

Lockdown diaries: Valentina, bringing communities of people together online and keeping spirits high

Continue supporting each other and your community members and we will come out of this strong and ready for what is to come next.

Originally from London, Valentina Ruffoni is a community consultant and events manager who's has been living in Madrid for over three years. She's also a food lover and the founder of the nearly 7,000-member Facebook group [Eat Out Madrid](#). Due to the lockdown, her sister group [Eat In Madrid](#) has become the place to be for community members to share all the recipes they're cooking up at home these days. Check it out.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

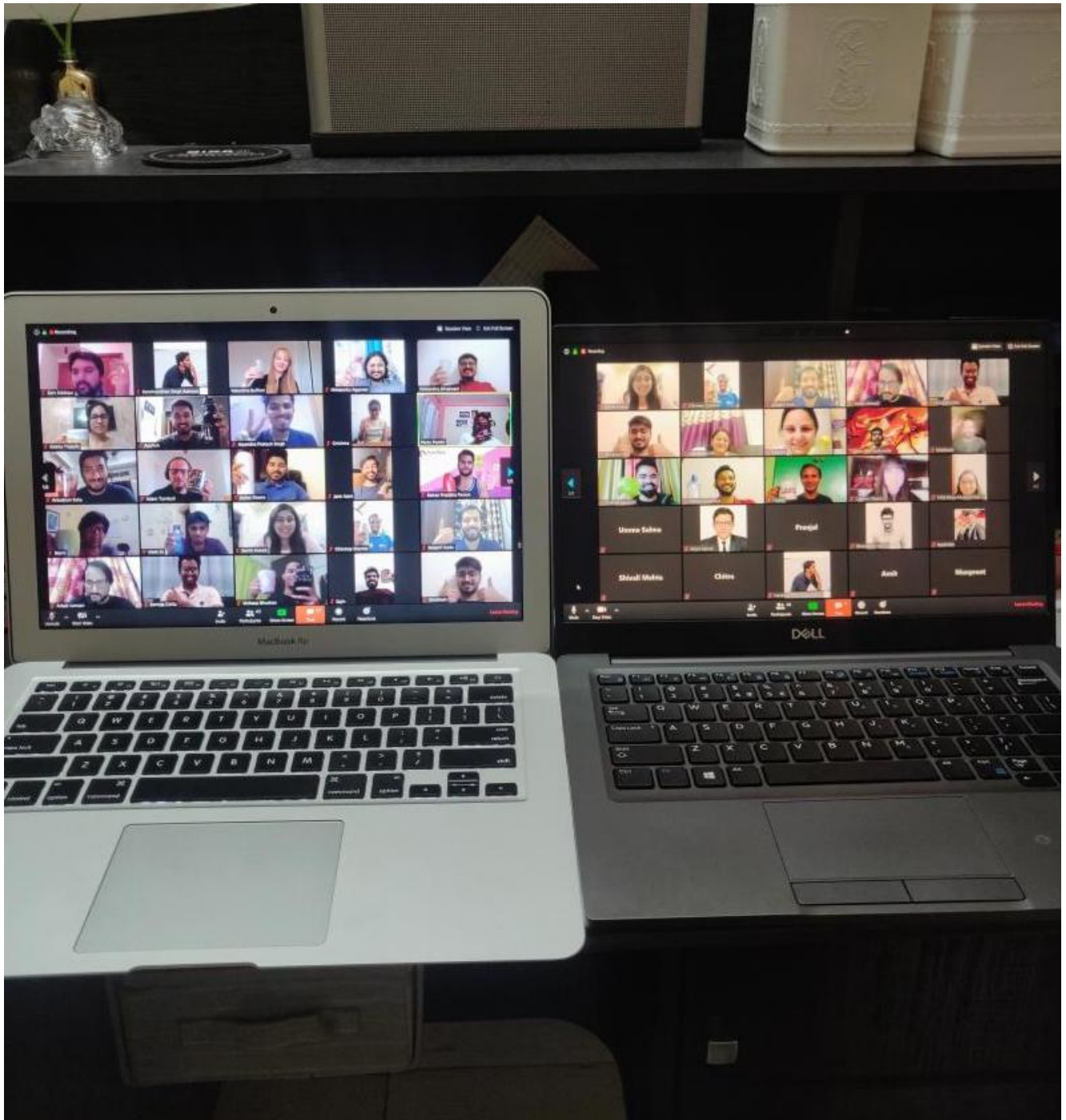
Before the lockdown I spent most of my time organizing and hosting in-person events and speaking in front of large audiences moving all around the city. Now the closest person I have been in contact with is my husband, so for a very extroverted and social person this has been challenging.

