

Surviving and Thriving During COVID-19

It's no secret that COVID-19 changed our lives. As a small business, we've had to pivot in extraordinary ways. And while we can't ignore the impact isolation and swift, life-altering changes have on our psyche, we have also learned that our resiliency and ability to manage is more powerful than we thought. Here are just a few ways our [incredible team](#) has navigated the pandemic in fun and fulfilling fashion.

How has your day-to-day work life changed during COVID19?

Cherie Edelstein, President: Although I always thought about the health and safety of our organization, my concerns now include our employee's families and home environments so that we can ensure everyone is staying as healthy as possible at all times. We need to look at our own protocols but also what happens in the home since that now affects our colleagues.

Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer: It has improved tremendously! Without the daily commute, my days are not as long, I'm more rested, less stressed and ultimately more productive



Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative:

Wearing “work Pajamas” ...it’s a thing!

Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager: Managing my team at a distance is a new concept, but we have found how to make it work well. I have to say, we are incredibly productive and efficient!

James Begin, CTO: Finding solutions to issues has become easier and faster because distractions are now less frequent.

Ilana Perlman, Human Resources Manager: I am still coming into the office daily, but I do miss seeing everyone’s face!

Sandra Agnessi, Accounts Payable Coordinator: Driving to work the streets are deserted. With most of the employees are working from home, the office is like a ghost town. It’s like a *Twilight Zone* experience.

What’s been the biggest challenge for you during this time?

Colby Fisher, Account Executive: The biggest challenge for me has been not being in the field to see customer applications. Plus, it’s more difficult to really develop trustworthy relationships with existing customers and new prospects when working virtually.

Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer: Cabin fever! Unable to physically interact with colleagues, friends, and, of course, family.

David Jugan, Outside Sales Associate: There's been a spiritual and physical health decline. We have lost a sense of worth and motivation due to both church and gym closures.

Chantal Girard, Senior Customer Service Representative: Grocery shopping and shopping for essentials in general. Outdoor lineups and angry people have made those normal experiences much more challenging!

Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep: Making sure my home office was functional in every way so I can do my work as usual.

Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service: Remembering to wear my mask in public; it does no good in my purse!!!

Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager: Knowing which day of the week it is! Not quite sure why, but the days and weeks just disappear on me.

Has there been any silver lining for you and your family?

Cherie Edelstein, President: Working from home has allowed me the time to think more clearly and connect with others in a very positive and supportive way.

Mei-Lee Wang Langi, Account Executive: My boys were sent home

from college, so I get a lot more family time. We have been playing board games and having family dinners again. The boys are looking up new recipes and taking part in cooking for us.

David Jugan, Account Executive: We have invested in a home gym so that our entire family of 5 can get and stay fit.

Colby Fisher, Account Executive: My engagement!

Kevin Quesnel, MIS Specialist: Having the kids stay home has increased our time with them. It has made a big, positive impact and a bigger appreciation felt by all.

Ashley Caward, Order Management Specialist: I think we are all stronger than we think. If we can handle this, we can handle anything

James Begin, CTO: Not spending 2-3 hours driving each day. Not having to get up at 5:30 am and fighting traffic! Also, not going out for meals has put us back in the kitchen thus improving our cooking skills.

Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service: Our grandson, Edouard, was born on May 8th!

Sandy Lee, Business Operations Analyst: Absolutely! I love having three meals together with my family every day and enjoying the extra time we get from not having to travel to and from work. On nice days, we get to enjoy the outdoors during lunch and breathe in the fresh air, which I rarely did at the office.

Have you tackled anything new and exciting? Did you finally make sourdough bread? Start training for an Ironman? Finished that craft room?

Colby Fisher, Account Executive: I've been able to get my yard and landscaping in tip-top shape, and torn down my washing machine to completely rebuild it with new parts.

Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative: We made the beignet Micky Mouse donuts from Disneyland. Delicious and fun!

Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer: I finally taught my daughter to ride a bike. She was always too nervous. I'm now able to work out every day, without sacrificing sleep, lost 9-11lbs so far. On the downside, I help out a lot more around the house now.

Kayla Greenberg, Senior Collection Specialist: I have tried every new recipe I could get my hands on and started a walking routine each evening.

Deborah LeCouffe, Customer Service Manager: I confess, yes I made homemade bread a few times. Although, I probably should

have been training for an Ironman.

