



Reflections of an MD

A year of running a business during a pandemic

Colin Campbell, Codelocks MD

As Codelocks' financial year ends, I've taken time to reflect on the past 18-months...

At the start of 2020, I had big plans for Codelocks, and a clear vision of the year ahead. We had developed the largest new product initiative in the history of Codelocks – many of them aimed at rental markets, which were a booming industry back then. We were also developing products and technologies aimed at niche markets – such as recording studios, or urban cycle storage solutions.

If you'd have asked me at the time what the biggest challenge would be over the next year, I'd have probably said: 'Brexit'. There was a lot of global uncertainty in terms of markets, in terms of free trade and trade barriers that may happen, and we were looking for clarity from the government to help us make good management decisions.

All that changed pretty quickly as the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear. I recall being in China in January 2020 and it was obvious to me that we were about to enter a period of major disruption. As the pandemic worsened the four questions I faced were:

- How to secure an ongoing product supply, whether this be components or finished goods?
- How could my staff continue to work and collaborate safely and securely?
- How would we be able to continue to deliver our products to customers?
- How would we continue to innovate – and should we change our plans?

I did take the decision, very early on, to furlough some staff, which allowed us to deal with the immediate shock of lockdown. This was a tough decision, but I did all I could to reassure staff that this was a temporary measure. I talked through the process, and asked for volunteers, rather than making the decisions for them. Once we realised that lockdown was going to be an ongoing situation, we invested in collaboration software and equipped the team with everything they needed to work remotely from home. We have new processes in place, including regular virtual group chats, to keep us all working well together as a team. As lockdown extended, I realised that we had to do a lot more to support individuals, whether on furlough or working remotely, as it was easy for them to feel isolated – affecting mental health. We organised various social events, including virtual drinks, quizzes, coffee mornings and of course, a Christmas party.

In terms of continuing to get our products to market the Government told many construction suppliers early on that they were an essential service to the NHS and could remain open. Plus of course, all of our products are available on-line, on our own website as well as through partners.

We did, however, initially experience some delays with our supply chain, and some products had to be launched later than planned. This was something we just had to accept, and we adapted our schedule accordingly. But the delays also gave us time to think about what products we should be launching. In the midst of a pandemic, I was of course asking myself – 'how can our contactless access solutions help with the current situation and the need for social distancing?'



As a business that has been operating in the access control market for 30 years, we're able to react fairly swiftly in situations like this – and get products to market pretty quickly. Many of our access solutions do already have an advantage over the traditional lock and key. Our Smart Locks, for example, enable facilities managers to grant access to delivery drivers or other visitors without actually being on site – they can simply text a single use code. But we wanted to go a step further – particularly to help our customers in the rental sector, and in hospitality, who were facing particular uncertainty.

So, we partnered with another company to quickly roll out the hugely successful Clean by Codelocks. Clean is a special nano-tech coating that combats SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19) and can reduce bacterial growth by 99.96%* – and it's now available with any of our existing products. Our keyless access solutions, combined with Clean by Codelocks, can help any organisation protect staff and visitors from viruses, bacteria and germs – and can help hospitality and businesses to do all they can to meet requirements for re-opening and keeping guests and customers safe.

Looking back, the advice I'd give to any other MD or business owner would be:

- Ensure you have remote working systems and processes in place.
- Make sure your systems are secure and do not forget about GDPR.
- Take time to assess the situation to rethink and revise your plans.
- Where possible, turn problems into opportunities.
- Adapt your products or services (or create new ones) to help the situation.
- Look after your staff – you'll need them when it's over.

It's been a challenging year, for sure, but we're a resilient business, and still have significant investments planned for the near future.

*Clean by Codelocks is a brand name operated by Codelocks Ltd. to describe products that have been treated with the LumaClean™ Multipurpose Photocatalytic Coating manufactured by USA Nanocoat "the Manufacturer". All test results, certifications and claims are those applied for or of the Manufacturer. Clean by Codelocks should not be considered a replacement for an overall cleaning and disinfection strategy. No claim is made or implied that Clean by Codelocks provides infallible protection against agents that may be harmful in part or whole to humans or animals.

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