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Stories of joy and happiness are always wonderful, but they are even more so during this crazy time. The pandemic has thrown a wrench into so many people’s plans; however, it hasn’t stopped them from finding creative ways to move ahead and celebrate life.

Here is one such story.

Dave Miller could never have imagined that his journey to meet and eventually propose to his future wife would be so complicated. It all started back in 2012, when Dave divorced after almost 30 years of marriage. His dear friends, Benny and Angie, had someone they wanted him to meet, but before any introductions could be made, Dave had already started dating someone else. When his relationship ended in 2015, Angie wanted to make the introduction again, but her plans were thwarted; Dave had a new girlfriend, again. 2018 proved to be an eventful year for Dave; he and his girlfriend broke up, and he started working for Axiom. That year, Dave attended training in San Diego. Upon his return, his friends, Benny and Angie, had a BBQ with the intent of playing matchmaker...AGAIN! Well, as the saying goes, the third time was a charm. Finally, after three attempts, on April 21, 2018, Benny and Angie introduced Dave to Deborah Purcell, and the rest was history! Dave knew he had found “the one!”

After two years of dating, Dave and Deborah began talking about getting married, and Dave started making big plans. First, he took Deborah to look at rings to get ideas, and she picked two she liked. They talked about buying them that day but decided to wait. Dave went back to the small jewelry store in Hickory, NC, where they had looked at the rings, to make his big purchase. The rings needed to be sized, so the store sent them to their central office in Raleigh. Dave had intended to propose to Deborah, with ring in hand, at her favorite restaurant on April 21st at 5:45 pm, the exact date and time they finally met. And then, COVID hit. North Carolina’s Governor closed the state to all non-essential businesses, which included the jewelry store before the rings got back from being sized. After several months, Dave got an email informing him that the store had re-opened at the end of May. Excited, he went to the store to pick up the rings only to find that the store in Hickory remained closed. Thankfully there was a 1-800 number to call if you needed anything. Dave needed those rings! He reached the manager of the store in Charlotte and explained his situation. The next day, the manager made arrangements to pick up the rings in Raleigh, bring them to Hickory, and meet Dave in the parking lot to hand them over.

At this point, April 21st had come and gone, so it was time for Dave to come up with a “Plan B”. Deborah had made arrangements for a weekend getaway to Bryson City, NC, the gateway to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, during the month of June. Dave thought this would be the perfect opportunity to pop the question. He planned to take Deborah to Clingmans Dome, a high spot in the Blue Ridge Parkway where you can see seven states on a clear day, and ask her to marry him at sunset. However, when they got there, it was crowded, cold and raining, and not the romantic setting he had envisioned, so with the ring still in his pocket, Dave decided to wait.

Time for “Plan C”! They returned to their car and started driving down the Blue Ridge Parkway. As they were winding their way down the mountain, the sun came out. There was a small pullout to take pictures of the mountainside, and they decided to stop. While Dave was taking Deborah’s picture with the beautiful mountains in the background, he got down on one knee and asked her to marry him. She said, “yes!!!” They became officially engaged on June 26, 2020 at 4:30 pm. The third time seems to be a charm for this happy couple, in more ways than one. Congratulations!

Dave works on AXIOM’s TRICARE Health Plan (THP) contract as a non-Defense Travel System (DTS) Entry Agent, entering TRICARE Prime Travel data into DTS so Veterans, Active-duty service members and their family members can be reimbursed for their specialty medical travel needs. He and Deborah live and work in Hickory, NC. Dave and Benny have been best friends and golfing buddies for more than 15 years, and Angie and Deborah work together at UNC Healthcare. Dave and Deborah plan to get married on April 17, 2021, and guess who will be the best man and matron of honor? Benny and Angie!
Dear Desk,

I wanted to write to you and let you know how much I miss you. Last week I finished a big proposal while working from home, and boy, it wasn’t the same without you. I’ve attached a picture so you could see the mess of it all. Truth be told, I’ve been holding on to the past and treating this whole “work from home” thing like you and I are just on a “break,” but I need to quit kidding myself. I’ve realized I need a “real” desk at home, which is why I was in the office the other day. I hope you enjoy the pictures I took during my visit. It was so great to see you!

Brian met me at the office to help me with my laptop. What a nice guy, and boy has he become downright chatty since this whole COVID-thing started. Dwight and Elyas were there too. They do such a great job making sure the network and everything is running smoothly. It’s always so good to talk to Dwight. He seems to get what I’ve been going through. He didn’t judge me at all when I told him how much I’d been drinking, and I quote, “In the cups, huh?” He gets it. Also, sweet Trinity was there to greet me with a smile. No, really, she’s smiling behind her mask. I didn’t get a chance to talk to Jim, but we waved through the window. He was clearly very busy, plus I didn’t want to contaminate his work space. He was the only un-masked face I saw during my visit. He looks good. The big shocker, though, was running into Doug Anderson. I’ve known this guy for almost 20 years and it’s the first time I’ve seen him sporting a mullet! Wow, just wow. I checked on Kelly and Tommy’s desks too, and everything seems fine. The Beatles are still standing guard on Tommy’s desk, and Kelly’s Snuggie won’t be necessary any time soon. The office was a balmy 76 degrees, and Brian tells me that’s cool these days.

