

## INTERVIEWS

# Workpuls Interview: Burke Files

How are businesses handling the coronavirus outbreak? Did they have to close? Are their employees working remotely? We interviewed Burke Files of the FEE Inc on the topic, but we also discussed some work from home tips.

Posted on April 6, 2020 by  Bojana Djordjevic



**Workpuls interview**

**Burke Files**



As we started investigating how businesses around the world were affected by the

industries. On our first video call we had the opportunity to talk to Burke Files, the President of the [FEE Inc.](#) They do financial investigations, due diligence, anti corruption and anti money laundering courses, and their business was heavily affected by the current situation.

You can listen to the full interview in the video below, or read the transcript.



**Workpuls:** I'm here today with Burke Files of the FEE Incorporated from the US. We're here to talk about the effects the coronavirus had on his business and how it's working out right now, what are the expectations and so on and so forth. So for starters, tell us a little bit about your company -

**Burke Files:** I don't have the usual business model. I'm an international financial investigator. I specialize in multinational investigations for due diligence or fraud. I also do a lot of teaching, I teach due diligence courses, advanced anti money laundering courses and anti corruption work and courses. Typically, I'll have one or two classes a month, and the last one was in Nigeria, at the University of Ibadan about three and a half weeks ago. And After that, nothing - everything has shut down. For me all classes and teachings have ended or been cancelled between now and June, and even the ones in June want to be put on hold. In terms of doing any international investigations there were some opportunities that I could have taken but I just couldn't get to those places. One of them was in Zambia. The flights don't go there anymore.

**Workpuls:** Okay. There are more consultants in your company, you're not the only one doing this?

**Burke Files:** No, I had some employees, I had to let them go because I could not pay them. Some of

working in a machine shop. The other two are actually driving cube trucks, up into a pick up and deliver. It's been, on both the investigations and the teaching side has been devastating. I'm filling my time by doing a little reading and working on another book. I've got a lot of time to work on the new book so hopefully it'll go quicker,

**Workpuls:** At least something. It's obvious that you had to change everything there, are you able to do any of the consultations or training online? Are people even doing those types of training online and now with the outbreak and everything?

**Burke Files:** That's a question that I've been asked many times and I've tried on these certification courses, corruption, due diligence, anti money laundering. I've tried doing them online, but it doesn't work.

We get about 30% less retention, and it's online education is as opposed to in person. And the workshops I hold are very dynamic. They're not just sitting there, that the students and the delegates are in there interacting. They're giving, being given solutions that they have rather

to work online.

**Workpuls:** Yeah, when there's a lot of interaction between the participants and everything, of course, it's much better to do it in person than online. You mentioned that some of the training and everything were postponed even by the end of May and or even June, do you expect that you'll be able to get back on track once this is all over?

**Burke Files:** I don't know. I don't think it's going to be a light switch and June is going to be wonderful. Any particular one of these classes whether I'm teaching on behalf of another organization, or it's one of the organizations I'm part of, take three months to ramp up to get this, the location secured to do the publicity, and to do the recruiting of students, it takes time.

And a couple of these groups that have me do the instruction for them. They're having a problem because not only are they not able to put on the instructions, but the hotels and the venues are not returning their funds.

So it's a double hit for them.

industries.

**Burke Files:** You describe it well.

**Workpuls:** Yeah. And you said something when you responded to my query the first time... You mentioned that some of the paperwork in the banks was done on parking lots due to this.

**Burke Files:** Yes. A client was closing on a house in Texas, and the bank had the lobby shut down. So they actually went out to the parking lot, completed the paperwork on the trunk between the trunk of a car and the bed of a pickup truck. And then they went to file it at the county recorder's office in Texas, which was also closed. So the comment was, "Well, you've got the loan, you owe the money, you have the house, we'll get it recorded when things open up."

**Workpuls:** Wow! It's really incredible to see how so many different industries, so many different places, so many different people were affected by this in many different ways. Of course, retailers

started working remotely. Were you working from home before or did you guys have office?

**Burke Files:** The office is at my home. All of my former employees and contractors - an office makes enough sense for us because if we're sitting in the office we're not making money. We go where the internet databases and the newspapers don't, and that's where we go; we get that piece of information or a little nuggets of wisdom and folly that others just don't look for. It's a fascinating work environment. I'm so thankful it found me but right now it's a bit rough.

**Workpuls:** It will hopefully be able to get back on track once this all settles down at some point. So you're already obviously used to preparing the teachings and the seminars at home and basically working from home. What would be your tips for all the people who haven't done this type of work before who are just now, being forced into it, especially if they have families and pets at home and things can get really insane with all of those?



