Virtual Programming: Lessons Learned

An effort of the SR-PLN Virtual Programming Workgroup

May 2021
INTRODUCTION

In March 2020 Extension systems across the country shifted to virtual delivery platforms for educational programs due to the coronavirus pandemic. At the 2020 PLN meeting a cross committee workgroup was formed to determine best practices and lessons learned in virtual program delivery, challenges, and evaluation / impact reporting strategies, with an eye toward sharing the outcomes at the 2021 PLN meeting. The committee members met in Fall 2020 and over the ensuing months developed and administered a survey to SR-PLN members that invited input into the following questions:

- Please share the top three lessons you learned about best practices in virtual programming delivery during the past 12 months.
- Please share a challenge that you, your educators, or your institution faced with virtual program delivery and describe how you overcame that challenge. (Please list up to three challenges and describe each on a different line).
- Please describe how participation was affected by offering virtual events, and what you attribute that trend to.
- How do you evaluate virtual programs to capture and report impacts (i.e., practice changes made by clientele)?
- What organizational changes have virtual content delivery created that you think will continue after the pandemic recedes?
- How do you see yourself doing your job differently in the future?
- Is there anything else that you would like to say about virtual content delivery in Cooperative Extension to share with colleagues or record for posterity?

Overall, 27 SR-PLN members shared their thoughts in the survey, the results of which are summarized here for consideration by current and future generations of Extension leaders.

Respectfully,

The SR-PLN Virtual Programming Workgroup

THE TOP 3 LESSONS THAT COLLEAGUES LEARNED ABOUT BEST PRACTICES IN VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING DELIVERY DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS

LESSON 1

◆ More training is needed to capture data.
◆ Should be soundly constructed similarly when designing curriculum content...objectives, etc.
◆ Be brief and to the point.
◆ We can deliver programs online and can be flexible in outreach efforts
◆ Survey tech skills and/or needs of constituents
◆ Interactions are essential - breakouts, polls, Jamboard, whiteboard, -- whatever it takes to convert from a "talking head" space
◆ It takes discipline
◆ Virtual programming presents challenges for recruitment, retention, engagement, and evaluation.
◆ When everyone embraces the potential of electronic communications tools, anyone can work from almost anywhere at any time.
◆ Emailing large groups of people with program information often gets caught by spam filters.
◆ Practice ahead of time, be prepared, practice, and plan! (4)
◆ It is possible to make big impacts.
◆ We need to make sure that, regardless of method/platform (YouTube, Facebook Live, Canvas, etc.), it's important to make sure that all are available through Extension's main platforms to ensure that they are
accessible to all Extension clients—not just the followers of one employee's or one office's account.
◆ Stay focused.
◆ Become familiar with the technology you are using before attempting program delivery using it.
◆ Marketing is crucial for success. We have not mastered it, but are continually trying to improve.
◆ For live virtual sessions, don't try to facilitate the meeting, do the presentation, monitor the chat stream, etc. all by yourself. Enlist someone to assist with the technical aspects of running the meeting so the presenter can focus on the presentation.
◆ Kit-based programs work best if you have intentional engagements and connections (Zoom meetings or similar).
◆ How to use breakout rooms to facilitate audience participation and interaction.

LESSON 2
◆ Need the right equipment (nothing expensive, just a wireless mike, tripod, etc.) and some basic training to be able to knock your virtual program out of the ball park (2).
◆ Not every virtual training needs to be recorded and archived as a scholarly program.
◆ Must forget the nice to know...and only include the information needed to develop the skill so that the participant can perform the task.
◆ Plan for glitches.
◆ Virtual delivery reached more audiences than in-person outreach efforts.
◆ Use clear instructions and allow longer periods of time for response.
◆ Building in time for informal interactions is important. We get these in face-to-face settings over breaks or casual hallway conversations. We need this as much (or more) in virtual spaces. It takes intentionality.
◆ Not everyone likes the platform of using virtual learning.
◆ Offer a variety of options for clientele to connect and/or access virtual programs.
◆ Change must be embraced at the top. When the leadership sets the expectations and sets the standard by example, the rest of the organization falls in line.
◆ Some agents experienced grifters trying to steal money from program participants during a virtual program (Facebook Live)
◆ Be prepared for “Zoom bombing”—require that participants register, have a co-host monitoring participants and ready to remove them if needed.
◆ You need to have professional assistance in setting up the programs.
◆ Proper Extension branding is even more important with the increase in virtual delivery of programs—because they are so ephemeral, it’s important to make sure participants know they came from Extension.
◆ Be somewhat redundant - cross-training and clear channels of communication allowed us to continue to provide service in situations where not everyone is able to work at their full capacity.
◆ Stay within reasonable schedules, don't overdo it.
◆ Prepare for attendees to have issues and have a plan on how to address those issues.
◆ Broadband disparity limits our audience in the same way that travel distance limits in-person audiences.
◆ Communication (internal AND external) is important!
◆ Virtual events allow for more flexible scheduling and timeframes. This is great for better accommodating attendees, but IT staffing for event support must be in place and available to respond to or cover events that may happen during irregular hours.
◆ Keep it SHORT!!! Don't let kids sit on Zoom for hours on end. Make it engaging and keep broken up into small chunks.
◆ The economies of virtual attention spans.

