

WEB CHAT: Working Remotely

Overnight, many of our teams are now working remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic. Watch our recorded informal conversation with Association North members that have embraced working from home prior to social distancing. Listen and watch as they share their tips and tricks, how they maximize their workday, ways to communicate with colleagues and more.

There was Q&A, and polling during the webchat with the participants as well, so in the following document we have captured the key conversations with timestamps, some insights from our panelists and helpful chat conversations from our participants.

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Facilitated by:

[Justin Bieganek](#), Mercury Creative Group and Associations North Board Member

Panelists:

- [Matt Anfang](#), MN Commercial Association of Realtors
- [Tanya Guy](#), NACM North Central
- [Maria Huntley](#), CAE, MN Academy of Family Physicians
- [Ed Klemz](#), Central Coast Solutions

Staff Participant:

- [Sarah Ruzek](#), Associations North

LINK TO RECORDING:

https://zoom.us/rec/share/4fBkKlnszX1IYKPDz1_Sd4AfGZ6-X6a8gHlc-vMjUm4Pz6luTkW7eRLHOLBVrk

Video Key Messages with Timestamps: *Total viewing time is 1:09*

The following transcription is the abbreviated messages from the webinar. Use the timestamps to quickly jump to the questions and answers you are looking for from the panelists.

You can skip the welcome and how to use Zoom, and begin with intros of the panelists beginning at 6:50 minutes in.

Introduction of Panelists:

- Maria: 8:00
- Tanya: 10:00
- Matt: 12:30
- Ed: 14:55

Chat ?: Communication tools and software participants are using

Questions to Panelists

18:12: How are you proactively communicating with your teams and what software is your organization using that found effective and efficient?

18:20: Ed, Three-tiered approach, general voicemail inbox, email in mailbox, chat, mobile and desktop, and Monday.com for project management.

20:23: Maria, tell us how you collaborate with your team while being remote? Been remote for a long time, and minimal adjustments needed during this time. Important for us is setting up protocol for what channel to use. For example, when to use chat, telephone or text. General cultural expectations as a team. Weekly check in video calls,

and we encourage team members to turn on their video as we are more connected that way. Intentional recurring one-on-one check-ins at the beginning. We encourage frequent communication and interaction utilizing all types of mediums to connect/communicate.

23:00: Matt, we use our VOIP phones that alerted team members when and when they were not available to allow them efficient production time. We push our members back to our website for some of the FAQ's and most up to date information. Communicate via text and email, along with video calls are how we connect. We don't force a specific time for our weekly meetings as my team needs the flexibility with their family needs.

25:00: Tanya, 100% remote is new to us. Sales and Support is comfortable w/ the tools we have. Other departments and team members aren't. We have scheduled calls weekly. We have learned that we need to educate and help our team on the technical setups, including cameras on laptops, different ways of accessing our files. We do regular check-ups, that are health check ins, and staying open w/ the new rules, and creating some social hours to engage with our staff in a different way. Get comfortable in front of the camera. Be okay with who we are and being comfortable in the new format.

27:00: Justin asks the panelists about trust. How do you embrace trust in remote working? You are not in front of your staff, you don't physically see them, how do you give them work, set them up for success and then get out of the way.

27:34: Matt: the last several years we have been going through remote work. Each of the four team members has a day they work from home and that works for us. We anticipate that someone will be doing laundry, preparing a meal during the day, but work must get done, and having trust with my staff is key to this. Matt wonders what will happen after this...will the team not want to come in at all? "I have to trust my staff, and if I don't, perhaps they don't belong in the organization."

29:14 Maria: Maria echoes what Matt stated about if you don't trust your employees, they are probably not the right fit. Giving people what they need to be successful is key. "We have a small enough organization so we know if someone is not holding their weight, we can see it. If someone needs help, we can feel it, and you can adjust accordingly." What about kids, and especially now that they have to be home? Everybody is doing their very best, and if they are taking a break to be with their kids for lunch, or switching laundry, in this reality, does it matter? I know they will figure out the best way to get the work done. I have a 7 and a 9-year old and I can't tell you how many times they have appeared on camera with me in a meeting. And it doesn't change the result of the call and the work. Be kind. Be supportive because we are doing our best to figure it out together.

