

# Companies putting the grit in integrity

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As part of our #LockdownLessons series, Bizcommunity is reaching out to its Press Office clients and South Africa's top industry players to share their experience of the current Covid-19 crisis, how their organisations are navigating these unusual times, where the challenges and opportunities lie, and their industry outlook for the near future.



Terry Levin

Terry Levin, creative director at Bizcommunity, shares her views.

■ ***What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it been different to what you expected?***

On 6 March we were attending Daily Maverick's The Gathering at Cape Town's CTICC, when the Zapiro's cartoon, featuring the first coronavirus case in SA was live released at the event. At that time corona news from the UK and Italy was cause for concern, especially as SA's first reported case was traced to a traveller entering from Italy. We were wondering when international borders would be closed, because as far as we were aware no testing or quarantine measures were in place at SA airports. Having watched international trends we were fully in support of Friday, 20 March, SA schools closure and Thursday, 26 March, lockdown and stay at home announcements and in agreement that utmost precautionary measures were the only way to safeguard lives and healthcare infrastructures.



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■ ***Comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your company or economy as a whole.***

Although the crisis has been extremely tough on business, there has also been a heartwarming sense of solidarity. We have been amazed at how SA's individuals, companies and brands from lifestyle to legal, medical to marketing and every industry between, have distinguished themselves in dealing with socio-economic challenges.

We are daily inspired and grateful to be able to provide a valuable snapshot overview of the over 350 companies and more

that make use of our business-to-business platforms to [publish company news](#).

### **■ How is your company responding to the crisis?**

As soon as lockdown measures were announced we set up three business-to-business resource pages. A [Covid-19 Special Section](#), Special Edition newsletters, [useful links](#) and [donation directory](#) initiatives have been undertaken proactively by Biz editors across all industries to provide a comprehensive overview of the generosity and ingenuity of the business communities we represent.

A valuable repository is being built via Biz #LockdownLessons series, #OnthefrontLine and others where SA's top companies and brands - from communications, eventing and strategy, to IT, finance and human resources, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, lifestyle, legal, property and construction sectors - are sharing how they are rising to remote working challenges.



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### **■ Comment on the challenges and opportunities.**

It has been amazing to see companies putting the grit in integrity, rising to challenges such as taking events online; entertainment and hospitality sectors pivoting to fundraisers and feeding schemes; consultants in law, management, digital and even hardest hit sectors such as property, construction and tourism coming on board with solutions.

For us a key opportunity lies in continuing to demonstrate the value of the business-to-business media in our region - as the showcase for these stories of proactivity and creativity, selflessness and solidarity within SA's business communities and we are committed to continue to growing this opportunity via our platforms.

We are particularly encouraged by the increase in international interest, which is in line with our vision of providing a valuable snapshot overview of the leadership, resourcefulness and capacity of our region across sectors.

### **■ How has the lockdown affected your staff? What temporary HR policies have you put in place regarding remote working, health & safety, etc.?**

In line with flexible working trends, Bizcommunity has had a clearly defined work from home policy for many years, this allowed our team to transition to virtual working lockdown directives seamlessly. The media has been deemed an essential service since day one of lockdown and have been impressed with the access and processes of applying for any relief funds that will enable us to keep our great team together, while servicing the needs of our loyal client, partner and readership base.

### **■ How have you had to change the way you work?**

I think the fact that many of our team have not had to factor in commute time has increased productivity. Saying that social isolation has meant that our supportive culture and team spirit have had to be virtual for a while.

### **■ Has this global crisis changed your view of the future of the industry in any way?**

We have seen the value of the business-to-business model really come into its own since lockdown and remote working measures were announced 26 March, 2020. We have been calling a visit to the Bizcommunity website, the daily "virtual commute", a destination for business-focused regional news that brings readers closer to their industry.

We believe the over 1,500 articles that we have published to date will provide a valuable post-Covid-19 archive, critical to

driving and reviving future economies.



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### ■ ***Any trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?***

A key trend that we have identified is the quest for higher purpose. Purpose has been high on the agenda for successful brands for a while, but the global crisis has accelerated its necessity. The daily stories of altruism from SA's big name corporate and retail brands has shown a new way and can have many mutual socio-economic benefits.

### ■ ***What do you predict the next six months will be like?***

The next six months will be economically very tight, but we will continue to see successful new models popping up in every sector and region. Due to the weak rand many people will be looking to international markets, models and investment. Socio-economic imbalances in the world and in South Africa will need to be addressed and there will be more appreciation for social ecosystems between people such as between clients and service providers, employers and workers, neighbours and civic society. There has been an average of 70% less crime across the board in South Africa during lockdown, due to people staying at home and increased police presence and perhaps reduced alcohol consumption and one would hope these new modus operandi would continue. There is a move to simplifying, making do with less and buying local, which could entrench new consumption habits.

### ■ ***Your key message to fellow industry folk?***

We take this time to salute and acknowledge the contribution of all stakeholders to the SA economic ecosystem - from leader to learner. We reiterate how proud and privileged we are to represent and be a part of 19 business communities. It is our brand purpose and prayer to see them all thrive and survive this crisis and to come out stronger than before.

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