LESSON 3
◆ It is important that those delivering virtual programs regularly check in with their
communications or IT departments for advice and the latest best practices.

◆ Privacy and security threats are an issue
◆ You must engage participants, or you lose them
◆ Promote, promote, promote.
◆ Being flexible and creative in program implementation
◆ Create lessons etc. to the level of understanding
◆ On a more personal level, we as individuals need margin between meetings. It is so easy in a virtual world to literally click from one meeting on one topic to one on a completely different topic in a second without allowing our human brains and bodies time to debrief/reflect/stretch from the last one. We need to intentionally build in margin that might have formerly happened as we walked or drove to another meeting. Self-care.
◆ It's less personal
◆ Change can be accelerated by promoting and rewarding good examples. Finding individuals or teams within an organization that showcase the use of innovative technologies inspires others to imitate their example.
◆ we need a better way to collect virtual demographics
◆ It helps to have multiple people with host/co-host/administrative privileges.
◆ The need for accessible (Section 508, ADA) virtual learning offerings is even more important, as these offerings are being created by individuals at home and/or on their personal equipment and platforms.
◆ Be digital - it allows greater speed of response and flexibility in implementation.
◆ Take tasks on, one day at a time
◆ Hybrid events are extremely difficult to conduct and require a team effort. You more than double the workload.
◆ Meeting/event security is a necessity and needn't be seen as a burden. Best practices include requiring participant authentication for internal (Extension/University) meetings and using pre-registration and waiting rooms for external/public events.
◆ Adults and youth engage with virtual platforms differently. Adults can join for much longer periods of time if the learning is more passive (i.e., listening while doing other tasks). Adults often leave if you stick them in a breakout room. Haha!
◆ The audience for our programming crosses county/city, state, and international boundaries.

CHALLENGES THAT YOU, YOUR EDUCATORS, OR YOUR INSTITUTION FACED WITH VIRTUAL PROGRAM DELIVERY AND HOW THOSE CHALLENGES WERE OVERCOME

CHALLENGE 1

◆ Facebook Live. July. Cell phone overheated in the hot field, and the live program abruptly ended. Program assistant ran his car and cooled phone with the air conditioning. Extension Facebook Live communication assistants operating remotely communicated via chat with program attendees and asked them to please wait while the phone cooled down. Program continued after a few minutes.
◆ Agents didn't know how to teach in a virtual world
◆ Not developing content effectively
◆ Zoom fatigue
◆ Managing time working from home and managing time with family was a challenge. We hired a nanny to help with our kids’ virtual school to free up time to focus on work.
◆ Most traditional farmers and ranchers are without advanced tech skills. We asked if they had family members who could help them learn to use the technology needed to interact with programs.
◆ Finding ways to take very interactive face-to-face processes and adapt them to virtual worlds. Breakouts, whiteboards, Jamboard, etc. Learning to use much higher tech tools for program delivery.
◆ I conducted a program that I used items for demonstration. Since going virtual I created a Power point presentation with visual aide
Recruitment for virtual programs has been a challenge. Far fewer participants signed up for our events. We developed a partnership with our state's health department to recruit participants directly from low-income health clinics following doctors' visits.

We had more requests for help from employees than time available to respond (basic how-to technical skills) – instituted a weekly one-hour office hour titled “Telework Tuesdays”.

Not everyone had sufficient technologies to work remotely. To overcome this challenge, we had to allow people to take their work computers home. In some instances, we had to purchase new equipment or increase or support of BYOD devices.

