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# SARS-Cov2: Top 6 Tips for Queer Entrepreneurs in South Africa



Dreilinden

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Foto by Ben Taylor, Bedford

We collated a few tips from various resources for our mentorship programme and thought they might be useful to others as well. We also set up a Facebook group for queer entrepreneurs where you can ask questions and get advice from people in the

communities and fellow entrepreneurs — it's a private group and only members can see who is in the group.

Chances are, you are feeling overwhelmed by the rapid developments, the never ending news of more SARS-Cov2 (Coronavirus) cases and actions required. At the same time, you have to come to terms with the fact that the virus will impact your business, your freedom of movement and potentially your health. It's a very complex situation with so many moving parts. It will be challenging to keep calm at times.

We hope to contribute a little with some actionable steps (and illustrative examples) you can take to improve the resilience of your business today:

## **Look After Yourself**

We know it's tempting to think that the virus affects "other people", however given how quickly it spreads, we can guarantee you, it will have an effect on you. Even if you don't catch the virus, the circumstances can be extremely stressful. You are the heart and soul of your business! So, please, please look after yourself (including your mental health), your loved ones and employees. Follow government guidance — social distancing, hygiene, and self-isolation, have proven to work, but only if everybody is taking responsibility. Our friends at QWB+A have put out a post with a summary on some simple things to follow around hygiene and are also hosting a webinar around mental health next week — sign up here. In addition, the South African National Department of Health has launched a Whatsapp group so you can stay informed, no fake news! For any other news including the latest cases and official messages, you can check out the South African government site.

## **Review Your Business Model**

You may already have experienced a drop in business and/or seeing your supply chains disrupted. It's time to review your assumptions and come up with an alternative plan. The business model canvas can provide a good base to think through all the different aspects — from your supply chain (do you need to diversify your suppliers?) to your customers (how can you reach them in times like these?), everything needs to be reviewed and adjusted to the new reality. Take the example of a restaurant. Many have shifted to delivering prepared meals (including meal plans — think subscription model) or use their spare capacity to provide meals to those in need at a lower price.

Don't forget to also plan for business continuity — if your business does not allow you to work remotely, maybe splitting your staff in two groups could mitigate the risk of everybody falling sick at the same time. The time to plan is now.

QWB+A are holding a webinar about how to overcome SARS-Cov2 challenges for all queer entrepreneurs. Sign up [here](#).

## Cash, Cash, Cash

If you haven't already reviewed your liquidity situation as part of the Business Model Review, you need to do it now. Liquidity is crucial in times like these — review your payment and cash collection cycles. This will give you an idea of how much time you have until you run out of money (typically called runway). Work through different scenarios and strategies to improve your liquidity situation so you can take action accordingly.

Try to conserve the essential operating capital to operate through the impacted period and recovery (assume at least 90 days). It is good to plan for changes that you need to make in your business to preserve cash.

Think about how you can get your customers to pay upfront — maybe offer them a slightly better service level or a bigger quantity. If that's not possible, staggered payments may offer a good alternative — just be upfront and tell your clients that the circumstances have changed and you will try to go back to the old model as soon as possible.

The African Management Institute will be hosting a number of free webinars next week, including a session on financial forecasting and cost management in an economic slow down. You can sign up [here](#).

## Stay In Touch With Your Customers

Stay in touch with your customers. If you can't see them in person anymore, post on your social media, send them a WhatsApp message or give them a call. Let them know that you are still in business and how you can continue to support them with your product and services. Think about the main pain points of your customers and how you can address them with your new offering. Your customers are in as difficult a situation as

you are, hence think about how you can reduce friction for them and make their lives easier. If you need help with tools, check out Mailchimp (free up to a limited number of recipients) or post in the Facebook group.

Connecting with your customer is also a chance to keep your marketing efforts going. Pret, a sandwich shop chain from the UK, just launched a great marketing campaign. They are giving all healthcare workers hot drinks for free and 50% off the rest. Of course they want to support the people at the front, fighting the virus, but think about what a campaign like this does for their image. It also makes their existing customers feel good as they indirectly support the initiative by bringing their business to Pret.

## Keep an Eye Out for Government Initiatives

At the time of writing, the Department for Small Business Development had already announced the launch of a debt relief fund as well as a business growth / resilience facility. Small businesses that can prove that they have been affected by the coronavirus are invited to sign up here. Keep your eyes peeled for other announcements and initiatives, so you can tap into all available resources.

## Support Each Other

As mentioned above, we launched a FB group for queer entrepreneurs (if you can't access it, ask one of your friends to make an intro to one of us). It's just one of many options — the important thing is that the communities support each other. Buying from one another, sending customers, opening doors to suppliers and giving constructive advice are all things that cost each individually very little but can have a huge impact on the resilience of businesses. Let's stand by each other!

We wish you lots of lots of positive energy!

Stefan, Sawa, Kebone

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## About Stefan Bollier

*Stefan is a member of Dreilinden's investment committee. He is the founder of Swiss based Impact Advisors LLC which is advising Dreilinden on the development and implementation of the foundation's impact investment strategy.*

## About Sawa Nakagawa

*Sawa is the Founder and Partner of ThreeArrows Impact Partner, a pan-African advisory firm, focused on impact investing and social innovation. Sawa is supporting Dreilinden's mentorship programme.*

## About Kebone Moloko

*Kebone is a co-founder and CEO of Queer Women in Business + Allies, a non-profit organization with the mission to empower and advance African queer women through access. Kebone was one of the panelists during Dreilinden's Q Pitch Days.*

## About Dreilinden gGmbH

*Dreilinden is a Hamburg-based foundation dedicated to advancing societal acceptance of gender and sexual diversity. Founded in 2007, Dreilinden has been at the forefront of supporting sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics with grants and investments. Kindly note that Dreilinden does not accept any grant applications at this time.*

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