

# RISE Academy keeps students active in lockdown

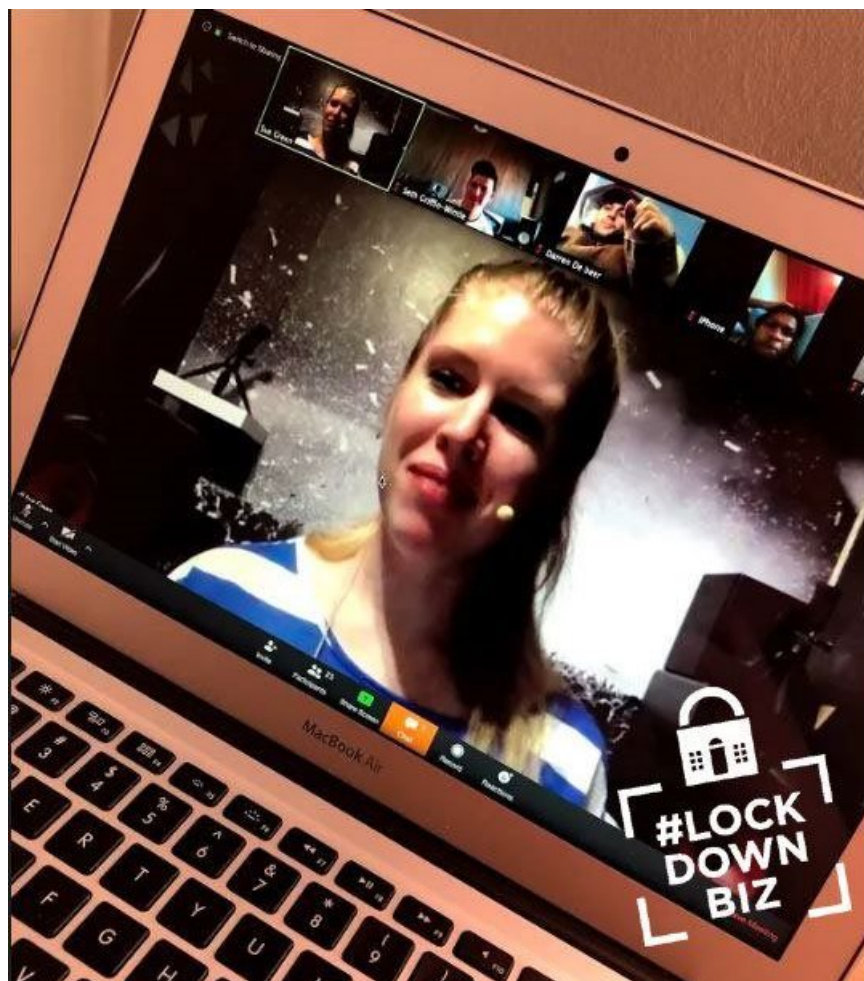
By  Evan-Lee Courie

18 May 2020

#LockdownLessons explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.

[RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship](#) isn't just your average academy, it's core function is to make business skills available to the youth in a way that speaks their 'language'.

Sue Green co-founded RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship, an academy that offers various courses and workshops for the youth that includes DJing, performing, dancing and modelling across Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.



Sue Green interacts with students during lockdown

Sue Green shares how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted the academy...

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

RISE ran classes every Saturday and prepared our students to be on stage at big events. However, since the start of lockdown, classes and events were put on hold indefinitely leaving us with a massive dilemma around how to continue providing our service and support to students. We had to make the decision between pausing the course calendar completely and freezing all operations until regulations were lifted, or to get creative and see how we could keep our students active during the lockdown.

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## #EntrepreneurMonth: RISE Academy nurtures youth to follow their passion

Evan-Lee Courie 31 Oct 2019



### ▣ How did you prepare for the lockdown?

We closed our office three weeks before the lockdown and asked all our employees to work from home. We stopped interviewing new students at our offices and moved these all to online interviews so that our premises were reserved only for our students. We reduced the size of our classes on Saturdays splitting students up into smaller groups. We had also implemented a number of new hygiene protocols to keep our students feeling safe and at home whilst attending their classes. When school closures were announced, we immediately started to planning to suspend classes and come up with new ways to support the students remotely.

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

We've moved all our classes online and had to rearrange our syllabus as some of our classes require our students to be in our studio, using our professional equipment.

