

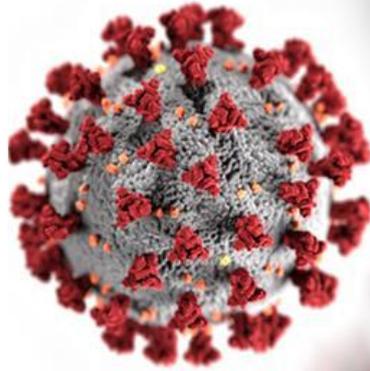
Special PMG covid-19 bulletin

Edition #001 – 19th March 2020

This is a special edition of the PMG newsletter in light of the current covid-19 situation. The purpose is to either share with you or to signpost you to useful information and tell you about fellow member's queries and questions. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

Covid-19 Most Useful websites for information

Here is a selection of government; local government; employment advisory bodies and private sector business websites that can be relied on to be frequently updated with the latest Covid-19 news for employers and businesses. As you can imagine, most include duplicate material.

A graphic with the text 'COVID-19' in large, bold, white capital letters. Below it, in smaller white capital letters, is 'CORONAVIRUS DISEASE'. The background is a blurred image of a crowd of people.

If you are a PMG member and you can't find what you are looking for, please contact stevgerry@dsl.pipex.com



HM Government COVID-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Heart of the SW LEP Growth Hub

The Heart of the South West Growth Hub is the government's main mechanism of engaging with businesses across the area through the local enterprise partnership or LEP. They are the first point of contact for businesses in the Hot SW LEP area

(Devon & Somerset, Plymouth & Torbay) wishing to develop and grow. Their service works in partnership with existing local and national business support services and will help businesses access the right support for them without duplicating existing provision.



<https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/covid-19-guidance-for-business/>

Plymouth City Council (Invest Plymouth site) –

<https://www.visitplymouth.co.uk/invest/business-support/covid-19>

InvestPlymouth

Driving Growth in Britain's Ocean City

PCC are also producing a regular covid-19 newsletter

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKPCC/bulletins/281cbe5>

Subscription point - here: <https://www.visitplymouth.co.uk/invest/news/newsletter-link>

South Hams & West Devon district councils have their own bulletin

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSWDEVON/bulletins/281dc29>

Devon County Council



<https://www.devon.gov.uk/document/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/#section-4>

Business West

Business West is the largest Chamber of Commerce in the SW. It is a not-for-profit company with 200 staff and a turnover of £10 million.

'We provide guidance & support on Coronavirus (COVID-19) for businesses, employers and employees in the region. We're working urgently to clarify how businesses can access the new measures announced by government – and will convey this to businesses as quickly as possible through the hub'.

<https://www.businesswest.co.uk/trading-through-coronavirus>



MAKEUK



The Manufacturers' Organisation

<https://www.makeuk.org/coronavirus>

All PMG members are eligible to become affiliate members of MAKEUK (formerly known as The Engineering Employers Federation). If you want to join contact

stevegerry@dsl.pipex.com

ACAS

ACAS is the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. *We work with millions of employers and employees every year to improve workplace relationships. We're an independent public body that receives funding from the government.*

This site is particularly strong on employment related issues including statutory sick pay.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>



This information is being posted on the PMG website today 19th March 2020

I News from Government & Other Agencies

Covid-19 Series of announcements to date by Government

1. Here is the latest announcements from Government since the March Budget statement.

- Chancellor delivers Budget 2020 – 11th March 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-delivers-budget-2020>
(£30 billion package of support for people and businesses).
- PM statement on coronavirus: 17th March 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-17-march-2020>
(I want to go through our overall plan for beating this new coronavirus).
- Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on COVID19 response – 17th March 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-of-the-exchequer-rishi-sunak-on-covid19-response>
(making available an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of our GDP).
- Statement from Education Secretary on Education Settings update – 18th March 2020
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2020/march/statement-from-education-secretary-on-education-settings-update/>
- PM statement on coronavirus: 18th March 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-18-march-2020>



Covid-19 and support for businesses from the Bank of England

2. *We hope very much that your families and businesses are coping with the various stresses being placed upon you during this very difficult time.*

