

COVID-19: Interview with Jon Bennett, CEO of Ryalto

Ryalto helps healthcare staff manage their working lives, a vital tool even before the pandemic arrived. Maddyness spoke with Jon Bennett, CEO to understand how the business has coped, evolved and is planning for the future.

Our mobile app provides every worker in our healthcare clients the ability to engage with their employer/s and each other as well as to book flexible shifts. This has always been important but never more so than during the pandemic. The need for fast and accurate communication and information sharing during the pandemic has been unprecedented which has meant we have seen a massive uptick in the use of Ryalto app in our existing clients and requests to go live with new ones.

The business has been established for 5 years but we are in a reinvigoration phase since the start of 2020, including a new board and management team.

What have been the biggest professional challenges during lockdown?

I'm a very sociable person and have spent most of my 20 year career working directly with clients in face to face scenarios. Suddenly being presented with a situation where that was entirely impossible was pretty scary at first. Naturally, the rise of video calls has really helped that but to be honest I still really miss

the proper direct human interactions.

The need to communicate quickly and accurately is critical during COVID-19 so the professional upside of a very sad societal situation is an increased need for our product. I have also found the sales process to be a bit more 'human' than before, it just seems people have become a bit more accepting and helpful which is nice.

What have been the biggest personal challenges during lockdown?

As a dad of three young kids ,with all of the financial pressures that come with it, I find the uncertainty very unsettling. I have always felt well armed with the tools, skills and experiences to stay on top of even a changing economic situation. But naturally we never expected this and the future is difficult to envision. .

The big upside for me, like many, has been the time spent with family. I have never seen my wife and three daughters more and doing things like nipping out for 15 mins at 5pm to do the after school club pick up and then get back to my desk for some more work is totally new to me but so very welcome!

Was remote working a new thing for you and if so will you be adapting your work to allow more of it?

It is new for me personally. I have spent 20 years commuting to and from offices or client sites. I have always advocated it for my teams but the wider acceptance of remote working means this will be much easier for us all to do going forward. We have a policy of 'work where you need to' at Ryalto but we also believe in spending quality time together and we will be ensuring we do that within the guidelines and rules.

On a personal level, do you think you had all the support needed to help you in these or other tough times?

Yes. I benefit from working in a very supportive set-up. My colleagues are superb professionals and good friends and our shareholders are experts in our

space as well as investors which has really helped me and the businesses.

How is your relationship with your investors?

It really could not be better. Our investors are also market experts so they help a lot when we need them to but they also give us the space to run the business within the plans we have set.

Do you feel confident in your business post-COVID?

Yes we really do. The healthcare world pre, during and post-Covid is the perfect partner for Ryalto. Our app enhances communications and engagement by putting a newsfeed and inter-organisational communications tool in the pocket of every single worker. Our wider business offering in Ryalto Group delivers a programme of cultural improvement. This culture programme not only ensures the app is used from day one and for the long term but also helps leaders to drive a better culture across their organisation which improves productivity and patient care. The outcome being that we connect or re-connect people to purpose.

Hopefully we have seen the end of a 'poster culture' in healthcare and a rise in the use of digital communications and engagement platforms like Ryalto that will be here for good.

Are there any changes in society/economy that you think will help you?

I think people really have understood the need for receiving fast and accurate news, information and communications. This is something that was lagging behind in healthcare and we can accelerate improvement and ensure the sector is ready for the post-covid future.

Our flexible worker or 'worker Bank' booking solution will help healthcare organisations to reduce their recruitment agency spend, delivering much needed savings that can be reinvested in care. The money simply won't exist in healthcare for 80%+ flexible workers in any healthcare facility to be from an agency and our Bank app is perfectly placed to enable that shift.

Have you had to pivot at some point?

Yes. The Ryalto app was originally just for flexible worker shift booking. But we realised people didn't want to be in an app just for that and that impacted uptake a lot. That's why we pivoted to being a communications, engagement and flexible worker app, because people spend all day using our product and book and manage their shifts whilst they are there.

What advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

Make sure you have the right people around you from the very start. That includes investors and your team. Ideally investors should be product / market experts (not just folks with money) and you have to bring 'A Players' straight into the mix from day one. If you scrimp for the sake of money, you will elongate the time it takes to get going at best and chances of failure are much higher if you don't have the best people around you.

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