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"I would like to put the company back as the number one value-added
binder supplier in Southern Africa." **Deon Pagel**, Managing Director, Tosas

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Tosas refreshes its

Deon Pagel, the new managing director of Tosas, shares his plans for taking a company that once was the industry leader back to number one position.



Q. When were you officially appointed as managing director of Tosas and what are your primary responsibilities in this new role?

DP I was appointed managing director at the end of August 2013. My primary responsibility is to make Tosas a profitable company that can independently add to the bottom line of the Raubex Group.

Your vision for the company is in line with that of your predecessor Phillip Hechter. Can you share some details of this vision with us?

Making the company profitable is the first and foremost priority, but along with that I would like to put the company back as the number one value-added binder supplier in Southern Africa. I know this is a massive

target, but the basic requirements to do that are in place. It's just a question of regaining the trust of road construction companies and showing them that we can deliver whatever they require, not only in terms of product but also in terms of application of these products.

As the new man at the helm and with the economy still tight, what's your strategic approach for the next few years?

One of our biggest challenges is to control overhead costs, which are currently too high. With that, however, goes the improvement of efficiencies of all aspects of the business – from our workshops in terms of repairs and maintenance, down to the last activities on any site or area of work. With all the other

industry players now offering the services and products that we were already offering just a few years ago, our margins will always be under pressure. Another big challenge is to regain the confidence of previous customers and users of our services. We know it will take time but we are confident that this is already happening.

For many years, Tosas was the leader of the industry. What changed over time and what plans are in place to reposition the company as number one?

That is absolutely correct and it is quite sad that things took a turn for the worse. There are many reasons for Tosas losing its position as the leader in the roads industry and, without beating around the bush, I think it

vision

wait for days (if not weeks) for the repairs to be affected. This, and other aspects of the business being managed perhaps in a different manner than what customers were used to, led to a lot of frustration and eventually forced customers to not only opt for alternate suppliers but to even start their own 'little Tosas'. Others found the financial requirements to be very strict and opted to find alternate suppliers.

Are you prepared for the challenges ahead?

I believe that Tosas has some of the best people in the business and that gives me confidence that we are ready and we can do it. You must remember that just about all the factors that led to Tosas losing its market share had very little, if anything, to do with



I have a team made up of some of the most respected people in the industry right from technical through to production, maintenance and financial

across from other divisions in the Raubex Group. Our branch managers are well known in the industry and they are playing a massive role in the success of the 'new' Tosas.

Are there any new products being developed that you could share with us?

Currently, I can only share a bit of detail on the New Crumbed Rubber Technology that was developed in conjunction with, and is produced under license from Sasol Wax. We are very excited about this technology as it brings about a completely new environmentally friendly angle to what is commonly referred to as the Rolls Royce of modified binders, namely rubber bitumen. Not only can we work at much reduced temperatures, but also the major limiting factor, namely the shelf life, is extended to seven days and even longer. This is a massive breakthrough in the use of rubber and we are of the opinion that this will soon become the norm. **35**



ABOVE Tosas has some of the best binder application equipment available

RIGHT Tosas has a fleet of more than 30 modern binder distributors

would be fair to say that the business just did not fit into the ambit of the previous shareholders. Things like central procurement under very strict conditions hampered the production and site delivery of the company tremendously. Don't get me wrong, you cannot forgo procurement rules and regulations, but for a company where breakdowns require immediate action, you must have systems in place that allow you to get the job done very quickly and efficiently. You simply cannot procure repairs to a rubber bitumen sprayer standing on a site in Springbok through a central procurement system that requires three quotes and then, literally,

our employees and now that they are working for a shareholder who perhaps better understands the day-to-day requirements, you can see a new hope instilled in everyone. We are working towards being number one again.

Tell me about your team at Tosas.

They are great, from senior management through to branch managers down to the cleaners. I'm so blessed with this entire team and the loyalty they continue to show, it is just amazing to believe that they stuck it out despite the very uncertain times. I can really boast that I have a team made up of some of the most respected people in the industry right from technical through to production, maintenance and financial. The already strong operational team that was in place has been further boosted by bringing in staff

