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INTERNET ARTICLE

Celebrating 40 years

15 December 2014



Stewart Buchanan and his father John Buchanan founder of Prentec in 1974

Local South African provider of water, sewage and industrial effluent treatment technology, Prentec, recently celebrated 40 years in the water sector.

Over the past four decades, the company has provided solutions to treat affected water worldwide. Prentec's experienced in-house fabrication coupled with its expertise continues to ensure a consistent supply of pure, life-giving water.

John Buchanan, who founded the company in 1974, discussed Prentec's business in the early years, and noted that "My objectives when I started the company were completely different to those of the company today. The name Prentec came from concatenating the phrase 'process engineering technology' and I decided that I was going to form a company that would sell process engineering technology into water and waste water, and that's how Prentec started in 1974".

He adds that "For the first two years in business, I focused on selling process engineering and technology. It came about that the equipment that I wanted to use was not readily available. I therefore started designing clarifiers and



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aerators and sub-contracted out the manufacturing of this equipment. By 1980 I realised that we'd need to have our own manufacturing facility, as the business was expanding rapidly. It was in 1981 that I purchased 9 000m² of land in Chloorkop, Kempton Park and we started to build this complex, with the first bay being built in 1983."

In 1985 he and his partners started building the office block and factory, which was officially opened in 1989. This was followed by the second bay in 1992 and the third bay in 2009, according to Buchanan, who was also the first editor of a water-sector trade magazine in South Africa.

Commenting on the milestones in the company's history, Buchanan mentions that "the opening of this our complex in Chloorkop is a significant milestone, as we could then provide a total turnkey design and construction facility to our clients, that would include civils, mechanicals, electrical, and the like. At that time we were the only company who could provide this complete service offering".

Managing Director of Prentec, Stewart Buchanan, remembers when as nine-year-old-boy, he watched his mentor in life start his dream. "My father John had the courage, the attitude, self-discipline values and most importantly the passion that was needed to turn this dream into reality," he says.

One of the first clients in Prentec's business was Eskom, under Prentec contract no. 002. "We constructed a water demineralisation plant for Eskom's Umgeni power station in Natal. Forty years later, Eskom continues to be a client to our company. We are proud to say that the projects throughout our 40 year history have contributed locally to South Africa's water and waste water infrastructure" says Stewart Buchanan.

"Prentec's vision for the future is to continuously evolve, develop and innovate new technologies that will be more efficient and cost effective to run and overall reduce operating costs. This is what we want to develop on an on-going basis" says Stewart Buchanan.

Speaking at the event, process director, Adrian Viljoen said "for the past 40 years Prentec has been serving the needs of our clients. What sets us apart is the fundamental way in which we address these needs. We have the capacity to deliver process plant manufactured items right from concept, through the design, manufacture, installation and commissioning and Operations and Management (O&M). We can configure custom solutions, which is crucially important in today's ever changing environment. We are continuously developing our products to meet these needs".



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It is through these endeavours that the company has created a large number of jobs and are continuously training and developing people through formal and informal training programmes.

Commenting on some of the company's latest innovations, Viljoen says "We have moved strongly into UF and RO. We are leaders in applying these to sea water desalination, mine water reclamation and other industrial water renovations and reuse. We are on the brink of commercialising our freeze desalination technology. This promises to address many of the brine problems associated with desalination".

"Prentec's management team are extremely proud of the significant accomplishments made over the past 40 years, which have all contributed to making Prentec the leading South African company that it stands for today – a provider of world class process engineering solutions from concept to completion," he adds noting that Today we are celebrating 40 year old partnerships with our loyal clients, suppliers and partners who are an integral part of our achievements and successes," says Stewart Buchanan in closing.

Ike Motsapi & Infrastructure News

Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

For more information contact : DWS Media Liaison Director Sputnik Ratau on 082 874 2942

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