

# All in this together...

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Understandably, there has been plenty of media attention globally devoted to the role played by health workers in fighting the coronavirus pandemic's effects.

Many of them deal only with infected people ... and significant numbers of them have contracted Covid-19 and died as a result.

Less attention has been on the other front-line workers – those working in the retail sector and, specifically, those employed in grocery shops and supermarkets, which have remained open all through lockdown and who have, no doubt, come into contact with many infected people.

Around the world, the health threat to shop workers is being recognised. Many of them are dying, too.

In South Africa, the Shoprite Group has made a number of videos – some airing as full-fledged TV commercials – which showcase the sacrifices being made by their people in order that the rest of us can put food on our tables.

In one, we see Thami Konza, branch manager of Shoprite in Khayelitsha, talking about hearing President Cyril Ramaphosa put South Africa in lockdown ... and the fear this caused for the welfare of his family.

But he sees his job as more than just a job – he is now one of those 'in uniform' in the front line and he continues to do his work.

Likewise, Las Hamukwaya, who is a mobile store operator with Shoprite subsidiary uSave, speaks about his responsibility in ensuring that people who may not be able to get out to get food – or are not able to travel long distances to shop – can get their food brought to them.

He points to the fact that the sign on his trucks says silapho ukhoyo (where you are, we are).

Both these Shoprite workers (the group also includes the massive Checkers chain) speak not only for themselves and for their employers, but for all those involved in delivering the sort of essential services which could, in theory, put them in harm's way.

In reality, that is not a theory. A number of supermarkets across the country have seen clusters of their workers test positive.

But even more poignantly, considering the highlighting of the role of Shoprite Group workers, was the video posted on social media, which shows workers at a Checkers supermarket standing with lighted candles and singing in memory of two of their colleagues who had succumbed to the virus.

Let's hope that, once things start returning to normal, we all remember that, no matter how humble, there are people out there who serve us and who deserve our thanks ... but even more: they deserve our respect.

An Orchid to Shoprite for producing human communication, which reminds us we are all in this together.

And, before I award a second Orchid, a declaration that I am a fan of this brand.

There is plenty of wordplay that can be engaged in by brands trying to remain relevant amid the coronavirus lockdowns.

But I think Subaru has absolutely nailed it with this simple execution, which has been lighting on social media.

With a simple "flatten the curve" and a photo of its Subaru WRX All-Wheel Drive car underneath, no further explanation is necessary. Subarus, multiple winners of the World Rally Championship, do really flatten the curves (of roads).

And in the WRX, this is particularly obvious because of its clever 'Torque Vectoring' system, which will get the car around corners quicker and safer than its competitors' vehicles will. That's not hyperbole either – I have driven the WRX and proved that point in real time.

So, an Orchid for Subaru ... although I think it goes to the global brand and was not produced in South Africa.

## ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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