

Sarah Cirone:

Hi everyone and welcome to today's webinar, six pitfalls employers face with offsite workers and how to avoid them. Hosted by HRDQ-U and presented by Penny Zenker. My name is Sarah and I will moderate today's webinar. The webinar will last around an hour. If you have any questions, just type them into the question area on your GoToWebinar control panel and we'll answer them as we can or after the session by email. Today's webinar is sponsored by HRDQ-U Consulting. Are you looking for Live interactive training classes delivered right to your learners wherever they are? HRDQ-U's virtual instructor led training classes allow your learners to keep the training, teamwork, and communication going, but from a distance. Real time interaction between instructors and classmates provides a powerful learning experience, the performance improvement and cultural shifts you need. Learn more at www.hrdqstore.com/consulting.

Sarah Cirone:

And I'm excited to introduce our presenter today, Penny Zenker. Penny is an international speaker, business coach and bestselling author. She founded, developed and sold her first multimillion dollar technology business while living in Zurich, Switzerland. Penny shares her expertise with high energy, contagious enthusiasm, and will challenge you to consistently think and act more strategically. Her book, *The Productivity Zone* was an instant Amazon bestseller. And her TEDx, *The Energy of Thought* has gained attention around the world. She has been featured on NBC news, Forbes, Inc, ESPN and Wharton Business Radio. It's an honor to have you speaking with us today, Penny.

Penny Zenker:

Oh, thanks Sarah. And thank you all for being here. I'm super excited and at the same time recognizing these are really emotional times. I'm sure that many of you have a lot of concerns, whether it's for your family's health, your future finances, working from home and the frustrations and challenges that that brings and maybe even a little too much family time, you know what I'm saying? But at the same time, we have that leadership role. I'm making the assumption that everybody online is in some shape or form in a leadership role. And even if you're part of a team, but you're not leading that team, you still have a leadership role. Just keep that in mind and this is coming from that perspective. And your greatest resource right now is the ability to maintain perspectives during these shifts. That's going to be the key to your leadership.

Penny Zenker:

And what we're going through right now reminds me a little bit of a storm that I had in 2008. Maybe some of you also had a storm in 2008 or any other time. But I wanted to share the story because of something that I learned from that. At that time, 2008, the market had dropped significantly and my savings were cut in half. And at the same time, because things like to happen in threes for whatever reason, lucky us. My husband of 10 years asked me for a divorce. The real challenging part for me in that was not to go into any detail, but that my kids were one and three and I was really worried to death inside about how it would impact them. And then as I said, things come in threes. Shortly thereafter, the Swiss company that I was working with, the parent company decided to sell the division that I was working for in the Swiss daughter company. And we had just turned around that division and really

carved out a competitive advantage for ourselves against the competitors. And now the parent company decided that we were going to be selling it to our biggest competitors.

Penny Zenker:

That was a bit frustrating and I knew that as a result of this reorganization that I was also going to lose my job. At this point, I'm needing to manage the terms of this negotiation with our biggest competitors and manage the team to keep them motivated, engaged, before the sale. And then deal with the layover, the layoffs and transfers and the other organizational impacts that we're going to be had. At the same time I'm dealing with my personal situation. This time with all these things going on at the same time, the impact on our finances, the impact on our families and the impact on our business and where business is going is all impacted. And what I learned from that time that in times of uncertainty, the most important thing is not to get caught up in what we can't control. For me, I knew and understood that if I focused on what I couldn't control, that it was going to cause more stress and it was going to distract me from my ability to focus on bringing the best of myself.

Penny Zenker:

Really what I decided to do was to focus on what I could control. And that's what I want you guys to think about as well is, what is within your control and what can you influence? And recognize what's out of your control. I focused on serving others on turning my focus outwards instead of focusing on myself. And woe is me and this is what's happening, I focused on what I could do to support others in this time. What can I do for my kids that would make a difference? How could I bring the best of myself for them? How could it bring the best of myself for my team? And so that helped me to create empathy for the other people and connect with them through that and to influence them and to support them at these times of high pressure and uncertainty.

Penny Zenker:

What I did do for myself though, is I want to make sure that you guys are doing this too, is I did get more and I did work out regularly and I took care of myself care. I also started a gratitude journal at that time because I knew how important it was to direct the energy of my thought. And I talked a little bit about that in a TEDx that I did a couple of years ago, you guys could check that out. But as a leader, being able to focus on other people, seeing the big picture and maintaining that perspective under pressure enables us to then, reframe a situation, a circumstance or a problem. And that's essential. It's essential, no matter whether you're leading the team or you're part of the team being able to bring that to the team is essential. I want you to allow yourself during this hour and really thinking about it is take that 10,000 foot perspective because we do need to take a step back and get perspective because we get caught up in the day to day challenges.

