1st September 2020

**THE REAL VALUE OF 'VIRTUAL' RUNNING**

In recent years there has been a growing phenomenon of 'virtual' running and I have to confess I was not a big fan initially. I didn't get why anyone would want to run from their doorstep (which we all do automatically) and pay for the privilege and at best just get a medal. I accept however that some medals are very, very attractive...

Now, since the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the trend of 'virtual' has grown considerably and people taking up the many various challenges have become unwittingly a vital part in sustaining many event companies such as BTR.

Back in March we hosted the Liverpool Half Marathon and 10 Mile Road Race little knowing that it would be the last event we could host. To date (late August) we have not hosted a thing... and that has brought a major problem. No events. No income!

There was no immediate leap to embrace 'virtual' running back in early April as we didn't really appreciate at the time of lock down just how long or how much the global pandemic would affect all walks of life.

Looking back over the last six months it has been frightening to see just how far reaching the effects of the pandemic have been for businesses large and small, especially in the areas of entertainment, tourism and leisure.

**And this is where 'virtual' running has become a real lifeline.**

Those people who have taken up the 'virtual' challenge hosted by BTR and added their names to the leader board have been absolute life savers! The income generated by 'virtual' running has helped to offset the ongoing operational costs of running a small business and also helped cover costs for which there has been no return such as medals that can't be used but have been paid for.

The revenue generated by 'virtual' running has gone a long way to ensuring that we can still operate and be in a good place to start the 2021 racing portfolio - assuming the social distancing regime is relaxed next year. And that assumption is very much at the heart of the problem. No -one really knows quite when we can get back to a good old fashioned normal when we just turn up at races and are happy to greet and compete with each other.

The longer that uncertainty remains the harder it is for small businesses particular to stay well... in business.

**So, if you are one of those runners who have supported the BTR Virtual Challenge then can I personally thank you for your support. You genuinely will not realise just how thankful we are for your support.**

Hope to see you at a BTR event soon!

Alan Rothwell

BTR Liverpool