Succession planning: Pioneer Foods spoilt for choice

By Marc Hasenfuss

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Consumer-aligned companies are often spoilt for choice when it comes to succession planning, having a surfeit of internal candidates who have worked their way up the respective organisations, to choose from when instituting new leadership.

Phil Roux

Image: Supplied - *Financial Mail*

Because consumer companies closely guard their brand-building strategies, it's understandable that their succession plans favour those managers who are steeped in the corporate culture rather than bringing in outsiders.

Supermarket giant Pick n Pay was an exception when it appointed British retail expert Richard Brasher as CE. This followed not exactly enduring efforts that started in the late 1990s to find a successor to de facto leader and prime mover Raymond Ackerman from inside the organisation.

One of the more inspirational outside appointments was when Pioneer Food Group - possibly at the behest of anchor shareholder PSG - looked for fresh executive input at a time when the company's prospects were looking stodgy.

There was no heir apparent to long-serving leader André Hanekom, who had overseen the original merger between Sasko and Bokomo in the 1990s.

Though Hanekom had done an admirable job for shareholders before and after Pioneer listed on the JSE, there seemed to be considerable merit in seeking out a CE who could bring a fresh perspective to the business.

Phil Roux, a former Coca-Cola, Sabco and Tiger Brands executive, might have surprised those familiar with Pioneer's homespun culture.

But Roux turned out to be an inspired choice as a successor to Hanekom, bringing a no-nonsense approach to weak businesses and an uncompromising attitude on brand strength. The Pioneer share price since Roux's appointment tells its own story, increasing from R73 to over R170.

Source: Financial Mail via I-Net Bridge