Auto-generated transcript for

**Shifting perceptions of workplace relationships**

Trimmed from video:

Hi everybody, I’m Scott Knudson with the Practice Management knowledge

0:01

community leadership group, I'd like to welcome you to our webinar this afternoon.

0:06

With me today we have Heather Pierce.

0:11

Justus Pang, Nea Poole, and Rachel Oleinick.

0:14

They'll each introduce themselves in a second.

0:17

But, before we started, we just wanted to run through a few slides, the shifting perceptions of workplace relationships.

0:29

Discussion really.

0:30

There's launching from a discussion board session we had in September where a lot of members contributed, the original question was about work hours and how the pandemic media changed with ours that are really shifted into a dialog about it.

0:47

The changing relationship between staff and management.

0:52

So, as I mentioned, in a membership member of the Leadership group, but I also run a small firm and Maryland's new design that does a variety of community based work and affordable housing.

1:04

And the practice management knowledge community is really your go to resource. If you're not a member, we encourage you to become a member.

1:14

It's very easy to join in and e-mail us if, you know, these on-screen instructions.

1:21

Don't, don't give you a lot, But there, we have a lot of library of best practices, So it's an opportunity for you to interact with other members about any practice related issues.

1:34

And Rachel comes to us from Chicago, We'll just go real quickly through these, so they can tell you a little bit more about themselves.

1:41

Person.

1:42

Nea comes from Virginia, and Justus is here from Nevada.

1:48

And Heather's here, you're from, well, I forget where from the South, and these four people have been chosen partly because several of them were active participants in that discussion board, but also they represent not only different geographies, different points of view on this fish.

2:07

And so, why don't we start going around the table, introducing ourselves now.

2:14

Rachel, what have you?

2:16

Sure.

2:18

Thanks Scott, for inviting me for this panel discussion. I'm very excited about it. I'm Rachel ..., I'm a licensed architect in Illinois, I practice in Chicago for North Works Architects. I've been with them for a little over five years now. And before that, I was with Tigerman McCurry also in Chicago.

2:37

And part of the reason that I'm really excited about this is I am a younger architects and I'm sort of entering the management role at my current firm and discovering a lot of these issues are coming up as I transition from that sort of staff position into a manager position.

3:00

So, excited to be here.

3:04

Nea?

3:05

Thank you, Scott. My name's Nea Poole, and I am a founding member of ... Architecture. This is actually our 20th year in business.

3:15

In our specialty is multi-family, and we build throughout the south we, south-east, and as far west as Nebraska.

3:25

My interest in this is that I wear a lot of hats in our office.

3:29

We have right now, 32 of us, and I do everything from architecture, too, taking care of the employees.

3:39

I do all the hiring, and so this was a topic how we handle, all of a sudden, this rush to work from home, how you handled people's concerns. How you handled bringing them back into the office.

3:52

has really been a topic in the front of my mind.

3:56

I've done a lot of reading on it, and the knowledge community, As Scott knows, I was very active in, not only giving my opinion, but trying to find out what other firms were doing, because I think that's going to be very important going forward. How do we move forward?

4:13

And I feel like, today, that'll be a big part of the discussion, Justus.

4:25

You're muted, just, I am a Rex.

4:28

Sorry about that.

4:30

So, as we noted, I'm registered architect in Nevada, I work for the state of Nevada, the public works division. So my primary role is as an onerous Project Manager at this point, having gone client side about three years ago.

4:43

I, my main project right now, is a large School of Education building for Nevada State College, But I'll also manage some small projects here in their kitchen. Demo was one of the projects they got canceled during coven.

4:57

My work history was, also, was primarily in private practice. With several small firms, and 1 larger 1.

5:05

Um, I think maybe the one thing interesting about my position in this meeting is that I, I've always somehow managed to kind of be a lone wolf architect.

5:16

I've just always been the sole draftsmen, even when I was working in the larger firm for on a 300 unit apartment complex. I somehow ended up being tasked with doing 80% of the drafting on that project. And, so, it really wasn't until about my last for firm in private practice, where I started to have interns helping me, even though it wasn't direct supervision. They would kind of be put on and off my project as the needs of the firm progressed.

5:42

And then, soon after, I joined the division, and so, I guess, technically, I do manage architects now, but it's in a very contractual, defined contractual relationship, hopefully, a personal one as well.

5:55

But, uh, and just in that sort of context. So, thanks again.

5:58

I really appreciate being offered the opportunity to join the conversation, of course, And Heather.

6:06

Hi, Scott. Thanks again for the opportunity to join the panel and to all of my fellow panelists. I'm really looking forward to some lively discussion. I've been in HR for a little over 18, 19 years, and I spent time in a variety of industries, for-profit and not for-profit, heavy highway construction, and now professional services with an architecture, interiors, and planning firm. I lead the HR initiatives for our 8 Office 350 person firm based in the south-east.

6:36

Um, people are my passion.

6:39

Great, thank you. And why don't you go ahead and share with us just some of your overall perceptions of the HR issues that you've been dealing with.

6:48

Do you have some slides to show?

6:50

Sure. Absolutely.

6:54

You should now be seeing my screen.

6:57

Great, wonderful. So let's start with, what do we know? And, What have we learned? and, What should we explore when we think about return to office work from home, some hybrid of those situations? Last May, Facebook, which has almost 107,000 employees, said that they would be moving to a substantially more remote workforce, and Twitter said It would give every employee the option to work from home.

