

[inaudible] >> Hello and welcome to The Valley Today.

I am your host Janet Michael.

We recorded today's show via Zoom on

Wednesday afternoon with Guy Curtis from

Lord Fairfax Community College's Workforce Solutions.

Guy, everybody else may be shut down or working in a smaller capacity,

but I think you and I and

the ladies that you've brought with you today are working harder

and more than we probably have on a normal 9:00-5:00 business day, aren't we?

>> Absolutely. We're all getting used to working remotely and virtually,

and it's taken a toll,

but I think some of us are getting into a new norm with this new way of working.

Hopefully, it's not for long,

but we're adapting and getting through and continuing our business.

>> I was having a conversation earlier in

the day with Niki Cales from the Front Royal Chamber,

and we were talking about the number of people that maybe in the beginning of

all this felt like they were being forced

to try this new way of working and working from home.

But a lot of them may end up continuing to work this way when we're

on the other side of this because it just makes

more sense and it's a whole lot more convenient for the employer and the employee.

>> Right. Yeah. It's very funny that our Leadercast topic this summer is called positive disruption.

I feel like this has been a positive thing.

We were even talking this afternoon at our staff meeting how we're learning new ways to deliver content online and work with technologies that we have in an existing way. I think a lot of our customers are going to start expecting that moving forward. I think, well, this unique opportunity, it's been a definitely a disruption in how we do day-to-day business, but it's definitely a great opportunity as well moving forward and capitalizing in how we can better serve our students and employers within our region.

>> Carlene Hurdle, I was going to say is with you, but technically, she's on the screen with us.

>> Yes.

>> She is the Corporate Training Director for Workforce Solutions. Is that right?

>> That's right. Hi. How are you today, Janet?

>> I am good, Carlene. How're you doing?

>> We're doing good.

Thank you for having us on here to talk about all of this positive disruption, as Guy called it.

>> How has the way you conduct business and do your job changed?

Because I know you've done the show several times, and a lot of what we've talked about has been based on in-person meetings and people learning new skills at a particular location which probably isn't working for you right now.

>> No, we're not able to obviously be a part of businesses, but what we have been doing is coming alongside of our businesses.

If you look at the business landscape right now,
it's a crazy looking economy.

We have businesses that are teetering on the edge of going out of business.

We have those businesses that are on the front line that are completely booming.

Then we've got folks that are in the middle.

They're a little more idle,

but they're going to survive it.

That's where we're trying to figure out what can we do to help them

thrive during this time and maybe rethink some of their strategies,

and even build and create more cohesive teams during

this time so that when we do go back to some sense of normalcy,

which I think will probably be a phased-in approach,

how can we be better for having been through this time frame?

That's what really what we've been reaching out to

our business community to do is to try and pour into

them any resources or things that we can do just to offer up any insights.

We have a brand new product development person on stash.

She's a curriculum and instructional designer, says phenomenal things,

and so we've utilized her talents and gifts to put

together some very informative pieces for us to share with our businesses.

Again, to just pour into them during this very unusual time.

>> That brings me to Jelise.

She is a Corporate Training Product Developer at LFCC Workforce Solutions.

Jelise, welcome to being a rookie on The Valley Today.

>> Thanks, Janet. It's good to be here.

>> You may actually possibly be the first rookie on the show this way,
so you're like a double-whammy rookie.

>> Awesome, breaking new ground.

>> Guy sent me the link to the webinar,
which is part of what we're going to talk about today because it's five ways
to support employees during this unprecedented time.

Tell me a little bit about your background and how you came up with this idea.

>> Well, I think like Carlene said,

it's such a difference in what all of
the challenges are that different businesses are dealing with right now.

But we know that unless you're a frontline worker,
you'll have this new normal of not having your staff altogether.

Before I came to Lord Fairfax,

I worked for a global IT company for 13 years

where my team was entirely remote on a different continent,

so I have a number of years of experience

working in the remote environment and even managing teams that way.

I think that it's a skill that you have to develop over time and

understanding how to effectively communicate and collaborate with teams remotely.

