

Manage-A-Bull podcast – Virtual learning at the UB School of Management

TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Anders Timothy Rosen, your host this fall 2020 semester for the manageable MBA podcast. We're extraordinary in our ordinary last season, co hosts Jacob Walsh, and Orion Lamontagne took you behind the scenes for deep dives and interviews with students, faculty, staff and alumni at the School of Management. I even got the chance to speak mano a mano with Jake for a little mid semester check in last November. Thank you so much to both Jake and Orion for creating the manageable MBA podcast. It's an honor to grab the baton from each of you. In this season of Managable, we shake things up a bit with roundtable discussions on topics ranging from job searches to the vital importance and creating a diverse, inclusive and equitable learning environment that is built on belonging. We'll also have surprise segments with alumni and current students to share their experiences, insights and stories about their MBA journey. I am so excited to get the season started and to welcome listeners into the UB School of Management community. So without further ado, Let's get into our first topic of the season virtual learning.

Anders

Hello, everyone and welcome to our first episode of the fall 2020 manageable podcast. I'm your host Anders Timothy Rosen. And today I have a fantastic panel of folks from the University at Buffalo School of Management to talk about virtual learning. I am so excited to introduce these three folks. So let me begin with doing that. First. We have my teammate from the first year of the MBA program. This is someone who works as a graduate assistant in the global programs department who has participated in multiple programs from Costa Rica to India and went to Ghana last year. This summer she started a side project with a couple of friends called *real talk* and I cannot I cannot endorse this enough. It is designed to encourage the discussion of social issues so check it out at [real talk calm](#). We have second year MBA student Janelle Fore. Janelle, how you managing.

Janelle

I'm doing good. Thank you for that lovely introduction. I'm doing good. Thanks for having me.

Anders

Of course, thank you for being here. Next I I am just like thrilled and amaze looking at the resume of this first year student. she, her most recent role was as a senior financial analyst at a fortune 500 company in Sunnyvale, California. That's right. That's Silicon Valley. For all you folks out there that are here in Buffalo. She worked with the executive leadership team, she built out global business strategy, product development, you know, just all the stuffs. Not only that, but as her first summer here in Buffalo. She

won first place with her startup venture True Recycle in the summer accelerator program. I am so pleased to welcome Anu Patel a new how you managing

Anu

Thanks so much for having me, Anders. It's been a wonderful ride this summer, just moving to Buffalo and then shutting down in the pandemic and still trying to explore out here, but really excited to be part of the show. Thank you.

Anders

You know, a side note about Anu that I learned from one of the classes that I'm a TA and part of what brought her to Buffalo was love because you can't spell buffalove, without love. And I say that because it's the same for me. Love brought me to Buffalo. So, thanks. Alright. And finally, I am so pleased to welcome, he is the Faculty Director of the MBA program. He has a PhD in organizational behavior from the Kelley School of Business, you know, try another one at the School of Management for what it's worth. But anyway, he studies employee productivity and performance, impact of pro activity on organizational and employee effectiveness. He is the Associate Professor of Management here at the University at Buffalo Professor Tim Maynes Welcome, how are you managing?

Tim

I'm managing well Anders. Thank you. And it's a pleasure to be on the on the podcast with you. I'm looking forward to a wonderful discussion.

Anders

Awesome. Well, I am so excited for the three to be here. So let's jump right in. I think I want to start with a question for you Anu as kind of a first year student. How has the virtual learning environment impacted you so far? What are the challenges? And also what are the things that have been, you know, better than expected?

Anu

Yeah, absolutely. I think the biggest challenge as a first year student is to stay focused. It's so easy not to remain focused, especially when you're in the comfort of your own home. It's really easy to read and respond to text messages. It's really easy to browse on social media to go shopping on Amazon. And the reason why I say all these, all of these things is because because I've done all of them in the first week and the reason why I am I guess I just figured it out in the last two days, what I need to do is I need to lock myself in my office and have a very specific spot that I attend to all of my class lectures from and

take active notes, regardless of if the professors are going to send the notes after class. And that's something that has just worked for me.

Anders

Yeah, I think that point about kind of finding a space where you can just engage fully is so important. You know, I worked remote before coming to school and it was always very difficult for me to figure out what is the right environment where I can just set up and be in the moment. Janelle, you and I switched over in the second semester from being in class to the online learning environment. How was that switch over for you?

