



ONLINE and upwards...!

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8 articles

We've had a few mantras over the last 5 years of [AutoSens](#)'s life span - 'By engineers, for engineers', 'Best in Class', and 'Onwards and upwards' all represent our approach, our engagement with our community of engineers and scientists, and our proactive, positive mindset.

By engineers, for engineers

But the world of conferences and exhibitions has been thrown a curve ball by COVID-19. Travel banned, meetings banned, venues closed and social distancing. It has been nothing short of chaos for the last 6 weeks. Of course, there are other impacted industries and healthcare challenges in many countries around the globe. Health and well-being are the most important thing for all of us, and while the media is quick to highlight the rebels I've been encouraged to see the many examples of [positive community spirit](#) this situation has given rise to. I certainly know my neighbours a lot better than I did a few weeks ago, even if we haven't shaken hands yet!

But while our health is paramount, health is partly derived from a safe and stable home environment, which in turn is dependent on a reliable income and engaged mind. For the Sense Media team, this means business must go on. We must find a way. It's a delicate line to walk between stubborn persistence, and ruthless opportunism. Neither are productive or appropriate, but I do believe that challenge brings opportunity, so we have been working hard on how to find that balance.

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I keep telling myself how lucky we are. It's not pure luck, you might call it 'luck by design', but I feel fortunate all the same (I practice [gratitude](#) every day and have done for many years). I was around in the 2008 recession, just starting out in the world of conferences. I saw the impact the global economic slowdown had on the events industry. Travel budgets slashed, marketing spend cut for shows, R&D belts tightened. I noted then that while many events companies suffered, the best in the market persisted, thrived even. Businesses still see value in attending events, but they trim down their roster to just the best ones.

I understood then that if you want to survive a recession in this business, you need to be the best. So back in 2015 when we launched Sense Media, that was the number one goal for AutoSens. To be the best in our niche within the market. That's why we have invested so heavily in all aspects of the conference series. I often see the phrase 'No expense spared' when looking at mint classic cars in the classifieds, and I feel I can say the same about AutoSens. We've put the customer first at every opportunity, and I believe that's been visible to our customers and community. Profit has always been a secondary target, but by investing in quality at every stage, commercial success has been a by-product of listening to our customers and delivering the best possible product we could. None of that changes because of COVID-19.

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So, back to lucky. Why are we lucky? We have built an industry leading brand over the last 4 years, we have tremendous support from our community, we are a tightly knit team with a great passion for what we do, we are a small business with the ability to adapt quickly and the skillset to do so, and we already have home working as an important part of our work-life balance. So, I feel lucky that we are as well placed as I could hope for to face the challenges we currently see.

The last 6 weeks have been an intense journey of discovery, listening to the market, trying to predict what impact global lockdowns will have on business, exploring the plethora of online event tools, many of which are totally inundated with new business enquiries. I'm very lucky also to be part of a [network of events business entrepreneurs](#) who have been a

hugely supportive community as we all revisit our business models. We've really pulled together, it's an amazing illustration of the power of community.

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What has come out of this? In the end, it's quite simple. We stay true to our founding principles of delivering a world class learning experience, an engaging environment with excellent networking opportunities, and a platform for driving new business in technology. All of this is possible in the 'new normal'. All of this is possible via online events. And the more I learn, I sincerely believe that many elements can be even more valuable online than via physical events.

Human beings are naturally programmed to thrive from face-to-face interactions, but I think the current forced situation is helping us to realise that perhaps we've been lazy in exploring and adopting online communication platforms. I don't believe my generation will ever want to completely ditch that face-to-face experience but in a post-COVID world we will all be using video chat significantly more than ever before, and the world will be better for it.

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AutoSens will be back, and I can't wait to see everyone in person again. But in the meantime, we are incredibly excited to be launching AutoSensONLINE, our new digital event series. We've put a huge amount of thought and effort into the detail of this new platform, and I'm convinced we'll remain Best in Class. In true By Engineers, For Engineers spirit, we will have the highest quality speaker line-up, delivered in bite-size chunks over May, June and July via a mix of presentations, panel discussions, Q&A, workshops, roundtables. Also to feature will be virtual demos, networking and other features to ensure business in the world of vehicle perception technology continues to move forward during lockdown.

And best of all, it's FREE. This wasn't an easy decision. I want to be clear that we still see great value in AutoSensONLINE for all participants, and free forever isn't a sustainable business model. But right now, we believe that we can play an important role in helping our community through these times, and removing barriers to access has been a founding principle since our inception. Our mission is to drive research, development and commercialisation of technologies for ADAS and autonomous vehicles, and AutoSensONLINE is firmly aligned with that purpose.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Sense Media team for all their hard work in developing this new platform. Working remotely presents extra challenges but we've knuckled down and I'm sure

it's going to be a great success. I hope you'll join me in looking forward to the future as we go ONLINE and Upwards!

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