

Keeping it in the family

Getting exposure to all things wood from his father isn't the only thing George Kuratle of HWZ International South Africa has learnt, he's also found inspiration and intends to pass on the same to his children.

By Ntsako Khosa

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION?

I am the president of the board of directors at HWZ International South Africa, it is a division of Kuratle group, a Swiss company which is active all over the world. The Kuratle group and its partners intend to promote wood construction and green building in South Africa. I am responsible for their strategic guidance and manage the CEOs of the companies belonging to the group.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR CURRENT POSITION? WHAT HAVE YOU ACHIEVED SO FAR?

We will continue to grow, and I hope to steer the company further into a successful future.

In the past 25 years we were able to grow the company from a local trader with 50 employees to an international operating company with more than 500 employees.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES, IN YOUR OPINION, THAT THE TIMBER INDUSTRY MUST OVERCOME?

Timber is a high-tech product. It is in many ways superior to concrete and it is one of the only 100% sustainable building material our planet has to offer while binding CO₂ at the same time.

It is the timber industries' job to create and transport this value to the end consumer and investor to further ensure sustainable supply of this great material.

EXPLAIN HOW YOU GOT STARTED IN YOUR CAREER AND HOW YOU ENDED UP WHERE YOU ARE TODAY.

My career started in our own home, where I worked during my school holidays as logistic employee and became attached to the company and the industry.

Many years later after gathering experience abroad, I was able to buy the company from my father in 1991.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THIS INDUSTRY?

Our family business and my father. I was attracted to the industry after my father went into politics. This is around the time when I took over the business. Additionally, I was also passionate about the industry as timber is a high-tech product.



IMAGE: HWZ INTERNATIONAL SOUTH AFRICA

George Kuratle from HWZ International South Africa.

DO YOU ENJOY WHAT YOU DO AND WHY? WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

I love my job. There is no day as the other and the challenges keep me going. The company is part of our family and so are all our employees.

To work and achieve goals together makes me happy.

In my opinion having an enterprise is also a social responsibility which sometimes gets forgotten by all the press about the global multi corporations.

To be able to define values, to create and guide a company that upholds these responsibilities and creates working jobs for our economy is very rewarding.

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR FUTURE? WHAT DO YOU STILL WANT TO ACHIEVE?

I see a successful future for our company as well as for the timber industry.

My focus in the next few years, is to further accompany the process to successfully hand over the responsibilities to the next generation. My daughter, Corinne Kuratle, and my two sons, Fabian and Roger Kuratle, will continue to work for the company.

WHAT BIG PROJECTS HAVE YOU BEEN PART OF?

I had the opportunity to be part of many great projects. With big clients building projects as supplier as well as internal strategic projects such as the foundation of our international sector some years ago.

WHAT IS YOUR WORK PHILOSOPHY?

Work respectfully with each other, focus on your strengths and show dedication to what you do, no matter what you do. 