

Press Release:

BBD's 'sisters of steel' win at the South African Premier Business Awards

31 January 2018

On the 30th January 2018, at a gala event, the South African Premier Business Award winners were announced. The event was hosted by the Department of Trade and Industry (dti), in partnership with Proudly South African and Brand South Africa. Rosslyn-based company BBD Steel Supplies are very proud to have been selected as winners in the category, 'Women-Owned Businesses'.

The Awards seek to recognise entrepreneurs and companies which have invested in both human and technical resources; and are producing premier products and services. The awards also honour local enterprises which promote the spirit of success, innovation, job creation, quality and good business ethics.

Gwen Mahuma and Monika Pretorius, co-Directors of BBD Steel are delighted with their award. "Winning this award is the logical outcome of the way in which we have approached our business since its inception," Mahuma explains.

She continues: "We have a very real passion for steel, which has translated into excellent performance by our valued people, who have tirelessly dedicated themselves to daily improvement and development.

This team effort has achieved the results we once only dreamed of - and ultimately, winning this prestigious business award, and the ensuing recognition".

BBD Steel was selected as a nominee – together with 5 other entrants in the Women-Owned Businesses category - from more than 179 other companies.

To initially qualify for nomination, BBD had to meet four key criteria:

- Employment
- Training
- Ethics and
- Development.

Regarding the employment criterion, from a three-person start-up in 2014, BBD now employs 48 people in a 75% black-women-owned business, working from a well-equipped 4000 m² facility. "There are not many employment opportunities in the north of Pretoria, so we are proud to have been able to create jobs where almost none existed before," Mahuma proudly points out.

Along with steel, training is an ongoing passion at BBD, with both directors really 'living' their training initiative. "Meaningful training and development is a factor that truly differentiates us; and it is something we are extremely passionate and excited about, rather than being mere observance of a legislative requirement," she explains.

To this effect, BBD Steel has established a dedicated training centre, through which the company has successfully assisted 25 of their employees to gain first-time qualifications. In the past two years, BBD has awarded bursaries in excess of R100 000.00 - with the company's training budget allocation steadily increasing by 10% every year.

Apart from these initiatives, BBD has also assisted disabled people to find employment.

Impeccable ethics are also something for which BBD Steel is highly regarded. "In business, sound ethics are a given. Without sound ethics, a company is built on shifting sands," Pretorius remarks.

In terms of development, the more empathetic and nurturing approach women adopt – not to mention their capacity for multi-tasking and attention-to-detail – has stood BBD Steel in good stead in the challenging steel industry of today. Notably, the company takes pride in listening to both valued customers and to its own people.

"Part of the development of our people has been to inculcate BBD values – and then to live and manage by them, and not by fear. If you work with people who have integrity, you do not need an overly disciplinarian approach," she comments.

Sometimes, in South Africa, BEE compliance is in reality little more than lip service. However, BBD Steel is the living embodiment of what true South African empowerment should be. Both directors are from the differing cultural backgrounds and have very distinct personalities.

"However, there is a baseline of trust, commonality and mutual respect and - as this is a long-term investment in our futures and those of our people - we work out any differences quickly and effectively," continues Pretorius.

"In fact, we have learnt to strategically leverage our different personalities, to match those of our various customers, to great positive effect," she remarks.

A key factor in the stellar growth of BBD has been its excellent relationship with senior steel major, Allied Steelrode. The latter has played a strongly mentoring role in the development of BDD, which now distributes Allied Steelrode Stretcher Material (ASSM) – a premium-quality, ultra-flat sheet steel – to the automotive and industrial heartland of Rosslyn.

“We really appreciate the support of a senior, successful industry player and mentor such as Allied Steelrode. Their dedication to unwavering excellence in customer service, technology investment and quality has been a great example for us to emulate,” enthuses Pretorius.

“We would furthermore like to sincerely thank the Department of Trade and Industry for their faith and belief in South African business, and for creating these awards to reward the hard work and efforts of our local entrepreneurs.

The generous selection of prizes includes R1 million towards participation in Wits Business School’s executive development programmes for qualifying employees from selected winners.

“Should we qualify – and in line with BBD’s dedication to training and development - we will be sharing this amazing opportunity with our team, in order to further their development,” says Mahuma.

“This award has effectively put us on the map, showcasing what the ‘sisters of steel’ can offer the industry; while also providing access to new areas of business and promoting sales and business development,” she adds.

“In summary, winning this award is a wonderful endorsement of what the ‘sisters of steel’ strive daily to achieve, for the benefit of our people, customers and the industry as whole, going forward,” Mahuma concludes.

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(915 words)

Note to Editors

About BBD Steel

Since its inception in 2014, and despite an extremely challenging economy, BBD Steel Supplies, based in Rosslyn, has doubled its turnover annually. From a three-person start-up, the company now employs 48 people in a 75% black-women-owned business, working from a well-equipped 4000-m2 facility.

BBD Steel is passionate about training and development; and believes that women have a dynamic role to play in all areas of the steel industry. The business is based on an ethos of honouring promises and doing the right thing even when unobserved. BBD Steel understands its customers' needs, always offering tailored solutions to their particular requirements.

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