

HOW Design Live

Molly Clark, Director of Marketing at inMotionNow, Ilise Benun, Founder of Marketing Mentor, Justin Ahrens, Chief Evangelist at Rule29 – *Getting Stuff Done: Being A Strategic Partner From Home*

August 13, 2020

Speaker Introduction by Amy Conover, HOW Show Director:

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to this digital session brought to you by inMotionNow. I am excited to have you here. I'm Amy Conover, and I am the Content and Show Director for HOW Events and just really thrilled to be part of this. This presentation I'll be moderating and doing the Q & A at the end

Today we will be talking to you about getting stuff done, being a strategic partner from home, and we're excited to have this our first digital session that's sponsored by inMotionNow. And just to give you some insight into who inMotionNow is. Most of you know, I'm sure, but they are a leading provider of workflow management solutions for marketing and creative teams. inMotionNow ignites and simplifies every phrase of the creative production process, delivering measurable value to enterprise clients with a user friendly interface and dedicated customer success team. inMotionNow helps creative and marketing teams of every variety automate their workflow and do the work they love, which at the end of the day, that's where we're all here to do.

Let me just introduce our panelists. I'm so excited because I know all these people very well, so it's a lot of fun for me, but first of all, we have Ilise Benun. Ilise is the founder of Marketing Mentor.com, which is the go-to online resource for creative professionals that want better projects with bigger budgets. She offers business consulting to small groups and also one-on-one, Ilise is also a speaker and an author. She leads courses on Creative Live. Everything that Ilise does is tailored to the needs of creative professionals. And for those of you that are familiar with HOW Design Live, you know, that Ilise has been a program partner for many years, I kind of lost track of the number and that's okay. But I have the privilege of working very closely with Ilise and I have to tell you, she's kind of my go-to sounding board for all things HOW and I am so appreciative always.

Now let's talk about Justin for a second. For us, I think over 20 years now, Justin has led Rule29 and a commitment to smart business, great design and helping others think differently about the world around them. He is an international speaker, an author, a teacher, a podcaster, a creative director, and a self-proclaimed do-gooder. Through a collaborative approach in both strategy and design, Rule29 culture is just as important as the work. And I have to tell you, I've had the opportunity to collaborate on our social cause. Every year, HOW Design Live chooses an official social cause. And for several years, we've worked directly with Wheels For Water, which is a cause that Justin and a couple other buddies of his started several years ago. But what I so appreciate about Justin is that he doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk, you know, it's around doing good and impacting positive change in our world.

So Molly Clark, let's talk about Molly. Molly is the Director of Marketing at inMotionNow, and she has over 10 years of marketing experience. She's focused her career on marketing operations, branding and cross departmental collaboration, even though she sits on the marketing side of the house, Molly loves to work with creative teams. And I have to tell you, I have had so much fun working with Molly over the past several years. Those are the panelists.

Molly

Thanks Amy, for those great introductions. So yeah, so let's dig in. So over the past couple of months, there's been a significant shift in the way creative teams work as, as we all for the most part are working remotely for the foreseeable future, but you're starting to see those same old challenges kind of start to present themselves in a whole new way. So let's quickly start by highlighting what those old challenges are. So according to our annual in house creative management report, which surveyed over 600 marketing and creative professionals, there are four main challenges that creative teams have been facing.

The first is the speed at which creative work as needing to get done. So year over year, creatives are faced with needing to produce more creative work at a faster pace. Not only are they expected and asked to create work, but also to do even more. And so as creative teams are trying to balance this, this volume and velocity, they're also trying to grow us as strategic partners. And, but their area of responsibility is also expanding. So with, with that time is, is always a premium for creatives. So the volume and velocity of requested work can also cause those obstacles, obstacles that pull focus away from creatives from being that strategic partner to the business that they actually want. There's just not enough time in the day. And when there is some of that extra precious time, creatives are often still left trying to tackle those admin tasks, which take away from what they really want to be doing and what they really love to be doing, which is being creative.

So while those old challenges still, they haven't disappeared during this, this pandemic they are starting to shift and manifest in new ways. So as we look at what's next for creative teams, we'll also be addressing those new challenges but then providing some solutions on how best to overcome them. So with that, let's hop into the first of the new challenges.

Ilise

So I'll start and say that out of sight, out of mind, whether you are working in house from home or whether you are a freelance working on a team with a client, a small business, a large corporation out of sight out of mind is one of the biggest problems. And it's tricky because often creatives are introverts or consider themselves to be relatively shy. And so to speak up in the first place is a bit of a challenge. So one of the most important things is to think about how can you get and keep your seat at the strategic table, which is even more difficult now that you are physically away from the people that you're trying to connect with.

