

A flexible workforce is critical as external disruptions become increasingly common

By [Donné Nieman](#)

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The Covid-19 pandemic has been the ultimate external disruptor. It forced many businesses to retrench or furlough their staff because they simply could not continue to employ them. The reality though is that the pandemic is not the only challenge businesses face, and employing a full complement of permanent staff has become a risk that few can afford to carry. A more flexible, lower risk business model, that is still compliant with all legal and regulatory requirements, is becoming increasingly critical in today's world and for the future.



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A plethora of external disruptors

While Covid-19 has thrown the world into turmoil, in reality, it is not the only factor that is making business challenging – it has simply highlighted how disruptive external forces can be.

In South Africa, load shedding is a reality, and it is one that will continue to disrupt business for the foreseeable future. While some businesses can put processes and backup technologies into place to minimise the disruption, others may be severely affected as load shedding worsens, particularly the mining and manufacturing sectors.

Weather patterns are also becoming increasingly unpredictable, with extreme conditions more common than ever before. When large storms occur off the coasts, this can prevent cargo ships from being able to dock, in turn affecting the logistics processes attached to imports. This means employees from the docks right through to the supply chain are unable to perform their jobs.

With Covid-19 also continuing to wreak havoc, workforces need to become more flexible to cater to shifting, dynamic requirements.

Reducing risk is the key

Direct employment has long been the traditional and often preferred staffing model, but in light of the challenges we face currently, this may no longer be the case for many. Permanently employed staff must be paid regardless of external factors affecting their ability to perform their job, and the pandemic showed that this can quickly become unsustainable. This model is not flexible, nor is it easily scaled, and in times of such uncertainty, most businesses cannot afford to carry the risk of large fixed costs like this.

The end result during the pandemic was that many businesses were forced to lay off staff or put them on reduced pay, which benefits nobody. To meet business needs in these times, it is important to adopt a more flexible staffing model, and outsourcing staffing to a reputable, experienced temporary employment services (TES) provider can be hugely beneficial.



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Temporary employment services are the solution

TES provides the staff required on a flexible and completely scalable basis, enabling businesses to operate optimally at all times, regardless of the external disruptions they face. They do not need to pay for permanent staff when there is no work for these employees to do. TES employees can be deployed where and when they are needed, which also gives them income continuity during these unstable times.

In addition, when outsourcing through a TES, businesses reduce their risk significantly, as the client is indemnified through the TES and the commercial agreement that is in place. Even in cases where joint and several liability exists, employers are indemnified against the consequences of certain effects of the labour law as long as they have complied with the provisions of the commercial agreement.

Flexible, compliant employment services

The unfortunate reality of today is that the financial consequences of having to engage in exit procedures with permanent staff members can be prohibitive and can push struggling businesses over the edge. It is simply not sustainable, not to mention that the prospect of being laid off is damaging to employee morale. With temporary employment, staff are matched to requirements, so they can be deployed elsewhere where their skills are needed. TES providers also provide a level of upskilling, which makes individuals more employable in the long run.

External disrupting factors are not going away, and in all likelihood will only get worse. When circumstances are out of the business' control, they cannot be budgeted or planned for, so flexibility is the key. In a world where it has become practically impossible to predict what the future will hold with any degree of accuracy, a TES can help businesses to meet their immediate needs and help employees to earn a more stable income with opportunities for skills development.

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