

Business News

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JUNE 2020

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A qu(Cl)ick scan gets businesses back to work

ClickScan and HealthScan - two easy to use, COVID-19 screening and compliance tools - provide safety and compliance as businesses return to work.



Covid-19 screening.

As industry re-opens during the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses must adhere to regulations to ensure safety and mitigate the spread of the virus in the workplace.

Employees must be screened to ascertain whether they have any of the observable symptoms associated with COVID-19; namely fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell being common symptoms.

Manual capture of information will be time consuming, costly and lacks the robustness of reporting and audit.

Electronic solution introduced

Since 2003 Cape Town based Touchwork has become an international leader in customer experience (CX) solutions and services that help organisations capture, analyse, and act on information in real-time – anytime, anywhere. Its clients include SAN Parks, Johnson & Johnson, Vodacom, Ezemvelo and more than 50 European and North American universities and colleges

The latest extension of this technology is ClickScan and HealthScan - both electronic regenerative tools that provide real-time health screening, combining COVID-19 symptom checks and temperature readings

from an infrared thermometer.

Both tools work in a similar way: ClickScan enables smaller businesses to quickly and easily implement a compliance solution at low cost while HealthScan is aimed at larger enterprises.

How it works

ClickScan, once activated provides employees an identification barcode by email, and the employer is issued with a screening link which is accessed at the office location:

- When employees arrive at work, their barcode is scanned, their temperature taken and they answer the required COVID questionnaire.
- The onsite screening team access the link via a browser-based barcode scanner. After scanning the ID, a risk assessment survey is completed and the temperature taken and entered using a standard infra-red thermometer.
- This can be done on any phone, tablet or computer with a camera. If employees fail the assessment, the system will warn the employee, an internal alert will be sent to a designated person within the company and they will be asked to return home following the

appropriate protocols.

- The system includes the ability to screen visitors and employees who have forgotten their identification.

TouchWork CEO Rudi Leitner says this innovation can be installed for as little as R500 per month and offers major benefits to business. "We have also deployed an educational version for use in our schools and universities."

The tool provides:

- Real-time data and reporting for health compliance and audit.
- Cost-effective and easy setup and deployment
- A streamlined solution designed to reduce admin
- No expensive equipment required
- Easy to use dashboards, reporting and data analytics.

HealthScan is the enterprise solution which provides more functionality.

Employees complete a daily risk assessment before leaving for work using their phones. If they pass the assessment, the system sends them an access pass which they need to show when they access the workplace. Temperature will still be taken, and is entered into the system via the scanner tool link.

Employees who fail the self-assessment receive a red or yellow notice to seek additional screening, or not come to work. In both cases, company HR is notified via email.

Although targeting COVID, the system could also be used to screen for other diseases such as TB, or could be changed to monitor staff sentiment post-COVID.

Leitner concludes "By using either ClickScan or HealthScan you have a fully auditable record of your Covid-19 screening processes. Implementing employee screening is a requirement for a return to work, and using this system will ensure that you meet all government requirements in terms of screening."

"Apart from your infrared thermometer there is no need to buy expensive equipment!" he added.

For more information visit www.clickscan.co.za or www.healthscan.co.za

The Great CHOC Superhero Bake Off



COVID-19 / the Coronavirus is having a global impact and is affecting each one of us. Of concern to CHOC is the health and safety of all involved with CHOC, especially the children and teens with cancer who are under treatment, many of whom have compromised immune systems. In addition to that, the lockdown as outlined by the President in his speech means that as an organisation we will have to limit the number of services we offer to our children and families. However, all CHOC staff will be working remotely to ensure that operations continue and that we are able to continue to provide support to our children and families to ensure that they are safe and are able to continue with their treatment.

CHOC is calling on all South African children, teenagers and adults to get the household together and tap into their creativity by baking absolutely anything around the theme "WHO IS YOUR SUPERHERO?" From biscuits to cupcakes to carrot cake – when it comes to our very own Superheroes anything goes. Whether it's your mom, a teacher, Superman, nurses or policemen – put on your thinking cap and go crazy. Bake something that relates to your superhero.

Challenge yourself to only use what you have available in your home – remember it just needs to look good – no tasting from the judges!

For more details about The Great CHOC Superhero Bake off visit: www.choc.org.za





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What are the most common ways water is wasted?

XYLEM, a developer of innovative water solutions through smart technology, helps countries and communities secure and manage their water supplies. Xylem South Africa is engaged in projects across the country and the African continent helping customers transport, treat, test and efficiently use water in public utility, residential, commercial, agricultural, mining and industrial settings.

“Water has become a modern convenience for many, so we sometimes don’t appreciate what it takes to get such a precious resource into pipes and out of taps,” said Chetan Mistry, Strategy and Marketing Manager for Xylem Africa “A little insight can go a long way, not only to build better water-saving habits but also to make the right choices on how to better manage water and water infrastructure.”

To help encourage discussion and enlightenment on water management, here are several ways through which water is often wasted at a



country and community level:

Ageing infrastructure

The Department of Water Affairs estimated that more than one-third of available water is lost due to leaking pipes, ageing and broken infrastructure, vandalism and contamination. Well-maintained water infrastructure can realise enormous savings for the resource and fiscus.

Poor water management

Human expansion has dramatically disrupted the availability of water.

Significant numbers of water bodies are polluted, from estuaries to coastal zones and even the oceans themselves. Much of this was done to satisfy short-term economic goals, but the long-term consequences may very well undo all those gains.

Insufficient use of water data

Human population sizes tripled during the 20th century, and water for human purposes grew sixfold. That doesn’t include industrial and other applications of water. As

urbanisation increases our thirst, it’s vital to understand the picture on the ground to plan ahead. The key to unlocking this is usage data. While infrastructure can be modernised to improve data, most utilities already have SCADA systems that produce large amounts of data. They just often do nothing with it.

Little recycling of water

Countless litres are recycled every year from different sources, ranging from risky greywater to dangerous

black water. But despite these efforts, not enough is being done to reclaim more. There are many opportunities to recycle wastewater and chemical water, and the world may have become a bit too complacent with its current recycling activities.

Outdated irrigation and farming techniques

Flood irrigation is a common technique to nourish crops, but it wastes water and can pollute waterways with fertilisers.

The wrong crop choices can also have a major impact on water usage. Remedies to improve these vary, and their usefulness depends on the context of the region. Examples include drip irrigation and covering crops to prevent water evaporation.

For more information contact: Chetan Mistry +27 11 966 9311 or email Chetan.Mistry@Xylem.com

It’s an ill wind...

#StayHome / Work From Home (#WFH) boosting SA e-commerce and parcel express industries, after two crippling months

IN just over a week, the lifting of the e-commerce ban by Minister Patel delivered a life-saving ‘U-turn’ to the future of several South African industries, most particularly online retail, and the courier, logistics and freight forwarding industry.

Prior to Covid-19, e-commerce contributed 1.4% of national retail sales, according to the Online Retail in South Africa 2019 study conducted by World Wide Worx, with the aim to double this by 2022. Local courier companies that had geared up for this by building streamlined processes, meeting delivery times accurately, and offering robust parcel tracking were prepared for 18 months of solid growth.



What happened next, as Covid-19 destroyed the economy, was very different, but Lockdown may still prove to be a blessing in disguise for e-commerce.

“When Lockdown was implemented, we took a hit on our volume like everyone else but we have a good number of customers in the healthcare and fresh

produce sectors which helped. What we’re seeing now though is a tsunami of consumers ready to jump into online shopping, simply because it’s a necessity to stay home and, for many, work from home. The courier industry has become an enabler to achieve that, we bring the goods to you, and we’ll do it

safely through our new contactless delivery process. We believe this will be the big shift to online shopping in South Africa that we’ve been preparing for. We are expecting massive volumes from the major retailers that we service, but also the smaller shops who have been working hard to bring their business

online,” explains Hilton Eachus, Chief Customer Officer at DPD Laser which operates under the Dawn Wing brand in South Africa.

His point rings true - according to an analysis by ACI Worldwide, global e-commerce sales in April experienced a 209% growth compared to the same period last year.

According to Garry Marshall, CEO of the South African Express Parcel Association, “Since Lockdown, our industry was down to about 30% of the norm - this makes it extremely difficult because you can hardly send out one-third of a vehicle, or have it one-third empty - so it dramatically impacted the cost

base of couriers. However, since Level 4, there has been a dynamic shift. Because of the extension of commodities into permitted products - allowing logistics companies to transport both the inputs and outputs for manufacturing organisations, we managed to get back to about 70% of capacity”.



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Can KAAP fuel growth?

PAARL-based agri-service giant Kaap Agri – which owns the well-known Agrimark retail chain – appears to be miss-firing on its expansion into the fuel sector.

In the six months to end March, Kaap Agri's petrol and diesel selling subsidiary, The Fuel Company (TFC) saw profits decelerating to R52 million (from R54 million previously). This was despite a slight increase in revenues to R1.28 billion on a 12.6% increase in fuel volumes to 139.4 million litres.

Kaap Agri CEO Sean Walsh reported price deflation of -1% in fuel sales. He also indicated that new sites would only kick in their profit contributions in the second half of the financial year.

Walsh said revenue growth had been slow due to low volume growth in like-for-like sites and delays in newly acquired sites. "The reduction in profitability is due largely to a combination of fuel price decreases impacting inventory valuation, increased costs and the impact of managed sites converting to owned sites."

He pointed out that managed site profitability was included in the base, but the actual revenue from this was only recorded once sites are officially owned.

The good news was that the TFC fuel forecasts – which host Expressmark convenience stores and Fego café quick service restaurants – did benefit. Walsh said these brands performed strongly.

TFC's footprint now extends to 43 fuel units – the bulk of which are located in the Western Cape (17) and Northern Cape (10).

There is a worry that the heavy investment in TFC is yielding low returns – remembering the fuel business operates on lower margins than Kaap Agri's traditional Agrimark retail core.

Walsh stressed the six month period was characterised by a "no return" capital situation on R49 million invested in new TFC site deposits.

He said the strategy for TFC remained unchanged – most notably the pursuit of national footprint.

He said TFC had added five new fuel sites since the first half of the 2019.

The TFC pipeline



held three new sites, but Walsh said Kaap Agri was cautious on the effects of Covid-19.

Overall, Kaap Agri performed soundly with revenue increasing 11,6% to R4.9 billion. Like-for-like comparable sales growth came in at 4,8% - buoyed by a 5% increase in the number of transactions.

Walsh said sales growth across all trade

divisions – which comprise Agrimark, Pakmark, Liquormark and Forge Build - was strong and accounted for 66.5% of total revenue growth.

Revenue for the trade segment came in higher at R2.93 billion (R2.6 billion) with profit before tax up markedly at R170 million (R152 million).

Looking ahead, Walsh said the trad-

ing division priorities would be reinforcing the building materials offering and retail optimisation as well as the centralisation of replenishment, assortment and pricing.

Interestingly Walsh reported that growing categories were hardware, homeware, pet supplies, FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) and gas. He said there would be a

continued focus on category winners.

The unsung hero of the Kaap Agri interim performance was grain storage business Wesgraan, which chipped in a healthy R15 million to profits.

Walsh did, however, warn that the strong Wesgraan performance might not be repeated in the second half of the financial year.

75% of SME's predicted to fail if lockdown runs past 30 June

SEVENTY-FIVE per cent of small and micro businesses will close down if the lockdown runs past 30 June, according to a survey by the South African SME Finance Association (SASFA) and assimilated by HeavyChef. The survey involved 2 300 business owners and found that even under Level 4, 70% of SMEs are not allowed to trade.

"Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the lifeblood of our South African economy," said Karl Westvig, CEO at Retail Capital. "With the extreme disruption to their businesses, most will suffer huge losses, retrench staff and many will not make it through the Covid-19 lockdowns."

Government and

some wealthy South African families have made funding available to SME business owners, but this was far too little and often did not reach the owners who needed it.

According to Westvig, only a fraction of these businesses had any support. "Only 47% of business owners applied for relief from government or financial institutions, because many of the remaining 53% did not believe they would qualify. But even amongst the 47% who did apply only 32% were successful. This means that a mere 15% of SMEs with a turnover of below R10m per annum, had any support."

Westvig explained that the R200bn Loan Guarantee Scheme from the National

Treasury supports the formal banks to lend to SMEs with a turnover of up to R300m per annum. "However, banks follow the traditional credit-vetting criteria which often requires surety and security. It is also expensive and difficult to underwrite funding for small SMEs with turnovers of less than R10m per annum. As such, the bulk of this support is going to medium-sized businesses that can provide security and have longer track records."

Clearly, 85% of SMEs are being ignored when it comes to acquiring support, Westvig continued. "The best-placed funders for these businesses are the non-bank lenders who have cash flow-based lend-

ing models and use risk scorecards and data-driven approaches, not collateral-based models."

As such, the lack of government support for non-bank lenders leaves a gap in the system. These lenders include members of SASFA and other non-bank lenders, including Retail Capital, Merchant Capital, Spartan Finance, Cashflow Capital, LulaLend, Business Fuel, Pollen Finance, Bridgement and many more. Collectively they have lent in excess of R20bn to more than 100 000 SMEs over the last 5 years.

Michael Du Plooy, CEO of Cash Flow Capital, points out that these numbers may appear small compared

to the R200bn Guarantee Scheme from the National Treasury, but they are vital to more than one million SME owners and their employees, with an indirect impact on over five million South Africans who depend on them. This impact is exacerbated by the fact that many of them have also been precluded from claiming UIF as the employees are sometimes casual or are not registered with UIF, even though they pay UIF levies in PAYE."

As a recommendation, Du Plooy says that government should consider supporting the SME sector through the non-bank lenders who have direct access to these owners. "This would entail the cre-

ation of a R10bn non-bank funding guarantee scheme to enable cash to flow to SME owners. This will allow them to weather the storm and give them access to start-up funding as the lockdown lifts in the respective Levels."

Along with this, government should also consider accelerating the lifting of restrictions to allow SMEs to trade, says Du Plooy. "Under Level 5, 90% of small businesses were not able to trade and with the slight relaxation for Level 4, this has risen to around 30% which are allowed to trade."

"We believe that government should start lifting restrictions now as there is a high level of awareness in the gen-

"... government should consider supporting the SME sector through the non-bank lenders who have direct access to these owners."

eral population regarding personal hygiene and social distancing. This is vital because the sooner these businesses can trade, the sooner they can come off support," he said.

"Unfortunately we have only a few weeks left until 30 June when three-quarters of our small businesses have indicated that they will have to close down," Du Plooy concluded.

Relief initiative for SA's Farmers

AS farming communities around South Africa continue to be negatively affected by severe drought, Engen has partnered with Agri SA to help drive contributions to their Drought Aid Fund, which ensures that farms remain in production and that jobs

and food security are protected.

For every litre of participating Engen lubricant sold nationwide, R1 will be contributed to Agri SA's Drought Aid Fund.

Since 2015, thousands of South African farmers and farm workers impacted by

drought have benefited from the fund.

Engen is proud to be a part of this initiative given its close and longstanding ties to the agricultural sector.

"As a leading supplier of fuels and lubricants to the agricultural sector we have witnessed

first-hand the impact that the ongoing drought has on our farmers, farm workers and farming communities, which is why we have partnered with Agri SA to ensure the sustainability of this sector," says Zama Dyaphu, the Indirect

Sales Manager for Engen Lubricants.

"The contribution of Engen will go a long way to assist farmers, farm workers and farming communities who are still suffering from this long-lasting drought. We will work closely with our provincial

affiliates to ensure the aid reaches those who need it the most," says Andrea Campher, Disaster Risk Manager of Agri SA.

Customers who purchase Engen Dieselube 700 Super, Engen Agritrac Super Universal and Engen Agrifluid Transmis-

sion from participating co-ops and distributors will ensure that R1 per litre is contributed to the Drought Aid Fund.

For further enquiries, please contact: Andrea Campher Agri SA Disaster Risk Manager 079 8872 174

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Explosion-proof hoists for Kusile coal conveyors



Typical Condra K-Series articulated hoist under test.

CONDRA has completed manufacture of eight explosion-proof, high-lift hoists – four of them articulated – for Tenova Bateman.

All are custom-built, two-speed machines that utilise the modularity of Condra's K-Series to deliver performance capabilities precisely tailored to the individual requirements of each application.

After commissioning at Kusile Power Station, the eight machines will carry out installation and maintenance work on coal conveyors.

They will further boost Condra's already substantial presence at Kusile, where the majority of overhead

cranes and hoists have been supplied by this company.

Lifting capacities, lifting speeds and lift heights vary greatly among the eight hoists.

Loads of between one and seven tons will be managed by fixed lifting speeds ranging from 1,25 to 12 metres per minute, and by lift heights of between 10 metres and 41 metres.

Noteworthy among the machine features is the articulation on four of them, allowing travel around curves away from the line of conveyor movement. Also unusual are the higher than normal lift heights on six of the units: 17 metres (two machines), 18.5, 21, 32, and 41 metres.

A Condra spokesman explained that even the 10 and 11,5-metre lift heights of the remaining two hoists can be looked upon as high-lift.

"Hoists with this sort of lift height are not off-the-shelf deliveries for most crane companies, but we can offer and deliver a high-lift capability quite quickly because of the modularity of the K-Series," he said.

"We can adapt the K-Series to an extremely wide range of requirements."

The K-Series is produced in three configurations: foot-mounted, monorail and double-rail crab. Lifting and reeving arrangements include centre-lift.

Fully covered hoists provide lifting capacities to 32 tons, while open-drum units have capacities in excess of 250 tons.

Features on all models include electromagnetic DC disc brakes, standard frame-size motors with parallel rotors, double-acting limit switches, solid bronze rope guides and totally enclosed splash-lubricated gearboxes.

Condra uses silumin rotor cores to enhance K-Series motor-starting torque in the high-lift role, and offers optional variable speed control on the drives to enable precise load positioning even on lifts of 100 metres and more.

The modular design

of the K-Series allows rapid modification to specific high-lift application requirements (including lift speeds as quick as 1 metre per second – fifteen times faster than the 4m/min found in many standard applications), resulting in delivery times that are usually the shortest available.

Standard hoist speeds go up to 18m/min.

After delivery, the hoists for Tenova Bateman will be installed in the coal silos and at various maintenance stations along Kusile's conveyor route, where they will help with the installation, removal and maintenance of motors, gearboxes, rollers, pulleys and the conveyors themselves.

Candidates named for NextGen Development Programme

THE Cape Chamber of Commerce & Industry's International Women's Entrepreneurial Challenge (IWEC) NextGen Development Programme has announced that two young South African women entrepreneurs have been chosen as candidates for 2020.

They are Shakirah Dramat, a social entrepreneur and speaker from the Bo Kaap and the Managing Director of *THAT Network*, and Siphesande Oeke, the founding member of a non-profit organization called, *Be the sister I never had Foundation in Cape Town*.

"The Chamber is delighted to offer this great opportunity for these two outstanding young women to be personally mentored into joining the world economy", said Geoff Jacobs, President of the Chamber.

"The mission of IWEC is to develop a global business

network for successful women business owners," Jacobs said. "Already we have made an impact. We now intend to expand it to the next generation with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to engage with, and learn from, successful international entrepreneurs in a formal develop-

ment programme.