Janelle

So, I mean, it was a challenge, you know, considering things when completely virtual, plus a pandemic happening plus social issues going on. So speaking in the virtual learning environment, it was rough because you have to really hone in your time management skills. And for me, like I would say, I'm pretty decent with time management. But even for me, it was a struggle, just making sure I prioritize things, and I keep on task. So it was difficult, but I think we adapted well to it. And kind of gotten to some type of routine that made some kind of sense. But yeah.

Anders

yeah. And I think as our team, you know, one thing that was really good is that we had a strong team already. So we had already kind of built up a set of practices and, you know, ways that we would engage with each other. So that was really useful that we had been able to build that up already.

Janelle

I agree. Like, I think for our team, we were really great at communicating. So with the whole virtual setting, it wasn't too difficult to navigate with classes because we are already so well acquainted with each other and we're comfortable communicating with each other.

Anders

So, on the flip side, you know, we have the learning side for Anu, Janelle and I, Tim, you know, what was the what was the first challenge on your end when you switched over to a virtual learning environment? I think maybe we can start by talking about the spring and then even kind of through the summer into the outfall.

Tim

Yeah. So obviously, it was a... you know, when that switch was made in the spring, it was thrust upon us at very short notice. And I think the university made the announcement just a few days before spring break, students were going to be leaving and and so you know, the students got a wonderful spring break or maybe not, I'm not sure but, but the faculty were here Around the Clock during that week as they as they tried to work and prepare and transition their courses to be delivered in a, you know, a distance mode, whether that was virtually or whether that was, you know, through some other medium recording videos and posting those or, or whatever. And so you can imagine that the scale of the work at that point was very daunting to quite a few of the faculty. And, and in there, there were obviously some hiccups along the way too. I mean, it wasn't like it was a smooth launch for all of us. Some did better than others. I can think of a few faculty members who have transitioned so well that they put the rest of us to shame. I mean, there's a faculty member that I'm sure that you that you guys know. Frank Krystofiak and although he's on the older age spectrum end of the spectrum for our faculty, he just did a phenomenal job of transitioning and creating resources for students and so there was a range of capability and making that transition and some do better than others but and then through the course of the summer, there was a lot of planning more generally not just you know, in terms of a single course but entire programs, how do you transition, a program to be delivered in a remote in a remote or virtual world and, and make sure that the program is integrated and, and meets some of the needs that I've heard expressed here about social connection? And how do you help to provide a structure so that students don't feel like they're kind of left to fend for themselves and so lots of those conversations happened over the course of the summer. And, and we'll see how it goes. I mean, obviously, once again, it's kind of an experimentation thing.

Anders

Well, you know, and it's interesting thinking about some of the maybe extracurricular activities over the summer as well that we're all online. So both Anu and I, actually Janelle as well, all three of us participated in accelerator programs. And they were all online. And so I'm curious, a new is this kind of your first time engaging in an extracurricular activity online? If so, you know, how is the transition for you into that? And if not, what were the things that you brought, the ideas that you brought to help kind of guide you through that.

Anu

And that's very interesting that you asked that because it was absolutely my first time participating on an eight week long program completely online. But for some reason, it didn't feel like we were all disconnected. I felt super close to my team. And it's funny because I just met one of my team members in person for the first time, and he and I just met yesterday for coffee. at UB, and it was just a shock. It's like we knew each other. But then we looked at each other, we were just like, wait, I didn't expect you to look like this. But it was a moment. It's been great. I think we got we made the most out of that eight week experience. Because I remember I was talking to my team members two to three times a week. And we got to know each other really well, despite not having met each other. And it's kind of like a

virtual pen pal that you communicated with without knowing the other person. So it was a wonderful experience. And I'll say the same thing for our MBA class. I don't think any of us expected our first year MBA program to be completely remote, but everyone's putting in the best effort. And I've gotten really close to my team and we talk probably like five, six times a day and we're constantly texting and keeping everyone engaged. We're also the team that encourages each other like presentation, I remember in our management communications class, we had to do a mini intro and we hype each other up over zoom. And then all the other teams started following that trend. So I think if you have a positive attitude towards virtual learning, you'll get the most out of it. And everyone appreciates the effort from the faculty side, as well, that it's a challenge and they're making the most of it. So I think the students are staying pretty positive.

Anders

First, virtual pen, pal, yes, I love that. And also, I can attest to the fact Yeah, they were hyping each other on that virtual zoom chat. And I was like, these people are so kind. They're so nice. And so like really and I don't know, it was really great to witness that. So

Tim

Can I just add a thought there Anders. By the way Anu that has not gone unnoticed among the faculty. So did that choice to have a positive attitude. I've heard that expressed from several faculty, they appreciate the appreciation they have for the students and the first years in particular, as they've entered this MBA experience with a lot of uncertainty and maybe having originally hoped to have an in person experience and it turns out that it's going to be online and but the attitude that has been so positive has just been such quite surprising in a very positive way as the as experienced by the faculty, so I thought that was important to share.

