

OneDayOnly's Laurian Venter on maintaining e-commerce momentum post-pandemic

By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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South African daily deals site OneDayOnly was among many online retailers worldwide that capitalised on the significant surge in e-commerce sales due to the Covid-19 pandemic. According to company director Laurian Venter, OneDayOnly "grew massively" during the lockdown, and the period provided the impetus to transition into a more modern, future-fit e-commerce business.



Laurian Venter, OneDayOnly director. Source: Supplied

At the recent [Payfast eCommerce Virtual Summit](#), hosted by Insaka eCommerce Academy, Venter discussed the challenges and opportunities that the e-tailer has navigated over the last few years and how it is setting the groundwork for future growth.

Customer conversion

During the pandemic, shoppers shifted towards online platforms as a safer way to shop from the comfort of their homes, and trust in e-commerce reached a tipping point. OneDayOnly recognised that consumers had become vastly more comfortable with the online payment and delivery processes and the security and benefits they provided.

"The convenience factor has really kicked in," Venter said, adding that OneDayOnly has retained most of its customers acquired during the pandemic.

While customer acquisition received a welcome boost, retention is a hard-won battle. As consumers return to their former lifestyles and spend more money outside of the home, the irregular online sales spikes brought about by Covid have simmered down. Moreover, consumers' disposable income has dwindled as they grapple with the ever-rising cost of living.

“This has definitely been a year of transition, with people going back to shops and restaurants and returning to travel. In addition to that, this year has been very trying for South Africans. We've had huge interest rate hikes, petrol hikes, electricity hikes...”

“We started to see a bit of a slowdown. It's been a challenging year of transition to make sure that we're retaining every single one of those customers, that we're still growing as a business and adapting to customer needs,” Venter said.



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Customer-centricity at the core

OneDayOnly's expansion into new product categories has been a successful business strategy that has continued post-pandemic. As Venter explained, during the pandemic, the retailer was limited to selling essential items such as washing powder, toilet paper and sparkling water. However, OneDayOnly managed to turn this limitation into an opportunity by building these product categories into a significant part of its business.

According to Venter, the retailer is constantly investing in becoming more customer-centric, tapping into data to improve personalisation and ensure that OneDayOnly is targeting the right people at the right times with the right messaging.

“We've focused hugely on understanding our audiences from a Google point of view, from a social media point of view, from a CRM point of view. We want to know who our current customers are, who our customers are that were shopping with us that have stopped, who the audiences are that we haven't reached, and who the audiences are that we've reached but are still not shopping with us so that we can then work on conversions.”

Black Friday preparation

For Black Friday, OneDayOnly actively sources information from customers on their product preferences and spend predictions, allowing the company to plan for the ideal merchandise mix and ensure sufficient stock availability. To circumvent supply chain challenges, Venter said the e-tailer begins planning for November's Black Friday shopping event as early as May, locking in good deals and prices at the right quantities to prepare for the seasonal rush.

“Stock has been gold for the last couple of years for various reasons. China being shut down for a lot of the Covid lockdown periods has meant that we haven't been able to get product from them. We've had huge issues with shipping containers, we've had strikes in South Africa ... This has meant that we as a business have had to plan well in advance.”

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Venter said OneDayOnly is focusing on sourcing fresh products from previously untapped regions of the world and has sent buyers travelling around the globe and attending trade shows to secure these purchases.

However, she noted the retailer's commitment to supporting local suppliers - sharing sales insights with them and backing their products with marketing support. This strategy has enabled OneDayOnly to diversify its product offerings while also supporting local businesses.

"The next year is an exciting one. This year has been very challenging to maintain the growth that we have seen over Covid, and next year we are looking forward to incredible growth again."

A return to the office

OneDayOnly's staff complement grew by 30% during the Covid pandemic due to significant sales growth. However, this presented several challenges, such as having to hire and train new staff online and building a culture and teams remotely.

Despite these challenges, OneDayOnly has successfully transitioned back to the physical office environment. Venter noted that the company achieved this by focusing on breaking down the silos that had developed during remote work, rebuilding collaboration and communication between departments, and bringing back the joy of working together in a physical space by encouraging team building and social interaction.



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Advice for emerging e-tailers

Venter closed off with some advice for emerging online retailers. "Really understand who you are as a business. What makes you special, what makes you unique?" Then assess your customers, she said, ensuring you're targeting them correctly and supplying them with the products they truly want.

Thirdly, she emphasised the importance of creating high-quality content to showcase your products effectively. This includes investing in good equipment and skilled photographers to present your products in the best possible light.

"The only way that people can actually experience your product is through your website, so you need to present it as well as possible. Video is huge for 2023, so make sure you've got some great video content out there," Venter said.

"As a business, if you can continue to be nimble, continue to be resilient and roll with the punches. That really is going to be the measure of success for every online retailer."

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