The NextGen Programme was conceptualised by the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the IWEC Foundation with the aim of empowering young women between the ages of 21 and 29, who meet specific criteria, to grow their entrepreneurial

skills and have a lasting, positive influence on the economy.

To qualify for the Programme, the applicants needed to satisfy the criteria and have the required attributes.

These were: to be between the ages of 21 and 29; have a proven entrepreneurial ambition; be committed

to the goals set by the programme; have a personal social responsibility project; be hard-working, open-minded, and willing to be guided.

"I welcome Shakirah and Siphesande as they begin their new NextGen venture, and wish them every success," said Jacobs.

B4SA calls on country to #SpreadCourage and support to all frontline health care workers

IN solidarity with Government and all frontline health care workers across the country, Business for South Africa (B4SA) is asking citizens to help spread a message of courage and support to all frontline workers, as they lead the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

B4SA has launched the 'Courage is Contagious' campaign, aimed at celebrating the critical role played by doctors, nurses, paramedics, community health care workers and pharmacists.

The campaign calls on all South Africans to share videos, pictures and messages of support across social media to encourage health care workers as the country heads deeper into the pandemic, and to attach the hashtag #SpreadCourage.

The campaign began with the launch of an advertisement on DSTV, SABC and eTV, which was made by editing together authentic mobile video clips and images supplied by healthcare workers and their

loved ones.

Dr. Tshogofatso Gopane, who is leading the 'Courage is Contagious' campaign on behalf of B4SA, says: "Our health care workers are profoundly important in our collective battle against the pandemic. As we move into the peak, and our hospitals fill up with patients, their daily task is becoming far tougher, more frightening, and more demanding. This is our time, as South Africa, to rally behind them, not only to encourage and support them but

also to let them know that the country deeply appreciates the risks they are taking on our behalf."

Besides showing our appreciation and support for frontline health care workers, B4SA is also calling on every South African, in every city, town and village, to heed our President and Minister of Health's call to help the health care system by taking ownership of our own health and practicing social distancing, washing our hands, and wearing masks.

"The only way to beat this virus is to be aware of how our actions and choices impact on both ourselves and the people around us. The time has come to be acutely aware of our collective responsibility towards each other. Let us beat this together, by taking heed of all the excellent advice shared by our Government and all the health experts," says Gopane.

Everyone working on this campaign has done so on a volunteer basis. "We would like to thank the team

at Joe Public United, and the editor, Jamie Taylor from House on Fire Films, for their time, energy and creative efforts in bringing this campaign to life in such a moving and thought-provoking way."

According to Gareth Leck, CEO of Joe Public United, the campaign offers ordinary South Africans the opportunity to help shape our future by celebrating the bravery of our frontline heroes, sharing their stories and telling everyone how their

actions inspire you. Because... Courage is contagious!

Says Leck: "As an organisation that is firmly committed to the growth of our people, clients and country, we are very excited to have had the opportunity to work on this campaign. South Africa is going through an incredibly tough time, and the people right in the middle of it are our frontline workers. It has been a great privilege to create a campaign that honours their incredible courage."



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The company – a level 3 BEEE contributor – is proud of its reputation, stock holding and service delivery to its customers. A comprehensive range of personal protective equipment is supplied to a diverse spectrum of industries including Mining, Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Agriculture, Construction, Fishing and Food industry.

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Pienaar Brothers recently completed a major revamp of its retail outlet at its Paarden Eiland premises -22 Auckland Street - and invites customers to view its comprehensive range of PPE approved gloves, workwear, safety footwear, eye protection and respirators – all in one modern and accessible retail outlet that provides for all industry.

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VW to convert its PE Plant into temporary Covid-19 medical facility

TO assist local and provincial government in providing much-needed care to Covid-19 patients in Nelson Mandela Bay, Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) has made its Port Elizabeth plant available as a temporary medical facility.

The plant in Neave (Korsten, Port Elizabeth), which is currently not in use, will be converted and used as an overflow medical facility.

Once fully operational, the facility could accommodate up to 4 000 beds for patients diagnosed with the Covid-19 virus. This would also include high-acuity patients who require oxygenation.

The planned conversion of the 66 000m² building is the result of collaboration formed between VWSA, the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Chamber, the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and the Eastern Cape Department of Health.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic



Team inspecting VW's Neave premises.

Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will provide funding of R5.2 million (R107 million) to support the conversion of the plant as well as the procurement of protective gear (PPE) for staff at regional tertiary hospitals, regional Primary Care Clinics and 49 Covid-19 test centres. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH will provide the performance framework to account for the public and private engagement and will foster the cooperation with the private sector to establish a

sustainable strategic alliance in Nelson Mandela Bay.

VWSA will contribute R28 million to the project. Additionally, VWSA will provide project management for the conversion of the facility and management of the procurement of the critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

The plant will be made available to government until March 2021, with the Department of Health and the NMBM responsible for the management and daily operations of the facility. The Business Chamber's role has

been to assist in facilitating the project and garnering further support from its membership base.

Following the signing of the agreement between the parties, the facility is to be completed in phases and handed over to government as the need for medical care in the Metro develops. The preparation of the first phase is currently ongoing and will take approximately six to eight weeks to be completed. This process will equip the medical facility to accommodate up to 1 484 patients.

This commitment is VWSA's latest move in the fight against the global Covid-19 crisis. The company has also been working on the manufacture of ventilators, respirators and masks in partnership with other local businesses, and has offered ongoing support to the Business Chamber and the Municipality in their coordinated efforts to bolster medical care in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro.

NTP radioisotopes doubles production

NEARLY six months after implementing its integrated Sustainable Return to Service Programme, state-owned nuclear technology company NTP Radioisotopes, a subsidiary of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa), has doubled the number of production runs of critical medical radioisotope Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99).

NTP is one of the world's key producers and suppliers of Mo-99, which has a half-life of 66 hours and cannot be stockpiled. Mo-99 is the parent isotope of Technetium-99m (Tc-99m) which is the most widely used medical radioisotope in the world, and is used in up to 20-million diagnostic nuclear medicine procedures each year.

In late May 2019, after extended shutdowns of its isotope processing facilities, NTP initiated a comprehensive Sustainable Return to Service Programme and resumed limited production of Mo-99. In October 2019, under the Return

to Service Programme, NTP received approval from the National Nuclear Regulator to increase the number of weekly Mo-99 production runs and was able to secure additional Mo-99 orders. Based on anticipated customer demand, it is expected that NTP will maintain these higher production levels for November and December.

"The Sustainable Return to Service Programme has provided a framework that has allowed a critical global nuclear supply facility to continue safely and sustainably producing high quality, high specific-activity and high-yield fission-based Mo-99," says NTP Group Managing Director Mrs Tina Eboka.

Mrs Eboka added that the success of the Sustainable Return to Service programme was also due to strengthened working relationships with NTP's shareholder, Necsa, and with the Nuclear Regulator.

"As key stakeholders in the nuclear technology industry in South Africa, we are all com-

mitted to NTP's future as a safe, sustainable, and profitable state-owned company. We are gratified by the success so far of the Sustainable Return to Service Programme, but it would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of all the stakeholders, nor without the efforts of NTP's own people," she said.

"Business transformation toward sustainability is a journey and not an event, and we still have a ways to go. But I'm proud of the efforts of so many to get us to this point" says NTP Chair Dr Namane Magau.

Dr Magau added that she hoped the Sustainable Return to Service Programme would allow NTP to gradually return to profitability after a two-year decline in revenues. Prior to the shutdowns NTP was a key revenue generator within the Necsa group, posting revenues of over R1,3-billion in 2016/2017 with profits-after-tax of R202,6-million.

Online education solution

CURRO Holdings, the country's largest independent education provider, is launching Curro Online – the group's first online school that offers a flexible yet structured education model, with classes taught by current Curro teachers.

"We've been developing our digital education offering for some time now, which is evident with our recently launched DigiEd model. As part of the design process, we decided to rethink how home-schooling and distance learning is currently being offered. We set out to understand the frustrations of parents, and the learner, and how best to serve them and came up with a different proposition," says Curro Online Business Manager, Jay Paul.

"One such concern is

that most home-schooling solutions do not prepare the learners for the technology-heavy 21st Century and hence we focused our curriculum on Maths, Science, Coding and Robotics. As Covid-19 continues to impact our country, we also identified a need among parents who are struggling to juggle home-schooling with their own work, or are looking for an online programme that will still give their children access to class-time with qualified teachers. Many parents are also concerned about sending their children back to school once schools reopen, especially those with immune-compromised family members living in the same household. Curro Online is a response to all these pressing needs," says

Paul.

Paul stresses that Curro Online is not a home-schooling model, where parents need to take on the responsibility of teaching and continuous supervision. It is a learn-from-home online model that is aligned with Curro's enhanced CAPS curriculum. The model's online material is created and taught by Curro teachers. There is a structured timetable in place for the learner that needs structure, as well as the option to be flexible for those that work well at their own pace. The timetable includes teachers initiating each class, and guiding learners through pre-set material on the online platform. The parent thus assumes a smaller supervisory role similar to the role they would

normally fill (e.g. checking that the learner has done their homework), and can rest assured that the academic process is taken care of by the Curro teachers.

"The teaching model combines flexible learning through pre-set learning material on our learning platform, with live interaction whereby learners can ask teachers for help and also receive detailed feedback on their progress," he says.

For parents that would like greater flexibility in their child's life, the Curro Online platform has an easy-to-follow curriculum with a variety of video material, recorded live lessons and other learning material. "Each learner can choose which material best suits their learning preference, and then complete a

variety of assignments and assessments for us to test their understanding," adds Paul.

Unlike other online schooling options that rely on a rotation schedule of tutors, Curro Online will be taught by a dedicated Curro teacher per subject, per grade, for the whole year. Having dedicated teachers for each learner allows them to actively track the progress of the learner and intervene pro-actively when needed. The school will be English-medium and initially offer grades 4 to 9, with new grades being phased in every year. Learners in Matric will write the IEB examinations.

For more information, visit www.curro.co.za or email info.online@curro.co.za.

Africa's Travel Indaba and Lilizela Awards cancelled

MINISTER of Tourism, Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane, has confirmed that the 2020 Africa's Travel Indaba and the Annual Lilizela Awards have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking during a tourism industry webinar recently Kubayi-Ngubane said: "When we initially postponed Africa's Travel Indaba 2020 we were hoping that we would be able to host the event during tourism month in September.

Currently it is looking very unlikely. Tourism activities and events can only

start once the country moves to Level One restrictions."

"With us having some time to focus on our properties and events, I do believe that next year's Indaba, Meetings Africa and Lilizela awards will be world class events showcasing the warmth of our industry as we rebuild the industry," concluded Kubayi-Ngubane.

The Minister added that the initial phase of the recovery will be driven by domestic tourism, followed by regional tourism. International tourism is likely to recover in 2021.



COVID-19 pre-screening is not just about providing masks, sanitisers and a clean workplace, it's about having a robust automated solution which promotes safety and social distancing in the workplace.

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HPE's \$2 bn finance package

HEWLETT Packard Enterprise announced that HPE Financial Services (HPEFS) is designating more than \$2 billion in financing specifically to help customers with their financial challenges stemming from the COVID-19 crisis, including cash-flow or liquidity issues. HPE Financial Services is also introducing initiatives including a Payment Relief Program to help customers acquire new technology and alleviate some of the financial strain as they navigate this

uncertain climate. The \$2 billion in HPEFS financing will be applied to help customers ensure business continuity and adapt in the current environment by addressing new technology financing needs, and convert their IT infrastructure into new sources of capital. Additionally, through the new Payment Relief Program, customers can acquire the technology they need today and pay only 1% of the total contract value each month for the first

eight months, deferring over 90% of the cost until 2021. This can be a safety buoy for many businesses to help navigate the financial impact of COVID-19 in the next few months. Beginning in 2021, each monthly payment would equal approximately 3.3% of total contract value. "This is a challenging time to lead a business. Today more than ever, IT leaders and CFOs play a central role in ensuring financial health while continuing operations", said Irv Rothman,

President and CEO of HPE Financial Services. "At HPE Financial Services, we are committed to helping businesses align their priorities from an IT economics perspective and provide them with concrete solutions so they can move forward." Many businesses today have an immediate need to preserve cash flow, defer or reduce expenses, and relieve capacity strains and delivery delays. "During this crisis, businesses need help regardless of size of

company or industry vertical. IDC recommends that organizations focus on two immediate needs: Conserving capital and utilizing flexible payment options like leasing or as-a-service to meet urgent capacity requirement with limited financial impact", said Susan Middleton, IDC Research Director, Flexible Consumption and Financing Strategies for IT Infrastructure. "By dedicating \$2 billion in financing and leveraging its broad portfolio of flexible payment

solutions, HPEFS will help business leaders navigate through the impact of COVID-19 on their markets." HPEFS is rolling out several programmes designed to address these priorities:

- Generating cash from existing assets
- Deferring or reducing expenses
- Matching payments to production
- Relieving capacity strain or delivery delays
- Offering short term rentals

"Almost every organization is looking for help right now. Now more than ever, capacity and remote worker access are of paramount importance", said Ashley Penner, CEO, Powerland. "By utilizing HPEFS' certified pre-owned tech, Powerland is able to quickly provide much-needed technology to our healthcare and education customers. The partnership with HPEFS is invaluable." For more information, visit: www.hpe.com

Surveys reveal the effects of COVID-19

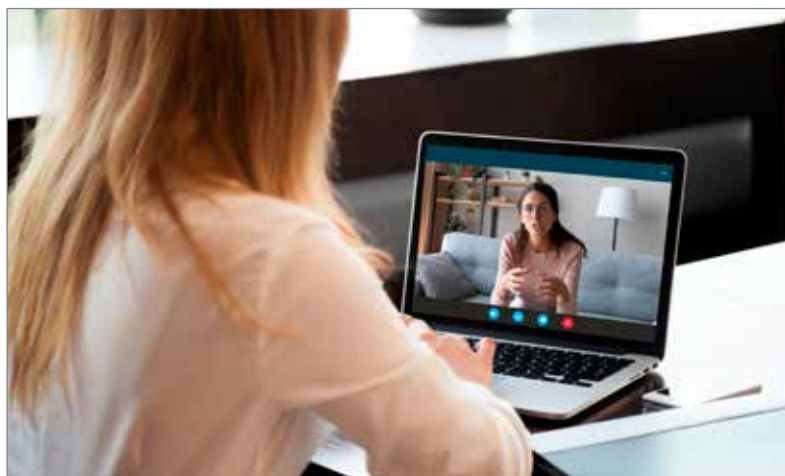
Should annual leave be used for lockdown?

How are companies reacting to payment of management and staff during this time?

21st Century is running a series of weekly surveys with businesses and employers to sound out how the market is reacting to coronavirus issues and other important topics as they arise from a people management perspective.

The surveys are providing an insightful glimpse into how employers are reacting to the pressures of the virus on the workplace. Both *Leave Treatment during COVID-19 Virus times* and *Pay Treatment during COVID-19 times* have proven enlightening.

The survey on leave for example asked whether the lockdown period should be used as annual leave, among other things. Half of the respondents felt that this time should



Women working from home.

indeed be deducted as annual leave, while the other half felt that the situation is no fault of the employee, who should still be permitted to take annual leave at their own discretion.

The issue of annual leave during this time is clearly a divisive topic, with a surprisingly even split evident among those who are for annual leave being used

and those against. Overall, however, organisations largely appear to be taking the socially responsible approach as opposed to a purely capitalist one and putting the wellbeing of employees first – at least for now. The dominant opinion is that those who operate in support of the greater good will fare better post COVID-19 when their

actions come to light. The survey also addressed remuneration approaches and tools of the trade that companies provide to employees who are working from home, pay practices for those who are unable to work from home, and the prevalence of employers who monitor and measure time management and productivity

during the lockdown period.

The survey on pay revealed that across all employee levels, the majority of participating organisations are providing full pay for the lockdown period - for employees who can work from home.

Added to this, while it is clear that there is, and will be, a negative impact due to COVID-19 and the lockdown, employers are still doing their utmost to avoid reducing salaries or not paying during this period.

Where freezes on salaries are being considered, it is at senior levels at this stage – with 40% of participants not having made a final decision on this as yet.

To take part in future surveys, visit the company's website: www.21century.co.za/covid-19-for-employers/

AVBOB donate R4.73-m to Solidarity

AVBOB staff and executives have heeded President Cyril Ramaphosa's call to contribute a portion of their salaries to the Solidarity Fund.

AVBOB's CEO Carl van der Riet says that the mutual society will make an upfront donation of R3 million to the fund. "AVBOB also committed to match any voluntary employee contributions, rand for rand, up to a value of a further R2 million. The support from our staff has been overwhelming and has led to them contributing R865 000 over the next three months. The response from employees recognises the fact that as a designated essential service, we are able to keep working and serving our communities throughout the pandemic."

AVBOB's total donation, together with its employee contribution

amounts to R4.73 million.

The President announced the establishment of the fund, which was set up to aid the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in late March.

Since then the fund has received contributions from across the board, including large corporations to smaller businesses and thousands of individuals including the President, government ministers and company executives that have committed to contribute fixed portions of their salaries.

Van der Riet said that it is important that every South African pull together and play their part in assisting where they can in combatting the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. "At this time AVBOB is committed to doing all we can to serve South Africa with empathy, care and dignity."

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CHANGE THE **GAME** PLAN

Recently while trying to purchase a small office heater for my wife, at a local large retailer. I experienced what can only be classified as appalling service.

It all started whilst waiting at a till for over ten minutes, with no acknowledgment of me standing there, whilst the teller and floor manager fretted with the previous customer who was still at the till. Having practiced enough patience, I promptly left the store. I noticed the floor manager walking in the centre and approached him and asked him, "do you know why I was not impressed by your service back there?"

His response floored me. "Yes you the f worded client!" And he promptly flipped me off with a hand gesture and stormed off. There was another person who saw what transpired and we just looked at each other. Plus it was clear who he was, as he was even wearing his branded jacket for everyone to see.

So I collected my thoughts and drafted up an email which I posted off to the service and info address on the website. Including a message to the CEO on LinkedIn and gave them 24 hours to respond. Fortunately the Divisional Store Operations Executive gave me a call the next day, apologising for the event, insisting that they will most certainly investigate the issue and take the appropriate and necessary action to make sure that this does not happen again. He did enquire about my purchase, which he then realised I had purchased elsewhere.

One can only hope that the necessary action has been taken, because no business can afford to dish out poor service. Especially when poor

service directly leads to loss of sales. Now my item was a small purchase, but you add up all the small purchases being lost in an already tight economy, across the many stores they have and you got big problems. So the **GAME PLAN** needs to change with new mindsets and rules.

Here are some **GAME CHANGING** nuggets.

Every interaction you have with your clients matters. Whether it is a last minute walk in or email. You need to stand up and take action, because complaints are all the result of a single bad customer experience.

Turn bad experiences into opportunities. Read an interesting method called **HEARD**. Hear, Empathise, Apologise, Resolve and Diagnose.

You are responsible for growth in your company. Research is showing that more than 86% of customers will pay more for better customer service or experiences.

Fast service is not always the best service. Research is showing us that speed is markedly less important than having tellers who can deliver service in a friendly and competent manner.

Making things easier for your customers is proving to be better than wowing them. By reducing customer effort and making life easier and hassle free for them.