Janelle

And it's another thing to add to that. That's so awesome hearing how engage everyone is considering everything is online, especially being first year. And that really speaks to, you know, being adaptable, being open to trying new things and making the most out of this virtual environment and not being the one that just gives up. You're trying and you're keep going.

Anders

I'm so glad you also brought up the word adaptive Janelle and it makes me think a little bit about the work that you do in the global Programs Office. Talk about having to adapt, right? You think of global programs and you think, Oh, you know, we're gonna travel around the world and visit places. We can't do that right now. We are, we are literally, you know, stuck in a way. So how did you and the global programs department adapt to this new environment?

Janelle

Well, there was a it was a process, but we wanted to replicate the feeling you would get when you're actually traveling. So, for example, the Ghana program and all the International Programs, we're trying to what we plan to implement activities that are cultural. Hey, Tim,

Anders

Tim made it to the video.

Janelle

Yes, so we're trying to duplicate what it would actually be as if you're going to go to Ghana for example. So we're going to be doing Cultural site visit so this is the slave castles. This is exploring Ghana, we're going to be doing virtual cooking demonstrations language in Ghana, as well as a little bit of dancing. You know, for all the viewers that are listening, yes, there will be dancing even though it's in a virtual environment. But there's there also be, you know, different components to it. There's networking, you're talking to people across the water. That's, that's amazing. Even though you can't traveled, the internet has brought us capabilities that are amazing. And for the experience of the 50 programs, we're doing more of networking, working with professionals. Each experience of the program has like a different segment to it. So for Chicago is really the industry and the healthcare and airlines, so kind of tailoring it to what students may want to do if they want to do health care, that is an option for them. You're networking with professionals, you're doing case studies. You're doing site visits with companies and professionals. So I think even though you know, unprecedented times you're in global programs really pivoted. And I'm really excited for the semester and participating in the India program where we're going to be learning Salesforce, and teaching and partnering with another school in India and teaching it there. So I think that's another cool aspect to the virtual environment.

Anders

Yeah, and I'm going to make a quick plug as well for something else that talks a lot about adaptability, which is the LeaderCore program at the School of Management and you know, there are nine competencies and one of them is self management and adaptability. And all of us have gone through a lot of you know, learning how to what what behaviors to exhibit through adaptability and self management. But another one that another competency that shows up in there is team Team leadership. And and I kind of want to pivot for a second and ask Tim a little bit about, you know, what, what you've learned, I guess over the summer and maybe some of what you have seen when it comes to Team leadership and team building through the online environment?

Tim

Yeah, so just maybe a couple of quick reactions to leading a team in a virtual world and especially one that had been non virtual in the recent past. So, sort of working in a world where the expectation was that we would be together and now being distributed was a challenge. I would say number one, my first observation is that the need for social connection, just because we're in a virtual world does not doesn't go away. In fact, it probably is enhanced. Because maybe people feel more isolated than they did before. So that need to, and we all have that as humans we have, we have a need to connect with others, and to feel like we belong. And that people care about us. And in, in modern in the modern world, we get a fair amount of that from the people we work with. And so as a as a leader of a team, I think it's really important to remember that and to make sure that people feel connected. One team leader that I was talking to recently shared an idea that they had, and I thought it was a really great idea that they in there, they have, you know, more than one meeting a week, but but they have one meeting week, that's kind of the big coordination meeting. And in that meeting, they would just ask for a quick social update from every person in the team. Not long and it can't be work related. So tell us about whatever is important in your life. Oh, my dog had a surgery and this is what happened. Or, you know, my mom's health is kind of declining. And so we had, we had to move her into a restaurant or whatever it is just whatever's going on in their life that's important. And they feel like that, that others need to know about. And I think that's just really important to connect on a personal level. And so that's, that's number one. And then the second thing is that realizing and recognizing that it's very closely related to this idea of connection. But it is that that it can be really challenging to maintain levels of trust and understanding in a virtual world because we don't have an opportunity to interact quite as much and we know from lots of research that that interaction goes a long way to help us to trust our teammates. And so that's another thing that a team leader needs to pay probably extra attention to is the degree of trust that teammates have in each other and, and help to foster that trust. Anyway, I feel like I'm monopolizing the time. But those are two things that I've noticed, in particular that are valuable.

