

Is your business ready?

The implications of a move to Level 3 lockdown are quite significant for businesses. While the exact regulations are not yet available, at this stage what is clear is that South Africa will go to level 3 on Monday, 1 June 2020.



John Woollam, CEO at Euphoria Telecom

For businesses, this means preparing for level 3, as well as having contingency plans in place to go back to level 4 or level 5, if need be, says John Woollam, CEO at Euphoria Telecom.

“Level 3, with greater freedoms, is likely to prove as complicated as government strives to ensure people social distance, wear masks, and disinfect hands, items and spaces,” Woollam comments.

Here are five key questions to ask yourself to ensure you are prepared:

1. **Business space** - You need to sanitise your entire office before you can resume operating, and then disinfect it regularly.

Some areas and items will need to be disinfected after each use, which can be many multiple times a day. The

business has to supply masks and ensure they are laundered.

Key question: How many staff can I keep working remotely in order to protect my people, suppliers and customers and manage virus-related costs?

2. **Cutting costs** - Business owners need to carefully manage cash flow and be ruthless about cutting costs and saving jobs. This means balancing the advantages of opening offices or locations and having teams working there daily with the costs of keeping people safe and the space disinfected.

For many businesses, the cost of maintaining a sanitised office space and a schedule to ensure only one-third of their staff are onsite at any given time will likely prove to be more costly than its worth.

Key question: How can I optimise remote operations to save costs and enhance productivity?

3. **Adapt** - What do you offer? How can you adapt it to better deliver value to your customers? Can you change what you do to open new revenue streams? How resilient is your business? If you cannot operate, how can you pivot to begin to operate again?

Many ecommerce companies pivoted to deliver essential goods instead, rather than shut down for the duration. You need to look at what you can do to work optimally in these circumstances.

Key question: What can I do to fill needs that are not being met?

4. **Reconsider** - Consider going remote, long-term. Look at the advantages, look at the costs of maintaining offices - even beyond the need now to sanitise and social distance - and consider how you can change the way you operate to make your business and your employees better and more productive.

Key question: What are the risks and benefits of moving operations remote for the long-term?

5. **Invest** - Invest in the tools and technology now that will enable you to run your business remotely, seamlessly. Move the technology you need to run your business onto Software as a Service platforms, running in the cloud - from your telephony to your call centre, your ERP to your email. This allows you to access these tools from anywhere and it makes you both resilient and able to move quickly. Look for providers that offer month to month contracts, rather than long-term ones that will tie you in.

Equip your people with connectivity, laptops and the software tools they need to work and you're protected from whatever market shifts may come in the future.

Key question: How equipped am I to deal with changes in lockdown levels and possible long-duration lockdowns and other disruptions in future?

It's become a cliché to call things the new normal, but realistically, we don't know what that is yet. We don't know how long the pandemic will continue to disrupt business operations. And we don't know how our customers and employees needs and requirements are going to change - although we can already start to see shifts, like the increased willingness of customers to buy online and deal indirectly.

Businesses need to be as flexible as possible if they hope to weather the ongoing disruption and that, in 2020, means equipping themselves with the mindset and the technology to operate, however, whenever, and wherever is needed and possible.

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