So one of my suggestions is to kind of push yourself more than is comfortable beyond what it's probably your comfort level. And it's a little bit toward what might feel pushy, but I promised it, she will never get close enough to push it. You really do have to push yourself a little bit more to insert yourself into the conversation so that people don't forget about you and what you bring to the table.

Molly

One of the things that we've seen is that we really need to start thinking about how to deal with that distance because the remote work is the new normal, and it is here to stay many companies including emotion. Now we've already said that we're not going back to the office this year, at least not in a full time capacity. So we need to get creative about how we can help facilitate and empower creatives to really have that virtual seat at the table.

So speaking of remote working and, and kind of that whole new challenge, it segues nicely into our next of the new the new challenges, which is the topic of working from home. And we used to talk a lot about

how those drop by conversations and work requests were, were so bad and they caused so much angst because they were happening outside of our process. However, we're now starting to see that, that you need to have that balance because without those water cooler conversations, then those conversations that kind of happened organically as you're walking back to your desk, you sometimes don't get that additional layer of context and background stories. So a recent example of this is a project that we did with our creative, our CS team. So they, they had a couple of customers who recently had babies and they wanted to send them like a cute onesy to help celebrate that.

So let's start it off as a fun little side project ended up becoming a bit over-processed because we got all the information that was filled out on the creative brief. So it was, it was filled out completely, but we miss some of that additional context as to why we were actually creating a onesy. Was it a onesy for a baby? Was it a onesy for us? What kind was it? And so, so what ended up happening was the result became super adorable and really fantastic. And it ended up spiking that conversation and we learned how to improve our request forms that we were having an area available for that additional context, but it was just a hurdle that we didn't have to face prior to working remotely.

Justin

Yeah, I think that's a great point. I know for our team and I'm sure many of you can relate when we all first started working from home, it seemed like there was absolutely zero separation from work life, you know, just kind of dealing with all that was going on and it didn't take too long for us to need to sit down and talk about what sort of processes that we needed to look at. How could we help our team create that space? You know for example, you know, at the end of the day end of the day in the beginning we would all say, Hey, we're going to go catch dinner. And we will talk later and clearly it wasn't for like a month that I realized we need to start creating an actual end of the day to help our team, you know be able to just stop working and to go on and, you know you know, do what they want to do, whether it was from home or not.

And I think without having the conversations and, and really trying to look at your processes and, and you know, how to create that separation well, we started seeing, and we're still working through this depending on our workload is, you know, we're just some of my teams breaking. We had some, you know, just unhealthy, you know, anxiety and that sort of thing. And I think it's really important for, especially if you're not used to working from home. And I'm sure some of you have already started doing this, but to have a collective conversation with your team no matter if you're just part of a larger marketing creative team or agency or whatever sit down and just really be transparent, try to have those conversations. You can create this separation. You know, we all know that the world, I don't need to need you to tell the me to tell you that the world has changed, but it's just really impactful for us to keep having that conversation and to keep, you know, adapting where we can.

Ilise

And I think the reality and what the next slide is about is the fact that we have less time to do what needs to be done. And the expectation is that we have to get more done. So the demands of the creative work has increased. And at the same time, a lot of resources have been slashed by many creative teams. And, you know, there's childcare, there's pet care, there's meals, there's so much that has to be done. So you really do have to prioritize and communicate about how the workload is that you, because I think often the assumption is well-staffed to do it and you just have to expand your work time to get it done. And that isn't good for anyone that isn't good for you or your family or for the business. So you really want to think about ways that you can communicate. I'm all about bringing up the conversations that you really need to have in order to do what's best for you and for the company.

Justin

Yeah, Ilise that's a great point. I know for us, we had, you know, in the beginning of all this, we were just to be really transparent, anxious, and nervous, you know, are we going to be able to keep the team we're going to be able to keep things going? We had a bunch of work that was canceled. And we had this really sort of insane opportunity that came in front of us. We were asked to do not one, not two but 12 brands that would usually take us, you know, six, seven, eight months. And I'm not making this up in two or three weeks. And it was a crazy ask. And they luckily the client knew that it was a lot, but we needed the work. We needed to figure it out as a team. And, you know, we pride ourselves in trying to have as balance of a schedule as possible.