31:08 Tanya: Just because we are working from home doesn't mean we can be lax about our team members. There are set expectations and we need to uphold them. To be successful, you gotta get out of their way, but you need to be clear on what the expectations are. It doesn't matter where you are sitting, do the work. There is still performance management, it is just taking a different form. But what will disciplinary actions look like over video chat? How do we have tough conversations...and what will that look like in the next couple months? There still is an expectation about the function that we play in the organization and our responsibilities are."

33:03: Ed: Not everyone is cut out for the work at home lifestyle. The idea of giving them the tools they need and any correction and attention they need from an employee standing point is key. To help them keep their focus. Having expectations that are low, will get low results. Let this settle for a week. But then it should be as much as business as normal. The fact that you are sitting at a different desk does not mean that the expectations for work should be any different.

34:10: How can we help our participants listening today and other leaders adjust to this new remote working situation? How can we be more disciplined and ignore the distractions at home?

34:45: Maria: Having boundaries that work for you are important. Figure out when to stand up and walk away from work, which is different for everyone. As leaders, everyone needs something a little bit different to be productive. Some need everything set up just right. Others can open up their laptop anywhere and be productive. Neither is right or wrong, it's a reality. To the best of your ability, provide each individual with what they need to help them be productive.

36:40: Matt: Boundaries. Our team includes availability time on our Outlook Calendar with time blocks and that helps manage Matt's expectations throughout the day. My team is very open with sudden changes in the day, so they need flexibility, and I embrace that; but they have 24 hours to get 8 hours of work done.

38:20 Melanie (participant): I have worked from home for 10 years. One thing I had to do is make it clear with my family that working from home did not mean I had free time. I had to make it clear to them what my schedule was and when I was working.

38:46 Ed: This first week, employees new to remote working, are using this technology as a crutch. Team members saying I don't have the same display or monitor that I do at work. It's a new environment and not everyone can roll with every punch. Using technology as a crutch. It will take time retraining and training during this time.

40:02: Quick tip on how to change the mindset about remote working. Alleviate the problems remote workers are experiencing to help them be more productive.

41:02: Panelist Question: Zoom vs GoToMeeting? Ed: Uses both, prefer Zoom. Zoom's features for panelists and attendee functionalities are better. Neither shines above each other. **Tanya:** We left GoTo products and Zoom and other solutions were much more affordable. **Maria:** Many of the platforms are similar, just with a different name. Zoom has been really great, and we have RingCentral which is great also. Strong component of Zoom. **Matt:** Has tried different platforms for Continuing Education, and was on a site call WebinarJam, which allows panelists to speak, and an administrator the ability to moderate testing and ask questions so participants can respond to. WebinarJam is \$700/year. We are focusing now on extending the deadlines on Continuing Education. Member to member interaction in a face to face setting is important. You can beat members engaging with other members. **Justin:** Prefer Zoom, has been using it for 7+ years and the quality is the best, cost is less than GoToMeeting and the quality with out of state client meetings is great. Best way to collaborate remotely.

46:18: Poll Question: Before last week, how often did you work from home? Occasionally 33% Never 17% Weekly 25% Most of the Time 25%

46:49: Maria: Joanne shared that they sent a survey to their team members on what barriers they were running into being newly remote. Maria's team did a pilot month and surveyed their team after 30 days to understand what they were missing or needed.

48:19: Tanya: Be careful with overreach. There are so many ways/channels to communicate. It's challenging to understand when and how to communicate with your team. Set up ground rules, a guidebook. Teams message me when I am out walking, and it doesn't stop. As managers we need to recognize we have a role to play in helping them with the tools for when to walk away and take a break.

50:00: Joanne responded to the question: What was insightful in the feedback to their survey. "It was validation that we were doing everything right as far as providing them with the equipment they needed and allowing flexibility. The value was validating that we were on the right course." **Justin:** What I heard was you cared. You gave them the opportunity to have a channel to wherever they were at with remote working. You opened up the ability to have a conversation with them to learn how you can help.

