

LOCKDOWN LESSONS FROM COVID-19

Covid-19 brought with it a flurry of panic and wave of negative socio-economic impacts as we entered a lockdown to stop the disease's spread. In some instances, the Florida Road UIP was prepared, in others there was a scramble to get up to speed to deliver on the required response.

There is no better time to learn than from a crisis and what did unfold was fast tracked lessons that may have taken longer to learn and apply under normal circumstances. As part of our commitment to embrace ongoing learning and constantly improve the Florida Road UIP management, below is a list of our most important lockdown management and operations learnings, some of which may be of benefit for you in your own business:

1. Were we tech ready to enable precinct management continuity?

Yes! We'd already begun enabling remote working and virtual access in our organisation so our online transition was seamless. None of us could imagine exclusively working online under such strict social distancing regulations but the pandemic has shown that remote digital access is vitally important for ongoing operations. However, we've also discovered that personal interaction in the work environment cannot be replicated by technology. We are discovering that a balance between remote working and in situ work is required.

Virtual meetings have been key to prevent precinct management disruptions and continue service delivery. Our daily online Teams meetings with the Chairman of the Board and management team updating them on all facets of the Florida Road UIP management have proved invaluable, allowing a free flow of information between Management and the Board. This has provided assurance that the Precinct was in safe hands, being well cared for and ready for making up lost economic ground post lockdown.

2. Had we planned for the worst?

Business continuity and a smooth recovery following severe disruptions is greatly enabled when a risk management framework and disaster recovery plans are considered and adopted. As part of the ongoing good governance of the Florida Road UIP, the Board had already initiated a detailed Risk Management and Response Framework although a pandemic such as COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown was not anticipated! It just reinforces you have to be prepared for anything! As such, we'll be updating our Risk Matrix to include 'Global Pandemic' and would suggest that, if you have not yet considered your business's risk response, you do so now.

3. Did we have a handle on our budgets and cash flow?

On announcement of the lockdown, the Management Team immediately reviewed budgets with a focus on cost containment and undertook cashflow projection analysis to inform decision making in support of business continuity. This will be an iterative process for the Florida Road UIP as the Government Guidelines change.

4. Were we covered by insurance?

We did not have Business Interruption Insurance, which on closer inspection may or may not have paid out under the current conditions. The breadth of coverage varies significantly by insurer policy, industry sector and geography, so we'd strongly advise companies to take time to understand their existing business insurance policies and increase their coverage should they feel it's required.

5. Did we have a crisis communication plan?

We didn't have a crisis communications plan in place, but we did have a smart communications system that allowed us to connect with stakeholders once our COVID-19 operational response was ready. This became a top priority workstream and we now have a communications chain of command linked real-time to our operational teams to allow for a quick release of information through our channels. Added to

this are our bi-weekly lockdown operations reports which have proved invaluable to directors and the Municipality and instilled confidence that our economic nodes are being secured.

6. Teamwork - sharing the load and important learnings

Never before has the importance of teamwork been more apparent. From a macro level as our country's people banded together to fight this invisible threat, to households, businesses and communities working together to ensure basic services and critical supplies are available to all. We are so incredibly proud of our Florida Road UIP Team which together with the Municipality and authorities, remained on the frontline to ensure that our cities remain safe, clean and ready for post lockdown economic recovery.

Additionally, the Florida Road UIP is managed by a Specialist Precinct Management Company, which manages many of KZN's key commercial and mixed-use nodes. The subsequent shared response protocols across precincts and pooling of vital resources has allowed vital cross-skilling of employees which will prove imperative as COVID-19 reaches its peak and we see employees needing time off.

7. Have you changed?

COVID-19 has changed and continues to change the business landscape as we know it. Businesses need to react to challenges, reassess what they do, reconfigure themselves and reinvent their activities to adapt to the disruption and prepare for the new normal.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that, while we can't control outside influences on our business, we can control how prepared we are internally to minimise the risks. By embracing a culture of learning, sharing and building of best practice, we are confident that the Florida Road UIP is prepared for the future and the challenges it may hold.

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