“ Our biggest challenge is supporting students who don't have a stable Wi-Fi connection at home. Moving classes online was a huge success but at RISE we feel strongly about not leaving any student behind. ”

We've had to get creative around sending just recorded audio files (which only require small amounts of data) of our online classes with small sets of notes per class that we can send via WhatsApp. We set homework exercises for each class so that we can monitor how each student is coping with the new format of classes – especially those who don't have access to our live online classes.

Keeping all our students active, engaged, and encouraging them to use this time positively to work on their music careers despite the technical challenges they're faced with has been our biggest challenge, but it has also been incredibly rewarding. Everyone needs some emotional support during this time, and being in a position to be able to keep our students active as a community, supporting one another, encouraging one another to use this time to their advantage, and keep them actively engaged in what they love during the lockdown, has been an absolute privilege for the academy.



### 📺 What sort of assistance will you need going forward?

Like most education-based institutions, our greatest need is around supporting students who do not have many resources at home. We'd love to see them supported with wifi. For our DJ students, not being able to use our top of the range gear at the RISE studios has put a pause on all their practice and skills development in this area. We're hoping a sponsor will step in and provide small controllers to students which will allow them to practice the basics at home and learn their DJ skills virtually. This would be a huge morale booster during lockdown for our students who are missing the studios terribly.

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

We've found a few creative ways to continue operating. We've switched our syllabus around to cover all the classes now that work best via online delivery. Zoom has been a great tool and we're actually enjoying our new virtual classroom!

“ We've found really fun ways to interact over Zoom and make classes really social before and after delivering the actual lesson content. We've invited guest lecturers to take class to keep the students excited and motivated to attend class despite the fact that they miss seeing their peers at their usual classes. ”

We've also added a few homework challenges in for them, giving them prizes for work that is completed excellently. This has kept their spirits high and kept them working hard between classes. We've also let all the students know that we will

repeat all the classes we've had online, in person once schools are allowed to re-open.

Despite the fact that we've incurred extra costs to essentially double the number of classes our students will receive so that we can keep them busy in lockdown, we've learnt a lot about online learning and have been recording high quality classes that we've turned into an online course that is now available to students outside of the three cities we have campuses in.

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

All our employees are working from home. We have online meetings weekly to plan classes, check-in on students, and check in on each other during this time.

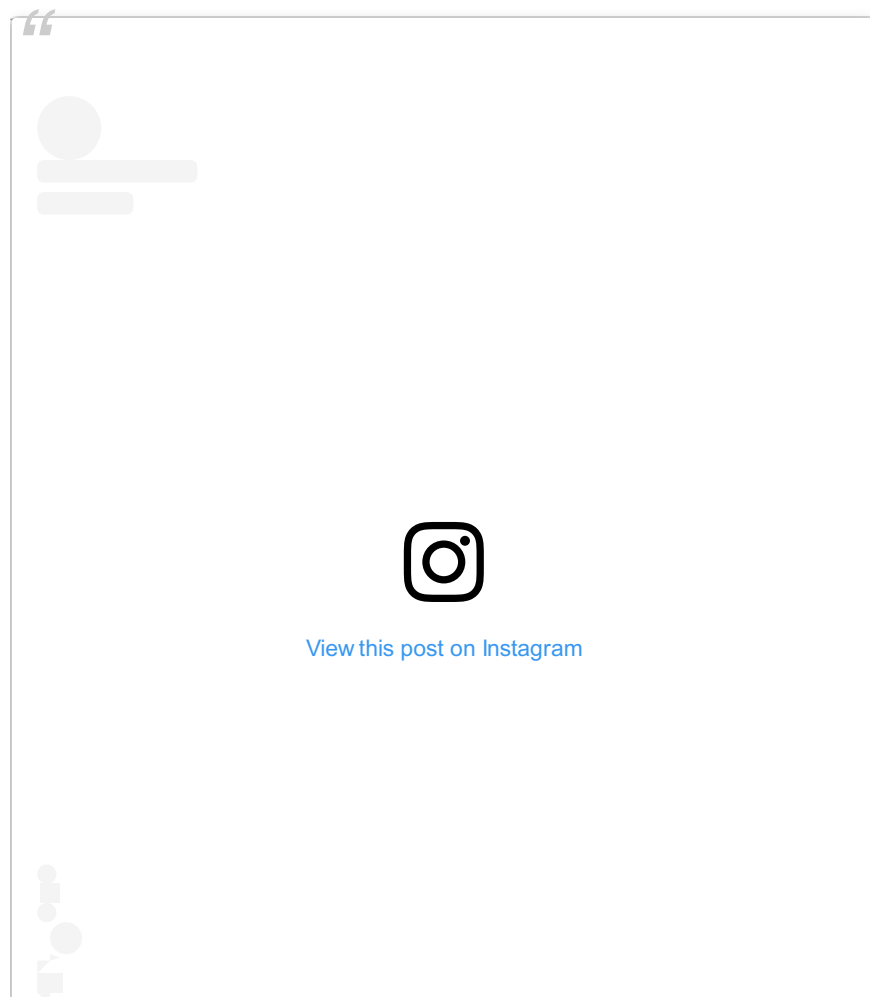
■ ***Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?***

