SANBORN HEAD

Working from Home During (and Beyond?) COVID-19

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During my nearly 20 years with Sanborn Head, I've worked in Burlington, Vermont and now Denver, Colorado. I spent most of that time working solo in office space not too far from our current Vermont office location. I figured the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home orders would seem like the solo working conditions that I experienced in Vermont. Not exactly.

In Vermont, I still had to commute to work. Now, my commute consists of walking downstairs to my home office in the basement. Most of the colleagues and clients I speak to now are in a similar setting instead of their traditional offices. Now I'm not just talking to others on the phone – I'm seeing them too. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and the like are the communication mediums of choice these days. In my opinion, video calls are much better than voice-only calls, especially when you're holed up alone.

While the office environment has changed significantly during the pandemic, the out-of-office interactions have changed more so and it's hard to know when or if external meetings will return to pre-pandemic regularity. Business development is a major focus for me that included getting together with clients and/or presenting/exhibiting/participating in industry conferences. For me, the most difficult part of developing business during this pandemic is the lack of in-person interaction. I've been doing my best to keep up communication with clients and industry representatives, but I find that video communication falls short to in-person get-togethers. Like other hurdles that I and my Sanborn Head colleagues have encountered in the past, we'll figure out best practices for developing business remotely. We love a challenge.

On the other hand, there are some positive outcomes to working from home. I've come to learn that my wife, who works upstairs while I'm downstairs, has a pretty cool job. My wife and I have been married for almost 30 years and we've always checked in, talked, and generally communicated well, chatting about our kids (who are now grown and out of the house), our jobs, and life in general. During this pandemic, I'm seeing a new side of her – the employee side. During her Zoom meetings, I listen with one ear from the basement and catch wind of all sorts of activities going on with her non-profit organization, which empowers adults 50 years and older to make positive social impacts. I get a kick out of the fact that she is the Office Manager for an organization that currently does not have an office. Maybe a new title, Virtual Office Manager, is in order. It's been fun getting to know my wife in a new light now that we're office mates.

I, like millions of others around the globe, am wondering what the work environment will be like post-COVID. I miss the camaraderie at the brick-and-mortar office, but to be honest, except for business development activities, I think video meetings are working well. It seems inevitable that the post-COVID workplace will include work-from-home and regular office hours. In the meantime, I'll continue to make the best of the current situation and enjoy time with my work-from-home office mate.