

Apex BI innovates in a time of lockdown

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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#TheLockdownSeries explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.



Neil Buckley, managing director of Apex BI

[Apex BI](#) provides powerful technology expense management (TEM) solutions to all sectors of the market, including: SMEs; medium to large enterprises; telecom carriers and service providers. Apex BI is an innovative, agile, service orientated company.

Neil Buckley, managing director of Apex BI, shares his experience of the current Covid-19 crisis and how his organisation is navigating these unusual times...

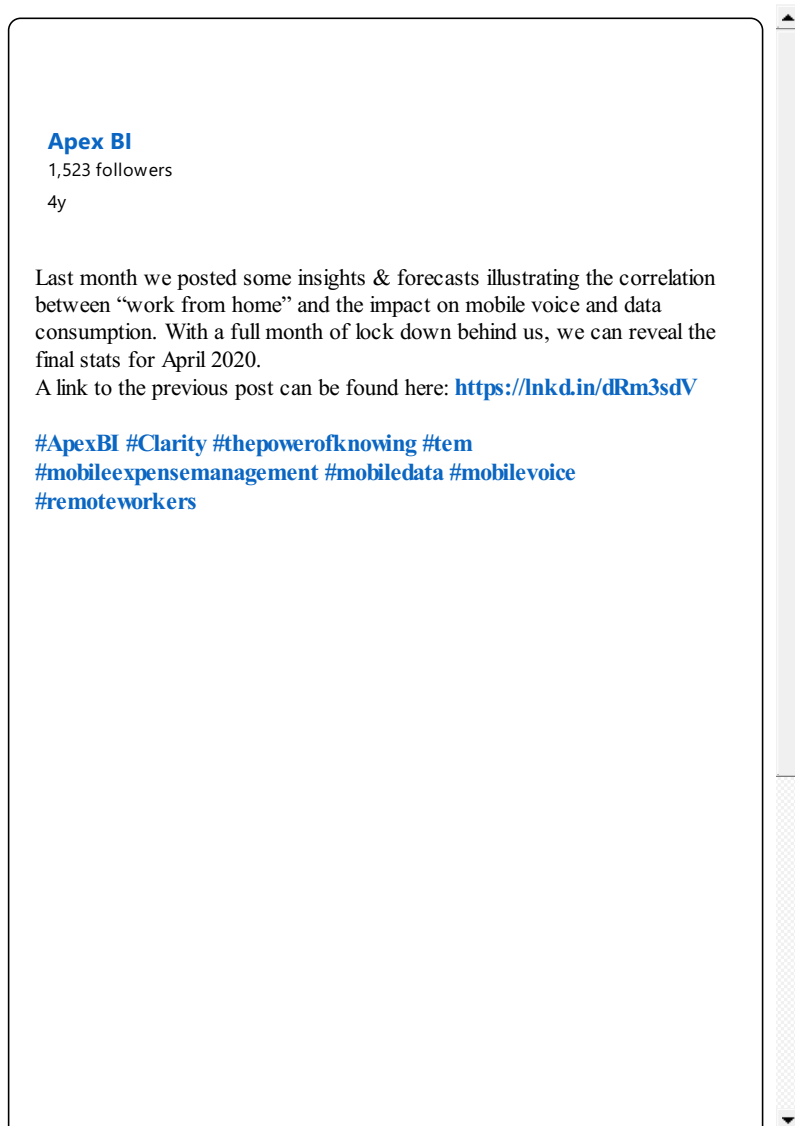
How has Covid-19 impacted your business?

Thankfully, due to the nature of what we do – which is essentially reporting on large data sets - we are in a very fortunate position where a remote working environment has very little bearing on our day-to-day operations.

Having said that, we implemented strategic and swift directives, and implementations, with regards to the following:

- We morphed into a 100% remote working environment.
- We made an early decision to increase value for our customers at the existing price points.
- We realised we had to change some of our processes to enable quick turnaround times. An example would be our onboarding process for new SIM cards.

A lot of our customers have had to quickly adapt their own organisations to remote working and this meant providing their remote workforce with mobile voice and data connectivity.



