NEWVISION ENGINEERING: BUILDING THROUGH RESILIENCE, DISCIPLINE AND PURPOSE

In conversation with Mohau Mokgatla, Managing Director, NewVision Engineering (Pty) Ltd



Your journey: What inspired you to start your business, and what keeps you motivated today?

My entrepreneurial journey has not been a straight line. Around 2001, I was employed by one of the largest parastatals in South Africa. After approximately two years, I made the difficult decision to leave secure employment and start my own business. That first venture did not develop as I had anticipated, but the experience planted a lasting desire to build something of my own. I subsequently pursued a career in the legal profession, but the ambition to return to business remained with me. In 2019, I left legal practice to pursue entrepreneurship once again.

In 2020, I came across an opportunity to join an engineering and fabrication company as a 51% shareholder. This gave me valuable exposure to the engineering sector and strengthened my conviction that there was an opportunity to build a sustainable, black-owned engineering business. In 2022, after extensive discussions with my then business partners, I decided to pursue an independent path. NewVision Engineering was effectively born in October 2022.

The establishment of NewVision was therefore not the result of one sudden decision. It was the continuation of an entrepreneurial journey spanning more than two decades, including an early setback, a professional career in law and a return to business with greater experience, maturity and purpose. These experiences taught me that an unsuccessful attempt does not necessarily mean that the vision was wrong. Sometimes it means that you must learn, grow and return better prepared.

Today, NewVision Engineering is guided by a clear vision: “Redefining the infrastructure and industrial landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa through custom steel engineering, machining and fabrication.”

Our mission is to provide high-quality, custom-engineered steel products and services to the mining, rail, energy, chemical, agriculture, agro-processing and other industries, while maintaining a culture that ensures customer and employee satisfaction.

What keeps me motivated is the knowledge that NewVision represents more than a business. It represents an opportunity to create employment, develop skills, strengthen local manufacturing capability and demonstrate what can be achieved through perseverance and disciplined execution. Every opportunity we secure has a wider impact on our employees, their families, our clients and the young graduates and interns who gain practical industry experience through the company.

Resilience: Share a challenge you faced and how you overcame it.

One of the greatest challenges we have faced has been building stability in an environment where engineering work can be inconsistent and cash flow cycles are often difficult. Breakdown work, delayed payments and irregular project pipelines can place significant pressure on a growing engineering company. These realities have tested both the business and me personally.

We have had to learn that resilience is not simply about enduring pressure. It is about developing the discipline to identify weaknesses, make difficult decisions and build better systems. We responded by strengthening our internal controls, improving accountability and becoming more disciplined in how we execute our work.

We began formalising our policies and operational procedures, strengthening our internal controls, and improving how we manage quotations, tenders, procurement and project delivery. An important part of this transformation has been the development of an Integrated Management System aligned with ISO 9001 for quality management, ISO 14001 for environmental management and ISO 45001 for occupational health and safety.

These standards have helped us move towards a more structured, accountable and sustainable way of operating. They have influenced how we approach quality, environmental responsibility, employee safety, risk management and continuous improvement throughout the business.

We are also progressing on our journey towards ISO 3834, the welding quality requirements applicable to fusion welding of metallic materials. For an engineering and fabrication company, this represents an important step in strengthening our welding controls, technical capability and readiness to undertake more demanding projects.

We have also become more deliberate about developing a sustainable pipeline of work and pursuing product-development and localisation opportunities that can reduce our dependence on unpredictable, once-off projects.

The journey is still continuing, and we do not claim to have perfected everything. However, each challenge has helped us understand the kind of company we want to build and the systems required to support that ambition.

Discipline in execution has become one of the most important principles within NewVision Engineering. A vision may provide direction, but it is disciplined and consistent action that ultimately produces results.

Impact: How has your journey influenced your community, clients or industry?

NewVision’s impact can be seen through the employment and development opportunities we create, particularly for apprentices, artisans, young graduates and interns entering the engineering industry. We aim to provide practical exposure that helps young people understand the standards, responsibilities and discipline required in a working engineering environment.

We are particularly proud that more than 20 apprentices have successfully completed their Artisan Trade Testing through our organisation and qualified as artisans. This is one of our most meaningful achievements because it reflects our commitment not only to production, but also to skills development and the long-term strengthening of South Africa’s engineering industry.

We recognise that skills development is not simply about placing someone in a position. It requires guidance, accountability, practical experience and an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the business. By developing young people within our operations, we hope to strengthen the pool of

technical, administrative and commercial skills available to South Africa's engineering sector.

For our clients, we provide local engineering, machining and fabrication capability, responsiveness and a willingness to engage with complex operational requirements. We work to understand each client's needs and to provide custom-engineered solutions that support their operations.

We are also pursuing product-development and localisation opportunities that could reduce dependence on imported industrial equipment and strengthen South Africa's manufacturing base. Our intention is to move beyond being viewed only as a supplier or fabricator. We want NewVision to grow into a product developer, manufacturer and long-term industrial partner.

Our journey demonstrates that emerging engineering businesses can make a meaningful contribution when they are provided with appropriate support, market access and opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities.

Partnerships: In what ways has working with Smart Procurement World supported or accelerated your growth?

Our engagement with Smart Procurement World has assisted us by creating access to platforms, networks and conversations that are often difficult for small and medium-sized businesses to reach independently.

For an engineering business, visibility alone is not enough. We need meaningful access to procurement decision-makers, large organisations and potential strategic partners who understand the importance of supplier development, transformation and localisation. Smart Procurement World provides an important bridge between these stakeholders and businesses such as ours.

The platform also encourages entrepreneurs to examine how they present their businesses, communicate their value and prepare themselves for larger opportunities. Exposure to procurement professionals and other businesses helps us better understand market expectations and the standards required to participate meaningfully in corporate supply chains.

Being selected for this feature is itself meaningful. It gives us an opportunity to share the story behind NewVision Engineering, demonstrate our capabilities and show what becomes possible when an entrepreneur is provided with both an opportunity and a platform.

This exposure strengthens our credibility and encourages us to continue improving our systems, presentation and readiness for larger opportunities. We appreciate Smart Procurement World's role in creating spaces where emerging businesses can be seen, heard and connected to potential opportunities.

Advice: What words of encouragement or wisdom would you share with fellow entrepreneurs in South Africa?

My advice to fellow entrepreneurs is to remain committed to the vision, but to be equally committed to the discipline required to achieve it. Entrepreneurship is not sustained by motivation alone. It requires consistency, accountability and a willingness to perform the necessary work even when the results are not immediate.

Do not allow an unsuccessful first attempt to convince you that you are not meant to be an entrepreneur. My own journey began with a business venture that did not work as anticipated. I returned to professional employment, gained further experience and eventually came back to entrepreneurship with greater maturity and a clearer sense of purpose.

Treat every setback as information about what needs to be strengthened. Build proper systems, understand your numbers, protect your reputation and surround yourself with people who respect the responsibility of execution. The quality of an entrepreneur's vision must be matched by the quality and consistency of the work performed each day.

Entrepreneurs should also remain open to partnerships. We cannot build sustainable businesses and industries in isolation. The right relationships can provide access to knowledge, markets and capabilities that might otherwise take many years to develop. However, partnerships must be built on shared values, mutual respect, clear responsibilities and a genuine commitment to achieving results.

Most importantly, remember why you started. When the journey becomes difficult, purpose provides the strength to continue. For me, that purpose is to build a sustainable engineering company that creates opportunities, develops people and contributes to redefining the infrastructure and industrial landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa.

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