

Aim for survival, look after one another - Lisa Ilingworth, Futureproof SA

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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As part of our #LockdownLessons series, Bizcommunity is reaching out to South Africa's top industry players to share their experience of the current Covid-19 crisis, how their organisations are navigating these unusual times, where the challenges and opportunities lie, and their industry outlook for the near future.

We chatted to Lisa Ilingworth, CEO and co-founder of Futureproof SA, to get her take.



Lisa Ilingworth, CEO and co-founder of Futureproof SA

■ **What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it been different to what you expected?**

Lisa Ilingworth: Like most, I had been following the news and had seen the effects that the pandemic had already had on other countries. It certainly has been devastating for many businesses, but it has forced us all to adapt and diversify. Change is the only constant. Planning has been almost impossible because the information and landscape of the economy are changing so rapidly.

■ **Comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your organisation or economy as a whole.**

Ilingworth: Our day-to-day business involves teaching children entrepreneurship within their classrooms, so this has had to change. We were, however, in the final phases of launching our digital offering and is going live shortly. Our team is tight-knit and we spend a lot of our time catching up over Zoom, email or WhatsApp. We are spread across the country, but these platforms keep us informed, engaged and excited. We have been working this way for some time but we needed to adjust to the new revenue streams and make them a priority.



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▣ *How is your organisation responding to the crisis?*

llingworth: We have developed a digital offering and spend a lot of our time providing parents and teachers with fun exercises to do with their children via their social media platforms. I, myself, am working with entrepreneurs who have really felt the effects of Covid-19 to help market their businesses and support them mentally in coping with the potential effects on themselves and their teams. We have increased the amount of times that we communicate with one another to ensure that everyone feels connected and part of a coherent team.

▣ *Comment on the challenges and opportunities.*

llingworth: Of course, there are challenges. The fear of the unknown and the new normal are two clear challenges that we are all dealing with. As a peoples' person, a lack of face-to-face communication can be an issue, but I am also very happy to interact virtually. For Futureproof, the biggest challenge has been accelerating our new digital offering and getting schools and parents to buy into this quickly because there are so many more expectations being added to what parents have to cope with now.

I am, however, excited as I believe that making entrepreneurship programmes easily available to kids and parents from the comfort of their own homes will add a new dimension to the home curriculum. Teaching children entrepreneurial traits, such as resilience and problem-solving, will serve them well in the long-term. In terms of opportunities, it's up to us to identify and create these. There is a lot that we can do in this 'new world'. The amount of companies that have been able to take their offering into the digital realm very quickly is also highly commendable with limited time and constrained resources like cash and connectivity.



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▣ *How has the lockdown affected your staff? / What temporary HR policies have you put in place regarding remote working, health & safety, etc.?*

llingworth: Our team is working from home and all teaching is now conducted online. Whatsapp groups have been created to allow for ease of sharing and the team has been involved in multiple training sessions on how to conduct online meetings, develop resources for digital use and best practice in online coaching.

▣ *Have you had to change the way you operate?*

llingworth: Yes, 100%. We have, however, embraced the shift and as we have always said, work is a thing you do, not a place you go.



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▣ *Any trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?*

llingworth: A major shift to digital, by many firms. Parents are now teachers and as a parent and teacher, I can assure you that this isn't always easy. Creating structure and routine around teaching from home is key and many are embracing it. There is a new routine to be built that is self-directed rather than group directed and people can choose the best hours of work for themselves and their responsibilities as a parent or partner.

■ Your key message to those in the sector?

Ilingworth: You are your own best resource at this time. Give yourself the freedom to process all the change in your own time and reduce any unnecessary outside pressures of performance and what good looks like. We are all navigating this situation for the first time, so lean on the collective learnings of those around you and don't try and plan too far in advance because it will change.



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

Ilingworth: Uncertain and busy. Let's brace ourselves, aim for survival and look after one another to come out as better humans on the other side.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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