



## April 2020 Enhance Webinar: Communication for Virtual Teams, presented by Laura Daniels, Amanda Borkowski and Andrea Brossard, DGN staff

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the world has shifted from in-person meetings and activities to telecommuting and video conferences. The professional staff of Dairy Girl Network (DGN) have always been experts with communicating as a virtual team. This is because, since its inception, DGN has been a virtual organization.

Laura Daniels, DGN President, shared that the goal of DGN's virtual team was to have a flexible work schedule with a purpose to allow talented people to help support and grow the organization. She also pointed out that in this time, many people cannot go sit with others to discuss ideas and have found different ways to communicate. Due to this, DGN wanted to gather dairywomen together to share ideas, best practices and helpful tips to help you continue to grow communication with a virtual team.

Laura started the conversation off with her tips and tricks. She first discussed how teams need to be flexible. For example, say hello when you see people on your video. This may be your own co-worker, their spouse, child or pet. Next, Laura encouraged teams to have a regular schedule and meeting structure. This means picking a time and creating a standardized agenda for the meeting. DGN regularly has a Tuesday afternoon 'huddle.' They start the huddle off with a virtual tip and then each team member gives a report and the action items they have been working on. Also, in the meeting, they create a space for everyone to be heard. No matter what platform you are using, Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc., you should hear from all of your team. A team member does not have to have the loudest voice in the room to share their opinion. This may be hard on a conference call, so be sure to call on people. Finally, whether in a virtual meeting or call, carve out space to build a personal connection with each other. This can be at either the beginning or the end of the meeting. The topics can range from anything like the weather, to planting, to cows! Just make sure you are taking time to make that personal connection with one another because we are all human.

Laura then turned over the conversation to Andrea Brossard, the DGN Educational Resource Lead, who discussed how to best utilize Zoom. In her role, Andrea handles the communication for DGN's webinars and Spanish classes. She is very familiar with how to use Zoom and provided attendees with a behind the scenes tutorial of the platform. She explained that on Zoom the options have been changing over the last few weeks. She also explained some

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common features such as muting and unmuting yourself, screen sharing and different views including chat view. One of the more advanced features is sharing a virtual background. This sometimes looks a little strange due to pixilation, but it is very fun and a good conversation starter. Finally, Andrea encouraged attendees to have a password for their meetings since some people are logging into meetings that should not be there.

From there, Amanda Borkowski, DGN's Interactive Media Lead, presented on the Monday.com platform, a project management software that the team utilizes to keep track of all of DGN's projects. She discussed how Monday.com is a very creative and customizable way to communicate within your team. This is a paid program, but they have a bunch of different plan options for any size business. Amanda covered how to add people onto your team and how to create boards and groups. Some boards and groups can be a little more complex depending on what type of program you are working on. Amanda also covered some cool features for Monday.com including how to use the "conversation" column on a board to communicate and ask questions within your team. To conclude, Amanda also discussed how you use the inbox, tagging and notifications. They are very similar to how you use Facebook. She also pointed out Monday.com has been the platform DGN has found the most success on, but there are other platforms too such as Slack, Trello, Basecamp, and Asana. One of these apps might translate well to your farm or business, you just have to find what fits!

To conclude, the group broke into a roundtable discussion of the best tips and tricks they had picked up through virtual communication over the past few weeks.

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