We needed a registration form that could be used with multiple delivery platforms. We used Qualtrics and developed a template that could be shared.

We decided we wanted a Zoom webinar license (to be able to have more control of attendees than Zoom meeting) but fortunately were able to find funds to purchase a license quite quickly.

CHALLENGE 2

Glitches of any kind. Video upside down. Phone overheating and shutting down. Getting microphone cords tangled around crops. How to overcome? ALWAYS keep a sense of humor. We've learned your audience will always understand and sometime enjoy laughing along with you.

Capturing data and evaluation impact

Managing as the presenter and the producer, while conducting the session.

Many of my projects were delayed in implementation, we sought no-cost extensions on my projects.

Our constituents did not check email etc as often as needed to interact effectively. We began by allowing longer periods of time to respond to directives. Also, lengthy explanations and reminders to check email or log in to programs more frequently.

Getting us, as educators, un tethered from PowerPoints as our "go to" form of content delivery. While PPTs still have a place in the virtual world, they cannot drive the entire session or people will check out. This is also true of face-to-face settings, but at least there the presenter can see when people
are getting restless and can adjust. That's harder to do virtually, so presenters have to be much more proactive in planning engagement. We engaged Chad Littlefield, We and Me, Inc. to help us find new ways of thinking about content delivery. Very helpful! https://weand.me/

◆ Some parents and students could not be present to pick up items for programs so I delivered them myself
◆ Employees had a difficult time keeping track of tech training events and finding tech resources – created and instituted a weekly “Tech Talk” newsletter.
◆ Not everyone had the skills needed to work remotely. To overcome this challenge, we had to increase our training efforts.
◆ Registration emails getting caught by spam filter. We used Qualtrics to create distribution lists that could be scheduled
◆ We wanted to try and reach beyond our local (county) traditional audiences--we tapped into various state and national networks to help spread the word about our webinars. Word of mouth also seemed to help spread the word to new audiences.
◆ Competing with family and social functions. Send reminders
◆ It was (and remains) very difficult to promote these virtual offerings broadly because they are being created by individuals who are sharing them only on their own accounts, not adding them to the Extension online calendar of events, not informing AgComm of their availability, etc. We haven't found a solution for this yet.
◆ Standardization of equipment - all staff must work on planned platforms (hardware and software) to allow interchangeable workspace and consistent production methods.
◆ Not everyone was familiar with how to use technologies to reach our audiences virtually. We had training sessions and created documentation to assist those who might have needed help with learning to use the required technologies
◆ Another challenge was training our audience. We made sure to include login and Zoom notes to everyone. However, computer skills vary greatly. Some of our audience adapted quickly and others gave up.
◆ Getting users up to speed on the platform options and capabilities. Technical overviews, best practices, and guidelines were shared organizationally by interactive collaboration, documentation via our webpage, and one-on-one instruction as required. We are fortunate to have been using collaborative video for programs since the early 2000s and have had Zoom in place since 2016.
◆ Very little known about number of engagements with programs that were available fully online and self-paced. (Next time, we might protect the program behind a Qualtrics form and follow up with utilization email evaluations.)
◆ Zoom fatigue has been a very real challenge. Making a conscious effort to keep meetings brief and engaging, as well as continuing to utilize other methods like telephone conference calls has helped.

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<th>CHALLENGE 3</th>
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<td>◆ There are so many virtual program delivery choices and Extension agents and specialists don't always know which to use (pre-recorded video or Zoom; Live Zoom, Facebook Live, Zoom to Facebook Live, etc.) We overcame that challenge by the communications department writing up guidelines for which vehicle is best for which situation and sharing across the Extension system within the state.</td>
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<td>◆ Training employees how to use technology and having internet access to do the work.</td>
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<td>◆ Continual engagement throughout the session</td>
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<td>◆ Fear of Technology by staff.</td>
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<td>◆ Finding a suitable time for virtual group interaction. Our project decided on evenings after 6:00pm was more acceptable to our constituent base.</td>
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<td>◆ Accessing equipment for virtual program delivery – provided employees with resources of where and what to purchase.</td>
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<td>◆ Working remotely left supervisors feeling &quot;out of touch&quot; with their employees. To</td>
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overcome that challenge more training was required to alter the behavior of how groups of people can operate effectively in a remote environment.