7:24

Those changes that once felt temporary might be more permanent than ever before.

7:30

Salesforce is the largest private employer in San Francisco and occupies the city's tallest building.

7:35

They expect more than 65% of their workplace to only come into the office 1 to 3 days a week in the future.

7:43

In addition to the fear of the pandemic personal choice, the data also indicates that where we do our work is shifting.

7:51

The National Bureau of Economic Research indicates that 37% of all US workers can plausibly work from home.

7:59

Other organizations have indicated they remain committed to office space work. Amazon, we all know who they are, went on a Hiring Spree last year and expanded office space in six cities, including leasing war space in Boston in 20 21.

8:13

We balance that by recognizing that a recent study indicated that only 9% of commercial real estate is currently occupied in downtown Boston.

8:23

A study by Stanford, of 16,000 workers, found that working from home increases productivity by 13%, and Forbes, when publishing their top 100 companies with remote work options indicated that employees on average can save almost $4000 a year, working from home.

8:41

We know that remote work works. But it's going to take creativity and open mindedness as they are more important than ever as we consider the possibility and the probability that we can and will continue to do this for many months or in years to come.

8:56

As Sir Norman Foster said as an architect, you design for the present with an awareness of the past for the future, which is essentially unknown.

9:05

How do we plan for that unknown? Let's explore the levels of engagement that employees have within their works, their teams, us, as leaders, and their firms.

9:16

Employees typically fall into one of these four categories.

9:21

The highly engaged employee, this is your goldstar winning your extremely collaborative communicator. This is the employee that, frankly, we all wish we could clone.

9:31

The waxing and waning Employee is the individual that isn't contributing a high level. They don't feel alive. They're definitely not engaged and they're not producing great work.

9:42

The waxing engaged employee as a team member, that's thankfully trending up, perhaps enthused by a new project, praise from the C suite, whatever the reason the engagement of this employee is, is increasing.

9:56

And, finally, the fourth level of engagement, and the employee cycle is the, the note that engage the individual that's checked out, whether it's, because they've had a day, they're just tired of working for a boss, they don't respect.

10:09

Whatever the reason this employee is simply checking boxes.

10:13

It's also key to understand that bouncing between levels of engagement can be a monthly, a weekly, daily, and even at times an hourly struggle for employees.

10:22

So, how can we help?

10:24

It's crucial to ask yourself, what role do you play? How am I helping or hindering this employee or my team member?

10:32

It starts with you, whether you own a firm, manage a team, or a new supervisor.

10:37

Coaching and mentoring is always a large part of leading teams. In a remote environment, that responsibility remains at the top of the list, but it does look dramatically different.

10:47

We need to be very careful about settling into what is personally comfortable. In 20 21. We can't do what we've always done.

10:55

This New Way of working is a two-way street, because we know that employees can manage up.

11:01

We, all, regardless of position within the organization, can learn how to work well with people who work differently than we do.

11:08

Some companies have been managing remote teams for decades. It's important to recognize that the practice of architecture is still somewhat new to the game.

11:18

If you take a moment, and Google work from home advice, you'll get roughly one point five trillion trillion with a T results. If you Google managing remote teams, you get less than one point three million.

11:30

Employees are clearly looking for ways to improve their work in this current situation. Significantly more so than leaders are looking for tips as how, as to how to lead their teams.

11:40

Employees are better prepared than we realize, and it's vital that we spend quality time looking for creative ways to lead, because, what we do now is that change is hard. And it takes work.

11:51

Leadership in a time of managing change starts with intentionality.

11:55

Genuinely ask your co-workers and team members how they're doing and then be quiet and listen.

12:02

Don't over schedule for yourself and for them.

12:05

Do connect.

12:07

Don't just listen in. Actively engage.

12:10

We know that there are going to be roadblocks. Let's take isolation for example. Isolation is the biggest pitfall that's been identified of working from home. But we can creatively help to solve this issue.

12:22

Yes, humans are social creatures, but do we actually need to be together in person to feel connected and do our best work?

12:30

While remote remote work can lead to feelings of isolation, we can keep our teams connected, collaborative and working together from the safety of their home offices or wherever else it is that they are working.

12:42

It's important to be proactive in reaching out. Don't wait to hear from someone. Take the initiative. Pick up the phone. Send a teams chat.

12:49

Send a Slack chat, send a text message, some smoke signals, but reach out, and make sure that you include the opportunity to have.

12:58

Casual conversations chitchat if you might have had at the coffee pot, or on the way down the hall to a client interview.

13:08

As we approach work in our new normal, it's also important to remember to set clear expectations and to overcommunicate. When something isn't working, start brainstorming how to fix it and involve everyone in this process. It's not just on your shoulders.

13:23

The key to productive collaboration is purpose. Once purpose has been established, it's important to ensure that whatever the work environment is, it's focused on supporting and promoting collaborative engagement.

13:35

There are a number of systemic factors that influence how we behave at work, whether it's how information flows through the organization, how the physical workspace is designed, or how new workspaces are designed as well, and how companies measure and reward behaviors.

13:52

Change is hard.

13:53

Celebrate the wins. Even the small ones, especially the small ones and build on those to keep you and your team moving forward.