Anders

Well, I feel like you were like reading my mind a little bit because, you know, I wanted to talk about trust and there you go, dropping the trust bomb right in the middle of this conversation. And, you know, there's, there's funny things you can talk about with trust, where it's like, you know, logistically, everybody, keep on your keep on your videos, so we can see that you're there or, or the use of technology to track during testing. So I first wanted to talk a little bit about those things like literally just the different operational tools that are now used in the classroom environment and how they're affecting trust. And then also actually dig a little deeper into I guess into you know, how it affects team building, but this is kind of an open question. But I'll start with asking Anu if you know you've experienced any kind of interesting, interesting trust challenges through the virtual learning environment.

Anu

So I'll say so far first week of classes, so far, so good, I haven't experienced anything crazy. But I think next week, we do have a test coming up. So I know we have to use one of those online softwares for test taking, where they track your eye movement, they track anything that's around you. So I can report back the following week.

Anders

So we're gonna have an addendum to this podcast. report back on that I'll take note. What about it? What is your opinion on video / no video during class.

Anu

Yeah, I like to turn on my video. And I know I think that's one of the things that definitely keeps me focused. But anytime that I don't have my video it's like a major distraction you're either shopping online or you're eating something so no go. Definitely go with the video when you can.

Anders

Alright so we have Anu on the side of definitely go with the video. Janelle?

Janelle

Okay so I'm read completely alle keep you on focus if you keep your video on, and so far I'm okay with it. Like there are times where I'm like, I really don't want to turn on my video, especially if you're in a room where nobody's video is on. Am I gonna be the only person who's videos on? No, I'm turning my video off. But I think I think it's important to have your video on just to kind of maintain somewhat connection like personal connection. So I'll do it here and there. But I don't want to say I'll do something when I do the other thing too. But that's my take on it.

Anders

I love it. I love it. I'll give a quick take on this too. Why not? Take I'm the host. But, you know, I think I have a lot of thoughts when it actually comes to the video through through virtual learning. The first one comes down to, like, you know, ensuring that I'm not getting overwhelmed by seeing too many faces. And it's funny because I actually enjoy getting up in front of a crowd and speaking in person. But the amount of kind of mental capital that you have to use to actually look at a screen of faces is very different than looking at a crowd of faces. And maybe, maybe Professor Maynes can speak a little bit more to that. But, so sometimes I actually kind of prefer not seeing too many faces just because there aren't so many different eyeballs that are looking at me. And it's not because of necessarily a fear of

talking. It's just is a lot to see all of them right in the same plane. Now, that said, I completely understand the utility one of the things that I have started to do a lot now is create, like, zoom backgrounds that are specifically oriented to either you know, something I'm interested in or class that I'm in. And something that I find is really useful for that, too, is that in many ways, we can feel a little bit like we are comparing ourselves to the others in the video. Oh, did you know? Does my background look that good? Oh, do I have a room that's that organized? Or, oh, is my lighting that nice? And that can be really, you know, that can be very hard from a personal level. And so, I give a lot of benefit of the doubt to folks when it comes to the video on or off. But I'm curious actually, to hear what you have to say as well, Professor Maynes?

Tim

One of the thoughts that strikes me is that when this pandemic first started to take hold here in the United States, some researchers at Stanford did a study and it was just preliminary data, but it's really kind of interesting. And what they found they had eye tracking software on a computer and Track people as they were in virtual meetings in zoom or Skype or whatever else. And they found that it is significantly more depleting for people typically in a cognitive way, you know, in terms of our mental capacity to be in a zoom meeting for an hour or whatever amount of time compared to the same length of meeting in person. And, and they attributed that to, you know, not exactly sure what the what the mechanism is because not the science hadn't evolved enough yet. But what they attribute it to was that our, our minds as humans were very social creatures and, our minds, and our eyes are sort of trained from a very early age to attend to people's faces. Because we get a lot of information from that face. You know, they're speaking to us there. There's a lot of expressed expressiveness in the face that tells us about meaning of the words that are being conveyed. And so people pay attention to the face and if your stick During a screen of a 30 faces and there's not other information, you know, a broader context of a room that you can sort of, you know, more physical space that can kind of help you to look at other things. So you're just looking at a screen, just a face is staring back at you. And it's like this very concentrated thing, it can be very hard to attend to them. So one of the things I think that can be helpful in that regard is to, you know, if you're in class, just pin the video of the person who's speaking that can help a ton, that you're not looking at everybody else, just looking at the speaker and kind of attending to what they're talking about. Or, you know, if it's a slide deck, then then focus on the slides instead of instead of speaker. So those two things can be can be valuable and helpful in that regard. I personally, and you know, in terms of just in response to the video on or off, I suspect that what has already been said by Anu and Janelle, that it's very true that if the video is not on, it's hard, it's hard to force ourselves to be dialed in and focused on what's you know, on the course. And I'll just give you a little bit of anecdotal evidence, when, in as we've launched the organizational behavior course this fall, there have been times where we'll split into teams or into groups. And when we do that, the person has to accept the invitation to join a breakout room, right. And I do find that, you know, at the end, after everybody's kind of already joined their group, there's already there's almost two or three people who take three or four minutes to join their group. And never is it the case that one of those people has their video screen on. So I suspect that's fairly true that it's hard to stay focused.

