



## What did we learn during 'lockdown'?

The coronavirus pandemic, the latest 'black swan' which emerged at the beginning of 2020, has dominated our lives and certainly changed our planet dramatically. Whilst everyone on the planet has been affected by it in one way or another, according to the International Labour Organisation, some 81% (4 out of 5 people) of the global workforce of some 3.3 billion people have experienced either full or partial workplace closures. As the world emerges from these unprecedented times, there are many things all of us need to consider.

*"You'll find that many of the truths you cling to depend greatly on your point of view" – Obi-Wan Kenobi*

### ***Remote working, when forced upon people, doesn't work so well.***

Those individuals, forced and expected as they were to simply 'lift and shift' from office to home largely suffered through isolation, irregular conditions and an absent leadership, which only served to further disengage and disconnect them, leaving them unsure of quite what to do. A business vacuum was established where "I'll look like I'm working and attend a Zoom meeting" (external dialogue) concealed the real (internal dialogue) "I haven't got a clue what to do, where or even how to it, so I'll just pretend, then go on social media, watch online videos, stream some TV and follow the news."

Humans operate in a herd mentality, and therefore such isolation, with its accompanying all-pervasive and constant media commentary, only served to highlight the individual's tendency to be influenced by outside sources. The usual desire for peer to peer connection fed upon this new, unusual source of direction and in the absence of a normal business focus, work continuance and growth failed spectacularly; the results of will show up clearly in later business employment, performance, financial numbers and results.

### ***Technology let us all down.***

Sure, it brought many people access to Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Netflix and a ton of memes shared on instant messaging (and we're all agreed that we'd never have survived lockdown without WiFi and humor) but, other than that... ho-hum.

There were no massive technological breakthroughs. No artificial intelligence or robots coming to humanity's rescue. No big data cracking the corona code. Nothing new happened at all. Just a lot more spam arrived and people merely realized how full their inboxes were with previously unresolved issues.

Whilst people did use webcams more than ever, which helped them see up a lot of other people's noses, as well as how they lived in their backgrounds which wasn't that great after all, the promised utopia of the I.T. gurus simply never materialized. In truth, unless a massive technological breakthrough arrives at our doorsteps soon, it looks as if we can expect nothing more exciting into

the immediate future than the release of 5G, which everyone will argue about the security and health benefits of, and an updated series of smartphones and watches, which will be just as expensive as the old ones. Yawn.

***Real engagement was missing in action.***

Business is going to have to rapidly learn to dramatically adapt its thinking as to how it presents and communicates itself both internally and externally in these new times. Most businesses and its leaders came across as either missing in action or appallingly poor at real communication. Stronger engagement is more essential to employees, suppliers, channel partners and customers than ever before. People wanted to look to their leaders to emerge to ignite their roles. Partners and suppliers wanted to commit to those business leaders who in turn were fully transparent with them. Consumers wanted real information, in real-time. It never arrived, other than in the form of old-fashion cliché-ridden P.R. emails which endeavored to tell them just 'how really important they were to the business concerned and that 'normal service would be resumed shortly'.

***A 75-year-old died.***

Coronavirus brought about the death of globalization. Born at the end of the second world war in 1945, this septuagenarian concept has now lived its full term and simply departed this earth. To be fair, there were signs of its demise; being admitted to the I.C.U. when Trump and Johnson sought to 'go it alone' and put their respective Western countries on solo tracks, following similar policies from Russia, India, and China for example. There can now be no doubt that the 'one global world' concept is now truly dead and buried. We shall soon witness many more versions of 'Make \_\_\_\_\_ Great Again' emerge very soon; where all you need do is merely insert the name of any country in the gap.

***Lots of stuff became meaningless (but will soon have meaning again).***

Like football, celebrities, and fashion. In truth, a lot of such things made us briefly pause and reflect on them and their importance and value, yet soon we'll be right back to following such delights as Manchester United and the Kardashians, regardless. Why? It's the very concept of humanity being intertwined with community and interactivity. Such things make us human. We have an innate human internal desire to imitate others and an ability to see things from another human's perspective.

