

How COVID has changed the way I do things

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Introduction

It is rare that an event occurs that significantly affects individuals, groups and society. In the 20th century we had a number of these events, including World War One, the Spanish flu, the Great Depression and World War Two. Of course, many other catastrophic events occurred, but the above seem to be the most significant ones. COVID-19 is the first disruptor of the new century, and the most significant one since World War 2. I hope it will be the last, or at least the last in my lifetime. Below I will consider how Covid affected one person, me.

How COVID has affected my work life

The effect on my business advisory practice

On a part-time basis I still run legal and accounting practices and also a business consulting practice. COVID-19 has not really affected any of these three businesses, in fact it has benefitted them. Client interactions are now rarely face-to-face, rather they are by Zoom / TEAMS, by email, or by telephone.

The effect on my Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

I am a member of the Law Institute of Victoria, the professional association for practicing solicitors, and CPA Australia, the association for practicing CPA Accountants. They require me to attend CPD. The Law Institute's requirements are very prescriptive, less so with CPA Australia. Between the two professions annually I need to attend 40 hours of CPD. COVID-19 has made attending CPD far easier. Methods of obtaining CPD include attending on-line discussion groups; attending webinars (as a recipient or many cases I also do so as a provider); writing articles; as well as presenting local, interstate and international courses (mostly online during COVID-19). Since the commencement of COVID-19 I have not paid any money for CPD except for membership of my discussion group. However, I remember in the past on many occasions having to pay between \$500 and \$1000 per day to attend CPD sessions. Today, there is so much free CPD available now that I cannot attend everything I want to as I would not have time to do my work.

The effect on my teaching

I facilitate non-award courses locally, interstate and internationally to business people in the management of contracts, business improvement, negotiation and procurement space. One contract required that I had to travel from my Melbourne home to Perth at least five times per year. I also had contracts in India and in Asia. There is a lot of wasted time in travelling. I have now been doing this work online in the form of Zoom / TEAMS meetings and webinars. The only travel is my one-minute odyssey from my lounge room to my study. I also lecture in the higher education sector to graduate students in technical business subjects. Again a lot of time has been saved due to COVID-19 restrictions. We are beginning to get back to face-to-face delivery. It is going to feel strange beginning to travel again.

The effect on my work as an educational administrator

I am also involved in educational administration and, subject to any lockdown, I need to go into the office. COVID-19 has not affected this work that much, except that I rarely see students in the office as they are taught and administered online.

How COVID has affected my personal life

For some time Melbourne was known as the world's most liveable city. Now it is known for the world's most locked-down city. We were locked-down due to COVID-19 for in excess of 260 days in 2000 and 2001. For nearly every one of those days I exercised by walking or jogging. At the beginning of the first lock-down in February/March 2000 I noticed how relaxed people were, and remember passing a young father walking with his children; they were so happy. Now after what seems an eternity, and after more than 260 days of lock-down, the official lockdowns have gone. However, we have the unofficial one. This is where many are so scared of the new highly infectious COVID Omicron strain that they just stay home unless it is vital to go outside. People have already become more introverted, and it will take some time for them to bounce back. Our two children, 16 and 18, were both very much affected by the covert restrictions and both of their educations were severely disrupted. I asked the 18-year-old what she saw as the difference between pre and post COVID-19. She said that she is now amazed that there are now so many "fringe people", which she never saw before.

The total effect

The large reduction in travelling time and greater office efficiency, has resulted in more time for work, and thus a marginally higher income, and more time for my non-work activities, including family.

Conclusion

It is strange for me to say this, but I have had a form of a holiday over the last two years. Previously, I often travelled for consultancy and education-type work. However, there was little travelling over the last two years with the exception of travelling from my lounge room to my study, and the odd trip between lock-downs. I was able to use this extra time for business and personal purposes.



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