

South African entrepreneurs making lemonade from lemons

Issued by [Doughgetters](#)

22 May 2020

David Goggins is a name that may not be familiar to you. But in ultra-running circles, he is a legend. In 2008 while competing in the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc, a 103-mile gruelling journey with 10,000m of climbing, had appeared to have beaten him. With ankles taped, shin splints, stress fractures, and injured feet, no one expected him to finish. Yet he did so in fourth place. His answer on how he did it... look in the cookie jar.



His cookie jar is filled with his past achievements, strengths, and the reasons why he does what he does. He says that when it's tough, you must remind yourself, you are not a weak person, you are the person who survived tough times in the past. You can get through this, and you can do well.

As we close the chapter on Level Five lockdown, we have all gone through our own 103-milers. We are all a little broken, and the race still isn't over. As entrepreneurs, our grit, confidence, creativity, and passion have been tested to the full.

Covid-19 struck without notice. Some have found a way to harness their cookie jar. Here are their stories. We hope you find them inspiring, practical, and encouraging.

Ace Models

Seeing the need for a proper modelling school in the coastal town of Mossel Bay, [Joani Johnson](#) founded [Ace Models](#) 16 years ago with R10,000 that she borrowed from her father. In 2019, Ace Models sold rights to Australia for R3 million and has since sold shares in the company to two other shareholders, including former Miss South Africa, Cindy Nell-Roberts. Today they have 25 franchises across Africa and are planning to take the concept global.

Lockdown adjustment

"Operationally, we were able to take our 'classroom' online and developed a virtual curriculum for this. This included virtual fashion shows, online tutorials and live streaming. Our franchisees and models loved the new 'classroom'," explains Joani.

"We have been filming a lot of online content and used social media and other online platforms to encourage models to participate in different challenges weekly. My franchisees mentioned that they had never felt more 'value for their money' than currently as we have really invested a lot of time to create a complete virtual teaching course."



Joani Johnson

Joani goes on to say, “This lockdown forced me to look at my business differently. I had to be open-minded and we had to re-evaluate our contingency plans – focus on what we can control and let go of what we couldn’t. We went through the priceless exercise of developing an online curriculum, something that will benefit us massively in the future, especially when going global. It has taught us even more how important resilience is as an entrepreneur.”

Joani also took the time to teach herself video editing and created her own Youtube channel, adding new skills to the business.

Naked Insurance



[Naked Insurance](#) was co-founded by [Sumarie Greybe](#), Alex Thomson and Ernest North. Naked Insurance was built to meet the needs of the modern digital consumer offering comprehensive cover for cars, homes, content, and single items. The business was named ‘Naked’ because they have no hidden fees and no hidden agendas.

Lockdown adjustment

Sumarie says their team has been able to continue working much as usual: “Our team has always been digitally enabled.” This is because the claims reporting function and emergency services are managed via smartphone app and the emergency line has remained open throughout.

“Unfortunately, our average repair time has been severely impacted because service providers like panelbeaters have been closed due to the lockdown. Luckily, our emergency services (e.g. plumbing and towing) can assist and from Level 4 repair times should return to normal,” she says.

“As it turns out, some of our product features have turned out to be a strength in these times. CoverPause™ has benefited our customers during the lockdown. The Naked Insurance app has always allowed one to pause the accident portion of car insurance cover and downgrade to stationary cover on the days that you’re not driving, with a single tap.



Sumarie Greybe

When the lockdown started, we recognised the reduced risk while people are stuck at home and reduced premiums even further. When you pause your cover, you will only pay roughly 10% of the usual comprehensive premium until end June 2020."

"This huge saving has been welcomed by clients, and we've seen most clients pause their accident cover on the Naked app, this feature has also attracted new clients," says Sumarie.

She advises fellow entrepreneurs to: "Remember your people! Check in and keep in touch as much as possible! Make sure your team has the support they need, not just for work, but emotionally as well. This is a stressful time, and it is important to be able to connect and respond with empathy. Also, don't underestimate your staff – be transparent and honest and make sure that they have a realistic picture of where your business is at and share your plans."

Andree Frates Photography



Andree Frates

Photography has always been [Andree Frates'](#) chosen career path from the start. "I am a blended product of my artistic mother and engineering father," tells Andree, who describes herself as a creatively technical personality. "Over time, I fell in love with portraiture because I could deal with people and create beauty with the subject."

Lockdown adjustment

"Honestly, there was a moment when I had a little pity party. After that, I started reinventing the way I worked," tells the mother of three. "I reminded myself that this is not the first time I find myself here. Staring down the barrel of the digital camera revolution forced me to adjust. And then, just when I got the hang of that, my phone became my major competition! I have learned to thrive by figuring out what the customer wants, and then asking whether I

can do it. Then doing it.

"Taking a step back and looking at what I was offering customers, I asked, 'How do I take a single moment in time and curate it so that it endures for as long as my clients' want?'"

Andree has developed an online solution to the family photo albums, placing clients' images in one collective space to tell their continuous life story. "I am so excited to flip my business to this new way of doing things. In a way, this may be the best thing that happened to my little enterprise.

