



Chat Transcript: Fireside Chat with Brian Kropp

15:02:34 - Heather Sittler:

I can't promise to stay the entire time. I'm on pickup duty for my daughter...

15:03:57 - Lori Thomas:

No worries at all, Heather!

15:05:06 - Heather Sittler:

We are family owned so they do address social issues based on our core values.

15:05:08 - Pamela O'Reilly:

I would say my company takes a reluctant stance on those issues.

15:06:46 - Pamela O'Reilly:

To be fair, they haven't talked about it a lot, but they've given a lot of money to charities to benefit women and minorities and that's probably better than talking about it and not doing anything.

15:07:52 - Heather Sittler:

Our leadership promotes action over statements.

15:08:46 - Heather Sittler:

That's something I love about my company. They align closely with organizations that align with our values and then our leadership encourages employees to take a step if the cause resonates with them personally.

15:10:21 - Pamela O'Reilly:

@Heather, it sounds like you work for a great organization!

15:12:33 - Heather Sittler:

It is a great company. I've been here for 21 years and can't imagine working anywhere else.

15:14:09 - Heather Sittler:

I can't name all the company values but I know family and community are at the top. It's easy to see how the actions of the leadership tie so clearly into those.

15:14:59 - Julie Stiles:

21 years Heather, that's amazing!

15:15:20 - Heather Sittler:

It's rare nowadays but the longevity at our company is incredible!

15:17:50 - Kelsey Lang:

And they breathe and eat, too. Just like me!



15:18:46 - Julie Stiles:

I prefer talking about work life harmony

15:18:48 - Heather Sittler:

I think that's what I liked most about video calls at the beginning of this whole mess. Seeing a glimpse of people's homes, their kids, their pets...

15:19:17 - Kristen Lippencott:

I remember in 2019 at WELCOA learning the terms "Work Life Wisdom"

15:19:29 - Stephanie Jones:

The working from home equalizes all of us, which I enjoy a lot

15:19:58 - Pamela O'Reilly:

@Heather, me too. The best thing ever was seeing my VP trying to have a Zoom call when his 5-year old kept interrupting and he was carrying his baby son around with him.

15:20:01 - cbeaman:

Love the Work Life Wisdom phrase!

15:21:09 - Lori Thomas:

@Heather and @Pam, I agree! It has been great getting to know and interacting with coworker's family members as well and really expanding our work family.

15:21:44 - Kelsey Lang:

@Lori and @Adam like you guys bantering with my husband while we were on Zoom last night! Hahaha

15:21:57 - Lori Thomas:

@Kelsey, exactly!

15:22:01 - Heather Sittler:

Ironically, I feel more connected to my coworkers in a virtual environment. Part of it is intention on my part to schedule 30 minute "catch up" sessions with various folks...

15:22:03 - Kelsey Lang:

He's part of the team too hahaha

15:22:34 - Heather Sittler:

My coworker's daughter joins most of our team calls. We love waving with her (she's not quite two).

15:23:08 - Lori Thomas:

One of our team members is on maternity leave and I can't wait for her to 'come back' in a couple weeks so we can all see the baby!! <3



15:23:09 - Marisa Jacobs:

I love how accepting work from home and the constant interruptions made everyone - it used to be this big embarrassing thing to have a dog or child or whatever interrupt you while dealing with a work thing from home, but COVID and wfh made it so that everyone had that happening and made everyone so much more understanding and tolerant...

15:23:12 - Heather Sittler:

We're going hybrid.

15:23:19 - Kelsey Lang:

Yes Lori!!

15:23:36 - cbeaman:

Sadly, my company is expecting to be back in the office within 1-2 months.

15:23:37 - Julie Stiles:

We're already all remote. Our flexibility in part comes in allowing people extended hours in which to do their work,

15:24:13 - Pamela O'Reilly:

We're consultants and 90% of us are on client site, so it will depend on what the client mandates. For those of us based at HQ, it's up in the air based on people's comfort level.

15:24:13 - Kelsey Lang:

WELCOA is staying home for this year still which I'm happy we're not rushing to get back in the office if we don't really NEED to. We've made it work remotely and if it's not broke, why fix it... right now anyway

15:24:47 - Heather Sittler:

I believe the move to hybrid is very reluctant. The leadership (very traditional!!) wants folks back in the office but the employees pushed very hard to be able to continue to work remote and have the option of working from anywhere.

15:24:58 - Marisa Jacobs:

We're back in the office already (obviously) and plan on staying there but I've seen a significant increase in flexibility just in the mindset in general.

15:26:36 - Heather Sittler:

We had a very rigid no remote work policy prior to COVID. When COVID hit, it was the proof we could keep working without missing a beat for the clients we serve.

15:26:41 - Heather Sittler:

Many of our clients didn't notice!

