



Jill Davie, president of TEAM Software.

Organizations pivot to keep teams busy, maintain seamless services

by Michelle Leach

Editor's note: This article is part of a series sharing first-hand experiences from local organizations on how their respective industries are adapting to COVID-19.

If Midlands organizations aren't pivoting to stay afloat or demonstrate value, they're helping clients pivot amid unprecedented change.

In recent weeks, Carolyn Sutton PR has been flooded

with client work — ensuring message platforms maintain trust, positivity, and calm; for example, when a client shifted from linens and bedding to making 20,000-plus masks for the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, messaging shifted in kind. It's messaging that Sutton's clients are most concerned about — how to navigate on social media and when/if interacting with media. Her

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team has proactively connected with clients to "get ahead of the dialogue."

"There are no rules or verified road map to navigating COVID-19," she said. "It is changing our country on an hourly basis. But, when it comes to media relations, we're looking to how we can be an advocate for our clients and the media during the immediate changes in the landscape."

Stories are told fast. So, it's imperative to jump on them.

"Also, it's crucial to have legit sources and experts for your stories and on behalf of your brand with prepared brand messaging," Sutton said.

Don't appear "tone deaf;" messages must align with daily happenings in the greater media.

"We are sharing authentic, real stories and angles, being sensitive and patient," Sutton said.

Team Software supports two industries deemed "essential" during the outbreak: cleaning and security.

"In many cases, customers are dealing with an increase in demand with requests for in-depth cleaning or those looking for more

guards to handle changing needs," said President Jill Davie. "They are balancing these requests with keeping their mobile workforce safe and healthy."

Accordingly, TEAM's toolkit on its 24/7 help site features crucial resources on their software — from scheduling and messaging tools, to direct deposit and additional employee "self-service."

"We've also been paying attention to the recent paid sick leave and compliance laws that are changing, and helping our customers manage the new requirements in our software," Davie said.

As a company with global offices and reps, TEAM's transition to "work-from-home" was seamless.

"We had been preparing for a work-from-home scenario prior to encouraged social distancing recommendations, so we were able to



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troubleshoot any issues before they affected our day-to-day," Davie said. "As we have shifted to a completely remote operation, our customer service surveys have increased in ratings and

our team has pulled together to provide extra support to clients. It's been inspiring to see team members across all departments jump in with an 'all hands on deck' attitude to help any way they can."

Before "work-from-home" was daily parlance, the architectural design team at AO saw continued demand for flexible, less static work areas balanced with acoustically-private solutions such as phone booths, conference room pods, and increased requests for services outside the architectural/engineering services scope; for instance, artwork selection and graphics design. Of particular relevance now, Owner Randall J. Palandri noted increased integration of technology, and increased teleconference abilities.

"We meet electronically several times a week to keep with work and each other," he said. "When you have a collaborative business model like our office, we are at our best when we can bounce ideas off of each other on a moment's notice. Trying to do that on a schedule online is not as effective but, for now, we will adapt."

As the firm relies on clients to move forward with projects, keeping productivity up is "difficult."

"[Projects] under construction are moving forward but we do not know for how long," Palandri said. "The building permit process was slow before the pandemic and I'm sure that it will take even longer now that ... City Hall is closed."

Under-development work is subject to how clients feel about the future, and their desire to spend funds for professional services, or to wait and see what happens.

"We are optimistic that as the virus becomes contained and as optimism comes back that we will see a surge of activity in the A/E/C industry," he said. "The economy was moving strongly before the outbreak and hopefully it will ramp up quickly as the virus becomes less intensive."