

Developing people

Reunert is a world-class company with aspirations to see South Africa taking its rightful place in the global community and competing successfully with the rest of the world. Recognising the increasing need to prioritise and improve science, mathematics and technology education in South Africa, Reunert has focused its social upliftment programmes in the vital area of building much-needed human capital.

REUNERT COLLEGE

With notable foresight, the Reunert College, established in 1993, acts as a cornerstone in the group's strategy to improve the educational standards of children and to fulfil a strategic support role in developing the group's future workforce. To strengthen this initiative, several group employees are actively involved in several government and private sector initiatives, all of which are aimed at improving matriculation results and addressing the competencies of educators in mathematics, science and related technological subjects.

Through the Reunert College, almost 500 students from historically disadvantaged communities have participated in academic advancement courses to improve their mathematics, science and English matriculation grades. This allows them access to tertiary education, specifically in the engineering field. The average pass rate achieved to date is higher than 95%, which is considerably higher than the 14% average achieved for maths and science in national schools.

Forty-four students will complete their bridging year at the Reunert College in 2001. Another 62 students are currently enrolled for tertiary education made possible by the Reunert College.

The Reunert College is accredited for experiential training by the technikons of the Witwatersrand, the Vaal Triangle and Pretoria. Most of the students qualify in the field of electronic engineering, followed by mechanical engineering and industrial engineering.

Various other training initiatives are linked to the college and form part of Reunert's objective to promote employment equity in the workplace. The Reunert Bursary Fund is an essential part of the college and about 360 bursaries have been awarded since its inception. Many of these students have subsequently been employed by the group, either as part of their practical or experiential training or as permanent employees.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The companies in the group also support a range of social responsibility programmes in their own capacity. These include bursaries to people from historically disadvantaged groups and employees' children, adult basic education programmes and financial support to schools and learning institutions.

Cable manufacturers, African Cables and ATC, are taking the shortage of matriculants from designated groups passing mathematics and science to heart. African Cables sponsored

further studies for a teacher and, together with Riverside High School in Vereeniging, has provided supplementary Saturday classes to more than 400 children since 1994. ATC, with Numsa and Cosatu as facilitators, is also sponsoring Saturday classes in Brits.

Circuit Breaker Industries' main social investment thrust is towards the provision of experiential training for commercial and technical students. They are involved with various technical colleges in Gauteng, providing lectures and demonstrations based on the electrical wiring code. The company has donated the CBI bus to the Johannesburg City Council's Engineering Services. This operation uses the bus to explain the safe use of electricity to first-time users.

Close relationships exist with several universities to the advantage of various group research and development programmes. ATC, in partnership with Telkom, Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and Technikon Witwatersrand, has developed the Centre of Excellence in Optical Communications at RAU.

This year, high-technology company Reutech Radar Systems (RRS) increased its sponsorship to the University of Stellenbosch (US) to R700 000 to upgrade the microwave laboratory at US. RRS will be working closely with the university on research and development projects.

Panasonic's involvement with the Twilight Children's project started in 1992. This

shelter for homeless children in Hillbrow, Johannesburg aims to help street children become productive members of society by ensuring that they are cared for and educated. About 60 young boys, aged between nine and 16 years, live at the shelter. A mentoring programme was started in 2000 and three boys will be identified to receive further education and possible work opportunities with Panasonic once their training is completed.

A range of Panasonic products has been donated to the Reach for a Dream organisation and the Topsy Foundation, which takes care of HIV-positive babies and Aids orphans.

Nashua raised over R500 000 for Nkosi's Haven, a shelter for mothers and children effected by HIV/Aids. The funds will be used to improve facilities and develop an additional hospice.

Several group companies have also donated obsolete computer equipment to schools and community projects.

Reunert also supports business initiatives such as the Business Trust that focuses on creating jobs through tourism, schooling and the reduction of crime.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Black business empowerment group Kgorong Investment Holdings has increased its stake in Reunert Defence Logistics from 10% to 30%. Kgorong also holds a 10% share in Reutech Radar Systems.

