

How a European Company is Coping With COVID-19 – A Personal Account

By Dr. Josefine Tangen Jensen and Kim B. Eriksen



The COVID-19 pandemic is unlike any other we have seen before. It puts the world in an exceptional situation that will take its toll on the economy and the financial sector. Starting in December 2019 as an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown cause in Wuhan, China,¹ it has since spread throughout the world and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020.

The WHO has named the causative virus SARS-CoV-2 and the following disease as COVID-19. Since March 12, Europe has been viewed as the new epicenter for the disease and as of March 23, 2020, there are more than 340,000 infected and nearly 15,000 deaths following the disease worldwide.²

The symptoms of the disease can be non-existent but are mainly fever, dry cough and fatigue. The major transmission route is droplet and close contact,³ which is why many countries have introduced far-reaching measures to reduce infection rates, such as limits on the size of assemblies, restrictions on travel outside of one's own residence, the requirement of work from home and the closing of restaurant, cafés and shopping centers. It is these measures to prevent the development of a major health crisis that will affect the economy greatly.

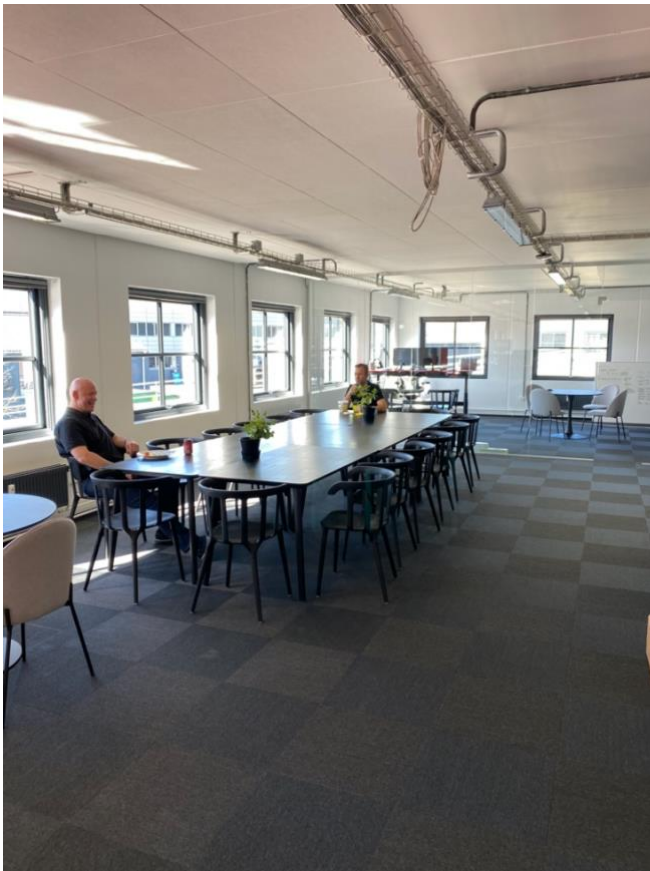
As owners and CEO of ParsePort, a European company specializing in XBRL solutions, we can see how COVID-19 has already taken its toll on us. We've been affected on several sides – the personnel side, where most of our employees have been sent home and asked to work remotely so that we will not have the risk of spreading the virus in our office. In the beginning, we merely asked employees with small children and elder relatives to stay home to avoid bringing and spreading the virus in our company. Later, the Danish government made some restrictions and recommendations, which currently are updated on a daily basis, which we are monitoring closely and following.

¹ <http://wjw.wuhan.gov.cn/front/web/showDetail/2019123108989>.

² <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

³ Chan J.F., Yuan S., Kok K.H., et al. A familial cluster of pneumonia associated with the 2019 novel coronavirus indicating person-to-person transmission: a study of a family cluster. *Lancet*. 2020;395(10223):514-523.

We have also been affected on the sales side, as many of our sales offices are spread over Europe, where we engage and meet potential customers to showcase our products. Now we are seeing those meetings cancelled, postponed or, in the best cases, moved to online meetings. Other companies across Europe are sending their employees home on forced vacation, some kind of leave of absence or to work remotely from home. We are expecting that COVID-19 will affect our business, as we will see months with empty orderbooks and postponed implementations and handovers of our products.



Despite all this, we believe that we will navigate successfully through the COVID-19 crisis. The beauty of our business is that we are able to move to digital sales, implementation and support. Our business is blessed as we can manage everything from first engagement to the handover of our products online, by using video conferences, online demonstration tools, etc. But I am seeing other businesses closing down, employees getting fired and cashflows being stalled, faster than I have ever seen before, and it really breaks my heart. The fact that the restaurant owner has to fire more than half of his employees, close the restaurant, write off the stock that will not be sold and put all plans on hold for an undefined timeframe is the new reality. And many business owners do try to be creative and adaptable to the situation, but there will still have to be a lot of sacrifices made.

The next effect – that has only begun – is the larger economic impact. Interest rates will go up, real estate prices will most likely go down, the economy in general will stall and some currencies will collapse – all affecting the financial ecosystem across the world. We will have to adapt even more as business owners, be creative, strong, brave and hold our breaths navigating through the storm COVID-19 will bring so that we can rebuild and rise once again once the storm has passed. I am convinced that we will return to a post-COVID-19 time where most businesses will be affected for years, not only financially but also in their way of acting and moving forward from here.

