

INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE DRIVE BUSINESS EXPANSION IN A DIGITAL WORLD



Within South Africa's infrastructure arena, the need for exemplary leadership is vital to ensure that the country remains a vibrant socioeconomic hub. **IMIESA** talks to David Leukes, managing director of BVi Consulting Engineers, about the firm's unique ability to adapt, win work and grow consistently since 1967, founded on a solid track record for multidisciplinary project delivery.

In our competitive world, what is your personal recipe for success?

DL Success is about having a positive impact, in addition to achieving personal goals. I place a high priority on moral leadership because I respect social responsibility, honesty, and integrity. Gaining the trust of coworkers, clients, and the community is crucial to long-term success.

For me, constant learning and flexibility are key. It's critical to maintain curiosity, accept new abilities, and be adaptable in a world that is changing quickly. This strategy aids in my ability to overcome obstacles, take advantage of opportunities, and maintain an advantage in the marketplace. Engineers are inherently problem solvers, so challenges should be seen as a chance to interrogate fit-for-purpose solutions that may at

times be unconventional. That's what separates the best from the rest.

Significantly, all successful leaders, and the enterprises they lead, have one major thing in common: they embrace innovation. That creates healthy competition and sets new benchmarks for excellence. It also attracts the best talent.

So, a dedication to innovation is an integral component of my success formula, in both my personal and professional endeavours. You need to keep an open mind and encourage the same mindset within your organisation to create a dynamic culture.

Does artificial intelligence (AI) present a threat or an opportunity?

Engineers are not going to be replaced by AI, but we cannot ignore the benefits of this technology as an interrogative and analytic tool. But it's not merely about adopting new digital tools like AI; it's about how we can harness advances in information technology to fundamentally reshape the way we design, build, and maintain infrastructure in unprecedented ways.

Building Information Modelling, the Internet of Things, and AI – among other technological advances – are already enhancing project efficiencies, reducing costs, and improving sustainability.

From a BVi perspective we recognise the benefits. We also understand that digitalisation and automation are not an option – they are an imperative for survival and success. For this reason, BVi continues to invest in cutting-edge software and hardware to stay up to date with the rest of the world. That includes investments in education and training programmes for our staff so they are conversant with the latest digital techniques.

As the incoming CESA President what are some of your major goals?

Consulting Engineers South Africa (CESA) has a rich legacy of addressing critical issues in the built environment. It's now my responsibility to build upon this foundation, leading with vision and purpose in helping shape today's and tomorrow's physical and social landscapes.

For this reason, I regard it as a great privilege to be appointed as President for the 2024-2025 term, following in the footsteps of exceptional

leaders that have carried the baton in the past, all serving in a voluntary capacity for industry.

As a proud member of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC), CESA recognises its role and relationship within the global engineering community, plus the responsibility of fostering partnerships and knowledge exchange across the

continent with our engineering counterparts via FIDIC Africa (previously known as the Group of African Member Associations or GAMA).

Together, we can amplify our impact and contribute to the sustainable development of the entire continent by exchanging local best practice experiences conducive to the successful implementation of projects on a local and international scale.

In a world that increasingly demands growth, tolerance, and stability, we must position ourselves as standard bearers in driving forward our mandate. We must actively promote and contribute to an environment that fosters proactive engagement, understanding and peaceful social coexistence.

Foremost though, we must collaborate with industry in addressing the brain and talent drain leaving South Africa to more lucrative international destinations.

In response, initiatives need to be undertaken to create an environment that not only retains local talent, but also attracts global professionals, including those from Africa seeking a dynamic and rewarding career in our built environment.

What's the best way to achieve transformation?

For transformation to work in practice, it needs to be inclusive rather than exclusive. For BVi, that process starts internally – through our recruitment, mentorship, management development, bursary programmes, and the BVi Academy. In terms of the latter, candidate engineers with less than two years work experience are selected from

across the BVi organisation to attend a 24-month internship programme to accelerate their path to professional registration.

Currently, BVi is a BBBEE Level 1 contributor, so we're on the right path. In fact, we're currently one of the largest black-owned consulting engineering firms in South Africa.

Externally, we run supplier development programmes that assist small black companies to become sustainable. We also have a corporate social investment programme in place to support dedicated individual and community outreach initiatives.

How do you foster a culture of teamwork and excellence within your company?

Our culture is empowering and supportive. Diverse viewpoints, experiences, and skills sets all serve as vital ingredients within multifaceted teams where lifelong learning is supported and encouraged. Mutual respect and trust are the essential starting points to spark creativity. Equally, adherence to the highest ethical standards is non-negotiable, as are strict health and safety protocols for all projects we design and execute.

In terms of personnel development, we introduced our Dream Machine programme at the start of 2023 in conjunction with a specialist consultant to further enhance employee engagement – so essential to BVi's success.

Creative thinkers, honest communicators, enthusiastic workers, productive team players, and adaptable individuals are typically

more engaged when there's an open, non-judgemental atmosphere that welcomes their input. It's the best way to ensure that high performers remain engaged, realising our Dream Machine vision. As the saying goes, "the dream works, if the team works."

And in closing?

The most important success factor is the full support and buy-in of the top management structures in the Group, leading by example. Employees at all levels within the organisation need to see this and to know that our collective efforts are what builds our business.

Because they do, our engineers are committed to pushing the boundaries of what is possible in support of sustainable infrastructure development and a better South Africa. ■

WORKING FOR BVI CONSULTING ENGINEERS

Scan the QR code link to view our recruitment video, showcasing the dynamic world of BVi Consulting Engineers. Our innovative projects, collaborative spirit, and unique vibrant culture define us.



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