

Eyethu builds a strong foundation with Bell equipment

Even if you can't get it right at first, at least get it going. This may seem a puzzling philosophy to some but when you hear Marshall Dlamini tell his life story, it all falls into place.

Marshall Dlamini hails from KwaZulu-Natal. After leaving school, he worked in construction for a number of years while studying part-time, first mastering some IT and then completing a three-year civil engineering course by correspondence; in itself an example of his disciplined approach to life.

"I had this irrepressible urge to be self-employed and started my first company, Marshall Construction in the early part of this new millennium," he says. "I also then ventured into transport and my company Sonqoba Transport hauled paper for Mondi, using an 8-ton truck."

This all happened in KwaZulu-Natal but Marshall was more ambitious and shortly after moving to Gauteng's Midrand in 2005, he merged the construction and transport company into a new venture aptly called Eyethu

Translodge and Plant Hire. "Eyethu means 'ours' and I felt I now had the potential to do construction, transport and plant hire," he says.

Having enrolled at the lowest level of the Construction Industries Development Board (CIDB) programmes and with training and tenacity reaching a Level 7, Marshall and his small company was soon doing work for the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) and finding work further afield with the Northwest Province's Department of Roads and large municipalities such as Ekurhuleni and Madibeng. Bulk earthworks, road upgrades and storm water projects were completed on time and on budget and soon the name Eyethu Translodge and Plant Hire was on everyone's lips.

Earthmoving equipment though remained a problem for the young company as Marshall explains: "We hired the bulk of the equipment we used. We spent about R8 million on plant hire in 2011 alone and I knew it was time to invest in a fleet of our own yellow machines."

Marshall had started talks with the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) who were eager to help albeit under strict conditions. They, the NEF, interviewed his growing list of clients to ascertain whether his company delivered on their undertakings.

"Having now had the experience of what equipment worked well for us on our projects, we knew exactly what we wanted and importantly sought out one original equipment supplier as we thought this would help keep the cost down," he adds. "We also asked around and learnt more about which suppliers backed their equipment to the hilt with solid technical support."

At around the time that Marshall and his company were looking to acquire their own fleet of yellow machines, Bell Equipment had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with both the NEF and the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) whereby emerging contractors would be assisted in buying equipment.

"Based on the criteria of the right price for the correct equipment, solid technical back-up obtained by having an excellent footprint of branches, we chose Bell Equipment," Marshall says. "Our timing could not have been better as this slotted right into the criteria of the MoU Bell had signed with the NEF and DBSA."

Early in 2012, Eyethu Translodge and Plant Hire took delivery of two Bell 770G Graders, two Bell HD820R Excavators, two Bell 315SJ Tractor Loader Backhoes

and two Bell BW211 D-40 Single Smooth Drum Rollers. This impressive fleet was to be deployed immediately, such was the demand for the machines.

Bruce Ndlela is Bell Equipment's Director: Business Development and he shares his views on the company's undertaking to assist emerging contractors: "We believe that the hand that we as a company put out to emerging contractors bodes well for the business future of South Africa. We further assist them by monitoring tenders and sharing this information. To us at Bell Equipment, Marshall Dlamini and his company are a shining example of what can be achieved through this partnership."

"We're excited to see a young company such as Eyethu take a bold step forward in its entrepreneurial development," says Thabo Semono, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative who conducted the transaction. "Marshall and his company feel like family to us and we're pleased that his is one of the first emerging contractor companies to benefit from the partnership between Bell Equipment and the NEF and DBSA."

Marshall Dlamini's energy and enthusiasm for delivering projects and contracts on time and on budget, has not gone unnoticed. He has been lauded by the JRA as one of its best contractors and was a finalist at an Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year award from Ernst and Young. He remains modest though and believes that now owning his own fleet of Bell yellow machines will take his company to higher levels.



Mr Thabo Semono (Sales Representative: Public Sector, Bell Equipment Sales South Africa), Mr Tiego Mampane (Legal Services, National Empowerment Fund), Miss Zimkita Zatu (IDC), Mr Marshall Dlamini (CEO of Eyethu Translodge and Plant Hire), Mr Bruce Ndlela (Director Business Development, BESSA), Mr Sifiso Maseko (Plant Manager, Eyethu Translodge and Plant Hire) .



Mr Sifiso Maseko (Plant Manager, Eyethu Translodge and Plant Hire) and company CEO, Mr Marshall Dlamini make themselves comfortable in the cab of their new Bell Grader.