"During this lockdown I have gotten to know that 'change is your friend', that tomorrow is another day and routine is key to achieving anything. And there is no substitute for getting it done today."

Sh'Zen

[Sh'Zen](#) started in 1989, a direct selling company, specialising in handcare products to South African women. Our customers are South African women (and men) who appreciate beautiful, high treatment facial, body and feet products, as well as 'rock star' supplements. "We help women - and men - look and feel better."

Lockdown adjustment



Ingrid Alexander

“At Sh’Zen we are fortunate that a number of our products are on the essential goods list, but pushing sales was not our focus,” imparts their MD, Ingrid Alexander. “I was acutely aware that our approach to business during the lockdown could make or break Sh’Zen. We made the gutsy decision and took our focus off selling during this period. Instead, we placed our focus on bringing the team together and further developing our already strong customer relationships,” explains Ingrid.

“In the first week we encouraged the team to pause and take time to internalise the change. Next we hosted a webinar discussing the changes and built momentum on this. During the third week, we hoped to get going, however, after our President’s address, we all went back to shifting the energy from making a sale to customer service.”

‘Sharpening your Saw’ was the theme for week four – during a webinar Ingrid touched on topics like improving product knowledge, communications skills, customer appreciation and self-care.

“By using this time to invest in our team I have seen, despite the challenges, every single member go the extra mile to ensure that our service level remains high. The lockdown has produced very uncomfortable feelings yet it’s also shown me that we are adaptable, resilient and I am so proud to be part of this team.”

“There is immense power in accepting the changes that have happened. Being prepared to make even the smallest shifts to your business will be vital. Business leaders need to position their companies in such a way that they respond to this change rather than react. Work with what is in our hands – now,” advises Ingrid.

To Be Gift Boxes



Michelle & Leandie du Randt

Co-founded by sisters-in-law, Leandie du Randt and Michelle du Randt, [To Be Gift Boxes](#) officially opened their online ‘doors’ in March 2019, offering many different, beautifully designed gift boxes filled with gift options for any person and any occasion and is delivered to anybody in South Africa.

Lockdown adjustment

“We realised we need to adjust to make sure this business can go on, so we had to shift our focus to essential products and essential gift box combinations. The moment we received our Essentials Goods certificate, we created some gift box options that only contain essential items, but that can still be packaged nicely as a gift for someone you can’t see during the lockdown,” tells Leandie.

“This business has been gratifying during this lockdown. We are motivated, knowing our gifts, are making a difference in our customers lives. We are all about creating joy, one essential item at a time,” relates Leandie.



Leandie's tip

"Don't just close your business without properly researching possible ways in which you can tap into the essential market during lockdown. Use technology and the internet to your advantage and get creative - if you only have a retail space, create an online store or platform for your brand during this time."

DoughGetters Accounting



[DoughGetters Accounting™](#) is a digital accounting business co-founded in 2017 by [Murray Barnetson](#) and [Willem Haarhoff](#). Having always operated 100% in the cloud, with no office building, this team of digital accountants and bookkeepers serves clients from wherever there is an internet connection as they utilise the [Xero](#) online accounting system along with its app ecosystem to provide the backoffice solutions their clients require.

Lockdown adjustment

"Pre-lockdown our primary service offering and focus was providing the SME market an outsourced bookkeeping, accounting, and tax compliance hub," explains Melissa du Plooy, Head of Marketing at the DoughGetters Group. "Within days after the lockdown was implemented, we saw our leads come to an abrupt halt as businesses were forced to navigate through their new reality. With lockdown having almost no impact on our business we knew that now was not the time to sell or to preach 'how to work remotely'. Instead we encouraged our team to carry the message of #KeepHopeAlive in all communication, whether it is with our clients, leads, or in social media, keeping our pre-lockdown relational approach at the forefront of everything we are doing," explains Melissa.

“As the days rolled on, we could see that, as one of our DoughGetters Accounting™ Franchise Partners, [Kenneth Coetzer](#), pointed out, ‘Our target market is still there, they are just behaving differently.’

“So we turned our focus to [DoughGetters Ximple™](#), a new division established just before lockdown, that specialises in online ‘app integration’ and backoffice automation solutions.” According to Melissa, the new division was created to help businesses move online using smart tech to streamline all their processes.

“Shortly after lockdown started, we realised a shift had to be made as enquiries started coming in for assistance to convert, integrate and train businesses in cloud-based accounting applications like Xero, ReceiptBank, Simple Pay payroll, and various other Xero-integrated apps increased significantly. Now was the opportune time for the DoughGetters Ximple™ brand to shine,” tells Melissa.

“We went from not only helping clients manage their ‘*dough*’ but also assisting them with finding and implementing the right tech tools to cultivate their ‘*dough*’. Over this time we have seen how business owners and their teams feel more empowered and optimistic when they embrace these technologies. They also see this new technology as a valuable asset even after the lockdown ends,” says Melissa.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>