Anu

I will say that Professor mains just very scientifically and politically correct way just described everything I was feeling for the last week. I've been trying To find words to describe that exact scientific research you just described and now we can use that as an excuse why can't stay focused on zoom? Thank you.

Anders

you know and I wanted to bring up as well we talked about a lot of the class and you know a little bit or just classroom environment a little bit about the summer but you know, there's obviously extracurricular activities that are going to be different this fall and in the virtual environment. First for you know, for Anu as a first year student, you know, how, what are your expectations when it comes to engaging in the more extracurricular stuff through a virtual environment?

Anu

That's a good question. Um, so I am a research assistant at UB's Blackstone Launchpad program. So I am in charge of organizing a completely virtual exactly, like the T shirt Anders, completely virtual Startup Weekend event in October and that has never been done before. It's Always hosted at a college. And there's like 100 200 students in person hyped up energized by the crowd with food and mentors and drinks, everything readily available. And now we're organizing that same event virtually. So it will be a challenge. But we are hoping to get a lot of engagement, I think. I think the benefit of having it virtual is people feel like it's less of a time commitment, and more people want to participate. They can take breaks on their own. And they don't have to be physically present in one room for the entire eight hour period. So I think we'll get increased participation. So that's the positive side, but we are continuing to find active and creative ways to market so we get the right crowd.

Anders

Absolutely. And Janelle kind of the same question for you is we're going into the second year, you talked a little bit about global programs and how it is adapted. But what do you foresee in terms of the other programs that you're going to be engaged in throughout this fall? Is it kind of the same as what Anu said? Or do you have a different experience so far?

Unknown Speaker 30:19

Yeah, so I'm a graduate assistant, we're going to be virtual. So I think what helped me throughout the summer, really is the meetings like check ins, mostly, they're just keeping up to date like once or twice a week. I think we checked in just in general, while we have like, you know, TAs for the week, we have what we need to do today. But this semester, actually, I'm doing the National Black MBA Case Competition. So that's going to be virtual, that's going to be an experience. And, you know, I'm looking forward to it considering the Wow fund covered it and it was amazing. You don't have to travel

anywhere. It's great. Even though you know, you'd like to network, there's going to be networking opportunities. Which brings me to my next point with the virtual career fairs, which is also going to be different. I've attended some of them, some of them are like, you enter and then you're chatting. So it's kind of, it's difficult to kind of make a connection with someone via chat, because they're seeing the same thing. Hello, my name is yada, yada. So it's really like how do you differentiate yourself through chat, but then there's other ones where like, you're in line to do a video. So I feel like that's more personable, and you have a better chance of, you know, you can kind of show your body gestures and make a connection there. But I think it's, it's a challenge and I can't wait to dive into it.

Anders

I am so glad you brought up the career fairs, because, you know, I think it will be a very almost interesting experiment in the fall. How different folks feel about career fairs in this case, you know, I will say, one area that has always intimidated me, or career fairs. Maybe it's because I always feel like I'm wearing a costume if I put a tie on but to me, I actually I did a virtual career fair this summer where it felt a lot less intimidating, being able to kind of do a one on one discussion through a through virtual format. So I feel a lot more comfortable in that area. But some, some folks, you know, they feed off that energy. They, they really embrace the handover of the resume and that, you know, that handshake. And so there's going to be, you know, it's interesting to see, you know, who would do really well in an in person career fair versus, you know, maybe find a lot of challenges in this kind of area. And that's part of kind of all the virtual the switchover to a virtual world. I mean, the theme of this podcast is virtual learning, but it's really just virtual. Just all virtual. Yeah. So I really appreciate you bringing that up.

