

When Positive Change Comes From Negative Experience

By Kathy Nanowski, CPSM

The global pandemic has taught us all a lot about who we are, what we truly care about, and how deep the well of our humanity and strength is. What we take away from these experiences is up to each of us, but to hold onto all the positive changes that have emerged is imperative.

In particular, A/E/C marketing and business development have changed vastly in a short amount of time. Here are four positive changes that many of us hope will continue as we find our way back to the new normal.

1. Decreased environmental impact and increased time when responding to RFPs and RFQs. Electronic submission of responses has become the new standard. This reduces paper and material waste and creates up to a day's worth of additional time to prepare a response. Social distancing has generated the need for virtual interviews, which reduces pollution caused by travel and no longer takes away the entirety of a day to attend an interview. This offers the additional benefit of being able to record interviews, which helps both sides of the table. The interviewer can rewatch and reevaluate, and the firm can use these recordings to improve their interviewing skills.

2. The new business development. The uncertainty of the future, coupled with not being able to meet with clients, has given way to increased client outreach and an entirely new method of communication. Zoom happy hours, "old fashioned" phone calls, and creative marketing approaches have forced us all out of our comfort zones—

something we desperately needed. Trade shows and conventions have been called off, so we're using this time to reach out to clients instead. While nothing will ever take the place of face-to-face interactions, these time and cost savings related to conference travel will push these new ways of reaching out into the category of normal, and we should support that.

3. Actual work-life balance. This has been a hot topic for years, but we've never really known what work-life balance was until our office was in our living room and our kids and pets showed up during videoconferences. And no one cares! For far too long, we've compartmentalized and pretended and felt guilty for doing so. But the world of unapologetically changing a diaper while working on a proposal is a world we should want to continue living in.

4. Building stronger bonds during a time of crisis. We always remember the people that stood by us during tough times and, to many of us, these are those times. We're building stronger relationships with people that will carry us well after this crisis is over. Whether it's our clients or coworkers, these bonds will not be forgotten. We'll look back and remember those who reached out to say hello or lend a helping hand. Our friendships with our coworkers and client connections will make our personal lives and professional lives better than ever.

How can you and your firm support positive change? Let's continue to embrace these concepts inside and outside our firms, with both colleagues and clients. ■



KATHY NANOWSKI, CPSM, is vice president and director of marketing and business development at Fuss & O'Neill, Inc., in Manchester, CT. She coaches managers and principals on relationship-based selling, project positioning, and winning new business. Contact her at 860.646.2469 or knanowski@fando.com.