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## Student start-up survives lockdown and repositions business

For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in South Africa, surviving the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown has taken grit and determination. For Tiang Moabelo, a University of Cape Town (UCT) student and founder of the start-up LoadALot, the past seven months have been a “redefining moment”.

The BCom Accounting student established his moving and logistics business in 2016. [LoadALot](#) is an online platform that takes the stress out of moving to a new house or office space and makes it a hassle-free experience.

When he established LoadALot, he started small, moving students in and out of residences, but soon expanded his service offering. He added a goods storage facility and interprovincial moving between Cape Town and Gauteng to his business’s list of services. Later this year, the business will also add Durban to its interprovincial moving list.

Like many other SMEs in the country, Moabelo went back to the drawing board when the nationwide lockdown came into effect and his business operations ceased. “We had for a while been thinking about moving with the times and incorporating the use of more technology into our business model. Lockdown was an opportune time to get working on those plans,” he said.

Together with his team, he used the first few months of lockdown to optimise his business. The end result is an artificial intelligence (AI) model with a built-in feature that allows users to photograph their living space. The system identifies the furniture in the room and feeds it directly to the LoadALot vehicle dispatch team. Based on the information the client provides, the system generates an instant online quote.

“The pandemic and lockdown were epiphany moments. They affirmed that technology is the only way to improve a business service. All of us relied heavily on it, and I knew I needed to make it work in my business,” Moabelo said.

The LoadALot team has also contributed to job creation in the country in recent months. As demand for their service has increased, Moabelo has hired several drivers and moving assistants. His focus now is on growing his business and providing on-the-job training and development to unemployed youth, and creating an even bigger job pool.

“Nothing is more fulfilling than making a difference and an impact in the lives of those who need it most. At LoadALot our focus is on the youth and making a contribution in that area,” Moabelo said.

To ensure an end-to-end seamless moving experience, LoadALot has partnered with storage facility Stor-Age, home-cleaning service SweepSouth, truck rental company Spartan Truck Hire and packaging supplier Ecobox.

Moabelo said: “These are leaders in their industries, and we are so happy to be working with them to meet our clients’ needs, grow our business and reach our goal – to create as many jobs as we can.”



Tiang Moabelo.

Photo: Supplied

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***ENDS***

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