14:04

Great other.

14:05

What was it you said about bostons post pandemic office buildings?

14:10

Yeah, my understanding is we pulled out some survey data. That only 9% of commercial real estate in downtown Boston is currently occupied.

14:20

OK, that's terrific.

14:23

Um, so one thing to them, audience here. If you have any questions, we've had a couple of people post already, but please use the chat box.

14:32

We will have a short period of time for questions at the end, and we'll try to respond to chat questions if we can fit it in as we go.

14:40

But certainly, at the end, seminar, and any questions we don't have time to address, you know, we're more than happy to follow up by e-mail and things like that afterwards.

14:51

So, I just wanted to ask the panelists, you know, how do you think the relationship has changed between staff, colleagues, clients, supervisors, from owners?

15:07

Take it away.

15:10

Well, I'll jump in and say, with our firm, 32 of us, and I ran the numbers in anticipation of this question. Right. Now, our national office, it's small six people. Everybody is back working. We've had to remote people.

15:29

For the last few years, they obviously had no change, and 12 of us are in the main office.

15:35

So, there's about, uh, 12 to 14 people who are still out, and, um, no. I prefer not to see this is the new normal.

15:47

My goal, running this firm, is, how quickly can we get back to where we were?

15:52

I think architects are, by nature, a collaborative group.

15:57

Even in school, we work in studios, we work together, I think four people who are senior people at management level.

16:05

People who are license and you have years of experience.

16:08

This isn't particularly tough. They can work from anywhere. They have the experience, they have the know-how.

16:15

I think who's really suffering the most during the pandemic and is ironically at least for our firms, the people most likely to stay home are the most junior people.

16:25

I think they're missing out on a lot of experiences that you just don't have and we've discussed this a little bit amongst ourselves and of course, we should all be reaching out to them.

16:36

Of course, we should be sharing experiences with them, but it's, it's not as organic, it's not quite the same.

16:44

For example, in the studio, if, if a contractor came in and there were employees, we have over here, a pretty tough conversation about a change order and it escalates, and it comes down, And then it's negotiated.

16:58

The employees right there really learned a lot without being in a meeting, without, it was just an organic moment.

17:06

Now, that project manager might think, wow, you know, this is something, everybody needs to know, that I have tomorrow he sees today. Tomorrow morning, I'll get on Zoom call with 12 people that aren't here. And let me tell you about this call, but it's it's not the same: you don't have the back and forth, you don't have the nuances.

17:26

And I think for people who are younger, they don't know what they don't know, and they're the ones who are going to probably want to stay home the most. And I think they're the ones probably that need to be in the office the most.

17:40

Go to my two. While we continue to talk about this, let's post to the audience about whether you guys already have policies.

17:51

But anybody else got thoughts on that? Same question.

18:01

Well, I think I definitely quite mirrors nias concerns.

18:06

I think it was interesting, because, when I joined the division, my boss, our team is a group of licensed professionals, and so my boss told me, your professional, I hired you as a professional. I'm not looking over your shoulder, just be fair to the division.

18:19

That's something you can do with someone that's been around for awhile and knows what the standard of care is and what needs to be done.

18:27

And, uh, but, you know, I grew up in the Bullpen, even if it's small firms, you know, you know, I learned how to deal with vendors by listening to my, my, my boss. Talk to vendors, or, you know, push on a civil engineer. Not the nicest way, but make it happen, right?

18:45

So, that is definitely the biggest concern I have from work from home, Someone like me. I think I feel like I do work. I most. I can even do better work from home just due to lack of distractions in the office.

18:56

And so wasn't, I guess, the looking for in the future, what I've been angle in discussing with my boss is seeing if they're away are the division doesn't currently have work from home policies That we are all working from home at the moment. But trying to work out a case, like Heather brought up, working from home, or maybe just three days out of the week.

19:19

But even then, the one thing I did bring up in our conversations is that I'm happy to start working in the office full-time if we ever hire someone.

19:26

Because you know, what we do is fairly unique and to have your teammates to be able to pop into the office, which I had for the first two years, when I was in, the division wasn't valuable.

19:39

That is definitely the biggest question in my mind, is how one trains the younger staff in this, in this new environment.

19:50

You know, one thing I'll add is, um, ask anybody who has kids from first grade through college, how the remote learning is doing for them. And these are teachers that are trying extremely hard, who have thought it through and who are focused just on those students for however, many hours, in a day.

20:10

And it's the rare parent or student, it's going to tell you, they're doing, as well, let alone better than they were doing when it was in person.

20:20

And I think that's very true for the younger staff at the office, know? Yeah, It's, it's always really interesting to hear those different perspectives. We were able to host summer interns last summer, and it wasn't so the volume that we've had in previous years that all of them wanted to be in our office space. We went back to a hybrid of work from home returned to office kinda, unless you do you policy at the end of May of 2020. All of our interns wanted to be in the office, and all of our emerging professionals are formerly known as intern architects are almost all back 100% as well.

20:55

That's awesome.

20:56

It's been, it's been a lot of fun. But we've also, we're very fortunate. We have tools that allow us to hop into someone else's screen and Go through red lines with them while we're actually doing them. So they understand why. We're using mirror Whiteboard and the whiteboard feature in Zoom and Teams.

