

What the auto industry is doing to help during the COVID-19 pandemic

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COVID-19 has successfully caused the global economy to come to a standstill. The global car market has taken a nosedive with light vehicle sales in the US alone being dropped by 39%. Car production around the world has been shut down to prevent the spread of the virus, causing many automakers to lay-off thousands of workers and reach out for government loans to avoid bankruptcies. On the other hand, the vast idle manufacturing and mobility capacity of the automobile industry can play a key role in these trying times. Many have stepped up to do their part.

Helping the war effort: Keeping the health works on the move.

Many carmakers have begun to take an active part in the world's defense against COVID19, providing the healthcare



system with much-needed mobility. In UK, Ford has lent 200 vehicles from its press fleet to multiple organizations including the British Red Cross and UK National Health Service. Jaguar Land Rover lent another 160, including 27 examples of the new Defender. Even Rolls-Royce, the de-facto icon of luxury, has deployed a fleet of 30 limousines to deliver groceries and medical supplies to those in need.

Other companies such as Vauxhall and Nissan have begun offering free roadside assistance to healthcare workers, a move that is mirrored by AAA in the US. US car rental company Hertz has also stepped up to help, offering free rentals to all healthcare workers.

Switching production: Equipping the health workers

As the spread of COVID 19 increased, so did the need for face masks and other Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). This demand soon surpassed the supply, pushing the existing supply chain to its breaking point. Chinese carmaker BYD was among the first to react, switching the production lines at its Shenzhen facility to produce face-masks and disinfectants. They soon began making 300,000 bottles of disinfectant and five million masks per day, making the plant world's largest producer of the latter.

As the virus's epicenter moved from China to Europe, the local auto industry was quick to follow BYD's example. Italian supercar maker Lamborghini began

producing face shield and mask in their plant in Sant'Agata Bolognese, along with Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce, Jaguar Land Rover, SEAT, and other European carmakers.

In US, the big three carmakers have also begun their own PPE production, with General Motors (GM) reopening its closed Michigan just to build more facemask. Small shops have also pressed themselves into action, such as JK Automotive Designs in Stoneham, Massachusetts who are churning out 45 face shields every ten minutes.

In India, Mahindra & Mahindra has also begun producing face shields at its two-wheeler manufacturing plant at Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh.

Helping patients breathe: ventilator production

As the healthy people of the world scramble to protect themselves, those who are already infected faced with a new shortage. The COVID-19 is a severe acute respiratory syndrome, meaning it fills the lungs with fluid and debris which makes it almost impossible for the victim to breathe naturally. This is where a ventilator, a machine that provides mechanical ventilation by moving breathable air into and out of the lungs, becomes a critical part of treatment. The demand for the device was quite low before the outbreak, and the handful of companies that makes them found themselves with mountains of orders

that are impossible to fulfill on time. The automobile industry found themselves to be the unique solution to this crisis, being able to supplement many of the ventilator components with off the shelf automobile parts. Electric car pioneer Tesla fully embraced this idea, and are working on a ventilator prototype build almost exclusively out of Model 3 components. Others took a more pragmatic approach, such as Ford who partnered with General Electric Healthcare to build the Model A-E, a quick setup ventilator that can operate without the need for electricity. GM also took a similar approach partnering with Ventec Life Systems and begun setting up a facility in Kokomo, Indiana for ventilator production.

Across the pond, Spanish carmaker SEAT has begun producing their emergency OxyGEN ventilator, which uses a repurposed a windshield wiper motor to operate the device's pump. While UK-based Formula One teams like Mercedes-AMG F1, Red Bull F1, Williams and McLaren started "Project Pitlane". An initiative that connects the teams with engineers and healthcare workers to facilitate rapid prototyping and fast-track the production of medical devices. So far, their Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) device was approved by the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency while McLaren F1 designed personal respirators for health care workers are undergoing testing.

How tech companies are benefiting from people staying in

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With one-third of the world's population in home quarantine, the use of internet-based services & entertainment is soaring rapidly. While we are on the brink of a global recession, some digitized companies are actually benefiting by coming up with new ways to keep customers engaged. Across multiple entertain and productivity platforms, we explore what these companies are and how they are keeping their businesses striving.