You need to protect your customers, by not thinking about the value of a purchase or order, but think about the value of your customer being with you for life.

Lastly, and I believe it is the biggest one. If you want to treat your customers well, you need to treat your staff well. Research is showing that improving employee happiness doesn't just increase customer satisfaction, but it also nearly doubles the customer's plans to purchase again. Journal of Service Research USA.

This article was written by


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Packaging majors combine



MARKEM-IMAJE, part of the Dover Corporation, and Systech International have joined forces to reinforce their leadership in product traceability, regulatory compliance and brand protection.

Locally represented by Pyrotec Pack-Mark, Markem-Imaje – a global supplier of product identification and traceability solutions – has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Sys-Tech Solutions International

(Systech), a leading provider of software and solutions for product traceability, regulatory compliance and brand protection. With the conclusion of the transaction, Systech will become part of Dover's Markem-Imaje business unit and will offer brand protection, traceability and automation solutions under the Systech brand to customers worldwide.

Headquartered in New Jersey, USA, Systech offers an inte-

grated Brand Protection Suite™ for compliance and brand protection applications, including serialisation, traceability, anti-counterfeiting and anti-diversion solutions, which will help customers meet evolving product traceability regulations and growing consumer demand for product safety, security and authenticity. Systech's proprietary and innovative e-Fingerprint® technology is a digital

non-additive product authentication solution that offers superior levels of brand protection with lower complexity and cost than other analog-based brand protection solutions.

Demand for brand protection and supply chain visibility solutions is growing rapidly as issues, such as product counterfeiting and diversion, cost brand owners billions of dollars each year. Additionally, end consumers increasingly demand assurances of safety, security and authenticity from brands they trust.

The acquisition of Systech will enable Markem-Imaje to cater to these market demands by enhancing Markem-Imaje's portfolio of product identification and traceability solutions with complementary digital brand protection offerings.

Systech's and Markem-Imaje's customers will benefit as the focused and scaled-up integrated

software and service organisation will provide innovative world-class brand protection and compliance solutions to global customers while leading the digital transformation of the brand protection market.

'Systech has a successful 35-year history of protecting pharmaceutical brands and products globally,' says Vincent Vanderpoel, president and CEO of Markem-Imaje. 'We are excited to combine Systech's solutions with Markem-Imaje's products, services and global reach to become a leader in the brand protection market.'

Ara Ohanian, CEO of Systech adds: 'The combination of product serialisation, traceability, digital authentication and connectivity that Systech provides is unmatched in the market. Joining Markem-Imaje will enhance R&D, innovation and global scale to better serve Systech's and Markem-Imaje's customers worldwide.'

Poop protection gets the bird

WHILE getting struck by bird poop may be a sign of good luck in many countries, bird poop landing on your car can have more serious consequences, for your paintwork. Fortunately, Ford vehicles are tested for just this eventuality, with the help of artificial bird poop.

The laboratory-developed synthetic droppings are so realistic that they can accurately reflect the various diets and subsequent different acidity of droppings, of most of the birdlife in Europe. Applied to test panels as a spray, sample pieces are aged at 40° C, 50° C and 60° C in an oven to replicate customer use in extreme heats, pushing the paint corrosion protection to its limits.

The "bird poop test" is just one of the ordeals paint samples are put through. Plant technicians spray phosphoric acid mixed with soap detergent, and synthetic pollen on panels before aging them in ovens at 60° C and 80° C for 30 minutes. The test guards against airborne particulates such as pollen and sticky tree sap.

Spring cleaning

Spring and summer can be particularly dangerous for paint as not only are there often

more birds about, but paint can also soften and expand under intense sunlight. When it cools it contracts and any grime, including bird droppings, attaches itself to the surface. If left on the vehicle, it can leave a permanent impression that requires specialist treatment to remove.

By fine-tuning the pigments, resins and additives that go into making a car's shiny protective paintwork, specialists can ensure the coating Ford applies to its vehicles has the optimum make-up to resist the impact of these types of pollutants, no matter what the weather.

The science of bird poop

Bird poop is often white and black, but it's not all poop. The white part is uric acid and is the bird equivalent to urine, formed in the urinary tract. Poop is made in the digestive system and while both can be secreted at the same time, it happens with such speed, that the two don't have time to mix.

Additional Ford paint tests

Other tests for paint samples include being bombarded non-stop with ultraviolet light for up to 6,000 hours



Birds welcome, poop not.

(250 days) in a light lab, simulating five years in the brightest place on earth, to evaluate outdoor weathering; getting frozen in sub-zero temperatures; being exposed to harsh winter road grime in a high humidity salt chamber and subjection to simulated fuel staining from vehicle service station over-fuelling.

How to clean bird poop from your car

Leaving bird poop on any car is never a good idea. The advice for

any car owner is simply to regularly wash your vehicle with a sponge and lukewarm water containing neutral pH shampoo, and gently remove harmful looking substances from

the paintwork immediately. Waxing painted surfaces once or twice a year helps ensure new paint finishes can better resist harshest attacks, while staying shiny for longer.

Other tests for paint samples include being bombarded non-stop with ultraviolet light for up to 6,000 hours (250 days) in a light lab.

Prepaid meters – a solution for non-payment

MANAGING utilities will be one of the top priorities of governments around the world for the next decade. South Africans are now living in a country where the provision of water and electricity is far from predictable and we must expect harsher regulations to curb wastage.



For landlords – especially those with units in multi-tenant complexes and flats – understanding their obligations in an increasingly punitive environment is more important than ever.

“South African lawmakers are tackling both the culture of non-payment, as well as the need to manage the usage of electricity and water, by calling for the implementation of prepaid meters,” Citiq Prepaid managing director, Michael Franze explains.

“While many know the benefits of electricity prepaid sub-metering, managing water supply with these systems is still fairly new. However, both local and national governments will be using their regulatory stick to ensure property owners and managers are toeing the line and, if not, they can quickly find themselves facing some stiff fines.”

Cape Town paved the way for future lawmakers, enacting new bylaws while dealing with the threat of Day Zero in 2018. The new laws did not replace the restrictions, but they did follow the regulatory trend of placing the onus on the landlord for more hands-on management.

For the first time, landlords of units in multi-tenant complexes and flats were responsible for keep-

ing record of tenants’ water consumption and for reporting any contraventions to the municipality.

Fortunately, the bylaws also make provision for the installation of prepaid sub-meters which allow the landlord to more accurately measure tenants’ consumption.

“Using the existing post-paid measurement system will only deliver data to the landlord well after any transgressions or anomalies take place, leaving them at the mercy of their local administrators. Whether it was their tenant illegally filling a swimming pool, or a leaking pipe, landlords need to be on top of any usage patterns that are out of the ordinary and act on them fast,” says Franze.

Pay-as-you-go utilities to tackle non-payment

Prepaid sub-meters have also been sanctioned by the national government as a means to curb the culture of non-payment.

The inter-ministerial task team, (IMTT) established in 2017 put forward recommendations in November to pilot prepaid water meters in four municipalities in an effort to curb municipal non-payment.

“While the issue of outstanding debt owed to national govern-

ment is still a bone of contention, using prepaid sub-metering as a means to move forward is the most fair and transparent method available. Prepaid sub-meters allow both the property owner and the tenant to easily see exactly what has been used – cutting down on disputes, late payment and non-payment,” Franze comments.

Prepaid sub-meters allow water to be distributed from the municipality to each unit, tracking individual household consumption fairly and transparently.

The landlord must, however, ensure the water sub-meter is installed by an accredited plumber, and that the meter installation complies with all applicable legislation, regulations and by-laws.

“When South Africa hit stage 6 load shedding in December 2019 government leaders woke up to the fact that not only was the electricity grid under imminent threat, but that at these levels they would not be able to sustainably supply water to citizens either. As we move forward, property owners can expect a much more punitive regulatory regime when it comes to utility consumption. The only way for landlords to mitigate their risk will be through the use of prepaid meters,” Franze concludes.

Putty business turns 72 years

THE fact that Pratley celebrates its 72nd anniversary this year is largely due to it being a successful family-owned and managed business, according to CEO **Kim Pratley**.

“This has had a lot to do with our success, due to the fact that we have been able to retain so much knowledge and experience with the company.” It also forms the basis for the company’s ethos, which had a strong R&D focus since its inception, thereby inculcating innovation and technical excellence and quality as key values.

Commenting on the values that the original founder established as the cornerstone of the company, Kim explains that **George ‘Monty’ Pratley** had a ‘can do’ attitude that did not tolerate ‘no’ as an acceptable answer to any problem. This was critical for the success of the business from a product point of view. “If we make a product, we know it will work. We have abso-

lutely no doubt about that.” Indeed, Kim has a plaque on his office wall that reads: ‘Impossible is what nobody can do until somebody does it’.

As to tips for success, Kim’s advice is simple: Do not make decisions based on anything other than objectivity. This is especially critical in a family business, where emotions play a strong role. “One tends to be emotional about the way things are done because you are so close to the business, but you have to guard against that.”

Another tip for success is quite an unexpected one: “Do take calculated risks,” Kim urges. “Here I am referring to risks that, if they do not pan out, will not necessarily bring about the demise of the company. Being completely risk-averse will impact on your decision-making when it comes to R&D in particular, which is both costly and risky. Yes, it is entirely possible that some avenues will be blind



Sons Charles and Andrew with their father Kim Pratley.

alleys. On the other hand, you can stand to reap rich rewards.”

Part of that legacy has been a penchant for developing world-class products, such as Pratley Putty. This product not only put Pratley on the map, but in outer space, as it was used by NASA as an adhesive on the Ranger Moon Module Project in 1967. Pratley Putty has since become a household name, used to repair and secure everything from swimming pools to the hulls of sunken ships.

“Many Pratley products have been ahead

of the curve at the time they were developed. For example, one of the minerals we process which is called Zeolite has found a modern niche as a pollution clean-up and water filtration material, while another mineral called Perlite has thermally-insulating properties that make it ideal as an energy-saving building material. “This is very much in line with the modern trend towards increased environmental stewardship, and awareness of our responsibility to future generations,” Kim stresses.

Personnel disinfection booth claims Covid-19 decontamination

LOCALLY manufactured by Dock Leveller Supplies CC is a walk-through enclosure tunnel which is claimed to disinfect and decontaminate individuals by short exposure to a cloud of internationally approved disinfectant which may be able to combat the Covid-19 virus.

The DLS disinfection/sanitising booth dispenses a measured amount of vaporised disinfectant chemical to form an invisible dry cloud which say

the manufacturers, is harmless to humans but is claimed to kill 99.999% of viruses.

Each dose of the disinfectant, Vidal Oxide, is approximately 3,3ml (5 litres will disinfect approximately 1 500 people). The product is approved for use against SARS-Covid2, the corona virus that causes Covid-19 by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Additional features

- Invisible dry cloud

means no damp or wet chemical is dispensed on to the person.

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square tube

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No ducking and diving – stick to the rules of insolvency

THE Covid crisis has had an overwhelming impact on local business with corporate South Africa struggling to keep its head above water and the wolves at bay. With no clear indication as to how the lockdown process will further impact businesses in the coming months, an understanding of the law of insolvency can provide much clarity on the available options for companies that find themselves in financial difficulties, giving them advice on how to dispose of assets legally.

A business facing insolvency may be tempted to dispose of or conceal assets. “In a word – don’t!” advises Katharine Timoney, associate at Gillan & Veldhuizen. If you or your business is in financial

difficulty, it is important to do the right thing by your creditors so as to avoid committing any offences such as attempting to dispose of or conceal assets, giving undue preference to certain creditors, colluding with creditors or disposing of assets prior to sequestration or liquidation. “While you may think it will give you short term relief, the consequences are simply not worth it,” says Timoney.

The Insolvency Act

The Insolvency Act 24 of 1936 (“Insolvency Act”) was developed to create a consolidated set of rules for how an insolvent’s assets are dealt with and is aimed at ensuring that the interests of all parties are protected and that all



creditors are treated fairly. The Companies Act and the Close Corporations Act incorporate the provisions of the Insolvency Act when dealing with corporate insolvency and these Acts go to some lengths to ensure that insolvent individuals and companies do not try to cir-

cumvent the system in order to get money to one creditor rather than another.

Insolvency guidelines

Timoney says that in order to ensure that all creditors are treated fairly, the Insolvency Act states that if you are

in financial difficulty, there are certain things you should avoid doing, such as giving away assets or choosing which creditors you would prefer to pay.

There are several categories of actions by an insolvent which can have the effect of disadvantaging creditors.

These are:

- Dispositions without value – where the insolvent gives away an asset or money without receiving anything of value in exchange and whilst their liabilities exceed their assets;
- Voidable dispositions - where an insolvent disposes of any property in his/her estate less than 6 months before their sequestration, which has the effect of preferring one of their creditors over another;
- Undue preference – where the intention or goal of paying money or giving assets to one creditor is to the disadvantage of other creditors; or

- Collusive dealings before sequestration - where a debtor who, in collusion with another person, disposes of property belonging to him in a manner which has the ultimate result of disadvantaging his creditors or preferring one of his creditors above another.

“The actions highlighted above are complex and if you find yourself in financial difficulties personally or in business it is wise to take advice from a professional rather than from your friends over your weekly zoom call,” cautions Timoney. This can avoid potentially disastrous consequences for everyone involved, and a lot of unpleasantness down the line.

NGOs reject proposed new gas law, demanding instead a just and equitable transition to clean energy sources

THE Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), GroundWork and Earthlife Africa have slammed the proposed Upstream Petroleum Resources Development Bill, published for comment by Minerals and Energy Minister Mantashe in late December 2019.

By mandating that oil and gas production “must” contribute to the nation’s social and economic development, the government is locking in fossil fuel production for decades to come, when it should urgently be tackling the climate crisis. This means that protecting human health and the environment will once again taken a back seat to unsustainable development.

The NGOs argue that the Bill should not proceed in its current form, if at all. Any new legislation governing petroleum resources extraction must give effect to a just transition away from fossil fuels to clean renewable energy sources, not “accelerate” their production, as the Bill states in its preamble.

- With this Bill, the Minister is trying to accelerate and require oil and gas production when the entire world, including South Africa, urgently needs to do the opposite. The South African government itself has concluded that South Africa, and the African continent as a whole, is extremely

vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Temperatures in the region are increasing at twice the rate of the global average. The Constitutional obligation on the state to protect South Africans against the impacts of climate change require the state to cease facilitating and promoting new investment in fossil fuels such as gas infrastructure.

- The Bill is a replication of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (MPRDA) but fails to remedy the many shortcomings of the MPRDA, which are simply recreated in the Bill. For example, just like in the MPRDA, the Bill fails to give the Minister discretion to award permits and rights contemplated under the Bill: if certain limited criteria are met, the Minister is obliged to grant these permits and rights. At the same time, crucial objectives of the MPRDA have been removed, including the State’s obligation to protect the environment, the need for transformation, and community development imperatives.
- Although the Bill makes provision for heavy criminal fines (including significant daily

fines for ongoing violations; fines based on percentage of turnover), the administrative fines are weak. Oil and gas facilities are both extremely capital intensive and pose enormous risk to the environment – consider the environmental devastation caused by the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Serious administrative penalties that match the magnitude of this risk are crucial, because our criminal justice system has a poor track record of prosecuting and convicting companies for environmental crimes.

- The Bill should be far more specific about the types of regulations that are required for the Bill, including the need for operators to disclosing fracking components; methane leak detection and repairs; caps on venting or flaring of natural gas; and use of best available technology.
- Environmentally sensitive or protected areas should explicitly be included on the list of areas where exploration and production is restricted. The Minister should also require investigation of no-go areas because of potential harm to the environment and human rights.
- It is worth noting that there appears to be no regard given in the publication of this Bill to the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Shale Gas Development in South Africa conducted by CSIR, SANBI and the Council for Geoscience for a big group of government departments and agencies, including the DMRE, between 2015 and 2017: In particular, the cumulative risks identified in the Scientific Assessment of the Opportunities and Risks – A Summary for Policy Makers, 2nd Edition, published in 2017.
- The Bill creates powers and obligations for the Minister that intrudes into the sphere of environmental regulation, thereby undermining cooperative governance by encroaching into the territory and expertise of the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries under the so-called One Environmental System.
- The Bill fails to make adequate provision for consultation with parties interested in and affected by the activities contem-

plated by the Bill, or for access to information by those parties, and therefore fails to give effect to the Constitutional rights to fair administrative action and access to information.

The CER has asked the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) to clarify its process for consultation on the Bill. When the COVID-19 lockdown commenced in late March 2020, the DMRE initially cancelled its scheduled consultations on the draft Bill. However, it now appears to be undertaking engagements that can be conducted remotely using electronic platforms. However, the DMRE has not indicated its timeframe for consultations on the draft Bill, nor its schedule for consultations with other stakeholders, including community organisations and communities that would be impacted by petroleum extraction activities.

The NGOs continue to call for the Minister to withdraw the Bill, as it is inappropriately and irrationally conceived in an era of climate emergency, and instead to invest resources in the development of policy, capacity and regulation aimed at reducing South Africa’s dependence on fossil fuels and enabling a just and equitable transition to clean energy sources that benefits all.

VWSA’s work offer

FOR the second consecutive year, Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) is supporting the national Youth Employment Service (YES) programme by offering work opportunities to 520 unemployed youth.

The group, which began its 12-month employment period recently, consists of 141 candidates placed at VWSA, another 194 working for the VWSA dealership network and 185 candidates being taken in by SME host partners.

Of the 141 that will work for VWSA

directly, 123 will be placed at the plant in Uitenhage, 10 candidates at the National Sales Organisation (NSO) in Sandton and another 8 candidates will join the Group Parts Warehouse facility in Centurion.

This is the second year that VWSA is supporting the YES programme, launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa to enable young people without formal qualifications to gain work experience with the aim of improving their chances at long-term quality employment.

Latest regs fall short

THE newly-released 2020 version of SANS 10400-T, ‘The application of the National Building Regulations - Fire Protection’, still does not adequately address all of the issues related to fire-safety designs.

This caution comes from ASP Fire CEO Michael van Niekerk, who notes that informal settlements and wildland urban fire interfaces, to mention a few, are not addressed. The acute lack of water and effective options to deal with it are also not included, albeit in commentary form.

“Our latest sprinkler code is in draft format, and is currently in circulation for comment. However, that is also not, to the best of my knowledge, a comprehensive standard like the American NFPA 13 standard for sprinklers,”

van Niekerk points out. Meanwhile, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has collaborated with a coalition of over 70 international organisations to develop a new fire safety global standard. The project aims to bring reassurance to people across the world that the buildings and infrastructure they use follows the best worldwide expertise on fire safety, RICS reported in a statement.

“I believe that international collaboration makes perfect sense, because unlike politics or cultural differences, fire burns everywhere in pretty much the same manner. The development of a standard that includes knowledge, experience and skills from across the globe can only be of benefit to all,” van Niekerk adds.

allmech Pty. Ltd

WATER TREATMENT EQUIPMENT AND CHEMICAL SUPPLIERS

Boiler division

Allmech manufactures electrode, element, gas-fired and oil-fired boiler plants to the required design codes, which are accepted and certified by professional engineers and AIA-appointed inspectors. Allmech's gas and oil-fired boilers range from 0.5 tons to 5 tons.