21:14

And so again, it comes back to that intentionality of just slightly shifting how we work and making sure that everyone is included in the process Yeah, look at what you've been saying Heather in our firm right now.

21:28

We have four different offices, The Chicago being the main office in, we have a bit of a mix right now. Coming back to the office on a more permanent basis. So, we have some younger staff members, not yet licensed, but on their way. And then, we also every, you know, a couple of days, we'll have someone who's more at a senior level.

21:54

So, having that, knowing that that makes exists, I think, lets us sort of clear that intentionality a little bit to say, OK, I know that The principle is going to be in on Tuesday, So let's make sure that we're going to review these red lines together at that point.

22:13

So, the other thing that we ended up doing, or that I personally did over the summer, I was working with a very new young designer who, this was her first job at an asset.

22:28

So, you know, really just learning everything, and not just how architecture works, but also how you work in an office. And we're having some trouble, like getting across, you know, here, the red lines, and I'm looking for on this set of drawings. And there was a number of iterations working remotely.

22:47

I ended up asking her, like, hey, I'm not comfortable coming into the office right now, because everything is like really fraught. Can you come to my house, and we can sit in my backyard, at my picnic table with a drawing set?

23:02

And we will go through these one-on-one and she happily was like, yes, this is fantastic, and yes, please give me this attention because I'm desperate for it. So, we went through and had that kind of casual conversation while we were going over these things in person.

23:20

But it didn't have to happen in the office. It just had to happen one-on-one.

23:27

And I think that that kind of change is also an opportunity that we to be looking at, where it's not Everybody's back in the office, or everybody's remote, or some mix there. It can also be OK.

23:37

Maybe it's not the office, maybe it's, you know, someone's backyard or a workspace or whatever. Where it can still be in person, and you still get that face time? And have the ability to bring up, you know, questions that may not have come up in something like a Teams meeting.

23:57

So I think that there's more options here than a binary between in the answer is normally Office.

24:06

Well, in fact, I mean, you mentioned that.

24:07

You're going, Oh, here's the, the poll results.

24:11

So, very, very few people were fully remote, I'm glad to say I was one of them.

24:17

All of this had very little impact on the service.

24:21

It looks like the majority of people had no work at home policies before. Obviously.

24:26

Are trying to develop those. But it seems that where things are really are right now.

24:30

And I don't know if it's how long it will remain is this hybrid model and how do you decide who, do you let everybody choose for themselves or there's some people you say, we need you in the office with these other people, and how do you maintain sort of equity of opportunity, but weirdness of their productivity and the skills that they're developing? Or not?

24:54

When you write a hybrid model, what are those challenges?

25:05

I know you mentioned you have that situation. Heather, are there.

25:12

How does your firm deal with?

25:15

Difference is absolutely, I love that question. Because the, the guidelines from the CDC and the World Health Organization have evolved since last March to present.

25:26

And we've been very flexible and our where you work philosophy, if you're comfortable coming into the office, our offices are open. If construction administration as part of your job description and you're on site, we have a protocol for that.

25:41

If you are better and more efficient and happier at home, please by all means work there. I'm still waiting for somebody to call me from Bora Bora and say that's where they are, in which case I'm hopping on a plane to. But we've really approach this. is there's there's enough change in the world right now for all of us to manage and there's enough uncertainty and anxiety. Let's not add to it the complication of where you work.

26:06

We do have some of our leadership, staff members that have the philosophy, that if I can't see you, I don't know that you're working were unintended working on that, but the numbers speak for themselves when we finished up 2020 and had better financial statements than 2019, even though we didn't meet our goals. We celebrated that, and we celebrated that with our staff, by sharing profits and some time off, and you know, lots of what we made it through the year, and the hope is that over time will find our balance working together, wherever it is that we're working.

26:53

Yeah, We can't hear you.

26:56

Sorry, I had it on mute. I agree with you on that.

26:59

And even though we're at a much smaller scale, we're effectively doing the same thing. Our office is open for anyone who wants to come in.

27:08

No, I feel you can't force someone who's uncomfortable who's afraid for their health to come into an office. We early on maybe June, July, survey the entire office. And we said, What does coming back to the office look like for you?

27:24

And we had answers from, please, God. Let me come back tomorrow, because it's driving me crazy to sit on the top all day, too.

27:33

You know, we, we had someone who literally wanted, and, again, we're just 32 people, but you we couldn't have the kitchen open. Nobody was allowed to have food in the office. Everybody had to wear a mask. We had to change the HVAC system.

27:50

The list was so long, I was like, Oh my Lord, by the time we do all that. I'll be working from home because it would drive me crazy.

27:56

So, that's when we decided, look, we have to accommodate all of our employees, We, we, we care for them. They do a great job.

28:03

We like them, And so looking ahead, I think, towards spring, we're going to have that survey again and say, well, you know, what does this look like for you?

28:13

Because I think of, within our employee base, I think the majority are staying home. It's for health concerns or family health concerns.

28:23

There's a few who have been forthright and just said, I like rolling out of bed, you know, working right on my computer.

28:31

Um, so that's what we're considering is, is there going to be a point where we say, no, it's going to be an individual decision on management if you're in a position where we feel comfortable with you working from home. And that's what we're trying to work through now.

28:50

But I think that will probably be sometime this summer.