Penny Zenker:

This is me jumping out of an airplane, and I'm going to share more about that story at the end, but I want you to understand that I purposely get outside of my comfort zone to challenge my thinking. And I do an exercise in my Live events that get people to think outside the box because it causes them to look at things differently. The workshop that I do, it kind of changes, it creates some circumstances which are out of people's control, which creates a seemingly impossible problem. I do say seemingly, and you see the way that the groups work on it and when they resist and then they tend to get stuck and they get stagnant and there's no innovation and no new solutions and those that choose a challenge response and go, yes, we've got this. And they collaborate, they work together and they actually come up with

new solutions to solve this seemingly impossible problem. And now when they come to a solution, it seems obvious because they were able to do that together.

Penny Zenker:

And all of this is about looking at things from new perspective. In a way, what's happening today in the circumstance with the Coronavirus and needing to work from home and having these financial challenges for organizations and individuals, is simply getting us outside of our comfort zone to help us to think differently. We're forced to think differently. And we can see that as a real positive thing because it's going to create innovation, it's going to create optimization of things and it's going to make things better in the long run. I mean, think about it, Dyson in 10 days, they were able to develop a new ventilator system and that is going to help support this pandemic situation. That's what I want you to do, is to think about what new ways you can be looking at your business, your family life, and what's important to you to better serve your clients and your employees.

Penny Zenker:

As I said, I'll come back to that story, but before we get into the six pitfalls, I just wanted to give you a high level understanding of the productivity curve that's in my bestselling book, The Productivity Zone. Basically, it's how we balance the efficient and effective. It's not just about speed and it's not just about getting things done perfectly. It's that balance that, the nuance and this framework can be used in a lot of different contexts. And we're going to see that as it relates to communication in a minute. I did want to take a little bit of a poll before we start the six pitfalls just to see Sarah, if you can bring that up. I wanted to get you guys involved and see, before this quarantine, what did you believe about working from home? Let's bring that up. Did you believe that it was more productive for people to work at home, it's just as productive, it's more or less the same, it's less productive or? I think we have just as productive and same as the office, those are the same. Just pick from the top three. I'll give you a minute to do that. You guys are fast. I'm watching those percentages jump up.

Sarah Cirone:

Yeah, there you go. Great. I'm going to share those results now.

Penny Zenker:

Some people said 36%, already believed that it was productive to work at home. Some people thought it's about the same and 26% less productive. That's interesting, I wanted to do this poll because I know a lot of people that I work with, they believe that they're worried about what people are doing when they're working from home. That makes it a little bit of a challenge. And that's why I wanted to ask where people were with this. If you already believed that it was more productive, I'm sure that you're seeing even more productivity because that's what you're already starting from in a belief. Thanks Sarah. Let's move on.

Penny Zenker:

Before we move to the pitfalls, I want you to understand that this is about focus and behavior, this a framework. And it's a simple framework to help us see when we're in the zone and when we're out of the zone. For instance, when we're out of the zone that's where we experience stress. If you're feeling stressed in any way or it's creating stress somewhere else in your organization, then you're either under functioning as an organization or an individual. You're not in full action or in total inaction or you're overfunctioning and you're in overreaction. In my book, I talk about the 10 fundamentals and core

drivers that help us to get back in the zone and stay in the zone. And they're really how we shift our focus into those.

Penny Zenker:

We're not going to talk about those today in that way. But I did want you to be aware of this context so you can see how it applies as we're going through the six pitfalls and how you can apply it in looking at your business in a simplistic way. And also you'll notice that I use a picture in a framework because it makes it easier to understand and it gives you a structure within to think. Because when we're in stressful times, we need to provide simplicity and structures because that's really going to support us and others in order to stay focused.

Penny Zenker:

Let's take a look at the six pitfalls. Infrastructure is pitfall number one. Let's talk about what that looks like in infrastructure. And there's a couple of different things, but it may be something that you didn't think about before because if you didn't have people working from home, you might've not thought about things like security. People are logging in, are they logging in securely? And this is a big issue for me right now because I've had a massive security issue for the last six weeks. Just last week that I get my website back up. It's been down for five weeks because my site's got a virus and I made a shortcut, which I thought was fine and it wasn't fine and I can't even tell you what it costs me in terms of my time, money and energy and lost potential because my site was down for so long.

Penny Zenker:

With people logging in from home, if you haven't thought about the security issue, that's something you really want to take a look at. Maybe it's better to have people log in through a secure VPN network so that you can control that connection and what kinds of, where the files are coming from and how they're being uploaded. Those types of things matter. I'm not an infrastructure person per se, but I just want you to be aware that this is an important time to think about that if you haven't already thought about it. And it's not too late. Thinking about security is important. What about a task force, and this is maybe more organizational, but I'm going to put that under infrastructure. Do you have a task force and we're going to do a poll in a minute to see if you've thought of these things and have things in place just to create some greater awareness, but the task force, the benefit for that is it helps you to proactively think in advance what are the challenges that people are going to have. What kind of answers can we already provide and be one step ahead of the curve before people have these challenges and so that they can be addressed.