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Various outreach initiatives have been implemented in the group. Panasonic's first empowerment franchise, Office Solutions Empowerment Company (OSEC), was appointed two years ago and is operating profitably. Zimele Broadcasting Services has been instrumental in concluding a substantial contract with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) for the supply of DVCPRO broadcasting equipment. Another initiative reaping benefits from an investment some years ago is Nashua Kopano, a 100% black-owned and managed Nashua franchisee based at Midrand.

In the past year ATC has engaged three black contractors in subcontracts to execute installation and turnkey jobs. The value of the subcontracted work was R4,5 million and formal negotiations are currently under way with a black company to undertake installation work for the second fixed-line telecommunications network operator.

About 90% of CBI's hand tools are purchased from an empowerment company and half of its requirements for overalls and dustcoats are supplied by Kunene Safety Equipment.

Over the past few years many efforts were made to identify and use service providers from disadvantaged groups for several outsourced activities, including maintenance, canteen and security services contracts.

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

As part of the drive to expand social equity and fair labour standards, Reunert has incorporated the principles of employment equity into the

strategic business plans of all group companies. The necessary employment equity plans have been submitted to the Department of Labour.

These plans form an essential part of the transformation processes designed to introduce world-class practices and standards into the workplace, acknowledging that effective performance is critical to the sustainable success of business organisations.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Reunert Skills Development Forum plays a vital role in implementing the Skills Development Act of 1998. Forum members are nominated from the different companies and are exposed widely to the activities of the various Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (Setas).

The companies in the group belong to the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Education and Training Authority (Merseta) Seta or to the Information Systems, Electronics and Telecommunication Technologies (Isett) Seta. Reunert is recognised as one of only nine companies nationally in the Isett Seta to be committed to skills development.

Reunert endeavours to be a pacesetter in customising learnerships to its own environment and building its people's competencies. The learnerships will reach beyond the traditional blue-collar trade apprenticeship training of the past.

Several skills development facilitators are involved at Seta level to set the standard of

quality assurance. Many of these facilitators will be trained to become assessors and moderators. Reunert envisages them playing an instrumental role in setting industry training standards and competencies.

During the past year Reunert continued its management development programme. In total, 39 senior executives and 32 middle managers were identified and their management potential assessed. Participants received detailed feedback on their performance and personalised developmental action plans were suggested for about 80% of the delegates. Subsequently, several of these managers participated in executive management programmes at business schools, both locally and internationally.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SAFETY

Over the last few years Reunert has enjoyed a low incidence of industrial action, which is ascribable partly to sound structures and healthy relationships with the 24 trade unions recognised by the group. The group's managers' ability to manage these issues professionally must be commended.

HIV/AIDS

Although recognising the pandemic scale of HIV/Aids in South Africa, Reunert has fortunately not experienced any significant direct impact on its businesses as a result of the pandemic. The group enforces a non-discriminatory Aids policy and during the year most of the companies expanded their awareness programmes on the prevention of the disease.

Nashua recently received the prestigious Raptor Award for the Nashua vs Aids campaign. The award entitled "The Big Idea" was received for Nashua's merger of social responsibility with corporate sponsorship.

PENSION FUND

Individual member choice was introduced two years ago, thereby allowing members to switch pension fund portfolios every quarter. Each fund's investment performance is communicated regularly to members to allow them to make informed choices about their retirement benefits and portfolio selection. More information on retirement benefits is on page 68.

ENVIRONMENT

Reunert is a corporate member of the South African section of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and is committed to pursuing and upholding the concept of sustainable development. Most of the group's business activities do not pose a direct threat to the natural and social environments. Group companies, however, adhere to appropriate legislation and regulations and are using internationally recognised environmental management systems.

Nashua has commissioned a poison working group to help eradicate the illegal poisoning of wildlife in South Africa.

As a group committed to the fair and equitable development of South Africa, its people and its resources, Reunert will continue to take every practical step to ensure that the country remains the location of choice for its businesses and its people.