



HUMANS FIRST, LET'S DO THIS

**A COLLECTION OF IDEAS AND TIPS BASED ON EXPERIENCE SHARED BY THE
DOT DOT DOT COMMUNITY OF LEADERS AND FOUNDERS OF CREATIVE /
MEDIA / CULTURAL / ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESSES TO HELP YOU GET
THROUGH THIS.**

This document is intended as a practical guide to countermeasures and strategies in the face of the Covid-19 outbreak. It is not intended, nor should it be read, as a replacement for medical advice or the advice from travel, business or governmental authorities.

INTRODUCTION

As business leaders, it is our responsibility to protect our businesses and teams, and with a pandemic which most of us have not experienced before, this is challenging. It's not impossible, humanity has got through worse, it takes measured planning, decisive action, clear communication, creativity and patience.

We need to use heads and hearts.

“Plan for the worst, expect the best” is a good mantra. Try to get a sense of balance between genuine concerns and actions to mitigate risk to people and business, and that good old ‘carry on’ thing us British are known for. That said, as this is new territory a proper escalation plan is critical.

The following is a collection of ideas and tips from an experienced community of business leaders, founders and CEOs in the creative, media, entertainment space.

We'll get through this if we think beyond our own lungs. We have teams, clients, they all have families and well, that is society. Our own health is important but the common goal is to stem the spread and get back to normal. Whatever normal is these days.

With love,



TEAM

Your team is likely to be your lifeblood, treat them with respect and remember this is a human challenge. Talk to them, they may understand better than you think, it's a global crisis, it's not personal. Communication is absolutely key as wavering and uncertainty can lead to greater anxiety and fear. We need teams to be well briefed and as focused on the job in hand as possible.

Lead from the front and don't always wait until forced to act. If you are a business who says they are people first, put people first. This is a social problem, not a personal one based on your own good health. You may shake the hand of a team member who has a child with severe asthma. Bravado is bullshit in this climate.

Working from home. Working from home shouldn't be feared, and social distancing WILL be implemented. Some businesses have successfully deployed work from home ANYTIME policies without a performance dip - it needs planning though.

Hiring freeze. If you can manage without new hires, it goes without saying to freeze hiring.

Unpaid holiday / sabbatical. In extreme cases consider asking staff to take unpaid holidays for a few weeks to alleviate costs.

Cut salaries. In extreme cases - to keep team onboard discuss % pay cut for a few months while you ride out the worst - start-ups have to do this often.

3 or 4 Day weeks. Ask staff if they can work a reduced week with pro-rated salary, it is preferable to loss to job (or business closure)

Sickness. Some of your team WILL get COVID19. Plan for a percentage of them to not be able to work AT ALL for periods of time.

Dry Run. Run a test and shut the office down for one day and see how you get on - assess and evaluate what suffered as a result.

Video conferencing immediately. Switch to video and phone conferencing while the virus is most prevalent - and advise clients and staff this is a policy.

Security and shared access. Ensure your team has remote access to shared drives and secure systems while working remotely.

Prioritise FD / FC remote working. Ensure your FD / FC can work remotely, you are going to be hugely dependant on their ability to plan and manoeuvre to get through this.

Hardware. Consider remote hardware needs, does everyone have laptops or desktops at home? If you have designers consider shipping their workstations to their home. .

Decide on and communicate sick pay rules. Check Government assistance on this [here](#)

Self-isolation is not sickness. if people are self-isolating you should still expect them to work from home so they will continue to be paid.

Assess your team medical landscape. Ensure you know about any underlying medical conditions of people on your team or family members they are in direct and regular contact with. (Elderly parents, children with respiratory conditions etc.). Ensure they are prioritised to work from home and avoid travel and face to face meetings.

Staff over 50. As above, there is an increased risk so consider having them isolate until the virus threat decreases.

Communication on Reception. Use clear signage on reception and entrance to your workspace asking all guests to confirm that they have not visited the high-risk countries or have come into contact with anyone that has the virus or has been to those danger zones.

Sanitisation. Put hand sanitizer on reception and in kitchens and anywhere you can. Encourage regular use. Insist on use when entering or leaving the building.

Soap. Stock up on soap - it is the most effective way of removing traces of the virus. Do not run out. Put up new and extra signage with the 20-second rule and insistence on adherence to this. Get hand sanitizer for guests to use when they walk in.

Deep clean. Get in touch with a few deep clean companies now in advance - should the virus infect one of your staff and you need to bring them in to clean the office to protect the rest of the team.

Empty office planning. Plan for an extended closure of the office of four weeks or more. Assess security, valuables and whether you have appropriate insurance.

Turn things off. Do you need to turn anything 'off' while you leave the office dormant for a few weeks?

Empty fridges and cupboards. Have someone throw out the food each Friday in case you have to isolate over the weekend and can't get back in for a period of time.

Check building access and rules. Check with the landlord if you are a tenant on what happens if they lock down the building. Will you be able to get back in while the lockdown is in place?