◆ Timing of collection of REG data is difficult. Many people register but may not attend. No good way to match registration data to attendance data unless you are using Zoom Webinar. We suggested setting up a Qualtrics survey and posting the link in the chat during the live presentation.

◆ We have tried to incorporate Spanish language webinars, but are struggling to attract participants for those :( 

◆ Competing with good weather for farming.

◆ Consistent production standards - all products should be produced in a manner that maintains professional presentation, appropriate content, credibility and branding.

◆ Distractions happen during "work from home" situations. Society and shared experiences made it normal. Examples include TV personalities being interrupted by kids and pets. Be flexible and don’t expect a Hollywood studio production.

◆ Expensive to deliver distance-learning programs. Materials and supply costs, as well as shipping and handling. However, we saved on many large in-person events (venue, food, rentals, etc.) which helped offset the costs. Also, we used some grant funding to support kit development and dissemination.

◆ Coordinating content delivery across departments, colleges, and program areas. We tried various approaches and settled on a master calendar, which is imperfect since not all faculty participate but is better than nothing.

◆ Other programs have suffered due to lack of the relationships built by personal interaction at our programs.

◆ In the beginning participation was high. It has declined due to Zoom fatigue.

◆ Participation was higher through virtual events than in-person because it provided flexibility to participants on which programs to choose from.

◆ Our program participant numbers dropped immediately. We had only a 10% return rate from the previous year of hands-on events. The reason given is that farmers and ranchers did not have the broadband service needed in rural areas. Also many of the participants did not was to stop and learn to manipulate technology for learning purposes.

◆ Greater numbers signed up than would have been able to attend in person. However, the % that signed up and the % that actually attended were pretty different. In the virtual world, it's a lot easier to get distracted and opt out of one more webinar where a commitment to attend a face-to-face gathering might not be dismissed so easily. So, greater reach because of easier access has a trade-off of commitment to engage given other distractions (what else is "pinging me" on my computer, working from home, etc.)

◆ Specialty camps and after school programs. Most student stayed at home because of the virus. Although virtual was an option attendance was significantly lower. I attribute that to Covid fear.

◆ Virtual programming does not reach the same audience that in-person programs are able to. We have seen far fewer African American and members of other marginalized populations able to join our virtual programs. Overall participation also dropped sharply. We might attribute that trend to competing demands for our target population.

◆ Participation by both employees and clientele increased, due to demand.

◆ Participation increased for most events. This was likely due to the reduced need to travel along with a more comprehensive adoption of remote technologies.

PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW PARTICIPATION WAS AFFECTED BY OFFERING VIRTUAL EVENTS, AND WHAT YOU ATTRIBUTE THAT TREND TO.

◆ It broadened our reach beyond our community. People who couldn't participate in person before can now come to programs.
In most cases the participation numbers went through the roof. Many agents say they will continue to use virtual delivery even when we go back to face-to-face programming.

At the start of the pandemic, we had very large numbers (for a daily webinar series) -- the numbers have declined as time has gone on, and the types of people attending seem to have shifted (away from youth/families and towards professionals). We also decreased the frequency of the webinars (daily for 4 months, weekly for 4 months and now monthly). I think the trend was the result of the rapid development of so many online options, the return to in-person classes in schools and people's return to work locations.

Participation in digital learning skyrocketed. Video production and viewership jumped by 1,200 percent in the first three months of the pandemic. Web and social media traffic nearly doubled. Zoom participation went from less that 500 events in a week in 2019 to over 11,000 events during the same pandemic week in 2020.

It was affected due to us not being able to reach the clientele that has little to no wifi/internet service, especially in rural areas.

Participation was impacted by the computing resources that attendees had access to at the time.

I believe some of our online events reached an audience that would not typically attend an in-person event, however the people who would normally attend in person did not participate.

People seemed numb to "another Zoom session". Attendance was lower than in year's past and we thought the normal crowd did not want yet another Zoom session.

Participation increased a great deal in some programs/workshops since offering them online eliminated travel. It also allowed participants well outside the intended target audience to participate in events. Many events targeting local or statewide stakeholders wound up having regional, national, and international participants.