Given the nature of our TEM business, and with particular reference to helping our customers manage and contain mobile voice and data connectivity costs for the remote workers, we changed some of our onboarding processes. This permitted us to expedite reporting capability for our customers so that we could enable visibility into their mobile voice and data costs.

This proactive approach translated into cost control for our customers and negated them being put into the position of having ‘run away’ SIM cards that delivered the cost fright at the end of April.

- We streamlined the support process and we have been offering support over weekends – this may become a norm.
- Like all businesses, our meetings with: staff; customers and business partners, have moved into video and/or audio conferences.
- We have seen a pendulum swing effect with certain expenditure line items. Whilst some costs have gone down, e.g.

business travel, others, such as: IT expenditure have increased as a result of additional video conferencing licenses, voice and data connectivity etc.

■ *How did you prepare for the lockdown?*

Fortunately, 95% of our core business activity, processes and support structures operate via digital platforms. Our core product is software and our underlying architecture is all cloud-based.

Due to this, we were able to transition to a remote working model quickly and with little, or no, impact on our customers. Again strategic decisions we made before the lockdown was implemented really paid off. We had made a decision to move into a work from home (WFH) environment pre-lockdown, with the result that we were able to acclimatise and test. We enabled remote extensions for all Apex BI staff, including the support desk; so they could receive and make voice over internet calls (VoIP) from their mobile devices. Our internal file servers were also already cloud-based.

■ *What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?*

The financial impact flowing downstream, from customers and business partners alike, is the biggest challenge that we are having to deal with, through requests for extended payment terms; payment freezes and discounting. This is impacting our own cash flow.

■ *What sort of assistance will you need going forward?*

At this stage, the most important form of assistance we require is for our customers to pay on time so that we too may fully pay our staff and creditors on time.

■ *If you are able to operate, what steps are you taking to continue operating?*

We are fully operational as a direct result of the early interventions we put in place. We have added additional measures to our financial management processes. All of our product support structures and processes remain unchanged. Our support team offers the exact same support channels.

■ *What measures have you put in place for your employees?*

As explained in the previously regarding our preparations for lockdown, we enabled our staff from a technology and management support perspective to move quickly and efficiently to a WFH model thus ensuring both their safety and most importantly no change to their employment status.

■ *Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?*

Yes, our communications and meetings have remained the same, if not amplified during this period. We achieve this through the use of mainly MS Teams but also WhatsApp, LinkedIn, e-mails and phone calls.

■ *How are you offering assistance to your customers who rely on your services?*

We are expediting onboarding processes; adding additional reports to all our customers highlighting lockdown related data cost increases which translates into cost control for them and our support team has been made available after hours to cater for urgent issues.

■ *What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?*

Without fail, it is going to be a financially challenging time for the majority of businesses. Companies are going to have to look at new ways to reduce overheads and keep them down. This process will inherently bring with it a lot of collateral damage for other organisations and throughout this process, the financial challenges will remain until a point of stabilisation and relative normality has been achieved.

“ <https://t.co/rCmb2fmdad#ApexBI #clarity #technologyexpensemanagement #thepowerofknowing #remoteworkers #mobile pic.twitter.com/xoVQADfNiS>— Apex BI (@ApexBI_TEM) April 15, 2020 ”

Furthermore, I believe organisations are going to start future-proofing their businesses for possible re-occurrences of the corona-lockdown scenario.

“ Valuable lessons have been learnt by many organisations during this time. All businesses should be accelerating their digital migration efforts to mitigate risks and losses should we find ourselves in a similar position. ”

The ability to flick a switch and enable a remote workforce for appropriate job specifications should be defined and documented.

■ **Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is Apex BI doing?**

In terms of experimentation, we believe it is important to take a pragmatic approach. This is a time for innovation but not a time for experimentation in the form trial and error procedures in the midst of the financial pressures that currently prevail for all organisations.

Having said that I believe that any situation that causes one or more people to change the way they work and behave - especially when it's forced on them - is an opportunity for innovation.

We are innovating! We are discussing several new product lines, the thought process behind which are a direct result of the lockdown imposed on all businesses. We see several opportunities complementary to our core offerings, to assist organisations with insights and management capabilities across their remote workforce.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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