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Is Zoom Fatigue a Thing?

A recent quote from Tammy Sun, the founder and CEO of Carrot, a startup that provides fertility benefit plans for companies, stopped me in my tracks. She tweeted, “Zoom fatigue has me wanting a landline and a rotary phone.” Amen.

Ms. Sun describes an affliction that has befallen us as we have hustled to maintain business operations disrupted by a pandemic that emptied our workplaces and forced us to work from home, as much as was possible. In the middle of March, MACNY became 100% remote. Our first order of business was to figure out how we would do it; virtual daily meetings have become the norm.

We’ve stepped out of a comfort zone that included face-to-face collaboration, communication that the experts call synchronicity, an exquisite interplay of talk, gestures, movement, and timing between people. We are hard-wired to establish this; even a newborn exhibits the ability to synchronize its movements with its caretaker’s speech. Says Jeremy Bailenson, professor and director of Stanford University’s Virtual Human Interaction Lab, “Zoom smothers you with cues, and they aren’t synchronous. It takes a physiological toll.” While there exists a body of research regarding human communications, experts are just getting started on these new technologies as Zoom has replaced the conference table, and the reasons why people report feelings of exhaustion.

This phenomenon of Zoom exhaustion is something with which we will continue to reckon if we hope to successfully emerge from this dislocation of our operations, still run by very human beings. At MACNY, we continue to address our personal reactions and feelings, taking breaks as needed, and remembering to be aware of the necessity of self-care. We also learn from our members, as they share their own discoveries and strategies.

While retooling our own procedures, we realized early on that MACNY was well-positioned to provide resources for our members experiencing these same urgencies. What was needed was information, guidance about best practices as the pandemic forced all of us to redefine employee and workplace safety. Check out [Keeping People Safe and Factories Running](#), and understand that this initiative has become the model for New York State manufacturers. It evolved quickly and continues to set the pace for critical resource delivery.

MACNY’s President & CEO, Randy Wolken, tasked us with accelerating our plan to offer more virtual events, communications, and trainings. A 12-month project produced results within days, finished products within weeks. We’re proud of the progress of our various offerings and webinars featuring vital information for MACNY members. Those webinars have morphed into video presentations and most recently, a daily update email for our members, full of up-to-the-minute information and helpful links. Don’t miss [Voices of Manufacturing](#), produced by our Communications Manager, Marisa Norcross, and our Director of Government Relations & Communications, Tiffany Latino-Gerlock. It is a celebration of the ingenuity and creativity of our members. The most recent interview was with Max Kunz and Stephen Chabot of Volpi USA in Auburn, who joined Tiffany to talk about how Volpi’s products are aiding in the fight against COVID-19, the impacts of a recent \$2 million renovation at their Auburn, NY facility, and future growth initiatives.

We continue to adapt to and embrace new technologies as we are forced to adjust. It has overhauled our operating procedures and will make us more resilient. We miss our in-person meetings and anticipate the more comfortable integration of virtual strategies into our day-to-day.