And so, you know, you talk about communication. We sat down as a team and said, Hey, listen, I was just really transparent. I'm like, we really need to try to figure this job out. How can we make this happen? How can we communicate, how bleak, you know, create, you know the right process and guidelines to do this and to do a well, but also to get through all of it. And, you know, early on, I think, you know, time was sort of irrelevant, you know, and I think what was great for us at that moment is realized that was sort of how the world was working at the time. And that through that project, we were able to set up some new processes, new communication channels, and figure out what tools we needed to use to really create some sense of balance and quality and communication.

Ilise

And I think people are finding also, sorry that some of these new ways of working are more efficient and probably we didn't need maybe all that time or all of those people, or, you know, at the excess that I think things had gotten to. So it's really interesting. I think the way things are starting to morph and adjust, and I just think we have to be really flexible.

Molly

And with that, like a lot of what we've had to do is, is quick pivots. And then to Justin's point some expedited timelines that we just didn't anticipate, like, as we did them last year, just how they've evolved this year. An example of that, that easily pops to mind are all of the conferences that are now going digital. I'm sure how, no, it was a little bit about this based on, on the email. I think we all got a couple of minutes ago prior to this. But, but with that, it doesn't mean it means additional work and planning not to not to mention the additional learning curves that it takes with it. So that takes some additional time as well.

So then as we, as we now move over into not just talking about what these challenges are, but also bringing some, some solutions to the table of how to overcome them. And so the first one we'll talk about is establishing and maintaining a strategic partnership.

Ilise

And my suggestion is to over communicate. And again, I know this may feel uncomfortable. It may feel pushy, but you can be sure that a lot of people are stretched in a lot of different directions. And they've got lots of, lots of different demands on their time and their email inboxes are full and they're being communicated with from many different sides. And so to assume that when you've sent a message or request that they actually saw it at the right moment to take action on it and do what needs to be done to move the project forward.

It's very unlikely. So that's why I think it's really important to over communicate and to use language like to reframe it in your own mind, even to think, instead of they're not responding to me, why aren't they responding to me? You can't, you have to not give up on them because you know that they are struggling with a lot. And so one of the phrases actually that someone I know uses in a really nice way is he says, I'm just going to bubble this message up to the top of your email inbox. Right? And there's lots of polite ways of saying that, but you can use a language to overcommunicate and let people know that maybe you're pestering them a little bit, but that there's a good reason. Or you can, you know, say, I know I'm harassing you a little bit, tell me if I should stop, but I would not sit back passively and just wait for people to do what they're supposed to because people just aren't thinking straight still.

Justin

Yeah. I think that's a really, really valuable point. I think over communication is key. What I would add to that is let's not forget the human element, right. We need to all have empathy. I think some days literally in an hour, I could go from laughing to crying, to being frustrated. And we're all in that. I think what's really fascinating. In all the ways you can imagine is just how we are collectively, you know in this together. And I think when it comes to communication, some of the ways I've had the most valuable communication, in fact, you know, going back to a couple points of where I think whenever we get on the other side of this season that we're in right now, I think there's going to be so many great things that will come out of it. And I think one of the things that came out of it for me and my team is, is when we take the time to actually write an email that is authentic and empathetic, it's huge.

So for example, my kids just recently were told that they have to go remote for the first half of the year after they were told they're going to be in person. I was really frustrated and I kind of send an email to a client and said, Hey, I don't know how you guys are doing, how's your kids doing we're remote. And we had this incredible dialogue to where she hadn't answered my first five emails, just because, you know, it just didn't seem as relevant to her. So I think having oral communicate, make sure that you meet people where they're at and just relate. It feels like we can do that more than ever now. And just being really transparent and open a word appropriate, I think is, is really valuable

Molly

And on the same kind of thought process from the very beginning, like a very tactical solution to this is from the very beginning of, of working from home through supervision. We had encouraged everyone to start using their, their video when they were on, on a call. And so from the very beginning, that was just kind of an established thing that we really wanted to make sure we were doing. And I recently had a call and it was just a phone call and I felt so kind of lost in and kind of disjointed with it because I couldn't see the person. And so I think not only when you're able to see somebody be able to, to then not only communicate, you know, through words, but also those nonverbal cues, which really helped to establish that more kind of human and personal connection. And so with that, you're making maybe more of an impact. And so you'll get invited back to the next meeting and, you know, emails will probably get answered maybe quicker and, and those kinds of things, cause you're making that, that human connection as well.

So as we move on to, to the next one do more with less, so platforms like a creative workflow management solution can definitely help to prioritize work, provide visibility into projects and statuses send gentle reminders when reviews are needed. My team can definitely relate to this one and ultimately help save you some of that time. So this was my shameless pug plug for emotion. Ignite is a great option. You should look at it. We even have a free trial that you can look at. And that is all of the plugs that I will give. And, and so Justin, you can talk about how your team can do more with less.

