

Covid 19 Lockdown

We are now living in a rather strange world, and we're all probably missing the familiar way of doing things and hoping it will be back soon.

At Steel Pencil we are looking at how to make this lockdown an opportunity as well as a nuisance.

Churchill once said that we should never waste a good crisis. Right now we are at the beginning of a good crisis. We can't do things the way we are used to, and our reliable sources of work are uncertain. We believe this is just an interruption, and normal service will soon be resumed.

What if that doesn't happen? What if this change is a new normal, with new viruses happening and lockdown being re-imposed from time to time? What will that be like?

If Steel Pencil wants to be successful in the new order we must do two things - see the opportunities in the crisis as it happens and be ready for whatever new world emerges. That means some thinking and maybe a few risks.

What opportunities are there in the crisis as it unfolds?

Most construction activity has been halted or at least slowed. Bad. A lot of our clients planning this work now have time to rethink the way they do things and to get ahead of the game. Good.

We hope that across the industry people are putting their feet up and looking at what comes onto their desks and what leaves it. How much of it is needed? How could the form of it be changed to get it from in tray to out tray faster? If a lot of it consists of questions people shouldn't have to ask, how do we fix this? We at Steel Pencil are reviewing all our systems and hoping to find things we can improve and things we can remove.

What opportunities might there be in a different world?

Clearly, when we all emerge from our homes and re-engage with the outside world there will be lots of things we have missed and are glad to get back to. But there will be things we were temporarily freed from and don't miss at all.

We are going to ask ourselves – why can't we go on doing our job without those things? For example, so far it looks as though on line meetings are shorter. Maybe it will turn out that brief one-on-one messaging with relevant people is more efficient. There will be things which we learn and can take forward into the new order.

This lockdown might turn out to be the jolt which moved the industry from face to face engagement with people to a greater acceptance of the on line world, where we can achieve more without the travel time. This has been happening, maybe the lockdown will accelerate it.

At Steel Pencil we have learned a lot. We now have nearly all of our team working from home. What have we learned? It should have been a standard risk mitigation procedure that we pay for all staff to have a high bandwidth internet connection at home, particularly in Manila. This would preferably be a duplex connection (same upload speed as download).

We should have more clearly understood what computer equipment staff have at home, and perhaps even provided some (on long term loan) for key staff.

We should have arranged for key staff to work from home for test periods so that we were more ready.

At Steel Pencil we also believe that we can also provide a large part of the answer for our clients. We believe that building modelling should be carried out at the initial stages of a project and that as many trades as possible should be in the one model. In our future we intend to "pre-build" your projects so that as many problems as possible are encountered during modelling, not on site. We have been in this role on many projects and find it satisfies us and satisfies our clients.