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Video Transcript

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Establishing and Maintaining Remote Connections

We are seeing an unprecedented number of individuals and organizations working remotely. Our dependencies on remote communication have skyrocketed to numbers reaching historic heights. Additionally, we face myriad pressures to be more efficient and accessible while doing even more with less in this tenuous environment. This session will equip us to stay productive, engaged and sane as we face these uncharted waters.

Session outcomes

Participants will explore the four Cs of establishing and maintaining remote communications.

- **Commitment:**
 - Using commitment as a vehicle for staying motivated.
 - Gain insight on how to best utilize remote personal and professional productivity resources.
- **Communication:**
 - Staying productive when digital devices are down.
 - Interpersonal communication techniques to engage collaborators in a remote environment.
- **Concentration:**
 - Steps to enhance your productivity while remaining focused on avoiding shiny-star distractions.
 - Emotional intelligence in a remote environment.
- **Contact:**
 - Self-care in closed quarters.
 - Remote environment tips—computer time, relationship maintenance breaks, scheduling, etc.

Commitment

Communication

Concentration

Contact

Let's keep this phrase in mind.

Make an insightful commitment to establish effective remote communication channels while maintaining a solid focus, using contact with care for yourself and others.

COMMITMENT

Let's start with commitment.

Using commitment as a vehicle for staying motivated to communicate effectively.

- Dr. Goldsmith in Psychology Today: precommunication: Clear your filters vs conversation storm.

Make the commitment to have clear focused filters. Clearing out our filters involves erasing any predetermined judgment or biases that we have regarding our efforts to communicate during this time. That may involve meditating, it may involve working with ridding ourselves of history that may not have gone so well with communicating during these times and with these kinds of vehicles. All of that avoids having a conversation storm, where all of your thoughts and feelings and emotions from the past as well as anything that is splitting your mind at the time about preconceived notions or biases that we have regarding certain communication vehicles or communication time.

That conversation storm can cloud our judgment and our thought process hindering our commitment to effective communication.

So, clear your filters!

Also, with commitment we want to gain insight on how to best utilize remote personal and professional productivity resources.

Here are some great vehicles to keep in mind:

- **Establish communication and equipment vehicles.** Always let other persons know what equipment is used and what communication vehicle is going to be used. For instance, are we using Zoom, are we using Skype, are we using GoToMeeting. Make sure they are aware of this ahead of time so they can be prepared.
- **Set usage frequency and feedback methods.** Also, establish frequency of the communication. Are we having these conversations using these vehicles daily? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly? That way persons can get into the mindset to make this commitment not only in their minds but also on their schedules. Clearing away everything so they can be present doing these communication channels. And feedback methods.

Let your audience know, are they going to be able to provide feedback during the session, after the session, prior to and which way are they are they going to be able to do that. Is it by email or a preconference call? Make the commitment to communicate effectively your top priority by being as clear and specific with these items as possible.

- **Agenda and activity updates.** It's always great for those A personality types, like myself, to send the activities list out. We want to know what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, how much time do I need to allocate for this session? So sending that ahead of time is great. And for the B personality type, it's OK because that's the information they are going to have and they can identify it and keep it moving. So it doesn't hurt to send out an agenda ahead of time.
- **Discuss collaboration spaces (VPN, Basecamp, Asana, etc.).** Those are several that can be used so it's important to discuss which collaboration space is going to be used. Right now, we're working with [Microsoft] Teams, so what are those spaces that we're going to use?
- **Keep everything same/similar and new.** A great example of this is, before COVID-19 we were able to communicate in person. We had formal and informal meetings and now we're doing everything in a digital format. You want to keep everything as close to similar or the same as possible. Meaning if you had a normal agenda before, use that same agenda now. If you met at a certain day and time before, keep that day and time now. Keeping everything as close to the same and similar is going to be great with helping people make this commitment to effective communications.

A new thing that was introduced, and this is a great example because you want to spice it up and introduce something new, because it is an adjustment to make. We're still making this adjustment. So introducing something new and flavorful is going to be great. It's going to rejuvenate our mind juices and get us a little bit more excited about the endeavor.

Our CEO, for example, uses Facebook@Work. He does live and direct messages calls. He'll send a message saying he's going live for an hour. Anyone who wants to message me or call me during this time, I'm available. That was just simply amazing. So it's often great if some does something new, like a leader making themselves available can really help enhance our level of commitment for our cause and our culture.

Other items that we use, some were mentioned before are Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts, Slack, Microsoft Teams, and CRM software.

COMMUNICATION

Once commitment is made, communication seems to flow effortlessly, and I love this quote by Bobb Biehl. "Without focusing and getting to clarity, you cannot lead. You cannot motivate. You cannot plan. You cannot communicate."

I think that's deserving of saying one more time:

"Without focusing and getting to clarity, you cannot lead. You cannot motivate. You cannot plan. You cannot communicate."

