

A family affair



CAPTION: Mrs Makume and her family of colleagues, celebrating the success of Boitshoko

Pretoria, xxx August 2018. The Boitshoko company is as old as democracy in South Africa, which makes it one of the earlier black SMMEs. And it is still growing. It is also unusual because it was started by a husband-and-wife team, and now is a family business – their children have joined the company.

Boitshoko Road Surfacing and Civil Works was established in 1994 by the late Ramalise Albert Makume. He and his wife, Miriam, grew the company from the ground up. It created around 20 000 job opportunities to date and presently employs 145 permanent staff. Boitshoko focuses on road rehabilitation, maintenance, construction and all civil works-related services, such as retaining structures and surfacing.

Mme Miriam raised a family of eight, who not only had strongly motivated, professional parents but also tertiary education. Of the 8 children 5 now help run the business their parents built.

Boitshoko is a 100% black-owned company.

It was important for all the Makume children to get involved in the business, not just because they needed employment, but because close relationships and a family vibe are part of what keeps Boitshoko sustainable. Miriam and her husband didn't just build themselves a livelihood - they gifted their children a legacy.

Mme Miriam is a strong believer in having the right support structure - your family, friends and colleagues. Working long hours and hard days can be taxing if the right social support isn't there. "If you have friends and family to motivate and encourage you, you can get through anything," she says.

When she reminisces about where they started, it still amazes Mme Miriam that Boitshoko is now a household name. She maintains that it is due to the hard work and dedication of her family of colleagues.

The handover of equipment earlier this month by earthmoving and equipment manufacturer, Bell Equipment, will strengthen the company's the ability to compete meaningfully in this challenging road construction industry.

The handover was made possible by the South African National Roads Agency SOC Ltd (SANRAL) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the equipment manufacturer and SANRAL in July this year.

"SANRAL and Bell noticed a major entry barrier for emerging businesses in the construction industry, where one of the biggest challenges contractors face is access to funding: the correct people with the right expertise and sophisticated construction equipment. This agreement will expose CIDB contractors not only to machinery but finance, training and maintenance services," said SANRAL's Transformation Manager, Mr Ismail Essa.

Given that the construction industry is still largely closed off to smaller contractors,

how can young entrepreneurs like the Makumes get their foot in the door? "Young people must wake up and work hard, there is no time for sleep," insists Mme Miriam.

"Getting into the construction industry is not easy for women. But it's not a man's world. Women must be bold and not be afraid to explore construction as a career," she said.