Penny Zenker:

One of the organizations that I work with, they started to have some bandwidth problems and problems with the voice because they do use a VPN, but they had some issues with everybody coming on at the same time. And so they sent out new headsets to everybody that they've already tested so that it didn't... There's time being lost because people don't have the things that they need. And so for them to be able to recognize as quickly as possible, then they could address the issue by sending out all new headsets to everybody who needed them so that there wasn't a lot of wasted time and frustration on people's part.

Penny Zenker:

That leads into the next point, which is the aspect of having a help desk. Having structured support for people at this time is going to be really important because a, it's part of the communication. It helps you allow them to say and check in on the status so that even if you can't solve their problem right away, they know that somebody is working on it. And they can see the status which it's in. You can also be clear on prioritizing the most important items when it's random by email, there's no structure to it and it's not as easy to prioritize. That structure, as I said, is really important in this time. And it's also going to help you to manage expectations, which is also really important. And this could be for your internal staff, but it could also be for your customers as well.

Penny Zenker:

If you don't already have a help desk and there's a lot of free tools out there, if you're a smaller organization, these can be done relatively inexpensively, but you want to put together that structure to support people. And by the way, this isn't just for now, this is going to support you going forward. I just wanted to bring up a quick poll to see what's true for you. Have you done something in one of these areas or all three of these areas just to get an idea of, have you thought about this pitfall of where things can fall down in infrastructure? Maybe you've actually had it this past week and you're pulling your hair out. Sarah, could you bring up that pole?

Sarah Cirone:

Yes. Now, you can cast your votes. We'll give people a couple of moments here to submit. And the casts are streaming and we'll just give people another second or so here. Great. And now you should see those results on your screen.

Penny Zenker:

Awesome. Well, you guys have this handled. Look, 71% of the people have all three areas handled. Kudos, really. That means you guys are in organizations that are proactive and acted very quickly on this situation and those of you who weren't, that's okay. You have an opportunity if you have only security, look at some of the other areas. This is an opportunity for you to be proactive in these other areas as well. Great. Something to think about is also to record what you learned a lot of times we're so quick to move on to the next thing. What things came up in the infrastructure area that you're having a place to put those things. And it might be a help desk and it might be somewhere else that you can identify. Next time that there might be some type of a crisis situation that you'll be able to already be proactive and putting things into practice head of time. That's pitfall number one, infrastructure.

Penny Zenker:

Pitfall number two is communication. I'm sure you're hearing this on a lot of different avenues and you're feeling it. Communication can be a big challenge during crisis and stressful times. And it was a big issue when I was talking about my 2008 issue when I was dealing with people. We have to understand that there's different levels of communication and I wanted to use this productivity zone for you to see how it can be applied in so many different contexts. There's efficient communication and effective communication. And somewhere in the middle is in the zone because you can under communicate and you can also over-communicate. Again, on the outside, when you're under or over-communicating, you're creating stress. Either it's coming from fear where people are having to make assumptions because sometimes when we don't have answers, we tend to not want to address it with people. We just don't answer it. And we don't communicate.

Penny Zenker:

And shutting down and not communicating, even though you don't know is leaving it open to people's imagination. It's okay to communicate what you know and what you don't know. As long as you're identifying, this is what we don't know yet and here's what we're doing to work on it. It gives people the understanding that this is under control, that you're managing this. And if there's no communication, it's challenging. Like I have some investment companies that I work with, one of them communicated and told me what's going on with the real estate payments that I own in those property and one of them did not. And I'm going to a lot of assumptions in my head as to, well, are they going to have financial issues and so on and so forth. No communication is not the way to go.

Penny Zenker:

And remember that over-communication can overwhelm people and that can also leave them in a place of stress. And so you want to make sure that your communication is, as I said, visual and simple, that's why I'm using a framework. You want to make sure that it's organized and structured in a way that they can understand the clear objectives, what you know, what you don't know. And also priorities, you want to really communicate priorities and you want in this communication... I'm just going to go to the next slide here. You want also to listen, you want to be empathetic and you want to listen and collect people's information. This is a good time to do some workshops and really hear from people as to what's working and what's not working. You want to be proactive in that communication. And as I said, you want to be visual and structured and that may require now, to put together like a communication plan, for instance, if you didn't already have one.

Penny Zenker:

I'll show you what one could look like and then we'll do a short poll and see who has communication plans in place. And by the way, it's not too late. I shared an example here of a communication plan that is for project management and it basically helps to identify, the audiences that are involved in the communication and there are different levels of communication. As we're talking about performance or resourcing or risks and mitigation or issues or scope, or what's going on with the budget and the quality levels, each level is going to have a different communication. When it comes to level one at the steering committee, they're mostly going to want to see the outliers. They want to see the progress and they're going to want to see the outliers. That's the way that the reporting would be structured.

Penny Zenker:

The project team, would see a little bit more detail and then the work streams would have even more detail. But you can level that out. You can also talk about how it's going to be communicated on what platform, will announcements be made, and what platform will you use for more detailed communication and so forth. By putting these plans in place that's going to really support you and support others so that they know where to look, if they have a question, maybe there's a list of frequently asked questions that they can go to as part of this communication plan. Maybe there's a daily update that's made. Those types of things are really going to support you in your communication. And like I said, it's not too late. And this relates to any type of communication type of project or anything within the organization.

