

Forget fashion, PPE is all that matters right now!

COVID-19 has changed everything, many people are now working from home for the first time. They're also going to the gym, school, pub, restaurant, cinema and everything else within the four walls of their house. This has brought huge changes to people's lives, created a lot of stress and as a result, people's personal appearance has changed because it's had to, loungewear has become the 'go-to' clothing of choice of the day, every day, as all aspects of daily life and routine have become blurred.

As a small fashion startup operating in the luxury end of the market, this is not great news. Let's face it PPE is much more important and valuable to people right now than fashion. I get that, it's never been more important. Right here, right now I can think of nothing worse than someone trying to sell me fashion of any kind because under lockdown it doesn't seem important. But I believe that it's only temporary.

I've taken the decision to sit tight and wait until the time is right for [DressCode](#) to talk about fashion again. Believe me, we're not sat on our hands, twiddling our thumbs. We've taken the opportunity to learn from the things we've done over the past 18 months and get our ship ready for life on the other side. This

extra thinking and development time has allowed us to develop the B2B side of the business. Something that we see as a useful investment of resource that has already generated strong leads.

Release the pressure

I think I speak for nearly everyone when I say 'I'm looking forward to life post lockdown', it's anything but clear what it will look like right now, which is intensifying the urge, to be honest. When the pressure is released and we do return to work, there will be no more wandering around in your 'loungewear' all day, every day.

You'll be physically seen – it's amazing just how much personal detail there is even at 2m social distancing. As we return to 'normal' the need to look good, feel good and celebrate the passing of this period will return.

It's a contactless future

The pandemic has heightened everyone's awareness of personal hygiene, we all know and understand much more about how germs spread from place to place. Physical shopping as we knew it is gone, digital now rules this space.

I'm not saying there won't still be a place for physical retail, I'm sure there will, but it will be very different. Not least because cash is now tainted with the dirtiness of the past. Both literally and metaphorically unclean and no longer accepted (at the time of writing) in retail.

The move to contactless and the accelerated rise of the transaction limits have forcibly lowered the barriers to entry. Right now there's no choice, using cash is just too risky and that won't change. Making a 'cashless society' a genuinely safer solution for everyone on many, many levels.

Read also

[10 Fashion Tech companies to watch in 2020](#)

Smarter clothes

We see the clothes of the future working much harder for us. They already do amazing work, connecting to our inner selves, empowering and encouraging our cognitive health and well-being, something that most people stopped consciously acknowledging along time ago, however, the effect remains as profound as ever.

Of course, clothes connect us with others as well, the colours, patterns and messages they create are visual signals about who we are, our interests and lots of other, sometimes very subtle, aspects of our character – think sport, any sport, at any level and the associated tribal following or colours, this has significant influence and connects people.

We are very much led by visuals, it's our strongest sense after all. I see the role of clothes going further, into a third dimension, with countless opportunities for our clothes to deliver more, genuinely helping us and taking away the distractions of our phones.

Digital by design

The pandemic has left many businesses in tatters, exposing all kinds of fragilities in the operating models, from supply chain to human resource. As an agile digital-first business we can weather this better than most. The DressCode business has been designed to minimise overheads and minimise the impact of our activities on the planet.

We operate from a virtual office with a team who all embraced home working long before it became a 'thing'. Our store and sales are purely online, 98% of our marketing spend is digital, so we can respond appropriately and in a timely manner, something that has been very important over the past few weeks/months.

We have also worked hard to streamline and minimise our supply chain, taking a less is more approach, using the smallest number of key suppliers possible to reduce the churn of supply. Giving us greater confidence and control over stock production and control, all of which is run virtually in the cloud with access to everyone in the chain, so we can all see and understand what needs to be done, and most importantly when those actions are required.

The pandemic has spared no-one, we are all affected, the level of exposure, however, is very much within our control. Digital solutions provide the much need flexibility that life presents. I.T's saved our bacon and I'm sure it will

continue to be a huge part of both business and personal 'life' planning in the future.

Andy Boothman is the founder of DressCode, a fashion start up that produces tailored shirts based upon tech and digital-inspired prints. Last year DressCode pioneered the CashCuff shirt which has contactless payment built into the shirt's cuff.

Read also

19 more business pivots

Article by ANDY BOOTHMAN