Justin

Yeah, that's great. Thank you for that. You know, I feel really fortunate that right around I think earlier this year we were looking at our online tools and we'd had a variety of them either signed up or we were trying. And so I'm sure like many of you, we had to, you know figure it out pretty quick, change our process and also look at what kind of tools that we had and really figure out, you know, which ones were valuable and which ones, you know we didn't need that sort of thing. And we're continually, even now, I feel like one of the things that's happening for our team during this time is even more open to looking at additional tools that can either reduce and get rid of other tools or just allow us to communicate quicker and cleaner and more consistent. So one of my big suggestions is continue to be open to how you can evolve your, your, your online tools, whatever that may be.

Ilise

And I think the point I would make coming at, I am from the place of an original professional organizer. That was my very first job when I got fired from my job 32 years ago, is that we have to be more organized now. And sometimes we feel organized because it's all in our head and we move from one thing to the next, but because people are not in the same place and there's so much distance and we often feel so isolated, we have to basically get it out of our heads and onto either a piece of paper or a document or one of these workflow system is right, so that we can be more efficient and not just all over the place. And it's really tricky, especially when we're doing more with less and the demands are higher and there's less time. So I think it's worth taking the extra time to get organized, to get the stuff, extract it from your head and get it out in such a way that it can continue to be iterated on and evolve so everyone can be on the same page.

Molly

Absolutely. So the next solution we have is to ask for what you need. I know on the, in house side to definitely, don't be afraid to ask. The worst case is the answer is no, but the best case is that you're going to be able to hopefully, you know, get the resources that you need. In some cases that might be, you might be able to partner with some freelancers or agencies to backfill the bandwidth resources and skill gaps that your team has. So having, having somebody on the inhouse side that really knows your brand, and then combining that with, but some outside expertise can really be, be that powerful way to produce a really like the best outcome possible. So, so definitely don't be afraid to ask. You're never going to know if you don't.

Justin

Yeah, I think that's a great point. And I want to say this not lightly. I think most of us realize that a lot of in house teams have been reduced in staff, but yet the demand and output is in many cases still super high. So I think one advantage to that is that you now have the opportunity to access talent that maybe you didn't before, because there's more out there. And so I think that in many ways you have a great opportunity to sort of band together some new expertise to new talent, to really, you know, help shore up that, that demand wherever possible.

Ilise

And one objection might be, Oh no, we can't afford it. Or if you're the agency or the freelance, or you might think, Oh, no, I've got to discount my pricing or charge less because it's a pandemic. They can't afford it. And that's not necessarily the reality. So my suggestion is don't make assumptions about what people can and cannot pay while many industries are struggling. There are also as many industries that

are doing just fine and really well. And as a freelancer or an agency owner, you definitely want to target your marketing efforts toward those industries that are growing and be the strategic partner that they need you to be. So pitch your thoughtful solutions, your problem, solving ideas, to show them that you can help them grow and for a fee, right. You're not going to just automatically, that's what a lot of creatives sometimes do kind of automatically just discount their pricing and assume people can't pay, but that's not the case. So you're going to negotiate. You're going to stand for what you want and you're going to compromise so that it's a win, win for everyone.

Justin

Yeah, I think that's a great point. I just, I would just add that we've had some people even approach us and say, Hey, don't you need the work, can't you do it for less. And I think the reality is let's not try to hire people right now because you know, they're cheap, let's pay people their value cause you're going to get that badge of right back and then some. So I think that as you explore, you know, experts, you know be ready and willing to pay them their value and you know, and or negotiate the best terms for both parties.

Ilise

Now I'll just kick this topic off because it's my specialty freelancing as a side hustle. And one of the things I'm seeing, that's really interesting these days. And I think this is a trend that's going to grow is that people are going back and forth, very fluidly between self employment and employment. And there's less and less of a stigma on both sides. So you know, whether you have a full time job and are moonlighting or daylighting or doing something on the side, you can't expect people just to find you, you really have to go out there and talk about what you're doing and offer your suggestions and be creative and be assertive. And the people who are positioning themselves and speaking up right now are the ones that are getting work. So again, it might be past your comfort zone beyond your comfort zone, but it definitely pays off.

