

Solid support keeps RDA Plant Hire loyal to Bell

Dana Schutte may have become the owner of a plant hire business by a circuitous route but one clear vision dominated his thinking: whenever he thought of yellow earthmoving machines, it was always those that came from a well-known manufacturer in Richards Bay.

Dana and his wife, Annari, own and operate RDA Plant Hire as well as a transport company under the name of RDA Cargo, of which both are situated in Potchefstroom. "I'm the son of a farmer from this North West Province and Annari is a born Namibian," Dana says. "We farmed near Ventersdorp for a number of years until soon after the new millennium and then we went diamond mining near Rysmierbult and Lichtenburg, here in the North West Province."

"Mining alluvial diamonds was very rewarding and we had big plans until endless delays with the renewal of our mining licence saw us selling our mine processing equipment and by 2007 change tack to plant hire and transport."

Dana and Annari settled in Potchefstroom where they had a good look at what the local plant hire market demanded. They decided that for their local market, they needed to have equipment that was versatile, reliable and new, for new machines, with their minimal downtime, bring repeat

business. "Friends of ours had bought two Bell 315SG Tractor Loader Backhoes (TLBs) through Bell Equipment's Sales Representative, Greg McClelland, and when we enquired about buying a similar machine, Greg was the man we spoke to," Dana recalls. "We still regard our first Bell 315SG TLB as the finest machine ever built as we are still running that first one from 2007 and it is still earning for us despite the 14 000 hours on its clock."

Through diligent marketing of their business, the Schuttes soon found demand for their equipment with bigger companies, such as contractors working on the gold mines in their area, and due to demand for their equipment they bought two subsequent Bell 315SJ TLBs in April and May 2008. "We soon realised that we're in a fickle market and although we do thorough market research before buying new equipment, to make sure that the purchase will be justifiable, we're confident our Bell TLBs have been the right choice all along," Dana says. "We've done calculations comparing the return on investment of a TLB to larger equipment and the TLB comes out tops every time, whether you use it on a mine or in a garden."

RDA Plant Hire now owns seven Bell 315 TLBs, all of them with 4x4 traction, and all but one bought new. "We've found Bell Finance a very handy option to use as they understand our market where you have to act quickly at times to negate the danger of losing a contract," he adds. "We prefer paying a healthy deposit and monthly installments over a short term to fit in with the length of our contracts."



Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Greg McClelland, with Annari and Dana Schutte of RDA Plant Hire.

By mid-2014 demands from mining clients saw RDA Plant Hire acquire a wheeled loader to load their long-haul side-tipper trucks, deployed by the company's transport side. "Because of the support and attention we'd enjoyed from both Greg McClelland on the sales side and Ben Spangenberg on the product support side, which made us as a small company feel like a big company, we had no hesitation in buying a new Bell L2106E Wheeled Loader for a contract with an alloys producer near Witbank," Dana says. "The contract called for around-the-clock production and when we encountered a problem on the new machine's differential, Bell Equipment was very quick to assist us with a loan machine to maintain our production."

Although the new Bell L2106E Wheeled Loader was repaired, RDA Plant Hire bought the Bell

L2106D loan machine as well to use as a standby. A subsequent short contract on a manganese mine saw the company buy two larger Bell L2606E machines fitted with slightly smaller buckets for the heavier loads. These two machines now work in tandem on a gold mine's waste dump where the old waste material is reprocessed.

"In buying the two bigger Bell L2606E machines we almost burnt our fingers when a supposedly long contract was cut short but Bell Finance's understanding of our situation saw us through," Dana says. "Our Bell Wheeled Loader fleet has expanded to five machines and this has added a new dimension to our services and has grown our confidence in tendering for more ambitious work."

Most of RDA Plant Hire's contract work is done on dry rates but, as an owner, Dana says that they are very conscious of their machines' fuel consumption for obvious reasons. Consumption figures vary with workloads but figures of 17 to 18 litres an hour for the Bell L2606E, 14 litres for the Bell L2106E and 5 to 7 litres an hour for the Bell 315 TLBs all bring clients back for more given high mechanical availabilities brought about by diligent preventative maintenance schedules.

"Our operators believe that they own the machines they operate, and that makes a big difference for us," Dana says. "Added to that is the solid technical support we can rely on from Bell Equipment that gives us the confidence we need to keep working in a market filled with many challenges."

