

JESSICA CAUSABON

Gemline

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.” I’ve always liked this saying and it could not ring truer since COVID hit. Like many, when everything shut down in March I panicked, I am a creature of habit and love my routines, but everything was turned upside down and nothing was certain anymore. Ultimately, I knew I could not afford to sit in my office and feel bad about myself and the situation, not only did I have sales goals to meet I had personal goals, sitting there panicking wasn’t going to help. I had to come up with a plan.

How do you plan when you and everyone else around you has never experienced working through a pandemic? You lean on each other.

Prior to COVID I saw my sales counterparts 2x a year for our national sales meetings. I would talk to them on the phone here and there but ultimately, we were all busy travelling to see customers, participating in trade shows and handling the day to day sales activities. Today, I see this amazing team at least 2x a week through Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

We quickly learned from each other the best ways to conduct virtual meetings. We consistently share presentation decks with each other, and we even join forces on virtual sales calls. While COVID has made it difficult to see each other in person it has also opened a door where we can collaborate with parts of our sales team that we were not able to collaborate as often with in the past. I can now bring Rich Devejian (*the best inside sales counterpart anyone can ask for*) on virtual calls with me and I can bring George Moreau into discussions on direct import more frequently. I have even been lucky enough to collaborate with fellow supplier reps like Teresa from Showdown and Loren from SnugZ for virtual end user trade shows. Rather than focusing on what I could not do anymore, I focused on what I could do.

Not only has the pandemic created opportunities to collaborate, it has also provided the opportunity to solidify relationships with existing clients and develop new relationships with clients we had not partnered with as much in the past. Why? Because we are all navigating the same challenges together and we can help each other make the most out of this wild year.

I’m not going to sit here and tell you that everyday is sunshine and rainbows, its not and it’s far from it. Its been stressful, there have been several days I haven’t completed anything on my to-do list and have been up late answering emails and working out problems. I long for the day when I can see my clients and fellow suppliers in person and things are more “normal.”

While the pandemic has taken many things away it has provided us with are new ways to connect and engage that we will continue to use after this is over.

A Day in the Life

5:00am: Alarm goes off and its time to ease into the day. I put on the coffee, feed the cats and the dog and then my husband and I will enjoy a cup of coffee while catching up on the news. Around 5:45 I will check my email for anything urgent that may have been sent overnight.

6:15am: Off to the gym! I have found that I am more productive when I work out, I think more clearly during the day and I am in a better mood. I will run for 30 minutes on the treadmill and then come back home for a 30-45-minute Barre work out (a workout which uses ballet barre incorporating movements and positions from ballet along with strength and stretching exercises drawn from Yoga and Pilates). If you have “Zoomed” with me, you probably have seen my barre setup in the background. I am lucky enough to have had my husband finish constructing my office/barre room just prior to the pandemic.

9:00am: Emails and catch up with Rich. After reviewing my email, Rich and I will hop on a phone call and determine our plan of action – each day has been a little different since COVID and we need to ensure we are on the same page. We review our daily schedules and determine who will take the lead on certain emails and projects that are on our plates.

10:00am: Between 10:00 and 2:00 I am at my very best, this is when I try to schedule Zoom meetings and phone calls with clients, work on proactive sales activities, analyze sales numbers, review new products/brands and collaborate with my colleagues at Gemline.

2:00pm: Back to the emails! I try my very best to respond to clients within 1-2hrs of receiving their message, while this can be challenging at times, I feel it is important to acknowledge the message even if I do not necessarily have an answer at that moment. If emails are slow, I also spend this time following up on open quotes and projects.

6:00pm: Family time. This is time away from the computer where I will catch up with my husband about his day, take the dog for a walk or to obedience school, make dinner and decompress. I will also use this time to catch up with friends and extended family that I might not have had time to catch up with during the day. Emails and other work-related items do creep into this time, but I make sure while we have dinner that the phone/computer is away.

9:00pm: Final email check. If my clients can’t sleep, I can’t sleep. I like to ensure that anything pressing is answered before shutting things down for the day.

