

CULINARY DISTANCING COS PROFILES

Lauren Hug, Co-Founder of Culinary Distancing COS and Author of *Digital Kindness*

“People want to connect. They want to participate. They want to be part of something hopeful and uplifting. We’re thankful many in our community found Culinary Distancing COS to be a place where they could do all those things.”

“The business world tends to focus on transactions and outcomes instead of human connections and possibilities. It’s hard to measure exactly how a kind word from a business owner to a person struggling with loneliness during lockdown via a food-related Facebook group translates to sales, but the results of the Culinary Distancing COS group member survey and the Colorado Institute for Social Impact (CI4SI) Social Return on Investment Study prove that it does. Interactions between group members resulted in nearly \$1.1 million in social return on investment for 2020, with 93% of group members reporting feeling more connected to the broader community and three-fourths of business owners saying the group had a positive emotional impact on them.”

“The findings demonstrate that positive digital interactions between businesses and community members create empathy for business challenges, amplify business messages, build a sense of camaraderie, and make community members feel more invested in the survival and success of businesses that connect with them in meaningful ways.”

“Connection doesn’t require a lot of expense or expertise, but it does require vulnerability, which is often the opposite of what business owners have been told to convey. For many businesses owners, simply showing up and being human on digital networks — sharing their heart, passion, struggles, and experiences — will result in increased support from existing customers and build relationships with new ones.”

“When Matthew and I hit upon the idea of starting a simple Facebook group to connect community members with food and drink businesses, I knew it would have some impact — digital interactions spill over into physical actions far more than many people realize — but I wasn’t sure how much impact it could have without significant investment of resources. Thanks to the determination of group members to support food and drink businesses and the willingness of business owners to share their needs, concerns and challenges, the group accomplished far more than we ever expected. It’s an uplifting example of how purposeful social media use in welcoming, participatory spaces can be a positive force for good.”

Digital Kindness: Being Human in a Hyper-Connected World guides the reader on a personalized journey toward purposeful digital engagement by asking “what if we use digital media to build relationships, better understand our fellow human beings and create a better world?” Available in both print and e-book on Amazon.com.

