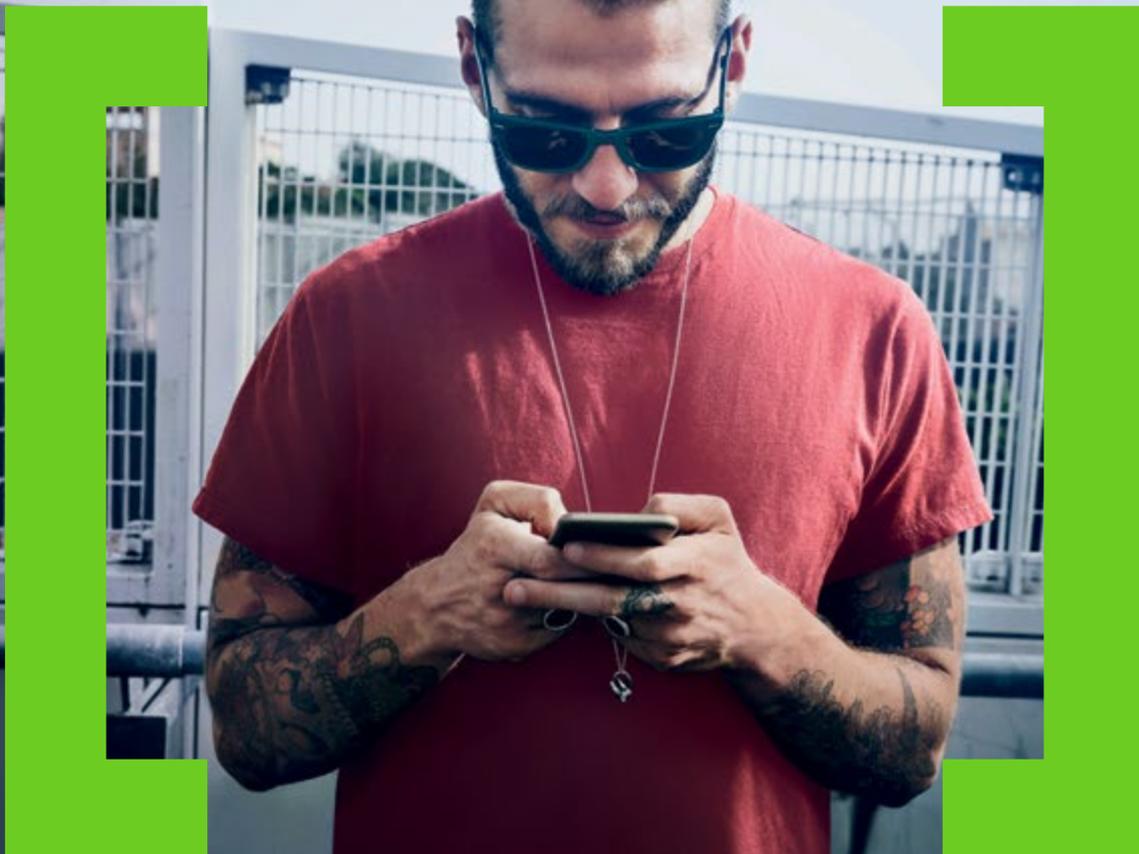


2020: the year that threw predictions out the window

By Peter O'Driscoll

Managing Director, RingGo

RingGo



Introduction

Across all industries, publicly and privately, predictions were made for 2020. The automotive industry looked hopefully into our crystal ball and imagined the great strides that would be made. But sitting here, halfway through 2020, it is safe to say that the world had different plans for us.

We have pivoted and reprioritised. We have worked from home and stood up whole new processes to support our remote teams. Struggled to keep staff and maintain cash flow, constantly re-evaluating as Covid-19 took hold month after month. As dire as the global situation may have seemed – may still seem – not all hope is lost and there are lessons learned that we can take and use to transform industries.

Given the shift in priorities, did any 2020 predictions hold up in a year that seemingly changed everything?



Digital is dialled up...more than predicted



At the beginning of the year, we were talking smart car technology, in-car payments and voice activation. But plans for lots of technology advancement turned sour when almost every car stayed parked, at home, for months.



However, not all technology solutions were put on the shelf. And as it turns out, 'TouchFree' parking – through phones and apps – is actually a key component in helping to get the country safely moving again.

Initially, local authorities and parking operators had adopted cashless payments as an option to become more inclusive. But based on current guidance from the government and the World Health Organisation to minimise contact surfaces and deal less with cash, this type of payment is a way to reopen outdoor spaces and city centres – and the car parks that provide access to them – without putting the public or employees at additional risk.

Reduced pricing and reinforced safety messaging have been put in place to promote cashless payments in the aftermath of the pandemic, but as adoption rises, so will the popularity. Over the course of the next few months, many will see the benefits of using a parking app that not only allows them to pay in a simple way, but helps to locate availability, provides directions, and enables you to extend your parking session from anywhere if you fancy a little extra time.



Changing mobility preferences and the environment

During lockdown, it is fair to say, most of us have spent more time outside in gardens and taking walks than ever before. We have replaced long daily commutes with a saunter around the block. We have listened to the birds, noticed the quiet and enjoyed the fresh air. But what kind of impact has this really had on the environment?



