

Bell invests in modern and efficient support infrastructure

Just as Bell Equipment is a leader in the heavy equipment market with its technology innovation and design, so too has the company opted to employ the latest global building trends and technology with the recent development of four new, modern Customer Service Centres (CSC) that strengthen the Bell brand and the company's customer support network.

Representing an investment of about R200 million during the past two years, the new CSCs have been developed in Middelburg, Nelspruit and Rustenburg in South Africa as well as Kitwe in Zambia. "They have all been designed and built in accordance with our new Customer Service Centre design policy, which sets three levels of CSC dependent on our customer requirements in a particular area," explains Bell Equipment's CSC Project Manager, Niraj Andhee. "Kitwe and Middelburg are our largest, A type facilities, with an average size of 4200m². Nelspruit and Rustenburg are both B type, which have an average size of 2 500m². We haven't yet developed a C type CSC, but these developments would have an average size of 1 800m² with only two or three workshop bays to service a smaller customer base."

According to Niraj the new facilities share the same modular design and a similar floor plan, which has several advantages. "By sharing the same design we are keeping the same look and feel with all our CSCs. This consistency enables our customers to immediately identify our CSCs as belonging to Bell and supports best practices and efficiencies throughout our network. The modular design will also allow for future expansion at a later stage should we outgrow the existing facility."

Due to the company's varied customer base, which includes customers in the agriculture, forestry, construction, mining and quarrying industries, Bell needed to find a design that would be suitable to all. The result is a consistent, clean, modular design.

"Offices are all open plan in keeping with world trends in office design. This enables administration staff and management to be able to see from the office to the workshop and from the office to the stores. This

improved visibility has important spinoffs in terms of improved management of systems and controls for increased efficiency and professionalism. We've also followed the automotive industry standard by having a main reception area and a separate parts reception and, where possible, all workshop bays are facing the main access road to the facility to improve visibility and display good housekeeping practices."

All the new CSCs are equipped with facilities for disabled staff and visitors and also cater for women in the workshops with separate change room facilities.

Continues Niraj: "Optimising space has been a key consideration and we've optimised our storage areas with high rise racking. In Kitwe and Middelburg we've also installed mini-carousels similar to those found at the factory and our Global Logistics Centre."

With environmental awareness in mind, Bell has installed an effluent separation system at both the Middelburg and Nelspruit wash bay facilities as part of a water conservation effort. Niraj explains: "These are the same systems as those found on mines so that we are able to recycle water from the wash bays for use as grey water. Depending on the success of these systems we will look to install similar systems in our other developments."

Furthermore Bell has fitted the latest lighting technology in its CSCs. "This new technology not only improves lighting but also reduces power consumption in line with Eskom's call to all consumers. Additionally, in the event of power interruptions, the CSCs are fitted with generators for back-up. At Kitwe, where water supply can also be an issue, we have installed water tanks for back-up storage."

The investment into CSCs is part of a long term strategy to support high levels of customer service. Bell will look to construct new facilities, according to the new modular design, giving focus to those CSCs where leases are due to expire, where CSCs have outgrown their facilities and where the potential exists to grow markets. "The development of a B-type facility in KwaZulu-Natal and a C-type facility in Namibia is currently under consideration," says Niraj.