Penny Zenker:

Another thing that you might want to look to, and then I'll come back to the poll. You might want to communicate what kind of, especially with people at a distance is, you might not already have a set of

tools that people can work from home. I wanted to compile this list that you could, if you don't already have it, to show people, here's how we're going to be communicating on each medium. For instance, chats are going to take place over Slack or maybe it's going to take place over Skype. Just identify where that is and how people are going to use it. They might use it to represent whether they're available or not. Maybe that's where the announcements are going to be made. What are the guidelines? How do I use this so it doesn't consume me. And so that I can manage this along with everything else that I have. Tell me what are best practices. Okay, good. The guideline could be to check it three times a day, and give people that guideline.

Penny Zenker:

Right now people are having challenges setting boundaries and understanding what's expected of them. Do I need to be available at chat all the time, especially if you're not used to using chat and where will project information be listed? Well, that's going to be in Asana for instance, or any other project management system or tool where you post the status is you're going to have your task lists and you might give people the guideline then of updating it daily and so forth. I'm not going to go through each one of these tools, but the idea is that you show them where each of the type of work is going to be. If things are being stored centrally, you're storing them in a Dropbox or wherever that is. Give them some usage guides around naming standards.

Penny Zenker:

And even if you didn't do this in the past, it's good to do this now. The challenges that you had in your business before are only going to be exasperated now because of this new way of working and communicating. And so this is an opportunity to tighten your communication, to set some further guidelines and training that's going to support people. And that's going to support you way beyond this situation that we're in now. Let's take a look at you guys and see who out there has a communication plan in place and how you're using that.

Sarah Cirone:

Penny, I see the people casting their votes. We'll give them another couple of minutes here. There seem to be falling in pretty quick.

Penny Zenker:

Yeah, we've got speedy people online, which is great.

Sarah Cirone:

It's great, there we go. You should see the results on your screen now.

Penny Zenker:

Awesome. A large majority of the group already has a communication plan in place. And that being said, everybody realized that there are multiple levels of black belt. In karate, once you get to black belt, there's other levels of black belt. Just because you have a communication plan, this is a great opportunity to look at it and see, what could we further do to improve our communication? What might be missing? What do our people need? And by the way, what we're doing here with the polling is a great way to find out, how often are you pulling your group to find out what their needs are and to better meet their needs. These are simple, easy ways that you can gather information and then you can update your plans accordingly.

Penny Zenker:

Another thing that we want to look at is pitfall number three, which is micro-management. Now, this probably isn't something that a lot of people are talking about. You might've heard a lot around communication, but you might not have heard about the pitfall of the micro-management. I'd like to know this one before we start. A little poll is, how many people feel out of control with their team working from home? We already got a little preview of that from a large majority of you are already working from home or feel that's a productive means. But I'm just curious, how many of you feel out of control?

Sarah Cirone:

Yeah and a couple more moments here. They're falling in fast.

Penny Zenker:

It looks like I'm the only control freak here. Go ahead and bring that up.

Sarah Cirone:

There we go. You should see the residents now.

Penny Zenker:

That's a great result. 76%, you're comfortable with your team working from home. You trust them or I'm assuming that that comes together. And for the 25%-ish, 24% that don't feel that, this is going to be even more valuable to you. Let's take a look. In this context, I just wanted to share that when I started my it business, I didn't realize but I was a terrible micromanager because my business started out with just me and it built up to multimillion dollar business and I had a lot of different hats that I was wearing from the beginning and I had such a problem to let go of that control. I'd like things done my way because that's the right way. Maybe some of you can appreciate that. And the truth is, it was having a huge impact on the productivity of my business. We still grew the business, you might say, Oh, well everything's fine because we're growing and we're getting the results. Well, maybe you could get even better results.

Penny Zenker:

The truth is, is that what would happen is if I would over-function going back to that curve, if I was going into micromanagement, that's overfunctioning and I had my hands in everything that meant that the rest of those people who felt micromanaged, they went into under-functioning and they went into apathy. And my reaction was, geez, my people really aren't accountable. And the truth is, and I hear that all the time when I go into work in coaching and consulting with companies, they're like, how do I get my people to be more accountable? I call this the accountability paradox. It's not an accountability issue. It's a micromanagement issue, in my opinion, and from what I've seen in experience.

Penny Zenker:

What we need to understand there is that, what causes micromanagement is that feeling and that need for control or fear of not being able to handle or come up with the results. But if we look at Daniel Pink's work, he talks about motivation 3.0 and he talks about, in order to get people to take ownership, and that's what's more important, is ownership over accountability. When people take ownership it's because they have autonomy. That means they can be creative and they can figure things out on their

own and they can bring their skills and ideas to the table. And mastery is the second thing so that they can rise to the occasion that they can handle a challenge and be creative in that context and create progress. Because we're all looking for progress. That's what perfection is, is progress.

