

How to modify your hiring strategy during Covid-19

By [Matthew Kibby](#)

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Business changed overnight when President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a national lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus.



As the majority of the South African workforce instantly became remote, businesses that had never managed a dispersed team were thrown in the deep end. Forced to adopt new working processes and practices, businesses are rethinking how they communicate, collaborate, and engage with each other, their customers, and the broader talent pool.

Those businesses that are still hiring during this difficult time will also need to change their hiring processes and policies. Nearly every aspect – from interviewing to onboarding – has changed.

Here are a few recruitment and hiring strategies that you can implement during the Covid-19 shutdown and beyond.

1. Look internally first

People are scared of losing their jobs. In fact, as many as [1 million South Africans could lose their jobs](#) due to the coronavirus outbreak. Before looking externally for new hires, there might be people within your organisation that you can reskill, upskill, and repurpose.

2. Conduct virtual interviews

Switch to online interviews using one of the many free videoconferencing tools available, like Skype and Zoom. If you have a Microsoft Office 365 subscription, you're already paying for the more secure and reliable Microsoft Teams collaboration platform.

When the lockdown is over, social distancing measures might still be in force. In this case, you could have colleagues in other cities to meet with potential candidates, rather than requesting that the person travel to the office for an interview.

3. Virtual onboarding

If a new hire joins your business during the lockdown period, you'll need to onboard them virtually. This requires a new management style. Since onboarding is quite personal, businesses need innovative ways to immerse new hires in the business and make them feel part of the team.

Introduce a routine as soon as possible. Send the new hire plenty of resources and information about the business and their new role, and schedule regular video meetings with their manager and colleagues. Some businesses use virtual reality technology to give new hires a tour of the office and facilities, and to give them a sense of the office culture.

4. Find the best candidate with AI

In times when unemployment is high and jobs are scarce, desperate jobseekers will apply for as many positions as possible, even if they're not fully qualified or experienced for a role. In fact, 52% of talent acquisition leaders say the hardest part of recruitment is identifying the right candidates from a large applicant pool, since up to 88% of the CVs received for a role are unqualified. This means that companies [choose the wrong candidates 82% of the time](#).

Artificial intelligence (AI) can automate the CV-screening process so that only relevant, closest-match candidates land up in your inbox, which reduces the time to hire.

AI can free up your time to get to know the candidates on your shortlist and decide if they'll be a good cultural fit. From writing the perfect job advert, to eliminating bias and improving the candidate experience, AI can streamline the entire recruiting process. AI chatbots can even conduct the first interviews for you and can help determine whether an employee will be honest and ethical.

5. Delay hiring and use freelancers to fill the gaps

Nobody knows how long the coronavirus will impact our lives, or how long the lockdown will be in force. If you'd prefer to interview candidates in person, consider delaying your hiring for now and tap into SA's growing pool of freelancers, independent contractors, labour brokers and personal service providers to meet the immediate business need as a stop-gap.

From copywriters to designers, business analysts to accountants, developers to video editors, the gig economy is brimming with senior talent that you can access immediately – often for a lot less than if you were to hire someone full-time.

When the lockdown is lifted and you start interviewing again, be sure to follow the Labour Department's [guidelines to deal with COVID-19 in the workplace](#).

6. Find a specialist recruiter

There's a lot going on right now. If you don't have the time or capacity to find an urgent hire, reach out to a recruiter that specialises in recruiting the skills you need, like payroll, HR, IT, and finance.

New normal

Conducting business during a global pandemic is new territory for everyone. Candidates are more likely to be understanding of the challenges that come with navigating this disruption. But this makes communication, trust, and relationship management more important than ever. Be transparent and stay in contact with current, new, and potential hires about your changing needs.

And, as always, look for the silver lining. The Covid-19 crisis is going to change businesses and people's behaviour forever. We're heading for a new status quo where businesses will see that employees can be productive at home (possibly even more so than when they're in the office), and that remote working can reduce their overheads. The businesses that embrace technology to find and support new ways of working and hiring will flourish.

Stay focused. Stay safe. Stay at home.

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