



# **COVID-19**

The Ways of  
Working in the  
Mobility Industry

ENNIS & CO

Ennis & Co are trusted by many of the world's leading automotive and mobility brands to appoint their senior leaders.

We carry out executive search assignments for organisations across the entire automotive spectrum, ranging from manufacturers to national sales companies (high-volume through to prestige and luxury brands), as well as supply chain companies, retail groups, leasing/mobility providers, data analytics organisations and innovative technology companies.

With the pandemic transforming how we live forever, I wanted to do something positive around this crazy time as you know I do not like preaching. I much prefer "doing".

Recently I have listened to a great deal of webinars, read many articles on LinkedIn and watched numerous news updates; yet most importantly, I have spoken to a number of our clients, candidates, suppliers and contacts. This has proven the most insightful and I wanted to share my thoughts and observations with you and try and consolidate a lot of the information that's out there – pulling it together so it's all in one place.

If, however, there was a time that will see diversity and inclusion stretched beyond the normal topics, it's definitely today... and I actually think this could be a lightbulb moment for us all.

Over the last two years of completing research and holding conferences in partnership with Auto Trader focused on diversity and inclusion, bizarrely, we found flexible working was an important recurring theme, which really resonates with what we are seeing today. Within this, we found that employers were facing new



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realities when developing working practices to meet employee expectations, coupled with the commercial needs of the organisation. In order to make a real difference the outcome was simple: ensuring employees were led by example – such as leaving work on time and working flexibly when necessary, such as doing the school run. The work/life balance was important in terms of D&I; but we needed to focus on 'thawing out' old practices and keeping the strategy simple to make the idea of flexible working... work.

It's also interesting to reflect on the research we conducted just last year, where we found that gender was still an important aspect of diversity and inclusion for many, yet the focus was beginning to shift on broader areas. The outcomes of this investigation involve the whole organisation implementing a D&I initiative to make it more authentic.

This also led to the discussion of authenticity of a D&I strategy that would work to create fantastic brand awareness; something high on the D&I agenda over the past few years. The subject of which we were eager to explore further in our D&I conference that should have taken place in May yet clearly couldn't go ahead during this time. Which is why this document exists in its place instead...

What I have tried to do within this document is:

1. **Look back** through history to see what we have really learned
2. **Assess** how we deal with the unexpected
3. **Review** how adaptable we really are as a sector
4. **Evaluate** what the new 'normal' might look like for "contemporary working"
5. **Now's the time to give something back...**

# HISTORY HAS A HABIT OF REPEATING ITSELF

A project I was involved in some twenty years ago whilst working for a global organisation was around the world of "contemporary working". We had carried out a study looking at global trends from both a client and candidate perspective on the future of the world of work.

This mainly assessed how **individuals** wanted to work versus how **employers** wanted to retain their talent. We modelled talent on time schemes as well as remote working, and asked questions around "what do you do?"

A "job for life" had become managing a set of different work experiences. What people did, where they worked and their skills they needed were changing. We found the following:

- Both individuals and companies were demanding more, but were unsure how to manage and navigate the journey.

## What did we do?

- We worked with various organisations and the three main areas we looked at were around:

### People, Knowledge & Innovations



In evaluating these areas, we understood their strategy around revenue, efficiency, innovation, thought leadership and organisation and culture.

We encouraged forward thinking, worked inclusively with both individuals and companies, listened to industry and professional experts for advice (which in turn brought fresh thinking) which transpired as an engaging solution and to build trust; which was the most important aspect of all.

Some of these solutions would, and did, see considerable change; be that in downsizing the business, redundancies, working with unions and work councils and fundamental changes to the organisation.

Back then, naturally, things were evolving in the world of diversity and inclusion; yet this was not specifically under the diversity and inclusion umbrella. There were elements involved that were not specifically "known" as diversity and inclusion; yet the formula was there.

**01** Talent on time for a global outsourcer: We deployed a remote recruitment team to deliver this concept, where their core aim was to find talent to work within new environments, allowing people to gain experience such as working in different countries, alongside different cultures, and truly experiencing new ways of working. Using this method, we completely re-aligned a global call centre into one region with fourteen different languages present; ultimately helping to ensure efficiency and a heightened knowledge base for the organisation. From a company perspective, this was extremely cost-effective, logical, and useful, essentially amalgamating all their call centres into one area. It was quite a challenging exercise from a logistics perspective, yet in the end it had long terms benefits. It was a success on many levels; particularly the people-focus and the improvement of the overall company culture, with an ultimately unique and diverse team.

