

# INOVO embraces cloud-based solutions

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#LockdownLessons explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.

[INOVO](#) offers contact centres a flexible way to service, sell to, or collect from customers across any channel – all with a view to transforming the customer experience, saving costs and driving efficiency and profitability. Through a collaborative approach, the company provides award-winning technology, solutions and professional services that deliver better, measurable results.

Wynand Smit, CEO of INOVO, shares how the lockdown regulations has impacted the contact centre specialists...



Wynand Smit is CEO at INOVO

## **How has Covid-19 impacted your business?**

We provide the local contact centre industry with innovative technology professional services and solutions, and it, fortunately, hasn't had a negative impact on our business.

Our technology has always been accessible externally, and we are still running operationally at 100% even though our employees started working from home a week before the lockdown was announced by the government.

In addition, the nature of the pandemic has seen an increased demand for specific solutions that our company offers - particularly those that help businesses migrate towards using digital customer contact channels or set up self-service offerings through these multiple channels.

■ ***How did you prepare for the lockdown?***

We didn't have to change much, as we have always been able to work remotely; this is what allowed us to take the decision to close our office early, out of concern for the health and safety of our employees. We focused on communicating with our staff and customers on what the changes were and to ensure that people had access to any hardware or software they required.

■ ***What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?***

We don't have any operational challenges for our sales, service or support; we have been using a variety of collaboration and video conferencing tools to ensure that project teams can carry on as usual, but they were using these before the lockdown anyway.

“ I feel however that people are still yearning for engagement on an interpersonal level - which you cannot get from a video call - and these are some of the changes that we will have to get used to. ”

■ ***What sort of assistance will you need going forward?***

Nothing from a financial or operational standpoint. While we didn't expect anything on this scale, our business model was designed to withstand such external impacts. Perhaps one area of assistance would be in understanding and correctly implementing the new legislative and compliance requirements that we will be faced with when everyone starts returning to

the offices.

■ ***If you are able to operate, what steps are you taking to continue operating?***

As mentioned earlier, we are very blessed that nothing has changed. We are engaging with our employees to ensure that operations are being improved where possible.

“ *The big challenge going forward is to look at ways in which we can evolve our company communications, engagements and culture in light of this new way of working.* ”

■ ***What measures have you put in place for your employees?***

Even though we are an essential services provider, we continued operating as usual under the Level 5 lockdown, but remotely. No employees were required to come into the office. The company has since procured masks, disinfectants and other items required to maintain a sanitised workplace and to prepare for a return to work. Yet, given that our employees are equipped and enabled to work from anywhere, we won't force anyone to come into the office even when lockdown restrictions are eased.

“ *Beyond their health, we understand that these unique circumstances also mean that employees require support in handling the changes in the environment, pressures at work and more.* ”

Even before the lockdown, the company made use of a wellness programme to provide employees with help, be it through guidance, advice or coaching - provided by an independent organisation.

■ ***Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?***

We proactively reached out to all our customers before we closed our offices to find out if we could be of assistance. While the national lockdown hadn't been announced yet, we felt that some contact centres (like ourselves) would seek to enable their employees to work from home or even activate self-service options or digital channels to help them serve their customers better remotely.

Once the restrictions were announced, we quickly worked with our customers to help them with some of the technical preparations and to ensure that they could continue operating during the lockdown. Fortunately, our cloud and hosted solutions are perfectly suited to enable remote working.

■ ***How are you offering assistance to your customers who rely on your services?***

As our solutions are cloud-based, we do not need to actually send anyone to a customer site. Our customer engagements have been carrying on as before - most of these sessions were done remotely anyway, and this has not changed with the pandemic or the lockdown restrictions.

“ *What we have found is that our customers are looking for even more information on what they can do through using our solutions.* ”

We have had several exploratory sessions to look at what is possible for our customers, and how they can make services available through multiple digital channels so that their customers can get things done without having to visit physical stores or offices, and optimise what they are already doing.

■ ***What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?***

I don't think anyone can answer this with certainty. We will see uncertain economic times, and everyone has to play their part in helping out where they are able to. As an example, INOVO has always had a strong focus on working on CSR initiatives in the field of education, and that hasn't changed.

“ If anything, we have committed ourselves to do even more next year. ”

Apart from providing resources, we are helping out by providing technical assistance to one of our partners, a non-profit organisation that works to ensure that fewer kids drop out of school. Rather than just giving them money, we have designed and implemented technology to help them with their day to day operations.

For example, we have created a field workers application to help them digitise their work. This means they can work with more schools and children without having to increase their own cost base - potentially enabling them to help even more children than before.

“ Each one of us - whether as a company or as an individual - has to look at where we can make a difference or help mitigate the impact of the epidemic in our communities. ”

### ■ **Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is INOVO doing?**

Given the nature of our business, we continue to innovate. Fortunately, the solutions that our company develops have become even more relevant at this time, when lockdown restrictions have meant that more businesses are looking for new ways in which to interact with their customers.

While we have been speaking about the benefits of our solutions for a while, the circumstances have meant that companies now have no choice but to embrace these new ways of working. An example would be our recommendation of integrating WhatsApp into broader business communications and customer service.

### ■ **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

This is more from a personal perspective, but you need to get your priorities in order, to treasure what is important to you, and to be thankful for what you have got. You need to look closer at how you can use what you have in order to help others.

“ We can't focus on survival just as individuals, as all of us need to come through this together as a country. ”

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