

## **As South Africa braces for the third wave, flexible staffing solutions are more important than ever**



In the wake of a challenging 2020, unemployment rates reached record highs and South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 16% in the first half of the year. In the third quarter, however, the economy saw improvement as lockdown levels were lifted, and employment increased across all sectors. The reality is that both employment levels and the GDP are heavily tied to the state of lockdown necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. As the country braces for an anticipated third wave in the coming months, uncertainty remains high. Effectively planning a permanent labour force is impossible in these circumstances, making flexible staffing solutions more important than ever.

### **Full time staff have become a business risk**

During the strictest levels of lockdown, many businesses completely shut down and staff were unable to work, and in many cases unable to earn an income. A lot of people were laid off, and many businesses were unable to recover. The resulting negative impact on South Africa's economy was dramatic, and there were very few organisations that were completely unaffected by the lockdown.

Now that we are in Level 1 lockdown, most businesses have opened again, but some sectors, like the hospitality and tourism industries, are still feeling the pinch. In addition, manufacturing organisations that are reliant on imported raw materials may still experience shortages and delays as the pandemic continues to affect various countries.

The upshot is that it is all but impossible to plan the labour force effectively and consistently, which is critical to ensuring ongoing commercial viability. Businesses today simply cannot afford to take on operational expenses that they have no control over, and the reality is that the labour force is often the single largest expense for any business. Full-time staff have become a liability in the face of business

uncertainty. Temporary Employment Services (TES) providers are perfectly positioned to assist both employers and employees in maintaining a stable workforce and a stable income through periods of fluctuating demand.

### **Flexibility is the key**

TES providers match employers with a need, with employees that have the required skills, making them the ideal partner during such uncertain and unstable times. They are also able to provide this service on short notice, which is of increasing importance as Covid-19 forces staff to potentially be unable to work without much warning. If necessary, a TES can provide staffing for entire shifts of production or other areas as required. They are also able to scale staffing solutions up and down dynamically to meet changing needs.

It is important, however, to partner with a reputable provider that has a large database of already vetted and appropriately qualified staff. This is essential in enabling them to provide the levels of service required, matching employees to available positions.

A large, established TES will also be able to provide the employees themselves with a stable income, having sufficient clients on the books to be able to place staff at ad hoc opportunities should their regular position become unavailable. This not only helps to provide a more stable income; it also exposes staff to opportunities to grow their skills and experience base, which will make them more employable in the long-term. The pandemic has made the future extremely uncertain, and the employment rate in South Africa is unstable as a result. Irrespective of Covid-19 and lockdown levels, a reputable and experienced TES provider can support business requirements by supplying correctly qualified and vetted staff as and when they are needed. This helps businesses to stay afloat and ensures staff have an income throughout this challenging period.