank you for your comments on Issue #10, Lessons of COVID-19 for the youth. This week, we feature an Interview with Mr. Kihmo Astaphan, Manager, Platinum Security, Dominica.



grandson, a brother, a Father, an Employer, a Friend and in some cases yes, even an enemy. But that just goes to show that Kihmo Astaphan is just like everyone else, he lives and breathes and feels. Some people have the perception that I am supposed to be this unfeeling person, or a "bad gun-man as they say". The people who feel that way are the ones who do not know me personally but formed an opinion based on what they have heard or because of an isolated situation with me.

What I will say however, is that I am a very straight forward person. You know where I am coming from all the time; what you see is what you get. I am often told that I am not the most diplomatic person. I normally speak out of turn most times saying out loud what the average person is thinking but would think twice about saying. In a room, most times, you can be sure that I would be the most outspoken one, but I am also a kindred spirit.

I live for my children, family, and friends, they are my life and what drive me. I consider myself a risk taker. I think outside of the box all the time. And I am usually way ahead of time in my vision or ventures. I am not a follower. I try to lead in any aspect of my life or business idea. I thrive on being different and setting myself apart on every level. I live to the

challenge to uplift people, even at times when it is to my own detriment or it does not benefit me or my business.

In terms of Kihmo and my childhood to now, a lot has changed. I have transitioned from being a very aggressive, hyper energetic, hot headed, guy to a more passive, peaceful, person; well, I try to! Over the years, and with time you see things from a different vantage point as you age. Now, and I, stress again, I try to think before I speak; be a little more sensitive and more assertive.

I am trying more and more to stand back, and watch things unravel, rather than be in the fore front as is my natural demeanour, but I would still give my experienced suggestions and advice, if requested. At 48 years old; I turned 48 on Sunday June 21st, I find myself anticipating the big 50 a lot. I do not know why, but to me, it's a big milestone and a blessing to make it to that age in these times, so I pray that the Father allows me to get there gracefully.

I have done much, and I think that I have proven to myself that I can do exactly what I set out too, and can accomplish even more, by the grace of God, as this is motivation. I started this business at the age of twenty-five and I have accomplished a few things, though

Qu 1. Who is Kihmo Astaphan?

Ans. The answer to that question is as complicated as the person himself 😊. I really can't explain in a nutshell who I am. Because to different people I am different things. But Kihmo Astaphan is first and foremost, a person. He is a Son, a

nowhere close to what I believe is my full potential. I dare say that in Dominica, it is always a challenge to maintain a viable business: as my Father likes to say, one step forward, two steps backwards.

As it relates to where I am in life personally, and where I would like to be, there are different things that I am looking forward to: I am not married and have never been. I am looking forward to settling down with someone, who connects to me, someone who is an extension of me. We need to be singing the same song basically. At my age, I am not looking to fall head over heels in love but simply to be with someone who is compatible with me and has the same interest and aspirations as me. I don't want anyone to change their personality to accommodate me. Just be true to who you are and expect the same of me.

I am looking forward to continuing spending a lot of quality time with my children. I have been doing so since they were born, and it's becoming even more pleasurable as they get older. They are growing up very quickly and time is passing us by so I want to enjoy every moment that I can before they are too grown up to enjoy the little things with me. They are not as inclusive as they used to be, and I find myself taking breaks on weekend to go camping or boating or just doing something fun with them that they can enjoy and have fond memories of later.

It doesn't mean that I am not busy; most days I am at work until late. Really and truly my personal workday starts at 4pm, yet I am at work by 8:30 or 9am daily, but my day at my desk doesn't start until that time because there are so many things that need to be put in place daily before I can really settle down and get down to business myself.

To this end, I would like to note that it is important for businesses to find and recruit competent staff, to prevent managers from micromanaging and allow for more flexible work schedules and also be able to have a balanced personal life. The time I should be home enjoying a little Netflix, it's the time my day starts, and I

get to think and strategise on plans for the business.

Qu: Tell us about your children.

