

## **Kristin Graham, Amazon**

### **Courageous Conversations: Foster Culture, Engagement and Hope in Times of Change**

- Burnout starts with us individually as communicators. We must each acknowledge the reality of burnout, including screen fatigue. How to resolve:
  - Find ways to inspire yourself. Remember that “You did not wake up today to be mediocre.” In addition, be willing to share your feelings.
  - Do fewer things, better. Shoot for doing 10% fewer things, but commit to doing them 100% better (or go deeper).
  - Challenge yourself and your personal investments in the information channels you’re consuming. Streamline and edit these down.
  - Don’t respond to every single request or email that comes to you.
  - Apply the “Communications Flywheel” to each ask or output, i.e.:
    - Is this the RIGHT TIME?
    - Is this the RIGHT AUDIENCE?
    - Is this the RIGHT MESSAGE?
- Email is still a primary channel.
  - Don’t disregard it in the rush to embrace tools like your Intranet/Teams.
  - Email is not going away, but make sure email content is “bite-sized” with mobile in mind.
- Related: “Make your leaders downloadable.” Keep their communique’s short, pithy—and ensure they don’t just “say something”—but that they “mean something.” Videos, for example, should only be 3 minutes.
- Extend onboarding to pre-boarding in the new normal, because new employees are experiencing/first meeting their colleagues now via screens—not in person.
  - This is also when you have their rapt/most attention.
  - This also accelerates the learning curve.
  - However, don’t give them homework—welcome them.
- You don’t have to create everything—it’s OK to curate!
  - Create “opt in” messages on a variety of topics—curating things that you want your employees to share. Grab pre-existing material and have an employee queue it up on your channel (e.g., chat platform, Intranet, etc.)
- Takeaways:
  - Culture is a daily dialogue.
  - Do fewer things better.
  - Preboarding is your culture kickstart.
  - Put leaders online to speak and listen.
  - Amplify your people managers.
  - Listen and learn mode all the time.

## **Peter Stern, Ferguson**

### **#HomeSweetOffice: How to Tap the 3Cs to Re-engage a Remote Workforce**

- Home base: How to integrate your intranet with Teams
- How to create a better feedback loop with microsite resource centers, Power Automate, FAQs and other tools

- The 3 Cs: Best channels to create and drive care, compassion and clarity (including CEO meetings, videos for all associates, twice weekly emails)
- Digital innovation: How to experiment and bridge gaps in your tech stack with mobile apps like Yammer
- Recommit to communicating everything with Clarity, Compassion and Care. Gauge your communications during these trying times against these three criteria.
  - Clarity in communication
  - Compassion through leadership
  - Care through connection
- Ideas to keep in mind when “going remote”:
  - Answer personal questions related to Covid-19 and health/wellness on internal channels only, never on a social channel.
  - Provide an “Internal Resource” center with FAQs (theirs launched March 13).
  - Give people a break from screen time during pandemic.
  - Centralize your intranet resources. Ferguson went from 100 remote employees to 18,000 from March to April. Intranet resources were centralized in response.
  - Foster engagement by letting team members set up their own meetings on Teams.
- When reaching frontline employees during pandemic:
  - Every decision and message must emphasize “first in safety” (Ferguson’s slogan). Ensure the employee is priority #1. Business has to be second.
  - Create one page daily digests with health updates and share internally/Intranet.
  - Conduct daily huddles with leadership to determine content for daily digests.
  - Encourage staff and associates to say “thank you” to each other and create sense of family and the sense that we’re all here to help.

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Liberty Mutual**

#### **What’s In, What’s Out: Best Channels to Spark Employee Engagement**

- Follow your true north even in crisis and change. Guide your pandemic respond and communications according to your core values.
  - For example, Liberty Mutual’s three key principles are:
    - Protect the health and safety of employees.
    - Live its values by acting responsibly and putting our people first.
    - Continue to meet the needs of customers.
- More is better during pandemic: Commit to more frequent and transparent leadership communications to keep employees informed. Liberty Mutual did this almost daily through March.
- Provide remote tools.
  - For example, Liberty Mutual launched:
    - LM Anywhere (ability to access work files, including all MS Office)
    - Zscaler (cloud based alternative to company’s VPN)
    - VDI Gateway (access all apps employees needed via a desktop image on the Intranet)
    - Network bandwidth via exclusion lists for non-critical roles, proxy blocking (video, social media, etc.)
- Liberty Mutual launched new workstreams and the outputs for each of these strategic categories translated to assignments or content created by internal communications:
  - Listening and Learning
  - Feeling Secure

- Adapting How We Work
- Keeping Spirits Up
- Adapt your previous channel strategies to meet the new needs of a remote workforce
  - The company created a dedicated “Covid Hub” on the MyLiberty home page. The internal communications team took over this particular tile on the site.
    - Do this: Create one spot for up-to-date information, policies, resources and tools.
  - Develop the right cadence and content for employee newsletters and email updates
    - Do this: Commit to a regular frequency. For example, must update the hub at least once a week during the pandemic.
    - Point employees to the page on regular basis (daily is recommended for larger organizations), whether via email or mobile alerts.
  - Open the floor. Empower employees to share their own content and build community on your existing digital channels—from the intranet to Teams, etc.
- Break down the silos. Partner with multiple functions to promote polices and resources created to support employees’ physical, financial and mental health.

