

Local, but global

Don't underestimate KwaZulu-Natal. The province of King Shaka, has showed time and time again that it is no pushover. If you underestimate it, you will come second as a KZN entrepreneur recently proved when it took on one of South African retailing giants – and won

By Danette Breitenbach



he story of how Frankie's took on Woolworths has been all over the news – from Twitter to radio news reports. It is testament not only to

toughness of entrepreneurs all over the country, but also to the spirit of one province in particular.

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has always had a character of its own. Rugby fans all over the world know this, as its Sharks rugby team supporters can be found in Johannesburg through to New Zealand. The Comrades marathon is a world class event with thousands making their way to the province for this race, as they do for the Midmar annually.

The province hosts the largest number of domestic tourists annually – a title it has held for many years and one that has increased – but perhaps this record is a little tainted from a local point of view – by the Matric Rage. This annual tradition for South African matriculates, mainly from Gauteng, to celebrate the ending of their school years, in towns such as Balito, Margate and Umhlanga has grown from 6 000 to 60 000 in numbers, making it one of the biggest festivals in South Africa. More recently it played host to the 17th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP17) which attracted 20 000 delegates over 14 days.

But KZN is not all sandy beaches, sport and partying. Behind this popular stereotype lies a business

environment with the likes of Unilever, SPAR and Mr Price. Serving these companies and many others are businesses that generates some of the best work in their industries globally.

THE NEW SILICON VALLEY

immedia is a digital studio, based in KZN. It specialises in mobile and online app development, both from a platform and application perspective. Anice Hassim, CEO and head strategist of immedia, says: "We carry our own teams of designers and developers in the iOS, Android, Windows Phone and online ecosystems." The company services and support clients throughout the country and, in select cases, other parts of the world.

He says there is a certain kind of thinker that gravitates towards a space like Durban. "We get a lot of infusion from people who are punching out from the Gauteng rat race, opting to live a life on the north coast in seaside towns such as Ballito. We ourselves have found many experienced and undiscovered talent, with values the same as our own."

For him, the quality of their talent is strength, and a very distinct, competitive strength at that. "We don't think we would have had as qualitative an outcome if we were working with people whose heads were in the status quo, and who



Anice Hassim, CEO and head strategist of immedia



Craig Starr, group client director, Barrows

“THE WHOLE POINT AND PREMISE OF THE APP DEV REVOLUTION IS THAT IT CAN BE DONE IN ANY COMMUNITY”

were’n passionate from the word go about what they wish to achieve or learn from our space.” Being in Durban allows us to be innovative, he says. “Because of the fact that it’s a bit obscure, if you fail at a new or unpredictable venture, the consequence is not as visible as it would be elsewhere. And as any entrepreneur would tell you, the lesson you get from failure can be very powerful in setting you up to pivot to something with a greater chance of success.”

To be sustainable, he says immedia wants to build something that is relevant and aspirational, not merely to the current generation, but the generation that comes after. “It requires a sense of anticipation and a degree of vision in:

- believing that it’s possible
- seeing how one could navigate to that reality
- trying to convince as many stakeholders as possible to assemble a moonshot over a generation.”

He believes that Durban is ideally situated to be an epicentre for post-PC app creation.

“It wasn’t a deliberate choice to create an app dev studio in Durban. It was more a case of us being really passionate about the post-PC era, and we happened to be from Durban,” he explains.

On the back of that, one of the key choices that the company did make was the decision to transform Durban into the nexus of SA’s technical innovation. “To the extent that we are deliberate, the choice was that we would live and work in Durban. And based on that, we’re trying to create an environment that is globally competitive in its ambition and vision.”

However, he does feel that what we’ve done here can be done anywhere. “The whole point and premise of the app dev revolution is that it can be done in any community. So we see our success in Durban as being a beacon of hope to any community in the world – primary, secondary or tertiary; marginalised or not. If it can be done here, it can be done anywhere.”

A GLOBAL BUSINESS

A business that has grown into a major global force within its industry is Barrows. From its Centre of Excellence in Durban, it exports its expertise around the globe. A few years ago, it established a branch in Brazil and is now expanding in South America. It also has a presence in the United Kingdom (London) and South East Asia. It is gearing itself to enter the United States and Asia this year.

Craig Starr, group client director, Barrows, says the business has come a long way from its roots: a display specialist in the retail business. “This said we are still display specialists but not in the old sense of the

CASE STUDIES

immedia
for SuperSport
(September 2011)

CLIENT: Graeme Cumming
HEAD DEVELOPER: Kishyr Ramdial

THE BRIEF: SuperSport.com is the go-to destination for all things sport-related. Its mission was to channel sport-related content to all their viewers and users on all platforms as fast and easily as possible. With apps targeting specific mobile and tablet platforms, SuperSport has created unique experiences for its users.

THE SOLUTION: The iPad app is the ultimate second-screen experience with match chat, live commentary, real-time event notifications (goals, subs, cards) and player profiles. With the iPhone app, users can quickly get to their favourite match, tournament, or sport in a very quick and intuitive way. The application also offers a far more vibrant, engaging interaction with the SuperSport.com brand using

features such as:

- Real-time updates on scores, substitutions as well as the latest fixtures, results, logs
- Live match commentary
- Live in-game match chat which allows viewers to chat to other avid sports fans in real time
- Match stats and player profiles
- Match check-in

UNIQUENESS OF THE SOLUTION:

What makes both apps truly spectacular and unique and separates them from other sporting apps, is that events and commentary are delivered in real time to both iPhone and iPad apps* as soon as they occur on the pitch. All this leverages the latest in real-time technology both on the server-side and app side.

**For select tournaments only.*



Barrows for
Coca-Cola

THE BRIEF: The primary objective was to design a permanent, cost effective display solution to merchandise Coca-Cola’s CSD portfolio, across traditional trade channels in multiple global regions.

CREATIVE SOLUTION: As a consequence of Barrows’ commitment to sustainability, the full lifecycle from cradle-to-cradle was scrutinised. The vision was to design a display with a focus on ‘Reuse, Recycle and Reduce’.

THE FINAL SOLUTION:

A display that could pack-flat (saving on shipping volume by two thirds); a display comprising of over 65% re-used material, the bulk of which comprises of HDPE and smaller components from PET derived from recycled Coca-Cola bottles; and an end-of-life design which allows for the entire display to be completely recycled and re-used. Finally, this smart design was cost effective, proving that sustainable design, is not just good practice, it’s good business.

CREATIVE TEAM: Channon Selwood, Coca-Cola; Brett Horn, Barrows; Matthew Pennefather, Barrows

word. What we do is so much more than that.” Barrows provides holistic retail knowledge to its clients. “Instead of starting with the display design as we did in the past, we begin with planning and strategy before moving to design, placement and production. We work with our clients to understand their needs. We also find out from the shopper’s point of view, how the category is shopped.”

All this is done at Barrows in Durban and then exported to the rest of the globe. “We just

happened to be situated in Durban but we all travel, frequently, and we all understand the Barrows way. We pass this on to our branches in the rest of the world.”

This knowledge is passed on to the locals in these countries to ensure that the businesses are sustainable going forward – a key part of Barrows sustainability model.

But what makes the business unique is its people. “It is the way we are wired and because we have a passion for what we do. Being global gives our people huge opportunities. Many of us have been with Barrows for years purely because we love what we do.”