The Bank is doing what it can, and has implemented a range of measures in recent days, some of which are in collaboration with HM Treasury and some in coordination with other central banks e.g. lowering interest rates and enacting measures to help banks continue to lend to households and businesses, ensuring liquidity in global \$ markets, and implementing a Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF). I will send an email later on today, outlining the various measures that the Bank, Government and other bodies are taking, by way of guidance and sign-posting. Other parts of the official sector have also made considerable efforts to ease the impact of coronavirus on the economy and public wellbeing, along with the steps being taken by companies and households themselves. We, the Bank's agents, will do what we can by continuing to gather intelligence from businesses to help policymakers understand what is going on at ground level. In the main, our usual individual company meetings are continuing, but by telephone rather than face to face. We quite understand if you are unable to continue to help us stay on top of developments during this challenging period, but if you can spare us your time, we would be hugely grateful.

Any additional feedback/updates that you can provide on what you are experiencing - on supply, demand, credit or other relevant, related areas - please send them to

southwest@bankofengland.co.uk or let us know if you'd prefer a phone call.

Every contribution will, as usual, be treated as confidential.

With best wishes, and many thanks for your input at this very challenging and complex time.

Malindi Myers, Agent, Bank of England, Agency for the South West St Brandon's House, 29 Great George Street, Bristol BS1 5QT Tel 07920 008235



II PMG Members' News

Whats most uppermost on the minds of our members

3. The following updates, which have been anonymised, have been received during the course of this week from our members ...

We have implemented :

- *Segregation of our production shifts*
- *Moved support functions onto a shift pattern to segregate and supplemented with home working wherever possible*
- *Visitors limited and vetted*
- *No business travel*
- *No company tours*
- *Increased cleaning regimes*
- *Education to staff on good hygiene practices*

One challenge we are finding is cisco WebEx bandwidth issues (increased global demand is causing difficulties with conducting WebExes), so any ideas on how this could be improved would be appreciated. (If you have a suggestion pl. contact via stevegerry@dsl.pipex.com)



Have already sent high risk people home & will phase in other departments over next few days with skeleton staff remaining.

Factory & production staff remain open and on site with plan to reduce shifts as & when required.

For self-isolation due to family member symptoms, we are giving the employees option of:

- *Paying statutory sick pay until they show symptoms themselves, then it goes to normal company sick pay*
- *Take holiday*
- *Take banked hours which they will have to pay back within the next 12 months*

... we are already feeling the business effects of the virus (higher than normal absenteeism). As a committee, we are probably all very busy trying to mitigate risk as much as possible within our own businesses. Please can we get PCC to provide key government information for businesses and then we can share on LinkedIn?

Key issues for us are:

School shutdowns and payment for employees - Paid, unpaid or holiday, our policy is dependency leave or holiday, but if longer than 3/4 weeks, this will become a major issue for lower paid employees with dependants if unpaid or holiday runs out and what are government going to do to support businesses or these employees.

Recovery of sickness pay as per the budget - what is the mechanism what do we need to do (how)?

A good free to use secure remote desktop tool for temporarily setting office workers up is <https://remotedesktop.google.com/> (courtesy of Jake Whitford, Pepper Comms)



Covid-19 Question & Request Corner

Two dozen Questions asked and more importantly answered on the MAKEuk website - [here](#)

