

Innovation has been key to Shoprite Group's lockdown success

Innovation has enabled the Shoprite Group to continue to serve its customers and launch new services during extremely limiting lockdown conditions.

"During the pandemic, necessity has truly been the mother of invention," says David Cohn, General Manager: IT of the Shoprite Group.

"The limitations that the crisis brought about and the desperate need of businesses to survive resulted in amazing examples of how companies can pivot with the right innovation," he says.

At the Shoprite Group innovation is everybody's responsibility in every business area, guided by a central innovation team that lends support where necessary.

"We may be a business of multiple thousands of employees, but we have a culture of innovation and exploration; and our teams think outside the box," Cohn explains.

This culture enabled the Group to "vault five years in five weeks" during the pandemic as it pivoted some of its businesses and accelerated its eCommerce, virtual voucher and online order fulfilment initiatives.

The Group scaled up its eCommerce and delivery services via Checkers [Sixty60](#) and [Checkers Food Services](#) and as it experienced a massive increase in users of both of those services. It has also seen the elderly, frail and low income customers taking to online for the first time.

Its Computicket division reinvented itself to provide an essential service with the [launch of virtual grocery vouchers](#). The ticket seller, whose business came to a near standstill during the lockdown, developed virtual vouchers – a secure, technology-based solution which enables people to send grocery vouchers via SMS.

"This is a perfect example of our focus on incremental innovation," Cohn says.

"While disruptive innovation may change the way we live, incremental innovation has been behind much of the change in the way we use, get and experience products and services."

"Small changes are leading to massive improvements in the way we live and work, often in areas we don't even think about, and leading to broader and faster adoption of technology. We are making sure we provide our people with the tools to keep these innovations going."

Some key innovations currently being investigated or used by the Group include computer vision, augmented reality, smart robotics, intelligent paperless solutions, advanced video-conferencing solutions and much more.

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