

From Pump Attendant To Co-Owner: The Rise Of Engen's Shepherd Macothoza

Ask Shepherd Macothoza how old he is and he'll answer "That depends". Born in Khayelitsha in 1979, Shepherd's family lost their possessions - including his birth certificate - in the township riots in the mid-1980s. On re-issue, the government moved his birthdate back to 1975 and so (on paper) Shepherd has lost four years of his life. In real life, he has wasted no time at all overcoming the burdens of poverty, access to higher education and pressures to fund an extended family's survival.

"We moved around a lot when I was young," Shepherd (whose isiXhosa name is Malusi) explains. "Site C in Khayelitsha was a site of struggle when I was young and my parents were both uneducated. I attended a host of schools, including some in the Eastern Cape, but once I had matriculated, I began working at Engen Blouberg on a casual basis. It was a relief to get full-time employment as a pump attendant. In those days the day shift was eleven hours long and the night shift, thirteen. But I knew – because my salary was essential to the survival of my extended family - that I needed to improve myself and so I enrolled at Impact College and studied short courses in Productivity, Supervision and Stock Keeping between 2000 and 2003."

It wasn't long before Etienne Bester and John Lloyd, the owners of Engen Blouberg Motors, recognised the raw ambition and rising talents of Shepherd Macothoza, moving him through the disciplines of Cashier training, Merchandising and Stock Control. In 2010 Shepherd was

selected to attend Engen's practical retailing skills training programme at the Edgemoor Training Centre, dealing with the practical aspects of running a dealership and growing a business.

In 2014 Shepherd overcame the many obstacles he had faced and he enrolled at UCT to study Operations Management at around the same time as the owners of Engen's Bloubaai Motors offered him a partnership in the business. Shepherd is typically humble regarding these breakthroughs. "I have grown up in a culture that looks after its own. And so, establishing a foundation for my children and looking after my mother and my niece at the same time always had its struggles and challenges. Finally, I could experience the thrill and rewards of breaking the barriers I had faced through my life."

As for the advice Shepherd would give to others, particularly his forecourt and back office staff, Shepherd maintains that hunger for better things is the essential quality. "The work is draining and many people look down on you. But, people are also watching you, so do your work as if today is your last day, give your all to everything you do and you'll discover that hard work pays off."

Joe Mahlo, General Manager: Engen Sales and Marketing says, "Shepherd Macothoza has proved that commitment to self-improvement, dedication to each discipline and task along with humility, provide the essential ingredients to a recipe for success and for changing the trajectory of his family for generations to come. He epitomises what we want to achieve in our business. He has a wealth of retail experience and is a source of hope and a beacon of transformation

within the
industry.”