All boilers are assembled and tested in Allmech's workshops. The company's range includes 16 electrode steam boiler models and five electrode hot water boiler models, all of which operate at 1 000kPa. The electrode boilers are able to supply steam from as little as 64kg/hr and our largest size reaches up to 4 000kg/hr. Higher pressure boilers are also available on request.

Allmech also supplies smaller electric element steam boilers, ranging from 19kg/hr (12-kw) to 76kg/hr (48-kw). Hot water boilers, together with calorifiers or storage vessels, are available for customers who only require hot water.

Water treatment division

The Allmech Water Treatment Division services customers with tailored treatment programmes for all makes of open and closed heating and cooling systems. Chemicals are blended by highly-qualified staff under strict quality control supervision and according to industry-recognised formulations.

Allmech has SABS approval on selected blends of chemicals, which are SANS 1827 Food Grade Boiler Chemicals.

The treatment programmes, equipment and services supplied by Allmech are designed to ensure increased plant efficiency and improve cost effectiveness, protection of expensive plant equipment, and return on investment.

The water treatment range caters primarily for the treatment of water associated with heating and cooling systems, including:

- Raw water treatment systems
- Boiler feed water treatment systems
- Cooling tower water treatment systems
- Wastewater treatment systems

Runxin control valves

Allmech is the sole agent for Runxin water treatment system valves in the South Africa, supplying a full range of manual and automatic filter and softener valves. The valves are reliable, easily available, user-friendly and cost effective and have proven to be more chemical resistant and robust than other brands on the market. Allmech is fully equipped to test, service and repair these valves locally.

Runxin valves are produced by Wenzhou Runxin Manufacturing Machine Co, a global company founded in 2000, based in China, which distributes its products into 117 countries around the world. Allmech supplies Runxin valves with flow rates ranging from 4 500 l/hr, such as the F56A1 manual filter valve and the F63B/C automatic filters, through to 30 000 l/hr F112A softener and F112B filter valves.

One-stop shop

The Allmech team is extremely knowledgeable and has extensive experience in all types of boiler plant and steam supply systems, and associated water treatment equipment and chemical programmes to suit customers' needs for all makes of boilers and cooling towers.

For more information, visit www.allmech.co.za



Allmech – sole authorised agent for Runxin valves in South Africa

Johannesburg, 10 September 2019: Allmech, leading South African manufacturer of boilers and supplier of water treatment components, is the sole official agent for Runxin water treatment system valves in the country.

Lionel Maasdorp, General Manager at Allmech, says the company has been South Africa's only authorised agent for Runxin for 11 years. "The valves are produced by Wenzhou Runxin Manufacturing Machine Co, a global company founded in 2000, based in China, which distributes its products into 117 countries around the world," he says. "We partner with Runxin because we've found their valves to be reliable, easily available and user-friendly. They are also easy to service and have proven to be more chemical resistant and robust than other brands on the market. Furthermore, they are a cost-effective option."

Maasdorp says Runxin has collected various valve models that have been in service for 10 years or more, which are on display at their manufacturing plant. Similarly, Allmech has a softener valve displayed that was in use for a full 10 years without a single service, and still functioning perfectly.

Allmech, which is headquartered in Johannesburg and has an office in Pinetown (KwaZulu-Natal) and distributors in the Western Cape and Free State, supplies Runxin control valves to both domestic and industrial water treatment clientele throughout the country, as well as in neighbouring states. Allmech stocks Runxin manual and automatic valves with a range of flow rates, as well as the Runxin ceramic ball range. Its water treatment division also supplies chemicals, reverse osmosis and demineralisation plants, softeners and filters.

"We have a test bench and host training sessions regularly, and pride ourselves in our technical support and spares supply capabilities," says Maasdorp. "We really work hard to provide an end-to-end solution for our water treatment clients, whether they are business owners, engineers or downstream distributors. They know they can come to us for expertise on which valve to use for a specific application, for repairs and maintenance, and for other technical input."

Allmech supplies Runxin valves with flow rates ranging from 4 500 l/hr, such as the F56A1 manual filter valve and the F63B/C automatic filters, right through to 30 000 l/hr F112A softener and F112B filter valves.

Paul Van Der Walt, sales and procurement manager of East Midlands Water Company SA, a leading supplier of water filtration products, says that the range of Runxin valves supplied by Allmech are a perfect fit for their application in whole house water filtering systems. "The valves perform as required, they are of good quality and the support and technical advice from Allmech is much appreciated. Allmech has always provided excellent service to us and in receiving great service, our customers also receive great service."

ABOUT ALLMECH

Allmech was founded in 1995 and has grown over two decades to become one of South Africa's leading boiler manufacturers and suppliers to the water treatment industry. Allmech offers a comprehensive range of electrical, gas and oil-fired boilers with water treatment to suit.

With a customer base stretching from its head office in Benoni, Johannesburg, throughout Southern Africa and beyond, Allmech has become recognised as an experience end-to-end provider for clients requiring boiler plant, steam supply of all types, cooling towers, water treatment equipment and associated chemical programmes. Aside from sales to direct and distributor clients, the company's services include technical support, repairs and maintenance, and spares sales.

Allmech is also the only authorised South African agent for Runxin valves, produced by the global Wenzhou Runxin Manufacturing Machine Co., headquartered in China.

For more information, visit www.allmech.co.za



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Export challenges for fishing companies

LOCAL fishing companies with sizeable export businesses could face some choppy waters in their key markets during the months ahead as the world battles to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest results from Premier Fishing & Brands (PremFish), which has sizeable export exposure via its squid, lobster and farmed abalone operations, strongly suggest that international seafood trading could be tricky in the months ahead.

In the six months to end February – a period which is traditionally the slower half – PremFish saw revenue decreasing markedly to R215 million (from R287 million) during the same period last year. Gross profit was down even more sharply at R80 million (previously R137 million), and profit after tax more than halved to R20 million.

PremFish said it had to cope with a num-

ber of extraordinary factors – most notably the socio-political unrest in the Far East and the Covid-19 outbreak. CEO Rushaan Isaacs said the demand for Premier's branded products remained strong but Covid-19 had severely impacted the export market of West Coast Rock Lobster (WCRL) and abalone in the Far East, squid in the Italian and Spanish export markets and the export of South Coast Rock Lobster (SCRL) to the USA.

She said PremFish was concerned about the impact that these challenges were having on our business. "However, the Group is in a financially stable position with no debt, is cash positive and we have put strategies in place to mitigate some of the losses the group has suffered because of the pandemic."

The decline in the squid segment – which is now a large profit centre of PremFish – was arguably



the biggest setback.

Chief financial officer Brent Robertson explained that the squid division was hampered by low catch rates industry wide – which led to decline in revenue and in turn profitability. "This division has the tendency to go through seasonal trends, but the potential and outlook in this division remains a positive one."

It would be a great pity for local hake specialist Sea Harvest

if Covid-19 disrupts international markets for a prolonged period.

In recently released 2019 financial results Sea Harvest reported that export revenue from the South African fishing operations increased 26% and that the export mix of revenue increased to 53% (52% in 2018). Export revenue – with the recently acquired Viking fishing operations fully onboard – came in at more than R1.4 billion.

But things are tricky. Sea Harvest's annual report cited supply side interruptions as the biggest issue.

Although Sea Harvest is classified as an "essential service" provider in the Covid-19 trading environment, the company stressed its most important "asset" in ensuring continued operating were the employees.

CEO Felix Rathebe cautioned: "Unfortunately, when people start getting sick from the virus – and judging by the ease of spread of the virus I believe this is ultimately inevitable – we would experience factory closures, vessels out of operation and a decline in output and productivity."

He said this would affect Sea Harvest's revenue line and lead to an increase in costs. "We have also seen backlogs in ports, both in Cape Town and also in all the markets we export to. This will increase as more people are infected, which will affect road and air freight, vessel maintenance in slipways, supplies such as packaging and others."

"It is too early to evaluate the extent of this, but this to me is a bigger concern than the demand-side effects which can, to an extent, be mitigated."

Caution is understandable in these circumstances, and it is interesting to note PremFish has opted to put parts of the expansion of its abalone farm on hold during the lockdown period.

PremFish still expects to increase the production capacity from 120 tons to around 300 to 350 tons per annum of cultivated abalone once the expansion is completed.

The development is slightly disappointing as PremFish had made encouraging progress at the abalone farm – managing

to already increase its export market production by 58% from 120 tons to 190 tons.

It will be interesting to see if PremFish's more cautious stance on abalone expansion influences other players in that segment – including Sea Harvest (which owns a 50% stake in Viking Aquaculture), Abagold and I&J (which has a well-established abalone farm at Danger Point).

Sea Harvest's bold move into aquaculture has been a tad disappointing – although it is still early days.

Sea Harvest said aquaculture performance for the year was negatively impacted by lower abalone sales caused by an extended red tide event at the beginning of the year.

Although no animals were lost, this hampered export sales. There were also disruptions to the abalone market caused by political unrest in Hong Kong and China.

Sea Harvest also reported increased competition in the smaller size category from other abalone-producing nations.

However, Rathebe was still upbeat. "Positively, both abalone farms are reaching their design capacity in terms of biomass. These two abalone farms will produce 500 tonnes of abalone at capacity, mostly sold live to Hong Kong and China."

Sea Harvest disclosed that its aquaculture segment recorded an operating loss for the 2019 financial year of R30 million. This meant the aquaculture business did not achieve the earn-out targets for the year.

In terms of improving performance in the

new year, Rathebe said the expansion of the Kleinzee abalone farm in the Northern Cape had been accelerated to provide additional tank capacity for the increased number of abalone to mitigate the negative impact on growth rates.

He added that Sea Harvest was also diversifying the market concentration risk away from Hong Kong by identifying alternative markets for South African abalone. "We are increasing the production of canned abalone and investigating the production of other product formats, including frozen and dried, to appeal to an increased customer base." Hopefully a prolonged Covid-19 impasse does not negate these plans.

AVI, the holding company for I&J, already warned in March that there was "considerable uncertainty" as to how long the Corona virus and Hong Kong protests would disrupt abalone demand. But the company warned "it is very likely that the contribution from this business will be lower than last year."

If there is extended pressure on the abalone market for the medium term, this could well play into the hands of SA's biggest fishing company Oceana. Oceana – which has a dominant slice of the canned fish market in SA – has already openly stated its desire to play in the aquaculture segment. A well priced foray into an established abalone farming operation would make perfect sense in terms of Oceana diversifying away from the regulated local fishing sector.

Waves of change

There have been some interesting changes at executive level at some of Cape Town's biggest fishing companies in recent months.

The big surprise was that John Paul de Freitas, the chief financial officer of Sea Harvest, unexpectedly stepped down after six years of solid service.

No additional detail was provided – save that De Freitas had stepped down to pursue "personal interests".

De Freitas will be replaced by Muhammad Brey, who previously served as chief investment officer at Sea Harvest.

Premier Fishing & Brands also saw a surprise departure

in February when CEO Samir Saban resigned for...also "personal reasons".

Saban was replaced by company stalwart Rushaan Isaacs, who has served as the sales and marketing director for PremFish.

The third executive change came at the end of January when Oceana announced that chief financial officer Elton Bosch resigned to pursue other business interests after serving less than a year in that position.

So far Oceana has not named a successor for Bosch with company stalwart Trevor Giles stepping into the role on an interim basis.

Rhodes can do it

GROOT-DRAKENSTEIN-based Rhodes Fruit Group (RFG) last month quickly reopened its fruit can-

ning factory in Tulbagh – a great relief to the company considering strong demand for its brands during the

Covid-19 crisis.

It was widely reported that this key production facility was shut for four days

for deep cleaning and decontamination after nine employees tested positive for Covid-19.

The closure was ordered by the Department of Employment and Labour (DOL) in early May.

RFG said operations at the factory were initially resumed on a phased basis to protect employees and provide a safe working environment.

RFG CEO Bruce Henderson noted that while the closure had been disruptive to the canning process and there was a national imperative to supply

food products during lockdown, the group would not compromise the safety of its employees.

RFG is one of the largest employers in the Witzenberg region – which has been identified as a Covid-19 hotspot.

RFG owns the best-selling Rhodes canned fruit and vegetable range – as well as other brands like Bull Brand, Magpie, Squish, Bisto, Hinds and Pakko.

RFG recently reported increasing turnover by 10% to

R2.9 billion in the six months to end March 2020.

The group disclosed that sales for the month of March were 22% higher as households stocked up on essential foods ahead of the national lockdown.

Henderson pointed out that RFG had seen "sustained higher demand" for canned goods throughout the first seven weeks of lockdown.

With sales of canned fruit, vegetables and meat proving particularly strong, Henderson said production had been increased

to meet the demand. Unfortunately for RFG, government restrictions on the sale of hot meals (which were implemented more than three weeks into lockdown) meant a marked slowdown in the sale of pies.

In terms of handling further Covid-19 complications, Henderson said the group had effective protocols and experienced operational management teams to reduce the risk of factory closures.

This would ensure rapid cleaning and reopening in the event of infections.



SS surface finish and cleaning protocols for operational hygiene

Choice of stainless steel finish and cleaning of surfaces is crucial to protect against bacteria and viruses

STAINLESS steel offers superb hygienic and anti-corrosion properties for food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries mainly because of its ability to repair its protective chrome oxide surface when exposed to oxygen.

With over 500 grades and finishes to choose from, there is a solution for every product and process, provided you have the right surface finish to start with and the correct cleaning protocols during operation.

Most engineers and fabricators working with stainless steel have some knowledge of different grades and their properties, but finishes - which are equally important for hygiene and corrosion resistance, - are not quite as well known.

Surface finish

Surface finish of equipment plays a vital role in the production of foodstuffs

- The smoother the surface, the more even the protective chrome oxide surface.
 - A smooth surface reduces the propensity for solids to attach to the surface. Solids on the surface exclude oxygen thus limiting the steel's ability to re-passivate.
 - Bacteria and viruses find rough areas where they are protect from factors such as cleaning agents.
- One measure of the texture of the surface is roughness, most commonly expressed as Ra.

Calculations involving several factors are required to establish the suitable surface finish for each application. This is necessary for almost all processes, particularly food and beverage.

Examples of stainless steel surface finishes

No 1 Hot rolled annealed, pickled. This is a dull, slightly rough surface.

2D Cold rolled, annealed and pickled. Smoother than a No1 finish, with a dull appearance.

2B Cold rolled, heat treated, pickled skin passed. A shinier appearance.

BA Bright annealed. This finish resembles chrome plating.

In addition, there are **Bead blasted** and **Electro-polished** finishes.



Heinrich Vollgraaff, Sales Manager at NDE Cape in Montague Gardens.

Surface Roughness – Some general comments

A few important points:

- A stainless steel sheet with a specific Ra value can differ in looks and service
- Finishes can and do vary from mill to mill.
- Incorrect surface treatment can result in irreversible damage. For example, there is no repair procedure if pickling acid is spilled onto a vessel manufactured from a 2B sheet or coil.
- Scratches on the surface of a tank or vessel can and

should be blended out but the affected area will have a different appearance

Cleaning protocols

Cleaning of equipment to minimise contamination

One of the big advantages with stainless steel is its cleanability. The cleaning products used and the frequency of cleaning are both important.

Various chemicals will kill off viruses and bacteria such as Listeria or Covid-19, but the cleaning chemical used should not corrode stainless steel and also not be dangerous to health. For instance, sodium hypochlorite is an effective cleaning agent, but not recommended as it can cause pitting on stainless steel.

The choice of surface finish is just one of the issues dealt with by our Technical Team at NDE Stainless Steel where it offers in-house technical advice and support to customers in many industries from hygienic to mining.

Whether purchasing stainless steel for equipment manufacture, building a plant or project, solving maintenance or breakdown issues or upgrading plant or equipment, it assists customers with expertise in many areas of stainless steel solutions for hygiene and corrosion resistance.

Contact Heinrich Vollgraaff, Sales Manager at NDE Cape in Montague Gardens - 082 413 5350 or www.nde.co.za

SA wine harvest report 2020: great season, remarkable wines

SOUTH Africa's 2020 wine grape crop will bring exceptional wines to consumers, following favourable conditions throughout the season. This according to the South African wine industry's annual Wine Harvest Report 2020.

"Although it's always important to take our diversity over ten wine grape growing regions into account, the industry had a very good season overall, which we believe will bring great quality wines to consumers," says Conrad Schutte, consultation service manager of the wine industry's representative body Vinpro.

The 2020 wine grape crop is estimated at 1 349 883 tons, according to the latest estimate of industry body SAWIS (South African Wine Industry Information & Systems)

on 24 April 2020. It is 8.2% larger than the 2019 harvest.

The Stellenbosch, Swartland, Cape South Coast, Paarl and Breda regions all harvested more wine grapes than in 2019, with the Olifants River region almost returning to its normal production levels after being one of the regions hardest hit by the recent drought. The Klein Karoo region still struggles with the ongoing drought, which was also experienced in certain parts of the Robertson region, while frost damage resulted in great crop losses in the Northern Cape.

The COVID-19 scurry

Although the harvesting season kicked off around two weeks earlier than usual, the

unexpected announcement of the COVID-19 lockdown, in effect from 26 March 2020, created a scurry among many producers to harvest the last grapes of the season and complete winemaking processes in cellars. Wine-related activities were initially prohibited, but Government made a last-minute concession which allowed for the harvesting and storage activities essential to prevent the wastage of primary agricultural goods during the lockdown. At the time, around 40 000 tons still needed to be harvested.

"With uncertainties during the announcement of the lockdown some producers decided to harvest the grapes without prejudice just to get it to the cellar, while oth-

ers waited for optimal ripeness to ensure exceptional quality," Conrad says.

Wine quality exceptional

"We are excited about the exceptional wines that will flow from the 2020 wine grape crop, with Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay leading the pack," Conrad says. The 2020 wine harvest - including juice and concentrate for non-alcoholic purposes, wine for brandy and distilling wine - is expected to amount to 1 046.2 million litres at an average recovery of 775 litres per ton of grapes.

Ready for the market

Following restrictions on both local sales and wine exports during South Africa's

COVID-19 lockdown, the industry was relieved that Government allowed for the export of alcoholic products from 1 May 2020, including transport to ports and airports, as well as related activities to prepare wine for exports such as bottling and labelling.

South Africa is the ninth biggest wine producer world-wide and produces about 3.3% of the world's wine. The wine industry contributes more than R36 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs nearly 300 000 people.

2019/20 Growing season

Most regions experienced a better post-harvest period than previous years. The



leaves fell around the same time or later than usual, vines were healthier and producers had access to post-harvest irrigation water.


Sufficient cold units were accumulated during the winter to break dormancy, while rainfall varied across regions but was mostly below average.

With spring came mostly favourable conditions, which contributed to a somewhat earlier but even bud-break. The early growing season was especially known for good, homogenous shoot growth.

See www.vinpro.co.za for the full harvest report per region.

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LiFePO4 v Pb battery systems

LITHIUM iron phosphate (LiFePO4) battery systems have a much lower total cost of ownership compared to traditional lead acid (Pb) batteries.

This is according to CHASE Technologies General Manager Brent Fraser. CHASE, an acronym for 'Chemical and Solar Energy Technologies', is a specialist provider of LiFePO4 battery systems for forklifts in materials-handling applications, in addition to battery-operated heavy equipment such as cleaning equipment and access platforms.

