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TRANSCRIPT

Community Conversations - Episode #80 - Marjorie Anderson

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

marjorie, event, mask, pandemic, person, dubai, people, memphis, community, precautions, conference, networking, travel, nervous, part, feel, conversations, personally, today, talk

**SPEAKERS**

Jim Storer, Marjorie Anderson, Shannon Abram

**Jim Storer** 00:23

Hello, and welcome to another edition of Community Conversations. My name is Jim Storer. I'm one of the founders of the Community Roundtable. And I am joined today by my capable co host, Shannon Abram, Shannon.

**Shannon Abram** 01:14

Hello, we are so excited to be here today for what I'm calling a special edition of community conversations. We are joined by longtime friend, Marjorie Anderson. Hi, Marjorie.

**Marjorie Anderson** 01:27

Hello, thank you for having me.

**Shannon Abram** 01:30

And just so ever, this is a very sort of ad hoc edition of community conversations. And I'm going to cue this up just the way you know, we were talking Off mic before that. Marjorie has been to an in person event recently. We're recording this in March of 2022. And I personally am attending my first in person community event next month. And I mean, I'm just a little bit nervous, partially because I'm a nervous person. And partially because I haven't been to a real life event since January of 2020. So I thought, Who better than Marjorie to come on and personally reassure me, but also give us all some advice for what business events are looking like now in this like, new stage of the pandemic era?

**Marjorie Anderson** 02:23

Yeah, it's it was definitely interesting. And I have to say, you know, like you shouldn't I, the last event that I was at was, in 2019, we had for PMI we had our global conference. In Philadelphia, I wasn't even traveling, like it was really a train ride from my house to into Philly. But there were still so many people there. And then to not be in a situation where I was around that many people for years, a couple years, and then to not only go to an in person event, but to fly 12 hours, across the world to go to an in person event was It was exhilarating. And if I'm being honest, Amenia a little nervous all at the same time. The great thing about what I will say the great thing about his how events are kind of unfolding from an in person perspective now is that organizers are really taking every precaution and being very careful about how they are bringing people together physically, and making sure that they're up to date on any CDC masking, masking recommendations, making sure that there is enough space for people to sit at making sure that when who to serve, it's not buffet style, but maybe it's BoxLunch style, those types of things. So it's they're being very mindful about what might be making people nervous, and ensuring that they are taking every possible step and precaution that they can to ensure that there's a good experience from an in person perspective, but also taking care of people.

**Jim Storer** 04:16

So Marjorie, I need to ask, you said you flew 12 hours now you went to Dubai, can you tell us more about that event in particular? Like what it was like for you?

**Marjorie Anderson** 04:27

Absolutely. So this was not only my first in person events since 2019. It was my first trip, a long, long, long trip, right? Like I have never been overseas before. So this was really, really exciting for me. So the way that we kind of maneuver things. So for international travel, you had to take COVID Test 72 out no less than 72 hours before you boarded the plane. So had to take a COVID test that was nerve wracking because I was like, Oh my gosh, it's going to come back negative I'm going to be able to but not to be able to go. So I had to deal with that for domestic travel not so much. That's not the case. But um, so had to get the COVID test and then getting from the time that I left my house at a mask on, I had a mask on an Uber, I had a mask on an airport and a mask on the plane, I had a mask on until I got into my hotel room in Dubai. And so that is something that is, was something that I knew I would have to do, but I wasn't quite prepared for, because you have to wear a mask to go to the grocery store, you know, things like that. Those are short trips. But to have a mask on for almost 24 hours was was very strange. It but it felt like it kind of became a part of me. But the thing is, once I got to Dubai, and we the hotel that they put us up that was right inside of the World Expo. And so not only was I at a conference there for a conference, but there was this massive international event happening right outside my hotel room, my hotel. And so not only did I have to navigate conference attendees, but then people who were there visiting World Expo. And so it was incredibly crowded, like nothing was going on, but people were still masked. So restaurants were still taking into consideration, social distancing, unless you were there as part of a group. masks were required wherever you went. And as a speaker, for the conference. I wasn't wearing my mask, but everyone who was watching me speak had masks on, right. So it felt it felt a little strange, but it was so nice to be in the company of other people and to be able to talk to people face to face and have, you know, in person conversations again, and see expressions on people's face and body language and, and you know, even shake hands, because yes, we were shaking hands, and there were sanitizing stations all over the place. But it felt like a normal in person event, with the caveat that you had to wear your mask. And there were of course, other precautions in place to ensure that people stay safe and well. But it was, it was really great once I was in it to be around people again.

