WHAT'S NEXT?

An M&E industry that's learned to adapt and excel after a year like no other, for one

LOCALIZATION
Dubbing from home is a work in progress

SECURITY
How to beat piracy and secure your business during a pandemic

SMART CONTENT
The new ways content players are using data to connect with consumers

NEW WORKFLOWS
Adopting the latest tools fuels a successful change to remote work

20.02

The reality is likely media and entertainment has changed forever. And that's not a bad thing

PERMANENTLY CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK AND LIVE

ABSTRACT: Being at home more, and dealing with the stresses of worldwide health, social, and political issues, only increases the appetite for entertainment, for escape. Our industry needs to pivot to a new approach. We need to look for new ways to engage with consumers. We get to write the story, to lead the discussion.

By Jason Gish, President, Film, TV, Testronic

We have all been inundated with Zoom meetings, webinars and articles about how to adapt to working during a pandemic. And rightly so. These changes have been incredibly disruptive and may well permanently impact our way of doing business, interacting with each other, and retaining social interaction.

Many of us have adapted to a remote-working situation, usually not in an ideal way. I rarely have a Zoom call that does not include my son or daughter running into the room and starting a conversation. They don't really understand yet, but they apologize and try to remember not to do it again. However, without fail, one of them will start talking to me on nearly every Zoom call I'm on. I'm guessing I'm not the only one who will go sit in my car in the driveway for really critical meetings. Sometimes I even park down the street so the kids can't get to my car. I'm adapting as best I can.

But, like many others in our industry, my meetings and responsibilities haven't really been reduced. Nor have the industry events our company attends – if anything I am able to more easily join events on the other side of the world without having to travel. Despite a horrible global pandemic (and after this long, also because of it) people crave social interaction and are looking for ways to retain that part of the business. Truly we all need contact with other adults to feel somewhat normal. Socializing and being part of a community are a critical piece of not just our business but our culture.

With all of the ways in which we have adapted, we have done so, at least initially, with the idea that we will be back to normal at some point; that this is a temporary inconvenience. We assumed or hoped that our lives won't be in danger if we want to return to the office and in-person events in a few months.

REALITY HAS SETTLED IN

But the reality is now proving more likely that we will be in some version of this new way of working for the remainder of our careers. Some remnants of our current precautions will likely endure for many years to come. COVID-19 is a virus after all, just like the flu is a virus. And like the flu, we may need to get COVID shots every year, and follow what protocols we can to avoid catching the virus. Despite the future of the virus itself, we are creating habits now that we will take with us after becoming so accustomed to them. Our current and ongoing efforts have become more extreme; avoiding crowds, social distancing, even wearing masks when indoors and around others. Some version of this may go on for years. Everyone is hoping for a cure of some sort, of course, but a real cure may never actually come. We may only get better therapeutics, or an annual or seasonal shot, but no real "cure." Even if a vaccine is approved soon, it still has to be implemented everywhere in the world and to everyone in the world. This could take years. And so, a very prolonged version of our current situation is a reality we need to prepare for.

In this reality, we do not go back to "normal." Not in a few months. Not next summer. Not even next year. This pandemic will likely permanently change the way we socialize and work. Because the habits that we develop now, and stick to for a few years, will have long term effects on the way we interact with other humans.

Luckily, we are in an industry with a product that is arguably tailor-made for this sort of scenario.

ENTERTAINMENT ADAPTS

Entertainment in the home increases when people don't leave their homes. In fact, DVD sales recently saw an increase during COVID-19 for the first time in many years. And the increased ubiquity of streaming services has been met with a healthy appetite by consumers. If our industry can perfect the way in which we work, in which that content is created and processed, we can get back to work (at the volumes we were hitting in 2019) while fitting into a socially-distanced world. The audience is ready and waiting.

I can't help but think that we are at one of those decisive points in history where things can take a dramatic turn. We can either just adapt the way in which we live and work, in a simple way, as we have done, by just doing what we normally do but doing it from home or virtually. Or, can we totally shift the paradigm by addressing the need people have to feel connected and solving the challenges in our business that really do require people to socialize?

There is an opportunity here for real and significant innovation. Who knows what may be birthed from this chaotic and challenging time. Maybe we'll see remote working and MR, VR, and AR merge into something out of a sci-fi novel. Maybe we'll start the process of eliminating vehicles and end commuting. Or maybe this will begin a significant and increased reliance in robotics since we can interact with a robot and presumably not risk contracting a deadly virus.

I really don't know what the solutions may be but I'm eager to explore big ideas and take big risks. I would love to see this lead to a world where amazing technology merges with the ideals of a close-knit community and we care for each other and nature. A society where ethics, inclusivity, personal happiness, and health are prioritized; a new and healthier vision of work-life balance that enables us to safely develop and maintain personal relationships across our industry.

SHIFTING FOCUS

Of course, this crisis has resulted in many losing their jobs. We need to work toward solutions that are inclusive, providing opportunity for a wider demographic of people while also prioritizing human-ness and technology simultaneously. At Testronic, we have integrated robotics and automation into our workflows wherever possible and we plan on increasing that integration in

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other areas as we continue to grow. With a diverse staff in six different countries and an international client base, we are able to collaborate and communicate effectively only because technology allows us to, but we are constantly looking for ways to improve those tools and bring our team closer together. Our tools for test automation allow us to replace some of the in-person manual labor with remotely controlled robots.

But there is still the problem of socializing and community, which are important and effective parts of our business. And the current solution of Zoom calls and meetings is very useful but it isn't especially exciting and it feels a bit like a temporary solution as opposed to long-term innovation. The tech and entertainment industry can do better. Our community must embrace technology

to do things safer and more efficiently, while creating new ways to interact with each other. The digital transformation that was already happening in our industry is now happening at a tremendous speed as media companies adapt to cloud technologies, new workflows, and the security concerns that come with these innovations. It has begun but we have a way to go.

Indeed it has been challenging adapting to these times and these new ways of working. There are benefits as well as challenges. For example, I am very grateful for the opportunity to be with my wife and children every day, despite the many interruptions. And with the removal of the commute time I've had more time to enjoy my family and to focus on my own health and well-being. These are things I may never have made time for otherwise.

Despite the regular interruptions on Zoom calls, I cherish this time with my family. My hope is that others find great benefit in these things as well and it causes us all to look for innovative ways to keep, and improve on, the good parts of our current remote-working situation while bringing back more of the social aspects of our industry. How can we retain some of the increased family time and work efficiencies, as well as avoiding long commutes, but also have access to socializing and interacting with the greater industry in a COVID-safe manner?

How will we create a "new normal" that solves new challenges such as a global pandemic as well as challenges we've always faced with work-life balance and efficiency? ⊞