

Lessons from 2020, COVID -19 and Lockdown

As we flip the calendar towards the close of 2020 and start a new year and the next chapter in the COVID -19 and Lockdown across the globe, what are the lessons we have learnt during 2020?

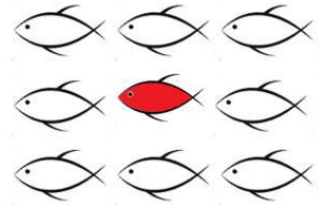
2020 has taken a lot from us, as well as many good people, but what has given us?

Besides, washing our hands more regularly, keeping safe distancing, wearing gloves and face coverings, helping the NHS, making sure you always have a stock of 'loo rolls' in and hopefully the end of 'Fake News' as a new President steps into the White House and of course not forgetting Brexit.

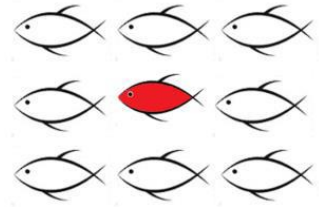
But now with three vaccines in sight and plans in place to get them rolled out over the next 6 months, everyone needs to have it, to keep everyone safe.

I have started with a dozen lessons, that spring to mind for me, as a takeaway from 2020, see below.

1. **Working from home (WFH)** – 2020, COVID -19 and Lockdown have actually shown that this works and works well. I think we have all proved that, but we don't want to be in a lockdown situation. We are social creatures and need to interact with others, meet and greet, having the human face to face contact is important. But we have shown that we can WFH if needed, a good balance is what we need moving forward. The office is going to change for many, it will be a place to 'meet and greet customers' do those final presentations and demonstrations, press the flesh and sign the deal. It will no longer be a location that you hang out in as we have shown that we are more productive WFH.
2. **Ask for help**, we can't do everything, and certainly can't do everything all of the time. We have to learn to ask for help. Sometimes 'It's ok not to be ok' knowing when to ask for help is important and being cognitive enough to recognise it in others and ask them if they need help.

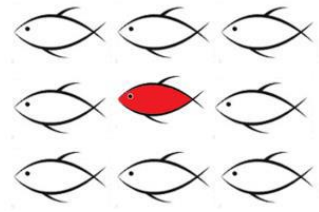


3. **Transparency** – treat your employees like adults – we had to during COVID-19 so continue to do so in 2021 and beyond. Keep everyone informed, share the plans and decisions that you are making especially when it affects them. No one likes surprises that affect their lives, livelihoods and working lives. If you treat them like adults, they will behave like adults and it provides a positive company culture that people will respond to and will attract others to the company.
4. **Mental health** - not being 100% is ok.
I have never had an issue with mental health, until I did. Sometimes the problems and issues of everyday life just get too big and something has to give, it can creep up on you when you are not looking. It is the small things and suddenly you have to many issues to deal with, but that is ok, sometimes 'It's ok not to be ok'.
5. **Diversity** – equality, and inclusion. We are all human and it should be a level playing field regardless of, gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation. And yes, BLM, but so do all lives, LGBTQIA. Its well documented that those companies with a strong diversity policy will outperform those with weak diversity, everyone has something to contribute for the good of the whole.
6. **Empathy** - this is the backbone every leader has needed in 2020 and beyond, this is something that we all need to embrace and get more of in the leadership team. Without empathy other traits manifest themselves. Lots of questions have been asked about the leadership within our companies and countries during 2020. It has not just been Empathy but other core skills that are needed in our leaders. For me leadership is a call to arms for 'those that will serve' the community and the team, unselfishly. It is about being the big brother or sister, to those you lead and protect. Being able to thank your leader, 'thank you for your service' is something that the armed forces do well, I'm not a military man but this is a lesson that the corporate world would do well to emulate and learn from.
7. **Personnel branding – social media** has come of age in 2020 whether we like it or not and we all need to face up to the fact that it is here to stay and the sooner we embrace it, the better. Make it work for you instead of against you. It is not something that comes naturally to most of us, so ask for help. It is not just a company thing anymore; it is a personnel thing. 'Personnel Branding' is what anyone in the view of clients needs and many of those that have previously been hidden from view. It is an opportunity to showcase who you are and what you do and how you do it.
8. **Mentoring and Coaching** – make sure you get some of this in 2021 and beyond. Throughout 2020 we have seen a staggering number of people join the cohorts of coaches and mentoring brigades. I hope they stay the course. This is something, I already do a level of work with, but do not charge for. However, personally I have a number of coaches for different functions, people that can stretch me, who I can gain clarity from in the different areas that I work in and across. I'm no guru with all the answers all of the time and we all need a sounding board or access to knowledge and wisdom. So, get your dollop of mentoring and coaching.