Ans: I am the proud father of five children. The Lord has blessed me with one son who is Mr. GQ himself and four darling daughters, who can also be boys, when the need arises and that is because of their versatile interests and the way in which they were brought up, being taught to enjoy everything around them.

My first daughter is almost 29 and is such a sweetheart. She was born in Guadeloupe; however, the distance has not dulled the father daughter relationship. My second daughters are twins and they just celebrated their sweet 16 in June. They are an amazing set of twins with all sorts of hidden talents and surprises. My last daughter is as feisty, brave and confident as me but at times shows another part that I don't recognize.

I make a conscious effort to spend as much time as possible with them so that I can guide and groom them. I cannot stress enough to them that they need to have their own legacy to leave behind because daddy won't always be there. Life is short and nothing is promised: today I am here, tomorrow I may be gone. They can't always depend on Daddy.

In their mind, Daddy is invincible but there will come a time when they will wake up and not have me around, so they need to have skill sets. As a young lady, you must be independent and ambitious, not to be reliant on anyone, not even daddy. Your primary function right now is to go to school, educate yourself and find something that interests you and allows you to have something substantial in life to fall back on.

I tell them constantly that when they move away, no one knows who Kihmo Astaphan is. I am no one. The onus is on them to find their own places in this life, on their own merit. I will not be able to help them. Yes, I will be their champion, but the real work will have to be on their part.

Qu: Platinum Security, how did it all begin?

Ans: Upon my return from school in Canada, I worked with my dad for about 5 years. Working for him was like working for Saddam Hussein himself. My Dad is not the easiest of person to deal with, worse yet to work for. However, I chose to capitalize on the opportunity to learn everything that I could from him: business savvy and simple common-sense strategies, that the average person would overlook but he would develop an entire business module from it. I chose to turn all the negatives about our working arrangement into positives, while all the time consoling myself with the thought that it was only for a while and I would be on my way soon. And as sure as I knew it, the time came when we had to part and go our separate ways. As they say, two male crabs can't stay in the same hole, so I moved on.

I took a lot of what I learned from him and moved on my own. Many were surprised that I left my fathers' business to work elsewhere, but when someone opens a path for you, you cut your way through to where you want to go. There are different paths to the same destination.

After I left my Dad, I moved to H. H. V Whitchurch Distribution Center, in Canefield, as the manager, for about a year. At that time, and being at a young age, I wanted to be versatile and started multitasking, so in addition to my job I also sold computers. I remember I sold Lennox Linton his first computer and subsequently set it up for him. We were close back then. We were both interesting in working out and would exercise together. Those were the good old days.

During that time, I also started doing house parties and created a group called Kamikaze in the early 90's. Kamikaze would fulfil the security void at events. I was always security-conscious and saw an opportunity to capitalize on fulfilling that need when required. We handpicked some of the most intimidating police officers and body builders and created a team of bouncers, now called event staff. They became the security personnel at the

gates who would search for weapons at events.

This level of security was new to Dominica, and there was some resistance initially. I remembered on one night, at a show at the old Grammar School grounds, which served as the Carnival City, we collected a box full of knives, cutlasses, and scissors, which were confiscated upon entry. We joked at the time that the patrons must have been going gardening and not to a fete. That was the moment when the police realised that we were on to something good.

As Head of Security of Kamikaze, I was recruited to manage security for the World Creole Music Festival (WCMF) for the first two (2) years. As a team, we drew up the security plans and made recommendations to ensure the safety of patrons and the venue. We were no nonsense kind of guys; the rules were the rules and were applied consistently with everyone. With the advent of Kamikaze, I had to be even firmer and stand my ground. People just never got over it and took everything personally, but I was simply doing my job. I have always maintained that there is no need to fear anyone, especially when it relates to doing your job and ensuring that people's rights are not being infringed on.

Eventually we were being called to provide event security all over the island, and so after five years of operations, Kamikaze evolved into Platinum Security in 1997; twenty-three years ago. Initially, when Platinum Security was founded, it was a real challenge getting clients. Additionally, my family name, Astaphan, did not help. No one was willing to give the Astaphan boy a chance; after all, his family already had money, right?