Penny Zenker:

And lastly, they're looking for purpose. They want to understand why it's important, how it fits into the big picture, what the big picture is. And then often it helps them then to see the value of the work that they're doing. Because if you jump in and you fix it for them, then you're taking all of these things away from them and that in itself is going to send them to the other side of that productivity curve. And it reduces trust. One of the things that's so important to collaboration and working together is trust. And this has a huge impact on trust. Therefore, you're not going to see the ownership and then you're not going to feel like people are being accountable. Good practice here is to think about, follow the delegation best practices.

Penny Zenker:

And by putting this structure in place, it gives you that framework or the guard rails, so to speak, of control so that you can set clear goals together and you can set deadlines and then you can set regular times to check in with one another, milestones and then hear how it's progressing, but allow them to bring their expertise and their creative ideas to it. I'll tell you, when I finally did get this message and I was able to let go, I found that the solutions that people came up with were far more creative than things that I would have come up with because also they're working on the areas that are challenged. Allow them to bring that, you can certainly bring ideas and ask questions as you have these check-ins but allow them that freedom and flexibility and that's going to make you a better leader. It's also going to take some off your plate. What happened for me is, I ended up working 24 hour days because I was doing my work and I was doing their work. That's not sustainable, you get to use this time to create more trust with your team and to allow yourself to relinquish full control. But be that coach that they need in this time.

Penny Zenker:

And then another thing that can create some structure for them that they need, and it'll give you that feeling that you know what's going on and that you're helping to guide the priorities is do check ins. Do a morning huddle with your team. It doesn't have to be long, you can set timeframes like everybody has let's say, two minutes to give the updates. Kind of like a scrum report, which is an IT. I used to be, as I said, an IT developer or in the IT world. And that was a quick way to check in and say basically what challenges are you having? What are you working on? And really just that quick update and what those morning huddles will help you with is it will help you with isolation. By meeting together every day, it'll help you to better assimilate people and inclusion, it will help to keep people focused and it'll give them that routine.

Penny Zenker:

It'll identify any issues that are coming up and enable you or the team to resolve them. It'll help you to reset priorities if things have changed, make any announcements that need to be made. And also, as I said, it creates that routine and that structure that they need. That's one of the things that structure pieces is only one element. Where else can you add structure and support for people that can help them while they're at home because they're missing that structure and support. You get to brainstorm and think how else you can do that.

Penny Zenker:

Pitfall number four is meetings. Meetings, they're a challenge anyway. I mean, just let's talk about before moving offline and working from home for a lot of people. Before 60% of managers, one of the studies I read that they spend 60% of their time in meetings and crazy enough that's 62 hours a month. That's a lot of time in meetings and 67% of people actually said they felt that 50% of the time spent in those meetings was wasted. This is a perfect opportunity a, to talk about how to run virtual meetings. But even more important is, it's time to look at our meeting culture and see how we can make changes in our meeting cultures so that we can run those meetings more optimally. Before we talk about these things on the slide, I would like to bring up the poll and just understand about your meetings and are they running longer or do you see them running longer as your people are working from home? Or do you see them more or less following the same structure that they followed when everybody was in the office?

Sarah Cirone:

Hey, again, we'll give people a couple of moments here, as their votes stream in. Perfect. And you should now see their results on your screen.

Penny Zenker:

Great. Again, most people are already set up that their meetings are about the same as they were beforehand, that's great. That doesn't mean that there's not an opportunity to take a look at your meetings and kind of use this as an opportunity to revamp them. But for those virtual meetings, just a couple of tips that that makes sense is you want to keep that video on. I've gone into other environments where they say, well, we want to save bandwidth so we tell people to turn them off. Well, the thing is, when you turn them off, that leads to multitasking. People will be doing other things. And so it's a form of accountability, but it's also a form of connection. To avoid isolation and those types of things, you want to keep those videos on so that you're interacting with people in that way.

Penny Zenker:

But you also want to follow an agenda. Send the agenda out ahead of time. As I said, that's good practice in meetings whether they're virtual or whether they're together on the same location. Create an agenda and send that agenda out ahead of time so that people understand what it is that they're expected to be there for and what the purpose is of the meeting. And my suggestion is, and this is again, not just for virtual meetings, but have a meeting that's only one purpose. We try to fit everything into the meeting. We'll do brainstorming and we'll do status updates and we'll do all different types of things that really involve different types of people. If you're going to do a status meeting, then do a status meeting, if you're going to be doing some kind of brainstorming or innovation, then you do that type of meeting. If you're solving a problem, then that's the type of meeting that you have. It's going to make your meetings shorter, more focused, and allow you to achieve that goal more efficiently and effectively.