- 9. Learning and development (L&D)** - make sure you get some of this too in 2021 and beyond. Over the next few years, we are going to encounter a huge 'skills shortage'; this is not a revelation, it is well documented. Companies need to start preparing now for this and if you get the opportunity to get some L&D, grab it with both hands.
- 10. CASH is KING**, cash is always king, these are the reserves that a country, company, or an individual holds for emergencies. When something like COVID-19 happens and we get lockdown and have a huge economic impact, it is the reserves that we have that keep us in the game, long enough to recover and start building again. It is time we became a saving culture instead of a spending culture, debt will surely drag you down and fast.
- 11. They say 'A dog is for life, not just for Christmas'** but a Job, might just last that long, in the future, 'for Christmas I mean not for life', those days are gone for most of us. 2020, COVID -19 and Lockdown has shown us that a job, is just a job, and we may need to move on and get another when needs must, other things are far more important. It might not be the same role, we may have to re-skill or learn something new before we can get employment, so being multiskilled helps. In the future people are more likely to have to change roles, more often than we have in the past. My advice is to find a job with a good leader, a good boss and good culture is more likely to enable you to stay longer and they are more likely to keep you if the culture is inclusive and has a strong diversity policy.
- 12. Recovery** - The globally economy is in tatters, debt surrounds us on all sides and it is down to each and every country to see how fast they can recover, which will dictate the future for themselves, their children and even their grandchildren. Most countries and many companies have borrowed in a huge way to help and keep people safe and it will take decades to recover from 2020, COVID -19 and Lockdown.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas, forgiveness, prosperity for 2021 & beyond – stay safe.



About the Author

Howard Longstaff has over 25 years of experience delivering people within the talent acquisition arena. He has worked extensively across the UK, Europe, USA, Canada as well as in South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Over the last 20 years he has specialised in two fundamental areas, although he often covers a wider remit due to his thirst and understanding of technology. **The first area** which he has a **real passion** for, **building 'Sales Teams'**, pulling together the very best **'A Players'** and creating something incredibly special for his clients.

To do that, he needs to have a clear understanding of what his client wants, so establishing clear communication with the client is paramount, understanding the nuances of what they are looking for and documenting this. Understanding the technology, the opportunity, and the growth potential all help to find the **'right fit, first time'**. He is one of the few head-hunters that is willing to guarantee his work, offering 12 months free replacement.

The second area he loves getting involved in, is the **leadership team, the C-Suite**, helping to get the balance right, cover the gaps in knowledge, skills and experience, working on the assumption that **'No one is perfect but a team can be'**?

Howard is someone who thinks outside the box, has an eye for detail, but is perceptive, looking beyond the surface of just skills and experience. He wants to know and understand the candidate behaviour as well as the emotional intelligence, the motives that drive the candidates he interviews. He is looking for the best fit for his client but also looking to ensure it is a fit for the candidate as well.

In the last 25 years he has also built his own companies and opened offices in **New Zealand, Los Angeles, New York** and most recently several companies in **London**. Specialising in technology companies, he has delivered permanent resources across practically every department. This has predominantly been for technology start-ups (Enterprise Software Co's) but also for many leading management consulting and enterprise clients.

Howard is someone that uses technology to enhance the hiring process, to save time, money and effort and take the pain out of the process, but to find those **'Exceptional People, who are so hard to find'**. He operates a **'Private Client Video Portal'** keeping everything together, the video, as well as **psychometric behavioural assessments** on candidates and interviewing on an **emotional intelligence** level. He has repeatedly built teams across three continents, so has a good breadth of knowledge across the **talent acquisition arena**.