50:48 Poll Question: Do you have the support in place to answer the inevitable questions that arise with IT? Yes 64% Somewhat 36% and No 0%

51:27: Deb If you are working from home and you don't have a door to close. Wear a particular article of clothing, like a red hat or a bright jacket, as a signal that you are at work.

52: Happy Hours. Matt 3:30 today we are having a happy hour! Chat responses about virtual happy hours. Maria is meeting with peers for virtual happy hours. It's easier when we don't have to get in the car and drive somewhere. We shared personal and professional stories. Those social check ins are very important and I feel so much better. Think about these with your family and friends too.

53:50: Ed, how will these times change how we work in the future? We have only been playing on the edges of digital communications between our peers. Virtual happy hours would be beneficial now and into the future.

55:16: Are there some security or technical concerns we should all check in on. Things to be aware of? **Ed:** If you deal with client information that is secure, you need to take extra steps that all that data, off-site, is also meeting the level of security you promise. HIPAA, PCI. These are rules you need to follow. Describes how to securely work and log in remotely. VPN access. Physical security policies should be in place. This could be just a single page document that everyone agrees to and signs within your organization.

58:32: Justin: We can't forget about staying connected, whether video or text. Use our community at Associations North to connect and help with your questions. We have a lot of experts at our fingertips.

59:17: Justin: How to stay focused during this time? Maria: It's been a lot about crisis mode right now and I am focused on our members. I think about my staff and all the hard work they have done for this event that we were planning, and now had to cancel. I am working hard to check in with each person. I am getting pulled in so many directions and I don't always know what to do, and I have such a great team supporting me. We have each other's back. Be kind. Support each other. Help each other out. We are all figuring it together. Give yourself permission that you are not always going to know what to do. Maybe you will wish you wanted to do something else and didn't. That's ok. Be kind to yourself and others. **Ed:** Together we are far better than we are separate. **Matt:** Happy with the team. We are doing the best we can. Not everything is going to go exactly as we expect. We have budgets, we have member needs. I don't expect our staff and board to have all the answers. We will come out of this stronger and will know what to do next time. I hope for every organization that get through this as best as they can. Everyone needs to know they may need to pick up the ball. The health of the employee and our partners is number one. **Tanya:** shared a link, Curt Steinhorst at FocusWise. He wrote about focus and how to stay focused well before all this began. Be kind. Be accommodating. Getting through this together is what we have to do.

1:04:46: Ed: One thing we can all do right now is contact your ISP. Whether business or residential. They are constantly updating their services, and you need to call them once a year to ask if you are getting the best service for what you are paying. You may be able to double your speed with no extra money. Make that simple phone call today. They have to tell you if they ask. **Matt:** Xfinity called because they noticed his bandwidth was blocking up and there was a new modem available and to come pick one up. It made a great difference. If a store is open, get out today. They can ship them too.

1:07 Justin: Closing. Reach out to your fellow members. More than being kind. Have grace. Have an understanding of your team, your clients, customers, and members. If you are thinking about them. Pick up the phone and call them. Text them. There was a reason they popped in your head. Could be a cute message. An email that you care. We are all in this together, and we are going to come out of this spectacular! Wishing all health, strength and success.

TIPS + INSIGHTS

Maria Huntley:

If you or someone needs a printer – we have one of these – we like it because it is small and portable and works really well. We probably print off 20-30 sheets of paper a month.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01HGD8T9M>

While not something that should happen quickly – moving from a server to a cloud environment was a game changer for us.

If not doing already – all banking can be done electronically. There is one form that requires my actual pen signature once a year, good excuse for a visit with our banker.

- LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY – it exists, is easy to use and hardly costs anything.
- Focus on work getting done – NOT when. Who cares if someone is doing laundry during the day if they are getting their work done!
- Be intentional about scheduling check in meetings – and don't make them long – 15 minutes for an individual is plenty – little longer for a group.
- Set expectations that are reasonable and work for your team. When should you email vs text vs pick up the phone and call each other?
- Ask those who have come before you for advice. How to process mail or pay bills? I've got a solution for that!
- Be patient and kind – we are all doing our best.
- Communicate clear objectives and goals, daily check-ins (we're doing team check-ins via Teams each morning and it's been nice to stay connected, share what we accomplished day prior, goals for the day and where we need help – it's also good and things are changing daily/hourly/etc.)
- IT – set up is necessary, equipment may be difficult to get now (can everyone access the server, etc.)
- Environment is important, we're all working in different spaces than we are used to – personally, I miss my office chair and am realizing I need to move around more at home for my own well-being (we're looking at converting a coffee table into a stand up desk and making our treadmill work with my laptop).
- Kids – may not be standard 8-5 work hours (I wrote more about this above, we're in agreement on this one and will do the best we can!)

Tanya Guy:

- Set clear expectations
- Provide the tools they need to be successful
- Over communicate until people are more comfortable with the new environment
- Force live interaction (like we did today!)
- Be flexible

Ed Klemz:

- Make sure you have good fast internet: Call your internet provider and ask if you are getting the best speed for the price you are paying and inquire about upgrading your service. Chances are you're eligible for a bump in speed without much of an increase in charges.
- Set reasonable expectations: This may take some time for your team members, as everyone has different home life situations. Be patient and flexible, yet professional. Set consistent work hours and do your best to keep to them.
- Secure your machines first: If this is the first time they've been out of HQ's firewall, they'll need to have proper security protocols in place before they go home with someone. This may vary with the size and complexity of your organization, so let us help you develop your policies and implement them.
- Understand your file workflow: Many of you have server(s) and will require access to files in a collaborative way. Using remote access (built into our Proactive Service Plans) is a safe, functional way to accomplish this, as is using VPN services from offsite computers. Do you remote control your office machine from home? Take the office machine home and VPN in? How do you manage licenses for your apps? There are a lot of Q's, we've got the A's.
- Get to know your tools: You'll be using apps like Monday, Zoom, Teams, Slack, and others for project management and collaboration. Keep in mind, you may need more than one, and when to use which is important. Decide on this as a team.
- Your Home Office: Make sure you have a dedicated space at home to work - something more than the couch or the kitchen table. Remember, you're getting paid to do a job, so separating home life from work life is key, and productivity is more important than ever.
- Make sure you stay healthy: Take breaks, get up and walk around at least twice an hour, and try to have as much of the same kind of interaction with your fellow employees you used to have.
- Stay connected: Host a morning meeting for all employees and a virtual company happy hour (no need for designated drivers) once a week. It's amazing how well video chat works for keeping people connected.
- Leverage new tools: Use your phone to give you the flexibility and functionality of office equipment we all need, like chat, FaceTime, and document scanning. Look at Adobe Scan, Tiny Scanner and others.
- Try new creative projects: See what you can get done within this new world!

CHAT COMMENTS:

Apps –

- Microsoft Teams
- Zoom
- Google Hangouts
- GoToWebinar

Survey to Team Members – JoAnn Taie, Global Management Partners

- What barriers have you encountered while transitioning to a remote work setting?
- What questions do you have?
- How can GMP assist to make this transition more successful?
- What ideas do you have to for keeping the GMP culture alive while working remote?

- What is something positive that you have experienced while transitioning to working remote?

Connectivity to Staff – JoAnn Taie, Global Management Partners

- Monday morning huddle to check in with each other
- Happy Hours

Distractions at Home (Family) Tip – Deb Kildahl, ACA International

- If you're working from home and don't have a separate place where you can close a door, I read this tip: Wear a particular hat, jacket or other piece of clothing as a "signal" that you're "at work."

Reduce Distractions at Home – Tanya Guy, NACM North Central

- <https://focuswise.com/>

Additional Resources – Associations North

- Work from home, mental health, events, industry resources, parenting and more: <https://www.associationsnorth.com/page/COVID-19RESOURCES>

OTHER RESOURCES:

- Zoom – Resources to effectively use Zoom, <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>
- GoToWebinar – Top Resources, <https://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar/resources>