Penny Zenker:

One of the ways that you can engage people because you want to engage people, you've seen us do polls, you've seen us do different types of things that you might've seen in other webinars as well. Assign roles to everybody in the meetings. Somebody taking the minutes, somebody else might be the timekeeper and so as you assign roles to people, then that's going to help them have a responsibility at the meeting and stay attentive and be working on their role. And also set the rules and guidelines. Let

them know how to use, as we first came on, I'm not a GoToWebinar person. I use zoom, so Sarah showed me all the tools, how to use it. And the that's important, is that everybody knows how to use the systems and tools that you're using. And that also you've got some guidelines that you're, she also checked in with me, which is good practices and said, Hey, can you shut down all your applications? Can you mute your phone? All of those things.

Penny Zenker:

I know it sounds silly, we shouldn't have to tell people, but those reminders are important. They might've forgotten. And there's a whole reason why sticky notes are really powerful and we've got them all over the place or we have the Fitbits that remind us to get up every hour. It's not like we don't know that we need to drink water and we need to get up and move, but we get so caught up in what we're doing that we're not always doing what we know is good for us. We need to put those reminders out, those guidelines and roles to support people so that they can show up at their best for the meetings and for everything else.

Penny Zenker:

Pitfall number five. Oh, actually, I want to give you a challenge. I forgot about this. As I said, this is a perfect time to revamp your meeting structure. I'm on a kick this year of doing more with what you have and doing more with the time that you have is a key. I'm going to challenge you because most meetings are 60 minutes long. I want to challenge you to reduce your meetings by 15 minutes. The Parkinson's law tells us that we'll use whatever time we have available. If your meeting is 60 minutes, you're going to use most or all of that 60 minutes where if you set it at 45 minutes, you're going to be more focused, more attentive. You're going to be clearer on the agenda and you're going to get it done in 45 minutes. And that's going to give people also time so that they're not running from meeting to meeting and meetings that go late and go into other meetings, give people a chance to go to the bathroom to write down whatever actions they need to do for this meeting and prepare for the next meeting.

Penny Zenker:

And not only that, but if you take 15 minutes by the 62 hours that managers are in meetings, that's 23 days a year that you could be saving by just reducing your meetings by 15 minutes. I want to challenge you with that, to bring that back. Maybe you're not the person who sets the meeting. If you are, that's something that you can totally do. If you're not, why not suggest that this is a perfect time to show leadership too? If you're not the team leader, show your leadership and identify areas that you can create optimization and reducing your meeting time is a perfect area.

Penny Zenker:

Let's go on to pitfall number five, which is bottlenecks. I think I mentioned it before, that the bottlenecks that we're experiencing might have already been there in the past. Those are only exasperated now because of the way that we're working. And this is a huge opportunity to be spending time identifying and finding ways to optimize and to work smarter and to innovate. We want to make time to hold workshops and to address and resolve our bottlenecks and to get the feedback from people to understand what is holding them back. Sometimes it... and actually, we have a poll here too. Let's take a poll that's going to identify what are some of major bottlenecks that you are recognizing right now. Sarah, if you can bring that up.

Sarah Cirone:

Yes. The poll is launched and we'll give people a couple of moments here. Just to cast their votes. Just while we're waiting for people to submit the responses, we did have a comment come through from Judy and she said that their staff meetings run longer as they have a lot to share. But most subjects, specific meetings have run short or on time.

Penny Zenker:

Great. And when there's a lot to share just to, as people are filling in the the poll. There is the meeting the appropriate place to share it. That's also the thought, is that some things can be shared in other contexts. If it's an all round announcement could be shared in the meeting, but it could also be shared in that chat or as a video for instance, out to the team or to your clients. So that meetings don't have to go longer, we want to think of different ways to create that communication in a more efficient way. Is it time waste and a distraction if not a surprise that that's one of the highest areas. Inefficient process, lack of training, communication. Awesome. Thank you guys. And just curious for the other, what are some of the other things that are showing up? You can put that in the chat.

Sarah Cirone:

Yeah. You can take your response in the questions box on your GoToWebinar control panel. Judy says rural internet connections.

Penny Zenker:

Okay.

Sarah Cirone:

Corey says childcare demands. Tech issues, politics stepping on each other's toes. Time zones, conflicts in the use of company Zoom. Yeah, we have a lot of tech issues and people not being prepared.

Penny Zenker:

Awesome. That goes back to that first point of infrastructure, and again, these might be out of your control or maybe they're just in your influence. Who could you talk to, to help them to better handle some of these tech issue, for instance? Are they using a help desk or are you one of the percentages that aren't, maybe that's a great suggestion that they could be grateful for putting that into place. And where could you in terms of politics and distractions even, what kind of conversations can you have as a group to identify some of these bottlenecks or the biggest bottlenecks, that are holding you back the most and come up with solutions together. I really believe in this as a time to handle that. And so bring that as a suggestion. If you're the person who organizes it, bring it as a suggestion. Again, this is the time to show your leadership.

