

## The Global Pandemic: Remote Working Strategies & Insights

As the times have been challenging and many have been settling into new routines revolving around virtual communication in place of in-person meetings, CSPN hosted our first digital Advisory Council Meeting on May 4, 2020.

Our Advisory Council is comprised of industry experts including executives from Canada Goose, CIBC, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP), Purolator, ParaMed, and more, that act as a strategic forum and sounding board to ultimately garner and share leading practices, industry trends, and expert knowledge that influence and shape the work we deliver. The goal of this Council Meeting was to gain insight into how professionals are coping with adversity and what new, creative strategies they have been implementing in their organizations.

To ignite the conversation, CSPN asked a series of questions that were structured around each council member's perspective and key tactics they are currently utilizing to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The first question we presented to the group was ***"What key tactics are you using to manage within the pandemic?"*** Many offered answers consisting of:

- The importance of frequent and consistent communication both internally to staff and externally to customers
- Increasing staff engagement by administering surveys and incorporating more opt-in / sharing sessions with staff
- Scheduling frequent team virtual meetings and ideation sessions
- Emphasizing the importance of being on video during meetings
- Implementing new technology to maximize business operations
- Encouraging staff fitness breaks, meditation, and wellness strategies

A council member from ParaMed shared an internal initiative that encouraged staff engagement and boosted moral. The organization expanded locations for personal protective equipment (PPE) pick-up and tailgating events for Managers and Supervisors to distribute to employees. This was a great initiative that highlighted the importance of connecting with staff and staying safe while social distancing and taking necessary COVID-19 precautions.

The next question CSPN asked was, ***"What is one thing your organization needs assistance with?"*** During remote working, many organizations are working longer hours due to the elimination of commuting and the ease of logging on and off from their own homes. Additional responses consisted of:

- Implementing virtual training and ideation sessions
- Navigating the various virtual communication tools available online and which is most beneficial for each organization's needs
- Incorporating more tools for staff engagement
- How to take frequent breaks and prioritize mental health
- Balancing work time and personal time while working at home

Regardless of where you are in the world, the pandemic is at the fore front of all news outlets, social media platforms, and conversations. We are all in this together, and although communities have become stronger and support for one another has increased, we are all wondering the same thing: ***"What does the future bring post-pandemic for our work life?"*** When asked this question, council members shared thoughts around:

- Many companies possibly working from home indefinitely or offering staff the option of continuing to do
- the heightened increase of virtual programs and online training for onboarding and upskilling
- Stronger focus on health and safety, soft skills to thrive in this new digital world (i.e. collaboration, virtual management / leadership),
- Navigating the potential of mandatory services transitioning to online-only access

Although it may seem difficult at times to stay positive and continue to move forward, practicing gratitude is vital for us to have a clear mind, stay present, and thoroughly enjoy what we do. The final question, ***“What are you thankful for,”*** truly resonated with the council and was a great conclusion to an engaging, insightful discussion. Answers consisted of:

- Friends, family, and loved ones
- The ability to practice mindfulness
- The time to focus on health
- Appreciation for being a Canadian citizen
- The pleasures of everyday life and not taking anything for granted

CSPN extends a special Thank You to our Advisory Council who dedicated their time to participating in an event that emphasized the importance of staying united and connected. We are reminded to remain strong and stay informed and aware of how businesses are continuing to thrive and repurpose services to support our communities and deal with adversaries.

CSPN will be conducting these virtual meetings on a recurring basis to help glean cross-industry insights and perspectives into key areas of interest. If you have suggestions on topics of interest for future “think-tanks” please reach out to [jenna@mycspn.com](mailto:jenna@mycspn.com) to share.