"We have an exclusive distribution agreement with the highest-volume producer of heavy-duty LiFePO4 batteries globally," Fraser reveals. These range from small

25.6V 135Ah units, right up to larger 80V 700Ah units. Unlike Pb batteries, LiFePO4 batteries from CHASE Technologies have a full five-year guarantee, which means no unanticipated cell replacements during the contract period.

Even when LiFePO4 batteries do fall below the efficient operating nominal capacity of 65%, they can still be used in lighter-duty forklift applications or retained as storage batteries, adding value long after the warranty itself has expired.

LiFePO4 batteries are sealed units that do not require topping up of electrolyte or periodic acid adjustment, and no equalisation charge or cooling periods are required.

LiFePO4 is also environment-friendly;



reducing heavy metal pollution as it is produced without any cadmium, lead or mercury. "Reduced energy consumption means less electricity required, and therefore reduced carbon footprint" Fraser points out.

The energy density of LiFePO4 is about 140

Wh/kg or three times that of Pb batteries. In comparison, LiFePO4 is only around 33% of the volume and 25% of the weight of Pb batteries. This means much higher-capacity batteries can be used in the same compartment, with greater configuration flexibility.

A LiFePO4 battery-powered vehicle is claimed to travel 1.35 times longer or further than the same vehicle fitted with a similar capacity Pb battery. During charge and discharge, the energy-conversion efficiency of the former is about 98%, compared

to a maximum of 85% efficiency for Pb, translating into a significant 15% electricity saving.

Due to their chemical composition, LiFePO4 batteries are also the safest and most stable of all lithium ion (Li-ion) batteries by not emitting any harmful acidic gases or hydrogen during charging, as do Pb batteries, which poses a health and safety risk. The absence of any sulphuric acid based electrolyte eliminates corrosion and reduces the premature failure of cables, connectors and battery tanks.

With the appropriate ultra-fast chargers a Li-Ion battery can absorb 50% of its capacity from a boost charge time of just 30 minutes. Full charge can be achieved in 60 to 120

minutes, dependent on the charger capacity. Rapid and opportunity charging ensures 24/7 availability.

Full charge does not need to occur in one continuous charge, but is equally effective with compound brief charges during breaks. There is no memory effect, which means opportunity charging is ideal for heavy-duty working conditions in long and multiple shifts. Ultra-charging, in turn, eliminates the need for multiple batteries and battery changeovers, as batteries can be boost charged during breaks or idle times. This reduces the risk of any accidents during battery changeovers and eliminates the need for battery bays with forced ventilation and battery attendants.

Solar system uses recycled aluminium to store energy without batteries

By Andy Corbley of the Good News Network (www.goodnewsnetwork.org)

A new renewable energy startup company has come up with a low-cost, zero-emissions solution to the thorny issue surrounding what happens when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing.

Paradoxically, the more the world embraces clean energy like solar and wind, the more it must embrace something markedly less-clean—diesel fuel or batteries.

In a building cut-off from a reliable grid powered by fossil fuel, diesel generators might be used to cover the hours of darkness when solar panels cease providing electricity. An alternative to this is to store the energy generated from the sun during the day in batteries, but along with representing a serious recycling problem,

batteries require rare-earth minerals that are obtained from environmentally-destructive mining operations.

"Batteries are very expensive to store power for a 24 hour period," says Jonas Eklind, CEO of Azelio, the Swedish energy startup that has potentially solved this problem for good. "If you want to store a lot of renewable energy, the most cost efficient way of storing this is thermal energy."

Instead of the critical energy storage component using rare and expensive minerals, the Azelio system uses recycled aluminium, which emits nothing, is much cheaper than lithium, and—as Jonas joked during an interview with GNN—"only lasts 62,000 years."

Molten aluminium can save the earth

The former CEO of a battery company,



KHI Solar One plant near Uppington.

Jonas helped start this remarkable energy storage project in 2016 when he came onboard, around the same time Azelio was looking into thermal storage technology.

"When we started the project, we had a conversion unit that converts high temperatures into electricity," he said. This device was called a Stirling Generator, and at first they would use biogas from landfills, water purification units—or from manure in a combustion engine to generate electricity—but after running numerous computer simulations on cost and energy capacity, determined that aluminium was the best choice.

Photons absorbed

by solar panels on your roof enter into the system where an aluminium alloy is heated so it moves from a solid to a liquid. This allows for the storage of an incredibly dense amount of energy within the material which can be sent as heat into the Stirling Generator and turned into electricity on demand, with zero emissions and at a lower cost.

This is in direct contrast to fossil fuels, uranium rods or pellets, or diesel fuel, because the energy in the aluminium can constantly be melted and hardened again to produce or store energy.

With its high energy density, the material has the ability to store energy for an extended

period of time, while the aluminium suffers no degradation in capacity over time.

Versatile yet Stable

The technology would prove to be ideal in parts of the world where grid reliability is low, like in Southern Africa where Jonas estimates that people only have access to a stable power grid 45% of the time.

Azelio's thermal storage would allow for people to implement solar into a community, an industry, or just their homes, to defend against failing or unreliable grids, which Jonas says is becoming more and more normal even in the developed world. In his home country of Sweden,

during the long winter, trees knock out power all the time, forcing rural communities to switch to diesel generators or similar interventions—sometimes for weeks.

"Our system can give you decentralized power based on solar and wind so you can build a local micro-grid that provides you with almost everything you need 24 hours a day," said Jonas.

And one of the really exceptional things about Azelio's system is that, in theory, it's as scalable as necessary; from 100 kilowatts per-hour, up to 100 megawatts per-hour, and more. Though it is maximized for solar power, it can easily work the same way for tidal or

hydropower, biofuels, and wind.

Most city or town grids are split up into multiple components that feed off of, support, and borrow from one another to remain stable. Like normal solar power that utilizes energy from the sun and sells the excess into the grid before later buying back from the grid at night time, Azelio's thermal storage can fit into the baseload power of a modern established grid as much or as little as is required—whether that's 10% of total power needs or 90%.

Azelio is conducting three verification tests this year—first, in their home country of Sweden, and two others in partnership with renewable energy companies. On March 5th, they inaugurated their thermal storage technology at the massive Noor solar power complex in Morocco, teaming up with Masen, and later this year, they will launch in Abu Dhabi with Masdar. In addition to these, Azelio has received various customer enquiries of a potential value in excess of EUR16 bn, including one customer in California who wants the system both for wind and solar energy.

"In 2025, with what we have promised to the market for the cost of electricity coming out of the system, we can possibly compete with large scale installations where we need to power a whole city."

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Conversion to natural gas brings new life to aging coal plants

This article, written by Kari Lydersen of the Midwest Energy News, is included to add a (positive) dimension to the current debate around the future of ailing Eskom. Although written in 2017, it should be seen in context with the current debate on Eskom's current woes and the serious relaxation of emission regulations proposed for major polluters including Eskom and SASOL - see article "Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, government locks SA into deadly air pollution" in May edition.

With ROMPCO's (The Republic of Mozambique Pipeline Company) stated "aim to enable regional markets and gas monetisation across the continent and to expand its network in line with growing regional demands", the existing 865 km long gas pipeline to from the Temane gas field to Secunda, could provide the close energy source to several Eskom power stations along the route.

Comments from the CEF - see article in May edition - entitled CEF Responds - seems to suggest that investigations are currently underway. Ed.

IT used to be that a train of coal arrived every day at the Joliet coal plant 40 miles southwest of Chicago.

depending on demand and profitability. The plant sometimes goes weeks or months without operating. Along with payments for the power it produces, the plant also collects year-round payments for capacity - the promise to be ready to generate a certain amount of electricity if needed.

"We've got a different price structure now," said plant manager Bill Naglosky. "Gas is a higher-priced fuel than coal. We've gone from being a base-loaded unit to not a peaking unit but more seasonably loaded."

"When the weather gets cold and a lot of electric heat is on in the city, the price of power goes up, demand goes up. We'll be on in the winter and in the summer - that is what justified the project. With coal, we pretty much ran all the time."

The conversion has meant projected emissions reductions of 99.9 percent for sulphur dioxide, 97 percent for particulate matter, 34 percent for nitrogen oxides, plus a carbon dioxide reduction, according to NRG spokesman David Gaier.

A changing fleet

The Joliet plant was part of the same fleet as Chicago's coal-fired

Castle, Pennsylvania, and in New Roads, Louisiana.

Naglosky said the Joliet conversion cost \$205 million.

There are three more plants remaining in the Illinois fleet NRG bought from Midwest Generation: a plant that it leases in Powerton in central Illinois, one in Romeoville not far from Joliet and one in Waukegan north of Chicago. Locals and experts have predicted the Waukegan plant will close in coming years, but Gaier said that the company recently invested nearly \$100 million in upgrading the plant for continued operations.

"We are continually evaluating all the units in the fleet to determine if gas conversion is an option based on a multitude of factors including environmental, economic and market," Gaier said.

Candidates for conversion

Scott Gossard is general manager of service projects at Babcock & Wilcox Power Generation Group, a major gas conversion vendor which supplied equipment for Joliet's conversion. Gossard wrote in Power Engineering Magazine about the various considerations and



many eastern plants."

The Joliet plant burned Powder River Basin coal. Its three units, two of 518 MW and one of 290 MW, were built in 1959 and 1966, while the whole plant dates back a century.

Gossard noted that the primary driver of conversions was the EPA's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS), not the Clean Power Plan which could likely be negated by the Trump administration.

"It would appear that the coal to gas conversion market has peaked and is now on the decline," Gossard wrote, as MATS deadlines were imminent and most companies have already planned for them. "Overall, switching to gas, even at current gas prices, is generally not an easy economic choice considering the capital cost, fuel costs, cycle efficiency, and future regulatory uncertainty."

Rather than switching entirely from coal to gas, coal plants can also be converted to burn coal and gas simultaneously or switch back and forth between the two fuel sources. The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), a non-profit research organization serving its member electric utilities, notes that co-firing raises more costs and challenges but can yield more benefits than total conversion.

"Gas conversions, as opposed to co-firing, poses technical issues significantly less challenging than gas co-firing," said John Marion, EPRI director of research and development for generation. "The movement

to gas conversions is well understood in the industry as being near-term in focus, avoiding expensive investments" in required pollution controls. He noted that it costs more to produce electricity after a conversion, but the plant can often be used as a peaker plant, selling electricity when demand and prices are high.

Making the switch

Gaier explained that at the Joliet plant, new natural gas burners "bring gas into the boiler in much the same way as pulverized coal was previously introduced."

"Most of the existing generation equipment requires no modification and operates just as it did on coal with exception of the fuel type," he said. Equipment to unload and handle coal, however, is rendered obsolete.

"Often you'll see previously-converted gas plants that still have coal handling equipment in place that hasn't been used for years or decades," he said.

Naglosky noted that NRG worked to obtain right-of-way for new gas lines and paid to build them. The plant is served by two separate lines, so in case one is occupied feeding local residences, the plant will be guaranteed supply from the other.

During recent cold winters, most notably the "polar vortex" in 2014, some coal plants around the country were idled or forced to reduce generation because coal piles froze.

Proponents call natural gas a more reli-

able fuel source for cold winters, though Naglosky noted that the Joliet plant continued operating during the polar vortex, moving coal from one pile to another in order to prevent freezing.

Job outlook

Without the loads of coal to process, fewer employees are needed at the Joliet plant. Eleven people were laid off because of the conversion, while 51 people took early retirement with incentives and 37 transferred to other power plants, Naglosky said. In all, plant employment dropped from 151 to 54. Naglosky said the company worked with local junior colleges to let employees know about other jobs and opportunities.

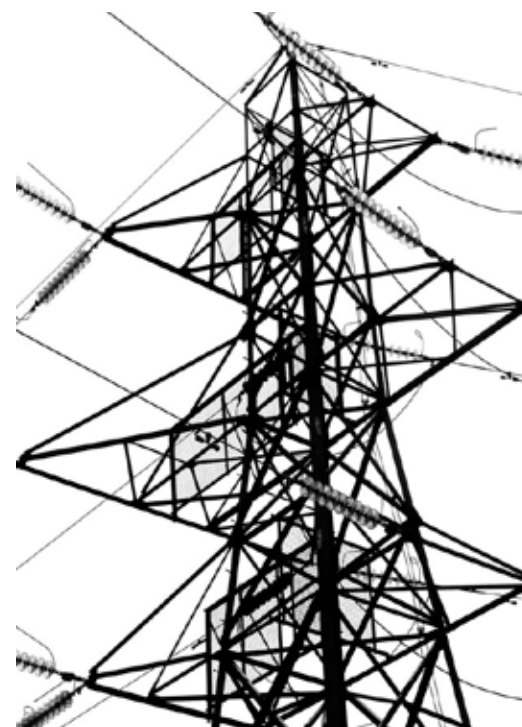
"I think they took it in great stride," Naglosky said of plant employees. "NRG did a very good job in explaining the alternatives, that we're not

sitting back and waiting for the market to affect us, that we had to close the gate. With a multi-, multi-million dollar project, they realized with that kind of investment the jobs that did remain would be very good."

He said management worked with the IBEW labour union to negotiate promotions for all the workers who remained. "Everyone here has added responsibility and pay increases," he said.

Naglosky said that when he started running coal plants a quarter-century ago, he never expected to see a wave of closures. But three of the plants he formerly ran are closed now, Fisk and Crawford plus the now demolished State Line coal plant on the Indiana border south of Chicago.

"At the time everybody thought, 'There's so much coal in the ground,' we thought it would go on pretty much forever without much change," he said.



The conversion has meant projected emissions reductions of 99.9 percent for sulphur dioxide, 97 percent for particulate matter, 34 percent for nitrogen oxides, plus a carbon dioxide reduction...

Forty-seven conveyor belts fed the coal into units on either side of the Des Plaines River. And workers busily transferred the coal from the train and maintained the system.

Today there are no more coal trains. But Joliet is not among the scores of coal plants that have closed in recent years. Instead, it burns natural gas. A number of coal plants nationwide have converted to natural gas, a move that uses much of the same infrastructure but involves different economics, less pollution and fewer workers.

Unlike the coal plant which ran nearly around the clock, the Joliet plant, owned by NRG, now fires up and down more frequently

Fisk and Crawford plants, which could not compete on the market and closed in 2012. A city ordinance had once suggested converting those plants to natural gas, but the company that owned the fleet at the time, Midwest Generation, said it would not be a financially viable option. NRG bought the fleet including the shuttered Chicago plants in 2014.

Naglosky had also been plant manager of Fisk and Crawford. He ran nuclear plants in the mid-1980s and coal plants since the early 1990s. In December, NRG announced the full conversion of the Joliet plant and also coal-to-gas conversions at its plants in Shawville and New

complications of coal to gas conversions.

"The most likely candidates for a coal-to-gas conversion are 50-plus year old units, less than 300 megawatts in capacity and generally early generation sub-critical utility boilers - the least efficient, most costly to operate and with the lowest overall capacity factor in the coal fleet," he wrote. "Most plants west of the Mississippi River built in the 1960s or later aren't as attractive as candidates for fuel switching since they are often larger, more efficient and tend to burn Powder River Basin coal, a cost effective fuel with a more favourable emission profile than the bituminous burned by

Hundreds of actuators for Indian pipeline



MORE than 300 Rotork actuators have been specified for use on an Indian pipeline almost 700 km in length.

The pipeline, which is currently under construction, will stretch across southern India and transport supplies from a key refinery. Due to the large scale of the project, a large number of actuators are required and Rotork's CMA, IQ and SI ranges have all been specified.

The customer selected the CML-1500 and CML-3000 actuators primarily for fail-safe motor operated valve (MOV) and modulating globe valve operation. They will be installed at remote locations along the 695 km pipeline, where manual operation would not be practical. Additionally, they are a low power consumption solution (less than 1 Watt at standby) which makes them

ideal for remote applications.

Electro-hydraulic SI actuators will also be installed to provide safety critical fail-safe duties on the pipeline. These were selected due to requirement of SIL3 certification and their high torque output, meaning that they are able to provide fail-safe solutions on the larger valves on the pipeline. With a linear torque output of up to 4 580 kN (1 029 625 lbf) and a part-turn torque output of up to 500 000 Nm (368 781 lbf.ft), these actuators are designed to meet today's control and safety needs.

Rotork's IQ range of intelligent electric actuators will be installed on ball valves and plug valves along the length of the pipeline. These will be providing vital isolation duties, ensuring that the supplies of oil and gas can be cut off in the event of an

emergency, therefore helping to eliminate the risk of fire or explosion. These actuators are explosionproof and continue to provide position tracking even on loss of power, making them appropriate for pipeline applications.

The actuators will all be linked by Rotork's leading Pakscan™ network bus system and connected via Rotork Master Stations installed at substations along the pipeline. Up to 240 field devices on a 20 km 2-wire loop can be controlled by a single Master Station, making them ideal for applications where remote control of actuators will be essential. The Rotork Master Station is available in single or dual configuration, while a hot standby option provides a replica unit to assume network control and ensure reliability.

Adding value to IPPs in the sugar industry

SUGAR millers depend on high plant availability for maximum input versus output. The main opportunity in this market segment is not only upgrading old and outdated systems, but the value-add that SEW-EURODRIVE can add to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) in the sugar industry.

Sugar millers produce their own power by burning cane fibre to generate additional power. Here the expertise of SEW-EURODRIVE in energy-efficient solutions is key. It can apply real-time power-saving solutions to produce the same performance from older existing equipment and applications. These energy-efficient trans-

mission solutions potentially produce more output power or torque by drawing even less power from the grid.

Applications for these mechanical and electrical transmission solutions in the sugar industry include milling tandems, bagasse conveyors, juice agitators, clarifiers, crystallisers, sugar dryers, and many other production applications.

A wide range of transmission solutions means there is a fit for every application. High ingress protection (IP rated), high IE3 efficiency classes, and the high thermal class ratings (H) of standard IEC motors from SEW-EURODRIVE means sugar millers are assured of

electrical transmission solutions of the highest quality that are cost-effective.

Other real business investment solutions include the MIG high-torque energy-efficient mechanical drive system. These units read the output load continuously, and adjust the required power needed to drive the application, in addition to saving energy. The Xe series allows for compact solutions to replace old cumbersome systems and boost mechanical efficiency. Planetary transmission drive systems provide localised assembled solutions, and cut down on delivery lead times so as to benefit sugar millers even further.

New range of metal isolators

"OUR customers in the commercial, mining and industrial sectors operate in harsh environments where they rely on superior-quality products to assist them in getting the job done reliably, cost-effectively and safely; our new AMPCO metal isolator switches fit the bill," states Donovan Marks, Director of Powermite.

"We have specifically designed and developed our AMPCO metal isolator switches to be safety-centric to the ultimate benefit of operators and companies," explains Marks.

Available from 63 – 630 Amps and in 3 or 4 poles, the IP65 (dust & water tight) rated AMPCO metal enclosed isolator switch range is ideally suited for disconnecting or isolating motor cir-

cuits. These compact and robust metal isolator switches feature an orange powder coated, rigid housing and cadmium plated screws.

The housing which is manufactured from sand cast aluminium, features top and bottom entry points and provides ample space for wiring. In addition, the metal AMPCO isolator switches feature padlocking facilities which safely isolate the unit in the OFF position.