Penny Zenker:

Number six, and I know we're going through these quickly and I like to share a lot of stories in different contexts, but we're not going to be able to do that as much in this timeframe. But I really want you to be thinking about, also this is six pitfalls. I wanted you to be thinking as we listed those bottlenecks, what are the other ones? What are the other ones that are within your control so that you can also identify that and what you can do. Time management is also one of those bigger ones. Most of the people said that distractions, were one of those major issues that you were dealing with. What I want to say here is that the last study that I showed even before the Coronavirus was showing that we're interrupted

something like, I think I have the statistic here somewhere, 56 times a day. Which I'm sure now with kids at home and and more challenging to set boundaries, that's gone way up.

Penny Zenker:

60% of people said that they were completely mentally distracted and physically depleted and emotionally drained. And that's the kind of state that people were in going into the Coronavirus. That on top of it has left people kind of frustrated how to deal with competing priorities, how to set those boundaries and how to be effective with their time management, how to set these goals and priorities, what tools can they use. Time blocking is a huge skill that a lot of people don't use and don't have. How do we manage those distractions and set those boundaries and some of those things you can teach through training. It is important to actually provide training. I'm just curious to go into a quick poll as to what's the frequency of time management and productivity training that you're doing in your organizations? Put that poll up. Thanks, Sarah.

Sarah Cirone:

Yeah. Well, they're flowing in again. We'll give people another.

Penny Zenker:

Yeah, I like seeing those numbers as they automatically go, that's my little geeky tech, enjoys that immediate response.

Sarah Cirone:

Yes. What she's referring to is, we can see that you guys cast your numbers and the percentages as you guys are submitting them and we'll share those results. There you go.

Penny Zenker:

There we go. That's not a surprise. I did in 2017, at the sheer event the international events for the society of HR managers. It was about the same, actually we saw 60% never did any of time management or productivity training. And here we're seeing 45%, but if we were to count it with the people who do it once a year, then we get to our over 60%. Okay, thanks Sarah. That's crazy because time management is a huge area when we work together, whether it's our personal time management or the time management that the team can implement is a huge area for creating and getting our time back right and being more efficient and effective and managing processes better.

Penny Zenker:

Some of that can be done through the organization by standardizing certain processes that are kind of ad hoc or maybe give training on how to write a productive email. Simple things like that can go a really long way. Looking at your environmental disruptions in the office but also at home and helping people, giving people those tools. If you're not doing training, then you want to look into how you can do that for your team, even if it's not a companywide thing. What can you do for your team that's going to make a difference to make, especially this time that they're working from home better.

Penny Zenker:

I do have a resource for you. If you go to [Pennyzenker360.com/recommended/](https://pennyzenker360.com/recommended/). I've got a list of tools and items, also like standing desks, items and things that they could be ordered to make their desk at

home a little bit more comfortable types of chairs, time tracking tools and other types of books and resources that are available. I also have a series of workbooks that I do that can help people with time management, resiliency and other types of things. Those are some of the topics that I do in my workshops. If we take a look at some of the things that we can do here, I talked about it earlier when I talked about showing what each app does, what it's for, how you're going to use it and some guidelines. Chat right now, can be a huge time sucker. Because people think that they need to be responsive all the time. I need to be always available in case somebody has a question for me. And it was already a problem in the office with those got a minute meetings and people stopping by your desk, but now they can text you or message you all the time.

Penny Zenker:

We've got to take a look at our responsibility of holding questions until we schedule a time to meet or identifying in a guideline. Well, what makes this urgent that it has to be answered now because every time we make something urgent that's not, we're interrupting someone else. We need to think about that. And if you can set some guidelines for your team. For instance, I said earlier that maybe you only have to check it three times a day or maybe you have coffee break times where everybody meets in the chat and they're going to available kind of like office hours where you can ask questions and check in for statuses and things like that, that you need. But there have to be some guidelines set. Otherwise, what happens is, these become an open meeting that lasts all day. And that can be a serious time suck and an additional distraction if it's not managed.

Penny Zenker:

Then I just wanted to give you an access to a bunch of personal productivity tools that I find to be super helpful. My most favorite is text expander, which is kind of anywhere templates. It allows you to have time blocks of texts that can be used anywhere that you're writing text. Whether it's in your email or in a product project management tool or wherever, if I just type in #wfh, work from home. That will trigger a link in a paragraph that I'm sending out. Wherever you have common answers and things, it can help you in making contracts and proposals and different things like that, where you use different types of help desks. This is huge for help desks to be able to send out frequently asked questions and standard links and things like that.

Penny Zenker:

I'm not going to go through each one of these. You can take a look at them. There's a digital workspace with a Platstack, Trello's a great task list tool. Evernote is the capture, Clockify, I do recommend time-tracking, especially when you're at home, it helps you to be more disciplined and it helps you also to see where you're wasting your time and how much time things actually take. And it really gives you a lot of insight, especially when you set it up in a way. I have a course that identifies how to track your time and how to time block. And it's a huge benefit to really understand where you're spending your time. And then I have a shameless plug for my own app, which helps you to track those 10 behaviors that I talked about to get more intentional and strategic in the way that you're thinking and acting and that's available on the App store.