- *If employees self-isolate, are they entitled to be paid?*
- *Is SSP now payable from the first day of absence?*
- *What if an employee does not have symptoms, but wishes to stay away from work because they are worried about getting Covid-19?*
- *What is the position for pregnant employees – should they still attend work?*
- *What if an employee who has symptoms (new continuous cough, or high temperature) is refusing to self-isolate and insists they are fit for work?*
- *Must employers pay contractual sick pay to employees who are self-isolating?*
- *What if an employee ignores Covid-19-related hygiene rules?*
- *Can an employer restrict an employee's personal travel?*
- *What if someone with Covid-19 comes to work? Do we need to close the workplace?*
- *Can we require employees to have their temperature tested before allowing them into the workplace?*
- *What are the data protection implications if an employer needs to gather information on which of its employees are at a high risk in relation to Covid-19 for business continuity planning purposes?*
- *What if an employee's child's school has closed due to Covid-19?*
- *What if an employee is looking after a child or other relative who has (or may have) the virus?*
- *What if we need to temporarily close our business and send staff home, e.g. because of supply chain disruption, or reduced demand for products or services?*
- *What about if public health advice is to close businesses?*
- *What legal obligations should employers keep in mind when making decisions relating to Covid-19?*
- *If an employee contracts Coronavirus at work does the case need to be reporting under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations)?*
- *Does this change due to Covid-19 being deemed a "notifiable disease"?*
- *What support for business was there for Statutory Sick Pay?*
- *Are Business Rates being adjusted to help businesses cope with the impact of Covid-19?*
- *Is there any direct funding available for businesses for 2020-21 to mitigate the impact of Covid-19?*
- *What if my business has outstanding tax liabilities that I may not be able to pay in due time because of Covid-19 related business disruption?*
- *My business is struggling to access finance due to Covid-19's impact on lender confidence, is there any new government help with financing?*
- *Can I claim on my company's insurance for any disruption and/or loss of earnings as a result of Covid-19?*



Members Questions:



- *What video conferencing software/packages are people using – especially that which is suitable for small firms?*
 - *Does anyone have a policy or guidelines to share for remote working?*
 - *What resources might members want to share – including staff?*
 - *How about sharing transport/deliveries?*
 - *What if we have to implement reduced working hours?*
- Contact stevegerry@dsl.pipex.com if you want to respond.

Sample Business Impact Policy – supplied by PMG member Pepper Comms

4. *The unexpected annoyance of Coronavirus. For us it's business as usual.*

As COVID-19 (Coronavirus) makes its way across the globe, it will inevitably affect our business, staff, families and customers in different ways.

The headline for us at Pepper is keep calm and wash your hands, but as a family run business and a business that treats its staff and customers as family, we have taken all the measures possible to make sure we have policies and procedures in place. So, as a business, we can Keep Calm and Carry on.

We have looked at the science and taken guidance from local health departments and government advice with a focus on our ability to continue work and deliver the products and services people rely on.

We're also building resilience into our operations and services by testing our capacity to work remotely. If school closures and unforeseen circumstances affect our team, we are able to provide our team the option to work from home if required.

We have outlined these steps below in our Coronavirus Business Impact Policy.

You can view and download our policy in PDF format.

[Pepper Coronavirus Business Impact Policy DOWNLOAD link V2 18 March 2020](#)



A sample staff notice sent by an anonymous Network member – sent 17th March 2020

Useful references:

NHS overview and guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

NHS online assessment <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

The UK government guidance was updated yesterday evening. With immediate effect, if you or anyone in your family have a "new and continuous cough" or a "high temperature" you are advised to self-isolate for 14 days (reduced to 7 days if you live alone).

If you think that you or a member of your household have these symptoms please do not attend work. Call your manager in line with our normal absence policy and we will advise what to do. If you develop the symptoms whilst at work, please speak to your manager as quickly as possible.

If you are required to self-isolate but feel well enough to work and if your role lends itself to homeworking, we will discuss how we can facilitate that. If you are feeling unwell or work in production, the isolation period will be classified as sick leave and you will be entitled company or statutory sick pay in line with the terms of your contract. Statutory sick pay has been extended to cover your absence from the first day.

Whilst COVID-19 related absence will be recorded as sickness, it will not be included in the "trigger levels" under the absence management procedure. You will not be required to provide the fit note unless your absence lasts longer than 14 days.

The headlines from the press conference yesterday evening have probably raised lots of questions and concerns.

Here are the key points:

- Everyone in the UK is now being advised to avoid "non-essential" contact with others and "unnecessary" travel*
- People are also being asked to work from home "where they possibly can", and avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and social venues*
- People are now being advised to stay at home for 14 days (7 days if you live alone) if they, or anyone in their household, has either a high temperature or a "new and continuous cough"*

- *People in at-risk groups will be asked within days to be "largely shielded from social contact" for 12 weeks*

Whilst some industries can transition to remote working with relative ease, due to the nature of what we do at XYZ, widespread working from home of office staff would be severely detrimental to the effectiveness of the production teams. Our engineers, buyers, sales and admin staff interact continually with the production teams and as a result we do not have systems and processes that support long term remote working on a wide scale. The health secretary has advised that if jobs do not allow working from home and "If you are healthy and not being asked to isolate because someone in your household has symptoms then of course you should still go to work. It is important that this country keeps moving as much as we possibly can, within the limits of the advice we have been given."