15:30:41 - Heather Sittler:

Can you train people to have intention around building connections?



15:31:17 - Julie Stiles:

You just have to be intentional about creating connection on a remote team. It's totally doable and we have a lot of strong connections across an entirely remote team.

15:35:18 - Lori Thomas:

Here are a couple of WELCOA blogs about connection:

<https://www.welcoa.org/blog/how-better-connection-can-make-the-workplace-whole/>

<https://www.welcoa.org/blog/making-the-workplace-whole-meeting-basic-human-needs/>

<https://www.welcoa.org/blog/the-year-of-social-connection/>

<https://www.welcoa.org/blog/covid-19-and-social-isolation/>

15:35:21 - Heather Sittler:

I found that forcing myself to be more comfortable turning my camera on has encouraged my teammates to do the same.

15:36:09 - Kelsey Lang:

Yes that's a huge step Heather! My last job we'd zoom but no one ever turned on their camera and here at WELCOA we see everyone's faces almost all the time!

15:36:29 - Kelsey Lang:

It's a nice switch and for me being new has helped me have a better connection with my new co-workers.

15:36:47 - Kelsey Lang:

Even if it's just a quick chat or something we have cameras on so it feels more genuine and "real"

15:37:15 - Heather Sittler:

@Kelsey You are so right! It's not the most comfortable thing but it really enhances the conversations.

15:37:33 - Kelsey Lang:

It only took me that first week to get over the first time feels hahah

15:37:39 - Kelsey Lang:

Now it's second nature

15:38:21 - Kelsey Lang:

It's also allows for a more genuine connection too to see oh hey someone else also has this or that going on in the background and it's not just me lol

15:38:34 - Kelsey Lang:

Everyone has lives outside of work and now it's merged into one environment

15:38:41 - Stephanie Jones:

I like using Zoom with the camera because you can identify body language and some of that nonverbal language we don't get with just audio

15:38:54 - Kelsey Lang:

Absolutely!



15:38:57 - Nereida Yanez:
@Kelsey agreed! Plus I've loved seeing all the animals

15:39:02 - Heather Sittler:
It really helps with not talking over each other. The bane of conference calls!!

15:39:11 - Kelsey Lang:
Yes the fur friends are always a plus

15:39:19 - Heather Sittler:
Sorry - have to head out! Time to pick up my girl...

15:39:27 - Nereida Yanez:
@Heather yes! I've noticed this too. The facial/visual cues are great

15:39:27 - Lori Thomas:
Bye Heather!! Thank you!

15:39:59 - Stephanie Jones:
It reminds me of Delilah after dark, mom made me listen as a kid

15:40:24 - Lori Thomas:
Oh my gosh, I forgot about Delilah! Loved listening to her.

15:41:02 - Lori Thomas:
We even do 'air hugs' with each other on camera when we miss each other most. It's fun!

15:41:09 - Kristen Lippencott:
I now have the De-li-lahhhh intro in my head

15:41:19 - Stephanie Jones:
Sorry! It's all my fault, it's in my head too

15:41:33 - Lori Thomas:
Nice little earworm for you, LOL!

15:45:48 - Kelsey Lang:
I like that we're not in a rush to get back into the office but there's some moments where I'm sad to not have that in-person contact/connection that you just can't replicate 100% virtually. I know it's temporary and that's kinda what keeps me going.

15:47:40 - Pamela O'Reilly:
I think it gets so frustrating when policies are made due to the actions of one person.

15:48:05 - Kelsey Lang:
Yes and not surveying or asking what the majority thinks/feels



15:49:17 - Stephanie Jones:

@Pamela yes, my old company made a lot of policies because one person would overspend on amazon

15:49:26 - Pamela O'Reilly:

I actually had a supervisor tell me that I had to work harder at home to prove I was working, but if I were on client site playing solitaire on my computer, that would count more.

15:49:27 - Stephanie Jones:

just as an example lol

15:50:56 - Lori Thomas:

Please share your feedback with us about today's session by completing this survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/20210325-fc-kropp>

15:52:41 - Lori Thomas:

Be sure to tune in to an upcoming WELCOA Pulse episode on the topic of The New Way Forward for Women in the Workplace - <https://www.welcoa.org/training/webinars-current-events/#2021-april-webinar-women-in-workplace>

15:59:07 - Pamela O'Reilly:

Need to run to another meeting. It was so great hanging out with all of you! Thanks so much Brian. I hope to see a lot of you next week at our bonus fireside chat!

16:01:30 - Kelsey Lang:

Thank you!!

16:02:08 - Julie Stiles:

Thanks so much Brian, Stuart, Lori, and everyone for contributing!

16:02:21 - Nereida Yanez:

Thank you Brian!