We have all of these organizations that have just

been thrust into this that may not have had

the time to develop the tools and have the right technology and the skill set in place.

We came up with the idea for this webinar because we felt that leaders really wanted

to come around their workforce and support them in this unusual time.

The number of people who attended really echoed that sentiment.

I was really blown away by the number of folks from

the area who attended this because it really shows

that our local leaders are concerned about

their employees and they want to support them during this time.

We had a great turnout,

and that was really encouraging for me to

see just the strong leadership we have in the Valley.

>> I think it's double-sided too because I'm sure that a lot

of employers had no real idea what was going to

happen when they sent their workforce home and still expected them to be productive,

and at the same time,

the workforce people themselves are suddenly now thinking,

"Where am I going to do this?

Is it going to be in my kitchen?

I don't necessarily have a room in my house to designate as an office."

Note, we all have different ways of working

and now we all have different rooms that we can work in.

>> That's one of the things we mentioned on

the webinar because I think even just two weeks ago,

a lot of us looked at this as a very temporary situation.

In the last two weeks, it's evolved for us to start to

realize this is going to be a lot longer term than I think any of us thought.

So that goes from we're just patching up a leak
and doing a quick fix versus we have a new normal
for probably 2-3 months now that we need to adjust
to and be able to continue to pour into the business and be effective.
Then of course, you have the added challenge of all the kids are out of school.

So even those of us who are seasoned work from
home people have the added bonus of our kids being home,
which creates a whole set of challenges on its own.

>> This webinar gives people five tips or five ways to work through it,
but it's more from the employer to the employee?

>> Yeah, the tips are really geared more towards what
leaders can do to help and support their teams during this time.

>> Can you walk me through a couple of them?

>> Sure.

>> Not necessarily giving away everything,
because I know people can still go watch this webinar after the fact, right Guy?

>> Yes, that's right. There's still an opportunity to watch the replay for it.

Yes, Jelise, go ahead give them some tidbit.

>> Well, I'll share at number 1 and
my personal favorite because my background is in communication.

Our number 1 tip is communicate, communicate, communicate.

I read this really great quote the other week from Pat Lencioni who's
a best-selling author and just an expert in business leadership,
and he said, "No one will look back at this time and say,

my manager was so annoying with all the encouraging e-mails checking in on me."

I think as leaders, sometimes,

we have this tendency to worry about inundating our employee.

Because there's already information overload right now with the news and social media, it may be our nature to hold back.

But what we need to realize, as our employees,

this is not normal and so they are hungry for information.

They're hungry for some sense of stability and what's to come.

It's never been more important for leaders to be communicating

regularly and almost erring on the side of over-communicating with their employees,

especially when you don't have the benefit of

that face-to-face interaction that you're

probably used to having if your workforce is remote,

you have to make an extra effort to communicate.

You have to find new channels to do that,

and make sure that you're communicating

not only formal information around what's happening with the business,

what are our focus areas,

but also just those personal check-ins.

How're you doing? What do you need from me?

What are you struggling with?

That really goes a long way with our employees feeling that it's going to be okay,

and my leader really cares about me,

and is there to support me.

>> Do you typically find that some of those are better to do one-on-one, especially using a tool like we're using today for Zoom, so that you can have that face-to-face individually with some of the employees? Or do you feel like it's still as good to do it altogether in Zoom as a staff meeting where 10 or 12 people are altogether are talking about how they're doing?

>> Well, I think you can do both.

When I was a manager of a remote team, I always had weekly one-on-ones with my directory ports because we didn't have the luxury of sitting near each other or working in the same space. So I didn't know if they were having a bad day because I couldn't see their body language. I didn't know if there was something going on at home, or there was something to celebrate if I didn't have that weekly check-in with them. But I also think having team meetings is really helpful too.

Here, in Workforce Solutions, we've started having weekly team meetings where as we used to only do them every other month.

There's 20-25 of us who are joining in on Zoom.

It's like the Brady Bunch multiplied with all the little squares, but it's great to see everybody's face and have that chance to connect because information is changing so rapidly.