**02** Production expansion: We helped a leading OEM increase production by developing a three-tiered shift programme, allowing for production levels and budgets to be exceeded. In order to achieve this goal, we had to work with the specified unions to agree the "new way" of working, making way for three different shift patterns to be opened and available to the different candidates being considered. The result of which saw that flexible contracts helped increase candidate response considerably, as well as portraying the organisation as accommodating to their workforce. In essence, this helped open opportunities to wider talent pools due to the consideration of the unique needs of working for many different candidates; as it really does resonate that it isn't a "one size fits all" situation when it comes to working patterns. This, in turn, heightened the business's brand presence as an inclusive organisation to work for.

**03** Resourcing and training: Working with a leading global telecoms provider, we helped to change their resourcing model to include an individual candidate, plus all their training requirements, hence continually training and up-skilling individuals for the needs of the business. This allowed for a truly flexible work focus with trained individuals ready to go from a "waiting bench" perspective. We did this to try and identify different pools of talent in different workforces; for example, candidates with sight difficulties who are excellent communicators. It was ultimately about finding new areas of talent and providing the training for them to enhance skills already there.

**04** Re-designing an engineering sales workforce: We developed a solution to manage and schedule a strategy for a niche, complex sales organisation. This solution allowed for the employee's skills and the business needs to be matched and managed in an outsourced solution. This allowed for a re-imagined workforce in order to boost productivity and decrease risk following an intricate review of what was needed for the organisation. It was a solution that really worked on a level that focused on re-designing "from the ground up" where the increase in productivity was key.

# HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE UNEXPECTED?

“ The automotive industry has a real opportunity to fundamentally move the sector forward

Normal reactions when you are presented with the unexpected is to go into “shock status”. This is somewhat strange to me, as I believe we have been dealing with change for a long time now.

“Change” is what I have been calling the new normal for some time, however, a global pandemic is somewhat unusual (a very large understatement). Changes in business have occurred and been adapted to with “normal” skills, which will have helped in some ways. Businesses have had to get used to continual change and, maybe that is what we need to coin the “normal” way.

So, after the initial shock comes the individuals who get themselves into “action mode”, deciding what to do and how to start re-balance every day for the business versus their employee obligations.

After dissecting the government statements, the prioritising starts where frequent calls and hourly/daily/weekly communications and decisions come into play – with Directors trying to ensure that the business doesn’t completely fall off a cliff.

Decisions surrounding what’s right for the business versus the right things to do for employees is always the tough one, as shareholders and Boards will all want their say. The question: “why didn’t we take our business online before?” will be asked, as well as: “how much business modelling can we do so we have every eventuality covered?”

Irrespective of the size of the business, or the business sector, everyone is in the same boat. However, some

businesses have really got their act together and taken advantage of the situation. This shows fantastic leadership and decision making, which just proves it is possible to deal with the unexpected and develop a resistant skill set.

The automotive industry has a real opportunity to fundamentally move the sector forward. However devastating this disease has been, let’s just hope that some good will come out of it.

Organisations now need to start asking the questions:

- What should my business be? Particularly focusing on size, scale, and operation
- What skills do I need and require for this business now and in the future?
- How do I need to retain them and how can I employee the best talent in the future to make my business and brand sustainable?

These questions should be asked before “what structure do I need?” as employees will now want to work differently. Organisations will need to find a balance between achieving a commercial result and satisfying their Boards and stakeholders. However, what “good” will look like for these parties might be very different now and for the foreseeable future.

What’s “now” and what’s “next” in the world of work will mean a new approach to working.

It’s a big idea.

**And it’s going to be your idea.**

# HOW ADAPTABLE ARE WE AS A SECTOR?



What has really surprised and delighted me through this challenging time is the industry's ability to adapt, help and inspire. There are many examples, but just as we are in awe of our NHS for the incredible job they do, (and continue to do), here are some examples of how the industry has come together to help in these crazy times.

As always, it's good to find the good, so, thank you. We have shown the world we can make stuff happen:

## **UK manufacturers adapt factories to build ventilators for the NHS.**

McLaren have been major players in their support of ventilator production during the COVID-19 crisis for the UK healthcare system, as part of the VentilatorChallengeUK Consortium; with their skilled engineers working tirelessly to produce lifesaving equipment for the NHS.

McLaren were also the first large organisation to quarantine staff, the first to voluntarily remove themselves from the Australian GP, the first F1 team to announce drivers are taking a pay cut; plus they have been praised for their clear and consistent messaging to employees, fans and consumers throughout.

**Jaguar Land Rover (JLR)** is scaling up production of its protective face visors in a continued effort to support the fight against Coronavirus. New tooling, developed by WHS Plastics, will produce a further 14,000 visors each week for key workers across the UK.

Other organisations involved include Rolls Royce, Vauxhall, Airbus and more.