Participation was pretty good in virtual events when they were well done. Quality programs developed a following and had really good success. Long, disorganized, and unengaging programs quickly lost participants. Programs offered in a series (2-4 synchronous meetings) with activities to do (either between sessions or while online) were generally well attended and popular. At the start of the pandemic, there was an overload of content being disseminated in multiple ways. To some extent, people were overwhelmed with options. Now, the offerings have tapered off and steadied. The comfort-level of the public interacting with online tools has greatly increased as well over the past year. Granted, some individuals complain of Zoom burnout (mostly the "traditional 4-H audience"). However, others actively seek opportunities and have found 4-H because of it. I see distance learning as a vital component to our programming moving forward!

We had several events where participation increased significantly. For example, the State Master Gardener College participation increased from perhaps 250 to 1,500 -- where it was capped -- with international participation. We attribute this trend to increased accessibility to Extension programming for some audiences. In some cases, participation declined for other audiences that do not have ready access to the Internet, but our faculty worked very hard to come up with alternate delivery modes. Such as delivering a farmer education program in a drive-in format with the information delivered over FM radio.

**HOW DO YOU EVALUATE VIRTUAL PROGRAMS TO CAPTURE AND REPORT IMPACTS (I.E., PRACTICE CHANGES MADE BY CLIENTELE)?**

- Number of virtual participants or registrants. We tried embedding program survey links in some virtual events too. The # of returned surveys was not very high.
- Qualtrics surveys
- In some instance a link was provided with a form...to the participants email. In others an
evaluation appeared at the end of the session like a poll.
◆ Our technology team does this.
◆ Digital contacts, knowledge gained before and after the program, post-program evaluation.
◆ There is an online poll launched at the end of each virtual program. Participants complete the poll in real time and the results are automatically populated.
◆ Electronic surveys, real time polling or asking questions in chat (gauging short-term impacts). Long-term impacts - surveys, ripple mapping sessions online, focus groups online and in person where possible.
◆ Pre- and post-test surveys identical to those used prior to the pandemic.
◆ Pulled meeting reports; debriefed with presenters and meeting hosts immediately following virtual event; post participant survey.
◆ Qualtrics
◆ During the webinars, we use polling to assess knowledge gain (none, a little, a lot) and also asked how many people were participating from a single device. That helped us get more accurate participant numbers. We send a link to a Qualtrics survey in the follow-up email that goes to webinar registrants. We asked about intended behavior change as well as any actual behavior change resulting from the webinar information. Because we had many repeat clients participating, when we asked for examples of behaviors that they had changed, people often reported things that related to earlier webinars.
◆ Immediate survey and another survey 2 weeks after.
◆ Each of the 17 program groups in Alabama Extension has an audience measurement element for their plan of work.
◆ SurveyMonkey at the beginning of registration for workshops and an optional post-eval.
◆ We use surveys both during the sessions and after.
◆ We have failed on this topic, but I am not sure we are collectively evaluating ag programs very well anyway. We sent some surveys after online meetings, but response was limited. I think the virtual meetings have highlighted our short comings in this area and we are working to improve.
◆ Post-session surveys helped capture the expected impact.
◆ Being in IT and not a program area, I'm less familiar with the methods used by educators to evaluate true impact, but I know that it has often been a challenge even with in-person programs. Video delivery platforms, including Zoom, provide quantifiable reporting data and metrics for each event, and collecting demographic information by requiring event registration expands on that data. However, evaluating impact and practice changes are separate issues.
◆ Most virtual programs were evaluated with online surveys (e.g., Qualtrics). Links to these were either put in the chat and offered as a QR code on screen or directly emailed to the program's attendees with automated reminders. Common Measures or other instruments developed were used.
◆ We have not been strong in this area. In cases where participants registered for an event the faculty member is able to send a follow-up electronic survey to participants. But, my sense is that a fairly low percentage of our virtual events include a registration and evaluation component.

WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES HAVE VIRTUAL CONTENT DELIVERY CREATED THAT YOU THINK WILL CONTINUE AFTER THE PANDEMIC RECEDES?

◆ We will continue to offer virtual programming for certain topic areas, and we will continue to purchase more equipment and offer more training and support to do so.
◆ We know how to work in this environment now so we can offer this as a method of program delivery.
◆ Willingness to be versatile.
◆ Conference participation has increased savings due to reduced registration costs.
◆ More videos available to learn and catch-up on missed programs.
◆ More extension personnel work from home.
Better use of engagement in virtual settings; more commitment to help underserved communities gain access to online services/broadband.

I love the option of zoom meetings. I like the idea of an initial virtual meeting before actually meeting a client, especially if it's a new client.

We anticipate returning to in-person-only programming after the pandemic.

