

# Using and developing your employees effectively during Covid-19

By [Jameel Khan](#), issued by [SAICA](#)

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Since the lockdown was announced almost two months ago in South Africa, there are a lot of businesses who have been unable to operate. The primary focus of these businesses has been on how they can access funding in order to pay their employees and remain afloat, and how they can adapt their business strategy to enable them to operate and generate revenue by producing essential supplies.



However, there has been one resource which has largely been untapped due to the panic the virus has caused, and that is employees themselves. A large number of businesses unable to operate are faced with a conundrum of whether to let employees go or pay them a percentage of their salaries.

In a recent article<sup>1</sup>, according to Sandile July, director and labour law specialist at Werksmans Attorneys, “the simple answer is that the employment relationship becomes suspended”. July noted that it was expected that those employers who can afford to continue paying employees who are not rendering services should allow those employees to take annual leave which they are statutorily entitled to. Further to this, employers could apply through one of the relief mechanisms from government in order to obtain funding to pay employees.

All of this is done despite the fact that certain resource centres, like sales staff, are unable to operate during Covid-19.

**This begs the question: are companies utilising these employees who are currently not working?**

Here are two suggestions as to *how* you as the employer can utilise your employees:

## **1. Reprioritise resources to current departments in your business.**

In cost accounting, we are taught an activity-based cost model, whereby we identify activities in an organisation and assign

the cost of each activity to all products and services according to the actual consumption by each. Businesses should thus look at the current activity levels of departments in the organisation and redeploy resources to the teams that really need the support at this point in time.

For example, in the current state of lockdown, human resource departments have been inundated with requests to apply for funding and finance departments are required to revise budgets, forecasts and actuals. Why not then ask the sales team or others that are under-utilised to assist these departments?

By so doing, not only will the staff in the department(s) that is inundated be grateful, but perhaps the staff from the supporting department will learn how this department operates as well as learn elements of a whole new field. This could definitely be good for employee morale and breed a supportive culture.

## **2. Use idle employees to grow your business.**

Employees could be tasked with investigating new revenue streams, investigating a new process that could create efficiency in the business or just build connections with potential customers they can reach out to post the lockdown period.

At SAICA Enterprise development (SAICA ED) I am noticing this as a trend with our entrepreneurs in our current programmes. There is a desire to use all idle resources to rethink current business models and business strategy or carve out relationships from now that can be exercised once lockdown has been lifted.

It is commonly written that unplugging from your everyday tasks can foster a sense of creativity. Deep Patel writes in his article<sup>2</sup>, *9 Ways to Rewire Your Brain for Creativity*: “Allowing yourself time to ‘space out’ and let your mind wander can boost creativity.” So why not task employees to investigate and use idle time to be more creative?

By adopting either method, as a business you will be:

- creating a more collaborative working environment.
- reprioritising currently ‘wasted’ resources with employees being idle.
- upskilling employees to learn different parts of your businesses.
- stimulating employees to be more creative and provide a more meaningful and sustainable contribution to your business.

The above-mentioned is an example of some of the ways we can think innovatively to help businesses come up with adjusted and flexible models to help navigate through these unprecedented times of Covid-19.

### ***How we can help small business***

*SAICA ED offers Financial Excellence to SMMEs through all designations of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA). The main purpose of this entity is to grow South Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem through advancing the sustainable growth of small Black businesses, which in turn will create employment opportunities.*

*As an ESD funder your contribution could be the difference between life and death for a SMME in this Covid-19 environment.*

***The SAICA ED Covid-19 SMME Relief Solution*** focuses on assisting SMMEs to access all the appropriate Relief and Funding measures currently available to them, to help navigate these uncertain times.

For any enquiries email us at [enquiries@saicaed.co.za](mailto:enquiries@saicaed.co.za) or visit our [website](#).

<sup>1</sup><https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/388055/do-employers-have-to-pay-workers-during-lockdown-what-south-africas-law-says-and-how-to-fix-it/>

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