28:53

But we're going to have to do that survey again, because you, in my opinion, can't force someone to work when they're afraid of being around other people.

29:03

Yeah, I completely agree, And in a way, this has sort of force the issue of, Get offering flexibility to employees who are looking for it, for whatever personal reason it may be. So it may be, well, OK, I have to get my kids because, you know, school ends at three o'clock, and I have to leave, I don't have another option for childcare, so I'm gonna get them, and then after dinner, I'll come back and do my hours. Or I have an elderly parent that I have to care for, or something just. I just feel like it, and I'm just, I just like being home.

29:38

And I really do think that having that kind of flexibility, um, not only allows for employees to work where they're comfortable work, where they can, but it also signals your commitment to them to say, Hey, I value you.

29:55

You're a big investment that I want to nurture, and I want to make sure that you know how much I value. I offer you this trust.

30:06

And this, this kind of flexibility, an opportunity to prove to me, yes, You do merit this trust because you're producing what you're saying you are.

30:20

And I think that that has a morale impact as well, that we haven't really touched upon yet.

30:28

It also impacts retention, too.

30:31

Well, and I feel like the case has sort of been proven, Whereas a lot of people used their office barriers as reasons to terminate employees, for lack of a nice reward them. And kind of try to hold your controls, and they actually need it. And now, it's really been proven that you don't have to work to identify.

30:54

And, as you were saying, Rachel, you can have folks work at odd hours, depending on their position and company, Obviously, they have to 10 jobsite meetings, or whatever times.

31:04

But with that, flexibility is far more equitable to the modern populus of architecture.

31:12

And just to us as humans, it lets us be in control of our own lives, kind of in the way we were in college.

31:18

Be aware. Yeah, we've got classes to go to that asset class.

31:22

Sure, we're swamped but we can play when we want it.

31:27

When I think about the impacts of this operationally, I think about one of our medium size offices in Savannah. And, right, when we began this hybrid option, they all sat down an agreed to core hours, and it's worked. It's worked for that team.

31:42

When I think about how we've always worked four nines and a four Monday through Thursday, or nine hour days, and Friday's a four hour day, Why in the world are we all commuting to our offices for four hours on a Friday, right? So we've had some of these epiphany and we've been able to hit the reset button, we, you know, first started in the pandemic and utilization or our efficiency measures were up.

32:04

But then we actually looked at the other metrics, and actual productivity wasn't quite there yet, because people were still figuring things out. So we started measuring things And instead of just looking at one ratio, we're now looking at 3 or 4 to give us a better indicator of actually how efficient are our teams so that it's a pandemic.

32:22

And it's been awful and it's really been anxiety producing, but it's also started shifting how we financially report and operationally consider our work that's being produced.

32:33

Well, I think there are some related questions coming in which are kind of on, on that topic of you mentioned that it's better for retention, Well, it also.

32:43

Has anybody expanded their recruiting that you may now be willing to hire people who aren't at any of your Office locations?

32:50

And end or the flip side of that is how do you maintain your reasonable working relationship with somebody who maybe did live in your city but as is now moving to vermonter wherever because that's where they want to be.

33:07

Our firm actually ended up in that position several years before the pandemic one of her really highly values.

33:16

Sort of management level folks ended up having a family opportunity in Philadelphia.

33:25

And this was when northward still only had the Chicago Office it was outside. So rather than saying goodbye to this employee, the partners that said, hey, do you want a satellite Office and Philly, and that's what happened. And so now, our affiliate officers, 5 or 6 people at this point. So that is not a new concept, I think it's getting a lot more adoption right now, but that was more or less, the way that my firm in particular has expanded into these different offices. And we have folks in areas like Nashville and Aspen who aren't necessarily in an office exactly but they're in that work from home situation and that's where they've been. You know before the pandemic really was a factor.

34:19

I think I was, because I think she's right.

34:23

We have we had before the pandemic two employees, almost identical stories, where they're now working remotely all the time for family reasons where they lived. But I think that does give to who is the employee.

34:39

If you hire an intern directly out of college and that intern then wants to work from Florida, does that work? And, you know, you really have to think about firm culture and how you integrate that person into the firm culture.

34:54

And one thing, actually, I wanted to mention is sort of the flip side of working from home, that I've been reading a lot about, and it's people with, I don't know, it's necessarily bad time management.

35:07

It might be Just because they are home. But it's some people do struggle with the work-life separation.

35:15

And I think, as employers, that's something else we all have to be aware of, is that, you know, people think, Oh, well, I'll jump on my computer, right after dinner, for just five minutes, answer some e-mails, and all of a sudden, they're on, for another hour. And you have to be careful about those people burning out, because they don't have that break that they used to have.

35:36

And do you think sort of on that same tone do, if you don't have a good work from home policy, are we going to have troubles recruiting people? The top people.

35:47

Are they required?

35:51

We're getting questions. We've, we've onboarded five people to date in 20 21 and we're gonna welcome 20 plus summer interns and it's it's a question. Formerly it was a, is this an option now? It's what your, what is your policy?

36:10

That seems to be great for these A plus workers that you are describing.

36:15

But what about the D minus folks that, you know, barely were hanging onto their job before.

36:19

Are they now out the door or they just feel happy in there?

36:24

Cool obscurity. And they've held onto their job because we all know there's. We identified and uncovered some performance challenges. In 20 20 that we wouldn't have had we not gone to work from home.

