

Eswatini company enjoys great success with Bell plant hire fleet

The father and son duo of Pieter and Kaiman Müller admit that they don't do business with Bell Equipment Swaziland. No, they say, they do business with Charlie and Nicolien Boucher and their entire supportive team of dedicated and understanding people who represent Bell Equipment at the company's branch in Matsapha, Eswatini.



The elder Pieter Müller had learned about yellow machines from his father Jan, who ran a successful borehole business in Swaziland in the 1950s and 1960s. Pieter started his own company PJM some 30 years ago, first providing services in bush-clearing before he ventured into construction, some mining, road and dam construction.

By 2007, Pieter and his son Kaiman saw more potential in the plant hire market sector in Eswatini and expanded their business. In 2019 PJM moved from Hluti, a small town in the south of Eswatini situated in the Shiselweni region, to the industrial hub of Matsapha.

"Our timing was not ideal with the COVID pandemic, but this was one of the best moves we had made," Pieter says. "We see a bright future for ourselves here."

"We provide plant hire services across the length and breadth of Eswatini, and many contractors from elsewhere who come to work here know that we have a large fleet of reliable equipment at competitive rates that they can depend on," says Kaiman Müller. "Our fleet consists of Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs), excavators, a grader, a dozer, wheel loaders, and 15- and 30-cubic metre tipper trucks. We don't have backhoe loaders as that market is overtraded here in Eswatini, which forces down rates.

We also run an old Bell HD1430 Excavator, a Bell 2808C Articulated Hauler, which is used for harrowing in the sugar industry, two Bell 1206 Haulage Tractors and five Bell 1766 Haulage Tractors with 10-cubic metre tip-trailers."

PJM also owns two older Wheel Loaders, a Bell L1206 and a L1706, which despite their age, also still give reliable service.

"One of the best machines we've ever owned was a Bell HD820 Excavator we bought new from Bell Equipment in 2004 while we were still operating out of Ermelo," Pieter tells us. "We eventually sold it on 17 000 hours, and we still regret that as we believe it would have still been running, such was the quality of its design and build."

PJM still owns a Bell HD1023 Excavator that has more than 30 000 hours on its clock and consistently delivers 180 hours of service a month. This machine has been used extensively in a sand mine the company operates. The sand is extracted using a pre-owned Bell B25D ADT that they bought in 2021 and, even with 18 000 hours recorded, it performs well in tandem with an older seven-cubic metre dumper truck.

"In early 2021, we started realising that our market needed a new mid-sized excavator as having new equipment that promises sustained uptime gives clients confidence and brings repeat business," Kaiman says. "We did thorough research across the market for a year and settled on the Kobelco SK220XDL-10 Excavator for its proven Japanese heritage, like our previous Bell Excavators, and the technical backing we've come to rely on from Bell Equipment."

"Having Charlie Boucher and his team close by, with the sound advice he gives us, made the eventual decision that much easier and we're pleased with our choice," Pieter adds. "The relationship we have with Charlie, Nicolien and their whole team makes the difference, and we often say that we do business with real caring people and not a company."

With ever growing demand for the quality sand they produce, PJM's Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator has been added to machine fleet at the river where the sand is extracted. Here it is returning consistent fuel consumption figures of 14,4 litres an hour. Kaiman is a qualified diesel mechanic and with his team he personally oversees all the out-of-warranty maintenance their machines need whether it be regular servicing or major repairs.

"We've never had a major delay in obtaining parts from Bell Equipment here in Matsapha because we know that if our order is in before 2pm on a given day, we can rely on that part being available the following day," he says.

"We do a lot of preventative maintenance and our operators, most of whom have been with us for more than 10 years, take ownership of the machines in that they look after them."



Kaiman and Pieter Müller with Bell Equipment Swaziland's Charlie Boucher.