Justin

Yeah, I agree. And I think, you know, at the beginning of this whole thing, we I shouldn't know that they sent it, but I know we almost doubled our communication and watch the data and, you know, try to figure out, you know, where's the right rhythm to that. But we also realized, especially with the way the world was both from a coven standpoint and, and a lot of the social conversations going on right now, we went back and updated and we like two years of content because we wanted to make sure that we were relevant or of course but also to expand on new ways of thinking new ways of working, you know maybe you're not going to hire us the whole campaign, but maybe we can help you with virtual brainstorming, you know, or just work out, you know, ideas or help you get over the hump or whatever. So there's so many ways that that you can be relevant, you know, during this sprint season, but you know, at least that you have to get out there and mark it.

Molly

I've also heard some creatives, especially those that have maybe been furloughed or, or their hours have been cut back during this time that they were also a little afraid to take on freelance work or, or to publicly try to promote their freelancing. Cause they were worried their employers would find out and potentially be upset about it. So the, the point that I wanted to make is don't assume that your employer will be unhappy about you picking up side work.

Unless it's with a competitor then that's probably, probably not the greatest. But ultimately they'll most likely encourage it because it's a great way for you to grow your skills and your network. But also it, it can end up being valuable for the company because you're then able to bring those new skills and maybe even some of your networking back into the organization. So it definitely is, is win-win. So as we, we wrap up and start looking at taking some questions, I wanted to quickly run through some of the key takeaways from today. So creatives are still facing the same challenges as before COVID-19 they're just manifesting their ways. They're manifesting in new ways. Don't lose sight of your role as a strategic partner. It's critical now more than ever working from home can definitely bring on a whole host of new challenges, but it is here to stay. So invest in creative workflow and evaluate some of your other tools and systems to see if there are ways that you can be better utilizing those and get creative with your problem solving. So freelancers and agencies are definitely both good ways to kind of flex your resources as you need them and fill in some of those extra gaps.

Ilise and Justin, I went to see if you had any other last minute add-ons, takeaways, comments to contribute before we hop over into some of the Q and A.

Ilise

I just would emphasize flexibility. It is so important. Things are changing so fast and constantly. And if we get too attached to any one way of doing something or anyone, client or anyone process, we're just going to be left in the dust and obsolete sooner than you can imagine. So I am just constantly emphasizing be flexible.

Justin

Yeah, that's great. And I also think that there's, there's two other parts that kind of work together and that is understand your value and be bold with communicating that. I think that we all have all deal with a variety of anxiety and fear, or, you know, I'm concerned about the future and we can't control that. But what we do know is that what we contribute is incredibly valuable and it is that it is needed now, you know, people need to communicate differently brand differently be more strategic. These are all things that are built into our DNA. So believe in your value and be bold with the communication and the marketing of yourself internally and externally on how you can help organizations be successful in any season.

Q&A

Q: HOW Design Online Attendees for Digital Session – read by Amy Conover, HOW Show Director

A: Molly Clark, Director of Marketing at inMotionNow, Ilise Benun, Founder of Marketing Mentor, Justin Ahrens, Chief Evangelist at Rule29

Amy

Thank you. And I have to tell you this was so, so good. I think one of the takeaways, and I appreciate you all kind of recapping at the end, but you know, about communicating. And I know sometimes we feel like we're over-communicating, so this was just a really good lesson and encouraging us to communicate in different ways and, humanize what we're doing. But you know, Justin, I loved at the end when you talked about, the value that you bring is as a person, as a creative and it's so critical, and it is easy, I think sometimes to kind of devalue what we're doing, but don't do that and be your advocate. Lots of questions.

So if our in house team is looking for an agency to partner with what questions should we ask to make sure they are a good fit or our culture around culture?

Justin

Yeah. That feels tailored for me. Yeah. You know, there's a, there's a couple big chief questions in my opinion. And, and, and I'll kind of reverse that as far as what we look for as well. I think it's, it's the same and that is, you know, what is it that you're ultimately looking for an agency to do, you know, and age, do they have those skills, but then B are they able to communicate those skills and be flexible with the way your culture works? Right. So for example, we're doing a project right now where every few days, and we need to have a standard meeting with the client and the client has like 12 people, you know, on the call. Some, some agencies may, may or may not be able to handle that and deal with that or communicate with that.

So I think it's really understanding, you know Hey, what skills do you have in house? Like what you, what you're great at? Cause we all want to say, we're great at everything, but we're not right. Second is having you communicate, you know, what are the, what are the ways do you have someone, you know, dedicated to our connection and that sort of thing. And I would start with their, you know, obviously you have to talk about how do you ideally want to get paid and all that sort of thing. And that's a different thing, but those two things in my opinion are where you need to start.

