

# Ozone supports its clients throughout the 'new norm'

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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As part of our #LockdownLessons series, Bizcommunity is reaching out to 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.



Henk Olivier, managing director of Ozone Information Technology Distribution

Henk Olivier, managing director of [Ozone Information Technology Distribution](#), shares his lockdown lessons and how Ozone is navigating the lockdown and supporting its clients throughout the new world of work.

## **How has Covid-19 impacted your business?**

Covid-19 has impacted our business in many ways. From a financial level down to business operations and processes that have had to be changed to adapt to the new normal. Our interactions with clients, negotiations with suppliers – these have had to take their situations into account. We've allowed for longer terms on accounts for clients and we've worked with the bank on certain deals to ensure that we don't make a loss in light of exchange rate fluctuations.

### ■ **How did you prepare for the lockdown?**

Two weeks before the lockdown we looked at how businesses on a global level were handling the situation and what they'd had to change.

“None of us were ready for how long this was going to be, most companies only planned and prepared for a short period of time.”

We put measures in place, evaluated the business to see what the impact of a full lockdown would be, and then we worked with our people to help them get the most from working from home. We also adapted our process flows and did the factor calculations for potential loss and worst-case scenarios. All businesses need to do that so they are aware of what they need to do to make end of the line critical decisions.

### ■ **What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?**

To ensure that all our employees are productive and actually working from home. The second challenge is communication – we've realised that you need to have constant calls with different stakeholders to ensure everyone feels connected and updated.

“Conversations that used to take two minutes face to face now take twice as long so there's more planning that needs to be done to be really productive with all the call interruptions.”

### ■ **What sort of assistance will you need going forward?**

We only need for our suppliers to extend their terms when needed, and for the banks to assist on the exchange rate forward cover when we need it.

### ■ **If you are able to operate, What steps are you taking to continue operating?**

We can operate remotely, so we're not directly affected, but many of our customers have been impacted. We've made provision for a certain percentage of our affected clients. How we adapt these provisions going forward will only be really determined as we see trends emerge over the next few weeks.

### ■ **What measures have you put in place for your employees?**

We've ensured that they're fully capable of working from home and we've put measures in place to monitor business income versus overheads so we're covering operating costs all the time.



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### ■ **Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?**

We engage with our customers over email, video conference calls and normal calls. We use the method of communication preferred by our customer and we've developed systems that make this communication as easy and accessible as possible.

### ■ **How are you offering assistance to your customers who rely on your services?**

Our sales and ordering side is completely operational so clients can always get the solutions and information they need.

“ Our technical support division is on-hand using a variety of digital communication tools and services so clients are not left with unresolved technical issues. ”

On the accounts side, if our clients need longer terms, we're working with them to provide payment plan options on some of the services we provide.

#### ■ **What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?**

I think we all need to embrace the change of everything. Things will go back to normal, but not as we know it.

“ We'll all work differently, communicate differently and spend our time differently. ”

The next six months will be hard but there's plenty of opportunities to do things differently, downscale on overheads and be less vulnerable for future mishaps.

There will be a large small to medium enterprise market but it will operate in different ways and new markets will be created. The whole of the entertainment, restaurant and social environments will change.

#### ■ **Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is Ozone doing?**

We're looking for new products and tools to distribute and assist companies be more productive with remote working. We're providing business knowledge on how to make use of tools so we can adapt and change quickly.

#### ■ **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

It doesn't matter what plan you have, there's always an unknown you can't plan for. Accept, adapt immediately, and realise that you don't have control over anything.

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