

Remote working: Leading and working from home.

Tom Eyre

It has been over a year since the first UK lockdown where we all had to drastically change our usual working patterns. As a business owner, naturally I was worried about how our team would cope with the new, remote, ways of working due to lockdown. Luckily, people who apply for jobs with startup, fintech businesses tend to be those who like a fast paced, busy, work environment and as such, I was confident that productivity levels would remain high. My concerns however, surrounded our employees wellbeing and how Gregor (*Gregor Mowat, my Co-Founder and Co-CEO*) and I could support the team now more than ever.

Some of the changes we put in place were small but highly effective such as reducing the standard meeting times from 30 to 20 minutes as we saw a greater commitment to meetings and our workforce told us they wanted to be smarter with their time commitments. But some changes were much bigger, such as leaving our physical office spaces in London, Bristol and New York. We tried to do everything possible to avoid disrupting the day to day running of LOQBOX as we still had a business to grow, but we needed to act fast to put measures in place to support our team.

The global pandemic put most businesses into crisis mode. Those with robust business continuity plans and a flexible working culture embedded into the company are the ones who adapted with ease. Thankfully we were one of the latter, we adapted quickly and provided our team with the tools they needed to be able to make the best of the situation we all found ourselves in. We gave every member of our team a budget to allow them to 'build' a home office working space. We utilise Slack and Google Meets more than ever before which has helped our team to bond and work together efficiently whilst maintaining the rapport you would expect in a physical office. We have a daily stand up every morning allowing the core teams to share their priorities for the day ahead and to discuss key changes and we end each week with a Friday 'cheers' - a virtual beer where work chat is left behind.

On reflection given everything that has happened in the last 12 months, I am proud to be able to say that we have not had any negative disruption to our business or our customers. In fact, LOQBOX has grown, in many ways - over the past year our headcount increased by more than 200%. Thus, lockdown oddly provided us with an opportunity to diversify our talent pool and allowed us the access and flexibility to employ people from across the United Kingdom. It's strange to think that we haven't physically met most of our new recruits yet! On top of this, we became a global business in late 2020 when we launched LOQBOX out of Pilot in the United States.

The main thing I have taken away from this situation is that trust and good, consistent communication is vital. For me personally, the new world of remote working has reduced my travel time significantly. Before lockdown, a usual week for me consisted of travelling between London, Bristol and Somerset (home) on a daily basis and regular travel to the U.S.

It still isn't clear what the new normal will look like going forward, but what we have learnt is that we don't need the traditional office with strict working hours. Perhaps in the future we will return to some kind of office / home hybrid environment, allowing for both those who prefer an office work space and also those who have beneficially adapted to working from home. Both Gregor and I are incredibly proud of our team and how they have dealt with

these massive changes. We have learnt so much about ourselves, our business and the capabilities of our team.