

Building a career one brick at a time

COROBRIK'S newly appointed marketing director Musa Shangase has at his core the unwavering belief that every South African deserves a home they can call their own. Into that understanding is not just a tin or cardboard shanty unable to weather the storms, but the soundness of bricks and mortar that can symbolise the dignity of a nation and the essence of the soul.

Shangase, whose new role incorporates the commercial and marketing director roles, replaces stalwart Peter Kidger on his retirement from the KwaZulu-Natal company after 43 years. They are large shoes he has to fill, but ones Shangase embraces in the same way he has always embraced challenges and opportunities throughout his life.

He joined Corobrik in July 2013 as national commercial manager, bringing with him his considerable experience in the building and construction industry. He is currently Deputy President of the Clay Brick Association of Southern Africa and, he had held senior management positions in several companies and been the African Brick MD.

In the past two-and-half years Shangase has secured a host of government and municipal contracts for Corobrik in growing the company's market share of public sector contracts. His responsibility has involved influencing key government decision-makers in using clay and concrete masonry as their preferred building materials.

That has also meant encouraging the use of conventional building materials in paving and walling projects.

“Corobrik is a leader in the clay brick industry and the company has a significant track record, strong management, world-class production facilities and the capacity to operate nationally and

within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The company has a pedigree stretching back more than 100 years and has always been a trendsetter,” he says.

Currently holding a Level 3 black economic empowerment (BEE) status, the total share equity in Corobrik under the control of Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA) is 45.09%. Corobrik has the capacity to distribute more than five million products daily from its 15 national factories.

Throughout its history Corobrik has supplied South Africans good quality building materials,” he says.

Corobrik considers the government a key client with the building industry vastly dependent on its approved infrastructure, public buildings and housing upgrades. Shangase says he wants to see government officials, especially when it comes to affordable and low-cost housing, schools, clinics and other public buildings, using more quality products.

“Replacing bad quality houses and shacks with good quality brick homes means the health, education and employment prospects of disadvantaged people can be significantly improved. That affects the economy and the future of this country,” he says.

Shangase believes in achieving his company goals, those government officials facilitating and providing infrastructure to deserving South Africans can sleep peacefully knowing they have been responsible for delivering the best schools, houses and hospitals within their ability.

“This can be attained by making them aware of the holistic contribution of brick in the community and the role public private partnerships can play in South Africa,” he says.

To that end Shangase has initiated visits by senior government officials and ministers to view Corobrik's end-product including Bongulethu Primary School in the Cape and Chief Albert Luthuli Primary School in Gauteng.

Besides saving on maintenance, the thermal properties of clay brick wall construction supports the thermal comfort conditions and mitigates heating and cooling in the buildings. Clay bricks have proven an attractive architectural finish while the non-toxic mineral properties meet the necessary requirements for healthy living and define an environmentally-friendly indoor work environment.

“Building in rural areas also provides opportunities to transfer skills by training local residents in bricklaying, masonry, electrical work and boiler-making. The reality is the country's economic growth depends on boosting employment and contributions from small, medium and microenterprise businesses and projects where skills transfer is a natural spin-off are a critical means for achieving that objective,” Shangase says.

Looking ahead he believes his new role can grow the economy and create employment. By encouraging government to use face brick and pavers as its preferred building material, the effects of those constructions would impact in societies demanding the greatest economic attention.

“As a market leader, it is our responsibility to help provide the social infrastructure – from schools to libraries and community centres – to build a better tomorrow,” Shangase concludes.