Anyway, like I said, it was great to see you. I hope we can spend time together soon.

Love always,

Maria

P.S. The view from my “desk” at home is a little better than the office, but it is also a super frustrating. I get so fired up every time I see a delivery truck or one of my neighbors run the stop sign on the corner. It’s there for a reason, right?!
What We Love About Working With…

Hopefully you’ve picked up on the theme for this issue: LOVE. Here are just a few things folks shared and what they love about working with their manager.

**Peter Holstein:**
What I love about working with Peter is that he truly puts his people first. Whether you’re experiencing a personal issue, a health issue, childcare problems, whatever you have going on in life, he always prioritizes your well-being so you can come back to work the best version of yourself.

**Peggy Cox:**
I love working with Peggy for multiple reasons. I appreciate her candor, while she keeps her sense of humor. Her work ethic is contagious! Just seeing some of what she juggles motivates me to work harder/smarter. She is always keeping up with multiple tasks at once, but she never fails to respond when I need her expertise. I’m convinced that Peggy never sleeps!

**Doug Anderson:**
In addition to being an exceptional human in general, what I love about working with Doug Anderson are his esoteric, totally on-point analogies. They always speak the truth and make us laugh!

**Frank Lee:**
What I love about Frank Lee is that he is a person that truly cares about his employees. When tough times come, he is always there to cheer me up. He advises me when I have issues with clients or employees. He is empathetic when I have personal issues. I have encountered every issue a person can have as a Project Manager, and Frank Lee has always believed in me, encouraged me and trusted my judgment. There is no greater boss than Frank Lee!

**Russ Hill:**
Russ’s positive energy and all-around upbeat persona enliven the everyday experience at Axiom. Interacting with Russ is distinctively fun because of his humor and wide-ranging knowledge on all sorts of interesting topics.
If there is a lesson to be taken away from 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that physical distance may have actually brought people closer together.

The shift to remote working has forced individuals and teams to get creative in how we all stay connected, which, in turn, has led to some innovative and effective means of collaboration. In a sense, the physical distance has made some teams much more efficient and united which can be seen in some of the amazing work solutions and products that have been developed to support the Defense Health Agency’s (DHA’s) efforts.

The AXIOM team supporting DHA’s Analytics and Evaluation Division (AED) under the J-5 Strategy Planning and Functional Integration directorate has been at the forefront of DHA’s COVID-19 response efforts. The team developed a series of informational and training videos for users at the MTF-level to better understand the DHA’s COVID-19 Dashboard and how this tool can best assist each MTF’s hospital capacity planning as the pandemic progresses. This resource was developed by AED and centralizes data across the MHS to help advance the understanding of the COVID-19 virus, inform and brief leadership in order to support readiness response, improve case, and save lives. Additionally, the AXIOM team has been involved in assisting DHA leadership develop strategies to further the efforts surrounding the Coronavirus Convalescent Plasma (CCP) Program. The Department of Defense has established a goal to collect 10,000 COVID-19 CCP units by September 30, 2020 to contribute to the readiness of the Force. The AXIOM team has been collaborating and supporting DHA leaders to develop courses of action to enhance the donor recruitment campaign in order to achieve 100 percent contact of eligible beneficiaries who have tested positive at MTFs and Markets with Armed Services Blood Program Blood Donor Centers in order to support and, hopefully, achieve this 10K CCP units goal.

AXIOM’s Integrative Medicine Modeling and Simulation Platform for Healthcare Optimization and Transformation (IMMSP) teams at Nellis and Eglin Air Force Bases have been absolute all-stars throughout this entire pandemic. While many of our colleagues have been fortunate to work remotely due to COVID-19, the IMMSP teams have demonstrated immense commitment to the mission by continuing to perform the majority of their work on-site. Since their clinical research support work involves direct-patient care and interaction, the teams have adapted quickly to changing guidance surrounding face masks and social distancing. While the nation’s focus has been on the response to COVID-19, the opioid crisis is another epidemic looming and impacting our country. The micro current therapy research being conducted is exploring alternative modalities and therapies for pain management. As research continues, coupled with the ‘new normal’ from COVID-19, the teams have been instrumental in developing and executing new processes and procedures to best protect our people and our patients while still delivering high-quality, effective care.

Thank you to my team: Sharisse Gallon, Kristy Crawford, Jonica Estrada, Thomas Haney, Carmen Jones, and Rachel Tate for their outstanding work. And thank you for reading our teams’ updates. We wish everyone continued good health and good times! Though we may be physically distant, may we always say socially connected!
We Love Our Axiom Masks

Eileen Luterzo while packing diapers for Community Church’s Diaper Drive supporting two local food pantries in Loudoun County. This picture shows about 500 packed diapers – in all, they packed and delivered over 7800 diapers!

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Do you have additional questions? Your AXIOM Corporate Team is here to assist!

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