

Success to the People

Like the mountains of Lesotho that reach for the sky, so too is one of the country's outstanding businessmen reaching great heights and leading the way for others to follow.

Victor Mokotso started Mafeteng Concrete Blocks and Building Construction in Maseru to fill a need in the region for affordable building materials. Now, his business is so successful that he not only supplies Maseru and surrounding areas, but also all areas of Lesotho and neighbouring South Africa.

small country to supply the needs of Lesotho as well as the surrounding areas in South Africa. As a major producer of building materials, the company has also entered the construction industry and is involved in housing and infrastructure delivery projects around Lesotho.

With 47 staff members on the books, Victor is serious about his responsibility to his workers and even more serious about uplifting his countrymen and fellow entrepreneurs.

Starting out

Growing up in Lesotho, Victor had many influences in his life that shaped his future. None more so than his uncle who operated a small block making operation that served the community near where he stayed.

While studying at the University of Lesotho, Victor had a life changing experience when he got news that his uncle had passed away and as a result the business had closed. Having seen how his uncle had served the community he knew that one day he would return and also provide the same service. But he wanted to do it bigger and better with better business management.

At this point Victor changed his direction of study from engineering to business management and began learning how to effectively run a business. Afterwards he worked for different companies with the goal of raising enough money to return home and serve his community by providing them with "home grown" building material.



Victor Mokotso and his trustworthy Nissan One-Tonner

His success stems from a need to serve his community and fill a gap in the market that was causing his people a lot of hardship and preventing them from building decent houses. This was a challenge for Victor to overcome and when he started his first small operation to produce quality and affordable blocks, the community was delighted and supported his business all the way.

Going higher

Right from the start the bricks and blocks sold as quickly as the small company could produce them. Soon new equipment and machines were necessary and were bought with the money earned from the operation.

The company has grown to operate some of the biggest block-making machines in Lesotho and has three manufacturing sites. These are situated around the

Filling the gap

This took many years and by the time he had built up enough money to buy his first machine, the community was in desperate need of affordable building material. At the time the only quality building material available had to be transported over long distances and as a result the cost was high. Limited availability also meant that suppliers could charge more and as a result new building projects were limited.

Victor's first machine was a small "egg-layer" machine from Pan Mixers South Africa in Johannesburg. Although it was small and could not produce enough blocks to meet the demand, Victor and his team of two other workers put all their effort in and kept the machine running at its highest possible output. They made sure that the right mix of cement and aggregates were used and as a result the quality gave the locals a reason to be happy.

The one thing that will not be linked to any of my successes:

POLITICS!

At this point Victor filled many roles in the company and when he was not manufacturing he was selling or acting as the driver making deliveries and collecting materials. He and his trusty Nissan One-Tonner became a common sight around Maseru as he battled to keep up with the rising demand.

Setbacks and challenges

As with any start up business he has had his fair share of problems. In the early days his business did not have any reputation to speak of nor any track record. Finding finance to buy more machines in order to meet the demand became a major issue and it took some time before the banks would lend him the money needed – so he bought machines slowly with only the profits of the business.

From Johannesburg the management team of Pan Mixers grew more and more fascinated by his hard work and soon realised that Mafeteng Concrete Blocks was a company with a good future. Their relationship grew

closer and sales and technical staff from the company spent a lot of time with Victor looking at different machines and options that would take the company to success and meet demands.

With a good understanding of the market

and using his hard learned business skills Victor chose the right machines that were able to produce the materials required, but that were affordable to him and would pay for themselves in an acceptable amount of time. This enabled him to buy machines to manufacture bricks, blocks and pavers and other concrete products as required. Existing supply lines also meant that the company could resell building sand and hire-out its delivery vehicles and machines when not in operation.

Future goals

The business has recently expanded to include a construction arm that specialises in housing projects and the provision of community related buildings such as schools.

This brings Victor closer to his goal of uplifting the community through providing not only building products and services, but also lending his skills to bring about a new generation of successful business people in Lesotho.

People development is the one thing that drives Victor to achieve even greater heights, it is his desire to help others succeed by mentoring them and lending support in any way possible.

His advice to others that want to start a business in the building industry: work hard, earn a good reputation, partner with the right suppliers, be brave and don't give up.

Mokotso started Mafeteng Concrete Blocks and Building Construction, Tel: (002 66) 227 01273

Size of the operation

- Three sites including property, buildings and machinery
- 47 employees
- Various Pan Mixers brick and block machines including one massive VB-4 machine
- 6 medium-sized delivery trucks
- 4 heavy-delivery trucks
- 4 medium-sized tippers
- 2 large-sized tippers
- 1 interlink trailer
- 3 forklifts
- 2 TLBs
- 1 front-end loader
- 1 20 000 litre water tanker
- 4 concrete mixers



One of the company's Pan Mixer machines in operation



The company had to overcome setbacks such as losing a brand-new truck and a bakkie before they were insured or even delivered to Lesotho