

Digital connectivity in a personal way

Ernst-Jan Stigter, General Manager Microsoft Netherlands

Remote working and video conferences is turned into an essential aspects of our working days. A big change that requires a lot of flexibility from all involved, but one that also gives us new and innovative solutions. Stories about new ways of connection and cooperation and how we find different ways of personal contact. I am very impressed how our customers and partners in various industries are now using digital technology to continue their work and to make the right impact. In this blog I would like to highlight some special stories about digital connectivity.

Virtual hugs in nursing homes

Visiting loved ones in nursing homes is difficult at the moment. Especially in these times, people are in need of more social interaction. This is also the case at [Livio](#), a company that specializes in nursing, care and home care. Justin ter Avest works for Livio as a system administrator and came up with a digital solution together with the healthcare workers.

Justin: “How can we provide personal contact via digital channels? This question was our starting point. We wanted to make communication as easy as possible for everyone involved: for the residents at the residential care centers and the nursing homes, for the families involved and for the healthcare workers at Livio. To facilitate video conferencing, we created a combination of Microsoft Bookings and Teams.”

Family members can schedule an appointment via the Livio website by filling in a digital form. After this they will receive a link to a video conference in Teams. “Healthcare workers need less time to schedule the video conferences and because of the simplicity not a lot of support is needed during the conversations. This gives them more time for their regular care, which of course still continues. The residents at Livio and their families are very happy with this solution to give a ‘virtual hug’. For many elderly residents the first video conference was quite exciting, but some of them do not want anything else now.”

Education for blind and partially sighted children

The current situation also presented several challenges for [Koninklijke Visio](#), an expertise center for visually impaired and blind people. Pauline Maas, lecturer at Koninklijke Visio, explains: “We have been planning the introduction of Teams for some time and were already running pilots. Because of the whole situation we decided to accelerate the introduction of Teams. Teachers were able to offer their classes in an adapted way. Especially for this vulnerable group of children and their parents, personal contact is very important to maintain the connection.”

Pauline: “Together with another teacher I had a video conference with one of our visually impaired students last week. They connected in no time via Teams and were both over the moon! Before the video conference the teacher had some deep concerns about online classes and the student about personal contact and following the lessons remotely. They even teach braille online, which is certainly not ideal and easy, but it still works.”

Do you want to know more about how we support children with disabilities? Check out our blog "[Tips for your at-home students with disabilities](#)".

Making digital wishes come true

[Make-A-Wish Netherlands](#) fulfills the wishes of children with serious illnesses. Normally personal contact is very important, but these times require a different approach. Ilse Helmons, COO at Make-A-Wish Netherlands: "We use Teams for the preparation of the wishes, for example the meetings with the volunteers that normally take place in the office. We also start various aspects of the Wish Journey online together with the family."

Sanne van Ginderen works at the WishDesk: "A large part of our wishes take place somewhere on a location, or it is all about a personal meeting. At this moment this is not possible yet. But we are offering other alternative digital solutions. One example is a Fortnite tournament with a number of popular YouTubers. Every Friday they play the game with the children, to make their day more enjoyable."

Special stories in special times. We are proud that Microsoft Teams is a platform that facilitates personal digital contact, whether it is for a grandmother so that she can see her grandson again or to ensure good education for our children. After all, technology supports people, not the other way around.