

Exhibit 3 Insider Article

We're a couple who was furloughed from our jobs, so we're using the time in self-isolation to turn our passion project into a viable business — here's how we're making it happen

By
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Anastasia Bendebury and Michael Shilo DeLay Apr 16, 2020, 4:37 PM



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In early March when Italy issued its stay-at-home order, we were still at work. Michael was teaching high school physics, and Nastia was guiding science and wine tours in the Pacific Northwest. After work, we dreamed together about ways to help people develop a stronger relationship with science.

On March 23, [Oregon governor Kate Brown issued an executive order](#) that shut down all non-essential businesses in order to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Schools shut down, tours were canceled, and state forests closed. Overnight, we found ourselves [on furlough](#), with ample time to make some serious progress on our goals.

A few weeks before Governor Brown issued the Oregon stay-at-home order, we'd launched our website, [demystifyingscience.com](#). The initial goal was to use it to showcase our ideas — a sort of long-form resume for getting hired to write about science. However, we quickly realized that we wanted it to be something much bigger. We wanted to create a media company that would help people make sense of the world by clarifying confusing science.

We put our heads together and came up with strategies for getting published — and getting paid. Flush with time, each of us wrote several new articles a week, and spent our free time promoting them on places like Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter. It worked — in the first month, 17,000 people read our work.

The aliens. Anastasia Bendebury and Michael Shilo DeLay

In an effort to produce more widely accessible content, we started a [YouTube](#) show about two aliens on a mission to help earthlings escape from the chaos of misunderstanding. The launch of the channel coincided with the publication of our first commissioned piece, an article for Nautilus Magazine about the [mechanisms of COVID-19 infection](#).

Here's our advice for quarantined couples looking to hatch their own projects while cooped up at home:

Find a project that fits both of your interests and skill sets

We knew we wanted to work together on something, but we also knew that we're very different people. We have diverging ideas about science, art, technology, cats — just about anything it's possible to have an opinion on.

To figure out something that would interest both of us, we talked to a lot of people that had started their own businesses. Immediately, it became clear that whatever we chose would require us to work harder for ourselves than we had ever worked for anyone else. It took a lot of honest conversations to find a project to which we were both willing to devote so much time.

After sifting through everything from starting an outdoor science charter school to building a climbing gym, we realized that there was only one very useful pursuit on which we were already spending most of our free time: clarifying confusing science.

Figure out what you're willing to give up

We'd both worked as laboratory scientists at top universities across the country for more than a decade, been published in academic journals, and completed PhDs at Columbia. Everyone expected that we would either get jobs in the biotech industry, consulting, or academia. Instead, we chose to teach and guide, taking huge pay cuts in order to open up time for our independent projects.

Our low-income jobs were a carefully calculated move that we made well before the COVID-19 pandemic. We made less than \$40,000 a year between the two of us, but gained the time necessary to figure out what we wanted to offer the world. Nastia studied illustration, wrote a novel, and honed her ability to speak to all kinds of people — whatever their background. Michael drew on his mathematical background in biophysics to begin rendering visualizations of light, gravity, and electromagnetism using a 3D animation software.

The year leading up to the stay-at-home order was one of the most productive ones on record, but our financial situation meant we had to sacrifice a lot to stay afloat. We cooked all our meals at home, didn't drink alcohol, and only bought things that we *really* needed: groceries, gas, and equipment for the website or the puppet show. When we got together with friends, we did things that didn't cost much — an evening spent playing music in the park or a day on the coast foraging for mushrooms.

Now that we're on furlough, we're reaping the benefits of having downsized our spending to little more than rent, groceries, and gas. Living like this isn't for everyone — it feels good to be able to spend money freely — but it does provide a lot of time for producing something for yourself rather than for someone else.

If you find yourself feeling like the time and energy you're devoting to your job is keeping you from working on the projects you're dreaming about, consider what you can do without. Being on furlough is a great time to have this conversation — and will give you a reason to make long-term changes for when things get back to normal.

Find people who need your work

It was really gratifying to see that people loved our scientific explanations — 17,000 people came to read about them in the first month and we received hundreds of likes and shares on social media — but the furlough put us under a lot of pressure to figure out how we could monetize our ability to explain. Though we'd been honing our skills for months, we hadn't made a single red cent off the website.

We studied common [online business strategies](#) — affiliate links, online courses, selling stuff — but they didn't align with how we wanted to present ourselves to the world, or with our minimalist values. It seemed hypocritical to buy as little as possible ourselves, but to structure our money-making strategy on getting other people to buy things.

Instead, we imagined a business-to-business strategy, where Demystifying Science sold the service of scientific explanation to publications and other organizations that needed to provide their customers with high-quality content.

To find clients, we harvested the ideas we'd already written about for our website and put together pitches for our favorites — we each have three to four going at any given time. We compiled a list of publications that we wanted to work with, including ones that were long-term goals like National Geographic, Scientific American, and Wired magazine.

In each pitch, we lead with a few sentences about our qualifications. The next section of the pitch is a bullet-point list of the most interesting ideas in the article. The final section lists the people that we would interview if the pitch was purchased.

There's been a lot of outright rejection, and even more absolutely silent rejection. But in the first two weeks, we're on track to cover our rent.

Learn to wrestle

Good ideas are only about 5% of the challenge — the rest is figuring out how to be effective. It turns out that it can be hard to be effective with a romantic partner, since it requires the ability to have difficult conversations without attempting to destroy each other.

Before the pandemic, we could leave the house, go to the gym, find some way to cool off when it got too intense. Now that we're under the same roof all the time, it's become more urgent than ever to criticize each other without attacking the person underneath.

Building a business together requires a lot of difficult, very honest conversations. If an idea is no good, then it's got to go. When someone misspeaks, it's got to be clarified. When someone makes a mistake, it needs to be corrected.

It's necessary to rearrange expectations, to believe in the fact that your partner has good intentions, even if they've said or done something that seems alien and weird to you. It creates a safe space for conversations, especially those where ideas are still in the process of being formed. You've got to learn to patiently ask questions of your partner until you find the kernel of truth in what they're saying, even if they're still incapable of saying it directly.

This doesn't mean you will always agree strategically, but it does mean you can find common ground without resorting to the resentful, "Let's agree to disagree."

Take the cold shower

Advancements in remote work means we can spend our furlough developing a truly global community of "demystifiers," so that we can be even more effective when the machine kicks back into gear. We're looking for people that are interested in getting involved, who want to help create a more robust relationship between humans and nature.

We envision Demystifying Science as a big team, a media company that helps its audience come to reliable conclusions about the world. It's an ambitious vision, one that will take years to achieve. But there's no other way of getting there except by going all in.

Whatever you and your partner are dreaming about, now's the time to do it. The pandemic has stripped away all excuses. Stay at home orders will be lifted, the hospitals will empty, the stores will open again. The world will keep going.

Will you be ready to go when it spools back up again?

Anastasia Bendebury studied the role of electricity in bacterial communication during her PhD at Columbia University. She's also studied infectious disease, aging, and reproductive medicine at UCSD, UCSF, and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Michael Shilo DeLay studied nanoscale mechanics during his PhD at Columbia University, after working on cell-signaling for nearly a decade at Yale, Ohio State, and UCSF. They're the creators of Demystifying Science, a science literacy organization devoted to providing clear, mechanistic explanations for natural phenomena.