As a consequence, unless you are self-isolating due to illness or symptoms within the household, you should continue to attend work in XYZ. For anyone considered to fall into the high risk categories, your manager will discuss the options with you individually. If you feel more comfortable discussing an underlying condition privately, please let HR or myself know.

Pandrol Vortok respond to the Prime Minister's request for help in producing

5. PMG members are rising to the challenge made by Prime Minister Boris Johnson who is looking for support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the United Kingdom as part of the Government's response to COVID-19.

One such firm is Langage-based Pandrol Vortok who normally design and manufacture new rail engineering technology. MD, Richard Robertson told the PMG on Thursday, *"We think we may just have a nifty design that will meet the spec, low cost and in normal circumstances off the shelf components. I will register now the team think it is possible"*.



Good luck to Richard and colleagues.

The original details released by government ...

As you will be aware from media reporting, The Prime Minister c/o BEIS is looking for organisations who can support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the United Kingdom as part of the Government's response to COVID-19. They are seeking suppliers with the ability to design, manufacture or supply the following, in addition to those who have/provide medical training or logistics capabilities.

Further details, including how suppliers can respond are here: <https://ventilator.herokuapp.com/>

- Air Compressors / Pumps
- Bellows
- Self-inflating bags
- Gas mixing valves
- Pressure Regulators
- Flow Control valves
- Solenoid valves
- Pressure relief valves
- Check valves / one-way valves
- Industrial Automation components (Safety Relays, PLCs)
- Power Supplies
- Electric Motors, and motor controllers
- Linear actuators and controllers
- Tubing and fittings
- Pressure Sensors and Indicators
- Oxygen Sensors and Indicators

- Flow Sensors and Indicators
- Manometers
- Heat and moisture exchanging filters (HMEFs)
- Air Filter, HEPA Filters

Further details are available – [here](#)

Home working arrangements/practicalities – provided by Princess Yachts

6. Details of home working arrangements/practicalities are kindly provided by Princess Yachts.

Dear colleague

You (or a member of your team) has/have been identified as a potential homeworker.

Please find attached the following documentation:

1. *Homeworking Brief*
2. *Homeworker Checklist*
3. *Homeworker Risk Assessment*
4. *Homeworker Tips*

Please do the following:

1. *Read all the attachments*
2. *Homeworker to complete the checklist and return to jane.wilcox@princessyachts.com*

A minority of individuals may be exceptionally authorised to use company hardware to facilitate their homeworking, this is minimised so far as possible as the following are potential risks associated with the movement of the hardware (this doesn't include laptops, phones or iPads):

- 1) *House insurance may be affected by company equipment at home*
- 2) *Transit of IT goods in cars needs to be safe and secure*
- 3) *Damage at home is always a risk*

Handover and Return to Work:

To facilitate removal of equipment from site, the employee needs to have authorisation from IT. This will involve an inventory of the equipment removed and the physical signing of the release of this equipment. No static equipment should leave site without IT prior approval.

Regards

HR Director

Four attachments – [Homeworking brief](#); [Homeworker checklist](#); [risk assessment](#) and [Tips](#)



Report to a parent company – provided anonymously by a Network member

7. Here is a copy of an intra-company report provided anonymously by one of our smaller firms. It was sent earlier today, 19th March 2020.

