

Bell rings in changes to its southern African excavator offering

Bell Equipment has signed an agreement with global excavator specialist, Kobelco Construction Machinery Co. Ltd (Kobelco), for the exclusive distribution and support of the Kobelco range of excavators in the southern African region.

This follows a mutual decision by Liebherr-Africa (Liebherr) and Bell Equipment (Bell) to dissolve the Supply and Distribution Agreement, through which Bell sold Bell-branded Liebherr-manufactured equipment in southern Africa.

Explaining the rationale behind the changes, Stephen Jones, Group Marketing Director of Bell Equipment Company, says: "We have had a strong working relationship with Liebherr. Their products have been well suited to our markets and have performed admirably, but there is a need for both companies to ensure that they are best positioned for long term sustainability, especially in the turbulent southern African equipment market. For Liebherr Africa to sell and support its own manufactured products makes sense and also allows them to further invest in structures aimed at customer support. Bell fully understands and supports this rationale."

"Bell will continue to support Liebherr machines that we have placed with our customers for as long as they are operational. We understand that one of the reasons our customers support us with equipment purchases is due to our ability to deliver on our 'Strong Reliable Support' maxim, and we have a clear obligation to continue to offer this to our customers for as long as required, irrespective of changes in associations between different OEMs.

"Bell and Liebherr-Africa appreciates the importance of strong and seamless customer support and, through our respective and comprehensive support structures on the ground in the regions, we aim to ensure that our mutual customers have both the confidence and options for the support of their machines going forward," he adds.

The Kobelco alliance
As an exciting alternative

solution for this market segment, Stephen says that Bell is looking forward to developing a long term relationship with Kobelco that aims to provide both companies with the stability needed to realise their growth potential in the excavator market.

A division of Japanese-based Kobe Steel, Kobelco is a leader in excavator innovation having developed Japan's first construction machine in 1930, followed in 1963 with Japan's first wheel mounted hydraulic excavator. In 1967 the company launched the first crawler type hydraulic excavator to be produced using Kobelco's proprietary technology, and in 2006 introduced the world's first hybrid excavator. With an equally proud history in manufacturing, the company has 10 production centres located in Japan, China, Southeast Asia, the United States and India.



"The Kobelco focus on product innovation and efficiency resonates with our own ideologies and the company also shares our passion for customer support, making it a great fit for our business. We share a number of dealers around the world and we are fully aware of how impressive these machines are and the name they have made, specifically through the choice of premium components, overall reliability and low fuel consumption delivered by the Toyota Group's Hino engines," says Stephen.

"We are fortunate to have teamed up with a leading capital equipment distributor in southern Africa, and also a like-minded company that believes in listening to its customers and reacting quickly," responds Managing Director of Kobelco Construction Machinery Middle East and Africa, John Boyd. "With Bell Equipment's broad product range, extensive distribution network and strong reputation for strong customer support, we believe that we have found the right partner for our products in this region."

Commenting on the Kobelco machines, John says: "Key to the Kobelco value proposition is our philosophy of pursuing the enhancement of performance capacity and improved cost efficiency with due care for the environment. For this reason all Kobelco excavators have two digging modes - H mode for heavy duty and higher performance and S mode for normal operations with lower fuel consumption. Real life situations show that the S mode can deliver around 20% reduction in fuel when performing the same tasks as like-sized machines while engagement of the H mode delivers 8% more productivity at the same fuel burn as competitor machines.

"As a specialist excavator manufacturer we offer users a premium product that we know will deliver for them. Our 'true blue Kobelco evolution' is about creating value, building a future and changing the world with the distinctive colour acting as a reminder of these underlying values that we put into our products and business dealings."

Bell will be complementing its extensive product range by developing the full range of Kobelco excavators, from the small 1t mini excavators through to the largest 85t units. This will offer customers options for the smallest



applications as well as competitively priced and perfectly matched loading tools for Bell Articulated Dump Trucks in the construction, quarrying and mining industries.

"Additionally Kobelco is seen globally as the benchmark with regards to excavator carriers for the forestry industry. Over time they have perfected models to operate in this specific environment, which bodes very well for Bell where these types of hybrid machines are popular. Forestry is a key market segment for Bell and we are excited to have a competitive product to add value to our product offering to this industry."

Teams from the respective companies are currently in the process of laying the foundations to ensure that they are able to meet customer expectations. "Stocking of parts in the Bell Global Logistics Centre is underway and technical staff are being up-skilled to deal with the new products. Likewise sales and application specialists are improving their knowledge to better advise and support customers to make the best application decisions," says Stephen.

Both companies agree that the new partnership has the potential to shake up the excavator market in the southern Africa region. "We have no doubt that the market will react quickly to the association between a fantastic product and a strong, well-established dealer network. We look forward to introducing these excavators to our customers and have confidence that with these machines, and our proven sales and support network, that we can earn our rightful place in this market segment," concludes Stephen.