>> I've been doing Facebook Live videos with several of the local chambers trying to offer marketing ideas and ways for businesses to think

outside the box from a marketing and promotion perspective.

One of the tips that I had been giving was,

get to know your employees.

If they're still working for you in-house,

now is the perfect time to actually have a little bit more of

an in-depth conversation to find out what are their likes and dislikes,

or strengths and weaknesses.

Because it could be that you have an employee who is really good at social media,

and that's not something you really can

handle with everything else that's going on right now.

I would imagine, as an employer, suddenly,

nobody being in the office and having meetings this way,

you're suddenly starting to realize, "Wow,

I really didn't know that particular employee as well as I thought I did."

>> Yeah, I think that's true. That was one of our suggestions on the webinar.

We were giving ideas of questions that leaders should be asking themselves.

One of them was, what questions should I be asking my employees?

I think that you hit the nail on the head.

This is such opportunity time to really get to know your employees

and ask those questions that maybe you wouldn't normally ask them to check in with them.

A little humor and levity goes a long way too.

We had our team meeting earlier today and we had

some fun with people wearing wigs and other costumes.

A good laugh really goes a long way in getting us all through the situation.

>> Oh, wait, Guy Curtis has a mullet wig?

Are you kidding me?

>> I was sporting them all away today, yes.

>> We are totally putting this video on our YouTube channel.

Before this is all said and done.

You are putting that wig on your head.

>> Oh, surprise. One wig came out and

then we'd probably had four or five other wig surface out of nowhere.

So we had wigs just on just on demand, just standing by.

>> We have been doing our staff meetings at the station.

We normally do them once a month and we've been doing

them every week and we've been doing them via Zoom.

Since I've been going to this station and

Kathy and I have been sharing a screen to do them.

We joke today that we're going to get a background.

It's the ocean and we're going to wear

floppy hats and have a fancy drink at next week staff meeting.

>> Yeah, we've had some very creative backgrounds on Zoom Meetings as well.

It's very fun to see.

>> Well, let's take a quick break when we come back, Jelise,

can you share a few more of the tips that were in the webinar.

>> Sure.

>> We're going to do that. We're going to take a quick break when we come back,

we're going to chat more Guy Curtis is on

the screen with me from LFCC's Workforce Solutions.

Carlene Hurdle also has her own square on the screen,
she is the corporate training director for Workforce Solutions.

We have also been chatting with Jelise.

She is a corporate training product developer at Work Force Solutions.

We're going to talk more with all three of them when we
come back in just a couple of minutes.

>> Expecting to hear a commercial.

That's what this is sorta.

First, I want to thank you for listening to the Valley today podcast.

You're one of 1,000 who listened to the show this way every month.

Sometimes it's because our listeners are busy
and they want to listen when it fits their schedule.

A guest on the show who want to hear what they sounded like when they were on the radio.

We even have a few binge listeners who listened to
a week's worth at a time can you even imagine?

So if you want those people,
your potential customers, to hear your message,
then this could have been your ad in the bonus,
your commercial isn't restricted to just 30 or 60 seconds.

You can take up to two minutes to talk to those customers.

There's even the opportunity to be an exclusive sponsor of the Valley today podcast,
which also gets you on air mentions at the end of every show,
if any of this sounds interesting to you,

give me a call at the station

540-635-4121 or send me an e-mail to janet@theriver953.com.

You can also find all my contact info by searching for me on theriver953.com.

>> Welcome back to the Valley today I am your host Janet Micheal.

We are recording today's show via Zoom

with Guy Curtis from Lord Force Community College Workforce Solutions.

Carlene Hurdle is also on the screen with achieves.

Their corporate training director,

along with Chile's is their corporate training product developer.

We've been talking about a webinar that is available even now.

If you missed it the first go round,

you can still go back and watch it I know Guy is

going to give us that link in a few minutes.

But Jelise I want to come back to you because there were five tips in here

for employers to really help their employees transition.

The first one that you gave us in the top of the show was

communicate what's another one of the five that you get?