London lockdown scenario. It's possible there will be a lockdown of London. We don't know what this means but assume buildings and transport closed or limited. Undertake an evaluation of this scenario.

School closure. What is the impact to your staff if schools close which they have already begun to. Staff may need to work from home even if your workspace is still open.

Cancel travel. All non-essential travel should be questioned and most likely cancelled or postponed, especially to high risk zones and ideally at all if we are to slow the spread.

FINANCE & CASH FLOW

Protecting your ability to exist and function is paramount. It will be difficult, and tough decisions are certain. You must act now. Get ahead of the problem and be smart. Don't panic - you make worse decisions when in fight or flight mode - discuss decisions with a trusted small team as you are likely to need the confidence to undertake some of the harder changes.

Economically we have been here before in 2008 and we got through it. No one knows at this point, but it may not be as deep. Particularly if we respond wisely, with a wider social perspective and swiftly.

Monitor closely. Ask your FD / FC to call in as much cash as they can. Right now you need as much cash in the bank as possible.

Banks and Overdrafts. Can you get an overdraft facility from the bank?

Try not to punish suppliers. We are responsible for our own business survival - but also contributors to a shared economic situation that we can make worse through punitive behaviour. Talk to suppliers.

Pay slower but fairly. If you pay suppliers as soon as they invoice move to payment on their terms which will usually be 14-60 days - give yourself a bit more breathing space. Worst case speak to your supplier and say you are struggling and want to pay them but you need to agree on new terms that give you more time.

Contact HMRC. There is a coronavirus helpline, so discuss your situation in advance so you know what you have to work with. 0800 0159559 mon - Fri 8am-8pm, Sat: 8-4pm

Changes to business rates. Business rates are being scrapped for some. Worth checking with your accountant on whether you qualify.

Reduce unnecessary costs. This is essential at this point. Look at pulling in all unnecessary costs. Directive out the team to do the same. Every penny counts.

Postponement versus Cancellation. If a client is postponing activity discuss whether you can take half the fee now to tide you over until it's back on.

Scenario Plan. Look at scenarios where main clients take a full lock-down approach - and cancel their events, travel, activity. Everything affected directly and indirectly by extreme social distancing. Look at 3 months, 6 months and 12 months impact.

Months not weeks. Don't think that when the worst is over and viral slowdown is happening, that within a few weeks everything will return to 'normal. Even if we respond effectively to contain and slow spread, the economic transition will be months or more. Plan for a sluggish year, and a rebuilding year after that.

Haggle Everything. Everyone needs a sale right now, and this is good practice ongoing.

Plan for office closure and transport limitations. Plan for the worst case scenario now. What can't be done from home if your workspace is shut down. List it out and get a solution for each one.

CLIENTS

Those who come out fighting and spend through recessions tend to benefit and clients want to see you servicing them with WORKABLE ideas - if they can't do an event, what can they do?

Look for ways you can be helpful to your client in these times - supply them with info that you're seeing yourself on how brands and businesses are finding ways to win in the downturn.

Add value. Explore how you can add new value to your clients - is there a service you could be offering them as they are suffering and struggling too.

Assess by sector. Consider the sector your clients are in, some are less affected than others. Some will have a boom period (video conferencing, remote working, portable computing, home entertainment and streaming services). Bus dev doesn't stop ever!

Innovation. Be creative - you love a brief right? Well, rebrief yourselves with the parameters of a world on lockdown for a period of time. Come up with cool ideas.

Consumer insight. Rethink consumer insight for this period - needs, fears, wants all just shifted slightly.

Live to virtual. Events being cancelled are exploring how they could exist digitally. Encourage your clients to develop ready-made content/experiences that could be applied in these situations. Many event sector businesses are scrambling to save their businesses and the brand equity of their event, offering this support could be a big help and build deeper relationships with these partners over the longer term.

THE FUTURE

Learn long term lessons. Use the opportunity to make smart long term changes - tighten the belt and your processes and strategy permanently.

Good businesses have a cash reserve that will see them through a 'stealth mode' operation of 6 - 12 months.

Be measured with investments and speculative expansion into new markets or areas.

Long term diversification of clients and sources of income is key. Spread your risk.

After this challenge is over, consider how essential things like international travel to meetings really is, there are beneficiaries of everything, and carbon from flights is in good shape right now.

The heightened sensitivity to your team and their direct family health is also something to build on. People first.

COMMS

Consider how you can keep internal teams, external suppliers and help the whole market see the wood for the trees.

Be clear, be concise, be constructive.

Updates. Keep your team updated on a weekly basis and stick to facts, not hearsay or unknowns. There is a huge amount of misinformation and confusing information. Try to keep everything in the present - what we know now and how we are tackling that problem.

Internal Crisis Coms: If you're having a problem with customers not showing up or clients pausing on business - communicate as much as you can. When people are scared and fearful they freeze, to help pull them out of that you need to talk to them. Find ways of reassuring them what you're doing in your space to make it safe for everyone, ask people to be respectful of others and not turn up if they have cold or flu symptoms or have travelled recently.