Amy

Perfect. Thank you. And this is for all the presenters. Do you have any tips for how creatives can stay focused on what is important during this time so much going on? So what are your tips on how to stay focused during this time?

Ilise

Well, I mean, you have to know what is important first, right? So that's, I think that's the tricky part actually is to determine what the actual priorities are. And then once you do, you have to be able to say no or not now, or yes, but to all those other things. And that's the problem. I think most people is they do know what is important, what the goal is and what will get you to the goal. But there are so many conflicting demands that it's usually the thing that is, you know, the most assertive or the most aggressive or the most nagging that gets the attention. And you really have to be strong, I think and say, you know what, this is not the priority right now. This is what I'm going to do. And I'm reading a really good book right now actually called the distracted mind. And it's all about how the brain like this brain that we have, which is actually very limited, does not make it easy for us to focus. So we have to work against this brain that we have that doesn't make it easy to focus.

Justin

Yeah. You know, there's another part to that question too, which is now could also be the time that you can invest into learning some extra skills, depending on what stage you're in, you know, from a work standpoint. So for example, I've been putting off forever to get a, to go through some Google certifications and some other things. And so I've taken that time to do that. And what's been really powerful with that is that as then, translated to us having better conversations and getting work. And so going back to, you know, what at least we're saying is what other priorities and what are the opportunities. So maybe one of the things is what's the opportunity and what's holding you back, maybe that is doing some certifications or, you know you know, doing some sort of activity to, to backfill that opportunity. I think that's a great, great place to start.

Molly

I think just looking at it kind of, it's a combination of, of both of those, but not being afraid to push back when you need to push back. So definitely making sure that you're checking in and aligning to what the strategic direction and ultimately, what are the outcomes that you're looking for, not the work that needs to be done, but what, what are those outcomes and definitely prioritizing and then pushing back on anything that isn't going to help you achieve what that outcome is. And so sometimes you have to have those, those hard conversations that like get a little awkward when you have to kind of reprioritize or tell somebody that it's not top priority right now. But you have to, you have to push back on some, like a little pricey that exactly, you know, I thought Ilise had shared earlier that you know, a good way to, to kind of verbalize is to bubble it up, you know, when she was talking about the email and I think it's finding those ways to be an advocate and be vocal without being offensive.

Amy

Good points. We have a question here from Sherry and she said, do you have a recommended resource for finding freelancers?

Ilise

Again, we're not talking about any freelancer here, we're talking about good freelancers, right? You don't want, I mean, it's really easy to find freelancers and I'm not going to say where not to look right. You can imagine. But I think that you want good freelancers and what is a good freelancer, a good freelancer is someone who does good work. Yes. But also has a good process. And back to what Justin was saying about how people communicate and are they clear and are they reliable? And can you count on them? Because often that to me is more important than the actual work that they do personally. So I'll just give a plug for myself actually and say, go on LinkedIn. And any freelancer that is connected to me is probably one of the good ones.

Justin

I love it. I have to add that plug. That is probably very true. I'm going to say, you know, what's been really interesting. We found because we do a lot of digital work, social media work. And obviously that's how we're getting information communicating now. So, you know, LinkedIn, you know, I would say usually in the past, yeah. It's probably the LinkedIn, but now for sure. And I would also suggest, you know, even promoting people that, you know, that need work, I've found so many people that will say I'll promote, Hey, so-and-so I know is looking for, you know, this opportunity and I'll get, you know, 10 or 11, you know, request back. So LinkedIn is, it seems to be just incredibly powerful right now. And so that's, that's one of the main places I would go right away.

Ilise

That's right. And look for freelancers who are actively promoting themselves because they're serious about it, right? That's the point about being connected to me, it means that they're serious about their work and growing their business. And you want people who are serious

Amy

And they're not afraid to advocate for themselves, you know, which I think is important. We have another question from Chrissy. Do you have any tips for keeping your design team engaged with each other?

Justin

Yeah. I got a couple of those. So, you know, I think all of us have heard about the, you know, kind of virtual happy hours or, you know, that sort of thing. You know, we have virtual birthday celebrations. We have, you know kind of virtual anniversaries you know, when someone's been here for a while, but one of the things that my team does and I love this is for example, you know, take time to do those kinds of goofy, fun things that bring you connected. So Adrian, one of my senior designer had this great idea where he's put the team up and everyone had to go find an object in their house. Right. And then those teams had put those ideas together and come up with what a product. It would be like a fictional product and then do like a shark tank presentation.

