

COMMITTED TO CHANGE

Effecting sustainable change in marginalised communities is a core CSI focus of energy specialists, Elegant Group

There's a great deal more to transformation and empowerment than holding a BEE certificate, according to Rocco Strydom, director of the Elegant Group – one of SA's most exciting and innovative energy companies.

The Elegant Group, which celebrates its ninth anniversary this year, is in the business of providing communities across the country with energy: fuel for their vehicles to keep the economy growing, and fuel for heating their homes and cooking food.

The company's business focuses primarily on petroleum and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) but Elegant also designs, builds and refurbishes service station forecourts, and is a leader in consulting and providing personal protective gear.

'Yes, the Elegant Group holds BEE accreditation. It's an entry requirement for business in South Africa. As much as we value our accreditation, the BEE certificate is paperwork that proves we comply and that we support the national transformation imperative.'

'It's Elegant's commitment to people that's the real measure of our determination to be a driving part of industry and national transformation,' says Strydom.

The firm's commitment to transformation and empowerment extends beyond the ambit of its own profitability imperatives, reaching into communities that have been marginalised from the mainstream economy. Results are tangible, measurable and disproportionate to the size of the company within SA's fuel and energy landscape – for Elegant is a relatively small player that boxes well above its weight.

In the next two years Elegant will create 150 new empowerment opportunities and leverage its entrepreneurial spirit, capex, talent and brand to cross-sell into existing markets, as well as open up new ones.

Elegant's LPG division – which recently marked its second year of operation – is now market-dominant in Limpopo. It has created employment for 15 historically disadvantaged South Africans in positions ranging from operations to management.

'Elegant Gas has established more than 30 distribution businesses that have collectively created more than 200 indirect jobs. Two Boxer LPG stores have opened through our partnership with Easigas and a further two are in the pipeline for 2016.'

Then there's the Elegant Group's CSI initiatives. One example is Project Themba, which aims to create real, sustainable change in people's lives as well as the welfare of their communities.

The project delivers skills training in economically marginalised communities and equips people with the know-how to find employment or start their own businesses. The curriculum covers trades such as welding, pump and tank installations, and maintenance engineering.

'Project Themba's objective is simple. We want to put more food on more plates and more roofs over more heads. It's working. And it's working well,' says Strydom.

Graduates of the initiative built gas management infrastructure at the two Boxer Stores in Limpopo. Elegant conservatively estimates that these projects



Rocco Strydom, Elegant Group director

created 15 sustainable jobs. 'We are passionate about sustainable job creation: a reliable and ongoing source of work and income for people marginalised from the mainstream economy for generations,' he says.

'In Themba's early days we would go out and pitch for new projects on behalf of graduates. Now demand for our graduates outstrips supply.'

'We also help financially. Often a client will only pay the artisans a percentage of the money upfront and the rest upon completion of the project. In these cases Elegant gives upfront funding, and Project Themba repays us on project completion and having received full payment from client.'

Transformation and empowerment, says Strydom, are the responsibility – and the privilege – of all SA commercial concerns. 'Elegant is fully invested in growing the economy, tangibly improving lives and creating a future that we can all believe in, and we can all be part of,' he says. ■

Elegant Group
Tel: +27 (0)15 516 1834
www.elegant-group.co.za