It's the reason we have malls, slang, restaurants, film stars and favorite football teams. Our human interactive, gregarious, tribal and social activities are by far and away the most time-consuming and enjoyable activities of our days. We want to be connected, share strong emotions, admire and envy others whilst we are admired and envied, and to tell each other stories of the same.

Lockdown made people first pause, stop and think, and then secretly long once again for their 'normal' way of life to resume.

***We treated 'lockdown' as a punishment.***

Although created and meant as a state of isolation to be instituted as a positive security measure against an unseen enemy, people came to see it as a form of imprisonment, offering them little or no contact with friends, family or loved ones beyond their immediate circumstances and immediately rebelled against it mentally, triggering human negative emotional states of shock, denial, frustration, anger, and depression, which feelings were further compounded by whatever media they consumed.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture states that ‘solitary confinement beyond 15 days constitutes a cruel and inhuman punishment’ and as such, so was lockdown seen.

***Some things that we secretly enjoyed.***

The fact that we didn’t have to spend three hours a day in traffic. The ability to slow down and look at the small stuff. A new found focus on who and what we are. A reconnection with family. The ability to reevaluate time and how we manage it for ourselves. Our ability to try, and successfully learn new things.

Interestingly, the biggest secret of all is that we could have arranged, created and done all of these things in ‘the old world’ but had previously been too busy rushing around endeavoring to feel and look important to notice or make a plan.

## **So, what’s going to change?**

***We’ll be noticing some changes for some time to come. My predictions are as follows:***

***Inside: It’s never going to be ‘business as usual’ ever again***

1. Financial management will come under massive pressure
2. Mega competitive entities will evolve and emerge
3. Just-in-time global supply chains will be assessed for resilience
4. The economy won’t recover until around 2025
5. Organizations who deliver no tangible, material or financial value will close
6. Your company is going to be closely focussing on its own, and your value
7. You will be expected to develop additional capabilities
8. Executive bonuses, pay increases and 13th cheques will be hard to come by
9. Technology will play a greater visible role in your workplace and your work
10. More business transparency and communication skills will be demanded by all sectors

***Outside: It’s never going to be ‘life as usual’ ever again***

1. Politics will become more visible and authoritarian
2. Globalization will give way to nationalization
3. All public buildings, areas and gatherings will face new rules
4. Peer-to-peer communities will strengthen
5. Social distancing will evolve and become more natural
6. You’ll need to obtain and carry a ‘travel health passport’ or ‘visa’
7. A move to visible online servicing and communication will grow
8. There’ll be a swing to shop, play and work, where you can, online
9. Rampant consumerism will slow
10. In homes, technology will expand beyond a smart TV and demand new spacing

## **What should businesses be doing now\*?**

Looking to implement leadership, though communication. Creating, developing and presenting your strategic story that inspires employees, excites partners, attracts customers, and engages influencers. A story that is concise but comprehensive. Specific but with room to grow. One that defines your company’s purpose, communicates your strategy, and embodies your culture.

A strategic narrative is a special kind of story. It says who you are as a company. Where you've been, where you are, and where you are going. It speaks volumes as to how you create value and what you deliver in a business transaction or relationship. It explains why you exist and what makes you unique. It revisits the core DNA of your business, drawn up from the original vision and ethos of your founder(s) and molds it into the appropriate shape, texture, methodology, and content of today.

***\*Why my story is yours:***

*As a professional speaker at over 2 700 conferences in some 46 countries about Change, in the world before coronavirus, I present myself to you now, post coronavirus, as a speaker without a keynote.*

*My new profession is now to help create, shape and deliver your story to inspire your employees, excite your partners, attract your customers and engage influencers. My work is to assist in redefining your purpose, communicating your strategy and direction and embodying your culture.*

Regards

Michael Jackson

Mobile: 0027 (0)83 641 5809

[www.theothermichaeljackson.com](http://www.theothermichaeljackson.com)

<http://about.me/theothermichaeljackson>

Skype: theothermichaeljackson