And it was still incredible. And we kind of got you out of the fact that you have all these things going on, you know, you're still at home. But coming up with ideas like that are, I think are really, really valuable and you know, kind of using the zoom experience a little differently and know, I think also, you know, for leadership is making sure that you have just, just one-on-one check ins and up meetings with your team and just ask them not about work, just man, how are you doing? I think the valuable, yeah.

Molly

I really liked that idea where I thought you were going Justin with this. So this was on our CS team did this earlier this week, actually. And so that's why I was excited about this conversation because I wanted, I want to do it with my team, but they did. They took their team meeting and instead of having like their standard team meeting, what they did was it was a scavenger hunt. There was one facilitators, so she didn't participate in it. You should probably get, bring somebody in from another department or something, but she, so she put it out there. Everyone had to then go and find something. So it was something sentimental something that they use to kind of reconnect with creativity and, and a whole bunch of different things. And so you turn off your camera, you go get it.

The first one back gets more points. And then if you come back with your thing, then you get some points and then there's a winner. But it just, I feel like in this situation, you're not having some of those one on one conversations that aren't necessarily about work, but they're about you as a person. Cause at the end of the day, we're still even in a remote setting, working with, with our teams, regardless of kind of what your team looks like for more than your, sometimes with your family. And so you want to kind of have that connection and know about them as a person and not just them as a coworker. And I thought that was a really fun idea that I wanted to try to do, but I also really like your idea adjustments. I'm going to definitely do that one.

Amy

Those are great. And you know, one of the things that I've found through this is we have colleagues that we work with and some of them we know better than others, but this whole situation of us and the zoom calls and seeing people's real lives, it's kind of just humanized all of us even more so to each other. And, you know, you see like, like Ilise has a dog Fannie who is vocal at times, but you know, and you just see people's kids and their animals. And I just think it's been a lot of fun to really kind of get a better insight into, into people and who they are.

We have another question from Melissa. She says that I find that in addition to chat and emails, messages get lost or are repeated in both places, you have any suggestions for how to streamline and focus the communications, with all these new ways of communicating?

Ilise

Okay. I have a thought about it. It is about communicating, right? That you decide, all right, we're only going to communicate this way about that. And so you, you know, funnel the communication about different things maybe into different media, if you will, instead of it being a free for all letting people, you know, just cause that, I think that it's so true and people like when you don't respond to an email, then they'll text you and then they'll Slack you. And it's like, no, right. So I think you have to decide together maybe, which is the most efficient for which type of communication or how urgent something is and put some, maybe policies in place now.

Molly

And I know for, for our team as where we're coming up with ideas and brainstorming and things are kind of, we take notes in one spot and then there's some of those kind of casual conversations in Slack, but we've done is made sure that all of those then go back into ignite. So as we have projects, we make sure that we're copying all of those conversations, linking back to Dropbox paper and wherever so that we usually, we go to ignite as, as that one single source of our projects that we're doing. So there's always that, that record that we can then link back out in a lot of our meeting invites, we link to the ignite projects so that then they know where to find the notes of the chats that have gone with it, all of the proofs associated within. So everything's just in that one spot. So we're able to kind of keep it, keep it nice and clean and know where to go. Even though there's all these conversations still going on in all of these other places, we make sure that and tighten it up.

Amy

That's good. That's good. You know, it's, I know sometimes on my team, when we were all sort of sorting through this, it was like you know, finding that hub, that repository, where, where do you want to put everything? I said, sometimes I feel like we spend more time looking for things that we were actually doing things. So it kinda, you know, goes back to your point to Ilise earlier about being organized and taking time to get organized. You know, and it's, it's funny, I've worked remotely for many, many years. But with every one of my team working remotely, it added kind of a different dynamic. So but that was all good information.

Justin

I think, you know, going back to one of our original comments that we talked about on the digital platform, and this is not necessarily an emotional flood, but they have great offerings here. I think, you know going in and really looking at the process and seeing if you have online tools, I can streamline all of that. There's so many opportunities out there and I know that we kind of double down on a bunch of stuff then took an internal survey and then, you know, reach week that, so there is definitely a solution there it's taking the time to set that process up, try it, and then also monitor it and audit it and see if it's working. I hope it does.

Amy

Like we have a couple other questions here, so, and I think we're about time to finish up. So if anybody has any one you want to just send it in really quickly.

What are some of the new ways that creatives can contribute to a business?

