

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in today.

Today I want to talk about really a lesson from the pandemic and of course what happened during the pandemic we, at least for periods of time, we had more people working remotely. And of course, we started to have Zoom meetings and those sorts of things in lieu of in-person meetings, with customers, with other outsiders, with our team members, all of that, we basically changed the way we communicate in a lot of ways. And what I found is there's really a lot of positives around that.

Probably the first positive are the time savings. A lot of times those personal interactions were timewasters or meetings, even if your meetings are efficient and probably many of them are, but probably some of them aren't, but the time coming and going to and from meetings. My son works for Duke University and he said, "Well, we'd have a meeting, people would be coming from all over campus to sit in this meeting that might take 30 minutes and people are spending 45 minutes each getting there and going back from there or going back to work from there." Now they Zoom in, they get to the business, they get to it quicker. There's less, I guess, fluff to it all. And they get right down to it. So, we did learn that it can be efficient to meet remotely and to meet via Zoom.

And of course, our skills for using Zoom and how we do that, that's all improved over this time also. I mean, most of these former meetings were conference calls and putting a face to the conference call, which again, we learned during this period really does improve the meeting and now that's becoming the norm.

So, the part I really wanted to talk to today is the opportunity part of this. So superintendent meetings, for example, most companies normally had quarterly superintendent meetings or twice a year, some even once a year, and some who were spread out a little more found it hard to have superintendent meetings ever. And yet they're so important. The sharing of best practices, the understanding of other people's problems, the ability to gain that comradery and company feel that you get from those meetings is really invaluable. Yet construction companies found it hard to do so because basically they're the head of that job site and people don't want to leave their job site unsupervised. So superintendent meetings were difficult.

Well, now people have found they can have a 10 or 15 minutes superintendent meeting weekly, share best practices, get that company comradery thing going, a lot of good communications about safety and other things and everybody can do it from where they are, they don't have the hour of travel. So the fact of the matter is you can have more meetings, you can accomplish more, you can get more out of it and know if you continue to do it efficiently, do it much more frequently, and that's a real benefit to your company.

So now let's just think beyond that. PM's and superintendents, the PM's got to get out to the job sites to have that huddle with the superintendent. Now sure, they talk over the phone once or twice a day, but a lot of times they don't actually meet, they don't talk about the job strategy. They don't look forward, maybe talking about which subcontractors are coming up on the list, who needs to get called, what needs to get ordered to make sure we don't get in trouble, they're sort of on their different wavelengths. But now that we've learned to communicate this way, they could have a weekly 30-minute huddle and they could get a good portion of the business taken care of. Project managers could save some of that drive time, still think it's important certainly to get out there, but they could also participate now by a virtual job site wide through.

Safety, you could add virtual safety walks, as a superintendent walks through the job site, he can be sharing that either through a helmet or just through the phone or iPad, he can be sharing the job site with others. Again, we've learned in the COVID environment that these things work, and they can work.

Thinking about leadership check-ins, both with the field individual check-ins, again, how often does the senior leader get to actually go out to the job site and see the superintendents? Now we've learned that, hey, we could easily make a five,

10 minutes Zoom call and see that person virtually, whereas before all of those calls were over the phone and Zoom's not perfect, in-person's better, but boy, if you think about 30 hours on the road, trying to get out and see all of those folks versus being able to eliminate those 30 hours and just do the 10 hours of direct contact and still be able to get more out of it, there's a real opportunity there.

So, think about that within your company. What meetings haven't you had because of the general inconvenience of getting people together to have them. I'm thinking lessons learned, post-project postmortems, always difficult to get the superintendent back, to work the logistics to getting the estimator in there with the project manager. But boy, Zoom up, do the meeting by Zoom and instead of not having the meeting, have the meeting. Is it perfect with people coming in that way? No, but it's a lot better than not having the meeting.

So, this is sort of one of there's an old saying, don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Well, this is one of the gift horses of the pandemic is that we've learned to communicate differently, meet differently and we've learned a lot of new skills with which to do that. Now, go back and figure out how you can take advantage of that skill by keeping in better touch with all of your employees.

Again, Dennis Engelbrecht, Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in.