

**Dear Valued Reader,**

To say we have, collectively, entered uncharted territory is stating the obvious.

The industry, from a mum and pop agency right through to our largest suppliers, is hurting. The bulk of business, we are told, has shifted from new bookings to processing cancellations. Cashflow is tight. Yet our collective love for travel is not tarnished.

In the words of one owner-operator, agents in many cases have morphed from consultants to counsellors—as clients turn to the agents for direction. It's times like these that those consultants, and their brands, can really prove their worth to consumers—even if it means hours of unpaid work rebooking or cancelling. However, that seems to be of little comfort to most right now.

Earlier this week I tried to tell one regional agency owner that we could only but look at this situation as an opportunity. To use it as a time to reevaluate the way we've always done things; and ways things could be done differently moving forward. My comment initially didn't go down well, but later she appreciated the sentiment. We really have no option.

There's that old adage that there's nothing as constant as change. We can't fight the Covid-19 hysteria, but we're all going to have to find new ways to navigate through this figurative global storm.

As such we are seeing unusual moves from key industry stakeholders. Yesterday helloworld called for the retail brands to unite and together focus their energies to certain regions in a bid to stimulate traffic. Was it unorthodox? Yes. Did all the brands agree? No. But this is uncharted territory—we all need to look at the way we are doing business. While suppliers and the retail brands may not have immediately jumped on board—it certainly got people across the trade thinking (and calling).

On that note, we have fielded an unprecedented level of calls from agency owners—many of whom are checking that they're not the only ones really suffering. Let me assure you, from the endless feedback we're receiving (see there is some merit in those long phone calls) no-one is immune. Businesses right across the trade are suffering—well, perhaps with the exception of Cover-More (who's scrambling to cope with a spiking level of demand).

We are not a travel agency—but we too are an SME. We get it. Daily we are working with our advertisers on work-arounds, changes and outright cancellations. But we too are passionate about travel, and this industry.

So what is all this waffle about, you may ask? We just wanted to let you know that we're here to share your views and spread the industry news. That said, many of you don't need to be asked twice to offer feedback.

We all have to come together to get through this, in a bid to keep Kiwis safely travelling. If we can help, please let us know. We are only a phone call (albeit a potentially lengthy one) away.

Hang in there,

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