The AMPCO metal product range complies with National Standards SANS/IEC 60309 P1 + 2. Furthermore, all Powermite plugs and sockets undergo stringent inspections during production processes and are manufactured in accordance with its ISO 9001 Quality Management Certification.

Alongside the isola-



tor switches, the comprehensive AMPCO new aluminium manufactured metal range consists of CEE type metal plug and socket outlets, DIN and Swedish plugs and sockets, explosion proof plugs and sockets.

"These new metal innovations further expand our existing plastic and metal AMPCO range and provide a host of solu-

tions under one roof," concludes Marks.

Building on over 30 years of experience in manufacturing and supplying industrial plugs and sockets to customers across Sub-Saharan Africa, Powermite's extensive product portfolio comprises cable reeling systems, specialised reeling cables, festoon systems as well as flexible mining cables.

Drive engineered packaged solutions

IN keeping with the latest trends of energy efficiency, local support from OEMs and reduced total cost of ownership, ABB South Africa offers complete packaged solutions for water and wastewater to mining and minerals, cement, petrochemicals and oil and gas industries.

Such packaged solutions range from the supply of medium voltage circuit breakers, inclusive of the required protection, to Variable Speed Drive (VSD) input transformers (if required), and correctly sized VSDs and motors for specific application. An e-housing can also be supplied in accordance with customer requirements.

A particular feature of the drive technology from ABB South Africa is the inclusion of a synchronous bypass option unit. This allows one drive to start and accelerate up to eight individual motors on pump or fan applications, for maximum efficiency, says Sarel Pelser, MV Drives Product Manager.

The synchronous bypass unit does not impact drive functionality negatively. Apart from using the VSD as a starting and network synchronising mechanism via the synchronous bypass unit, the VSD can also be implemented for process control functionality by controlling the motor shaft

speed during system operation.

This has the advantage of reducing mechanical and process system transients while gaining controllability during start-up conditions. The VSD can control the motor speed continuously for unlimited periods, with the option of synchronising the motor directly to the supply grid.

This is available with the specific MV drive product portfolio from ABB South Africa, such as the ACS1000, ACS5000, ACS580MV and LCI. The power and voltage range covered with this functionality is 2 300 V to 20 kV (motor voltages), with a motor power range from 200 kW to 101 MW available upon request.

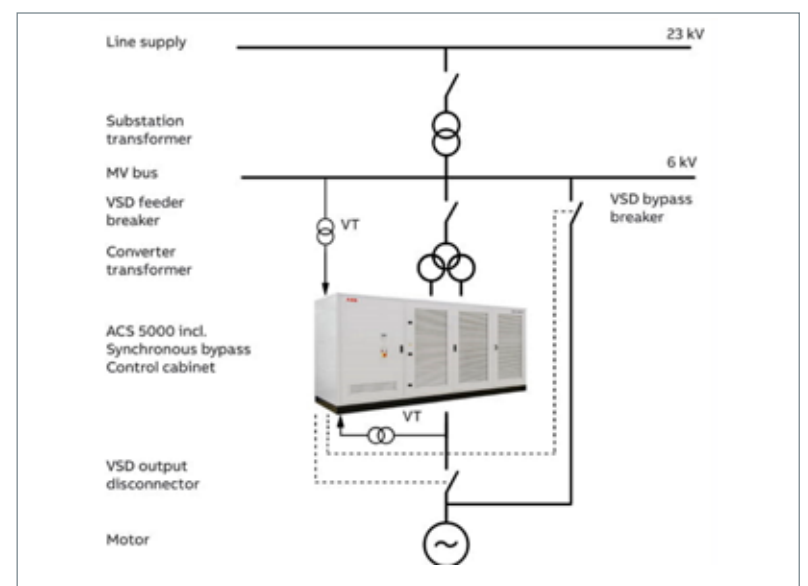
ABB South Africa

specialises in large, complex and challenging customised application requirements. It has a large local technical sales and service support base in Southern Africa covering the entire industrial spectrum. Aftermarket support includes ABB Ability™ condition monitoring and remote assistance for drives. This ranges from rapid support for onsite problems, using the drive data that has been stored remotely to deliver accurate real-time information about drive condition and events, ensuring maximum equipment availability and reliability.

In addition, ABB Drive Care Agreements range from Initial Care, a free service for newly purchased ABB MV drives during the first

year of the warranty, to Complete Care, which allows customers to focus on their core business thanks to a fixed-price lifecycle agreement.

ABB (ABN: SIX Swiss Ex) is a technology leader that is driving the digital transformation of industries. With a history of innovation spanning more than 130 years, ABB has four customer-focused, globally leading businesses: Electrification, Industrial Automation, Motion, and Robotics & Discrete Automation, supported by the ABB Ability™ digital platform. ABB's Power Grids business will be divested to Hitachi in 2020. ABB operates in more than 100 countries with about 144,000 employees. www.abb.com.



Green is key



How can automation solutions with artificial intelligence help optimize maintenance and production for sustainable manufacturing? This article describes how Omron supports the E-mobility market of the future in sustainable pouch battery cell production. And it takes a look at how Omron itself is putting sustainability into practice in its own operations.

TODAY, sustainability is no longer a niche topic, but something that companies are integrating into their business strategies on a daily basis. It is because sustainability practices reduce energy consumption and waste and also help companies to use their resources more efficiently. It even helps companies optimize their manufacturing agility and enable them to respond to fluctuating demand and the growing need for personalization. Sustainability can play an important role in acquiring and retaining customers, as well in developing new market opportunities.

Example E-mobility: pouch battery production of the future

One area where Omron wants to shape the market with a sustainable manufacturing approach is battery cell production. In Europe suppliers need to step up their game and compete with other regions with better quality, more efficient production and optimized use of resources. Omron's goal is to help suppliers save ten percent on excess material. As E-mobility moves forward, more advanced battery technologies are being developed to increase the reliability, safety, and operation of vehicles. In the widely used cylindrical cells, the active layers are wrapped around

the inner electrode. Where in contrast to cylindrical cells, with pouch cells, the stacked layers are enclosed by a flexible outer foil usually made of aluminium. Pouch batteries meet some of the most important current requirements for the automotive industry as per example- they are easier to install in vehicles because of their flat and more flexible shape. They also offer longer battery life and are less susceptible to damage from electrical charging and discharging. At the same time, these batteries are safer and more consistent at lower cell temperatures.

The production of pouch cells is also more complex and much more demanding than the production of cylindrical batteries. This places special demands on production. Manufacturers are turning to production processes supported by artificial intelligence to optimize machine efficiency and to ensure zero-defect production. Omron's AI, sensing, control, security and robotics solutions support the reliable, sustainable and high-quality production of pouch batteries. In addition, Omron supports manufacturers with self-contained, battery cell inspection solutions that are fully integrated in the line, as well as solutions for electrode and battery module manufacturing. Omron's automation solutions can help streamline leak and vacuum testing and provide end-to-end traceability throughout the lifetime of the battery cell.

Automation solutions with artificial intelligence can fulfil all customer requirements for product quality and predictive maintenance, helping manufacturers to achieve sustainability goals. While battery manufacturers must adapt to the con-

stant state of change in the E-mobility market, they are in need production of lines that can be adapted faster with more flexibility than ever before to meet the constant changing requirements. This can be achieved with innovative automation solutions that also ensure quality and reduce waste, ensuring sustainability.

Sustainability in practice

An example of an international sustainability strategy one can have a look at Omron. Founded in Japan in 1933, the company today employs more than 36,000 people and supports customers in 117 countries in a variety of applications - from industrial automation to the manufacturing of electronic components such as battery electrodes, battery cell modules, and healthcare solutions. For Omron, sustainable manufacturing is closely linked to innovative technologies, especially in the context of artificial intelligence. By using such solutions, energy consumption can in many cases be reduced by up to 50%.

Environmental protection should be part of corporate responsibility. Omron launched its own environmen-

tal protection concept "Green Omron 21" already in May 2002. The goal of this vision is to contribute to the sustainable development of society, while at the same time maximize 'value added' as a company in the long term. Factory automation is a critical element in vehicle manufacturing as well as food production. In energy management, the introduction of renewable energy resources needs to be promoted and CO₂ emissions reduced.

We value your input

Only through your input can we continue to improve.

- Comments
- Suggestions
- What would you like to hear about

editor@cbn.co.za

Multi-purpose controller for all kinds of automated equipment

THE Delta compact modular mid-range AS series PLCs, available locally from leading supplier Electro-Mechanica (EM), is a high-performance, multi-purpose controller designed for all kinds of automated equipment.

The AS series of PLCs features Delta's self-developed 32-bit SoC (System on Chip) CPUs for enhanced execution speed (up to 40 k steps/ms), and also supports up to 32 extension modules or up to 1 024 I/O points. The series provides accurate positioning control for up to 8 axes via CANopen motion network and a maximum six axes via pulse control (200 kHz).

"The Delta AS series of PLCs is widely used in diverse automated equipment such as electronics manufacturing, labelling, food packaging and textile machines," EM Product Manager William



The Delta AS series of PLCs is widely used in diverse automated equipment.

Cameron highlights.

Features include a robust non-backplane design and patented DIN rail clips for vertical module installation and replacement. Includes ISPSOFT editing software for programming, hardware configuration, network communication, system diagnostics and positioning planning.

The Delta compact modular mid-range AS series of PLCs is available from EM's extensive distribution network and branches nationwide. The full range of industrial automation products from Delta Automation has been represented in Southern Africa by EM for over 15 years.

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Looking Forward **VEGA**

Rating downgrades and interest rate cuts, chaos? I think not...

THE market turmoil of the first quarter of 2020 has given rise to opportunities in the South African fixed income market. In an environment of low economic growth and inflation, there are good opportunities to lock in high real yields for investors.

This is according to Ian Scott, the head of fixed income at Momentum Investments, who spoke at the first virtual Outcome Matters event for 2020.

Scott said it was important to understand the macroeconomic drivers of these opportunities.

"March 2020 was not a repeat of 2008, which was a solvency event. Valuations simply got too expensive, and the market corrected. In contrast, March 2020 was a liquidity event – the US bond market and, to a greater extent, the South African bond market, became illiquid – and when liquid-

ity disappears, prices fall rapidly."

Scott explained that, against this backdrop, it is important to note that the US Federal Reserve (Fed) sets the base interest rate for the global economy. "During the market turmoil in February and March, the Fed stepped in and cut US interest rates aggressively, and we expect them to hold rates at these low levels for a long time. Coupled with this, they increased their balance sheet exponentially and are buying assets in the market, thereby supporting and fuelling the recent recovery, which followed the market lows at the end of March."

The US has been in a low-inflation environment for quite some time, with the average inflation rate at around 1.6% per year. During the next five years, the market expects inflation in the US to be below this level – and

low inflation is good for bonds.

Emerging-market bonds were particularly hard hit by the turmoil, as fear gripped the market and investors wanted to exit at all costs. As a result, emerging market bond yields shot up, as the bonds were aggressively sold off. According to Scott, the South African bond market, given its liquidity, suffered a disproportionate sell off compared to emerging-market peers. "This means South African bonds are very attractively priced compared to developed and emerging market peers," he said.

"The very steep South African yield curve tells a story. The market is pricing in a lot of negative risk for South African bonds. It prices in the fact that the South African government finances are stretched, the economy is without growth and that Eskom is a major overhang on economic

growth." Having that, Scott believes the South African yield curve is still too steep compared to emerging-market peers.

Comparing the South African 10-year bond fair-value curve to US treasury yields, it is noteworthy that the market expects inflation in South Africa to be more than 6% per year for the next three to five years. Momentum Investments, however, forecasts inflation at about 3% in the same period. This means that if the South African 10-year bond yield is 10.5%, it yields a real return of 7.5% per year. "This return is analogue to yields expected on equity, but at lower bond risks. We, therefore, believe South African sovereign nominal bonds are very attractive for investors. There is simply too much negative risk priced in at the current levels."

Not all South African fixed income invest-

ment opportunities are equal, however. "We are forecasting cash to return 5% to 5.5% in the next year; credit to return 6% to 6.5%; inflation-linked bonds to return 6% to 7%; and nominal government bonds to return 8.5% to 9%," Scott elaborated.

The South African listed credit market is also of concern to the investment team, said Scott.

"Government nominal bonds are our preferred current investment option," says Scott. "In the current low-inflation and growth environment, there are excellent opportunities to lock in attractive real yields for investors. This, coupled with the fact that the Sarb cut rates by 250 basis points for the year to date, with further rate cuts of 50 to 100 basis points forecasted, provides strong tailwinds for South African fixed income" Scott concluded.

VC funding secured

CAPE TOWN-based fintech company, CompariSure, has secured venture capital (VC) funding from UW Ventures in partnership with Allan Gray. This latest deal comes off the back of CompariSure's first external investment deal concluded in August 2019 with 4Di Capital, an early-stage tech VC firm.

"At the time the original deal was concluded, 4Di was eager for us to find another institutional investor to diversify the shareholder base, and we are delighted to now have UW Ventures and Allan Gray on board," notes Matt Kloos, CompariSure co-founder and CFO.

"In combining 4Di's deep understanding of insurtech with Allan Gray's extensive financial services expertise and UW Ventures' strategic and business support, we feel our investor base could neither be stronger nor more experienced," says Kloos.

CompariSure was founded in 2017 by CEO Jonathan Elcock,

along with Kloos. As a registered FSP, the company distributes financial services products via its proprietary chatbot technology that leverages platforms like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. CompariSure has recently also started licensing out its chatbot technology to insurance providers looking to enhance their own digital capabilities.

UW Ventures intends on supporting CompariSure with its scaling ambitions, including into international markets.

Echoing Loxton's sentiment is Anton Van Vlaanderen, Partner at 4Di Capital. "The first time we saw CompariSure's chatbot in action, we knew there was something special there. Add to that a dynamic founding duo with big ambitions supported by an excellent team; we believe that CompariSure has what it takes to become a true success story."

Loxton and Van Vlaanderen will sit on the CompariSure board.

Why use an intermediary when selling your business?



George New.

HORIZON Capital Corporate Finance (Pty) Ltd, a Cape Town 'boutique' corporate finance house specializing in the sale and acquisition of medium-sized enterprises, has facilitated numerous successful transactions over the past 15 years. From a buyer perspective sound relationships have been built with many of the JSE listed and larger unlisted companies, family businesses, private individuals, consortiums and invest-

ment companies.

The decision to sell could well be the most important decision a business-owner will make and it is vital that a qualified professional corporate finance advisor be appointed to guide you through the sale process.

The expertise required lies not only in the transaction process and management but also in the ability to 'match' the requirements and objectives of the seller and potential buyer in order to

achieve maximum value for both parties.

While Covid-19 has put many businesses under immense strain and earnings pressure, the purchase of a business must be taken with a long term view, and not just current circumstances that are largely out of the business owner's control. Despite the challenging economic environment buyers continue to look for acquisition opportunities to complement and grow their own earnings, so there

is continuing demand for financially sound and well managed businesses.

When discussing the sale of a business the question often asked is 'why use an intermediary?' George New of Horizon Capital explains "Our experience shows that owners who try to sell their businesses themselves mostly end up in an absolute quagmire, often resulting in a cancelled deal at the last minute or the seller ending up with

a less than satisfactory arrangement, which often only manifests itself after the deal has been concluded! Selling a business can be a very complex and time-consuming exercise with many legal, tax, accounting and regulatory issues to address. Expertise is required to seek and identify the appropriate buyer for the business and then value, negotiate and structure the most advantageous transaction for both parties involved."

George further explains that Horizon Capital offers a full turnkey solution for the seller – from assisting the owner to prepare the business for sale, conducting a valuation, preparing an Information Memorandum and discretely taking the business to the market and introducing it to qualified potential buyers. Very importantly Horizon Capital negotiates on behalf of the seller to ensure the optimal deal structure, and a fair price, is realised. George adds that Horizon Capital also assists with the overseeing of the sale agreement and supporting documents, as well as the facilitation of the transaction payment.

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Should you be considering the sale of your business, or seeking acquisitions, please contact our Corporate Finance team on **021 425 8586** for a confidential chat.

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Another relief for the agriculture sector

Comment by Paul Makube, Senior Agricultural economist at FNB Agri-Business

A combination of favourable crude oil price outlook, lower local inflation with risks to the downside, and economic contraction afforded the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) room to cut the repurchase rate by another 50 basis points. This brought the repo rate to a historical low of 3.75% and the prime lending rate to 7.25% effective from 22 May 2020. The interest rate outlook is even lower with the SARB's projections pencilling another cut of two repo rate of 25 basis points in the next two quarters of 2020.

With debt estimated over R170 billion and rising, the agriculture sector is set to benefit

especially in this time of COVID-19 where disruption to trade will impact on incomes and debt serviceability. Bear in mind that some in the sector are yet to recover from the recent severe drought conditions of which the latest has gripped large parts of the Eastern and the Northern Cape provinces.

Agriculture machinery sales and replacements has been under pressure in the last twelve months on the back of drought induced financial constraints due to the lower harvest. The latest tractor and combine harvester sales from the South African Agriculture Machinery Association (SAAMA) showed a decline of 4%

and 13% respectively year-on-year (y/y) during April 2020.

The agriculture harvest outlook however remains bullish with the 2019/20 summer crop harvest expected up 31% y/y to 17.52 million tons and country's largest staple, maize, seen at 15.22 million tons (+35% y/y). This combined with a favourable interest rate environment will afford producers to do the necessary replacements of various machinery and equipment employed in agriculture. The bullish supply outlook will help tame food inflation in the wake of income losses due to COVID-19, affording consumers the necessary breather.

Reducing costs

FROM simple things you can do like checking tyre pressure to leveraging the latest in agriculture technology, there are several ways farmers can increase fuel efficiency and save money. When the harvest season approaches, we know the last thing you want to worry about as someone who works in the agriculture industry is your fuel bill. That's why we've pulled together some hints and tips to help boost fuel efficiency and save you money.

- Healthy engine = better fuel economy -Engine maintenance is key:
 - Minimise time spent at idle
 - Aggressive driving can increase fuel consumption,
 - Get your tyre pressure right
 - Keep radiators and radiator screens clean
 - Be mindful of excess weight
 - Check those oils
 - Using the right equipment matters
 - Are you using those features correctly? Use diff-lock and four-wheel drive appropriately:
 - Technology can be your friend
- Make use of your vehicle's features! Tools such as headland management, GPS coordination and field mapping have all been developed by OEMs to help you get the most out of their equipment.

Quantum of solace

WELLINGTON-based agribusiness Quantum Foods – which holds poultry, egg and animal feeds interests – has pulled through a very lean six month trading period with its finances still intact.

The company generated all important cash inflows of R74 million in the interim period ending March – notwithstanding an increased R73 million investment in working capital.

Quantum finished the interim period with a reassuring R174 million net cash position – which probably explains the willingness to pay an interim dividend when most companies are holding back distributions to shareholders while uncertainty around the Covid-19 crisis lingers.

The next six months could prove even tougher, and Quantum's plump balance sheet could come in very handy if the Covid-19 pandemic continues to disrupt the local economy.

In the interim period Quantum managed to lift revenue a solid 16% to R2.44 billion – but operating profit retreated 24% to R91 million.

CEO Hennie Lourens said individual businesses performed largely in line with expectation.

