

# Consider flexible solutions to meet fluctuating staff requirements as lockdown eases

By [Kim Coetzee](#)

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The lockdown situation in South Africa has created a challenging environment for both the retail and logistics sectors. Since the initial shutdown and panic buying of goods, especially essential ones, we are now seeing the easing of restrictions and a wider variety of goods being offered once more. The entire distribution chain has had to adapt to these fluctuations in order to ensure a steady supply of goods to customers. Flexible staffing in the form of Temporary Employment Services (TES) can be extremely beneficial in assisting both retailers and logistics organisations during these trying times



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## Meeting increased demand

When the nationwide lockdown was first announced, the logistics and retail sectors experienced unprecedented pressure, as people rushed to stock up on 'essential items'. This wave of demand eased, but ensuring a steady supply of goods remains a challenge. The current environment for essentials like food and cleaning products is operating at peak demand, and the distribution channel needs to be able to cater to that. This means they require a workforce to keep up with this demand and resultant functions, from the offloading of imported shipments to transport to packers in stores.

As the lockdown is gradually lifted and more industries are permitted to once more resume operations, the need for workers will grow. However, at the current level, warehouses are not permitted to operate at full capacity. There is also potential for the country to revert back to higher levels of lockdown in the future, which would then put different pressures on the workforce. In addition, if a worker tests positive for Covid-19, many others must be quarantined, which results in the need for an entire additional workforce to be deployed at short notice. Given the nature of the virus, this is likely to happen many times over in the coming months. Flexibility is of the utmost importance when it comes to handling this challenging time and ensuring operations continue to run smoothly.

## The skills you need, when you need them

One of the most important qualities a TES provider offers is the flexibility required, with access to an extensive database of

skilled and experienced staff across all industries. This includes expert on-site operations teams and quick and effective contingency teams. In addition, they are able to guarantee the short turnaround necessary to ensure staff can be deployed quickly, even on the same day should this be necessary. For example, a store may need to be closed or warehouse staff quarantined, which means that a whole new workforce may be required on short notice. With the services of a TES provider, retailers and logistics operations have support for fluctuation and industry demands, both during more normal times and in this difficult environment.

TES providers ensure that all staff have completed the necessary on-the-job training and have the relevant skills for the positions they are being deployed to, to enable them to fulfil all job functions effectively. They also offer systems and operational support to ensure that all workers deployed meet the requirements of each individual site, including training and any necessary inductions.

#### Assisting with economic recovery

Once businesses are allowed to open up again, they will need to do so on a smaller scale until such time as they are able to reach full capacity. Flexibility in terms of supply on demand and a pay-as-you-work basis are key factors to facilitating the reopening of industries without unnecessary financial pressure. TES providers also offer human resources, industrial relations, and fully compliant workforces, which allows businesses to focus on recovery without additional administrative headaches. Workers on the books of a TES provider benefit from being able to go where the work is. This assists businesses as they try and recover, and staff as they get back to work and begin to earn an income again.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim Coetzee, General Manager: Sales at Workforce Staffing

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