I want to just say this kind of just a question overall, are there any there been any surprises that you guys any of you have experienced through any kind of just switch over to virtual anything that you're like, I did not expect this. This is this is cool, or this is strange.

Anu

Yeah. Well, I have a completely unrelated but short story to share. Nonetheless, I think after going virtual and staying at home during the pandemic, I have fell in love with technology. I have not loved technology more since the pandemic. And now I'm this techie person that has a Roomba and I love my Roomba. I've named him Ronald. I've invested in a dishwasher, we didn't grow up with one. So there's that. And I keep buying new technologies that make my life more efficient. And I spend more time doing the things that I want to do. So it's really funny but over zoom in the background, you'll hear my Roomba like going around, and I have to like it's like a giant child that I have to like man around and follow because it's still learning the lay of the land in my apartment. So it's been fun, but I think that's one thing that I'll share that I fell in love with his technology during the pandemic and a greater appreciation for it.

Janelle

Just a clarification question the Roomba is that vacuum that moves around? Is that

Anu

yes, it's the self. Yeah, self guided vacuum. I highly recommend for all the listeners out there,

Anders

you don't you don't have any pets. Do you?

Anu

No, I don't, I don't, but I've heard they work really well with pets too.

Tim

Do you need to disclose any kind of financial interests in Roomba?

Anu

Thank you for asking. I am not sponsored by Roomba at the moment

Anders

and neither is the podcast.

Janelle

Um, I would say like this is kind of not interesting, but like just maneuvering around zoom sometimes. You know, when you start a meeting, you never know if the person pre set settings that your camera turns on automatically. So all the time, I'm always covering my camera, just just in case I'm not ready, I'd like to be prepared. Another thing, sometimes I've done accidentally on multiple occasions, if I'm the host, and I press leave, I'll do end meeting for all instead of leave meeting. So it's kind of like yikes moments. Um, but if I have any more moments like that I'll let you know.

Anders

I would consider that a drop the mic moment I think it's I think it's there's respect there. What about from the teaching side anything surprising or unexpected?

Tim

You know, I'm good question I didn't I did not think I was going to like teaching on you know, in a sort of a remote delivery way zoom or any other way because I just enjoy the interaction with the students and having an opportunity to meet them and to see their faces and you can learn a lot about them by the way they interact with other people and so I missed that element of it and and of course, you know, you won't, that'll never be perfect in a virtual world probably but, but there are some things that are a silver lining, and I'll just, you know, kind of related to what has already been said about the ability to save time it's more efficient to do things on zoom, you know, I have two classes this semester, two sections of the organizational behavior course, with 10 minutes in between. And that was always the case before. But the, the transition between the two was always so challenging to turn over a class and 10 minutes to get everything ready against for the start of the next class. Now I'm sitting in my chair, I just exit the one and I enter the other and I'm ready to go, you know, I mean, and so that's just been tremendous in that way. Another thing that's kind of nice is that I've had alums reach out to me of the program, and say, Hey, I'd love to be a guest speaker. And it's going to be easy for me to do that, in this virtual world. So, so I think that we're gonna have, you know, fingers crossed. We haven't got it all arranged yet, but I think we're gonna have some nice guest speakers that we would not normally get. And that's kind of cool.

Anders

Send them over to the podcast.

Tim

Oh, if you're interested. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. That's a great, great idea. I think we could for sure do that. Maybe we should talk offline Anders, about the kind of the target of what you're looking for maybe topics or you know, levels in the company or industries or any of that kind of thing. You know, it'd be interesting if someone in retail, yes, or in the restaurant business, you know, two very, very heavily impacted...

Anders

Yeah, we haven't talked, of course about the essential workers in this in this podcast. It may be a little bit outside the purview of this topic, but it is super important to just keep in mind how many people are still, you know, on ground providing services and support in essential areas to, you know, to keep to keep the cogs turning. Yeah. And I got to thank them every day. Yeah, being out there. So I really appreciate you bringing that up to I think kind of to begin to wrap up. I'm wondering, as we look forward to not just, you know, the next semester of school in the next couple of years, but you know, what do you think And I'm going to put this out to the just full panel. You know, what are what are your thoughts on the lessons you've learned in working within virtual learning environment or just being in a virtual

environment in general, that may be useful to bring to the working world after graduation or during an internship or you know, anything like that. And that includes in a, you know, time in the future where we may be working much more in person. Yeah, it's it's hard to think about the future right now. Who Who knows what happens in the future at this point? I can't see what tomorrow. I don't know what I'm gonna eat for breakfast tomorrow for what it's worth. So. So that's why it's such a great curveball at you all.

