

Bell Logger proves invaluable to Timber Express's operation

Word of mouth is said to be one of the most powerful forms of advertising and to Danial Rana's ears this certainly held true when his family's business wanted to buy a timber handling machine in the past year.

Danial and his older brother, Arslan, had joined their father Abdul in South Africa in 2010. Abdul and his wife had left their native Pakistan in 1997 with the aim of establishing a hardware business in South Africa, and this he has done successfully trading as Timber Express with branches in Margate and Dududu on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast and in Flagstaff in the Eastern Cape.

"Because we experienced shortage of supply in certain key areas, we embarked on

manufacturing our own water storage tanks, which are made under the banner of Amadiba Tanks and are popular items," Danial tells us. "We've also encountered a shortage of building timber and decided, as a family, to source our own as we were close to the timber growing areas in southern KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape."

The Rana family bought a former guest farm near Paddock, to the west of Port Shepstone, and set

up a tank manufacturing plant and a small sawmill. Handling the large pine logs delivered there posed a handling problem due to the sheer weight and size of the logs. Due to the rough terrain and stanchions on the timber trucks delivering the logs, a traditional forklift truck is unsuitable.

Logs in varying diameters are sourced and 6m lengths are preferred as they can be cut to shorter lengths, depending on demand. Their timber is used mainly for construction, roof trusses, decking and furniture.

"When we asked about hiring a timber handling machine the only name on everyone's lips was a Bell Logger," Danial explains. "So, we found a plant hire company and hired

an older Bell 220 Logger, and even though it broke down at times and once stood for a whole month while the engine was refurbished, we soon realised that without it to unload timber off trucks and feed our small sawmill, we would be in trouble."

This however solved their supply problem to a large extent and with timber stocks now flowing to their stores, this enterprising family were looking to supply timber to a wider market as well as looking to lower their production costs.

"We realised that as efficient as the Bell Logger was, it's hiring costs were eating into our bottom-line profits and we had to approach this situation differently," Danial says. "While asking around about how to buy our own Bell Logger, we were advised about Bell Equipment being a local company with its manufacturing plant in the same province as we were, which was a pleasant surprise to us."



Danial and his brother, Arslan, met Nomthi Mazibuko, Bell Equipment's sales representative working out of Durban (now known as eThekweni), after scanning the Bell Equipment website.

"Dealing with Nomthi was very pleasant as she knew the product range well, could organise finance for us through Wesbank and stuck to the timelines she had committed to," Danial says. "Having some financial experience taught to us by our father, we realised financing the Bell 225F Logger was a better option for our cash flows as we needed cash on hand to buy raw material."

Timber Express took delivery of its new Bell 225F Logger in April 2021 and it was immediately put to work offloading pine logs from trucks, delivering them to the plant at Paddock, feeding the small sawmill and loading sawn timber for transport to their three hardware stores.