The plan aims to harness the power of British industry to assemble machines, as well as lending high-level design and 3D-printing capabilities to help companies that already make ventilators to produce more. Vauxhall has offered to help with 3D printing and putting together the crucial devices, working from technical drawings to be provided in the next few days by the public research and development body Innovate UK.

## **Emergency aftersales services remain open**

Key workers and essential service vehicles are being checked and kept operational by garages across the UK. Recovery services such as **The AA** are also still operating. This is all in order to keep roads safe and help to support key workers.

**Marshall Motors** and **Vertu Motors** have recognised the efforts of their car retail workforce to support the NHS and other key workers during the coronavirus lockdown period. Marshall Motor Holdings have kept 62 of its aftersales operations open across the UK. Furloughed Vertu staff have also been volunteering to help the NHS by delivering medication for pharmacies and providing cars for the NHS.

**TrustFord**, part of the **Ford Retail Group**, the UK's largest Ford dealer group, announced that it will continue to provide aftersales services with a "skeleton staff", while its Part Plus business will also continue to operate.

## **Free meals and rides for NHS workers:**

Companies such as Uber have offered free trips for NHS workers during the crisis. Apps such as FREE NOW and Gett have also created a special booking offer for NHS workers, along with support from BP Chargemaster, which is supporting these initiatives by providing charging credit for electric taxi drivers who are participating in the scheme.

## **Donations of masks and safety screens for passengers:**

LEVC have donated 40,000 masks to arm the NHS in the fight against coronavirus, alongside Geely. Germany have also been relying on LEVC's electric TX taxi and TX shuttle services during the outbreak, particularly due to the glass partition which completely separates driver and passenger; allowing for safe travel, yet the ability to communicate via integrated microphone and loudspeaker.

## **Caring for key workers and employees:**

Micheldever Tyres operate their business from 14 warehouses, 7 wholesale sales offices and 157 retail stores across the UK. Micheldever have worked hard to ensure their operations are continuing to run smoothly. Any sales or head office phone calls are being diverted to staff who are working from home, deliveries are

continuing as normal following government guidelines and they have worked tirelessly to ensure they're open for service; particularly for those in need of travel, such as key workers and front-line workers.

## **Putting people first:**

Cox Automotive were the first in the industry to move their auction business completely online; a huge step in the direction of the future of technology and the maintenance of safety during these unpredictable times.

Amidst adapting to infrastructure changes, Cox continue to put their people first; their social media is full of helpful hints, videos, and networks to help support employees during the outbreak. And the feedback from their employees speaks volumes.

Adaptability will continue to thrive; as well as, with hope, volunteering and assisting to support the needs of others. In this respect, it will be extremely interesting to see in the next twelve months how practical we have all been; from a diversity and inclusion perspective and beyond. For me, this is something that needs to be reviewed and I hope I'm sat reflecting, in twelve months' time, on some truly incredible positive changes from all of this.

# WHAT "NORMAL" MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR CONTEMPORARY WORKING

Inevitably, there will be some very difficult decisions that organisations are going to have to face. Individuals will lose their jobs, companies will unfortunately fail and job security will be something that nobody will be able to ever take for granted anymore.

Businesses will have to be scaled to the appropriate levels, salaries and bonuses will certainly be reviewed and behaviours will undoubtedly be challenged. Organisations that come through this will be different and the "new normal" for working might be challenging, however, for me, I think it really resonates that diversity in the workplace will now become more paramount than ever.

Having shared the information I have, I think organisations and workforces will realise that they need to support each other during the bad times, as well as the good.

On this note, here are some of the discussion areas that have resonated with me following numerous conversations with our clients, candidates, and contacts, which I thought would be useful to share:

## 01

**Job Flexibility:** It's pretty clear that a great deal of jobs are operating on a flexible scale- and with that, one size really doesn't fit all. Yet for me, I believe a great deal of this newly adapted flexibility relates to a great deal of trust from employers. Can work be "a thing you do, not a place you go?" Can this now be implemented in everyday working life, leading to people physically not having to travel to offices, leading to less need for office "bases" and heightened digital communication? Absolutely. This entire situation has proven that "the show must go on" and I truly think business infrastructure will drastically change because of this. It already has when you look at factors such as flexible working hours, where many people have found themselves trying to balance care (either childcare or for the vulnerable at home) with work responsibilities. This also goes hand-in-hand with productivity. Again, I refer back to the point that each person has their own unique situation; so, somebody could be completing their best work at 5am to suit their home schedule, or later in the evening when the kids are in bed. Work hours are currently quite different for those who have had to adapt and overcome.

