

# UK Customer Experience Awards 2020

## Entry Identification

Entry Title	[REDACTED]
Organisation Name	[REDACTED]
Category Entered	[REDACTED]
Description	[REDACTED] leading [REDACTED] company, selling [REDACTED] via an omni-channel customer experience. Established [REDACTED] in 2004 with a team of three, the company now employs over 230 [REDACTED]. We give customers the ability to [REDACTED] search the best deals from different finance providers via our [REDACTED] tool, which also searches the best prices from competitors, therefore giving our customers transparent and comparative prices.
Precis for awards e-brochure	When the impact of COVID-19 shut down the [REDACTED] industry, protecting our customers became paramount. 'If it's right for our customers, it's right for us' is one of our company values and so 'Operation [REDACTED]' was created to protect both our people, our customers, and our business.

## Criteria

### Summary

Provide an overview of the entire initiative, capturing the most important information from beginning to end. NB. This will be used for shortlisting finalists and the scoring of the written entries but is not relevant to finalist presentations.

- Our core values are about working together to do what's best for our customers. Part of **Operation [REDACTED]** was bringing our 'If it's right for our customers, it's right for us' value into the spotlight.
- **Operation [REDACTED]** was about more than just protecting customers through lockdown, it was about laying the foundations for more protection and a better experience in the future.

#### Support:

- In the first week of lockdown we set up a Covid-19 Small Business

Support Team to give small businesses help and guidance on how to access funding available from the UK Government during the pandemic.

- We ensured all our Sales & Service phone lines stayed open.
- We also did the paperwork and the early 'hard yards' for the customer in their time of need.
  
- By adding Covid-19 Small Business Support information pages to our website that focussed on the searches and questions our customers were actually asking, we saw a successful over 20,000 organic hits of our content.
  
- Developing our eCommerce capability to ensure we delivered a customer-first, industry-leading proposition, was the key to future-proofing our business. We ensured all our tech and Marketing teams stayed working throughout lockdown to deliver the upgrades we needed.
- We introduced new propositions to help our customers at this difficult time [REDACTED] This provides customers with peace of mind, enabling them to purchase with confidence even in the current economic conditions.

## Business strategy

What was the background to the initiative? How did it meet the strategic needs of the business?

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- The impact of COVID-19 shut down our industry. It was paramount that our crisis plan was in place immediately.
- **Operation [REDACTED]** kicked off 1 month before lockdown.

Operation [REDACTED] incorporated our core values:

- If it's right for our customers, it's right for us
- We love to learn, from our failures and successes
- Even if it's brilliant make it better
- We are family we look after each other

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- Protect our **people** – to save jobs
  - Protect our **customers** - decide which teams we kept working to improve CX and to take advantage when pent-up customer demand is released
  - Protect our **business** - ascertain how much cash we had and how the position could be improved so our people weren't
  - Learn and improve - evolve Operation [REDACTED] in a fast-changing pandemic world

Protecting the Customer:

- We knew our customers, many of whom are sole traders, would struggle

to navigate the Government COVID schemes. If we could help them in this difficult time it could save their businesses.

- Our online support and advice hub provided a place for our customers to learn about how to tackle the pandemic and what it meant for their business. Strategically it also gave our website more hits, improved our SEO rankings, and exposed us to more prospects.

- Despite the pandemic, customers remained at the heart of our business. So part of Operation [REDACTED] meant challenging our digital and marketing teams to use the lockdown period work on improving CX.

## Goals and Objectives

What were the specific goals and objectives of the initiative? What business benefits did the initiative set out to achieve?

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### **Our main objectives throughout this initiative were:**

- Support existing and potential B2B customers through this difficult time and assist in the complex application processes to gain government financial support.
- Offer further customer support by giving them access to helpful and informative content on our Covid-19 Small Business Support website pages.
- Retain and renew business by being open for our existing customers {45k}.
- Empower our marketing and tech teams to work on a providing a CX improvement for when demand returned and more of our customers businesses were back up and running.

### **It was imperative to have some key underpinning metrics:**

- Maintain a 4.4 Trustpilot Score by giving brilliant service in a difficult period
- Maintain a strong NPS score despite challenges in the supply chain
- Increase web traffic and broader reach of our website
- Keeping our main phone lines open so customers knew we were always there to support them.
- Building more trust by implementing a COVID-19 Small Business Support Team to help our B2B customers cope with the complexity of the government financial support schemes.
- Use this period to enhance our ecommerce experience to ensure that post-lockdown our customers would have a totally painless leasing experience.
- Grow brand awareness through support for ALL small businesses by making sure our website content was rich in helpful content, information, guidance and support

## **Planning and Implementation**

What steps did you take to plan the initiative? How was the initiative implemented? Who was involved and how was communication maintained? What was the target, budget and timeframe. Show results of any challenges along the way and the results against target, budget and timeframe

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### **Planning**

- Daily senior Management meetings as COVID-19 started to take place

one month (Feb 24th) before lockdown, inc weekends {led by CEO}. This has continued and is still in place.

