

Going beyond compliance

ROTOCON BELIEVES BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (BEE) IS NOT SIMPLY A MORAL INITIATIVE TO REDRESS THE WRONGS OF THE PAST, BUT ALSO A PRAGMATIC GROWTH STRATEGY TO HELP REALISE THE COUNTRY'S FULL ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, AND A MEANS TO BOLSTER SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.

BY ANTON PRETORIUS

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IN 2020, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Commission published a report on the status of, and trends in, B-BBEE. The report revealed that while there was an overall improvement in the average levels of black ownership of enterprises from 25 to 29%, skills development of black people remained static at an average score of 49%.

The skills development element of B-BBEE is earmarked in the B-BBEE Codes as a priority element, recognising that skills are essential for universal economic empowerment. The Commission maintains that the targets for skills development are high, but emphasis should not only be on measurement of quality of skills development spend, but also the nature and quality of the training interventions, and greater scrutiny of the role of intermediary skills development service providers.

With reports of 'fronting' – a deliberate circumvention of the B-BBEE Act and Codes – rife throughout South Africa's private sector, ROTOCON group CEO Michael Aengenvoort says B-BBEE-compliance should not be a 'box-ticking' exercise, but rather "a means to actively contribute to the company, and the country's economic growth, in a meaningful way."

He says the appointment of John Lomborg as the company's market and business development director in 2021 was anything but token. "John's position is strategic for ROTOCON's business goals and growth strategy and emphasises our product, our service, our brand and customer-centric approach," he comments.

Based in Cape Town, John brings 25 years of experience in senior and executive roles within the financial services industry, most recently as the head of market development at Santam. John is also responsible for ROTOCON's corporate social involvement

programmes, sustainability, regulatory compliance, as well as monitoring and development of policies related to risk management.

The focus of John's appointment is to maximise engagement with ROTOCON stakeholders and customers, but also to contribute towards revenue growth, increase brand value and identify new printing technology opportunities in South Africa and the sub-Saharan region. "But most importantly, there's a strong focus on skills development," Michael says.

John says his appointment will also focus on building supplier development and enterprise capacity in South Africa. "We want to help make black-owned supplier businesses more efficient, professional and sustainable. There's a need to develop township economies, not only financially but also in a mentoring capacity."

John says there are opportunities to develop black technicians within the business and South African printing sector. "We've seen an aging generation of sharpeners and grinders for instance. Our job is to identify, develop and empower a younger generation who specialises in these skills."

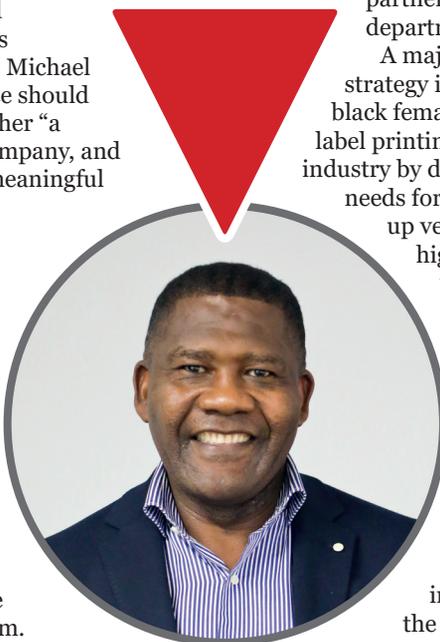
He adds that as a corporate citizen, ROTOCON (and other companies) must look beyond B-BBEE compliance by making meaningful investments in society, which includes South Africa's most vulnerable communities. Earlier this year, ROTOCON presented the Alta du Toit Aftercare Centre in Bellville with a generous cheque worth R100 000 (read the full story in our April 2022 edition).

"We, as ROTOCON, look to initiate and develop partnerships between various government departments and small enterprises.

A major component of ROTOCON's growth strategy is to invest in and facilitate access for black female-owned, youth and township-based label printing business to access the label printing industry by designing technology investment needs for smaller label operators and start-up ventures, carefully balancing the

highest possible product specifications with competitive pricing. We also form strong partnerships with empowerment agencies like SEFA and Seda, both government initiatives whose core function is to foster the establishment and growth of SMMEs in South Africa.

It's one thing to pay lip-service to B-BBEE, but real transformation is when companies look beyond compliance to implement inclusive strategies for the benefit of the entire sector and country. That's what real empowerment is all about," John concludes. ♦



John Lomborg, ROTOCON's market and business development director.