Justin

Oh, I can jump on that one. Yeah. I think we have found, and this is really relevant. I think we're in house teams as well. I think what's happening and continues to happen with every new wave of something that happens in the world is oftentimes leadership and departments and organizations are just trying to find and think through creative ways to communicate, be relevant. Not say something that, you know would hurt them on accident, right. And so when he is created as, or are built for that sort of design thinking, right. And taking the messaging and the challenge and, and taking the through it. So I think one of the ways that I seen at least for us is to sit with people from the C suite to heads of departments, to internal departments and say, Hey, we need to do this thing. And we have no idea how to do it. And just being there to listen and take them through like brainstorm. That's been really, really valuable and awarding and it may seem intimidating, but the reality is you already do it every day when you work on your pipeline. So it's really being bold, right. And having that conversation and taking someone through that process.

Molly

The operations side of me is also just like buzzing with that kind of question. Cause there's, there are ways to really tie some value and metrics that to the creative work that's being done and then tie it back to, to like the bottom line and the, the revenue that the organization is, is bringing in. So tying, you know, being able to pull metrics out of how much time certain projects are taking the rounds of reviews of those things and being able to put it back and marry it with some of those marketing metrics and really kind of having that synergy between the marketing and creative teams that you can, you can really prove the value of, of a creative asset and the work that goes into it because it's not just, you magically get a beautiful display ad. There's a lot of work that goes into it.

So as you're able to tie the time and everything that goes into it, that all of the iterations and you know, that back into this is the ROI that we have actually seen. And so that you can even report that up to the C suite and say like, this actually has cost us this, this is the return that we're getting on it. It really then is showing how important and how valuable creative is to the business. And so that's, I think that's a powerful thing that we're kind of starting to see.

Amy

That's, that's a really good point, Molly. Thanks for bringing that up. Looks like we have one last question. I know we're running out of time, but I'm going to just share a Lisa question with you and someone can jump on it.

Do you have any advice for agencies who are half working in the office and half working from home? She says we've struggled to set up a way to communicate that appeals to the generation who isn't as used to virtual communication as some of the others who thrive in it, having half the people in real life and half online has thrown another obstacle into the fire.

Justin

I can share a little bit because we've had this, I think this is a tough question to answer, because I think one of the things we have to do is be honest and define reality. And the reality is that we're in a new era, right? And those who are used to communicating this way is sort of like toughen up buttercup. Like we did do it, you know? And I think one of the key ways to do that is to have a conversation about it. And I know it's overly easy, but like at least sustain earlier, you have to over communicate, you have to have process. And this is just our reality. And I think that's one thing that is just really hard to navigate is

because when people come to work today, you know, we're all bringing all the other stuff that's going on in our life. And we need to acknowledge that and then say, but so I shouldn't say not, but, but, and we need to communicate this way and figure out and have a conversation about it. We've had to do that. And it's been really powerful. Not that those who don't like virtual communication dig it anymore, but they realize, at least for now that is their reality. And the more they fight it the harder it's going to be for all of us to be successful.

Molly

I think at the end of the day, for those that aren't, aren't as comfortable with some of the virtual conference set ups and whatnot, making sure that it's okay, that they're not that comfortable with it and making them feel like they can stumble, stumble through it and try to like quickly click their camera off. But they're the last one. And you get that like awkward moment where all the memes have come up lately. Like, it's fine. We're all here doing it. So it's okay to ask questions and, and still be learning a process cause we all are, and there might be something that someone else who maybe understands the video conferencing or some of those tools that they don't know that that's somebody else does. So just making sure that, and I feel like everyone at this point, you're having to be a little bit more vulnerable than, than what you have been in the past. Especially just like you yourself have to see your face every day, which you're doing this. You're probably aware of what's going on at all points. Don't be afraid.

Justin

Yeah. I will build off that and say just to make sure that my point was clear and that didn't sound mean it's really an opportunity to grow as a team.

I think, I think to Molly's point, you know it's an opportunity for the team to collaborate and say, Hey, I understand you're not comfortable with this. And there's some tricks and tips that I've done. And it actually could be something that brings your team together and that's where I would encourage you to lean into.

Amy

Yeah, that's good. It just comes back again as we end on communication and just being transparent and honest and, you know just being gracious with each other and kind, and I feel like this time, a lot of us, you know, we're kind of on the edge of it because there's still so much unknown. But I think what we're seeing though is, is the strength of people. So I just want to thank you all for, for doing this. It was awesome. And I knew it would be. And I'm just glad that I got to be a part of it, but just really quickly before we jump off here, is there anything Molly that you want to say.

Molly

I really appreciate that. And Amy, thanks to HOW for letting us come and do this.