**Jim Storer** 07:30

And it sounds like I'm going to make a leap here. But it sounds like during the social interactions if there were happy hours or, you know, maybe, you know, people came up after your talk everyone was masked? And was that challenging at all? I mean, I I feel like the face to face events that I've been to over the years it they feel a little like family reunions. And so I you know, I know a lot of the folks from working with them, you know, you want to give them a hug when you see them after not seeing them for a year or more. It was that was that sort of the the experience or was it was where people you know, hands behind their back, keeping their distance.

**Marjorie Anderson** 08:16

You know, within networking, it was it was left hands behind back keeping distance people. People were in one room. Another for instance, I was there as part of the SAE delegation, and those folks for a lot, but they hadn't they hadn't seemed, you know, out, right. So they were hugging each other that are sitting closely with one another people who have been a part of this, this conference before. Were so wonderful. So glad to see each other, we're helping each other. So in these pockets, you saw these peoples come together very quickly. Because they hadn't seen each other or ever been able to interact with one another for so long. And in even in the networking part of it, because people still very nervous about traveling, like Canada, and there wasn't a large amount of attendees. So the networking was smaller. But people didn't have their masks on they were trying to keep distance and not be touchy, right. They didn't didn't want to touch, be too touchy and be sensitive to how other people might be feeling. Being in a setting like that. But for the most part, it was still very warm. And people wanted to interact with one another. People want him to be close with one another because we have not had that opportunity and so long, that it just almost felt natural to kind of fall back into that level of engagement while also being mindful about the fact that we're still in a pandemic and people can still get very sick. So it was kind of a it was more along the lines of being very warm. And then it was being very kind of sterile but people were still mindful of, of boundaries.

**Shannon Abram** 10:08

It sounds like such an interesting experience, not just obviously, from a post pandemic, but I mean, Dubai, it's just such a, it sounds fascinating. So the segue here is going to be that I get to see Marjorie in real life next month, we're both attending the same event, the Community Leadership Institute Expo in Memphis, and Marjorie, how should I be preparing? What should I do differently than what I might have done two years ago to prepare to attend an event both from an attendee, but also as a, you know, we're a partner, we're going to have an area you visit us, like, how should I be preparing?

**Marjorie Anderson** 10:48

Yeah, so I would say so first of all, I am so excited to see you both, at quick, I can't wait. And so I would say that when you're preparing to travel, make sure you have plenty of masks, because you're going to be wearing them unless you're actually speaking or presenting, they are going to require that you that you wear masks in the space, make sure you have Hansen sanitizer, if that's not something that you brought regularly, make sure that you have that. Um, I would also say that, you know, come prepared for people to want to hug, want to shake hands, those types of things. And I would say that if, if that is something that makes you nervous, telling people right up front, Hey, I am so glad to see you. But I You know, I've got a little one at home, or I'm personally, you know, still have some reservations about COVID. You know, let's just bump, elbow bump, whatever that looks like for you. Because some people will have a different level of comfort with that. universe's others. But other than that, I would just say come ready to engage and and have a good time with folks again, I know that there are some people who are looking to do small dinners and those types of things. And I would say, you know, engage on that level as you are comfortable. And I would also say that if you decline, no one will think will be any, none the wiser, right? Because, again, everyone's comfort level with being in the settings again, is, is going to be different. So understand that if you've got boundaries, make them known, and people will be fine with that. But also, just just come knowing that people are going to be really glad to see you and see each other and may or may not may not mean any harm, when they go to hug you or something like that, if that's not something that you want,

**Jim Storer** 12:49

I think we need to come up with the over under for the number of vendors at the event who have hand sanitizer...

**Marjorie Anderson** 13:00

Yeah, and everywhere you turn, there's going to be hand sanitizer, there's probably going to be when it comes to the conference meals, they're probably going to be packaged individually versus they're being like a buffet style or something like that. There will be I think, a networking event so that that's optional. So you know, that's something you want to go to make sure you're prepared for that. But then outside of that, all the other conference stuff, bring comfortable shoes, that type of stuff, it's, it's all going to be the same, just with a few other precautions.

**Jim Storer** 13:38

And also Memphis, just speaking about the the CLIX event coming up in April, Memphis is actually going to be pretty nice. So I would kind of expect that they will try to do as many of the kind of networking events as they can outside, you know, if there's available outside space. I think I've never been to Memphis but I think there there are a lot of rooftop venues and things like that. So I wouldn't be surprised to see that.