### **Bennett Andelman, Power Home Remodeling**

#### **Rally, Revive, Reconnect: Secrets of Engaging Townhalls and All-Hands Meetings**

- About Power Home Remodeling
  - Established in 1992
  - Slow tick growth for first 17 years.
  - Since 2009, have experienced great growth and talent acquisition.
  - Now have 2,800 employees.
  - Planning to have 10,000 employees in the next five years.
- It makes sense to run efficient, boring meetings. Only provide what is necessary, be quick and painless—but this destroys creativity and doesn’t do justice to employees.
- You should feel obligated to share the good, bad and ugly with your employees.
- Meetings should always begin and end with, “Who before what.”
- All great meetings have three pillars that make employees feel like they are part of a mission, inspire them in difficult times and uplift their spirits.
  - Shared consciousness
  - Inspiration
  - Entertainment
- It’s important to be vulnerable to gain the trust of employees.
  - Being honest may create frustration initially, but pays off ultimately
- Use data to show employees business opportunities and the possibilities they offer.
  - The team constantly collects data from other teams and looks at whether it’s something employees would want to know.
- Don’t be afraid to lose employees who aren’t attached to your mission.
- Use every meeting to share your positive impact on the world—it is especially important to millennial employees.
- Having fun in meetings encourages employees to do their best work—it changes the mindset that work has to suck the life out of you.
- Nurture relationships in the workplace—not titles and hierarchies.

- Highlight the vibrant personalities of those you work with
- Many employees were furloughed during the first months of the pandemic. Those who weren't set out to remind all employees that they were still there for them.
  - Every week, they gave them a look at "Power Life at Home."
- Cheat sheet for meetings:
  - Honestly cover everything.
  - Live your values and inspire others to as well.
  - Laughter is critical.
- How are you handling video with social distancing?
  - iPhones are used, but employees are given guidelines to shoot good videos.

## **People Power: How to Foster a Meaningful Culture with Remote Teams**

### **Ann Melinger, Brilliant Ink**

- Brilliant Ink is an internal comms and engagement agency that ensures employees have a great experience at every step.
- It's never been easy to connect remote employees to the culture of a central office location, or to make them feel like they belong.
- What is culture?
  - More than office perks—it's a combination of values, behaviors and business practices that decide how things get done.
  - These concepts don't require physical proximity, but they do require focused, intentional activities.
  - Never has culture been more important than it is right now in the COVID era.
- Defining culture on paper is important because you can't protect something that hasn't been clearly defined.
- Culture should be 80% realistic and 20% aspirational.
  - The story you tell about culture needs to be accurate and realistic.
- Looking at the employee life cycle is crucial to understanding where culture shows up.
  - Your career site is often the first connection point to your culture in the employee lifecycle.
    - Ex: Showing actual data about representation shows a real commitment to diversity.
  - When onboarding remote employees, video is critical to showing culture.
  - Storytelling is a great tool to use in your day-to-day communications to showcase culture
    - Comms don't have to be one-way during COVID—collaboration tools are important here.
- Talking to your people and doing surveys is especially important right now to understand if people still feel connected to your culture.

### **Ally Bunin, Russell Reynolds Associates**

- Russell Reynold's culture is all about collaboration, so remote work posed a large challenge.
  - Revamped their Intranet and created a micro-site for coronavirus. (They use SharePoint.)
  - Regular CEO communications including videos and town halls.

- They were checking the boxes, but connectivity was still suffering.
  - They began watching the new stories happening in the company and new connections between employees happening—then shared them.
  - “Stories of survival” during COVID is critical and creates a sense of community.
- Ran pop-up pulse surveys on their intranet (They use SnapComms for pulse surveys).
  - Got 85% of their workforce to participate.
  - Became a triage center for people who needed support.
  - Quickly pivoted their behaviors in response to results.
- Realized their employees needed more transparency and began running more shareholder meetings.
  - Did live pulse surveys during these meetings.
- Needed to meet people where they are.
  - Gave them tools and resources to help them collaborate and lead, such as newsletters, resource hubs.