We will continue to offer virtual events, as well as hybrid (combination of in-person and virtual) events.

I hope that we continue to consider the needs of those attending events remotely as a primary part of event planning and not an afterthought.

Virtual delivery will continue and likely increase

Establish a hybrid system that combines the both live and virtual.

I believe that people will continue to create their own virtual offerings, so Extension needs to create standardized, properly branded templates, procedures, and expectations for doing so, including accessibility, promotion, evaluation, inclusion in Extension's body of knowledge.

Extension communications staffing increased by 25% to support pandemic-driven communications production requests. Across the board, digital learning tools are perceived to be widely accepted by audiences. Extension administration has encouraged continued production of educational materials in a digital environment.

Investing more time in creating online forms and digital communications

Much more emphasis on effectively creating online program delivery, training, technology resources.

I believe we will learn to use video more. I don't see us conducting a lot of hybrid meetings due the additional workload of those events.

Making an online-available concurrent session will be helpful to those who cannot attend, although more interaction will be possible only through in-person sessions.

Since our educators have become more comfortable with online/virtual delivery, we believe many will continue use that as a viable option even as some eventually return to offering certain programs in person. There is a great deal more interest in producing online courses, educational videos, and Zoom workshops both live and recorded. These approaches can help grow our audiences by providing educational programs "on-demand" to meet the various schedules of participants. We have also seen educators taking "hybrid" approaches -- for example, teaching part of a program live via Zoom and then assigning self-study via online course modules.

To handle the significant increase in demand for creating online material, we have somewhat allowed educators to do more on their own or with less oversight from IT and Communications. Audiences have accepted that materials and delivery might not be "broadcast" or "theater" quality. Delivering good, accurate information in a timely manner is the overriding goal, even as we continue to strive for the highest quality feasible.

I would love to see distance-learning programs continuing to be offered! Programs offered in a series (2-4 synchronous meetings) with activities to do (either between sessions or while online) were generally well attended and popular. This is a great practice for convenience to the clients and increases access for those lacking transportation, time, and/or proximity.

My guess is that we will continue to have a good percentage of meetings virtually to save time and travel resources for off-campus faculty. I also think that virtual programming efforts will make up a higher percentage of our faculty's efforts than they did pre-pandemic. We are expecting a hybrid face-to-face / virtual approach going forward rather than heavily weighted in one direction or the other.
HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING YOUR JOB DIFFERENTLY IN THE FUTURE?

- Providing continued and wider support to those Extension colleagues who are trying to deliver virtual programming.
- Working more remotely
- Fewer organizational face to face meetings.
- No different from now.
- By taking advantage of a hybrid model of in-person and virtual program delivery. Being flexible and creative in implementation. I don't have to travel across the state to deliver programs.
- More participants (farmers and ranchers) can be reached by integrating virtual sessions into regular programming.
- Virtual isn't going away but also won't take the place of all face-to-face work. We are all real human beings that thrive from connections. Virtual is better than nothing, but not as good as the real thing. Virtual will likely take on a bigger role than in the past, partly because we have gotten a lot better at it. As we gain even more abilities in this space and community access/skills increase, it will likely grow to a larger percentage than it was pre-COVID.
- I see myself instead of eliminating virtual programs and meetings once the world opens back up to have both virtual and in person as an option.
- I anticipate doing a combination of working at the office and remotely.
- We have institutionalized a permanent option for teleworking in our organization. This will promote a better work-life balance, enhance recruiting efforts, reduce overhead costs, and reduce traffic & carbon footprint.
- I would LOVE to see live language translation become a reality which will open up virtual programming to many new audiences.
- Facilitating additional online meetings.
- As a supervisor, I think we have answered the question about teleworking--it works and it should be an option for our employees. I think that the technological/virtual workspace, that centralizes access to documents, resources, tasks, virtual meetings, scheduling, collaboration, etc., will be even more important in the future.
- More time in: strategy, training concepts, and workflow assessment.
- Working in communication, these channels of communications were always open, prior to the pandemic.
- As an IT Professional I think we will be called upon to help Extension educators discover new, more effective methods of delivering virtual programming. We need to be prepared to adapt and discover these new methods.
- I think we have a lot of ag educators who are waiting it out so they can get back to 'normal.' Some have learned to produce videos, but there is a lot of work associated with that.
- Incorporating more persons in the planning process; forcing communication lines between various groups is critical to the success of the event.
- Our IT staff will likely be supporting more software and cloud services that enable our educators to create and offer online/virtual programs. Also, the ability to "work from home" has now been well-evidenced and will need to be accepted by administration, management, and users as a viable alternative to traditional office environments and work hours, especially in light of virtual events occurring at any hour of the day or night and more often than not overlapping with each other.
- Remote work has been a tremendous benefit during this time!!! So much has been accomplished and the amount of productivity in the past year has greatly increased without constant time spent on the road and traveling. Although we started using Zoom a little before the pandemic, the university did not have a license and only individuals who invested in an account used it often. We rarely conducted programming or met with clientele with this method. Now, it is a common tool. I see a lot of our meeting time and travel being reduced in the future because of this resource and others that have been embraced to increase organizational efficiency.
I very much address the work that is in front of me, occasionally coming up for air and to look ahead / strategize. So, I am still giving this some thought. For now I can say that I will need to do a better job keeping abreast of educational technology tools in the future to keep up with the knowledge possessed by many of our technology savvy faculty, as well as to advise those that are less technologically savvy. I already used virtual conferencing software extensively in my work for meetings pre-COVID due to the state-wide nature of my position. Partner organizations much less so, however, and I am hoping that they recognize the benefits of virtual meetings for partners that have very long travel distances for comparably short meetings.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT VIRTUAL CONTENT DELIVERY IN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION TO SHARE WITH COLLEAGUES OR RECORD FOR POSTERITY?**