It was a very difficult time and I was starting to think that I had made a mistake; even my family members did not see the need for the service and did not contract our services. Sometimes, people do not see or share your vision.

I remember when we brought in the first armoured truck in Dominica in 1997. An Armoured truck was new to Dominica and once again Kihmo was ahead of his time. The Customs' officials did not know how to classify it, as it was the first of its kind. Businesses and individuals did not see the need for this service. Not even the banks, because no bank had ever been held up before. We were however, thinking ahead and out of the box.

We finally got our first client who paid us \$400 a month. This translated to less than a cent per dollar moved, yet we encountered great difficulty getting additional clients. I remember clearly that the Manager of a well-known bank, called me to a meeting in the board room of the Central Bank. When I got there, all the managers of the other banks were present and he said to me that my rates were too high and if I did not lower them, the banks would boycott me. All the managers present agreed with him.

I was 25 years old and all these men, who were in my dad's age group, said to me that we are going to boycott you. I said silently, "Kihmo, you are dead; you finish!" I straightened up and said I am here to work with you guys, and I offered a \$75 reduction, which they agreed to. That was how we were able to get business from the banks and for more than a decade some of these same banks would not agree to an increase in rates. I could not believe that the banks were threatening to boycott our business for \$75, when we were already moving money for less than a cent per dollar.

Presently we still have customers who are paying the same rates from since 1999, as they threaten to terminate the service if the rates are increased. Some jobs are not profitable, but we keep them to keep our staff employed and help maintain the pickup schedules.

There is no growth, and so I had to become very creative in looking at options to earn a living for my family and to allow my employees to be able to do the same. This led to the diversification into the retail

store, providing other auxiliary services, including selling of licensed firearms, and offering firearms training courses among other things. I have learnt that because Dominica is such a tough and price sensitive market one must become very creative to succeed, even if it means, resorting to selling ice, which incidentally I have also done.

We had a loan of \$5,000.00 monthly plus operational costs and we were earning only \$400.00 per month from our first customer. We were forced to ask the bank to renegotiate our loan agreement and that itself, is another story. It is a story most people, especially the younger persons should hear, because many believe that in the first year of having a business, they would be able to buy a car, or a house, and when they are not able to do so, they get despondent and quit. A few make some big-ticket purchase in the first or early years and the business goes bankrupt.

Qu: Speaking of ice, I remember you selling ice following the passage of Hurricane Maria. I found that this was very innovative, and you were quick with that venture. I found you just as responsive, with respect to COVID-19 and the sale of PPE's. I admire your ability to see an opportunity and seize upon it almost instantly. This is leadership in action.

Ans: It is. My line of work requires frequent travel and I am exposed to all sorts of creative ideas. I happily take every opportunity to capitalize on that. I also keep my eyes open when I travel and look for fresh ideas that can be applicable to my business and that can also be implemented.

But about Maria and the ice issue. Dominicans were very hot, very miserable, and very thirsty and we could not find a cold beer or drink anywhere. It was just terrible, even for us at Beau Bois. We were without electricity for six or seven months. I realised that ice was in high demand and since we had an ice machine, it was an opportunity to offer that service. We got some 10lbs ice bags which no one else carried, and people were placing their

orders for ice. We were not doing mass orders. There was a network of friends to whom I would deliver on my way to work or they would collect at my home or the office. It was not a big money maker, however it catered to the needs of persons at the time and led to new clients for other aspects of our business.

With COVID-19, in January, I travelled to the US and noticed that there was a shortage of masks, I sent a message to my neighbours, family and friends telling them to stock up on masks, as there is none in the US, but no one took me seriously. I then sent a message to our Office Manager and told her to go to the pharmacies and buy every single mask we can afford to buy. We needed the masks for our officers. Months later, the pharmacies were calling us, asking for masks, as they were all out! In January, we were on the ball. We gave persons the heads up, however, many did not pay heed.