>> Another tip we have is to set realistic goals and expectations.

We mean when we say this,

we mean both for the business and for your employees.

But we really focused on the webinar on

setting realistic expectations for your employees.

I think this is especially important for organizations that are

suddenly thrust into this telework or remote work environment.

Because if you have employees who are not used to doing this,
they may not understand what the dictations are.

So just simple things like setting expectations
around availability and how to communicate.

Perhaps texting is your preferred communication
for urgent matters and email for everything else.

Or maybe you have a collaboration space like
Microsoft Teams and that's what you want your employees to use.

But it's important for leaders to communicate that with
their employees and set those expectations for when they will be available,
and then we were talking a few moments ago about
that face to face interaction and when you are on calls,
do you wanna see your employees face-to-face?

Do you want to set that as an expectation that they be able to do that?

Are you fine with just hearing each other's voices?

So just little things.

I think it's important for employees to
understand what those expectations are so that they're not caught
off guard and you don't have leaders who are getting frustrated
because there are these unspoken expectations.

But the important part of that tip is
the realistic part because this is not business as usual.

We're all in an uncertain time and those of us who have kids have kids at home.

So we need to make sure our expectations are realistic and flexible for our employees.

>> We touched earlier too you on the fact that employers need to make sure they know their employees to a certain extent because they also have to take into account, like you mentioned, all of a sudden now all three kids are home while this employees also trying to work.

That has to factor in to that expectation level a little bit to I believe.

>> Right. Absolutely, and if your employees need a little extra flexibility, then come up with a plan that works for both of you so that your business goals and objectives or your objectives for the team are getting met, but you have that flexibility.

So your employee can also tend to the needs of their family.

>> I remember when I first moved my office, when I had an office for my marketing firm, I always had an office.

I never thought I was a work from home person.

I always thought I needed an office and had a really nice office, shockingly guy over a coffee shop in Old Town Winchester.

I know that might be hard to believe.

But at the end of the year when I'd moved into that building and realized how much money I was spending on rent.

That literally maybe three clients ever visited me at that office because I always go to them.

I'd like, you know what, I'm just going to move everything home.

That was the toughest first year of my life because I couldn't not see the dishes in the sink.

I couldn't not know that laundry was stacking up downstairs.

It was a tough transition for me to be able to do that.

I think that's going to be a big struggle for a lot of

the employees that the employers also need to take into account.

>> Yeah, absolutely. I mean,

we're riddled with distractions when we're at home

and especially right now if you also have kids at home, it's extra distraction.

So it's definitely something for leaders and managers to take into consideration.

Again that's why we recommend setting realistic goals.

Because maybe what you decide with your employees is that there's

a certain amount of hours that need to be contributed to each project each day.

But when they get it done, it's up to them.

So you're giving them the flexibility to meet the needs of

their family or they they have those distractions.

Or maybe the expectation you said with your employees,

they find a quiet room where they're away

from those distractions for a couple hours a day.

But yeah, like you said,

have that conversation with your employees,

understand what their situation is like and

then come up with something that's realistic for both of you.

>> So give me another tip.

>> The last tip that we give on the webinar,

not surprisingly being a higher education organization

is to educate yourself and your employees.

There's certainly no shortage of information that's going around right now.

One of the things that we did with

this webinar is we gave a handout to everyone who attended.

That's also accessible for those who want to watch it on replay,

but it has a whole bunch of links of resources.

Both government resources where business leaders can find

information that's pertinent to leading their business during this time,

and during a pandemic,

as well as resources for free collaboration tools that they can find.

Resources for employees, if they have employees who are finding

themselves in an unstable situation financially and need aid or support.

There's resources they can direct to their employees.

Then also resources for learning,

because we really believe that this is a time to embrace learning,

not to run away from it.

You might have some employees who have a little more downtime than normal,

so what a great opportunity to work on professional development,

or you may have employees who you're hiring because you're so

busy to meet the demand that you need to quickly get them up skilled.

Guy can talk more to this,

face-to-face training is not really an option right now,

but we have hundreds of online courses that we offer through Workforce Solutions.