36:36

We also have been able to deepen relationships with those folks. That may be where the bees are the B minuses and we're able to elevate them to the B pluses and the minuses. So, you know, it really is a double edged sword. There are perhaps, A two sided coin. Is a better analogy, you know, we're able to both better lead and better understand and better support the performance of our folks.

37:03

Yeah, I would say that this is more of an opportunity for whoever the manager is, of the D folks who are struggling to deepen that relationship.

37:17

Don't feel that there are a lot of folks out there who are pleased about being a D person. I don't think that that's something that anyone really pursues.

37:32

Or, or, you know, I really would question, if they realize it and I would argue that formerly, before the pandemic, where all of this communication needs to be intentional. The sort of organic happenstance kind of communication leaves those folks behind. And so now, the focus really needs to be OK, I'm planning this phone call and planning this meeting and planning this, no Slack chat or whatever it may be.

38:04

This is the opportunity to say, hey, I'm noticing this, No work that isn't what I think you're capable of. Or work that isn't meeting the mark. Let's figure out how to make it better.

38:18

Actually have that. And have that confrontation rather than saying, oh, that's just to someone so that's what they do if they just hang out in the corner and we ignore that fact.

38:31

Well, I think we're gonna post another poll about productivity, But while we're doing that justice, I mean to you, do you think that there are, that this is, there are different attitudes about employer and employee relationships. Anyway. Some people think that they're committed parts of the firm. Some people think they're just here to get paid. What's kinda your take on this?

38:53

I mean, my, my take, I guess I've always taken a very all, right. Not always.

38:56

But I think the saying that's run in my head for years, is that an architect is paid in terms of time, and are in terms of money, and experience, project experience, and in terms of money.

39:09

So I guess I've always taken a fairly, I guess, exchange. Sort of, You know, I I, I provide my time leveraged by my skills.

39:17

And in exchange, you know, I get some money and I also get great work. And I've been very lucky to work on some cool projects.

39:26

I think that sounds very transactional, but I think the other thing that I've always kept at the top of my head is that this is an infinite game that we're playing with our careers, right?

39:36

So, that the term infinite game where winning is A Winning is defined, not by a small victory or a small advantage here or there, but by just keeping a seat at the table. And, I think, in our profession, reputation and relationships from almost everything else.

39:53

I definitely am realizing that as I sit on the other side of the table, as well as I work with architects and whatnot.

40:00

So, I guess for me, that's always been a fairly productive way to view my relationships.

40:06

When I'm at the office, obviously wanted to be personable, I enjoy the time. I have with the people that when I'm sharing the room with them.

40:13

But, at some point, I am cognizant of the fact that, you know, I have my life and they have theirs.

40:19

And I personally find it difficult to swallow language of family and sacrifice, apply to business relationships.

40:30

Just because I feel like it, it either takes it to another level, which maybe isn't always fair to the employee or maybe cheapens the, the, the analogous.

40:42

The similarly, as far as relationships between between family, but that's kinda the way I've approached it. I think that's the way I've been approaching the work from home.

40:51

I know like, for example, on my end, that staying at home, as as hard as I have, because I live with my in-laws, most certainly will have some effect potentially on relationships at the office. Or, you know, with upper administration or management.

41:08

But, you know, I looked at that and said, OK, that's the price I'm willing to pay, and that's exactly what I would tell, someone, as an intern, as, you know, if they're in a situation where they need to whole up, they just need to know that they are going to have to write off.

41:21

You're a year of learning just because they're not gonna get that learning. You know, from home when they might be getting it. in person. And so to me, it's always kind of a matter of choice of tradeoffs.

41:34

and being very conscious about those tradeoffs, and making it clear to those folks that, that is the choice they're making.

41:42

Because I would not think that, everyone who is in that position, that young staff, who don't know what they don't know, are you aware that this is the, the tradeoff that they're making?

41:58

All right?

42:00

So I would say, too, there's some.

42:04

Maybe unconscious or unwitting, you know, biases that happen in that.

42:09

Especially now. When some of the staff is in, some of the staff isn't in. If all of your senior management, At least in our case, you know, all the senior management is in.

42:21

You can't help, but perceive the people you see, every single day, everyday I leave.

42:26

Same guys here late.

42:29

No, unless I do a survey at 615 on zoom, to see what everybody's doing, that guy sticks out to me as well. You know, he's always, he's always in the trenches. He's always working.

42:41

And if you're at home working at 615, your boss isn't seeing that.

42:46

No end.

42:49

I don't know how you get around that because nobody's going to start calling around 600 team working me.

42:55

And there, there is an inherent advantage to be in an office if that's where the management is, because, know, just today, one of our managers was going on a job site turn just to the guy sitting next to him. He knew he had been on, a job sounds like, Hey, you wouldn't go with me. I mean, it wasn't planned. It wasn't, you know, a day in advance scrolling through, zoom to see who may or may not be busy.

43:24

It was just that moment, and I think, it, being in the office like that does give you an advantage of being in front of the senior people of the office, which is always been seen as a positive.

43:41

It certainly expands the relationship to dimensions other than just the transaction of work for money.

43:48

I think the tricky part with that, is that we as a profession, sort of have built our plan around, yeah, we're going to hire you, even though you're not good enough at your job yet.

