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SA NEEDS TO BE A TEAM PLAYER IN GLOBAL MANUFACTURING

21 July 2008

South African manufacturers need to see themselves as being part of global product production community that combines the best resources from around the world to take a product to market, rather than trying to keep all the processes on shore, says Roelf Mulder, managing director of award-winning product designers Dot Dot Dot Ex Why Zed Design (...XYZ Design).

"Instead of seeing ourselves being in competition with countries such as China and India we should establish relationships with the various operators in their manufacturing arenas to see how we can support each other's roles within the development production process. South Africans need to see themselves more as global team players, rather than one-stop shops."

Having a global manufacturing focus gives product developers the dexterity to choose who will contribute the most appropriate components to suit the product/quality/deadline specifications required by clients.

"South Africans must become adept at finding affiliates around the world so we can become part of the global manufacturing community. We have, during the past 10 years developed the contacts to tap into the capabilities of a wide range of skills and capabilities around the world."

Mulder says that ...XYZ Design has commissioned toolmakers from Europe, India and China and has brought back the tools to be used by South African manufacturers in the production process.

"We have found that using appropriate off-shore skills and components has had a major advantage in our ability to deliver world-class products that meet our clients' export strategies. To be globally competitive our clients demand that quality criteria and deadlines are met so they can attack a window of opportunity. We have to select the best product location and process to meet the client's demands and, often, this is not in South Africa.

"South Africa doesn't have the all-encompassing manufacturing capabilities to be all things to all people, so we source some of the input we need from elsewhere. We make an effort to source what we can locally."

But, for example, South African toolmakers are in short supply when it comes to meeting specific quality standards and timelines, so ...XYZ Design has most of its toolmaking done in China.

"There is a misconception that Chinese manufacturing is of poor quality. Our experience during the past few years has proved otherwise. They are professional in responding to requests for quotations-often responding within 24 hours. And, as long as we are specific in clearly conveying what we want, they deliver within the required timeframe.

"Sometimes we deal with multi-national concerns based in China and often these are managed by expatriates who are contributing to that country's burgeoning manufacturing sector."

Mulder adds that South African manufacturers should be smart about dealing with the competitive forces of China, India and other Asian countries. "These countries have far greater human, educational and financial resources at their disposal than we do, so let's not waste time trying to tackle them head on. We need to see where we can use what they offer and combine it with our strengths to deliver products to markets."

South African has globally competitive potential in a number of areas that are different to the Asian countries, such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and we should focus on becoming sought after for these capabilities in the global manufacturing space, he says.

Source: www.pressportal.co.za



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