There's a lot of opportunity for organizations to educate

themselves not only with what's happening in this current situation,
but just broadly to work on their professional development and work on the business.

That was another great quote that actually

Carlene had shared with me, that somebody had said,

"If you can't work in the business during this time,

then work on the business."

There's a lot of ways for leaders to be investing in their business during this time.

>> I think that she makes an important point too, Guy,

because there are a ton of online things that are still available,

and I never have to set foot on campus or see somebody in person.

I can still sign up, register,

and go through those online classes, right?

>> Yes, absolutely. Virtually, we're still here on campus in theory.

We can respond to any questions our students or employers are looking for,

but some of the recommendations that online learning that are out there,

it's possible managing productivity in remote workplaces,

stress management in the workplace, productivity need tools.

There's a ton of online classes that we have within

our categories of courses of business and professional development.

Computers in IT, leadership,

human resources, customer service,

business applications with computers.

There's a lot of different opportunity out there.

Believe it or not, we have heavy equipment operator online.

>> What?

>> Yeah. Shut the front door.

Exactly. As far as opportunity,

that's another tremendous program that we have available that we don't talk much about,

but that is a program we're going to be featuring as

a way for individuals to ramp up skills.

We have a lot of folks that are being laid off,

and a lot of opportunity for those to retool.

But the businesses that are out there that are still surviving,

there's a lot of opportunity for

their own professional development with the employees they have.

We literally have hundreds of online courses that are enrolling

either through a continuous open enrollment or open-ended enrollment,

so you can just jump in at any time,

or there are several that are also starting on specific starting dates.

If you are interested, for example,

our heavy equipment operator class,

it starts May 1st,

and it is an online course until eventually we meet in person for the hands-on portion.

As far as opportunity goes,

we are continuing to provide the skills that individuals

need to grow themselves and support the employers that we work with.

>> I think one of the silver linings to all

of the working from home and the changing the way that we work is,

there's probably a certain part of
the population out there that would love to take classes,
especially online classes, business development classes,
but always wondered, could I even do something like that online?
I'm not that tech-savvy, for example.

Working from home and having to learn some of these new skills,
to do their regular everyday job,
probably is going to make it a whole lot easier and
more advantageous for them to say, "Well, you know what,
if I can work from home for three months,
I'm sure I can take an online class,
because that's going to be a walk in the park compared to what I've had to do."

>> I think our society is so quickly
adapting to this new virtual environment that they'll realize
some of those opportunities to go online are not as
hard and even in some cases more convenient.

Many of us still like the traditional face-to-face interaction with an instructor,
but a lot of the online courses we do provide that direct immediate feedback,
and you have someone either on Zoom or some other platform to walk
with you and talk with you in case you have
questions or concerns during your course and training.

That's the great thing about a lot of the online opportunities that we have,
that we have that support.

If anything, we have the staff internally to help guide

people through those moments if they come across any roadblocks.

>> Carlene, you were telling me when we took the quick break, that business is going on as usual for all of the services and everything that you offer through the corporate training program. I'm sure there are a lot of businesses that have had to pivot in the last couple of weeks that are now wondering, is this something I can continue when everything gets back to whatever the new normal is? You guys are still working, you're still offering suggestions, you're still doing coaching, you guys are still full steam ahead with all of the services that you offer anyway, right?

>> Well, just as you see the business community starting to serve their clients in new ways, we're likewise pivoting and shifting so that we can meet our clients where they're at. With social distancing and meetings of less than 10 people, and those restrictions. We too are having to find some new approaches in how we serve our clients, but it's been very positive because we now have the opportunity to develop customized online training, for instance, or we can come alongside an organization that needs to provide smaller snippets of information and do micro learning, which is 10-15 minute quick how-tos. We have the ability to come alongside a business and previously where we may have had a three hour course or a six hour course in person, we can now do that online.

We can digitize the content,
we can shorten the program.

We are going to be offering some one-on-one coaching so
that leaders of organizations who are looking to sharpen the saw,
so to speak, during this time,
can do so and still have that connectivity to an individual.