"I can confirm that we are open and ahead of our production schedule. I would really like you to be aware;

1. *I am incredibly proud of the team here who are undertaking a sensible approach and keeping the factory open. There is not a single member of staff here that isn't fully behind the company, nobody in my opinion is doing anything other than giving their all to support the business as best they can! All of us without exception have made a commitment to multi-function, including cleaning the factory, producing product, inspections etc without a second thought. (Obviously we will undertake all of that safely and sensibly)*
2. *We are open and can operate at 100% capacity, we are in fact approximately 1 week ahead of our production plan for the month. I will update you with a forecast on Friday.*
3. *We have no material supply issues to report, product from China is now on the way*
4. *We will by this evening have finished the IT project that ensures all those who can work from home are equipped to do so. Status update;*
 - a. **Engineering** *4 Engineers able to continue working from home on CAD capable machines. XXXX and XXXX already operating this way*
 - b. **Quality** *XXXX our Quality Manager has to self-isolate for 6 more days (assuming all is well) but is fully functional from home.*

- c. **Sales** XXX,XXX & XXXX are all fully functional from home and operating that way as of 9:00 am.
 - d. **Sales Admin & Business analyst** XXXX is fully functioning at home (self-isolating as precaution – No symptoms) XXXX is in the office but is fully home functioning capable
 - e. **Procurement and Production Management** Both XXXX and XXXX are in the office bar are also fully home functioning capable
5. We have the ability to seamlessly answer land line calls made to the office on 6 company mobile phones. This is an app based service and allows us to manage who gets the calls and when etc.
 6. We actually have 1 additional member of staff here today after a false alarm required him to go home yesterday
 7. We will be shipping on a “soon as we can” basis to get products invoiced as per our email exchange yesterday. Currently none of our customers are reporting that depots are closed although some companies are imposing their own local receipt of goods policies based on medical advice.
 8. I have compressed the working day so that everyone can leave at 4 pm so that they can get to supermarkets ahead of the 5 pm spike in footfall. This also allows a little more time for them to help family and neighbours etc. I will also allow people to arrive slightly late if the need to do an early morning shop.

I would also say that the first real tranche of government support to business was announced yesterday, I will relay the details to you over the next few days as they are released for the various packages. In addition there are support packages for individuals, some yet to be announced, that I will ensure all staff are fully aware of.

Whilst we have spent some money on CAD capable IT equipment, and some of our booked travel will be lost, we are looking to cut costs where possible and will be chasing up debts etc with a renewed vigour. I am particularly pleased with how quickly we have been able to act to enable such a strong ability to really operate from home with such effectiveness!”

We have nobody diagnosed, nor anybody showing symptoms but Have 1 Engineer working from home as he has a child with immune issues, and two people isolation, one as his partner has shown signs.

Sample intranet site from a PMG member

8. Here, shown below, is a Covid-19 entry on one of our larger member's site.



COMPANY UPDATES

Key Message

Symptoms

- The symptoms of Coronavirus are:
 - a new, continuous cough and/or
 - a high temperature
 - shortness of breath
- But these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.
- For most people COVID-19 will be a mild illness

Self-isolation

- If you are showing some or all of the symptoms above, you need to self-isolate for a minimum period of 7 days from when the symptoms appeared (further details - [link](#))
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14 day period starts from when the first person in the house became ill.
- Please follow this [link](#) for full details of stay at home guidelines from GOV.UK

Working from home

- Where possible and practical, Plessey will support employees working from home. Please discuss with your line-manager.
- Where possible, IT will provide additional hardware and methods to support employees working from home.

Company sick pay applies

- As with all sickness, Company sick pay policy will apply, see Plessey Employee Handbook for details ([link](#))
- When self-isolating and not showing symptoms (i.e. another member of the family is showing symptoms) and your job function does not allow you to work from home:
 - You will get your normal pay, including shift premium (enhanced company sick-pay from day one), on the basis that those hours are banked and subsequently recovered over a twelve month period OR
 - Claim statutory sick pay only from day one (SSP @ £94.25/week).
 - Alternatively this time may be taken as unpaid leave or paid holiday.
 - You will need to get written approval, please contact HR when appropriate.

Essential travel only

- Only essential travel will be authorised and this must be approved through your line manager.