In communication, staying productive when digital devices are down or slow is critical. Here are a couple of tips and best practices to help us with our communication.

- **Adapt and add capacity.** Check out your wireless WiFi settings, look at your computer settings, just check everything and make certain that you are at full capacity. That may involve you updating your plan. Do that ahead of time. Also, GEO data centers were expanded during this time so that all our digital devices could be enhanced without delay. There was a major slow down and now so many tools and resources have been added to prevent that from happening again.
- **Check your ethernet vs. your WiFi connection.** Lag time reduction starts here. If you are not directly connected using your ethernet cable.
- **Disconnect everything else** so that lag time is not being experienced by your system being bogged down.
- **Avoid high usage times**, which are anywhere between 7 and 9 a.m., 12:30 to 2 p.m. and 7 and 8 p.m. Those are the busiest times for digital data usage. So if at all possible, try to schedule your sessions around those times.
- **Use the telephone and email** if all else fails.
- **Make sure data caps have been lifted.**
- **Spectrum offers 60 days free WiFi internet service.** K-12 and college students enjoy free internet service to this day.

Communication is key and cannot be effective if our devices are down or running slowly.

Some startling statistics came out about how the systems crashed and slowed down. We wanted to share these best practices and tips with you to make sure those things were avoided.

Some of those are shown here:

Microsoft experienced 500% increase in computer usage, 200% on mobile devices.

ATT Voice went up 53% and WiFi, 92%. Streaming hit an all-time high of 61%, especially in the Seattle area, teens skyrocketed this usage by over 104%.

These numbers were nothing compared to this prior to the time we are in now. We're going to be readily equipped because we are focusing on communication and checking our devices and outlining our plans so that our devices don't go down or are not slow.

Along with communication, interpersonal techniques to engage collaborators in a remote environment is critical.

- **Recognize differences.** No jargon-speak. If I say ISA what does that mean. No one may have a clue to what I'm talking about. We have to make sure that we recognize our differences as we are collaborating with our other stakeholders. So try to eliminate any acronyms, any jargon that is specific to your work culture and make sure that you are offering the best inclusive communication as possible.
- **Don't go tone deaf.** I'm bored. I don't know what to do during this time. Oh my gosh, I can't handle the kids anymore. I can't stay in this house one more moment. That is going tone deaf and being insensitive to someone who is really experiencing a hard transition.

We have to make sure that we don't go tone deaf so that we can stay in touch and have empathy and sympathy for others at this time. Saying that I'm bored or I don't know what to do can be insulting to someone else who is overworked and just doesn't know where to get the next meal or break. Try to avoid going tone deaf as much as possible. That will strengthen communication.

- **Show sincere interest.** Active listening and response. Really take this time to pay attention to what people are communicating. If you listen intently, being present in that moment, no multitasking, no switch-tasking, being present. Show your interest and offer an appropriate response. That will get the other person to buy in to the communication process. You will have their full attention and they will offer you their highest level of productivity.
- Also, when communicating, **be intentional about tone and body language.** Your tone needs to be steady, yet upbeat. Please don't sound like you're going to sleep or like you just woke up from a nap. That is going to bore everyone to death. We don't want to do that.

We want people to be engaged. When you're not in person, engagement takes so much more energy and effort. That's why you have to be intentional. You have to be well-rested. You have to be fresh. Have two or three cups of coffee, do whatever you need to do to make sure that you are energetic, that your tone is great, that you have good body posture, body language. Do not be slumped over, so your computer is propped up high. Make sure you have eye contact. Look at the camera. Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate. You will not believe how much more engaged your audience can be when you employ these communication techniques.

CONCENTRATION

The commitment to communication is not possible without concentration. Doing more with even less vs doing more differently. Let's talk about the differences between these two.

We are doing more with less because as everything gets more compound our time is even different. So, while we're doing more with less, we can still be very effective. We want to concentrate on what exactly that means. It means we're handling more Zoom meetings, or GoToMeetings. It means they're nonstop, back to back all day. It also means we're taking care of homeschool items or maybe caring for a parent.

There are so many things that we now are responsible for that were part of a broader shared community previously. So, we are doing a lot more with less resources. However, we can do them differently; we can do them effectively. I want to make sure that we do that.

Steps to enhance our productivity, while we may need focus, avoiding the shiny-star distractions.

We were just talking about all the things we are managing more with less. In order to do that we need to avoid what we call the shiny-star distractions. That shiny star is the sound made when an email came in, or the sound you hear on your cell phone when a voice or text message comes in. All of these things are distractions because we are focusing on something that all of a sudden, when that shiny-star distraction came in, our attention shifted. Our concentration changed on a dime, just like that.

