



# A SMART Working Case Study

## FLEXIBLE WORKING PRACTICES AT PUNTER SOUTHALL ASPIRE

May 2020



### **Since the outbreak what 'new ways of working' has the organisation adapted and to what extent will the way you work transform in a post Covid-19 world?**

The currently lockdown has forced a wholesale shift in the way we work and collaborate, with everyone in the business rising to new challenges. Innovation is everywhere as we collectively learn through trial and error to find the best solution to support our clients, improve productivity and support one another in the process. The change has not been just about coming to terms with new technology like MS Teams & Zoom but also a cultural shift about the way we support each other and a new normal about work patterns and flexibility.

It would have been impossible to conceive of such rapid change before Covid-19, but we have now proven 9-5 office life is not an essential ingredient of a modern business. Smart working is now the number one item that will transform the business in a post Covid-19 world, making the business more resilient to future shocks and enable us to deliver new and enhanced services to our clients.

From a client perspective we have had to explore new ways to deliver our service, acknowledging that everyone is different and not one size fits all.

Some clients do not have an email address, yet others are willing to consume in multiple ways meaning the personalisation of our service is even more extreme.

### **What effect has the lockdown had on your organisational culture?**

Punter Southall Aspire has 150 staff across 11 regional offices, and since the lockdown the business has been collaborating 100% online removing all regional bias and individual differences as well as providing everyone with a voice. The informality of this approach has allowed a broader range of people to be involved in product development, client service delivery and general decision making despite the fact they may have children, pets or partners in the background creating a much more inclusive environment both internally and externally.

The crisis has also facilitated a much more flexible and open culture, with managers and employees sharing their personal difficulties and challenges in a very supportive and non-judgmental way. This is not only occurring in one to one situations but publicly in meetings and presentations.

From the start of the lockdown period communication has significantly increased across the business but email traffic has simultaneously reduced with individuals learning and using a broader range of more appropriate tools; video call, chat, teams, live streaming etc. I believe the effect has been a more engaged business where individuals are more informed, and happy to join or more importantly not join a conversation without missing out.



**Steve Butler**  
CEO, Punter Southall  
Aspire

## **What are your top 3 biggest lessons learned since the lockdown?**

### **1. Flexible working works**

The informality and flexibility of work patterns, meeting scheduling and general collaboration has created a much more productive and inclusive culture which must be continued into the future, we need to translate the benefits of the current situation using smart working practices in our return to 'normal' planning.

### **2. Communicate informally, honestly and often**

As business head, the lockdown has meant more frequent, less polished, and more transparent communication to the business such as weekly business wide zoom presentations covering a range of subjects; business, investment, mental health, social issues etc. This worked very well and should continue at all cost.

### **3. Make it personal**

The value of sharing personal challenges and stories publicly has moved the dial in creating a more open and honest culture, where we can all genuinely understand and support one another. This needs to be factored into our future working practices.