

Beating load shedding: How to up productivity whilst you have the power

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Load shedding is an unpleasant reality that will be around for at least the next 5 years and that has already had a detrimental impact on the South African economy. It is now imperative that organisations turn away from simply complaining about the power cuts. They need to start thinking creatively about the effects of these on productivity and, as a result, how the bottom line can be minimised.

Eskom has implemented 10% power cuts on organisations involved in large scale production. These are businesses that rely heavily on the availability of electricity in order to ensure the smooth operation of their production lines and processes. In order to recoup the revenue that will be lost during that 10% of load shedding companies must increase their productivity during the hours when power is available by 10%. In winter, when the electricity supply will come under even further stress, businesses must boost their productivity by 15%.

This will be no easy task as it will require an analysis of current processes and how these can be streamlined in order for organisations to gain maximum efficiency from them. There are two components of the production process that will be focused on here: the shift handover and the organisation's recovery time once the electricity returns after a power cut.

Businesses can no longer afford dawdling, laid back handovers. Hot Seat Changovers, where an employee keeps working until the moment his replacement arrives, should be employed. Employees must be informed of the reason for the implementation of the hot seat changeovers in order to guarantee their buy in.

A great deal of time is lost when the electricity does return and all staff slowly start returning to work. Clear procedures for immediate action to be taken when the power returns must be put into place with supervisors tasked with the responsibility of making sure that these actions are followed.

These very simple steps, coupled with an intent focus on eliminating non-productive uses of electricity – e.g. air conditioning, using electrical light when natural is sufficient etc – will up a businesses productivity by the necessary 10 to 15% and also go a long way to easing pressure off of the limited electricity supply.

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