THORBURN: OFFERING GAME-CHANGING SECURITY SOLUTIONS FOR ANY RISK SCENARIO

Security was one of few industries that operated at capacity during South Africa's hard lockdown. With no handbook to negotiate Covid-19, **Stephan Botha, CEO Thorburn Security Solutions**, and his team relied on agility, communication and technology to rapidly react to clients' changing needs

Future generations will be told stories of how overnight South Africa's bustling city centres ground to a halt and streets took on a post-apocalyptic eeriness, how beaches stood empty on perfect weather days and schools and shopping malls lay abandoned. Prior to 2020, this scenario was unimaginable, but on 23 March 2020 President Cyril Ramaphosa declared that the country would face a full national lockdown (starting four days later) limiting movement and severely restricting interpersonal contact. Those who could, obtained special permits or worked from home, others simply waited for the restrictions under the Covid-19 pandemic to ease.

While economic activity slowed, one industry that remained 100% vigilant was security. According to Stephan Botha, CEO Thorburn Security Solutions, it was 'business as usual' if by 'usual' you mean operating under extremely challenging pandemic conditions, while continuing to provide safety and security for people, property and assets.

"It was like operating in the dark, nobody had experienced anything like Covid-19 before and we had to learn on the job while actively responding to the pandemic," says Botha.

As part of the Tsebo Solutions Group, where exacting health and safety and risk mitigation are part of a professional profile, Thorburn had access to the most up-to-date information on global best practice surrounding the virus and was able to play an educational role for staff and clients.

"Communication is very important and in addition to our regular risk assessment and trend analyses reports, Thorburn keeps clients updated with detailed Covid-19 audits and reports," says Botha.

"We began engaging clients early on, by providing information about the areas impacted, and how Covid-19 would affect crime. 'Letters from the desk of the CEO' were issued to inform clients about the interventions we were putting into place at different levels. Further to this, our Client Liaison Director contacted clients by phone daily to determine their concerns and ensure continued contact and proactive response. Agility was key as clients assigned responsibility for their property portfolios to us while they worked remotely," says Botha.

"We had to work closely with clients to develop new standard operating procedures to ensure safety and compliance."

WE **DEVELOP** PEOPLE, TO **SERVE** PEOPLE, TO **UPLIFT** SOCIETY

Part of the organisational adjustment was the immediate expectation from clients that security officers assume responsibility for Covid-19 compliance at access points – by enforcing social distancing and conducting temperature screening. This requirement directly impacted security officers who were still expected to carry out their usual responsibilities on top of performing an additional service they had not been trained for.

Thorburn's compliance officers were deployed to ensure that security officers were issued with the relevant personal protection equipment (PPE) and information was supplied through weekly toolbox talks, posters, reminders and training interventions.

Additionally, Thorburn sprang into action to provide clients with fever-screening solutions, including fever-screening surveillance to scan small crowds at the access points to mines and healthcare facilities – all within the first few weeks of lockdown.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO DRIVE COST SAVINGS

Aside from numerous health and social challenges, the pandemic wrought havoc on the economy with the resultant need for additional cost savings in most businesses. By working closely with clients, Thorburn identified the use of technology linked back to its National Control Centre (NCC) as a viable option to balance the need to reduce cost without compromising on security.

"Technology has a significant impact on our ability to control, predict and reduce risk. Because we don't need to have as many security officers permanently on site it becomes a more affordable option," says Botha. Using advanced CCTV and alarm monitoring and visual verification, the centralised control centre in the Western Cape provides a 24/7 pro-active response to improve early detection thereby enabling Thorburn to quickly deter crime and significantly reduce risks to on-site staff and assets.

"We are in the process of opening a second National Control Centre (NCC) in Midrand as part of a renewed focus on innovation to address the changing needs of our clients. By investing heavily in technology Thorburn is demonstrating a commitment to enhancing its direct-response capabilities as well as to our clients' business continuity. We also have the capability to open control centres on client's properties. "

This use of technology comprehensively addresses the increased demand from clients to protect their vacant properties. Thorburn is able to tailor specialised Vacant Property Solutions, which includes monitoring properties to protect against security-related issues such as vandalism, theft, and vagrancy as well as maintenance issues such as detecting and reacting to water leaks, fire and other hazards.

"Our overall strategy around the control centre is to work closely with the client to maintain high standards of security while keeping within their financial margins. It really offers exceptional value for everyone. We can redesign the solution around a client's specific needs. If correctly applied, technology is a real game changer and will have an enormous effect on the security industry landscape of the future," says Botha.

With South Africa having returned to Level 1 of lockdown, and businesses slowly returning to work, Thorburn is taking the lessons learnt in the heat of the pandemic and applying these to enhanced customer protection, cost efficiency and exceptional levels of service.

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