What we're doing and how you can help

- Ensure that all gatherings and meetings are essential
 - Use Teams for Unified Communications and Video calling where possible.
 - Where practical, keep a safe distance between individuals
- Additional cleaning and wiping down of surfaces is being carried out throughout the site, including the pool car and deep clean of the canteen.
- All visitors to site to follow clearly signed hand sanitisation / hand washing processes.
- Additional equipment is being purchased and configured to allow home working where possible.
- Avoid shaking hands

If you would like to help, please see the ViralKindness Postcard ([link](#)). You can use this to help support fellow employees.

Public Health England @PHE_UK
If someone in your household has symptoms of #coronavirus, everyone in the household should stay at home for 14 days. Read the full guidance here: bit.ly/3b3Uaqj

HM Government NHS
Coronavirus
Stay at home: guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection

Public Health England Retweeted
Department of Health and Social Care @DHSCgovuk
Various information is circulating on social media about which medicines to use to help treat the symptoms of coronavirus.

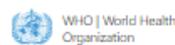
NHS advice:
✔ take paracetamol to treat the symptoms of coronavirus, unless your doctor has told you it's not suitable for you.

HM Government NHS
Ibuprofen and paracetamol
There is currently no strong evidence that ibuprofen can make coronavirus (COVID-19) worse. But even so, here's more information: take paracetamol to treat the symptoms of coronavirus, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol is not suitable for you.
If you are already taking ibuprofen or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) on the advice of a doctor, do not stop taking it without checking first.

Public Health England Retweeted
Department of Health and Social Care @DHSCgovuk
We're introducing the #Coronavirus Bill to Parliament.
It will mean the government can take the right action at the right time to protect the public, the NHS and social care staff.
Measures will only be used when strictly necessary.
More info: gov.uk/government/publications

HM Government NHS
Coronavirus
We are introducing emergency legislation to help in the fight against coronavirus

Main resources



III Business to Business

Professional Services communications received over the course of this week

9. The following communications from Plymouth-based professional services firms have been received over the course of this week. Undoubtedly more will follow!

Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP

The COVID-19 outbreak is going to lead to months of uncertainty for employers, with many having to grapple with making some very difficult decisions.

<https://youtu.be/OP-hDluM8sk>

Foot Anstey Employment Bulletin

This month's employment bulletin is earlier than usual, because we want to share practical guidance about COVID-19 with you as soon as possible. We hope this briefing will help you in your response to the epidemic and answers the questions you'll undoubtedly get from within your organisation. If there's a question you'd like us to answer which we haven't touched on in these briefings, please let us know. We will support our clients and readers however we can.

Newsletter - [here](#)

Bishop Fleming - Tackling COVID-19

Providing assurance and help to our clients and contacts

We recognise that the current situation surrounding COVID-19 will be a cause of major concern to everyone but we want to assure our clients, prospective clients, contacts and suppliers that we are committed to ensuring the continuity of our services to you.

We know that many of you are going to require additional assistance and we are available to work with you through this challenging time.

To help, we have created a [COVID-19 Knowledge Hub](#) on our website that will curate and host an increasing number of useful links, resources, guidance, information and contact details providing help for individuals and different types of businesses across all our sectors.

We have instigated our business continuity planning and a central team is co-ordinating our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These include measures to support our people as they face their own challenges and we are enabling our people to work from home.

Our business is set up to work in agile way and we are ready to ensure our services can be delivered to you as seamlessly as possible and any disruption is minimised. How we are doing this and what this means to you can be viewed in more [detail here on our website](#) – which we will update as the situation evolves.

We are ready to help you where we can so please do not hesitate to speak to your Bishop Fleming contacts directly. All existing contact details will continue to operate as normal.

Andrew Sandiford, Managing Partner

Home Working in a Technology Environment. Been there, done that, sharing what I wish I had known at the start!

10. This article was published on March 18, 2020 by Allan Proudfoot ISO13485 Internal Auditor; Director Medilink South West; ISO9001 and ISO13485 Quality Consultant who is well known to several PMG members.



My experience

I worked from home for a major semiconductor corporation from around 2009 to 2019 initially temporarily, and then permanently, having found that 'it worked'. Over this period I had quality responsibility for teams in several countries covering everything from silicon chips used in life-sustaining Medical Components, chips for Power-over-Ethernet, phone networks, in-car WiFi and pretty much everything in between. Simultaneously.

