



Linea Insights

Social Distancing?
Not for me, thank you



In the 1970's there was a reasonably popular Irish comedian called Frank Carson.

He was a genial fellow, won Opportunity Knocks, was celebrated on This is your Life, and awarded a papal knighthood for his charity work by Pope John Paul II.

His most famous catchphrase, delivered in his cheerful, chuckling Belfast accent, was:

"It's the way I tell 'em."

Now more than ever, and especially with the rise of social media, we have such a plethora of words to read – books, blogs, articles, LinkedIn postings, so-called fake news, and so it is really important to ensure that what we say is what we mean, and that our message is clearly understood. We really do have to be sure how we "tell 'em".

We were all taught from an early age, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me!"

As young children, we knew how rubbish that well-intentioned parental advice was – of course, those words hurt us! They were more painful than a passing kick on the shins, or a wrap on the knuckles – those wincing passed quickly – but the bitter wounds of spiteful words rang long in our ears.

We only need to look at the impact on young people and teenagers and the impact of social media to appreciate that 'words' do hurt, and sometimes with tragic outcomes.



So, having established that words and their meaning are important, let us examine what 'social distancing' means.

Interestingly, one of the first historical references can be found in the Book of Leviticus, "And the leper in whom the plague is ... he shall dwell alone; (outside) the camp shall his habitation be." In more recent times, the city of St. Louis implemented major, early lockdowns during the 1918 flu pandemic and were the least affected US region. Lessons to be learned, but I digress.

Social distancing, which will inevitably be one of our new phrases in the Oxford Dictionary later this year is defined as, "a set of non-pharmaceutical interventions or measures taken to prevent the spread of a contagious disease."

That's fair enough, but don't we all think, on reflection, that this definition is the one that should be under the heading "Physical Distancing?"

To be fair to the World Health Organisation, they did suggest this term better reflected that it was physical means that transmitted the current virus, but I guess they have bigger issues on their mind at the moment than to win that linguistic battle.



For me, my level of social distancing, or social engagement has risen in a number of different ways, and that is from a start of being reasonably sociable in the first place.

My interactions on a daily basis have been enhanced by platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams; ideas that have emerged because we're not all running off to our next physical meeting have led to greater collaboration, and that in turn has produced a lot of improved and closer relationships.

My daily ration of exercise (and I was once told off by my GP for calling daily alcohol guidelines, my allowance – but enough digression) has given rise to much greater levels of social interaction as people wave and smile as I cycle past them, at the respectful 2 meters of course.

So, in our business and private lives we should recognise the power of words and the huge distinction between social and physical distancing.

We should, more than ever, keep in touch with our loved ones, and we should of course keep in touch with our clients, our business partners and collaborators, and of course our future clients.

We all must have at least an extra hour or two each day from removing our commutes, and our long lunches, so let us use that time well, and keep engaged.

This will be vital as we start to emerge from our digital caves, and we meet physical people again, and I am sure many relationships will be enhanced.



About the Author



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Currently CEO of a leading cloud based digital transcription outsourcer, with growing interests in on-line content generation and media distribution and professional back-office training delivery. He is also Associate Director at Tranmere Rovers Football Club, responsible for community engagement in the UK and internationally.

Martyn is a keen cyclist, completing the Tour de France Etape in 2016, a member of the International Travel Writers Alliance, Trustee of the National Youth Advocacy Service and previous President of the Liverpool Society of Chartered Accountants.

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