## 04

**Innovation:** Innovative thinking has shone through for me a great deal during this outbreak. Instead of admitting defeat and saying "we can't do that/ we don't have the infrastructure in place" ... businesses have broken the mould when it comes to saying "yes, we can." If your spotlight in the biggest car show in the world has suddenly been fizzled out... create your own show using innovative ideas from your workforce and keep your consumers happy. If you can't physically be there to deliver your services... think of another way. It's high time for organisations to shine in what they're doing here. And I, for one, think they've made employees, and consumers, immensely proud.

## 07

**Travelling to work:** How comfortable we feel travelling will also be not only a challenge for us morally, but safety will also be paramount. The enhanced worries of closely compacted tube, bus, plane, and train travel will be a worry for many. Each mode of travel will have to find ways of enabling us all to self-distance. This might be near impossible - however, this could act as a pivotal time for car usage and car sharing schemes to grow new opportunities, such as Jaguar Land Rover's alternative to premium car ownership Carpe (a car subscription service subsidiary of Jaguar Land Rover). Other organisations such as Hertz, AVIS Prestige and Turo, to name a few, may also diversify their offering to meet the growing demand for temporary transport that meets social distancing safety standards.

## 02

**Legalities:** This brings me swiftly onto how the "legalities" of working will change; in relation to how people are going to work safely in the future. Companies will be adhering to revised guidelines, where employee handbooks will need to change, the internal communications strategy of which will need to be strong and the general points surrounding insurance, personal liabilities and the like will all need to be considered. Employee contracts will change. "Working from home" infrastructure will need to be properly put in place. The likelihood is, the "new normal" will see a considerable amount of people now working from home for certain periods of the week. Consider the positive impact this will have on, say, the environment. Commuting and travelling with decrease, leading to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions... leading to advanced benefits all round; particularly for those working in the automotive industry, and beyond, aiming for the lower Co<sub>2</sub> emission targets.

## 05

**Better hygiene:** Ensuring the safety of employees will be paramount. Face masks, screens, anti-bacterial gel, and all other kinds of personal protection equipment will be commonplace in the working environment. New guidelines will be added to this effect to employee handbooks and will add to the infrastructure of the "new normal" implicitly. Of course, the primary concern is keeping businesses safe, however, this for many organisations will incur additional business costs, which companies will clearly now have to take into consideration.

## 08

**Volunteering:** Many of us have done something to help others during this pandemic. You don't get 600,000 volunteers to help the NHS and not realise something has changed in our altruistic make-up. Organisations may need to realise that this will continue to be important to their employees, and whilst some companies already encourage this, I feel that what you "give back" will be high on the CSR agenda going forward.

## 03

**Resources, insight, advice:** We are living in a time now where we have access to an abundance of information; as well as the toolkits available to share this information in the blink of an eye. I think this is easily forgotten in a world where communication is often taken for granted so, if anything, I actually believe due to lack of physically "being together" - communication has only heightened, which has mostly been driven by the employer. Following the outbreak, 81% of UK workers have reportedly said they are making more of an effort to reach out to their colleagues, with 77% reporting they are grateful for their colleague's support working from home. I feel like these statistics would be entirely different should we not be facing the current circumstances...

## 06

**Working from home:** For the first week, for many, this was quite an experiment; yet for more than a month it starts to become institutionalised; even in professions that had never contemplated it before. The British Cabinet now meet on Zoom, as do many Boards. Court hearings have started online, and bank staff are executing transactions from home over secure systems. All this has happened unplanned while many employees are looking after children all day. Home working will be easier after the pandemic if organisations change their thinking, that's for sure. Again, if white collar employees end up working from home for just half a week; the fall in commuting would slash emissions, pollution and rush hour traffic, whilst boosting national happiness.

## 09

**Having the right vision, values, strategies and attributes:** If ever there was a time when employees and future employees will be looking at and dissecting an organisation; it's now. The vision of the business needs to be clear and lead in the creation and delivery of products and services that enable their clients to win in this changing world of work. The values of people, knowledge and innovation will be key, together with a clear and defined strategy. How will businesses drive revenue and generate profit? How will they be more efficient in driving innovation, thought leadership and culture? Their brand attributes will also be tested, especially around the acceptance of fresh thinking, employee engagement and trustworthiness.

# TIME TO GIVE SOMETHING BACK!

This amazing industry has been so good to me and my family and therefore, I wanted to share my thoughts and observations.

I still feel extremely proud of how the industry has reached out to help with this pandemic and so, if anyone would like to pick my brains on how some of these past yet relevant solutions were developed, or thoughts on future talent strategies – I am more than happy to assist.

It feels right to give something back if only to continue to make this industry truly more fabulous.

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