44:02

And we're going to train you into it.

44:04

You may think you're great at your job, but we're training you to a job you don't yet.

44:09

And so I think maybe that's some of where management is looking for.

44:14

Are junior staff.

44:15

Because management feels, I should say, good management.

44:19

Feels like they're, you know, lifting their staff, but the staff may, not always.

44:24

And that's it.

44:25

The tricky part, you know, Scott, one of the things I mentioned in those couple of slides I shared is that this is a two-way street.

44:32

You know, we should, as leaders, have the expectation that our employees are managing up as much as we are leading them.

44:39

You know, when I think about the fact that I have worked in previous lifetimes for supervisors and managers and leaders that didn't sit Geographically where I did, I made sure I was communicating what I was working on. Not, let me check all the boxes, so you know that I did my job today, but I'm effectively communicating, and I've done this at various points in my career. I'm effectively communicating so that they don't have a question in their mind. And I also think that when you start from a foundation of trust, and there is a concern that perhaps someone isn't doing their job effectively, or they're not doing what we want them to do, let's have that conversation before it becomes a problem. You know, if we start to see that we're headed down the wrong path, or, we start to see that an employee isn't quite looking to where we want them to go. Let's have those discussions before they become major issues.

45:35

So this is, this is interesting. But maybe also makes me feel better, because I'm definitely, yeah, I have a general sense of how productive, some ideas.

45:46

But I don't have a measuring tool for, so I'm glad to see I'm in the majority there.

45:52

Good, any thoughts on whether people should have more specific productivity measures?

46:00

Or is that maybe not the primary issue in deciding who should take, you know, be promoted, get a salary, raise, change their role.

46:13

I think anything on the thing on this poll that jumps out at me as being really distasteful is things like keystroke monitors. It's a signal, again, from management to staff that we don't trust you.

46:31

We do not assume that you are doing your work unless there is some device that is watching you and reporting back to us.

46:41

And I really don't think that that's appropriate for architecture where it is such a collaborative kind of work and it really widens the design between management and staffs.

46:59

In a way that I don't think any kind of data from that information data achieved from that is a benefit.

47:09

There's no doubt in my mind that whatever benefit you might get from that keystroke monitor is not overcoming the giant deficits that you've created.

47:19

I could not agree more, and I may have mentioned I read an article where one company did keystroke software does a 400% since the spring another company that does they take a picture of you every so often. You're up 500% in sales.

47:39

And the point of the article was when companies do this, what they're not thinking about is the message that they're sending to their employees and that apparently beyond just the message, it really stresses people out.

47:54

It's constantly being watched like that.

47:57

And that your, your attrition rate you start to lose people because.

48:04

They're not flipping burgers at McDonalds, they're professionals and they expect to be treated that way.

48:10

Yeah.

48:11

So that's the problem with data driven decisions, is that sometimes you use the wrong data mm. or do you use it in the wrong way?

48:18

Yeah.

48:19

yeah, I would like to get back to what Justice was speaking about earlier in this sort of transactional attitude between staff and employers.

48:31

I think there's something interesting there that maybe may feel like a generational divide, but what I think it may actually be is the design that's occurred because of outside economic forces.

48:48

So I think justice, you and I are pretty close in age, so the The things that we're facing, and that a lot of my peers have been facing, are multiple recessions.

49:04

We've seen 9, 11, we've seen just these extremely dramatic changes in the US economy, in the US business landscape, that we're not really this frequent in the decades prior.

49:21

And I think that that has had such an impact on what kind of risks businesses are able to take, what kind of traffics that there, making, how close to the margin they're running And what they're able to pass on to employees as well. So, the folks who are in the millennials, and younger kind of age bracket, I feel, are suffering and become a lesson, transferred the idea of the sacrifice and the family, kind of motto, because they're not seeing the benefits that the folks who were prior to this period, actually getting benefits from because the, there was more stability. There were fewer like major upheavals that have crushed wage levels have crushed businesses entirely.

50:19

So I think that it's not, it is a generational divide, but not because it's a particular age gap. I think it's because it's this particular period of time and events that have occurred in that period of time.

50:32

So, the idea that millennials are less interested or are more transactional, I think is a direct response to this idea that, yeah, I am more transactional because my wages have been depressed since 2008.

50:46

I was out of a job for three years or I was forced out of the fields entirely and I'm not seeing the benefit to working 70 hours a week for this.

51:00

Then they're working for the wrong firm because our firm philosophies, the total opposite, I want this to be somebody's last job and when we're busy and it's a good year, everybody knows it's a good year and you take care of your people and when it's not a good year, everybody knows and, OK. Well, you get a whole lot more time off because there's just not a lot of work to do.

51:23

But I will tell you something, we have observed, and I actually had a, a college student say to me, is that for awhile? Because what we do is a specialty.

51:35

We thought it would probably be easiest if we hire people straight out of college. Going back to what Justice said.

51:40

They don't know anything, but they think they know everything, but you know, there's a learning curve in your teaching moment.

51:47

What we found recently, in the past maybe six years, is that there's this attitude where your first job out of college is really the steppingstone, your second job, and so they would come for about two years, and then no matter what we did, they would leave.

52:06

And, you know, we were talking to some of our younger people about, you know, what, what are we doing wrong? And they said, Oh, that's just, you know, everybody in college talks about it.