The big setback, however, was that egg prices declined more sharply than expected during the first three months of the 2020 calendar year. This, Lourens explained, caused the egg business to record a loss for the interim period.

What's more, Quantum's key poultry segment saw the cost of key feed raw materials largely impacted by the Rand weakening against the Dollar.

Lourens said this resulted in a 5.4% increase in the price of yellow maize with the bran and hominy chop prices increasing 17.2% and 9.7% respectively.

"The net effect of these increases was that the cost of layer and broiler feed increased by 4.3% compared to 2019."

The star performer for Quantum in the interim period was the animal feeds business – which drove volumes up 18% and managed to increase margins by 2.2%.

Lourens said that despite the constraints of load shedding, all the feed mills ran at close to capacity during the period.

On the farming side,

Lourens said the layer breeding operational performance continued to exceed the breed standard.

He noted that production volumes of day-old pullets and point-of-lay hens increased by 6.8% and 11.6% respectively. "This resulted in the company incurring above-inflation cost increases in the layer breeder business."

Lourens added that external sales of chicks declined, and more chicks and pullets were placed on company-owned farms. "This contributed to an increase in eggs available for sale."

But he noted that the commercial layer farms' efficiency continued to improve and reached the highest level since 2014.

Lourens said the financial performance of the broiler business was satisfactory with volumes of day-old chicks increasing 4.1% and overhead costs were well contained.

"Although the breeder section of this business is still under pressure, we saw an improvement in the performance of the recent grandparent genetics received."

Overall, he reckoned, the commercial broiler performance remained at a very high level.

Unfortunately, prospects for the egg segment still look badly scrambled.



Lourens said the egg industry was under severe pressure due to the oversupply of eggs.

Egg prices declined 7.4% in the interim period.

He disclosed that the Nulaid business recorded losses for the six month period despite volumes increasing by 16.3%. "The decline in egg prices, together with the increase in feed costs, resulted in a further contraction of margins."

Lourens said operational effectiveness remained at high levels despite the higher volume of eggs managed by the business – and although there were nominal cost increases, the cost per dozen eggs decreased.

Looking ahead, Lourens conceded that the change in the economic landscape due to the unknown

impact of Covid-19 made it "extremely difficult" to provide an accurate outlook for the next six months. "In general, raw material prices are expected to increase – only due to the effect of the devaluation of the Rand. This will result in a cost push throughout the business."

He argued that a portion of this impact should be recoverable in the farming and feeds businesses.

Lourens also expected an improvement in the supply and demand balance of eggs in the second half of the financial year. "Egg supply should decrease slightly due to lower placements of day-old chicks. Egg prices will be managed judiciously to balance the requirements of ensuring a sustainable business and the needs of the consumer."



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Keep recycling, urges RecyclePaperZA

MORE than 12 million tons of paper and paper packaging have been recovered for recycling in South Africa over the past decade.

This, according to RecyclePaperZA, the country's paper recycling association, has ensured that waste paper is diverted from landfill and recycled into new products – tissue products, newsprint and paper packaging for the agricultural, manufacturing and retail sectors.

In 2018, South Africa collected 71.7% of recoverable paper and packaging*, amounting to 1,285 million tons. "South Africa is in the enviable position of being able to use up to 90% of its recovered waste paper locally by recycling it into new paper, packaging and tissue," says Anele Sololo, general manager of RecyclePaperZA. The balance of waste paper is exported.

A difficult time for paper industry, but don't stop recycling

Currently, the global paper recycling industry is faced with oversupply. "This means there is more waste paper available than there is use for it," says Sololo. There are various economic factors at play, not least of which is China's stricter requirement for cleaner waste imports since 2017. This means that around 30 million tons of waste paper from around the world needs to find a new home and use.

In South Africa, the severe drought in fruit-growing regions has had a knock-on effect for the paper packaging sector. "Corrugators produce less boxes for fruit with the result being that mills produce less paper which affects waste paper consumption rates," explains Sololo.

"It is important to understand that col-



lectors are paid for the recyclables they collect, and the higher the value of that recyclable, the more likely they are to collect it," says Sololo. The lower demand in the market will affect a price drop as mills need to ensure they remain commercially viable, and unfortunately this affects recycling collectors and traders.

The South African paper industry is however investing in research and development of alternative uses for recycled paper to ensure that recyclable

paper and paperboard continues to be diverted from landfill and help improve demand for recycled paper fibre.

Different recycled paper products need different ingredients

Printing paper, tissue, cardboard boxes, paper bags and sacks all require different types and quantities of raw materials. "The difference in paper recipes may even be customer-specific which makes papermaking an exact science," says Sololo.

Historically newspapers were required as a raw material for newsprint manufacturing. The declining newspaper consumption, largely due to online media, has resulted in the closure of newsprint machines in South Africa, leaving only one operational newsprint machine. "In 2011, South Africa produced 316,725 tons of newsprint," says Sololo, adding that in 2018, the annual newsprint production was less than half the 2011 figure at 113,912 tons. This in turn has reduced the

demand for used newspapers by paper mills.

Newspapers are still used in the manufacture of moulded fibre products such as egg cartons, takeaway cup holders and fruit trays. "This is where brand owners and retailers can help make a difference – by moving from plastic to paper for their packaging," notes Sololo. A classic example is polystyrene vegetable and fruit trays – these can be made effectively from paper pulp. Some grades of paper are in higher demand than others. As an example, there is more use for white paper as it requires less deinking and cleaning than newspapers and magazines. White paper also contains better quality fibres for "paper recipes".

What should we do with "old news"?

Fortunately newspaper is very versatile and can be used for many things. Here are our top five but you can

find a more comprehensive list on www.recyclepaper.co.za.

1. Animal shelters
2. Compost and worm farms
3. Fruit and vegetable drawer liners
4. Gift
5. Table padding

Where should I take my paper recycling

In November last year, Mpact Recycling, a RecyclePaperZA member, announced the discontinuation of its kerbside collection programme. While we recognise that this causes inconvenience to a number of its loyal supporters, there are other options available:

Visit www.recyclepaper.co.za - Check out our "Where to recycle" page for some useful links.

So keep up with those recycling efforts! And keep your paper clean and dry, and separate from other waste.

Support for waste pickers during lockdown



DESPITE the fact that many role-players in the plastics industry are suffering financial losses as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, the various plastics PROs, individual members and corporates have not hesitated to dig deep into their pockets to donate funds to the country's waste pickers who are currently finding themselves unable to collect recyclables. Because their income and thus food supply are directly linked to the amount of recyclables they collect on a daily basis, thousands of these reclaimers have suddenly and

unexpectedly found themselves facing dire circumstances.

Working in close partnership with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), Packaging SA and in support of the members of the two associations representing the waste pickers/reclaimers, i.e. the South African Waste Pickers Association (SAWPA), African Reclaimers Organisation (ARO), a total amount of R785 000.00 was collected within a matter of days last week. These funds will now be used to purchase electronic food vouch-

ers that will be sent to the collectors who are on the DEFF database via cell phones and can be redeemed at major supermarket retailers.

The plastics industry has also committed to offering on-going support during this difficult time in recognition of the important work these waste pickers do, and have challenged everybody involved in the waste management sector to rally with them and to continue making tax deductible financial contributions to lighten the burden of the waste pickers.

Source:
Groundup.org.za

Waste stream upcycling at the V&A Waterfront

A new project broke ground at the Portwood District of the V&A Waterfront last year. The project upcycles a significant stream of plastic waste using sustainable methods. The project in question is the Ridge Building, a bespoke eco-building currently under construction. It will serve as the regional office of a multinational client, Deloitte.

Mark Noble, Development Director at the V&A Waterfront, says that recycled beverage bottles are being used as 'ecobricks' on site. Made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles, these include 'Coke' 2 litre bottles. The ecobricks will be used as void formers in the concrete slabs in the central toilet areas on each floor of The Ridge.

The bottles are filled to constant density with waste plastics. This waste includes chip packets, candy wrappings, shopping bags and waste generated on site. The ecobricks were donated by community volunteers and scholars from Cape Town's suburbs and quality control is undertaken on site by the main contractor. The checked bottles then get used as void-formers at the Ridge.

"Often, builders incorporate void-forming materials into concrete slabs. These are of a much lower weight than concrete. They are sometimes made of expanded polystyrene (EPS). Under normal loads, these voids do not undermine the structural strength of the slab. But they offer many other benefits, which is why we use them.

"The recycled PET bottles are called ecobricks. To the best of our knowledge, the Ridge is the first large commercial building in the world to do this," says Noble.

"Together with our various other established recycling programmes, which include a substantial quantity of the building waste from the SILO project being re-used, these techniques make a vital contribution to the circular economy. The is what we term 'Our Normal', a bold step into participating in this new economy and the environmental challenges we face", he concludes.

Background - how the concept works

From a structural perspective forces run along the outside of the structural member of a building. This use-

ful characteristic has allowed, for example, the safe usage of bricks with holes in the middle.

So the core of a concrete structural element plays little role in imparting strength, but a hollow or near-hollow core can remove a tremendous amount of weight from the building. Consequently, less concrete and structural steel may be used to support the additional weight of the building. Consequently, less concrete and structural steel may be used to support the additional weight of the building.

Void formers are more than a significant opportunity to lower the material cost of the building. Void formers also dematerialise the construction. In green building technology, this reduces the embodied carbon and energy 'footprint', meaning lowering its environmental impact. Less usage of materials such as concrete and steel also reduces building material waste recovered at the end of the structure's service life.

Also many methods that reduce the greenhouse gas contribution of a building are of benefit in the battle against climate change and environmental pollution in general.

A commonly used void forming material is EPS, most often

formed into shapes or profiles using virgin polymer material. This however does not contribute to environmental benefits and consumes plastics made from fossil fuels.

Sometimes, voided concrete slabs use recycled materials, not only generating far less waste material when scrapped one day, but capturing a waste stream which would otherwise have been sent to landfill, or reprocessed at a cost.

In addition, thousands of plastic and plastic/foil packets from consumables such as potato chips, chocolate wrappers, cling wrap and shopping bags are used as stuffing inside the PET bottles and removed from waste. The Ridge project will consume an unbelievable 12 000 ecobricks, each creating a void and displacing on average 2l of concrete.

At an average density of concrete being 2.4 kg/litre for Portland Cement Concrete (PCC), this equates to a displacement of 57 tons of concrete in the absence of any other void forming material being used.

The material, cost-saving and environmental benefit of this programme is significant.

Opening the construction industry is key to rebuilding lives and the economy

IT is vital that the entire construction industry be allowed to return to work as soon as possible. If this does not happen, the Western Cape stands to lose over 110 000 jobs and R14.9bn in wages this year.

This is according to a recent submission to Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma from Minister David Maynier, in which he requests that under Alert Level 4 restrictions, construction be allowed to expand operations beyond public sector engineering and construction, to include commercial, industrial and private residential construction.

Allen Bodill, Executive Director of the Master Builders' Association Western Cape (MBAWC) welcomes and commends this submission, especially given that the industry body has lobbied the Western Cape Government on behalf of their membership to urgently recommence work on all projects that were active at the time of the lockdown,

irrespective of the nature of the work.

Urgent call for reopening

The MBAWC is cautiously confident that the industry is prepared to return to work safely and maintains that the longer the industry remains dormant, the greater the financial losses will be for companies to bear. These losses threaten the continued employment of thousands of workers in the industry in the Cape Peninsula.

"We have fielded innumerable desperate calls from industry workers, who have described their circumstances of real hardship, in not being able to purchase electricity or food," says Bodill.

The performance of the UIF/TERS scheme has further exacerbated the plight of the construction staff. MBAWC recently conducted a poll amongst its members who have submitted claims to the UIF/TERS fund to cover the period of the lockdown up to the end of April. As at

20th May only 12.7% of them had been paid, 18% partially paid and 64.8% had not been paid anything at all.

"We have been working with the Building Industry Bargaining Council (BIBC) to identify the issues that members are challenged with, in the hope of finding solutions, but the situation has led to enormous anger and frustration," Bodill adds.

The reactivation of active construction projects is imperative

Millions of Rands have already been invested in projects that were in progress at the commencement of the lockdown and their current stalled status impacts the entire supply chain, from developers to contractors to subcontractors and also suppliers.

The lives of many South African homeowners have also been impacted. "As residential alteration and renovation construction projects were also stalled, there are currently many people



Allen Bodill, Executive Director of the Master Builders' Association Western Cape.

that are "camping" in partially completed homes with unfinished kitchens, bathrooms and open roofs," says Bodill. "With the winter weather approaching, we have received many desperate appeals from homeowners, for contractors to be allowed to urgently return to sites to secure and complete these residential projects."

According to Bodill, there has been encouraging and positive cooperation between the Employee Representatives in the Trade Unions, the Employer Bodies and the Bargaining Council, with

regards to measures to allow employers and their workers claw back lost time and income. These measures will be implemented as soon as the contractors are permitted to resume work.

Health and Safety is key for construction

As viewed from an Occupational Health and Safety perspective, the construction sector is well-prepared to return to work. We are used to operating under strict health and safety protocols, says Bodill.

"The construction industry has for many years been subject to a highly regulated Health and Safety working environment. Contractors already have well-developed resources in place to comply with legislation requiring site-specific safety plans. These include the provision of appropriate PPE and the regular monitoring of the health and safety of the workforce.

"Whilst the additional COVID-19 specific precautions will

undoubtedly add cost and responsibilities to contractors, their experience with regard to well-practiced site health and safety protocols will stand them in good stead in implementing and managing these additional responsibilities."

Along with this vitally important experience in maintaining site safety and health, and given that some of the construction sites are outdoors or in open areas, many of the workers are likely to be less exposed to the risk of infections on those sites, compared to visiting crowded shopping malls or using public transport, Bodill explained.

Fast-tracking projects to boost the sector and the economy

The MBAWC further calls on National and Provincial authorities to fast-track the processing and approval of infrastructure projects currently in the pipeline, as this would boost jobs, not only in the industry, but throughout the wider

supply chain.

"Historically, infrastructure projects have been proven to boost economic recovery and create jobs during financial crises," Bodill said. "Just think of the New Deal in the USA after the Great Depression."

In closing he says: "We unequivocally support the State's efforts to save lives, but the way the regulations are being implemented across the risk-adjusted levels is not logical. There is no difference between a contractor working on a public works site and one working on a commercial project or residential home. The transport challenges, the sourcing and supply of materials and many of the individual work-related tasks are much the same."

"As such, we implore the National Government to allow the construction sector as a whole to return to work immediately, in order to save the industry and more than 100 000 local jobs that depend on it," concludes Bodill.

Online concrete technology education now offered by TCI



The School of Concrete Technology now offers online courses for the construction industry during the Covid-19 lockdown.

THE Concrete Institute's School of Concrete Technology now offers online courses to help members of the construction industry upgrade skills during the Covid-19 lockdown.

John Roxburgh, senior lecturer at the School, says the courses are offered via the School's existing online platform, augmented by video conferencing technology to

explain important concepts, receive feedback from the candidates, and answer any questions they may have. "We have already most successfully employed this method for SCT30 'Concrete Technology' training recently. This is an intensive course aimed at civil and structural engineers, experienced technicians and technologists and involved receiving tuition from the online

platform and attending some short video meetings for discussions, feedback and supplementary information. All went exceptionally smoothly," he states.

The School of Concrete Technology is now planning to online present SCT10 "Introduction to Concrete", and SCT20 "Concrete Practice", both coupled with video conferencing as the successful SCT30 course.

It is also planning to present SCT21 "Concrete Industrial Floors on the Ground" online.

"The online training will be offered at special lockdown discounted tariffs to encourage prospective candidates to use the lockdown to expand their knowledge of concrete technology. The School has over many decades established its reputation as the leading concrete technology training establishment and we now intend continuing to serve our market in a manner more suitable for current – and even future – requirements by adapting as much of our current curriculum as possible for online tuition," Roxburgh adds.

For more information, contact rennishas@theconcreteinstitute.org.za. The School's full 2020 education programme is on www.theconcreteinstitute.org.za.

So, where does this leave the construction industry?

Over the past few years, the construction industry has suffered many near fatal blows. The embattled sector now faces further losses as a level 3 service provider

FROM the construction mafia to limited investments, non-payments and a rise in lawsuits, all these factors have ultimately culminated in the demise of some of South Africa's most prominent construction firms.

Fast-forward to February 2020 and the country is temporarily revived during the time of President Ramaphosa's SONA address and Finance Minister, Tito Mboweni's budget speech. "This year started off more promising than anticipated," says Wayne Bartlett, Director for Bartlett Construction.

Talks of continued smart city developments, a brand-new university, R700 billion worth of investment over the next 10 years and a skyline filled with cranes were making news headlines. "A promise to shift expenditure and focus from state owned debt servicing to infrastructure was on the cards," says

Bartlett.

With more than 55 years in the industry, Bartlett Construction, a medium-sized construction firm has upscaled and downscaled over the years to accommodate fluctuating demand. "Late last year, heavy weights in prominent industries started issuing tenders and the industry seemed to be getting back on its feet".

Bartlett says that this was short lived. "The country's budget (in excess) has now been allocated to fighting the pandemic and the commercial construction sector sits at level 3 of the risk-adjusted strategy. This means that all halted commercial projects pre-lockdown will remain uncompleted for the foreseeable future and will put major pressure on both the industry and its clients once they can commence".

Adding to our country's unemployment woes, the construction industry recorded the highest number of

retrenchments and job losses in the country between 2018 and 2019. "The industry has shed so many jobs over the past few years and it's expected to accelerate rapidly. According to a recent article by Marketwatch, the construction industry worldwide will be most affected by the pandemic".

Bartlett hopes that a compromise can be reached within the next few days rather than waiting a few months for projects to continue.

"A construction project can generate hundreds of jobs for labourers. While the phased approach is restrictive and necessary, the industry could have effectively started to operate from 01 May at around 20% capacity with strict PPE measures in place. This would have offered a boost to the sector and could ensure that client's projects are met in time for lockdown to be lifted and business to re-commence".

Lubricants for maritime, mining



BMG's extensive range of sealing products encompasses Spanjaard lubricants, oils and greases, which are suitable for industrial, automotive, marine, mining and consumer applications.

BMG's Spanjaard lubricants, oils and greases have been developed with the latest formulations and technologies, to meet the demands of all sectors, including mining, automotive, marine, general industry and consumer applications. "Included in this range are mining lubricants and allied chemicals, that offer solutions for the most difficult lubrication problems," says

Marc Gravett, BMG's Business Unit Manager, Seals and Gaskets division.

"Spanjaard lubricants and allied chemical products have been formulated to improve performance of equipment and machinery; to minimise operating costs and reduce maintenance requirements in heavy-duty applications.

"Lubrication-related failures in machinery

are generally preventable and can be avoided with the application of the correct lubricant. A general multipurpose grease is adequate in many applications, but more arduous operating conditions demand the selection of the correct lubricant and lubrication system. BMG takes cognisance of factors such as speed of relative movement, ambient and operating temperatures, loading,

vibration and the environmental operating conditions.

"The effects of friction and the resulting wear of moving components are significantly reduced by effective lubrication. The purpose of any lubricant - which may take the form of an oil, a grease or a solid - is to separate the mating surfaces and thereby reduce friction and wear. For this reason, lubrication is considered to be one of the most important aspects of most industrial equipment and machinery maintenance programmes. Not only do lubricants, oils and greases extend the service life of machinery and equipment, but they also play an important role in enhancing performance of components, like bearings and industrial chain."

