

## **What Our Members Are Saying**

### **Breakout Room Highlights from the 2021 Virtual Connection Event**

*This year our Chapter shifted our annual Awards Gala to a virtual celebration and connection of the New England Chapter community, held on January 20, 2021. Part of that event was spent in breakout rooms, networking and discussing the impact the pandemic has had on our industry, our businesses, and our personal lives. Here are some highlights from those breakout room discussions.*

### **How is the physical workplace changing? Will we see a fundamental shift in space design?**

Key discussion points:

- Yes, many companies are looking to go to a hybrid approach
- Variation will come based on the company and its culture – not all companies are thriving in a virtual environment
- Some companies are incorporating “intelligent scheduling”
- Focus will go toward spaces that support collaboration and long-term health and wellness within buildings
- We are social creatures and we want to interact

“The experience is what will draw people back into the workplace. What are people not getting from working at home, and how can that be incorporated into the design?”

“Companies need to determine how to incorporate the hoteling concept. Distributed work and flexibility are here to stay. How can companies implement an office to function more like a quality hotel?”

“The future will focus less on the design and more on cleaning to create space where people feel safe. This will include HVAC specs, clean air distribution, filter systems, and cleaning protocols.”

“Companies will focus more on WELL certification to support the health and wellness of their spaces. The certification is more relevant than ever before. Workplace strategy will be key as people return to the office.”

### **How have you changed the way you're networking to gain new business opportunities?**

Key discussion points:

- Leveraged common groups, organizations, or associations to connect or reconnect with old friends and colleagues
- Virtual setting saves travel time and has made it easier to schedule meetings
- Without the pressure of in-person connections, it's made it easier to connect with people across the globe

“While it might be harder to form new relationships in this environment, many of my existing friendships have deepened during the pandemic.”

“Working over Zoom has made it easier for prospects and clients to take calls. We’re all saving time by not needing to travel to meetings or events, and we’re all better able to schedule around work and home commitments.”

“This year has created a greater sense of humanity and humility. We have gotten to know our colleagues’ kids, pets, seen into their homes... and in turn, potential clients seem to be more open to meeting and discussing business opportunities.”

### **What have been the unexpected benefits of the transition to remote work?**

Key discussion points:

- Learning to work together differently and, in some cases, better
- Opportunity to test new technologies
- Greater understanding of benefits of in-person meetings
- Side benefits: time with family, no commute, connecting more with friends, spending less money, enjoying the outdoors

“Learning to work together differently has brought us closer together, especially members of our leadership team. Everyone is really working deliberately to engage people.”

“We see each other all the time now. I never used to walk across the floor to see someone (and probably won’t again in the future). But now we talk all the time on Zoom or Teams.”

“So much more work gets done without all the side conversations and interruptions that happen in a normal office day.”

“I do miss having lunches and visits to people. There are benefits to in-person meetings, especially for team-building and for junior staff just getting started.”