- The timeline was that within 1 month we'd be ready to tackle the pandemic if/when it struck.

- When all staff were sent home on March 24th we already had a clear vision on how to support our customers, provide them with content and work towards giving them an incredible ecommerce journey once demand in the market returned.

- Individuals 'chosen' from each department based on different customer touchpoints. They formed the COVID Small Business Support Team. After one week of training at the start of lockdown on the government support, our team was up and running and taking calls. We were quickly helping and guiding small business owners through the processes of accessing government financial support. -

- Our marketing and content team created an online Small Business Support Hub within 48 hours of lockdown. This was populated daily with updated added from the Government schemes. It also included advice for our customers about payment holidays.

- This changed daily which meant moving our content manager to being solely dedicated on our hub. -

- Digital, Marketing and PMO Teams kept working {whilst others were furloughed} and were set the challenge to work 'on the business' instead of in it. The challenge was to achieve a full ecommerce website experience during lockdown so we could create a roadmap of accelerating and improving customer experience, in readiness for pent up demand at the end of lockdown.

- This was achieved through daily stand up calls and weekly project sprints.

More than 5 million self-employed people make up 15% of the UK's workforce, either as sole traders or limited companies. A big chunk of that figure are van-driving tradespeople who account for many of our loyal customers. We understand that as the Covid-19 outbreak locks down areas of the UK & limits the ability of many people to work that it's a really hard & overwhelming time for everyone - that's why we have pulled together all of the information about the support available from the UK Government into one place.

After announcing its wage support scheme for UK businesses, the Government revealed a similar programme for the self-employed called the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SISS). The scheme allows those self-employed people operating as sole traders or in a partnership to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of trading profits (up to a maximum of £2,500 per month) for 3 months from March to May.

This article takes a detailed look at the SISS scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (which provides salary support for employees & employers alike, now extended to cover salary payments up to the end of October 2020) & includes a rundown of the other schemes the UK's self-employed workers & limited companies can currently benefit from during the Covid-19 outbreak. It is broken into the following sections:

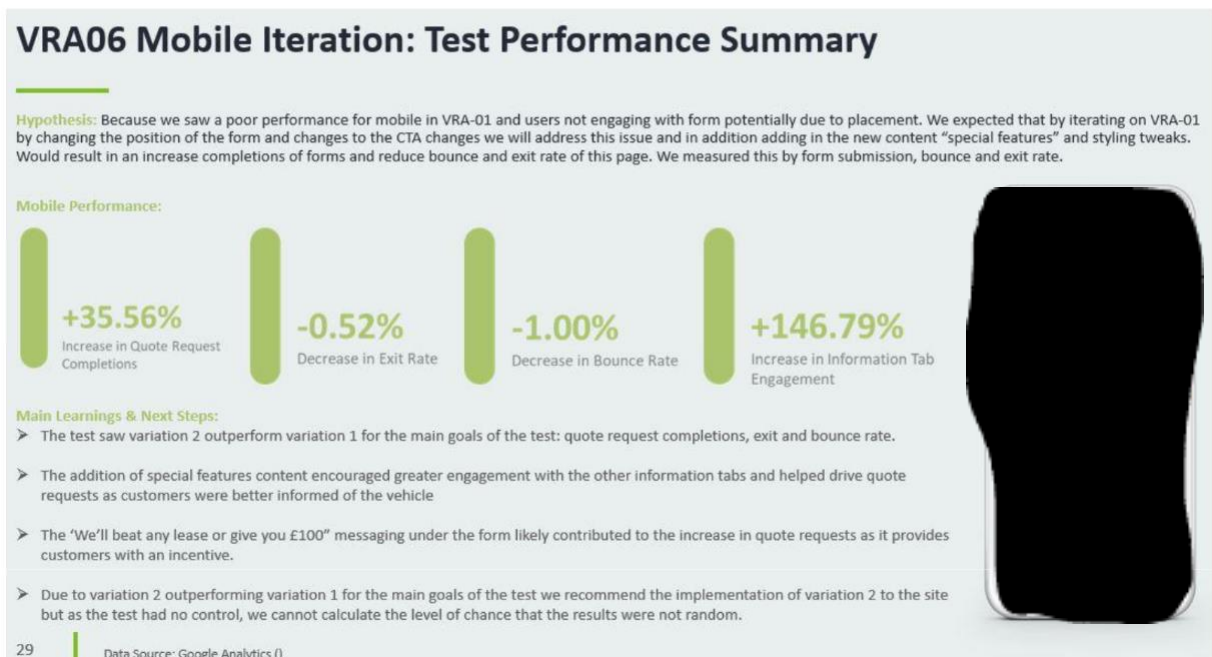
- **SECTION A: Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SISS)**

- If you're self-employed, a sole trader or operating in a partnership, this section covers the Government's main financial support scheme for you. The online service you'll use to claim is not available yet. HMRC will aim to contact you by mid-May 2020 & will make payments by early June 2020.
- **17/04/2020 update:** The online service you'll use to claim is not available yet. HMRC will aim to contact you by mid May 2020 & will make payments by early June 2020.