Anu

I will say I did interview Lauren Lopez. She's the VP at Rich products. Corporation. Right here in buffalo this morning. And I asked her a similar question is how did the company adapt to a completely remote work environment? And she put it really well actually, when she said that COVID-19 just helped accelerate a lot of the initiatives that they had in place. They know that they want to attract a younger talent pool. And for that to happen, they need to have a more balanced work life balance setting and they know that the typical eight to five that rich products has in place right now is not going to fare well with the younger generation. So she said because of COVID-19. Now they're exploring a lot more remote opportunities. They're exploring a lot of remote technologies to make to help that transition. And so I think a lot of companies are transitioning to more remote work opportunity. So we'll see a lot of that come about in the next couple of years. I know it's especially coming from Silicon Valley know many of the companies are now exploring just hiring a workplace workforce that's completely remote. And not having to build real estate in the valley where it's highly expensive. And now you're not limiting your talent pool to specifically Silicon Valley, but now to the rest of the country. So you're not limited in that sense. So I think that's definitely a trend that's going to continue past COVID-19 is more remote opportunities.

Anders

I think that is a perfect moment to really wrap up on. And it really important for any students listening and to keep that in mind to, you know, the opportunities that we're going to have in, you know, in the working world are going to be much broader, I think given you know, opportunities in the remote work environment. So thank you so much for sharing that Anu. So before I let y'all off, I just want to make sure you're able to plug you know, whatever you've been working on lately and share with folks what you're doing and where you know, if you want anybody to find you by email or anything. So firstly, you know what's going on with True Recycling now?

Anu

Yeah, absolutely. I'm continuing to pursue it and I think the wonderful remote opportunities have brought more connections for True Recycle specifically I've been able to connect with a lot more people from around the East Coast. So I've talked to city of Buffalo. I've talked to people from Erie, Pennsylvania that really want to collaborate with True Recycle to develop a product. And two days ago, I pitched to Professor Alan Hunt's class, graduate CS level students. And I have a handful of students that are really

excited to build out the product. So I think in the coming months, you'll see a product that's built, and probably through the Blackstone programs, you'll probably see me pitching again.

Anders

That's awesome. Janelle, what about tell us about real talk a little bit?

Janelle

Yes, let's get real about Real Talk. So if you didn't hear in the beginning, Real Talk is a platform that is designed to encourage the discussion around social issues. So we've seen lots of things happen from the beginning of this year. That things that have been happening since the beginning of time. We've had George Floyd, we had Ahmaud Arbery, we've had Breonna Taylor. And what I've noticed, which kind of sparked this idea, is that people weren't really talking about it. People who, in my class I, I just didn't hear the conversation. And I have my friends that I talked to about it, I have friends and I like vent to. But I feel like if we really are to overcome this, we need to have a discussion about it. And we need to empower each other to do something. So Real Talk is for that. It's for people who don't know how to have the conversations for people who want to educate each other, learn about different perspectives, and most importantly, listen to each other because every person has a different perspective. And it's important to hear it no matter what the opinion is because you're trying to understand a different perspective. So, similar to Anu, I, my team also pitched at this CS with Alan Hunt. So we're here to get that ball rolling, we've had some faculty interested in like a live version to do in class. We've had our own real talk session via zoom, where we had students, we've had non-up students, we've had faculty. And it was kind of just a version without the app, just to see how it would run to get feedback from it. And it went very well. We got great feedback, and we're working to develop it more and have more sessions. So if you're interested, please check us out at teamrealtalk.com And give us a like on Instagram at [teen Real Talk official](https://www.instagram.com/teenrealtalk).

Anders

That's right. Always be plugging. Yes. Thank you. Janelle. I'm so so excited and amazed by the work that you're doing there. That's really important. And it is, is well received. Tim, what do you what are you researching? What are you studying? Any interesting paper coming out?

Tim

I first I wanted to just kind of second, some of the thoughts there from now on then I'll talk about a little bit about what's going on in my work. But I think this this issue is not issue this. It's this very important topic and is something that needs to be sort of continually at the front of our conversation for some time, so just want to emphasize the importance of what she said. And it also reports some good news a little bit. I mean, at least it's progress. This year, we had a record number of black students apply, students of color applied to the program, but not from international locations from the United States,

which was a very promising theme for us. We hope to continue and build on that. I think last year that we had about six of a class of 82 students of color and this year, we have 14 out of 98. So that was progress. And we hope to be able to continue to do more in that regard. And so things like what Janelle is talking about there are super important to build the culture. That's one of inclusiveness around diversity and so on. But so anyway, I just want to underscore that's super important. to know you had your mic off. Were you going to make another comment?

