

How to remain successful despite load shedding

 By [Devan Moonsamy](#)

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Load shedding has been a literal on and off game for South Africans. Whether you use the time to catch up with the family playing board games or visiting the mall to beat the hours of no power, load shedding has definitely forced us out of the ordinary.



Devan Moonsamy, CEO of The ICHAF Training Institute

Load shedding has not just hit consumers hard, but businesses have also been crippled as a result of the power struggle. According to *Times Live*, The Johannesburg's City Power has incurred a direct financial loss of more than R58m as a result of load shedding over the past three months.

At the same time *Fin24* wrote that big power users, including mining houses who say load shedding will be the death of the industry, say they want the government to move faster with new self-generation regulations because they no longer want to be at the mercy of Eskom.

Last month, mines across the country were forced to shut down after flash flooding triggered the most severe power blackouts. The mining industry contributed R351bn to the economy in 2018, the Minerals Council has said, equating to about 7% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Exxaro Resources CEO, Mxolisi Mojo, said the instability of our power supply in South Africa, as well as the cost of electricity, has meant that mining companies cannot process their minerals in the country.

Reporting to Maphosa at the Business Unity South Africa's (BUSA) Economic Indaba, companies who were in an energy crisis breakaway discussion said they want SA's energy plan to be within the direct control of the Presidency, and asked Maphosa to fast-track deregulation of private sector generation.

Now while big companies are beating a drum and trying to make a noise to what seems to be falling on deaf ears, we have to ask what are smaller businesses expected to do when Eskom cripples them with load shedding?

How can my business still be successful during load shedding?

- The first and most important point is to plan around the time of load shedding.

If you know that the power will be out for four hours, then necessary plans can be put into action. Customers can be informed in advance of this and employees should be trained on how to handle customers during load shedding.

Employees need to be trained. Yes, the keyword is training. Training needs to be provided on how to handle customer queries and work even when we are plagued with load shedding.

Businesses should have a standard policy on how customer needs should be met despite the power being off.

For example: If a customer calls wanting to make a reservation and you are offline, the necessary step would be to manually take down their details and if possible, make the booking manually. You should also inform them that you will call them once the power is back to follow up on the electronic confirmation that you will send through.

- Load shedding also brings with it, angry customers. Perhaps your business is a dry cleaner or a hair salon. Not having power can be detrimental on these smaller businesses. The advantage of being a service provider of this sort is that you are able to keep the customers' details. By this, you can call and inform them in advance if the power is out. This, of course, preventing the angry outburst in the store and also the customer would most certainly appreciate the effort by your team for informing them.

We know a lot of smaller businesses thrive by word of mouth. If customers are being given such service, they are bound to inform their friends and families and thus growing your client base.

Research has shown that 90% of angry customers will return to your organisation if their query has been resolved with follow up's and exemplary customer care. Companies invest a lot in product training but this is useless if soft skills like conflict management and customer care are not addressed. You can have a wonderful product but if you don't know how to engage with the people who are interested in it then it's pointless.

- The idea of staff training should also translate to management. This should be mandatory for all individuals who are part of the business. From the person who makes photocopies to the person in the role of security, they should all know that despite the power outage there is a contingency plan to do business. This is essential because each

individual is a brand ambassador.

They should know that the company will still keep the wheels turning even though there is a small bump. By doing this we also create a working space where people feel part of a solution instead of blaming the problem.

- During load shedding, ensure that staff prioritises care for equipment. Be sure to check that you have turned off any equipment that may be at risk of a possible power surge if the power comes back. It's important to do this because working equipment ensures we are able to meet our customer's needs.

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In closing, being a successful business during load shedding is still possible. We need to remember that given the tough economic times, turning away customers due to challenges by the state-owned enterprise that we are depending on is a no-no.

Start the conversation today and implement training to prevent the decline of your business.

ABOUT DEVAN MOONSAMY

Devan Moonsamy is the CEO of ICHAF Training Institute. ICHAF offers SETA-approved training in business skills, computer use, and soft skills. Devan specialises in conflict and diversity management, and regularly conducts seminars on these issues for corporates. To book a seminar with Devan or for other training courses, email devan@ichaftraining.co.za or call +27 (0)11 262 2461.

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