

Preparing for GetVen 2.0



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.

GetVen is a South African online venue marketplace which allows companies and individuals to book venues for events, meetings, parties, productions and more. GetVen is tapping into a key element of the “sharing economy”, allowing everyday spaces in our lives to become viable revenue streams. Users can list any type of venue, from restaurants, bars, wedding venues and homes to abandoned churches, container yards and farms.

In November 2019, the co-founding team of Sibs Gift Qetu-Yates, Connor Kirsten and Werner Riekert launched the GetVen Minimum viable product (MVP). Since then, the team has been joined by new CEO, Petra Pavlovic and Developer Gustav Bornman and the five of them now make up the GetVen co-founding team.

Sibs Gift Qetu-Yates shares how the online platform has had a shift in business...



Sibs Gift Qetu-Yates, founder of GetVen

How has Covid-19 impacted your business?

GetVen is premised on people gathering en masse and with the current lockdown in place, the question marks around the lockdown and how the government will regulate the hospitality industry has no doubt affected our business.

Our venue partners have all closed their doors, in line with the Government Regulations, so they are unable to take bookings. On top of that, nobody is allowed to publicly gather or socialise so there are no bookings taking place on our platform.

We were intending on launching our next iteration, GetVen 2.0, at the beginning of April but that has since been pushed out and we will be relaunching at the end of April 2020. We made this decision because we did not feel that it would be appropriate to launch a platform that promotes people gathering during these times and especially amid so much uncertainty about what was allowed and what was not.

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When we relaunch, bookings will be disabled and our platform will only allow listing and enquiries. Once an announcement has been made by the President and the relevant laws and regulations have been updated, we will launch and position our platform in line with these regulations and our moral duty to the well-being of all South Africans.

An example of this would be if people can only gather in groups of 50 or below or only events can take place with everybody wearing a facemask then we will only allow bookings that follow those guidelines to take place on our platform.

It's an incredibly delicate position we find ourselves in so our team is working around the clock to ensure that we launch in a responsible manner that is considerate of peoples' health and is beneficial to providing income for our venue partners so that they can survive this period.

■ ***How did you prepare for the lockdown?***

Our team is very fortunate to have already been well equipped for working remotely. Our team is based both in Johannesburg and Cape Town so the culture of video conferencing (Zoom, Discord, Google Hangouts etc.), using Slack and Google docs was already something that we were very familiar with. So there was, fortunately, not a lot that we had to adjust to in that respect.

“ It's one of the advantages of being a tech company at the moment. We live by the cloud and die by the cloud. ”

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

It's without a doubt the uncertainty. We don't know when normality will return or if a “smart lockdown” is going to become the new normal. I think once we understand how the next six months is going to work, then we will be well suited to position our offering to deal with the pandemic in a responsible manner.

Another challenge worth noting is that until people can gather then we can't accept bookings as we are reliant on companies and individuals gathering in our venues to share, create a collaborate and most importantly make memories. And with that said, our venues are also reliant on the additional source of revenue that GetVen provides them so until we are able to fully open our platform, we aren't able to assist the venues that need us the most at the moment.

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

Being a platform business, we are very fortunate that we are not capital intensive so we will survive this period without assistance.

“ Our main goal at the moment is to assist, as much as possible, the hospitality industry and small businesses to survive this uncertain time. We believe that our platform can offer an additional source of income for the hospitality industry in what has been a very financially burdening time. ”

We're also there to assist all the people who have had to reschedule important celebrations, productions and events during the lockdown and are now without a venue. Our extensive catalogue of venues gives those who find themselves looking for new venue options. Ultimately, we as a company have made it our number one priority to position our platform to be able to assist as many people as we can to recover and reopen their doors.

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

Through our email list and a regular check-in phone call from our sales team, venues are being kept in the loop with how we will be handling this period. Our customers are constantly reminded that our team is always available to take phone calls and emails should they need any additional information.

Additionally, we will be relaunching our social media communication this week in order to be able to better share our progress and platform with the general public.



Sibs Gift Qetu-Yates is well equipped for working remotely.

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

We have taken this time (lockdown) to rebuild our platform. We are now able to offer venues and guests more features and benefits than before.

“ This lockdown has given us the time to research, test and build. ”

We have worked closely with venues across South Africa who, like us, have been afforded the time to plan for life post lockdown. We have been able to share knowledge across industries, the knowledge that has helped us in curating the best offering with our new platform.



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Candyfloss pink walls and one of Cape Town's hottest venues Venue: @ilovethedoughct

A post shared by [GetVen](#) (@getvensa) on Apr 20, 2020 at 7:09am PDT

Our team is dedicated to monitoring government regulations and laws and assisting us in positioning our offering to adequately assist customers during and after this period. Our customers are always front of mind in how we approach things and it's no different during this time. So we're doing our best to keep our customers in the loop and ensure that we assist them as best as we can.

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

We believe that without a doubt, normality will not return in the next 6 months. We will definitely need to adjust to a “new” normal. We’re not in the business of making socio-economic predictions as we don’t feel it’s our place as an online venue marketplace but our hope is that by August the latest we will be able to gather in larger groups.

“ Ultimately, our biggest hope is that we defeat this virus with as little loss of human life as possible. The team at GetVen is really appreciative and grateful for the doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals who are on the frontlines helping those affected by this. ”

Ideally in the next few months, we hope that many of our venues will be allowed to reopen their doors and that gatherings (even ones of limited numbers) will be permitted.

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

We’re always innovating and experimenting. If we’re not then we can’t expect to improve our offering. The most important thing that we’re doing at the moment is that we’re taking a very measured approach to positioning GetVen to assist those that need us the most. Every day we’re learning about new requirements that our venues are going to need after this lockdown and we’re constantly adjusting and working to get make GetVen the best platform that it can possibly be.

■ **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

Technology is your best friend. I can’t stress enough how technology has been our saving grace during this period. Our team works around the clock and we’re always in communication with each other. This wouldn’t be possible without platforms such as Slack, Discord, Zoom etc.

I would also say another big lesson that we have learnt is that you never know what’s around the corner so it’s important to be adequately be prepared for a situation like this.

Ensure you have “enough money in the bank” to be able to get through a period like this. Ensure that you’re legally protected and that your insurance covers you in periods like this. Going forward, our team will definitely prepare as best as we can to handle a period like this.

Once we have relaunched in Johannesburg and Cape Town users will be able to list their venues and view venues via the platform. Communication will be sent via their email list and social media platforms with regards to when the platform will be available for bookings.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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