**Marjorie Anderson** 14:09

Yeah, definitely giving people the opportunity to still come together. But in a in an open space where there's not recycled air or anything like that. Makes it much easier and it makes people a little bit more comfortable.

**Shannon Abram** 14:23

Marjorie, I know you are involved in CLIX on more of a leadership level. Can you give us a sneak peek or a preview of what's going to be going on?

**Marjorie Anderson** 14:32

Yeah, absolutely. So I am serving as the conference chair for Clix and it's going to be a really fun event. We believe so Sunday night for those who will be in early. On the third. There will be a networking event I hear Elvis might make an appearance. So that evening there will be networking and then over the course of two days. There's going to be a Some really great sessions around different parts of managing online communities or managing community all together, there's going to be talk about business value, there's going to talk about organizational communities, there's going to be, you know, conversations around understanding who your community members are, there's going to be just such a rich amount of information that people are going to be able to take away when they come. And they're going to be some more networking on the fourth. So there's two nights where we're going to really have an opportunity to get together know one another, but then two days of really rich content, that's really going to provoke some thought get people thinking a little bit about their community programs, not only how to build them, if they're, they haven't gotten there yet, but how to strengthen them for those who have built them, and what the community landscape really looks like, holistically, because the interesting thing about Plex is that it's not specific to any industry. It's, it's really about people who are building community, through events, people who are building community through product, people who are building community through many different ways. And so regardless of where you sit in an organization, if you're tasked with building community or or what business you work for, there's going to be something that clicks for you. And so there's a lot of value that's being driven through this through this event. And I'm really excited to see and hear what attendees get out of it.

**Jim Storer** 16:31

All right, Marjorie, I've got one last question for you. Before we wrap, I'm just wondering if you have advice for folks that are going to be getting outside of their hermetically sealed bubble and coming to Memphis, any final tips or tricks?

**Marjorie Anderson** 16:46

Yeah, I would just say that it's okay to be nervous. Even though I went to Dubai, I'm still nervous to travel to Memphis because, I mean, you know, we're still a pandemic. So it's okay to be nervous, and it's okay to to have some boundaries, and it's okay to, you know, not participate in a more engaged way than you normally would. But that's okay. Whatever you're deciding to do from an event standpoint, if you're going to be going outside of your bubble, and attending something in person, know that all of those things are normal feelings. Again, make sure you have plenty of masks, protect yourself in the way that you feel protected. But also go with the understanding, and with the expectation that you will have a good time that you will see people again, that you are coming together to learn and to network and to engage and to and to talk to people maybe you haven't talked to in a very long time, allow yourself to feel joy in that experience, while also understanding that you have some precautions that you need to take, do not let the fact that if at all possible, try not to let the fact that, you know, these are still uncertain times in regards to in regards to COVID. Don't let that overshadow all that you can get out of coming together with folks again. So try to make the best of it as much as you can.

**Shannon Abram** 18:13

That's really, again, personally for me great advice. I've really been struggling with the idea that I don't feel like the same person I was the last time I went to an event, and how do I get back to that place? But But what you just had really learned from me that I don't have to be that person, I have to be the person that I am now and approach this with what do I want to get out of today? How do I want to act today? Versus I've spent a lot of time thinking about, well, how can I make this be like it was, but it's not going to be and that's okay, so thank you so much. I mean, I hope other people who are listening, get something out of this. But for me personally, that really resonates.

**Marjorie Anderson** 18:55

Yeah, I think that's so important. Like were none of us are the same person, we were going into this pandemic, that on the tail end of it, and I don't even know if this tellen but it feels like it's things are starting to get back to. I don't I won't say normal, but things are starting to kind of level while a bit. And, you know, we all kind of grew and evolved during these two and a half years. And it's okay to bring who you are today into any situation that you were in because we change that would be true if there wasn't a pandemic, right. The difference is we were all kind of shoved into our houses because of this. And we made some pretty significant changes in the way that we navigate this world as a result. And you don't necessarily have to change that to make others comfortable in order to still enjoy experiences.

**Shannon Abram** 19:49

Thank you so much, Marjorie. I really enjoyed this and now I'm even more excited to see you next month. But thank you, I know you're busy getting ready for clicks. So I really appreciate you taking Taking the time to chat with us today and I think your advice is going to help a lot of people!