



LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

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For this month's article, I thought I would share with the YPN community my experience of life in lockdown. We will have all experienced some changes, as well as come across some positives, which we can continue when we assume 'Normal Life' once again. So, I ask you the question ... What has Lockdown done for you? I would like to break this question down into segments.

SLOWING DOWN

Before lockdown I can honestly say that I was running around like a headless chicken. I was attending meetings here, meetings there, calls, coffees and life was pretty hectic. Lockdown has allowed me to reassess and actually confirm that business no longer needs to be like this.

In lockdown, my sourcing business has still remained pretty active. Admittedly, we are not doing the volumes we were before, however it is still very steady. My biggest challenges have been trying to get purchasers around to see properties. The issues have come from:

- 1. Investors who live quite a distance from the property and therefore cannot travel**
- 2. Tenanted properties where we have to abide by social distancing measures for everyone's safety**

I have found that getting hold of people has been a hell of a lot easier, and actually some people are pleased for us to get in touch. Prior to my call, their only other contact would have been the people confined within their four walls – and let's face it, we have all probably had enough of talking to them!

We have also found that conducting viewings via Facetime, video recordings and virtual tours of the property have helped massively, and have allowed investors to make an initial decision on the property. They have then proceeded based on the promise that they could physically view the property prior to completion. I ask myself, could this be the future?

I have also enjoyed holding all my meetings via Skype, Zoom and Facetime. Going forward, I do not intend to travel to meetings if I know that we can hold them virtually and still achieve the same outcome. I appreciate the benefit a face-to-face meeting still holds, but I intend to hold a lot more online and save myself a lot more time in the office or at home.

We have seen that a lot of the networking events have been holding virtual events and numbers attending have soared, with some even having over 1,000 people. I ask the question ... could this be the future?



ESTATE AGENTS AND AUCTION HOUSES

As I mentioned above, virtual tours of properties could now become the norm. A particular segment of the property industry that has continued to trade all through COVID-19 is the property auction industry. They have had to adapt to a completely new way of doing business, and I was fascinated with the way they have adapted to change.

Previously, property auctions would:

- 1. Market their property online or via a catalogue listing the viewing schedule**
- 2. Potential purchaser would then go and view the property**
- 3. The buyers would then go on auction day into a hall and bid against each other**

Auctions are renowned for not only getting cheap property, but for also achieving way in excess of the market value. This is because many purchasers become emotionally engaged once they start bidding in the room. Their whole business model is based on multiple people bidding and getting carried away. The more they sell, the more commission auctioneers earn because they generally charge a percentage of the sold value to the seller, but can also charge the buyer a percentage too. A very lucrative business.

As a result of lockdown, the auction companies have not been able to conduct any viewings, therefore they would be reliant on the buyers to watch a virtual tour or video of the property. However, having watched quite a few of these videos, there is a fair amount of the property that they do not show. By this I mean, how could viewer and potential buyer determine whether the property has a structural defect? Or how can they try and determine

the level of works required to the property? Ultimately, this would have an effect on the amount the purchaser bids as they would have to leave some funds in the pot for contingencies.

As a result, the purchaser is almost buying blind. The purchaser would then bid on the property in an online auction and if they are successful on the day, they would be legally bound to purchase.

Auction companies have seen a massive downturn in sales. An average auction would sell approximately 80% of the offered lots, but recently they are achieving just 35%-50% of the properties offered.

Although I feel for the auction companies, this has created a massive opportunity for the opportunists. As a deal sourcer, this has opened many doors as the auction companies and estate agents, who are now suffering from low sales, are entertaining conversations they were too busy to consider earlier in the year. As they say, every cloud has a silver lining.



PERSONALLY

From a personal prospective, I have quite enjoyed lockdown as it has allowed me to relax a little. Admittedly, I am still working, but lockdown has inspired me to work smarter not harder.

I have also kicked off a few (non-property!) projects that I had been procrastinating over for quite a few years. I finally successfully launched The Property Rebel podcast and managed to get it in the Top 10 of all podcasts in the UK, which was a massive

achievement. I now release podcasts every Tuesday, and content on my YouTube channel every Monday and Thursday.

Previously, I would have been too busy for this. But lockdown has also allowed me to experiment with staff members to see what other skillsets they hold and what else they are good at. Little did I know that my PA is also very good at video editing and consequently now looks after a lot of my social media. Before I would have been doing this myself or outsourcing it to other companies, but as we had the time, it has worked in my favour.

Time at home with my children has been priceless and a pleasure. Although I generally consider myself a good dad, I have loved having the chance to spend more quality time with them. We have enjoyed cooking and taking a greater interest in getting more active outdoors. We go out for long walks and bike rides, read, and they even help me in the garden.

In conclusion, life in lockdown will be whatever you make it. For me, so far it has been a positive experience and certainly something I will remember for the rest of my life.

CONTACT

As always, you can connect with me on my social feeds by finding me on:

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