

How UBU International can give local businesses a leg up

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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UBU International, which recently launched in South Africa, aims to help local businesses boost their sales by leveraging a combination of mobile discovery, marketing, rewards and mobile payments.



Andre de Wet, UBU International CEO

The platform-based ecosystem has been designed to convert the power of mobile search for products and services into feet through the doors of local brick-and-mortar and digital businesses. When consumers search for services and retailers, the mobile app directs users to participating businesses in their area, and when the user purchases services or products at these vendors, they get immediate cashback.

UBU International's CEO, Andre de Wet, is a serial entrepreneur and mobile strategist, who had already sold his first business by the time he was 27 years old. Most recently, he occupied the role of CEO at well-known e-commerce site PriceCheck.co.za.

Here, De Wet unpacks the mechanics of the UBU International platform and how it's primed to boost local business recovery.

Can you explain how the UBU International platform works?

The UBU International ecosystem engages with three audiences:

- Local businesses who are hoping to attract and retain new customers;
- Organisations or individuals that have a substantial audience, customer base or following (this could include schools, radio stations, gyms, churches or even social media influencers and local celebrities) and;
- Members of the public who want the convenience of a touchless mobile wallet as well as the cashback rewards and discounts offered by a loyalty programme.

Our platform solves a commerce problem. Rather than simply focusing on sales conversions, it is designed to increase sales and drive foot traffic for brick-and-mortar retailers, while using digital channels to address relevant audiences for both retail and e-commerce businesses, many of whom can't afford large advertising campaigns or to implement complex loyalty programmes.

UBU International provides businesses with their own branded loyalty wallet where their audience, customers or followers can get direct loyalty rewards with instant cash back, while also being able to shop in the wider UBU Marketplace. It's therefore in their interest to actively encourage users to download and use their wallet, which includes access to mobile payments, while at the same time having access to the UBU International platform which manages both the loyalty and rewards programme.

This programme allows for all merchants on the marketplace to be featured across the whole ecosystem.

Organisations who have their own branded wallets earn a commission for each purchase made by their users in any store in the Marketplace, creating a passive income stream. This is a unique way for wallet holders to earn income from their users outside of their normal sphere of business.

Our solution merges marketing, loyalty and payments. With one platform we solve the small business challenge of getting feet through their door. We enable radio stations, churches, schools, gyms, NGOs and even social media influencers to monetise one of their greatest untapped assets – their audience.

■ Considering the app was launched during the Covid-19 lockdown, how can it help boost business recovery and encourage support for local SMEs specifically?

As mentioned, the SMEs included in the UBU Marketplace can enjoy the exposure from the organisations or individuals that have a substantial audience, getting coverage that would normally cost a substantial amount of money to buy. Ultimately,

this exposure delivers more customers to their door, thereby boosting sales.

The built-in, instant cashback feature for customers also allows SMEs to implement a loyalty programme without any complexity.



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■ ***A mobile wallet and cashback rewards are key features of the UBU International platform. Can you comment on the benefits of mobile payments and loyalty/rewards programmes in today's business environment, and how they are impacting consumer behaviour?***

The loyalty system encourages the SMEs' customers to become more frequent, devoted shoppers. In a [recent article by Forbes](#), they stated that customer retention is the key ingredient to small business recovery. The main drive of this argument was Bain & Company study that showed that a simple 5% increase in retention can result in a profit of 25% or more.

The UBU mobile wallet offers touchless transactions, which is an important feature under the current 'Covid normal'.



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■ ***In your opinion, what should local businesses keep in mind when trying to capture the attention and spend of consumers during these uncertain times?***

Many businesses focus on customer acquisition, which is certainly an important component for growth for a business. However, as the *Forbes* article mentions "it takes five new customers to equal the amount one repeat customer spends in an average transaction".

The UBU loyalty programme users also come out on top as research has shown that cashback and great deals are the benefits most sought after in such programmes. We cannot emphasise enough the value of a good loyalty programme's benefit to a business.

View [UBU International's Biz Press Office here](#).

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