



From the Director's Desk: Is remote work a transformational change?

Brian Elms' article in Governing.com from April 29th 2020 "[Government's Innovation Surge Shouldn't End with the Pandemic](#)" notes that "service improvements that used to take years are now being accomplished in days."

Elms oversaw the Denver Peak Academy for the city before writing the book [Peak Performance](#) about what he learned deploying LEAN Six Sigma practices to teams, to offices and to programs at the city. Since then, he has taken his show on the road as a government innovation guru leveraging a career nudging entire office teams to assess and improve processes.



As usual, necessity is driving innovation. Tremendous external motivation exists to move service delivery for entire departments on-line if they were not before. It was something resisted or on to-do lists for years, and it happened overnight. This was not rocket science for vehicle registrations, document notarization or video conferencing. For systems that are suddenly experiencing high volumes the need for improving system capacity for loan processing or unemployment benefits will likely be forever improved when they are fixed. The same will likely be the case for mail-in ballots going nationwide in the November election. Governments are seizing the opportunity to adapt suddenly, obliterating the red-tape and bureaucratic patterns of work that most citizens have abhorred for years.

Video conferencing and working-from-home was on the rise, mostly in the private sector, when in a matter of weeks entire public department offices shifted to service delivery with remote employees. Think about how this IT/HR miracle just happened. Except many of us are suddenly aware of how vital in-person office culture, and the social proximity of our daily lives is vital to our mental/emotional health. If you want a real sense of the pace of change this article from March 11 about "[Why Conference Call Technology Never Works](#)," is a brilliant, deep-dive that barely 8 weeks later seems obsolete. Transition workforce to remote work with video conferencing - mission accomplished.

Will remote work go down as one of those not a big deal issues that company cultures resisted? Working remotely is not equivalent to, say, the invention of canals which brought freight from the Atlantic Ocean to the Midwest, trans-continental railroads, or the Interstate Highway system, Social Security or Unemployment benefits. Will real transformational change emerge from this crisis or will many of our adaptations just be temporary?

The problem with tech progress is that it almost always incremental. A perspective on this published what feels like 20 years ago, in February 2020-"[The Real Trouble with Silicon Valley: The toxicity of the web is peanuts compared with Big Tech's Failure to remake the physical world](#)" points out that there are major social and engineering problems to solve - take finding a vaccine for COVID, for instance, yet much of the wealth and brain trust seems to focus around something as potentially addictive as more realistic gaming.

Will there be paradigm shifts from this time in history that we look back upon that remade our culture? I like Elms' encouragement. As he points out, the trouble with normal was that it wasn't evolving quickly enough.

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Celebrating in the time of COVID

Ever had a birthday during a pandemic? No parties. No special dinner at your favorite restaurant. No toasting with your people and certainly no traveling for a birthday vacation. It's basically a big ole birthday bummer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard for a lot of people and socially isolating is difficult regardless of your age. As older adults are one of the identified groups most vulnerable to the virus, social distancing has been even more pronounced. According to a study in Perspectives on Psychological Science, the health effects of prolonged isolation are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and that study was conducted before the pandemic.

In an effort to combat social isolation and the birthday blues, Eagle County Public Health, with funding from the Alpine Area Agency on Aging, is delivering flowers and balloons to older adults in Minturn on their birthday. Pat Nolan, one of Eagle County's Healthy Aging Program Coordinators, has been busy making days brighter and alleviating loneliness with her special deliveries. We are so thankful for Pat, Eagle County Public Health, and our innovative, thoughtful, and responsive providers who are working even harder during this time to make older adults' lives better.



COVID QUOTES

"The whole concept of social distancing is contrary to the efficiencies of mass transportation."
David Peckler at RTCC Meeting

"CMC's approach and initial response has been wide ranging and includes free summer tuition & books at and all fees waived for students." Dr. Carrie Besnette Hauser, President and CEO, Colorado Mountain College on NWCCOG Senator Bennet Call on 4/30/20

"Summit Chamber and the businesses it represents hopes federal government can push for proper changes to PPP that go back to the intent of PPP." Blair McGary, ED Summit Chamber of Commerce on NWCCOG Senator Bennet Call

"Childcare is an invisible issue during the pandemic but one that is increasingly apparent when hearing from essential workers. Childcare was the first emergency support function put in place, however many essential workers didn't know about it if they were not already using it." Jeanne McQueeney, Commissioner Eagle County, NWCCOG Senator Bennet Call

"We ask the Senator to support any legislation (for funding) that can go directly into smaller counties and not come through the state." Kris Manguso, Commissioner Grand County, NWCCOG Senator Bennet Call

"COVID is a public health crisis quickly turning into a long-haul public communications crisis. We also have breakdowns in mental health as it becomes an economic crisis. This is a marathon." Jeff Shroll, Eagle County Manager, from interview for upcoming NWCCOG COVID newsletter

[See NWCCOG Coronavirus Resource Guide here](#)

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SPECIAL EDITIONS

News is developing as fast as the speed of the spread of the virus. For the next few weeks - hopefully not months -- we'll publish more frequently as needed to get the most current information to our members. If you have information you think should be shared on this newsletter, please send suggested content to jstavney@nwccog.org.

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