Janelle

Yeah, I was just gonna say I'm glad to hear that the number is going up, considering I was among the low population of black students, people of color, and I'm, I'm happy to hear that people who look like me have more people who they can see in the program, and viden that's,

Tim

Yeah, I think that's really important. It's going to be important that for this particular group, this incoming group of 14, that they feel supported, so that we can continue to build on that success and hopefully even expand Further. So, anyway, that's, that's, in my mind some good news. In terms of other things that are going on and in the program and into any listeners, you know, I suspect that many of the listeners will be MBA students. So I would just encourage you to, to get involved in some of these extracurricular things. I know that we and we talked about it here, that they're not going to be the same as they have been historically, because there'll be virtually done. But I, I've been so impressed with the faculty and others who are putting together these programs. And I think that the experience is going to be as good as it possibly can be. I mean, I think of global programs, for instance, and Dr. Siaw-Asamoah, who has always done a tremendous job but the transition and you know, adaptability she demonstrated in altering how those were done and still making it how, you know, allowing it to have we're ensuring that it has an international experience flavor, despite being virtually in nature, goodness gracious. I mean, I'm just so excited about those programs. And you know, and there are other things like the Blackstone programs and others that are just tremendous. So, to me, a lot of the value in the UB MBA is in these extracurriculars. So I would say, you know, do some research, find the ones that are appealing to you and get involved and, they'll be great. Even though it's virtual, I think you'll still have a tremendous experience and develop relationships and connection. And so and in addition to learn, and so that's my plug is to get involved in those extracurriculars and in any way that you can.

Anders

Thank you so much to all three of the folks that joined today on the Virtual Learning roundtable with the Manage-a-bull podcast. Thank you to Anu Patel, Janelle and Professor Tim Maynes, your knowledge and the expertise you brought to this was just amazing and I am so glad that this could be the first panel discussion of the semester. Thank you again to Anu Patel, Janelle for and Tim Maynes for joining me on the first episode of the fall 2020 Manage-a-bull podcast. To wrap up our show, I invited recent MBA

alum, Thirth Patel to share some of his experiences and advice. Thirth's a business analyst at Empodio, after graduating just a few short months ago in May of 2020 shares this update with the podcast.

Thirth Patel

My name is Thirth Patel, and I am a business analyst at Empodio LLC. They are a Salesforce boutique consulting firm. So I graduated in 2020 in May of 2020. And in the MBA program, I studied three concentrations marketing, consulting and data analytics. I am working virtually. And it's been pretty interesting just because you have to really learn how to manage yourself and manage your own schedule. It's very easy just to get off track and all of a sudden burn three hours doing absolutely nothing. So I can really, it can really be hard from a productivity standpoint. But on the flip side, it's also really nice because I'm very flexible schedule now. So as long as my work gets done, I can play around with the timing and with the sort of when and how I do my work. As far as advice goes, for anyone who might be interested in getting an MBA, my biggest advice is to first take a look at where you are currently, and more importantly, what you are trying to accomplish by getting an MBA. So I feel that a lot of people just kind of jump into an MBA without knowing exactly what it is that they want or some That even applies to myself, I went directly from undergraduate to my MBA. Now while this provided me with some unique perspective and some unique learning experiences, I feel that it would have been better if I actually took the time to get some more working experience before I got that MBA, as it would have been, it would have benefited me more in terms of overall career background, and more importantly, it would have gave me a different perspective when I was actually going through the courses as well. So that would be my biggest piece of advice for anyone who's thinking of going for MBA. Think about what stage of your career you're at, think about the pros and cons of going into an MBA and more importantly, think about how the MBA is going to fit into your career goals.

Anders

Thank you to Thirth for giving us a look into your work and your first few months post grad from the UB MBA program. Next time on the Manage-a-bull podcast, we discuss diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging with a guest host who I cannot wait to welcome to Manage-a-bull. I hope you tune in and invite others to tune in as well. The Manage-a-bull podcast is recorded and produced by me, Anders T. Rosen, in partnership with UB School of Management. Special thanks to Aaron Shaw, Assistant Director of Recruitment, Harrison Cheung, Assistant Director of Marketing, Erin O'Brien, Assistant Dean and Director of Graduate Programs. And Paul Tesla Dean of the School of Management.

I'm Anders T. Rosen. How am I managing? Any better, I couldn't stand it.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>