

Dwellers Trading and Projects impressed with new JCB fleet

Growing up in the Mthambeka section in Tembisa on Gauteng's East Rand inspired a young man of that area to make his mark in civil construction and bulk earthworks in South Africa's busiest province.

Vusi Sithole's father, Mike, built houses on Johannesburg's East Rand, the area that now falls under the Ekurhuleni Municipality. Vusi came to work in the area too, learning about building materials in the yard of a large national building material supplier.

"During the two years I spent in the yard of the material supplier, I also dabbled in a few small building contracts as a sub-contractor with skills I had learnt from my father," Vusi says. "I had always wanted to be self-employed and left a salaried job in 2010 to start my own company in Johannesburg which I called Dwellers Trading and Projects."

But this didn't mean Vusi could take the Gauteng construction world by storm, and he admitted to himself that he needed to learn many building skills and some business acumen. Fortunately, he was able to make full use of an initiative of the Gauteng government's Public Works Department, which through the Ekurhuleni Municipality offered a three-year contractor development programme in construction techniques and practices.

"We had lectures during the first year and then undertook practical building projects in the second and third years, working under the supervision of qualified people who taught me personally, so much," Vusi explains. "I started off at a CIDB (Construction Industry Development Board) rating of Level 1 and ended the third year at Level 5,

which says a lot about what we were able to learn from the course and the knowledgeable people who mentored us."

Having successfully completed the course meant that Vusi was now listed on a panel of potential contractors. This soon paid dividends as he was contracted to undertake construction projects at the Johannesburg fresh produce market, the bus rapid transport system in Tembisa and various water reticulation projects for schools in Mpumalanga.

"I also learnt the hard way that in civil construction when you need to hire in yellow equipment it eats into the bottom line. Subsequently, buying used equipment, as I could not yet afford new machines, also came with a price," Vusi continues. "When looking to grow your company, you also need to grow your asset base and that's why, when new contracts were looming in 2021, I eventually decided to invest in several new machines, and I chose JCB."

Vusi goes on to say that when chatting to fellow contractors and friends, the one brand name that was mentioned often was that of JCB, and when he learnt that Bell Equipment was now the South African distributor of the marque, he felt much more assured of his choice.





Vusi Sithole and his wife Jabulile enjoy paging through a copy of the Bell Bulletin.

Vusi's choice fell on two JCB 205 21-ton Excavators, two JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loaders and one JCB 116D Roller with an operating weight of 12 tons.

He arranged his own finance for the equipment and explains this as follows: "Many of our contracts run over 36 months which gives one the opportunity with a substantial deposit, to pay the equipment off over 18 months," he adds. "When dealing with Bell Equipment I met with Sales Representative, Enock Mabaso, and he offered the guidance to make sure I bought the correct machines for what I believed we needed. It's a great feeling dealing with a company that understands your business and the challenges you face."

"Another justification for buying five new machines from one supplier is that as the equipment was bought with extended warranties to 6 000 hours on their wet drivetrains, we'd get to establish a relationship with Bell Equipment and its mechanics when they service our machines. Spares would also be obtained easier from one supplier."

Vusi points out that on the issue of maintenance costs, his research had shown that the cost of replacement parts and service kits for JCB machines was reasonable by industry standards.

His JCB equipment was delivered to him in December 2021 and the two JCB 205 Excavators and 116D Roller have been deployed on a roads project in the Moakeng township near Kroonstad in the Free State, which shows that his company,

Dwellers Trading and Projects, is now firmly spreading its wings beyond the borders of Gauteng.

"This project is a real win-win situation for the local community in Moakeng as in terms of our contract we must train and employ local people from the area to make up at least 30% of our labour force there. This will be done once we've excavated the road footprint between existing houses, laid the base course and started the final layer of brick-paving, which will involve a lot of manual labour, providing skills transfer and employment."

Vusi has one JCB 205 Excavator working in a nearby quarry excavating fill material for the base course of the road and the second similar machine, is used to excavate the road's footprint and flatten heaps of fill material to enable a grader to process it faster. The JCB 116D Roller is used to compact the processed layers.

"With the equipment being so new, we haven't settled fuel consumption figures yet but as we supply the diesel ourselves on this project, I can tell you that all our JCB machines are running well within the fuel cap of our budget."

With the level of service Vusi has enjoyed dealing with Bell Equipment, his future plans include a grader and possibly a mobile screen for use in remote areas. We're positive the sparkle in his eyes means that he will keep on buying earthmoving and material handling equipment from one now favourite supplier.