She's like, "I don't know, I'm playing with the kids, I'm having a good time. We're fixing stuff up at the house." And in their own way they've kind of hit the solution, is that **you have to have a plan for every day**. You have to have realistic goals and steps to achieve those goals. Right now my goal is to write a third of a chapter every day, and it's technical writing so it takes some time. As well as to read more of my collection of professional books on money laundering and fraud and due diligence and they're really dry, they're boring. So it's a task, I tell you that, hopefully my book will not be dry and boring.

**You have to have a plan for every day. You have to have realistic goals and steps to achieve those goals.**

**Workpuls:** Well, you do have the time to refine it during this quarantine period. And also any tips on that, since your employees are obviously, you are not working from an office and dedicated office space? How did you manage to manage your

team managers?

**Burke Files:** A good investigator you cannot manage; they're absolutely unmanageable. However you can corral them. We just have a few rules. We have the benefit of doing well and doing good at the same time. Second, never lie to either anyone around us or yourself. That's the one we lie to the most is ourselves. I believe I'm skinny and tan, of course, it doesn't work. And really provide value to the client, if you go down a dead end, that really was a small chance of profitability. You just have to credit those hours back to the client and let them know that you tried but it didn't work. Other than that, they're motivated individuals, they're creative individuals. They've worked in some of the harshest environments. And when I tell you that each folks have worked everywhere, from the boardrooms in London and New York, to the jungles of Latin America and the Savannas of Africa, that's not only true, that's been in the last three, four months we've done all of those things.

**Workpuls:** Wow!

make it to this year, Honduras was my hundred and seventh country open to it.

**Workpuls:** Wow, that's amazing.

**Burke Files:** Our people are amazing, they really are. You get to meet some of the most amazing folks and you travel if you just go sit down over a cup of coffee or a bite to eat and start talking.

**Workpuls:** Yeah, I can imagine. Do you think you'll be able to get your employees back and just return the business to the normal that it had before all this?

**Burke Files:** I hope so but the indications tell me what was back in 2019 is not going to be again. This is a great dislocation of businesses, employees and employers. It's going to be very difficult as it reassembles itself. I think that the coronavirus, this particular virus is going to be with us for probably at least 18 months.

we'll see in other places of the world when their winter comes, that they'll see their spike. I hope all of the research that I've been given is incorrect but I expect that to be the case. So I'm trying to prepare for the next two years, not just the next few months.

**Workpuls:** Yeah, that makes sense. It's definitely time to plan way ahead for everybody, not just to think about the next couple of months, next couple of months are probably going to be the toughest but still, if this prolongs it's going to take a much larger toll than anybody expected.

**Burke Files:** I think you are correct.

**Workpuls:** You mentioned also that you had some mergers and acquisitions that are currently on hold because of this. Are they going to take off again when this is over, or do you expect that it's going to be a fallout from these cases?

**Burke Files:** I don't think the mergers that we were doing the due diligence on behalf of are

acquisitions in late summer and early fall. It's the companies that are surviving that weren't heavily leveraged, we'll be able to acquire many of the smaller firms that have been severely damaged by the downturn. And they'll be going at bargain basement prices and they'll get gobbled up quick. When you're paying full value, you're very concerned that you're getting full value for your dollar when you're bargain basement shopping. You buy six sweaters if one of them got a hole in it or stain in it, you didn't see that. So what?

**Workpuls:** Yeah, that's definitely true. I think we covered all the bases regarding the work and the remote work and tips and all that. I don't know if there's anything else you'd like to share with the viewers and anybody else who's listening in.

**Burke Files:** Yeah. It's hard, but plan for the worst, plan for a two year downturn. I'm not talking about your toilet paper and tin food. The American are... Actually the distribution systems throughout the developed world are amazing, they'll survive. I'm looking at career wise, financially. It's going to be a hard time and what



your ear and your mind to the changes you see around them and how you can adapt to them. I am a knucklehead, I like to fight. I like to challenge, I wish to push things through. And this is one of the many times that life tells me, "Ha, that's not going to work, you're going to have to adapt."

**Workpuls:** Well, I hope you'll be able to, we all need to somehow be able to adapt to everything that's coming for now. I want to thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this interview and to discuss this issue further. I think it's very important that we, as a business community, shine a light on how businesses were affected. And not only physical brick and mortar stores and retailers and restaurants, but there are many other businesses that were hit by this and that will continue to be hit by this as long as it prolongs. So thank you so much for sharing your experience and your insights and tips on everything.

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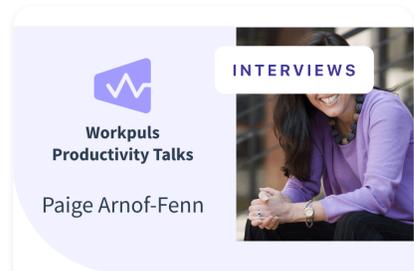
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