Zoom downloaded more than 50 million times

Zoom Video Communications Inc. provides a software-based video conference, web conference services, online meetings, group messaging in a singular platform. As concerns over covid-19 upsurges, Zoom is exploding with popularity by ensuring a platform to conduct meetings, online classes & digital communication to the world. Wall Street firm Bernstein Research evaluates that Zoom has already brought in new active users due to the pandemic. Zoom officials observed this rapid change in their user directory and actively engaged with it. According to a stock market report, it was valued at \$15 billion last year(debut)which has now risen to an estimate of \$38.5 billion. The shares in Zoom are worth almost double increasing by 101% since January 31,2020. A report from March 26 shows that, it had been downloaded more than 50 million times on the Google app store alone as the global pandemic enforced people to work from their homes. It was named as the top free app on Apple's App Store. The number of active users spiked from 10 million last December to 200 million in April 11th,2020 while simultaneously being ranked as the number two and number one app in the UK and US, respectively.

As part of public service, they already lifted its 40-minute time limit for callers hosting an online meeting for paid users. Zoom's CEO Eric Yuan said that he wanted to make a contribution to help those affected by the virus. Additionally, Zoom has lifted some of their subscription on online collaboration services to help businesses that aren't adjusting well.

But with all the growth in their business, there are certain complaints raised against them by various users. According to Intercept, Zoom doesn't offer end to end encryption. This means that the data shared through zoom is not entirely secured. The company has focused much less on its privacy and security and it is surprising because the British PM was seen to use their application. Reports about data leaking, iffy encryption and zoom bombing (malicious practice of gate-crashing meetings) have been numerous. Various people have complained about such privacy concerns where a large chunk of



new users were victims of security lapses. Despite its greater job in connecting business, academia and government all around the world, zoom must make amends for the faulty security concerns if it wants to hold on to its sudden boom in its own business. More of this in last week's issue.

Slack gets 78 percent jump in revenue and competition from Microsoft

Slack is one of the most renowned applications used for workplace messaging. It's professional and faster than email and people already use it. But the pandemic has raised its stakes to a soaring level. If we look at various data clusters, we can decipher how slack reached 12.5 million connected users for the first time in its history as of Wednesday, March 18th and its spike continues to grow. Slack's growth has surpassed all that it earned in the last two quarters of 2019. In quarter 3 and 4 of 2019, it only accounted for 5000 new customers while it has already risen to 9000 over the past few weeks.

In response to this, Butterfield, founder of SLACK tweeted "It felt like the shift from inboxes to channels which we believed to be inevitable over 5-7 years just got fast-forwarded by 18 months. Good for our business.' All of these led the company's stock to rise by 13 % with a 78% jump in revenue causing a spark increase in net income. Butterfield also tweeted about how this pandemic made people spend more time in Slack causing average number of messages sent per user per day go up 20%, and average active usage has surged past one billion minutes each weekday. Slack has already taken some steps to help during these trying times of the pandemic by providing "free upgrades to paid plans" for teams working on coronavirus pandemic research. It has also bought in a lot of new upgrades which helps you toggle between new conversations and being more user friendly overall. The numerous updates suggest that slack employees have been working tirelessly which Butterfield reaffirms in his further tweets. However,

there had been severe doubts about whether the computing infrastructure of slack has enough capacity to handle the increasing usage. But the biggest concern for Slack is that its rival company Microsoft Corp.'s digital-collaboration tool Teams has already taken in as many users as them amid this corona outbreak. Therefore, Slack is facing a challenge not only to keep existing customers but also holding on to new customers. One of the users claim that 'Teams' has a lot more interesting feature than slack which might seem lucrative. If slack wants to maintain their current level of consistency, they have to find a way to keep their customers using slack.

Netflix chills with 7 million new subscribers in 2020 to reach 167 million

People who have been searching for leisure to watch all their unfinished Netflix shows have their prayers finally answered. And this has undoubtedly benefited Netflix as their subscribers keep

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NOW YOU KNOW

Your car is tougher than it looks

The ongoing pandemic has forced all of us to enter a period of self-isolation, to help contain its spread and flatten the curve. This has caused many car owners to store their cars, many of which are entering their third week of hibernation. Modern cars can sit up to two months without any major problem, so this is hardly a cause for concern. Owners can start their car up twice in a week for a piece of mind, but owners of hybrid vehicles such as the Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV should make sure to leave their car's battery charged around 30% during storage. This will protect the battery from any long-term damage.