Which meant that wherever I was in the world, I would be remote working as far as the other locations were concerned.

What I wish I had known at the start. And what I learned. Sometimes the hard way.

1. Contact

Much can be made of the lack of face-to-face contact. There are many technological routes which can replace this from simple phone calls to Skype, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp and a multitude of similar platforms. Most of these allow real time sharing of user screens, presentations, data and voice. In technological fields this covers a large percentage of what information needs to be shared; video can be nice to have but it is not critical.

I have used most, if not all of the above along with video calls, voice calls and SMS texting as appropriate. All can work in the right situation, so choose the appropriate means for the task in hand. A simple text along the lines of 'can you give me a ring when you have a couple of minutes free', or 'can you call me at 2pm' can be very effective. SMS would not however be of much use when reviewing a sales forecast or making a business investment decision.

Be responsive on emails. If you receive an email that has clearly been used as an alternative to someone sticking their head round your door or stopping by your desk then if you cannot reply in detail immediately, do acknowledge receipt. Just as you would hope someone else would do if you sent one. Do not copy the world on emails. Think of this as shouting out all your business in an open plan office. If you would shout out something to everyone, then go ahead and copy them. Especially so if there is an opportunity for learning or celebration.

Advising, reviewing, decision making, procedure auditing and staff appraisals can all be done remotely with some forethought and planning - although of course any manufacturing line assessments or direct interventions cannot.

2. Time Management

I was in the fortunate position of loving my job. I was living the dream (weird for a Quality Manager, but there you go!).

I have seen little in Linked-in or other places on the effect of the absence of a commute. Love the commute or hate it, it acts as a break between home life and work life. So set a start time and a finish time for your work. If you are used to having a break at 10am, have a break at 10am. But keep it the same length as it would have been in the office. Same goes for lunch time. If you habitually work through lunch then carry on doing so. If you stop for an hour for a sandwich, stop for an hour and have a sandwich. If you go out to the pub every lunchtime with your friends, prepare to be disappointed!

Ask younger and older family members to pretend that you are away at the office while you are working and not to interrupt. Attempt to find a working space that is away from too many distractions, as far as possible.

Missing the home commute is the one that surprised me. It is incredibly easy to forget to stop working. I have eaten evening meals while sitting at my laptop hours after I would have otherwise left the office, got in the car and finished work for the day - doing stuff that did not need to be done then. Work and home life can easily blend into each other and both can be adversely affected. So...

At the end of your working day find a way of stopping!!! What worked for me was decisively shutting down my computer and announcing to the house (sometimes empty, sometimes not) 'I'm home!'. It feels weird at first, but it does work.

Meeting discipline is critical. If you thought it was difficult keeping people that did not really need to be in a meeting awake when you could go up and outstare them, it is impossible in a remote meeting. So do what you know you always should have done.

- Only invite people to a meeting that need to be there. Those not there will appreciate the extra time that can be used to get stuff done.
- Circulate an agenda beforehand
- Have a timekeeper if the meeting is a long one
- Allow time for comfort breaks.
- Be tolerant of dogs barking, children crying and other noises that you would rather not think too much about where they may have come from.
- If an attendee on a headset is a distracting heavy breather then politely ask them to mute themselves. They will be the only person in the meeting that does not know they are doing it, and are unlikely to be psychic. Same goes for keyboard warriors that have the deft touch of an elephant.

3. Team Management

Similar rules apply to managing remote staff as to doing the same in an office environment - but more so. If remedial coaching is necessary then this should be on a one-to-one basis and not copying the whole virtual office. Think closed door. In some ways remote coaching can be an advantage as there is less risk of loss of face for an individual since other office members do not see someone called in for a 'discussion'. It is crucial that emotions do not get in the way of good communication. Check that points are made and understood. Check that any expected actions *and timescales* are understood. And agreed. Compliments and achievements should still be shared, albeit without donuts or pizza.

Have regular team meetings but keep them brief and to the point; there is no harm in doing a round-table 'how are you', though. If you have quiet team members then do not forget them - make sure they are included in discussions and have the opportunity to express their opinions.

Once again, accept that dogs barking, children crying and doorbells ringing are inevitable and a part of home life.

