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INSIDE OUT

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HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED WITH COLLEAGUES TO DRIVE WORK SUCCESS?

Martini: With most businesses working remotely for the foreseeable future, it is important for the lines of communication to remain open for high-performing teams to be successful. Team leads need to regularly assess individual and collective performance across the financial and productivity levers, and should have regular meetings to discuss what is working well and where the challenges lie. It is also important for team members to be nimble, resilient and creative in their approach to getting the job done even though the work environment may be far from ideal. Patience, understanding and compassion are critical in shifting the mindset from seeing this as a short-term phenomenon to a longer-term reality.

Susler: My company has multiple business units with more than 30 plants in 10 states and four countries. Even before the pandemic, I was used to working with clients remotely. We have always connected by telephone, email and text, with in-person meetings typically only once or twice a year. Since the pandemic started, those connection styles have continued with videoconferences. The real difference is the quarantine state of mind. In many respects, the isolation can seem greater even if, in fact, we have always worked together remotely from each other. The biggest difference in the way I now stay connected with colleagues and team members is that we check in personally more often, beyond strictly talking business.

Now that the new normal is here to stay, how do we approach networking?

Martini: We need to approach networking and relationship building with a sense of urgency and an understanding that it is unlikely things will ever go back to "normal," so the notion of waiting for that is unrealistic.

If you have been holding off on engaging in these types of activities, stop waiting. Develop ways to connect with people so that you can continue to create and deepen relationships. When you have the opportunity to see clients and prospects in person in a responsible manner, do it! As we head into the fall and winter months, these opportunities may be tougher to come by. Also consider ways to contribute thought leadership and other content to your network to make sure that you stay top of mind. Continue to build your



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Plenty of options to stay connected and grow your career

By CHRISTINA L. MARTINI and DAVID G. SUSLER

professional profile. Explore virtual cocktail hours and other get-togethers so you develop your network and maintain much-needed social interaction. Videoconferencing is a great alternative to see groups of people. These are vital.

Susler: The good news is we are all in the same boat. The concept of virtual networking is something we are all learning to do together; it simply has to be accepted as the way to do it. Networking in this "new normal" can be accomplished to a large degree in the same ways we have always connected with our colleagues, but we must be intentional about it. Videoconferencing is the best way to virtually network, especially with people you are just meeting and getting to know. Also, depending on where you live and your comfort level given the state of the pandemic, meeting in person for an occasional drink or meal at an outdoor restaurant may be acceptable, even desirable, but again, we must be flexible and accepting of people's different comfort levels.

As we continue our journeys, what are some things for people to keep in mind?

Martini: Shift your perspective, reframe your approach and plan accordingly. Remember that it's a marathon, not a sprint; be innovative and try several approaches to see which are the most successful and adjust. Regularly assess what is most

effective and most challenging for you, what leads to the most successful results and address whatever issues there are in real time. To the extent you need assistance from others to handle these challenges, do not be shy about seeking out help.

Susler: Remember we are all learning as we go. This is simply not normal for us, so we have to be accepting of the fact that we are all still adapting. We all have different circumstances to navigate, so be patient with people and be understanding. Accept the barking dogs and crying babies on video calls. If someone is not comfortable meeting in person or only doing so outdoors, accept it without criticizing or judging. Be open to change in ways you maybe were not previously, and embrace the forced changes as opportunities to reinvent yourself or your processes. Now is actually a great time to try out something new. CL

Christina L. Martini is a practicing attorney, author and columnist. She is a partner with McDermott Will & Emery and focuses her practice on domestic and international trademark, copyright, domain name, internet, advertising and unfair competition law.

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To submit a question, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com