

# It's tough - but it's for the best

By [Gerhard Papenfus](#)

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This may be the better of the two evils. It was always a toss between two very difficult decisions: either a 'partial lockdown' or a 'complete lockdown'. It turned out to be a 21-day lockdown, commencing at midnight on 26 March 2020.

It cannot be expected of the government to make perfect decisions. What is expected is for the government to act decisively; and that is what the government did. After extensive deliberations, based on what they know, they took the best decision under the circumstances. We must make the best of it.



Gerhard Papenfus, Chief Executive of the National Employers' Association of South Africa (NEASA)

A three-week lockdown can be regarded as a balancing act between containment of the virus, protection of South Africans and measures aimed at fortifying the economy against the inevitable disruption to manufacturing, productivity, growth and employment - as per the President Ramaphosa's message on Monday night.

Some may argue that this measure amounts to an overreaction. However, taking cognisance of the situation in Italy, the current global epicentre of the pandemic, this seems not to be the case. The Italians blame inaction regarding restriction of movement and a lack of appreciation of the seriousness of the pandemic, as the reasons for the life and death predicament they find themselves in.



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Businesses will have to work with what they have been presented with. Firstly, many SMMEs cannot shoulder this financial

burden alone; it is to be shared between government, business and workers.

The President has given an undertaking that certain measures will be implemented to soften the blow for employers and employees alike. The details of these interventions have not been disclosed but are expected within days. However, due to the government's fiscal constraints, there is not much government can do to alleviate the plight of those affected.



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Of concern is: what if, three weeks from now, we haven't achieved the desired result? What happens if the infection curve shows a downward trend during the lockdown period, but increases again thereafter? What then?

It is, however, not for us to answer this question now. What we have is three weeks in which we ALL have to make the best of this dire situation.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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