We've been working very creatively and collaboratively within our organization,
and then one of the things that we're
exploring and reaching out to businesses to do as well,
is to have some leadership round table,
just facilitate conversations between companies and industries.

They're going through this together.

For example, we are in a huge manufacturing backbone.

What are our manufacturers doing?

Those that are running, how are they doing it,
and then those who are not running,
what could they be doing differently?

What could they be utilizing their equipment or
their resources to do to approach business in a new way?

We're really just coming alongside our business community and saying,
"Tell us what we can do,
to serve you in a different way that's useful to you during this time."

I think we're going to come out of this with a whole new perspective on
what the art of the possible is for achieving the goals.

I think that there's many silver linings in all of this for us,
because we have been forced to think creatively.

Those are just some of the ways that we're doing it, we're reaching out.

It's funny because Jelise and I have been sitting in on several webinar support
that our organization is pouring into us so that we can pour into our business community.

We're just gaining some wonderful insights,
and getting a chance to see and participate in some really incredible creativity.

I think that sky's the limit.

If a company can dream about it,

I'm sure we can come alongside them and help,

because we do have access to so many resources and

so much innovation and creativity right now in this particular business landscape.

>> Now is the time.

History has shown us that some of

the most successful companies that we do business with and see

today are successful today because they came through a crisis like this and decided,

we're going to take a chance,

we're going to try something new,

we're going to go full steam ahead.

They weren't companies that decided they were going to go hover in

a corner and just hope and pray for this to pass quickly.

It's the perfect time to reach out now and say, "You know what,

I'm throwing caution to the wind,

and we're going to give this a shot and see what happens."

>> We just want to encourage our customers who are maybe stalled a little bit or are working hard to survive this environment to be thinking of what you want to do to really thrive as you come out of it.

>> Guy, where can people go to watch Jelise's webinar?

>> Sure, our website,

lfccworkforce.com/webinar or if you just go to our website, lfccworkforce.com and search webinar, you'll be able to find it.

From there, you'll be able to download the replay, as well as look at the handouts that she recommends, and we've put forward.

It's a tremendous opportunity to just watch the replay, there's no cost or obligation.

Just visit the website, and if you have any trouble, feel free to give us a call to help you get there.

>> I will tell you since you e-mailed it to me and I'll show it up here on the screen.

I went in, I haven't watched the webinar, but I went in and I printed the PowerPoint, and went through some of that just so I knew, and it literally took like maybe a minute and a half to fill out the form. Then it was in my inbox, and it was full steam ahead.

It's a really easy process.

>> Absolutely. A ton of great resources all in one place,

and we are that resource for our community employers.

Take a few moments, take a look at it,

and help yourselves in a number of different ways.

>> Well, we are going to wrap up today's episode.

We have been chatting with Guy Curtis from

Lord Fairfax Community College, Workforce Solutions.

Carlene Hurdle has been on the screen with us as well.

She is the Corporate Training Director along with Jelise,

who is a Corporate Training Product Developer with Workforce Solutions.

Thank you guys for taking some time out of your afternoon

to have a conversation with me on Zoom.

>> Thank you, Janet.

>> Well, thank you.

>> It was wonderful.

Thanks Janet. We appreciate it.

>> As we're recording this, let's see,

listeners are listening to this right now on Thursday afternoon.

We recorded it on Wednesday afternoon,

but for the first time all week,

I can say with a great deal of confidence that my guest tomorrow on Friday,

because all week I have no idea,

when I was recording,

and what day, and anything else,

but I am going to be having a conversation with Dr. Fai tomorrow from Valley Health.

He's going to be joining me to talk about their telehealth services,
that Valley Health has recently kicked off.

Meet me back here tomorrow at a few minutes afternoon.

I will have that show geared up and ready to go for you.

I will also add links to everything that we talked about

in today's show on the show notes page.

You can go to theriver953.com and click on the Valley Today banner on the front page.

They are already there right this minute waiting for you.

I'll meet you back here tomorrow few minutes afternoon.