BMG's range of Spanjaard industrial

products includes anti-seize compounds and penetrants, assembly and disassembly products, chain lubricants, transmission oils, cleaners and degreasers, electrical maintenance products, plastic moulding and cutting compounds, as well as engineering and fabrication materials. Also available are a number of Spanjaard greasing solutions, including open gear lubricants and wire rope dressings; bearing and synthetic bearing greases, as well as other general grease products.

Spanjaard EP2 multipurpose grease is an all-purpose, lithium-based grease, which is fortified with rust and oxidation inhibitors and is suitable for lubrication of plain, needle, ball and roller bearings in mining equipment.

Spanjaard 1345 wire rope dressing pen-

etrates deep into the core of the rope for continued lubrication of the wire strands and protection against fretting. This dressing contains solid lubricants and anti-corrosion additives, to resist displacement by high-load pressures and water.

Also in BMG's Spanjaard range is an electric motor cleaner, which is a high flash-point safety solvent, specially developed for removing deposits on electric motor windings. This cleaner dissolves oil and grease and removes dust and grime from electrical and mechanical components and quickly evaporates, to minimise downtime.

Spanjaard chain oil 718 is a medium viscosity chain lubricant, which is used on heavy plate conveyors and is also effective on creasing and cutting

machines. This chain oil is based on a highly refined mineral oil and contains MoS₂ that acts as an anti-wear agent and extreme pressure additive, providing lubrication when the chain is subjected to shock loads.

The range also includes chain and linkage spray that contains low-friction, soluble molybdenum in a special lubricating base that penetrates like oil deep into linkages and lubricates like grease. This water-resistant spray is suitable for standard and "O" ring type chains, linkages and cables. 360° valve technology allows spraying at all angles, including upside down. This non-staining spray resists fling-off and remains adhered to surfaces in inaccessible places to give long-lasting protection in demanding conditions.

Ballast water treatment systems on board for international shipping sector

NAMDOCK, a ship repair company strategically located on the west coast of Africa in Walvis Bay, Namibia, is providing a ballast water treatment system installation service.

This ensures that offshore support and other vessels docking for repairs by Namdock are also able to comply with the International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) requirements for ballast water management and treatment.

This is according to Claus Zeilinger, Assistant Technical Superintendent of Carpentry and Electrical at Namdock.

"We have led the ship repair market on the

West coast of Africa in the installation of ballast water treatment systems since last year, when we obtained certification to install Bio Sea ballast water treatment systems on board our clients' vessels," Zeilinger advises.

Namdock has since successfully installed two of these systems on one of its long-term clients' offshore support vessels.

"We have also recently completed the complex installation of an ESMA ballast water treatment system in a heavy fuel tanker which docked in Walvis Bay. This was a major and very interesting project, which saw an inter-disciplinary team

of fifty people working around the clock to pull off the project. This was successfully completed in just three weeks," he adds.

At this stage, Namdock undertakes work on the piping, valves and electrical installation of the ballast water treatment system. Their certified installation team commissions the system, and then trains the client's staff on board the vessel in the operation thereof.

Internationally-compliant certification

Zeilinger explains that Namdock installs systems which have been certified for ballast water treatment

on vessels in port by the IMO: "Our task is to determine the best possible position for the system on the vessel in question, and ensure that it operates as intended."

Zeilinger and two of his team members completed training in the installation and commissioning of the Bio Sea system in France last year.

"One of the main benefits of this system is that it treats the ballast water through ultra-violet (UV) radiation. It is therefore completely safe to use, contains no harmful chemicals and the installation is simple. These factors make it one of the best systems

to use worldwide," he enthuses.

Namdock has presented its recently-completed ballast water treatment system installations to maritime class surveyors, who verified that they were satisfied with the way in which the systems were operating. The installations were done on vessels which had docked at Port of Walvis Bay for their two or five year classification surveys.

'Buoying up' ballast water treatment

Vessels which take in seawater have until 2024 to comply with the International Convention for the Control and

Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (Ballast Water Management Convention) which aims to prevent the spread of harmful aquatic organisms from one region to another by establishing standards and procedures for the management and control of ships' ballast water and sediments, and stop damage to the sea and marine environment from ballast water discharge.

According to the rules of the Convention, all vessels in international waters are required to manage their ballast water and sediments to a certain standard, according to a vessel-specific

ballast water management plan.

Zeilinger explains that ballasting is the process whereby seawater is pumped into the vessel to balance and submerge it deeper into the water, in order to have a more comfortable and stable sail. Seawater in different oceans differs in salinity, as well as in the concentration thereof, and in the species of bacteria and other marine micro-organisms present. Ballast water therefore needs to be treated to destroy any bacteria, viruses and micro-organisms it contains - to prevent the pollution of seawater and marine ecosystem accordingly.

Offshore gas mega hub development

EQUATORIAL Guinea continues to lead the development of natural gas production and monetization in the Gulf of Guinea, with the award of a new contract for a new Gas Master Plan to support the ongoing development of its offshore Gas Mega Hub.

In collaboration with Marathon Oil Corp and EG LNG, the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons (MMH) has awarded a contract for the development of a Gas Master Plan to British company Gas Strategies. The work is part of the development

of Equatorial Guinea's Gas Mega Hub, for which Definitive Agreements towards the monetization of the Alen unit were signed in April 2019.

The offshore gas mega hub will be the first such venture offshore Africa and aims at pooling stranded gas across the Gulf of Guinea by maximizing existing infrastructure at Punta Europa. While key facilities there, such as EG LNG and Marathon's methanol plant, have traditionally been relying on gas feedstock from the Alba Field, declining output

requires to gather gas from additional fields and reserves in the region.

"Equatorial Guinea has given natural gas a priority in terms of development and monetization, and we believe gas is the key to industrialization and jobs creation," declared H.E. Gabriel Mbagha Obiang Lima, Minister of Mines and Hydrocarbons. "With key initiatives such as LNG2Africa, the ongoing offshore Gas Mega Hub and the Year of Investment 2020, we are going to complete key gas projects in

upstream, midstream and downstream that will further diversify our economy, provide opportunities for our local companies, and create jobs for our citizens," he added.

Under the development, Punta Europa is set to become a gas processing center for all stranded gas fields in the Gulf of Guinea, and could open up economical avenues to monetize offshore gas in Cameroon and Nigeria as well.

The new Gas Master Plan represents an important step towards the realization of this



vision, and will help in accelerating and coordinating offshore gas

developments, which could eventually lead to the construction of

additional liquefaction capacity on Punta Europa.

The primrose path to hell is paved with good intentions

Continued from back page

We ordinary citizens have come to expect the State to do more and more for us. In democracies that makes politicians promise to give us what we want so we will vote them into power and they then make sure more people are hired to fulfil their election promises. We want the State to educate our children. We want a safe job in the civil service. We want free health care. We want a free house. We want to be ultra-safe at all times and someone to blame when we are not. And so on and on, the wish list has grown.

In one-party states like the ones socialists love to create for themselves the drive for greater number of civil servants is because more and more are needed to carry out the socialist theories -- the main theory being that the State can and should do everything for the people.

There are serious downsides to this of course. East Germany is a prime example, having been forced to endure 75 years of socialism before the entire shaky structure collapsed in 1989 leaving the inhabitants like deer in the headlights. They found themselves having to compete with high-achieving, individually-motivated West Germans. Too many failed to meet the challenge and the poor things still yearn for the return of the (harsh) nanny of the East German Democratic Republic.

In short, too much socialism turns people into sheep without initiative. They are always waiting for instructions from the shepherd and his dog. In socialist states there are many highly paid shepherds and the dogs are very fierce,

so beware of what you wish for.

In every population in every nation in the world there are people who are more than willing to assume the reins of government or who want to become servants of the state in return for the safe job, and the considerable perks (like it being very difficult indeed to ever get fired for being incompetent, and getting an inflation-linked pension).

These are the people who volunteer to sit on committees, who relish taking the minutes, love drawing up rules for others to follow, and are the very last people to leave the meeting hall. They are not all dangerous. Some genuinely wish to serve others.

The problem lies with those who have an over-arching plan to solve all problems, who follow what they believe is an infallible philosophy of how things should be ordered. They are particularly dangerous because so many are very clever indeed. Well qualified academically, and often emerging from a long career through schools to universities they only then enter politics.

These intellectuals often carry a deep seated grudge against a free society where individuals can flourish. Having as children and adolescents been showered with praise and admiration for their academic achievements, they find in adulthood that being clever by itself does not guarantee a well-paying job.

Indeed, in the private sector where a nation's wealth is created, praise goes to those who can provide the goods and services that the market wants at the highest

quality and for the best price.

Praise and reward goes to those who work hard, take risks with new and better ways of doing things. People like these regard customers as very important, because their buying habits can make or break a business overnight.

Socialists think they are the wrong people to be rewarded. They are always very suspicious of successful business people. They regard them as uneducated, not very bright, and undeserving of their material success.

Therefore, in their eyes, because such people are often very successful, there has to be something very wrong with a society in which a free market flourishes. What society needs, they think, is a benevolent dictatorship in which socialist philosophies will rule, carried out in practice by a loving civil service who will organize and monitor every little thing.

There will be no beggars, little crime, everyone will be looked after by the State from the day they are born to the day they die. No one will go hungry. There will be no drug addicts, no drunks, no religion other than the State-approved one.

And eventually, given enough time, humans will evolve under the careful watch of the State and begin to think and behave as the wonderful socialist theory says they should.

Ja, well, and no, fine. The way to this hell is paved with such good intentions. Don't believe me? Just ask the Germans under Hitler, the Russians under Stalin, and the North Koreans under what's his name.

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Back to school safely



THE reopening of schools and universities means that administrators must adhere to strict regulations to ensure safety and to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the learning workplace.

Teachers, learners and institution's employees must all be screened to ascertain whether they have any of the observable symptoms associated with COVID-19; namely fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell being common symptoms.

Capturing the daily data from each and every individual involved is also a regulatory requirement as is a high level of sanitation, frequent hand washing, wearing PPE and social distancing. Manual capture of information will be time consuming, costly and lacks the robustness of reporting and audit.

Electronic solution

As reported on this month's front cover, Touchwork has developed two electronic regenerative tools that provide real-time health screening, combining COVID-19 symptom checks and temperature readings from an infrared thermometer.

While ClickScan enables learners from ECD and Grades 1 to 7 to quickly and easily implement a compliance solution at low cost, HealthScan is aimed at

learners from Grade 8 to 12 and universities.

The tools work in the same way as described in a business application with the following procedural changes to suit educational establishments.

Once activated, ClickScan provides

"...Touchwork has developed two electronic regenerative tools that provide real-time health screening..."

learners an identification barcode by email which can be attached to message books for younger learners or accessed via phones for those more senior; the institution is issued with a screening link which is accessed at the workplace.

- When learners and educators arrive at the institution their barcode is scanned, their temperature taken and they answer the required COVID questionnaire.
- The onsite screening team access the link via a browser-based barcode scanner. After scanning the ID, a risk assessment survey is completed and the temperature taken and entered using a standard infra-red

thermometer.

- This can be done on any phone, tablet or computer with a camera. If the learner or educator fails the assessment, the system will forward an internal alert to, for example the principal and they will be asked to return home following the appropriate isolation protocols.
- The system includes the ability to screen visitors and learners and educators who have forgotten their identification.

HealthScan provides more functionality and is recommended for Grades 8 to 12 and universities.

Learners and teachers complete a daily risk assessment before leaving for their school/university using their phones or computer. If they pass the assessment, the system sends them an access pass which they need to show when they arrive at the workplace. Temperature will still be taken, and is entered into the system via the scanner tool link.

Learners and teachers who fail the self-assessment receive a red or yellow notice to seek additional screening, or not to come to school/university. In both cases, the educator nominee is notified via email.

The system could also be used to screen for other diseases such as TB, or could be changed to provide attendance recording and workflows post-COVID.

TouchWork CEO Rudi Leitner says this innovation can be installed for as little as R500 per month and offers major benefits to schools and universities.

"Implementing this learner and educator screening will ensure that you meet all government requirements in terms of screening and you have a fully auditable record of your Covid-19 Screening processes."

"Apart from your infrared thermometer there is no need to buy expensive equipment!" he added.

For more information visit
www.clickscan.co.za or
www.healthscan.co.za

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A conspiracy of dogmatic dunces

The cheerful confederacy of convivial conversationalists usually called to order in the local Pub & Grill was steadily being stripped of its charms. Lock-down has lost its patriotic pleasures.

That was my opinion.

"Useless!" exclaimed Jon the Joker. "Why now? We haven't had a pub since March! And as for beer and wine, some of us are by now considering sipping the poison consumed by ANC cadres at their planning meetings."

"What?" enquired Irene the Queen. "I thought the advantaged members of the upper cadres drank only single malt and Blue Label?"

"No way," corrected Jon. "Listen to those Cabinet ministers ..."

"Definitely not Cabernet ministers, what Boyo?" interrupted Colin the Golfer.

"Thank you, Colin!" joked Jon. (I think.) "My point exactly. If we had Cabernet ministers, they would have moved in more urbane circles where slugging companions over the noddle with empty bottles never happens..."

"Noddle, eh boyo? Aren't you the right Jon the Pom!" exuberated Colin, delighted that his right to interrupt has been restored.

It was indeed so. "Heavens Colin," I came to Jon's defence, "we all agree that typing at each other was no fun. Also that my grandkid is a genius for getting us onto this Doom or Gloom or Zoom so that we can at least pretend that we're together, all alone. But twice in two sentences!"

"No more Jim Reeves," Luke the Dude boasted his trivia championship. "I think they should call it Boom, it's as good and really replacing tobacco now."

"Reprobate," muttered Bob the Book. "What are you saying Jon, ANC ministers have bar fights?"

"Must be," finally continued Jon the Joker. "Bheki Cele, fired by Zuma but back for the Temperance Movement, Dlamini-Zuma, taking from the poor with Sarafina, snuffing Aids patients with Virodene, shirking at the African Union and now making ANC donors fabulously rich by giving them sole rights to the smokers' market."

"Also beyond the Cabinet. Zwelinzima Vavi, adept at flattening the curves at the union office and now going for that cute Corona."

"Bar fights and home wrecking are the only kinds of drinking they know. Drinkers? They beat their wives and assault their children. Murderers and rapists, those are the drinkers known to the ANC's Central Command Base, pardon my Afrikaans."

"Indeed," agreed The Prof. "I, too, have found the ANC Command's pontifications offensive, if not dishonest – not that they

had to be introduced to either. This as the billions contributed in relief by caring people and big business, the so-called White Monopoly Capital, were very efficiently received while assistance to the needy remains very inefficiently unpaid."

"Viva Prof!" saluted Jean-Jay. "Spoken like a true Frenchman! We do not often see you so passionate. I'll do some weeding in my garden for you, Oui? Makes the pipe tobacco go longer and cures the irritation. Lot of that disease around now. Wear mask and earplugs near ANC Central Command how you say, Barser?"

Bob the Book disapproved and was ignored.

"At the beginning of this disaster," informed Miss Lily, "we were upset about the government interfering with better-meaning people who were feeding the hungry, but since then it's become much worse as the economy falls down around us."

"It is heart-breaking to see the queues of starving people growing longer than the voting queues in 1994, while our so-called protectors physically bar the desperate from collecting their daily sandwich. Police actually broke into a home where food had – secretly! – been delivered to steal the delivery and, while they were there, other food in the house."

"They also wanted to know the skin colour of the donors."

"It took the courts to stop the government's interference with feeding schemes," frowned Stevie the Poet, "if only with a postponement. The brightest flame in the current fading of the light is the emphatic ruling by Judge Hans Fabricius in Pretoria, outlawing the violence of government gangs in uniform. The last I checked, they had killed eleven people."

"This is part of the very ugly panorama being revealed around us. We read of conspiracies to complete the National Democratic Revolution, of people who see the virus as a hell-sent opportunity to destroy South Africa so that a new order may be rebuilt from the ruins."

"One such is, no less, the Black Management Foundation's Dumisani Mpafa. William Saunderson-Meyer quotes him thus on politicsweb: 'We are dealing with a solid economic architecture, so strong, unless something drastic happens, you can't sabotage it. You've got to bring it to its knees and start afresh.'"

"So it's for the best to close the chapter on the SA we know, 'to start all over to build a new economy'."

"Another lobbyist for Radical Economic Transformation is Dr Mukovhe Masutha, a manager in the ANC's policy unit. He wants the current economic system to be dismantled "even if it means risking

everything". Writing in Mail & Guardian, he also wants the Command Council to become permanent so that Parliament and opposition parties are neutered and South Africa becomes a permanent autocracy. Run not by Ramaphosa but by the Zumaite who lost against him."

"Who? Dlamini-Zuma?" interrogated Luke the Dude.

"Just so. The same 'Dear Leader' who overruled Ramaphosa on the availability of legal cigarettes."

"None of that will ever happen," challenged Luke. "If the economy is not rescued from the deep hole into which it is slipping, never mind destroying it, everybody will die. From hunger if not before. Everybody knows that. It's simply unthinkable."

"Sadly," re-emerged Bob the Book, "not everybody knows that. Almost half the ANC doesn't. And secondly, it's not unthinkable; it's been done before. In Russia, at the cost of millions of lives. In China, ditto. Venezuela, Zimbabwe, we can make

OPINION

ON THE CONTRARY



Pieter Schoombee

a list."

"But not in South Africa!" insisted Luke. "Yes, in South Africa," nodded Bob. "You can Google 'Nongqawuse'. It's no longer politically correct, but it used to be called The National Suicide."

"Hey, it's just a conspiracy," grinned Luke the Dude. "Isn't it Stevie?"

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The primrose path to hell is paved with good intentions

I have come to the conclusion that what I always believed was an incontrovertible fact is wrong – or only half right.

I used to think that the massive increase in the numbers of civil service employees – laughingly called public servants by some – was solely driven by empire-building within the bureaucracy.

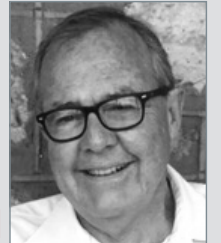
In other words, I thought it was in the nature of all civil services to grow constantly regardless of any need to do so beyond the desire of the heads of departments to gain a bigger salary because of the number of people under them.

I still think bureaucratic empire-building takes place.

It certainly exists in the big corporations like oil companies and banks. And civil services do tend to attract people who specialize in so-called human resources – as though humans are to be equated with other inputs to a business like steel, or wool.

But the exponential growth in civil service numbers -- and the huge salary bill

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN



Keith Bryer

taxpayers have to bear—cannot only be explained by ambitious managers or indeed by human resources departments expanding.

There has to be another reason, especially in South Africa's case where it has got to the point that bureaucratic numbers have crippled previously flourishing state-owned enterprises like Eskom, SAA, Prasa, sundry municipalities, plus others that have not yet hit the headlines.

In most large private and public organizations there are rules that govern the blatant stuff like jobs-for-pals and employing relations, close ones or otherwise. Usually, but by no means always, these shenanigans are stopped – but they are generally frowned on – especially by those not so favoured.

No, the major reason why civil service numbers have ballooned in the last 100 years in all countries around the world is... us.

Continued on P23



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