Bottom Line(s)

There is undoubtedly more that I have forgotten than I have written but if this helps one person be more confident then this article has achieved something.

If you think something cannot be done remotely, then you will be correct. If you think it can, then in most cases you will also be correct.

Most of all, be tolerant and respectful. If you are new to home working and feel uncomfortable, then the people you are dealing with are probably in the same position. In these times, it is possible a home-worker may also be caring for a family member.

Stay safe, everyone.

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Inspire and South West Growth Service launch free Coronavirus support for business owners

11. The ramifications of Coronavirus on South West businesses has already created a shockwave across the peninsula, with recognition that the impact will neither be short term or modest. Few, if any, businesses have been unaffected with orders being cancelled, staff being forced to stay at home and cash resources being quickly depleted.

With this backdrop, **Inspire** and **South West Growth Service** have launched a support service that will allow business owners to have comprehensive advice from experienced management consultants as part of an overarching programme to protect SW businesses from the worst of the Coronavirus impacts and to facilitate seeing the opportunities that lie ahead in a collaborative way.

The service is online or via telephone and will allow businesses to obtain both strategic and practical advice.

To access this **free** support, please contact:

Tel: 01884 220150 or 0117 203 4288

Email: info@southwestgrowthservice.co.uk or inspireteam@inspirebiz.co.uk

Daily online drop in 1215-1245: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/7832534841>



Other sources of advice and articles:

Getting homeworking right – CIPD - [here](#)

Leadership, Resilience, and the COVID-19 Outbreak

As the world mobilizes to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus, uncertainty abounds. One thing is clear, however: the COVID-19 outbreak underscores the need for business and society to be resilient and prepared—qualities that will be in demand long after public health has been restored. Boston Consulting Group - [here](#)

V Events on hold ...

Mayflower 400 Plymouth Programme - Latest Position

12. *In light of the latest UK Government information and guidance regarding coronavirus, we are currently in contact with our many partners, event organisers and host venues in the city to work through the implications on the Mayflower 400 events and activity programme.*

Plymouth's Mayflower 400 events in March, April and May will be cancelled or postponed and we will announce details of what is happening on the Mayflower 400 website and through our social channels as soon as clear guidance is available.

The latest Mayflower 400 events in Plymouth to be cancelled or postponed are [here](#)

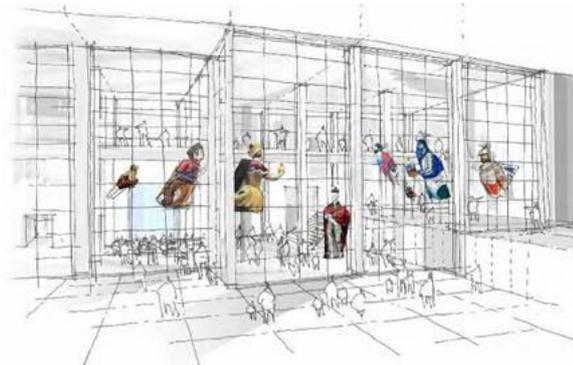
Opening of 'The Box' postponed

13. *In recent weeks we've been monitoring the fast changing health situation regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) and taking regular advice from the Director of Public Health.*

We've been trying to remain positive but, based on the most up-to-date advice from the government, we've decided to postpone our launch on 16 May.

We'll also be postponing our Preview Weekend on 2 and 3 May but still intend to hold this later in the year. Your registration will automatically be included in our ticket ballot for the new opening date.

We'll be reviewing the situation regularly and will announce a new opening date as soon as we can.



Credits:

The Editor of this newsletter is grateful to various news sources for stories contained either herein or in previous editions, including: insidermedia.com; [Plastics & Rubber Weekly](#); [The Manufacturer](#) and [Plymouth Herald](#)

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NB: Some weblinks are only accessible temporarily until the release of the next edition of this newsletter. Pl. contact the editor if you cannot access the link you require. stevegerry@dsl.pipex.com

If you want to read what some people are saying about this newsletter please see [here](#) and scroll down towards the bottom of the screen. All comments are unsolicited. Please send me your own if you wish!

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