

Written evidence submitted by Rank Amateur Ltd

Impact of C-19 on UK television sector.
Rank Amateur Ltd

Rank Amateur provides music composition, sound design and graphic design solutions to the UK and European film and television sector.

As of March 2020 and the imposition of tighter social distancing controls by UK Gov, UK TV production was immediately impacted. Two projects I was attached to were immediately cancelled. I have furloughed myself until end June 2020 and don't expect to see new commissions re-established until late summer 2020.

I would make two short, separate observations as to the impact of the virus on my practice:

1) With regard to UK Gov policy: there has been a strong sense of confusion and contradiction amongst colleagues as to what fiscal policy was. Small Limited Companies were initially barred from support, but then late included though, as of today 1st May 2020, it is not clear when that financial help will be forthcoming - if ever. There have been no updates on HMRC website or social media, and press seem to have been distracted by the 100,000 a day testing target for the time being. There is also a strong sense that these measures will be inadequate and that, by the time it becomes clear, it will be too late to save many businesses and companies. The overriding frustration however, has been the nature of communication. I think, when reviewed, the daily government briefing will be seen to have been largely propaganda driven. A few journalists' questions are no substitute for robust interrogation by opposition parliamentarians in my view.

2) With regard to my business sector: there also lessons to be learned in terms of contingency. Too much UK business is run, like supermarkets, on a 'just in time' basis with no financial headroom, and little contingency for economic hit. In terms of interruption to production, much of this could have actually been avoided had remote working practices already been made, if not actually the norm, at least commonplace. I, as a composer - and others in the production line like editors, directors and producers - have been able to work remotely for many years. I am based in rural Shropshire and have serviced a London-centric business for 15 years with little problem. Indeed the only challenge to remote working has been a fundamentally poor internet system, far behind our European counterparts in terms of speed and reliability. As usual we have been too market driven and the weaknesses that model creates have of course come to light in recent times. Thinking in to the future, far greater work flexibility in terms of location for workers has enormous upsides - both in terms of performance and economic sustainability of business. In C-19 then there is the opportunity to really seriously consider how companies (re)organized themselves, going forward.

Yours sincerely
George Taylor
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