

SATELLITE STORIES

Tales of Remote Working



Satellite Stories

March 2020 – May 2020

We have all weathered the changes of living in the COVID-19 era. It is simply useless to describe all the various changes to our world. Also, slightly insulting. Everyone has their unique vision of the world and the changes that we are experiencing are intensely personal.

The purpose of sharing the following (somewhat modified) stories is just to remind the reader, and ourselves as well, that everything can be framed according to our viewpoints. As terrible, hard, and disruptive as this has been, try to find something that will help you as your career and life continue to develop. For example, we are sure many of you have had to familiarize yourselves with Zoom for everything from conferences and meetings to teaching!

At some point, the question of strengths and weaknesses arise in interviews and job performances. The experiences that arose during the COVID-19 era impact each of us. Sharing some of the stories that we have heard about changed perceptions, new ways to look at issues and learning to manage and redirect emotions are tools that can be relevant to everyone at every stage of their work life.

How we ultimately evaluate our stories will determine how we view the incidents that have occurred. Did they make or break you? Only you can answer that question. Either way, it needs to ultimately be framed so that continued development of your career is not halted by the COVID-19 shelter-in-place.

If you have a shelter-in-place story and want to share with us and your fellow readers, please send it to us at team@tmasfconnects.org. If we feature it, we will send you a \$25 Starbucks gift card!

Stay healthy and well,

Your Team at TMASF Connects

Frustrated Foodie puts fork aside

Worrying about EVERYTHING had become a full-time job. I missed my office, coffee, clothes, and colleagues. The work was still chugging along, but my spare time was increasingly devoted to finding flour to make cookies. As the flour became hard to find, my attention, like a fickle lover turned to package mixes! Who knew – flour was available, partially prepared, and ready to go?

Fast forward several weeks into my imaginary baking internship and here my clothes no longer fit. My colleagues remained polite via Zoom or call, but they were also showing strains of the day.... I decided to ask if anyone wanted to stretch during a break or at lunchtime. I figured the further away from my kitchen, but still in the womb of my cave was a better bet for a happier future.

Now, I have been leading the stretching which has turned into an exercise version of The Hunger Games.

Our little group has grown, and everyone contributes an exercise. What began as 10 minutes as become 30 with a couple of sideline workouts with another group of colleagues.

My career plans to apply for a pastry internship have changed. Although I do not intend to become a trainer, I have learned how to address a problem, share the answer and motivate others and make peace with the original situation which was not of my making – where's the flour???

Exercises Expand Mind & Services

I am the owner of a mid-size communications firm with an established roster of clients. Since COVID-19, my business world has slowed considerably. As a seasoned executive, I was not too concerned at first. But, as Week Two became Week Ten, my analytical side was becoming my anxious side. I have always been athletic and so I decided to use my spare time to get into the best shape of my life.

That being a questionable goal, and no doubt, others may view my physique differently (if I ever leave my home again) led me to an intense workout schedule twice per day. It was in the middle of a grueling workout that I had "the thought." I had completely changed my exercise routine to address the change in my life – why not create a Value-Added service for my clients? If I could add value to their business by an expansion, improvement, or re-brand, I'd have work and they'd be better prepared for the changed landscape that lies ahead.

My existing clients who were struggling and not spending any money on communications programs became excited by my idea. Their business could broaden, and I could also continue to work. By adding additional – read as new, but not expensive-to-offer features, I added value to their services. I also have a new set of messages to be crafted and delivered which allowed me to survive the past ten weeks without needing to furlough anyone.

What I had reluctantly began to feel could ruin my business became an opportunity to expand services to my clients. Whether it continues or works, I did develop a new skill set that helps me to reframe problems and then address them from a new perspective. The expansion of my exercise led to the expansion of my business.

Doing Good while Dining Well

I am a San Francisco resident who is fortunate enough to live in one of our City's great neighborhoods and take MUNI to my downtown office. I have studied communities and work in the communications and program field on issues related to employment. I can honestly say that my work is important to me, matters to others and has made strides toward improving opportunities to find work. Recently, I had an idea to help small businesses better navigate shelter-in-place.

As a social person, it was an adjustment to suddenly be living and working from my home. As a true lover of all good food, my passion for dining well has led me to travel and go to great lengths to find exactly what I want. In the era of restaurant closure this led me to become part of the dropped diner set waiting patiently and grateful with (the street) Curb for my dinner.

It was during one of the early dinner pick-ups that I had a stark realization.

I was struck by the information inequality that exists in San Francisco. There are so many different resources to help small businesses, but when trying to order my dinner from one, I understood they had no access to needed information. In this restaurant, and I believe in many other, there was no understanding or awareness of options being offered to help small business survive. To that end, I decided to translate my work into a different language. Armed with my own native skills, I planned to begin this process.

However, it was truly a joy when my expanded thoughts were skyrocketed into reality as I realized that Microsoft Word has a translator for many languages. In an instant, I was able to take my work and make it legible to others in their native language.

My COVID-19 story is one of realization and followed by action. Hopefully, the language translator feature will help some of these small businesses better navigate the governmental resources available to small businesses. Going forward, they will also make the work of my organization more effective, diverse, and far-reaching.

Better Living through Binge Watching

I am a seasoned business executive and love my work. My job is very social and dining and discussing is a large part of what I do. As a serious person who studies issues intently and methodically plans my life, it was a jolt to suddenly find myself in the loving and very available arms of my home office.

Gone was the soy-whip hot chocolate latte and comradery. I have become comfortable with Zoom and now look forward to our thrice-daily video calls. But, without the time taken to commute to my office and dress meticulously, I have been able to accomplish more in a shorter period of time. During the COVID-19 era, I was also able to finish much of the office automation that I had been working on for the past 18-months.

Now, as I turn my eye toward the issues of employee benefits and new approaches for 401 (k) planning, I have been struck by the Billions bug. Watching the machinations of the Wall Street villains, people of questionable repute, kinky shrink and hungry day-traders has captured my attention.

Although I do not see myself becoming a day trader or moving to Wall Street, I have a completely new vision of investing. My 401 (k) is in good hands, but I will now be a much more discerning client asking questions. Our employees will also benefit from a slightly more aggressive approach to retirement benefit planning.

Living a bit vicariously through Billions has strengthened my resolve to more actively manage my resources and dress a bit more like the kinky shrink of Bloomingdales...

Don't forget to share with us your shelter-in-place stories! If we feature it, you get a \$25 Starbucks gift card!

Take care and stay well!