All our students are on WhatsApp groups with us and their classmates. We're in permanent contact, checking in, setting fun challenges for them, and keeping them in contact with their classmates.

“ We regularly communicate with the parents via email and encourage as much feedback as we can get on the new online classes. ”

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

We've been very active on social media, to keep our wider community (not just our students and graduates) in contact with one another. We're available to all our students via video calls, and classes are continuing to follow our existing calendar via online classes. We've added in fun challenges to encourage the students to use this extra time in positive ways. We've invited guest lecturers to chat to the students to keep them inspired through this period. We've added in a few prizes for the students, to keep them motivated and working hard on what they love.



Whether you're a DJ, Music Producer or Performer - who is your dream collaboration with? 🎧🎧 Tell us below 🎧🎧🎧🎧

A post shared by [RISE Academy | South Africa \(@riseacademysa\)](#) on May 11, 2020 at 11:39am PDT

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Our main goal has been to use the platform to keep our students' moral high, offer as much support as we can, and continue to be a community that inspires positivity in amidst all the uncertainty. We've tried to offer our students as much stability as we can by continuing with classes so that they have some routine and consistency during these trying times.

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

We're expecting the next six months to be challenging – we're prepared to continue with our new model of online classes for as long as we need to, and we can't wait to gradually re-introduce small classes and welcome students back into our music studios so that they can record the music they've been working so hard on during lockdown.

We've been mentally preparing our students for the likelihood that large public events will not return until either a vaccine or a treatment becomes widely available. We've been working on ways to turn this into a positive thing for our students, giving them the time to work on their stage skills in creative new ways, adapt to using new technologies to take some events online which gives them access to new platforms where they can showcase their talents.

Our students are live streaming, using this time to brand themselves, market themselves, grow their fanbase, and strategize their next few career moves with our guidance. Rather than hope for events to make a speedy return, we're encouraging them to accept that events may take many months to return and to use this time to create opportunities for themselves as each student will play a role in rebuilding the events industry after this crisis, and rebuilding our local music scene.

#### 📊 **Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is RISE Academy doing?**

We've taken this time to record our online classes and build a set of online courses that are now available to students for distance learning. We get many applications each year from students outside of main city centres, and from students living in many different African countries who cannot afford to relocate to SA where we are based. Now, these students have the opportunity to join us via correspondence learning.

“ We've discovered some incredible new online tools that have completely changed the way we think about education ”

We're having a lot of fun with our students online, and will definitely keep a section of RISE available online in the future as a supplement to what we offer our students.





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

Our biggest lesson has been around cashflow. Years ago we made the decision to start teaching our young students how to manage their money, build their careers responsibly, and start their own small businesses. Each year we stress the importance of cashflow and 'saving for a rainy day.' This lesson has never been more relevant than it is now.

RISE and the rest of our affiliated companies in the Live Group have had a financial plan in place for years now. We have savings that we've created as a buffer against any unforeseen future events. We never predicted that this contingency plan would be used during a global pandemic quite like this, but we're so grateful now for this conservative planning.

*“ It's incredibly sad watching other small businesses close down, and we're very grateful that we get to set a new example to our students for the correct way to financially plan, save, and create sustainable businesses. ”*

Despite being based in the entertainment industry, our companies are leveraged to survive tough times such as these. We've been able to continue paying our employees, offer stability to our students, and our companies will all be ready to operate at full capacity, throwing incredible events as soon as it's safe to do so.

This crisis has given us the chance to lead by example and our students have a much deeper understanding of the importance of financial planning and cash flow. We look forward to watching them use this knowledge to create the next generation of sustainable businesses in South Africa, they will need to play their role in re-booting our economy and we will continue to do our best to guide them in every way we can.

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