Back in March, we were already seeing significant impact of the lockdown on the environment as car registrations fell -44.4% and motorway traffic dropped by a staggering 83%.



It was first spotted from space, as images started to show a drastic reduction in pollution. Animals have followed suit, taking over areas once occupied by humans and enjoying the peace and quiet. As the country begins to open back up, the question has to be, so what now?

At the beginning of 2020 we were already seeing a drive towards more environmentally friendly mobility, while lockdown took us almost to carbon neutral, it isn't a feasible way to maintain the environment. However, with the pre-Covid-19 rise in 'environmentally aware' purchasing, seeing the impact first-hand could truly help with adoption of cleaner driving habits.

At the same time, as people start traveling again, they will be less keen to jump back on a train or bus than before, meaning that many will be looking to their cars more. In turn putting more on the road and possibly impacting pollution levels rapidly. However, not all hope is lost for the environment, more cars may be on the roads, but many of them are cleaner – hybrid or electric – vehicles. As an additional bonus, it was announced in April that company car drivers and fleet operators choosing an electric vehicle will incur zero tax on Benefit-In-Kind (BIK).

The adoption of cleaner vehicles is also being encouraged by policies – such as emissions based parking (EBP) – that more authorities and parking operators are putting in place. EBP, for example, charges higher polluting vehicles more to park than hybrid or electric vehicles, ultimately making it more environmentally friendly – and financially sensible – to own a cleaner car.

Unlike the early 2020 trend of the rise of the ride hailing, many now find themselves having to adjust to in car screens and compulsory mask policies in order to abide to social distancing regulations. The lockdown has also encouraged people to begin opting to take a long walk and even choose to jump on a bike to get from A to B. Many cities will look to capitalise on this trend post-lockdown to pedestrianize more city centres and there is a likelihood that policy on electric scooters could receive more support to provide alternative transportation options.

In spite of current unfavourable public opinion towards public transport, changes to the way we commute to work are likely to transform rapidly as the government fast tracks the development of e-scooter and cycle schemes to ease the pressure on our transport links. But regardless, as suggested at the beginning of the year, despite the cause for it, there has been a change in mindset. Providers like TfL should use this to start thinking about their price points, rethink their business model and understand the areas in which the business can continue to grow versus the areas where the focus will need to shift.

The environment has benefited from the stay at home orders and despite an initial spike in car usage, this could be the jump start that we need to look for alternative modes of transport that support cleaner, healthier cities.



The environment has benefited from the stay at home orders and despite an initial spike in car usage, this could be the jump start that we need to look for alternative modes of transport that support cleaner, healthier cities.

Re-building local authority relationships

Local authorities are always planning for the future, but 2020 threw most of those plans out of the window. They may have been looking to install new EV charging points, but with the complete standstill of many sources of income for local authorities, many projects like this have been put on hold. New sources of revenue have had to take priority and, unfortunately, many are just struggling to provide basic services.

However, as lockdown restrictions ease, local authorities need to be both considerate of safety and well-being, while still getting people back into town centres and opening attractions. Data can play a bit role in making this happen in smart, efficient ways.

At the beginning of the year we talked about learning from consumer data, but those patterns have all but gone out the window. So, we need to establish new baselines, current consumer behaviour – who is coming in and out of cities, the types of cars being used, how this is impacting wellbeing and the environment, etc. Planning is will also be driven by government announcement and changes to lockdown orders, so agility is key. Now is the time to turn to data driven integrated services to understand patterns, make plans and

ultimately breath life back into the once bustling streets.

This trend towards data will enable providers within the industry to ensure that solutions are being developed to meet new, evolving consumer and societal needs, as well as cater to local authorities that need digital solutions rather than simple transactional tools to get them back up and running.

2020 was not what anybody expected, and likely the surprises are still not over, but we can learn, adapt and ultimately improve as we move through the challenge of opening back up. But how we move will be key and the long term impact of Covid-19 on mobility trends will likely be a focus for a long time to come.

Now is the time to data driven integrated services to understand patterns, make plans and ultimately breath life back into the once bustling streets.

About RingGo

RingGo is the UK's no. 1 cashless parking solution. We're driven by one thing: making our cities healthier, cleaner and more liveable. Transforming cities into places where people can move around freely, with easy to use mobility solutions, while reducing congestion and pollution. How? By unlocking the power of technology to make parking simple, quick and effortless for drivers, operators and cities.

We're proudly representing our UK and European brands including RingGo, PARK NOW, Parkmobile, and Park-line. Our teams of 500 parking pioneers serve clients throughout Europe from our offices in Germany, the UK, France, the Netherlands and Belgium.

RingGo is part of YOUR NOW Group, the global joint venture in mobility solutions founded by BMW and Daimler. NOW Group offers car sharing, ride-hailing, charging and parking solutions to help people navigate their urban journeys with ease while being environmentally conscious.

For more information, please visit:

ringgo.co.uk

Want to get in touch?

[Peter O'Driscoll](#) • Managing Director RingGo

RingGo

Ground Floor East, Maplewood

Chineham Business Park

Basingstoke, Hampshire

RG24 8YB