Nathalie Abdelhadi, Strategic Sales Support Coordinator: Trying my hand at gardening with herbs and vegetables. So far, so good!!

James Begin, CTO: Due to cooking meals that would normally have 6 portions and not wanting to eat leftovers the next day, we have mastered the art of freezing meals. We have learned how to thaw and heat again so they are just as tasty as the day they were cooked!

Steve Underhill, Senior Marketing Coordinator: I have been able to complete several home projects, like painting, setting up our Pergola, and a new BBQ. We are slowly transforming our back yard into our vacationing spot for the summer.

Sandy Lee, Business Operations Analyst: I've tried new recipes, started baking a little, and incorporated 10-minute yoga stretches into my day... what a difference this makes!

Sandra Agnessi, Accounts Payable Coordinator: I purchased and started to read a new book series, *The Neapolitan Novels*. It's my escape, it brings me to another world and takes my mind off the things.

Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep I finally learned to make my own pizza dough from scratch, and it's very delicious!

Eva Varelas, Customer Service Supervisor: I've started a garden for the first time.

David Jugan, Outside Sales Associate: We planted our first raised bed garden this spring and are hopeful that our \$1,000 veggies will taste amazing!



Any funny anecdotes? For example, did your kids crash your ZOOM calls or did you start making TikTok videos??

Elisa Hernandez, Senior Customer Service Representative: The office came to my house for a socially-distant birthday and I had my “work” pajamas on!!

Mei-Lee Wang Langi, Account Executive: I have walked into a few Zoom classes because my sons point their cameras toward their doors. I drop to the floor and crawl out of view when

that happens!

Kevin Quesnel, MIS Specialist: The kids have come up with interesting games and crafts each day. Always something fun, like the other day they set up a full live-action show in the living room. It was complete with a table of snacks, built-in audience (lots of animals), and a magic act.

Chantal Girard, Senior Customer Service Representative: My son tripped on the steps outside and broke my Mother's Day present: A bottle of Champagne that he was leaving at the door for me.

Michael Gauthier, Senior Strategic Buyer: During a department video chat, my clothesline was in the background. Suffice to say, the meeting was "BRIEF"!

Mauricio Acuña, Strategic Buyer: In the beginning, I had to hide from my 2-year-old son; he would assume that daddy being home meant playtime! Three months later, not so much.

Nathalie Abdelhadi, Strategic Sales Support Coordinator: My dogs crash every Zoom meeting I have with my volunteer group. Thankfully my work video chats are at the office!

Steve Underhill, Senior Marketing Coordinator: My daughter, Taylor, moved out at the onset of the pandemic and since then I have become her contractor and advisor of choice when it comes to just about anything except for fashion or décor. I know I am in for something new when she calls and it starts with, "Hi Daddyyyyy..."

Sylvie Scrivo, Senior Customer Service Rep: In one of our Friday video conference meetings, I came in costume, wearing everything I love about my favorite Caribbean island: Jamaica! The girls found it really funny.

Rosemary Mercer, Customer Service: We installed and filled a kiddie's swimming pool in our garage, complete with 8 octopus spraying tentacles so our 4-year-old granddaughter could go swimming as her regular swimming classes were canceled due to COVID-19. It took three hours to install including laying cushioning on the garage floor, blowing up the pool, filling it with water, connecting the spraying tentacles, etc. She played in it for exactly 11 minutes!!! Eleven minutes of pure fun. Then we had to empty it. Not so fun.

As we start to resume “normal” life, what are you most looking forward to?

Mei-Lee Wang Langi: Being able to hug my parents again.

Colby Fisher: I'm looking forward to human interaction. I'm looking forward to not taking other people for granted because they've always been there. Time away from people and made me realize how necessary it for us to interact on a personal level with each other.

Michael Gauthier: Interacting with people, visiting family, and yes, taking a Caribbean Cruise!

Chantal Girard: Flying to the Caribbean!

Elisa Hernandez: Sushi and spending time with my daughter

Ashley Caward: Looking forward to starting Roller Derby again.

Ilana Perlman: Going to the hairdresser!

Eva Varelas: Going out to dinner with friends and seeing my colleagues again.

Mauricio Acuña: Eating a good spicy pita Falafel, and babka bread!

Cherie Edelstein: Connecting with friends and food in a restaurant of some sort. Just chilling and hanging out without all the stresses of a virus.