During this time People would ask, "How is it possible that Kihmo, who is in the security business has masks, but the pharmacies have none? The reason is because many of my business associates reached out alerting me that they were no longer doing cameras but doing PPEs and wanted to know whether I was interested.

I took a calculated risk and ordered 5,000 masks in the first instance and literally before the masks landed, they were sold out. We subsequently made some more larger orders and they sold out, on all occasions. Sometimes to be successful, one must be willing to take calculated risks and I guess some people are not willing to do the analysis needed to help them push forward. One must also determine the quantum of money that one can afford to lose investing in a new venture.

In March, there was the news that the borders were about to be closed. In 48 hours, I was on a plane to Florida. On that trip I stocked up on food supplies and bought all the masks I could find. I got back to Dominica, a week and a half before the borders were closed, knowing it was inevitable that there would be restrictions on travel.

Qu. Now that we see that you were and are well prepared, how has COVID-19 affected your operations?

Ans: In the first few weeks of the lockdown, our business operations decreased by about 35%, as a result of the reduced operations of the banks and some of our other clients. We did not lay-off anyone, however, like most businesses we had to reduce working hours, with some employees working significantly below the normal 40-hour week. There was a significant amount of juggling and scheduling staff to ensure everyone got in the maximum number of hours possible weekly. We were also forced to reassign some employees and interestingly, some of them were reluctant to accept the changes initially.

I thank God that Dominica has not been affected and has not suffered to the extent of other countries. We can truly say that we are a God-fearing and blessed country and I commend our citizens for taking the necessary precautions and adhering to the safety standards.

I am, however, uncertain about the extent to which we are embracing the opportunities that have been given to us to analyse and put into perspective our own lives. For one, people spend more time with their families now, and that is already one positive coming out of COVID-19. Secondly, we found the convenience of working from home, which turned out to be the best of both worlds. People were also able to explore their hidden talents and found alternative ways to earning a living. We learned that we are able to conserve and live within our means or survive with the barest minimum. And finally, direct savings in our pockets, due to the plummeting prices of petrol. The last time I remembered getting those gas prices was in the late 90s early 2000 at \$6.00 & \$7.00 per gallon. At least now we can all explore Dominica during this time, without the fear of bursting our budgets.

My point is that there are many lessons to be learnt from COVID-19. Yes, we lost revenue, the economy took a hit, people are still home, however, once you have life you can survive and rebuild anything.

Some people say that I am in a position to say so, but I wasn't always in this position and not all that glitters is gold. I work hard like everyone else. I go home dead tired from work every night. I do not have set 8 to 4 hours. I push hard, and I don't give up until I have met my goal. So, when it's time to relax I take the same approach. I take "ME" time seriously, so that I can have a balance. Balance is GOOD! **Not everyone has a balance, a hobby, some me time!**

I look for the opportunities in every situation and go for it. I have had a hard run for 23 years, a hard run with numerous obstacles and setbacks. When we did the Cove, that was a big setback for us, that was a huge risk and we lost a lot of money. But like I said we can always bounce back. And I think it is fair to say that it was fun while it lasted. Dominicans created some wonderful memories at the Cove, and I am happy to have been part of that, so I would say that in the end, all was not lost.

I don't go about life looking at what I lost. I don't hold grudges; I forget what was said yesterday or what I didn't do and move to a new day. I choose to focus on what I can do. I mean education is always important, however, it makes no sense to me, if you cannot apply it to everyday life. I have gained lots of experience, I am street smart, and I can look at an opportunity and see how I could try to make it profitable.

Naturally we all go into business to make a profit, so if someone works hard and becomes successful, we should support and admire them for it, not be envious or hate them. **Success should not bring jealousy or enemies. Instead it should motivate others to follow suit.** I love knowing that I can be challenged into turning a profit in any venture, and to reinvest the proceeds and help others.

I don't think I pay enough attention to my earnings. I know that I work, I get paid and I am happy. Sometimes I lose track of things and I find myself asking "Where did this come from or where did it all go?"