Penny Zenker:

And I also have another resource for you because one of the huge things you all said it is what's distracting us. Well, the first thing and when we want to address something is to be able to identify what's distracting us, specifically what's distracting us. Not I'm distracted all the time, but really to

narrow it down into what specifically. I created this fun quiz that'll tell you whether you're a wizard, hamster, squirrel or time zombie. And if you go to distractionquiz.com after this, you can find out which profile you are, but also get a greater awareness of really what things are within your control and that are distracting you.

Penny Zenker:

And then it'll give you the opportunity to think about maybe what's not on the list. And then what I'm really counting on is that it's going to bring it to a heightened awareness where you say, I'm tired of tolerating this and I'm going to do something about it. This opportunities for you to do that too. If you want to get some additional training on time blocking, I'm happy I have an online course. I also have a 14 day challenge that I'm doing that can help you to get clear and block out some of those distractions and also have some tips and tricks on how to increase your focus. But first find out which profile you are and you can share this with your team, and find out what are the common things and how can you support one another.

Penny Zenker:

I just come back to online workshops and then I'll wrap this up. Really this is a time to use the tools that are available and do some online workshops so that you can resolve some of those bottlenecks, connect with one another and really get some of the issues that are currently experienced by each other that you can talk about them and also work through them. It's a perfect time, you don't have to be physically there. There's lots of tools, this is a tool called Rimo and it creates these little tables that you can give different assignments to each table, but then send it back to the main core. Lots of tools out there. Lastly, I know we don't have that much time. Want it to open it up for any questions and then you guys can also send those questions to me or to Sarah and we can address them separately.

Sarah Cirone:

I think we'll have time for about one question here, Penny. And we had a question come through from Anne and she was asking how do you deal with people that don't want to share personal stuff, answering questions about how they are or funny stories, et cetera.

Penny Zenker:

I guess because they're trying to engage those people.

Sarah Cirone:

Yeah.

Penny Zenker:

Well, some people are private, so it's finding out what do they like to share? What do they read? It's getting a little bit more creative in knowing that person and meeting them where they're at. If they're not ready to open up and share that they're frustrated or that type of emotional share if that's what the person is looking for, but they're looking for engagement. Just come up with a whole bunch of different questions and find out which questions those people are receptive to or give them a role. Like I said, you can give somebody a role in a meeting, maybe they ask the questions to other people. It's getting creative. We get stuck when we hear like, it's like my kids who come home and I say, how was your day? And they say, fine. And you get those one word answers. You get to be creative and find out, okay, now

it's a game. How can I get this person to engage and interact? What other questions can I ask or roles can I give them?

Sarah Cirone:

Great. And I think if you have any other questions, just type them into the questions box. And as Penny said, we'll make sure to get back to you on those. And I'm to bring that back to you now, Penny.

Penny Zenker:

Awesome. I just wanted to close out my part. I said I'd tell you more about that story. This day when I jumped out of this plane, you might be looking at this picture and thinking, why is she smiling? Why does she look so happy? And she's just jumping out of the plane. And I wanted you to know that, I know I put myself in this circumstance and you might be thinking, well, how does that relate at all to the circumstance around us because I didn't choose it. And that's true, but whatever the circumstance is, this was still scary and still a huge challenge even though I chose it. The doors whipped open, my friend was actually first to go and I was sitting right across from her and I saw the blood just drain from her face as the door whipped open and the air just kind of like took the wind out of us.

Penny Zenker:

I saw her face and I saw that they had to pry her hands from where she was sitting to get her out the window. And then the person who was behind her that was going with her had to really forcefully push her out. And I thought to myself, what kind of experience was she creating? Because she was in complete resistance. And when we're in resistance, remember back to when I said about the exercise that I did in my workshops when people are in resistance, it changed the whole experience that they had. They weren't having fun, they weren't collaborating and they weren't creating solutions. I decided that wasn't going to be my experience. Even though I had some fear in me, I wasn't going to let that happen. I know that when we smile, it releases hormones in our brain that offset the fear and allowed me to make it a great experience.

Penny Zenker:

I decided that I was going to trigger that off. I was going to be purposeful and strategic about the way that I did this. I smiled and as I came and jumped out, I remembered all the things that they asked us to do. I was going to be safe. Because when you're in fight flight or freeze mode, when you're in stress mode, you forget things, you're not able to access that part of your brain that you need. I smiled, I decided and controlled my focus. That's what you get to do now as a leader is to choose your focus and how you're going to interact with your team and what experience you're going to create. Remember in the beginning I said, focus out and focus on the others and how you can serve. Thank you guys for your time and attention today.

Sarah Cirone:

Well, Penny, that was amazing. I have to say that with such a great story. I can't lie, you had my heart pounding while you were talking about it, but I want to thank you very much for joining us today. This webinar was sponsored by HRDQ Consulting, a team of highly experienced consultants who can pull your teams together online from remote locations. Learn more at www.hrdqstore.com/consulting. Thank you very much for joining us today, Penny.

Penny Zenker:

Thanks for having me. Thank you all.

Sarah Cirone:

And thank you all for joining today's webinar. Happy training.