

## **Husband and wife team fuel Cape Town**

Phumla and Songezo Nayo are a testament to hard work paying off. The married couple, who entered the fuel industry, with no prior experience were committed and absolutely determined to make their new business work.

Today the Nayo's are the proud owners of not one, but two Engen petrol stations, with their eye on future growth.

They first opened Engen Vredehoek Service Station in Oranjezicht in 2011 and in 2015 they opened Engen Eastlake Convenience Centre in Muizenberg.

"Owning two Engen service stations gave us, as a black family, an opportunity to contemplate creating intergenerational wealth, something that is still elusive for Black South Africans," says Phumla.

With a BAdmin (Hons) in Industrial Psychology and having worked for a number of years as a human resources specialist and independent consultant at some of South Africa's top corporate companies, Phumla's HR background has played an important role in building her team of employees and ensuring that her customers get great service. "I am passionate about people development, empowerment and service excellence," she says.

The couple's cross-section of skills complement each other. Songezo has an MBA from UCT and strong management skills, having gained solid business experience as the previous MD of SA Rugby and having run his own sports management business.

"Our first break came when Engen gave us an opportunity to be caretakers of Engen Vredehoek, which was a good platform for us to gain industry experience. Breaking into the industry was initially tough as we had to overcome perceptions of black run businesses, which meant having to prove ourselves over and over again," says Songezo.

Today, success for the couple is having had the opportunity to create jobs at their service stations and invest in the development and empowerment of their employees.

“We work very well together because we have mutual goals and interests. We implicitly trust each other’s skills and each one allows the other latitude in relation to their area of expertise. We have also invested a lot financially and otherwise in the businesses and so failure is not an option,” adds Phumla.

For entrepreneurs who want to enter the industry, Songezo says it’s important to understand that businesses do not move in a straight line. “There are highs and lows. What one needs, in our experience, is patience to withstand the lows and patience to ride the highs. You have to understand that the next low might be just around the corner.”

The couple are strong willed and resilient, which are important traits in a tough business environment. “What differentiates us from our competitors is our location, convenience and great service. We’ve built up a loyal customer base and time and again our customers commend us on our service excellence which is ultimately what we are striving to deliver.”

With two service stations under their belt, the couple might just opt for a third in the not too distant future.