

## B.E.D. Cape Town: 25-million fasteners a year ensure 'the perfect fit, fast' for the Western Cape

EVEN with a component as small as a nut or a bolt, the Bolt and Engineering Distributors (B.E.D.) Group's Cape Town branch plays an important role in major projects throughout the Western Cape.

Each year, the branch supplies over 25-million fasteners to a wide variety of key industry sectors, including construction, agriculture and maritime, to name a few.

This is according to operations manager Juan van Zyl, who says that fasteners – upon which the company was originally founded and which form the foundational bedrock of every building and construction project – still account for a substantial percentage of their sales, along with welding equipment and services.

### Strength in diversity

Diversity is a key differentiator, according to van Zyl, with B.E.D.'s fasteners being sold as far and

wide as Robben Island, the Department of Correctional Services and even key power generation facilities such as Eskom's Koeberg nuclear plant and the extensive Worcester solar plant.

"Of B.E.D.'s nine branches countrywide, in Cape Town, we have one of the most diverse customer bases. This includes private sector manufacturers, mines and even shopping malls; as well as public sector entities such as Transnet, rail operators and even the navy and defence force," he explains.

However, the construction sector is the largest Western Cape fastener market, followed by manufacturing - as food processing plants, warehouses and packing facilities, which are all highly automated, and all require fasteners.

### The 'nuts and bolts' of selling fasteners

Van Zyl explains that the manufacture of equipment worth mil-

lions of rands - or the completion of large construction projects - could come to a halt if a single R4 fastener is missing.

For this reason, B.E.D. Cape Town prioritises meticulous planning to ensure sufficient stock is available.

"Therefore, we always go back to basics, as per our ethos and tagline 'it's our business' to know your business'. We not only have to understand our customers' needs and pain points - but also to know what projects are coming up so that we can help them to plan ahead," he says.

Another important consideration for B.E.D. Cape Town is ensuring the traceability of products, to counteract challenges associated with counterfeiting and poor quality:

"People need to know that they are getting a genuine product. Knowing that we have their interests at heart really sets our

customers' minds at rest," he maintains.

### Building strong relationships

For Van Zyl and his team in Cape Town, there is far more to supplying fasteners than price and availability.

"In our experience, providing a sought-after solution is crucial. Once you help to solve a tough challenge for a customer, it is highly likely that you will have their ongoing loyalty and business," he notes.

An example is the Western Cape's extensive agricultural sector. Fasteners are essential for maintenance of equipment, but customers often need assistance.

"They may want to swap a fastener with a tensile strength of 4.8 for one that has a strength of 10.9. This will not work - the stronger the fastener, the more brittle it becomes," he warns.

Another area where good advice is important is that of corrosion protection coatings.

Tough coastal weather increases the probability of corrosion. In the construction sector, columns are usually galvanised - meaning fasteners need to be treated as well - and preferably, hot dip galvanised. This can treble the lifespan of a bolt.

B.E.D. not only stocks a vast range of fast-moving fasteners, but also supplies obsolete and hard-to-find fasteners. By working closely with original equipment manufacturer (OEM) suppliers, the company can assist with sourcing bespoke fasteners which are specific to customers' individual designs and requirements.

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