I'm cooking more than ever (before this we used to eat out a

lot) and working from home. I'm also hosting several events online and being very active in my online communities, as there's a clear need for social interaction on the internet right now. Providing a place online for people to come together and share their recipes, dishes and favorite eateries to order from seems to be helping a lot.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Unfortunately, the main industry I work in, the events industry, has been severely affected, forcing us to explore ways of doing things online. However, this has been a great time to adapt and come up with creative ways to bring the in-person experience digitally.



“How to care for a community in crisis” online event with [Community Folks](#)

The community industry has also seen a huge increase in interaction and support which has taught me so much about my members and what they want and need. It is during this time that we must remember the importance of ourselves as community managers, how we manage our time and interact with our communities, to keep spirits high.

People are craving the in-person connection more than ever and unfortunately with most of us inside we rely on online platforms to communicate. Continue supporting each other and your members and we will come out of this strong and ready for what is to come next.

And teaching has seen a rise in students taking classes online and has acted as my safety net when I'm not able to make an income through organizing events.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

As the founder of [Eat Out Madrid](#) and [Eat In Madrid](#) I'm a big advocate of supporting the food and drink industry especially during this time. Many businesses are still open offering delivery of their products or even gift certificates for future visits, so I always encourage people to reach out to their favorite places and help where they can. Other ways you can help is by simply leaving a review within the community or on their dedicated sites which helps attract future customers and when this is all over, we can go and enjoy their amazing offerings once again.

How are you coping?

Mondays seem to be the worst day, I'm not sure why because half the time I have no idea what day it is. I'm a big food lover, but surprisingly not a fan of breakfast, however I've learnt how important it is to get into a routine and start the day off right with good wholesome food and continue throughout

the day. It has definitely helped me curb my temptation for snacks throughout the day.

One other thing I would highly suggest is getting dressed. It is so easy to sit in your pyjamas all day, but I've found myself become way more productive by doing this. Plus you never know when you may need to jump on a video call with friends, family, clients or anymore for that matter. #alwaysbeprepared

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?



The 8pm daily routine of clapping for the medical staff that others have mentioned has been especially uplifting. One of our neighbors has a speaker and disco lights and plays *Resistiré* by Duo Dinámico followed by *I will survive* by Gloria Gaynor, it is a great way for the community to come together even though we may have never met each other before. I hope that when we can come out and socialize in person again we can celebrate that we made it through the situation and our residential community can continue to support each other.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

We moved into a new apartment in February and I'm determined to finish unpacking my stuff out of boxes. I keep looking at them and saying tomorrow... I really have no excuse. I have also started a little herb garden so I hope that soon I'll be able to enjoy some fresh oregano, coriander, parsley and basil on my food. I just hope the rain holds off so they don't drown outside.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

I think the first thing would be to take a long walk, I am very fortunate to have a large Carrefour literally 2 minutes from my door but that means the walk isn't so long. I miss the change of scenery and seeing people and cars around going about their day.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in your similar situation?

I am in quarantine with my husband. This situation has come at a somewhat good time for us as he works away a lot and we often don't get to spend much time together. We're enjoying being able to live together, cook and support each other during these uncertain times.

Something we've been doing is trying to avoid listening in and watching the daily news constantly as we can easily be overpowered by information which can only lead to panic. For others quarantined in couples, take this moment to enjoy each other's company and take each day as it comes together.

- You can connect with Valentina on [LinkedIn](#)
- Join Valentina's Facebook online communities [Eat Out Madrid](#) & [Eat In Madrid](#), as well as [CMX Connect Madrid](#)
- Also read Valentina's article on our sister publication The Content Mix: "[How I grew multiple online communities and became a thought leader in my niche](#)"

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)