

EPS continues "focused, strategic growth path"

Excellerate Property Services (EPS), which was formed following the group's acquisition of a stake in JHI Properties in 2010, continues on its focused, strategic growth path, said Marna van der Walt, CEO of EPS.

"Over the past three years, EPS has not only capitalised on the synergies with JHI and made significant inroads into the market, but is now moving forward into a dynamic new growth phase, which encompasses the entire group and sees us expanding our activities and presence in southern Africa and other countries on the African continent." said Van der Walt.

EPS has a comprehensive footprint in South Africa with major representation in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, and with offices and partnerships in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Ghana and Kenya.

In the near future EPS are expecting to roll out new offices in Nigeria, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Senegal.

EPS incorporates the following integrated services: commercial, retail and residential property management, commercial leasing and sales broking, valuations and consulting, revenue and parking management, cleaning and hygiene services, security, catering services, repairs and maintenance services, events infrastructure, strategic procurement, development and project management, pest control, gardening and indoor plants, utility management and a training academy.

Integrated, property-related services

A level three BBBEE contributor, EPS includes a variety of integrated, property-related services that dovetail together to form a full-spectrum property services group. "This enables us to provide clients not only with added value through increased cost efficiencies, but also with a complete bundled service offering, which conveniently caters for all their property management and property related requirements," said Van der Walt.

"Through leveraging on group synergies we are able to provide market leading, integrated service offerings at competitive costs - a key imperative in today's challenging economic environment where rising operating costs are a factor of concern for landlords and tenants alike. Increasingly, we find property owners with investment portfolios of varying size and stature seek to outsource property and facilities management to professional organisations who are proficient and experienced in providing high levels of service in a cost-effective manner.

With over a century of experience, the intellectual capital at our disposal throughout the organisation and our emphasis on inclusive client involvement and consultation, coupled with a flexible and innovative approach, stands us in good stead in growing our business exponentially in the years ahead," she said.

"Our aim is to provide a turnkey solution for clients and a 'one-stop shop', while achieving one standard of excellence and accountability for the group - which can be delivered to the same level of quality in any African country. By adhering to one technology platform and standard of quality throughout the group we not only add value for clients, it also enables us to offer a key differentiator, which sets us apart in the marketplace.

In addition, through the synergies of the companies within EPS we are also able to derive meaningful cost savings by cutting out layers of cost and achieving economies of scale throughout our operation, but, importantly, without comprising on quality."

Quality assurance for the EPS group is based on a wide range of measurements, which include the implementation of the ISO 9001 2008 quality management system, policy framework guidelines and customised performance models based on continuously monitored client-specific service level agreements.

Green strategy

EPS also takes a holistic approach to environmental planning and the balancing of social demands with environmental sustainability. In response to a rapidly growing need for environmental sustainability and energy conservation, EPS, in collaboration with Green Star Accredited Professionals, has formulated a comprehensive but simple "green strategy" involving nine categories that impact on the environment. This strategy provides practical, applicable initiatives with each action being evaluated in terms of expertise required, costs involved and benefits to the environment.

Says Van der Walt: "One of the key factors to be considered when changing a business unit or building from traditional to sustainable is to carry out a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that the investors weigh the costs of doing business the usual way or against the costs of keeping the environment in mind when conducting business." Excellerate Facilities Management, which is a company within EPS, says it is imperative to consider the social implications of implementing a sustainability programme into a business and how the organisation will reap the future rewards.

"Previously, when an organisation was described as being sustainable, it referred to the ongoing continuity of the business, whereas today sustainability may refer to a strategy to save operating costs, thereby making sound business sense," added Van der Walt.

Trading conditions remain challenging

While trading conditions in the commercial property market remain challenging, resulting in muted overall growth, there are a number of factors that are having a positive impact on activity and future potential in the market.

Currently managing approximately R55 billion in assets on behalf of property owners, JHI Properties has, since the start of 2013, acquired the management of 34 additional properties with a combined market value of approximately R2.7 billion. These comprise 20 retail properties, which are predominantly rural-based and in neighbouring centres, nine office buildings and five industrial properties.

Said Van der Walt: "The opportunities for us in growing our business lie in the very challenges that face us; firstly, through increasing long-term building efficiencies especially around 'greening' buildings for long-term operating cost savings; increasing international interest in the South African market as we comply with international real estate regulations with the conversion of property loan stock structures to real estate investment trusts; and working closely with tenants to understand their needs and provide intelligent property solutions.

As mentioned, further opportunities also lie in the growth of the African middle class both within and across our borders.

"Similarly, via our Interpark operations, we are extremely positive regarding the future of Africa and the opportunities it offers, not only from our own business growth perspective but also in regard to providing technologically advanced service offerings and parking solutions in the various countries in Africa." Currently Interpark has over 240 contracts across South

Africa, Swaziland and Botswana, with its first site in Namibia due to commence in November 2013.

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