We want to be mindful that when we are communication, especially during these times, we want to be certain that we eliminate the shiny-star distractions. Some of the ways we do that are scheduling time, some of the ways we do that are staying mentally strong.

Some of the ways we can stay mentally strong and enhance our productivity are shared.

- **Launchpad, Khan Academy and Sophia.org** are offering free professional development courses. Courses on project management, courses on communication skills. These kinds of courses can help us stay focused and keep a strong mental concentration to eliminate the shiny-star distractions.
- **MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicators)** discs are great for helping us to learn and understand what our personality types are, what are some ways that we personally can concentrate better. Knowing yourself is the first step in knowing how you function best. How you thrive. What is the best environment for you to thrive in mentally.
- I use the **productivity box** for social media time, for projects. My productivity box is time. Click it on, it has 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 45 minutes, 60 minutes. So I limit the amount of time for a project with my productivity box. So I flip that box on and I'm so laser-focused during that time because I know I only have a certain amount of time to accomplish this task. Once the alarm goes off, I am done with that task. So, the productivity box helps me to stay focused. I even use it during meetings, because on it, it has a welcome, an introduction, main content, summary and it keeps the meeting very focused.
- **Creating and launching projects** is another area where concentration is crucial. You have to make certain that you have creative space, and we're launching projects and programs that we are focused on what the endgame is, and we stay focused on that and we still have that timeline from start to finish so that we excel.
- **Email time.** There are tons of productivity book that I subscribe to and read and almost all of them talk about scheduled email time. Remember I told you about that ding you hear when an email comes in? Or the [sound] that lets you know a text has come through? We need to schedule that

time. Because they can be major shiny-star distractions and keep us from our productivity if we allow them to permeate through every second of the day. So please, schedule email time.

- **Audio books are great.** I need to confess, I have to have noise in the background for productivity. When I'm in my zone, I need music playing, I need the TV on, I need something in the background. I don't know how that works, but it helps me to stay so laser focused. I can't really tell what's on the TV or what song is playing. Or I use audio books. Right now they have freebies out there for us at this time that keep going, so take advantage of all those tools and resources to help us stay focused on the task at hand before us.

Here is another quote I want to share with you, that I absolutely love, by Michael Nolan:

"There are many things in life that will catch your eye, but only a few will catch your heart. Pursue those."

Another quote worthy of reading again.

"There are many things in life that will catch your eye, but only a few will catch your heart. Pursue those."

Pursue those!

I've shared my vision board because a lot of things will catch your eye and catch your attention. But there are only a few precious things that tug at your heart strings. So on my vision board I talk about my health and wellness, I talk about my family. I talk about my love of dance; all kinds of genre of dance. I love building things and creating things. I have a picture that is my tree of life. I have a picture of a yacht because I am a water baby. I love being out on the water, that is where I am the most creative is by water.

Know what those things are that capture your heart. Not just those things that capture your eye, like those shiny-star distractions. Allow those things to help you concentrate and stay focused on what you put on this board to begin with.

That leads to emotional intelligence in a remote environment, and that involves a myriad of items.

- **Self-awareness**, we discussed that.
- **Address your emotions.** Remember we talked about that commitment at the very beginning? Checking our biases and predetermined things at the door so we are fully present and bring ourselves into each communication that we have.
- Our emotional intelligence allows us to **influence others**.
- We **influence responses**.
- **Patience is truly a virtue**.
- **Know your triggers.** ID them and mitigate them. Know those things that distract you. Know what are. Know the things that place where some disaster in the past from using Zoom, so now every

time you have a Zoom meeting you start twitching. Identify those triggers immediately and mitigate them at all costs.

- **Always be respectful of differences.**
- **Change your marketing messages.** We have to change our messages; we have to change our visuals so they are more relevant for the time that we are in right now. What sends the strongest communication message ever is when you care enough to change your word choices, your visuals, your entire messaging to be sensitive, aware and relevant of what's happening right now.

There are five other things we want to keep in mind when we are dealing with the concentration component of remote communication.

1. The first is culture. Impact every organization, there's culture and individual well-being. Culture is our care, our display of changing our messaging. Also that speaks to the welcoming and warm culture and inviting culture we want to create and maintain during this time.
2. Accountability and visibility. Are employees doing what is asked of them? How do remote workers get recognized? So accountability and visibility are key because now you're not really in the view of your teammates or your supervisor. So how are you going to show up right now? I ascribe that anyone listening right now is accountable, that they are producing more than before even.
So keep accountability at hand and visibility. Make sure that if you have teams, even if you don't, acknowledge someone's work. Because you're not physically present doesn't mean that you can't recognize what someone is doing. So please, take two seconds to send someone an email or text message, give them a shout out on a call. Let them know you appreciate them, let them know you noticed that since this time they have really stepped up. Show them in an exceptional way.
3. Security. Keeping remote workers' data and information safe in a high-risk climate. The risk climate is high so make sure that you always convey security settings and measures to keep everything that's being shared safe and protected.
4. Work life balance. We can't talk about that enough. There's a lot of debate around work life balance, but is there really a balance? Yes, there is. And we can create it by maintaining boundaries between work life and home life.
We talk about homeschooling and having pets and everything that is in our environment while we work remotely. So, it's OK to schedule some great times with your family and your children. Take the dog for walk, cat rubs, belly rubs. Create that work life balance within your new work life situation. Have the family meeting to talk about these things so that they are adhered to and respected, so they work well.
5. Keep in mind time zones and communication. We are working with everyone domestically and globally in a myriad of time zones. When we schedule communication, we want to keep those things in mind. I don't want to schedule something at 7:30 in a Central Time zone when I know that three hours earlier someone somewhere else is sleeping. So make certain when we are looking at