I was moving offices some time ago and I found a cheque which my dad had given to me, close to five years ago for my son. I

never deposited it and found that to be incredible, so I called my dad to explain to him. Of course, he was disappointed and told me it was irresponsible of me and naturally refused to issue me a new cheque. I said but dad, I am not calling to tell you I wanted a new cheque, I will deposit the amount in his account myself, as it was my fault. I just called to let you know since the cheque was never drawn on your account. To me it was funny, but he wasn't amused at my irresponsibility, according to him. I just laughed and told him to relax.

I am not interested in just money itself, I thrive on the challenge and seeing my efforts become a reality. My passion is in doing what everyone else sees as unattainable and proving to myself that I have the skill to make it possible.

Qu- You mention about the 23 years of ups, downs, challenges and successes, I want us to talk some more of the challenges you have faced and the some of the successes you have enjoyed over the last 23 years in your business.

Ans: One of the challenges for Platinum Security was getting persons to understand that security was an absolute necessity and not a cosmetic part of their business, and that any cash not yet safely deposited in the bank, is a liability. I had to push that point everywhere I go. You can have cash, but it is a liability to you until it is safely deposited into the bank. Once deposited, it is now the bank's responsibility and it can now start working for you. It took us years to drive that message home.

Right now, the security business is plateauing as there are so many companies on the market. I tell customers what differentiates security firms is the ownership and the management of the company, the willingness to pay when the company is liable, and the willingness to fix issues and rectify clients' grievances. It is also about educating and coaching clients. In Dominica, there is a lot of pettiness with people not liking you on the perception that you have too much

already, others can do the work, and everyone must eat. And while I admit that on Fridays, I purchase from various vendors to patronize and support; in security you can't do that.

There is no compromise: you must get it right the first time, as you may not have a chance to fix it. You can't risk your assets based on being charitable. We all have a choice to do what we think is best for our business, so if someone feels that means offering the business to another firm, I say feel free, no hard feelings.

We have had situations of general stigma and stereo-type, based on personality clashes. Some persons have said they will never give Kihmo my business and when asked why; they can't give you a valid reason. They may have never hired us before or never worked with me directly, but these things only make me stronger and push me further.

Like all other business we have had our share of financial challenges, we have never had any external financial assistance, not from family or investors. It has always been Kihmo on his little island. Platinum Security was built from scratch; it was not inherited or handed to me. When this company was first started, I did not have a \$1.00 to my name. I had zero dollars and zero cents, and while my friends were able to free up and socialize as they pleased; I was constantly working, just like I am now.

To succeed one must be willing to put in the hours and willing to go the extra mile. You can't just do the barest minimum if you want to succeed. I remember growing up I would see my dad constantly up late at night working and burning the midnight oil and I would say to myself, "What is he doing up working at this hour?" I was young; in my late teens, the time when I went out partying, without a care in the world, drinking and feting. Now, I understand, because now I am doing the same thing my dad was doing – working upwards into the night, while others take their free up, so to each his own.

Another key challenge that we face is that we have always been light years ahead of

our time and we still are. Most of the services we provide, we have had to wait for them to grow on our clients to get used to the idea or see the need for it.

We have set the pace in terms of electronic security, but we are no longer the only providers of these services as was the case

"The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night,"

Henry Woodsworth Longfellow

before. There are many players in the game and there are some offering a \$50.00 camera when our cameras are maybe \$500.00. It is not that we are trying to make money out of our clients, but when it comes to security and you come to Platinum Security, you come to expect professionalism, quality products and services. We visit the client and provide advice on the most suitable camera for the specific application.

Some companies only realize the inadequacy and inefficiency of their system, when there is a robbery or employee pilferage. They then realise that the forensic part of the system is lacking, and they could not zoom in on images as the cameras were so pixelated or badly angled. Anyone can install a camera or an alarm, but it takes extensive training, knowledge and interest in your client to guide them properly and ensure they are getting value for money, and that is the Platinum difference. The market is now so saturated; that's why I keep

diversifying and keep looking at new ideas and initiative to set my business apart.