52:14

The first jobs you're stepping stone, We're like, Oh, OK.

52:18

Well, we stopped going to colleges to recruit people, and now we're trying to be the second jobs forever.

52:26

But I think it goes between what both of you said that firms have to step up, and they have to take care of their employees.

52:38

Because if you want someone to stay there, they're not. They know what's going on within a firm, and if you take care of them, I think they'll appreciate it, And, without asking, they'll be willing to put the time in.

52:51

I mean, I'll just say one more thing.

52:53

Our firm, When I hire people, I tell them, we are a 40 hour week firm, we, we, My partner, and I came from a firm that was 70, 80 hours a week with whose standard it was expected, and Our lives were miserable, And it is a favor. Because we were miserable. So, we went founded her own firm? But, we tell people, we truly believe in that and, you know, maybe if there's a deadline, somebody's working a few extra hours.

53:18

But I've been shocked in the last 20 years. The number of times I've come in, say, on a Saturday.

53:24

And I'm catching up on something And there'll be an employee or something, like, what are you doing here and Saturday? Oh, I just want to catch up on something. They don't tell me they don't make a fuss about it.

53:34

But because we're taking care of them, they feel the responsibility to the firm to give back.

53:41

And I think that's a lot of that's on the firm, that if you're leading correctly, your guys are gonna want to stay and they're gonna want to contribute.

53:52

Just to jump in, we're in the last five minutes, one thing I failed to say at the start is all of you attending will get continuing education credits.

54:00

Will be posting a link to those credits, but that if you have any questions or problems about that, you could just female P, M K C, AIA dot org, to get your credits. So let's, we've had a whole lot of questions come in, and we have not been able to address all of them.

54:22

So, we appreciate, you guys asked me, well, we'll try to post some of those on our discussion board.

54:27

So, again, join so that you can follow the discussion board, but just quickly skimming through a couple of those.

54:36

I'm seeing that.

54:38

Some people brought up a very good point about mid-level staff.

54:41

We've talked a lot about kind of senior junior, but what about people that are mid-level trying to become Senior Corps, frankly, even their senior staff, trying to move into an ownership slot and him?

54:54

What's, what's going on with that, though?

55:00

I'll just go ahead and say for us, in a lot of ways, the only thing that has changed is where we're doing our work, and where we're having conversations with our team members. And I know that we're very fortunate to be able to say that we were a large enough firm that had the resources to send all of our people to work from home without consequence and really great benefit, but truly, in so many ways, the only thing that's changed for us is geography.

55:26

You mentioned that.

55:27

Working at home.

55:29

Does the company make sure you have the tech resources at home? If you maybe are one of the lower court, or does that, Our tech team is phenomenal. Basically, overnight, we went from eight physical offices to 347 or so.

55:43

Hmm, hmm, hmm.

55:46

OK, I'd like to mention one thing that I think did actually really improve just being the work I do. It turns out most of my work is essentially remote, because my primary architects are obviously never in the office with me at the division.

56:00

But I think the one thing that really helped me, and it's something I will be keeping up throughout after things go back to normal is I've created a I use a sauna as a project management tool.

56:10

And I basically created an agreement with my project architects that they either call me or put something on a sauna. So if it's important enough, the just give me a call. Let's make it happen, or if it's all day, one week, two week turnaround in a question that needs an answer. Use a sauna. And then what we also do is have a weekly, every Monday afternoon, I call my project architect me and spend about an hour. Just Go and Overstock.

56:32

And I feel like doesn't really improve the way.

56:35

My communication, I kinda wish I did that before that and I certainly will keep that up after and maybe that's somewhere where a mid-level person in-between top and the lower levels that's, I think, a strategy or tactic that they should most likely use both for managing up and managing down.

56:51

That's one thing I've noticed since I'm on the phone, way more than I used to be.

56:56

And not just with clients, consultants, and contractors, but with my teammates now.

57:03

And what's, what I find particularly interesting, is, working in an office where multiple projects are made up of teams, across different offices, this needed to be in place regardless. So it's not just the communication, it's also the core hours, because we're also scanning time zones. It's also, OK, how are we going to run this meeting when someone's in Philly and the other persons in San Francisco.

57:33

So, again, I think that a lot of this is just tools that we've come to in a crisis, that I wish we had gotten to a little bit earlier.

57:45

one thing I will say for anybody who is in that frankly middle two, maybe more junior position, is that exactly what Heather said the transaction goes both ways, and so you know, I think people need to reach out to who they're working with more. You know, don't don't just wait for your project, Andrew Coyne, call them, Hey, you know, How's it going today? I Heard you had a meeting with the client. You'll see how back go. I mean, you do that in an office.

58:15

Don't let just because it soon make you stop from doing it, and I think if I can to encourage anybody to do anything, it's it's, you know, it is Heather and Rachel Vincent, the communication.

58:29

And, um, you know, that's the one thing I see.

58:32

Especially with more junior people.

58:34

They're more hesitant to, I know we're reaching out to the more senior people and I'm like, I would have talked to you by the coffee pot anyway. Don't wait till I call you to see how the baby is. You know, call me and let me know what's going on.

58:48

That's great.

58:49

Somebody asked me to repeat the e-mail.

58:51

So, Link is going to be posted in the chat box.