

# How prepared is SA hospitality for the 2020 festive season?

By [Robyn Christie](#)

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*Heading into the summer holidays, many people who have planned to travel over the festive season may be wondering how seriously the hospitality industry is taking COVID-19. Industry veteran and Agility Hospitality consultant Robyn Christie recently took a trip to the Cape and provides first-hand insight into how these businesses are competing on new ground.*



Robyn Christie

Have you ever had one of those nightmares of going to school in your pyjamas? I experienced similar mortification and shades of horror when I arrived at an unassuming establishment on the outskirts of a town in the Karoo a few weeks ago. Hot and tired from my travels, I forgot myself for a moment and made the ultimate faux pas of 2020 as I leapt mask-less out of the car at this oasis.

There was a time when the sight of a masked stranger would have aroused alarm and suspicion, but things have profoundly changed in 2020. Armed with her bottle of sanitiser, the wizened proprietor stopped me in my tracks before I could cross the parking lot to remind me – in a tone of well-justified alarm – to please remember my face mask if I wanted to set foot in her business.

From the airports and airlines to the hotels and guesthouses, and even tiny *padstals* in far-flung rural areas I have been deeply impressed with the commitment to Covid-19 prevention the industry is demonstrating.

We have a very stringent set of protocols for hospitality and high standards of hygiene are generally expected among South African travellers. The stakes are higher than ever, with a keen competition to attract guests born out of the sheer will to survive. No business can afford to be branded non-Covid compliant, and many are going to great lengths to provide an additional sense of reassurance for their guests.

As a major employer, hospitality businesses and staff need to do everything within their power to prevent a resurgence of Covid-19 that could further threaten their livelihoods. To their credit, from what I have seen they really seem to be putting in a fantastic effort.

For instance, businesses making use of the Agility Hospitality integrated health, risk and wellbeing solution are managing human capital risks in the long-term, while taking care of the immediate needs of their workforce and the market. When staff members have convenient and cost-effective access to telephonic health advice from a trained nurse, they are empowered to take better care of themselves early. This reduces the risks of serious health complications for themselves from any number of conditions, not least Covid-19.

It should not take a pandemic for us to realise how the health of one may impact the wellbeing of all, but it has starkly illustrated how interrelated the destinies of businesses and their staff are. As a country, we need these employers working to aid economic recovery. It is important that we play our part as responsible citizens and guests by maintaining Covid-19 vigilance and precautions to avoid the need for another hard lockdown.

Even in very remote, often underprivileged, communities the message of what we need to do, as part of our collective and individual responsibility for Covid-19 is understood. It has been a tough year, but we cannot be tempted during December to attend huge parties and create unnecessary opportunities for the virus to spread. Neither can we afford not to make the most of our incredibly beautiful country and our time on this earth.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robyn Christie is Industry Advisor and Consultant to Agility Hospitality.

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