time zones and communication that we look at our work culture and their work habits that we pay close attention to that. People are going to respect that and be highly engaged.

CONTACT

Contact is just as important as the other three elements we've talked about. Let's talk about contact.

Self-care in closed quarters. Contact shows up differently now. It's not physical so there are other ways that we need to make contact and we have to provide self-care for ourselves and others at this time.

- **Phone a friend.** Pick the phone up and phone a friend. You will never know how people are struggling during this time and how a phone call from you; just hearing your voice on the other end of the line will make the world of difference for them. We're on Zoom calls, we're texting, we're emailing. Getting that personal phone call takes effort and it is greatly appreciated.
- **EAP (employee assistance program).** Companies usually provide five or six sessions for EAP. Talking about stress and what's happening in the world can really help right now. Talking about the lack of contact, if you're a single person that is so much different than if you have a house full of people. Family members may be in close quarters, but close quarters looks different for people.
- **Involve your family.** There are other things that we can do to keep our minds and stay in contact with others.
- **Peloton and Orange Theory** offer great workout sessions during this time, and I love it. I can just turn on my TV and I see other people doing things. I miss other people because we are all grinding it together at the same time. There are a lot of way to express contact differently right now and I wanted to share 15 of them with you that are great practices.
 - o Greet the sun with sun salutations. I love yoga and do meditation every morning.
 - o Set your daily intention. So every day I say what are the three key things I want to accomplish today? And I set my daily intention. One of them, every day, is having great communication during this time. I'm setting that intention every day.
 - o Enjoy your morning coffee or tea.
 - o Eat a nourishing breakfast to give you energy.
 - o Eat without distractions. Try and find that quiet place, even if you have to go outside and sit in the car with the air running for just a few minutes. Get a few seconds of quiet.
 - o Connect with your family and friends.
 - o Break a sweat. Join Peloton or Orange Theory.
 - o Fill your house with plants. I don't have a green thumb, but let me tell you, hostas and day lilies are your go-to plant for people who don't have a green thumb. They provide great oxygenation and life inside of your home and home office.
 - o Take a walk on your lunch break. Get some fresh air.
 - o Drink an afternoon matcha tea. I love my matcha tea in the afternoon.

- o Create a cozy space in your home. I have surrounded my office with so many pillows you'd think it was a living room. But that is cozy for me.
- o Set aside time to create. I shared with you how I love water. I go to water at least one day a week and I take my laptop and my journal and just do a brain dump. I just create about how can I communicate more effectively? How can I grow with sharing with others during this time? Use your productivity box if you have one. If not, use your stopwatch.
- o Limit your social media time. It's very addictive.
- o No screen time after 9 p.m. if you want to get a good night's rest. Shut down all technology after 9 o'clock. You will sleep like a baby.
- o Keeping a gratitude journal is great. I love the gratitude journal because it helps you remember those three intentions you set in the morning and how well they went for the day.

There are other types of contact I would like to share, and this involves a contact calendar. Someone shared this with me, and I couldn't help but share it with you all. It is literally a calendar to help you maintain great contact during this time. There are some great examples here. You'll find in here about keeping a journal. You'll find about calling a friend and making sure they can hear your voice. There are lots of ideas. There's one for every day that you can employ to help during this time. This contact calendar was created just for this time. It's actually called a coping calendar. Keep calm, stay wise, and be kind. Be very, very kind.

In summary, I can't stress enough that the keys to keeping and maintaining very strong communications during this time involves the four Cs.

Commitment

Communication

Concentration

Contact

Our theme and our mantra for this session is:

Make an insightful commitment to establish effective remote communication channels while maintaining a solid focus, using contact with care for yourself and others.

As you can see, all four Cs are incorporated into our mantra.

Make an insightful **commitment** to establish effective remote **communication** channels while maintaining a **solid focus** (that's our concentration), using **contact** with care for yourself and others.

I cannot thank you enough for your time today. I applaud you for making the commitment to establishing and maintaining remote connections. Thank you so much.