Yes. If it is Extension's goal to get information into the hands of the people who need it, it is my belief that any of us NOT doing some degree of virtual program were remiss in doing our jobs. In 2021 more adults learn virtually (YouTube, online non-credit courses, etc.) then in person (classroom or field demonstrations/workshops). If virtual program delivery was not part of our instructional toolbox before, we were turning a blind eye to the way the majority of adults like to be instructed. I think the pandemic has taught us we can and should continue offering virtual programming AS PART OF (not instead of) the way Extension reaches its goal of delivering science-based information to people who need it to improve their lives.

Although virtual programs increased participation, networking opportunities with colleagues are fewer and far between. In-person events improve morale, builds confidence and ensures in building relationships which are otherwise lacking through virtual programs.

It's here to stay!

I hope the embracing of remote technologies isn't just a "flash in the pan" that fades after the pandemic, but remains a lasting lesson in reaching more clientele and improving the work-life balance for our employees.

A colleague and I spent 2 months writing six guiding documents on how to use Qualtrics for program registration and next month Qualtrics is rolling out a new version which means it all must be updated. UGH. And our institution is looking into using Destiny registration software for County Programs which may negate the use of Qualtrics??! Change is constant and sometimes necessary.

It works but we may be missing audiences if we do not continue personal contact or use one method exclusively.

I'm very proud of the dedication, creativity, and courage Extension people have shown in pivoting to virtual delivery of programs. I believe their drive to connect with clients and to keep our communities learning and growing has been very important in helping people get through the pandemic. I believe we have shown not only that Extension's content is still relevant and valuable, but that our delivery methods can adapt almost on a dime to meet the needs of our audiences.

Digital delivery worked incredibly well. Our audience substantially increased during the pandemic. We were prepared. Staff were trained and understood how to use the tools available to them. The pandemic, horrible as it is/was, provided motivation to fully implement our digital communication plan.

The pandemic provided a jump start to force legacy programs (and individuals) to embrace virtual delivery and online collaboration, at least for the duration of the lockdown. Many who wouldn't have otherwise changed will carry that momentum forward.

I LOVE IT!!! Incredible work has been done and the innovation that has been sparked by this unprecedented challenge has been inspirational. While I never want us to have to go through this again, I am grateful
for the programming accomplishments and outcomes. They need to stay an integral part of our 4-H programming model. :)  

◆ Folks need to be conscious of setting up a professional workspace. This includes the background scene as well as management of interruptions.  
◆ Be open to diverse platforms for delivery based on the audience, context, and content. Don't try to force something into an unsuitable delivery medium - be willing to experiment with different methods.  
◆ Be very intentional about designing a quality virtual experience with the participant in mind, to include breaking up delivery modes, including bumper music, using quality technology, being adept with the technology to minimize interruptions when using breakout rooms, and so forth. Quality virtual programming products require the investment of significant planning on the front end.
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