Clients too. Suggest the same to clients and reassure them of your steps to make their life easier. Show that you're open for business but in a way that resonates with the feelings of people right now. Use this opportunity to listen to your audience whether internal or external.

Get help. It's not easy communicating this and so seek input from those with experience to craft messaging and shape good ideas. Look at what others are doing. The ones that are communicating with their customers will be helping to alleviate fears and showing they are open for business.

Don't panic. Humanity has got through worse than this, and we will get through this. Measured and calm but decisive comms will help communicate confidence in the process to the team.

Close shop to protect. If things get serious, know when to close up to protect you, customers - don't be reckless.

Creative and helpful content. If we are on lockdown find content themes that engage with what you do. A live music venue could make available live footage from past, a restaurant could ask the head chef to post simple immunity-boosting recipes for people to make at home keep that connection up. Especially as web and social media activity use will be so high in the coming weeks and months.

TEMPLATE EMAIL: LONG ONE FOR INTERNAL TEAMS

Hello Team,

Just wanted to update you on our position following the ongoing developments with the Coronavirus. Whilst the below is extensive it is intended solely to inform you that as a company we are fully prepared.

There is a constant stream of news and hearsay from various news sources and social media about the virus and potential future fall out which can be overwhelming.

For now, we are continuing to focus on the facts and the official advice to inform our actions and for your own peace of mind would recommend you do the same.

This is what we know:

The virus seriously affects the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.

The virus is more contagious than your average flu which is why the official directive is to wash hands regularly and take care when greeting people and touching surfaces outside of a known area to 'Contain and Delay' any spread.

The government and WHO are predicting that a significant proportion of the UK will get the virus and recover quickly from it but that this may disrupt some businesses. We have made preparations for this which we will put into action should things escalate further.

In the music industry, the businesses that are dependent on live events are under immediate threat.

We have diversified significantly across entertainment in the last few years so only a small part of our business is reliant on live work.

We also received a message from the building manager this morning outlining the measures they are taking to stay clean and maintain hygiene at this time which you can find below.

You may have heard record labels putting out directives to not conduct offsite meetings and banning handshakes. While we don't feel the meeting protocol is necessary currently we would say the greeting policy has some merit and you should use your own discretion on either carrying hand sanitiser if you're going to shake hands or deciding on an 'elbow bump'.

We have stocked up on soap. We also have disposable gloves for those worried about touching surfaces on public transport if you need them. We have new hand and tea towels in the kitchen please ensure you hang them up to dry after use.

We would like to suggest that anyone coming back from travelling on a plane in the foreseeable future to notify us so we can decide whether a few days self-isolation might be appropriate.

If you have any of the symptoms outlined in the official guidelines below then please notify us immediately from home - If you are unsure please don't travel in.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

A reminder of key directives:

DO:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds*
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work*
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available*
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze*
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards*
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell*

DON'T:

- touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean*

If you have been in contact with someone that has recently been to the danger spots (see link below to official guidance) please notify us.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/advice-for-travellers/>

If you have been in contact with someone that has caught the virus please tell us immediately.

If you have any concerns or further questions please email X, X, or X

The bottom line is we all need to try to stay as clean and hygienic as possible to reduce the chance of infection or spreading to others.

TEMPLATE EMAIL 2: SHORT ONE FOR INTERNAL TEAMS

Hello Team

As per our quick get together this morning. Should we find ourselves in a position where Coronavirus escalates further and advice from Public Health England is that people should restrict travel and work remotely we will put the below remote working policy in place.

Alert

An all staff email will be issued on the day by 7am. So please do check your email daily before coming into work and ensure your name is on team email.

Within reason please ensure you take your equipment home in the evenings so you are good to go should it be required.

Sickness

If you feel unwell then please report it to your manager no later than 7.15am on the day.

Availability

When working remotely you will be expected to be available during usual office hours of between 9a.m. to 6 p.m.

Responsiveness

When working remotely you will be expected to respond to coworkers by phone and email. It is vital when working in isolation that we maintain collective productivity and communication. That said, of course take breaks as you would in a normal working day!

Productivity measurements

Please ensure when remote working that your line manager is clear on what you're working on, please also make sure your time is tracked on paprika on a daily basis when working remotely, this is extremely important.

Equipment

When working remotely it is important that you have the right tools to complete your work i.e a phone and laptop. Where more specialist studio equipment is required then close liaison with your line manager will be required.

Tech support

If you have any tech issues, particularly with your laptop or phone then please contact Maria ccing Emma immediately for assistance and resolution. You must be fully operational and contactable at all times.

Communication

Open and frequent communication is necessary between remote workers and managers. It is every individual's responsibility when working remotely to check in with their line manager and team. Every manager will be accountable for their teams productivity and delivery so it is important that they are kept informed.

Client confidentiality

Client confidentiality is paramount. For example, if you're having a client call in a more public setting you have to make sure you aren't discussing or sharing sensitive information in that setting. Please ensure you dispose of all client sensitive materials or documents appropriately.

and finally

Rightful termination

No employee will be terminated on the basis of working remotely.

XXX