Another of our biggest challenges has been our human resource. I know often our office has called and would say, "Valda, we need help, we need you." We were hiring square pegs for round holes. In 2018, when we started re-building I decided I do not want anybody coming to work with me because I knew their father or their Grandmother. If you do not have the qualifications we cannot hire you. This is to ensure I stop micromanaging.

I find myself not doing what is required of me to advance the business, but instead overseeing duties and fixing mistakes that are made. We solicited your help in hiring the right set of people. Our human resource challenge also included employees who did not share or appreciate the vision of the company. We experienced a lot of staff turnover in the earlier years, however, over the years this has improved, as I too, had to rethink my management style. My longest serving employee is going on 19 years or more. Over 50% of my employees have been with the company for 10yrs+.

Our biggest challenge yet is our clients' unwillingness to pay a rate that will in turn translate into increased wages to our staff. Valda, I am not taking a big stone for you for \$5.00 per hour and that's what persons are asking the officers to do. They are asking them to get stabbed, shot, bitten for \$5.00; it is tough. They are there to secure your assets but is the value of your asset more than that of their life.

Most security officers are unable to pay for a decent insurance coverage even if we would be paying part of the premiums. I don't think that Dominicans respect security officers and the role that they play, but the value of their purpose is not reflected in the compensation they receive.

We have had to experiment with payment options. We now pay a flat rate to some of our officers and the benefits include lower turnover, lower no shows and more motivated staff. It does not mean that our customers are paying more but we have

decided to reduce our profit margin to keep our staff stable and happy, which in turn does the same for the company. Basically, it is my view that security for many Dominican business owners and to some extent the local law enforcement community, is still perceived as cosmetic, so we are fighting a constant battle, but we won't be giving up.

Qu: What are some of the successes enjoyed?

Wow. I have done so many things. I told my children recently, "Daddy can rest now!" I have tried on several occasions to bring a sense of safety, joy, entertainment, relief to Dominica and Dominicans. We have done a few things outside the box, which were not security related.

Platinum Security introduced an event called "Fresh Air Films," and contributions went to the HIV Foundation managed by Nurse Julie Frampton, in the early 2000s. We built a 30ft projector screen and we were charging \$1.00, \$3.00, \$5.00 and showed family-oriented films to strengthen family ties and bonds. Patrons could enter with their lunch bags, beach chairs, and their blanket. This was one of my more personal accomplishments.

Another accomplishment, which is dear to my heart, is the assistance we provided to the people of Petite Savanne, after Erica. I heard that there were about 400 people stranded and we mobilized immediately. We paid to get rubble cleared to access my boat for rescue, purchased supplies; I also got some supplies from my dad's company, HARA Agencies, and over a three-day period we rescued over 121 people. This, to me, is one of my biggest accomplishments possibly the most humane and daring thing I have ever done.

The fact that I could pull a team of friends together on short notice and they were more than happy to join me, still amazes me. At the time I gave no thought of my safety or the implications to my family if something happened to me out there, I had one goal in mind, to assist in the rescue of the people of Petite Savanne, especially my Pappy son. Every so often I

go onto YouTube (*Tropical Storm Erica Rescue Mission Platinum Security*) and relive those moments. It keeps me grounded, reminds me of the fragility of life is and to value people and their presence. Maria drove that home even further.

"All great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word:

Freedom, Justice, Honour, Duty, Mercy, Hope,"

Winston Churchill

Qu: How has your company contributed to assisting with the fight against COVID-19?

Ans: We have contributed to the fight against COVID-19 by providing security officers and being on the frontline. All security firms have been on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19. The security officers, the police officers, firemen are also at the greatest risk, not only the health care workers. When everyone was home with their families, they were and are the ones trying to keep us safe. Platinum Security has been one of the main suppliers of masks and thermometers, especially for government's entities and the corporate community. We have also, via WhatsApp, sensitized the public and our staff about sanitizing, wearing of mask, social distancing.

Qu: How do you think your staff feels about their contribution to the efforts re COVID-19, especially as they are on the frontline? What were their fears and what has been their attitude?

