

# COVID-19: Interview with Joe Boyle, CEO and Co-founder of SaltDNA

Belfast-based cybersecurity company SaltDNA keeps conversations between executives, customers and partners private. Maddyness spoke with Joe Boyle, cofounder and CEO to understand how the company is coping during the COVID-19 pandemic and what the future holds.

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[Maddyness] What is the biggest professional challenge for you today?

[Joe Boyle] Our biggest challenge is definitely not being able to get face to face meetings with our customers and partners. We work in an industry where strong trusted relationships are so important. Given that this is a global pandemic, we have found that much of what we would have only talked about in face to face meetings has moved to secure calls. The silver lining is that we're a secure communications company!

Social interactions in the office is an important part of working within SaltDNA so we've all missed that. However, we've been able to replace this with quiz nights and tea at 3:00 pm every Friday to catch up socially. It's been amazing how fast the team has adapted and the output levels and quality of work have

probably increased since lockdown so that's definitely made us think about how we do things in the future.

## What is the biggest personal challenge today?

With four kids at home, there's nowhere to hide and nowhere that's quiet for too long! That makes client calls and presentations a little less predictable. Luckily, the other people in the meeting are often in the same position so we're not too hard on each other.

The silver lining, of course, is that all of my family are healthy and working at home has (for the most part) been a pleasant experience. We've had many more family meals than we've had in a long time – as I am not travelling and my kids aren't running to sports events after school. It'll be good to get them back to their sports though!

## Is remote working a new thing for you?

Not at all. At SaltDNA we actively encourage flexibility and remote working when needed. For example, if a member of staff has a medical appointment or needs to work from home for any reason there is no problem with that.

Of course, we do like to be in the office as often as possible to keep the social aspect alive and not lose out on the importance of face to face contact. We continue to work closely together as a team which is proving to be very effective. That's the perk with having developed a communication platform: we have an easy way to communicate securely every day.

## What changes have you made to keep your business running?

The only change we have had to make is adjusting to all our staff working from home, which to be honest hasn't been a difficult change. Our staff adapt quickly and could work from anywhere. Other than that we haven't had to reduce staffing or advertising spend during this period. Unlike many other businesses, we've been very lucky to have continued developing opportunities and building out our pipeline during this period.

## How is your relationship with your investors?

Our investors have always been incredibly supportive before and during COVID-19. They are very hands-on so there is definitely a sense of us all being in this together.

## Have you had to end or delay your office rent contract?

No, we haven't had to do this, but are looking forward to returning to the office when it is safe to do so.

## What do you think of the support packages for startups offered by the government? What have you been able to use?

The furlough scheme has definitely been a lifeline for many companies which have seen a temporary large drop in demand. We've not had to furlough any of our development or sales and marketing teams because we've been so busy.

## Do you feel confident in your business post-COVID? Are there any changes in society/economy that you think will help you?

We feel as confident as ever in our business and the technology we have developed. Since lockdown, there has been a huge move towards video conferencing technologies. We believe that, in the future, organisations will be much more willing to use this technology to provide flexibility to workers, reduce travel costs and speed up decision making and information sharing. Many of these conversations are very sensitive and the mainstream systems are not secure enough. We aim to be the leaders in secure communications for

these companies.

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Article by MADDYNESS