- **SECTION B: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)**

- If you're an employer (e.g. the owner of a limited company with employees), this section covers how to claim 80% of your employees' salaries from the Government while they're furloughed (including your salary, if you pay yourself through your company's PAYE).
- **07/04/2020 update:** Anyone who left their job for any reason after 28 February 2020 can be re-hired by their old employer & included in the furlough scheme.
- **20/04/2020 update:** The online claim service has now gone live [here](#).
- **12/05/2020 update:** The Chancellor has announced this scheme will be extended to October & confirmed that the Government will ask companies to "start sharing" the cost of the scheme from August (guidance expected shortly).

## Image: CRO test results example





## Stakeholder Engagement

What was the leadership model and who were the relevant stakeholders? How were their needs identified and understood, and how were they engaged in the process?

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- CEO led – from a comms perspective, it was a 'cut out the hierarchy' philosophy. Daily and weekly messages, videos, posts from the CEO, updating the workforce on what's happening, and what the plans are to take us forward.
- Board meetings & regular briefings. All senior Team attending to share plans and initiatives
- Senior Team {all department Directors / Heads} on daily morning calls to discuss and monitor progress of plans.
- Customer feedback gained from research, website traffic, Trustpilot, phone calls {Coaching / QA calls}
- Comms & Engagement strategy for [REDACTED] employees – Daily and weekly video led communication, led by the CEO and supported by the Senior Team. This also included furloughed staff having their own sessions with CEO and Senior Team to keep abreast of all that's going on. All employees kept up to date with the strategy and progression of plans through the lockdown period.
- Weekly people panel meetings where representatives across the businesses shared processes that could be improved for our customers.

## Innovation and Creativity

What was especially creative and innovative about the initiative? Was there anything unique or which proved an interesting twist and contributed to the overall success?

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■ The unique leadership thought process was to 'not waste a good lockdown period'. The focus was very much on developing and accelerating our business model, so that following lockdown customers would get a significantly improved experience [REDACTED]

- We managed to move to a fully ecommerce website experience during lockdown – achieved within the 12 week-period.

- In 2019 we had 5.1million website sessions, of which >70% were out of “normal” business hours. Since the introduction of our new eCommerce capability over 62% of sales now come from fully online orders vs 0% last year.
- Communication Workstream - launched a newsletter on industry news, government updates on Covid-19 and interactive quizzes. This has resulted in a 25% percentage increase in customer engagement since the start of the year. Open rates have increase by 10% and click rates by up to 3% as a result.
- Because of our automation we were able to increase our opening hours from 45 to 80 hours per week and pivot our account managers to deal with customers when suitable for them i.e. evenings and weekends.
- Operation [REDACTED] heightened our sensitivity to the socio-economic climate for consumers/small businesses so in an industry first, we were able to offer free redundancy cover to our customers so that when they came out of lockdown and were getting their lives and businesses back on track they had some extra peace of mind.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## Impacts and Benefits

What has been the resulting impact on the business? What other benefits have been achieved in relation to the goals and objectives, and were there any additional unforeseen benefits?

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### Brand benefits

- 4.4 Trustpilot Score throughout lockdown demonstrated Operation [REDACTED] was maintaining trust.
- 18,376 organic sessions overall to all Covid-19 pieces, peaking at 712 in one day on 7th April
- Our article focused on [REDACTED] during lockdown (the search phrase was getting 60,500 avg monthly search volume) peaked at #7 [REDACTED], [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] it had CTRs well above usual for that position
- We can now do more {Sales} with less human intervention. Since the introduction of our new eCommerce capability over 60% of sales now come from fully online orders.
- The new eCommerce customer journey has increased our conversion rate from 0.01 to 0.13%.
- A slicker, fully eCommerce website experience for our customers. Resulting customer proposal figures in June / July up 40% year on year
- Record order month in July with 2,976 proposals processed smashing the previous record in Feb 2020 of 2601 by +14% - achieved with 20% less resource.

## Supporting customers

- 124 businesses contacted our COVID-19 Small Business Support Team
- We helped to complete 67 payment holiday requests on behalf of the customer
- Feedback from customers was excellent:
  - "Well done [REDACTED] for helping"*
  - "I'm really impressed with what you are doing here to help the self-employed, so thank you very much."*