Ans: They have been good. During the lockdown, we provided transportation for staff, so we were assuring them that they

were safe and did not have to worry about going on public transportation. We also provided them with weekly supplies of PPEs. We created a WhatsApp group to keep them informed and maintain contact. We also provided regular training and information on safety. In general, I think the staff have been very supportive and they responded very nicely. I can honestly say I am proud of them and their response to the entire situation.

Qu: How do you see COVID-19 affecting business, not just yours, but business going forward post COVID-19 Lockdown?

Ans: People always offer the argument that the security sector will thrive in any economy: after a natural disaster, civil unrest and in a booming economy, security is needed even more so. I am not one to profit from peoples' misfortune, but maybe one could say that it was foresight going into a business that would be required in any environment or circumstance. However, the businesses that will survive through the trying times are the ones that will think outside of the box.

We had this little discussion about the little rum shops/bars, that were prohibited from selling alcohol and many worried that they wouldn't survive. I think that's a wrong perspective. They could have simply turned their efforts into selling flour, bread, milk, biscuits or canned goods. Why do you want to stick to alcohol and deprive yourself of earning an income? Companies need to be diverse in their thinking to be sustainable and look for alternative opportunities beyond their normal core business.

Like most nonessential services, Outdoor World was closed during the lock down. We opened an online platform and in a short space of time we sold out all our pools and hammocks. If the need arises and things get really tough, I can fish and will fish, to ensure I can provide food for my family. I'm just saying that we must always have a backup plan and the more viable options there are in business, the higher the rate of success.

Qu: Great job. You operated during the lockdown as your business is an essential service, what new can we expect from you, Platinum Security and Outdoor World, post COVID-19 lockdown?

Ans: We took the opportunity of the down-time to get our building completed. In the next couple of months, once the all-clear is given, we will be opening an indoor shooting range and mini store at the shooting range. Our training facility will also be available for rent. Our training facility is a state-of-the-art training room that can comfortably accommodate 20 persons. We are also planning on opening a satellite office for doctors, lawyers, and the business sector, who do not have an office and are interested in renting that space for the day or a few hours.

In terms of Outdoor World, we will be expanding the store and keep on doing what we do best: bringing in the products and keeping everyone happy in the outdoors. We may bring back The Cove, who knows? I'm looking forward to an oldies-goldies jam!

Qu: Any parting words

Ans: I would first like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Jacqueline Fadelle, former Human Resource Manager at the National Bank of Dominica, who encouraged me to start the Security Officers Division of Platinum Security. I have not seen her in a while. I need to go and look for her. Ms. Janice Thomas for sticking out the first 15 years with the company and who still play a role, no matter how minor it is. I would also like to thank my customers and clients for their continued support and my staff for their dedication and service, including Shirlyn Joseph, Vermont Esprit, Royston Azille and the officers who have been with us over a decade.

It was not easy, and the fight continues. Just have faith as we always come out on top. My Children who have had to endure countless no shows from dad for Opening of School in Sept and special events due to my business travels. I owe a big debt of gratitude. I also thank my family, friends, critics and well-wishers, without whom

none of this would be possible. And to you, Valda, thank you for the opportunity to share my story.

Thank You Kihmo for so generously sharing your story with us. May God continue to Bless you, your family and Companies.

We will explore the topic, "Pushing Through Fear to Success," in Issue # 12.

We look forward to hearing from you with comments on this article, suggestions for topics to be covered and sharing of your HR experience.

We have moved to 78, Independence Street, Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica

Please feel free to share this Newsletter with your contacts. We also welcome guest authors and look forward to receiving your articles for publication.

We, at VF Inc, stand ready to serve and be of service to our clients and prospective clients, "with Integrity and Excellence," in keeping with our Motto.

Until next week, May God continue to Keep us in the Palm of His Hands. Please send us your questions, comments and share your experience managing in the COVID-19- era at info@vfinc.org. You may also reach us by telephone: 1 767 275 0566/617 0566.