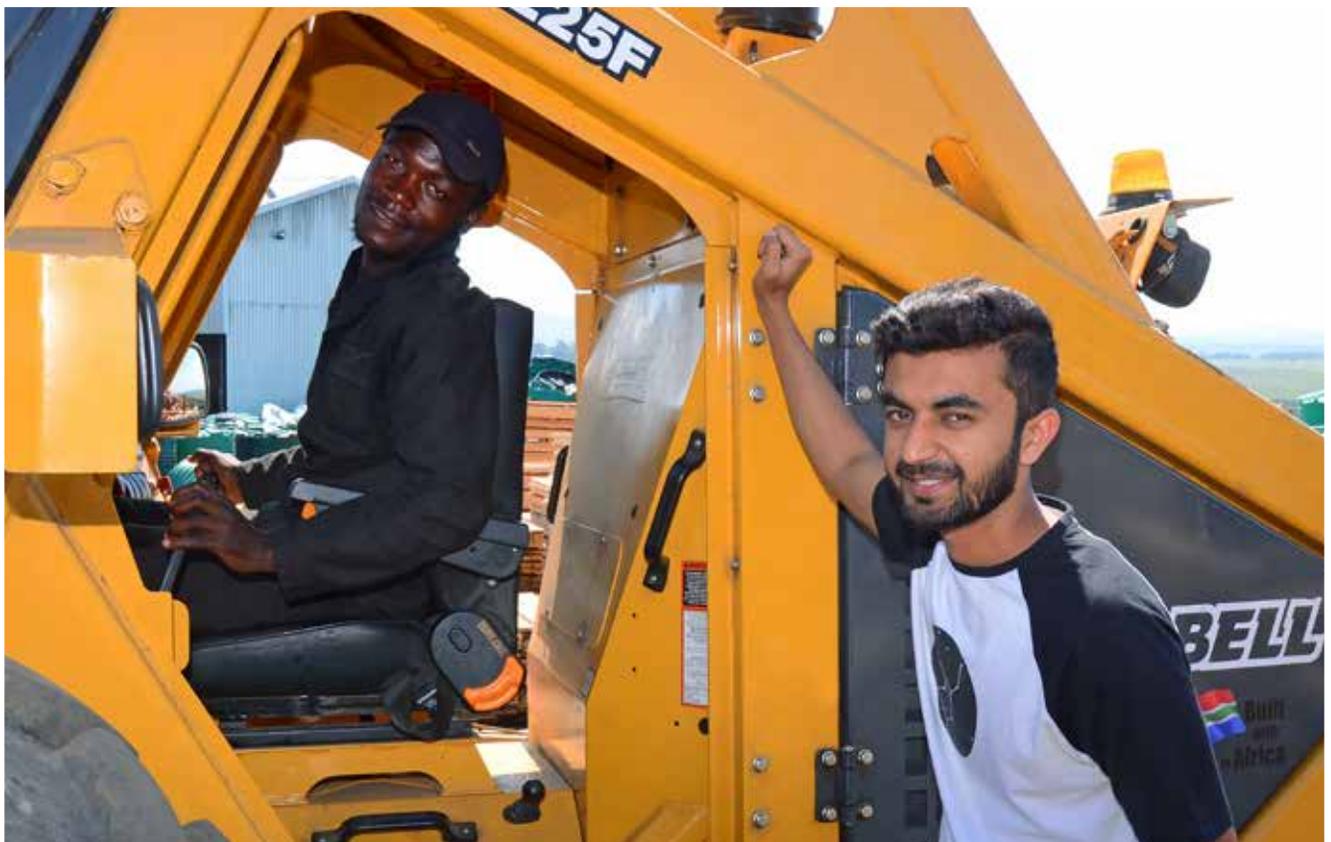
"Now that we've streamlined the timber sawing process, we've also started supplying some customers in northern KwaZulu-Natal using our own fleet of trucks, which is adding value to our business," Danial adds. "We're currently working in daylight only but can foresee that we'll extend the hours on our sawmill once there is greater demand for our timber products, which will see us using our Bell Logger during a night shift."

Danial comments on the superior LED lights the Bell 225F Logger is equipped with, which makes him

confident that operations at night could be conducted safely. He feels they are fortunate to have an experienced Tri-Wheeler operator in Patrick Paragza, who spoke of the smooth and responsive controls on the Bell 225F Logger.

When asked about the fuel consumption of the Bell 225F Logger, Danial explained that they still had to calculate exact hourly fuel burn rates as the machine had only done 300 hours. However, the brothers were pleased with their decision to buy their own machine as the monthly instalment alone was much less than that of a hired machine and it was running at 100% mechanical availability despite having suffered a punctured tyre the day before. They were in the throes of compacting their operational area with fill material and foresaw punctures could be avoided in future. The water-cooled Yanmar engine in the new Bell 225F Logger was proving to be less thirsty than the air-cooled engine of the older hired machine.

"This is a powerful machine, and those big front wheels offer amazing traction in wet weather when this loading area becomes muddy," Danial says smiling. "We're confident that as our business grows, we'll have need of a second similar machine to keep our production rolling. We're also enjoying the service Bell Equipment offers us under warranty. With this level of attention we can see ourselves using that excellent and confidence-boosting service way beyond the warranty period on our Bell Logger."



Patrick Paragza, the Bell 225F Logger operator, chats to Danial Rana (right).