

Culture of trust keeps clients coming back



Hemingways Shopping Centre



Peter Mokaba Football Stadium

Trust, accountability and dedication are cornerstones in the business philosophy of construction management consultancy Betts Townsend. Established in 1995, the consultancy has built up a solid track record with its clients, and has several branches around the country. All directors have a background in the construction industry, and this gives them a solid understanding of the complex processes involved in bringing any successful project to fruition. SA Property Review spoke to executive directors Howard Betts and Mike Taylor about the company's approach to business and what the future holds.

Betts Townsend's offering encompasses the retail, leisure, commercial, residential and mining sectors, with particular focus on retail projects. The company has completed work for a number of well known listed property companies in this respect. Recently completed projects include the massive Hemingways Mall retail development and the Mdantsane City Mall, both in East London. These two projects were completed for the Billion Group. Howard gives some interesting background to the construction of this project: at the time when construction was due to start, the construction industry was so busy that it had been almost impossible to secure a contractor to construct the Hemingways Mall. Betts Townsend ended up being instrumental in helping the Billion Group to set up Billion Construction, an empow-

erment construction company, to undertake the building work on the project. In spite of this, the shopping centre was finished a month ahead of the original schedule.

Other interesting projects that the company has been involved in include the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Meyerton; the Peter Mokaba Soccer Stadium in Polokwane (undertaken in joint venture with Seco Project Management); the new Retail Pods at Canal Walk in Cape Town; the Southern Sun Hyde Park Hotel and the 37 000m² Jubilee Mall which is currently under construction in Hammanskraal. Over the border, the company recently assisted a British project management company on the British High Commission in Harare, Zimbabwe. It is also currently involved on a project for BHP



Canal Walk Shopping Centre Retail Pods



Canal Walk Shopping Centre Retail Pods

Billiton in Hotazel, which involves the development of an entire new sustainable town as part of a mining project in the area.

Howard and Mike point out that while many firms were exploring new territory such as the Middle East in the past few years, Betts Townsend has remained firmly focused on its South African market and clients. The company elected to keep its focus on the local market and keep refining its service offerings for its established clients during recent years. "We build our relationships with our clients on trust and integrity," Mike explains. "They entrust us with large amounts of money and we co-ordinate a team which is responsible for delivering the correct yields for funds and developers," he adds. There are plans, however, to look a little further afield within our neighbouring African countries for new opportunities in this diverse and developing continent. The company's directors have already gained experience over the border in countries such as Tanzania, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, and would like to build on this even further.

A culture of accountability ensures that each person in the chain at Betts Townsend delivers results. Staff not only receive support and training in order to ensure that they are able to perform the required tasks, but they will shortly be further rewarded by means of a staff empowerment trust which has been set up, and through which they are able to own a stake in the company. In addition to this, the company has made its contribution to empowerment and skills transfer by helping to get two small empowerment companies on their feet. This has evolved into a social empowerment scheme in which empowerment entrepreneurs can be trained and nurtured by an experienced company, gain exposure to large projects which will give them an understanding of the mandate and vision of the client involved, and have the benefit of solid management right from the point of start-up.

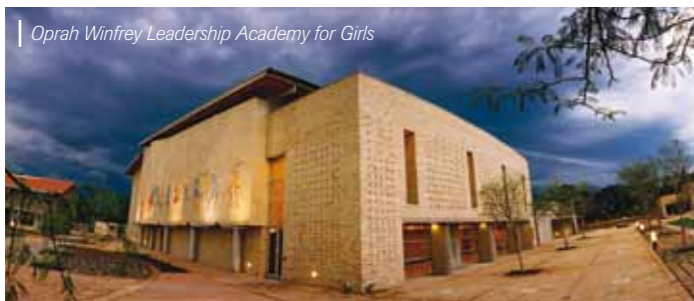
Howard and Mike believe that the company secures so much repeat business because of its results orientated approach and the fact that they place such high importance on trust. Betts Townsend has built up a team of people who not only have refined their project management skills and savvy, but who understand their clients' busi-

ness requirements and strive to exceed their expectations. A case in point is the new Pick n Pay warehouse in Longmeadow, which is currently under construction. In this case, Betts Townsend is project managing and construction managing the development. "Currently, this project is a month ahead of schedule and is coming in at 10% below the original budget," Howard points out.

Betts Townsend's services include project initiation and briefing, concept and feasibility, design development, tender documentation and procurement, construction documentation and management, and project close-out. The company is affiliated with SAPOA, the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) and the Association of Construction Project Managers (ACPM). Its clients have included Hyprop, the Billion Group, Pareto, ApexHi, Investec Properties, Redefine, Edcon, Corovest, Madison Properties, Growthpoint, Liberty Life, Southern Sun and Sun International, among others.

SAPR

Betts Townsend was recently approached to apply for possible inclusion in the South Africa Fast Growth 100 list. Founded in November 2009 by AllWorld Network, Endeavour SA and Professor Michael Porter of Harvard Business School, the list will include innovative and dynamic privately owned companies in South Africa – those who are contributing to job creation and economic growth. The companies will gain international exposure through their inclusion in this list. Betts Townsend has applied and is in the running for consideration.



Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls



Southern Sun Hyde Park Hotel



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