



IVOR ICHIKOWITZ
paramount group

Ivor Ichikowitz' Paramount Group has become a leading Global Aerospace and Defence business. The multi-faceted organisation has over 15 subsidiaries involved in the design, development and manufacture of technologies, systems and equipment to support governments around the world in the development of defence and security institutions.

Paramount Group works with more than 30 countries around the world supplying peacekeeping operations, air forces, navies, armies, police forces and Internal Security Institutions.

48-year-old Ivor hails from Springs where he matriculated before attending Wits where he did his BA. Ivor is also chair of TransAfrica Capital – a leading African private equity group and the founder and chair of the Ichikowitz Family Foundation.

His business employs some 2,000 people at 13 facilities in South Africa, Latin America, the Middel East, Asia and Europe.

Paramount's facilities include a shipyard which manufactures high-speed naval vessels; an aerospace company which is a Tier-1 sole-source supplier to Boeing and Airbus; a land-force business which produces the most advanced armoured vehicles in the world; a military aerospace business which is one of the few such businesses in the world with supersonic fighter jet upgrade and support capability; an optronics business which manufactures some of the most advanced military optronics in the world and a communications and electronic systems business.

One of SA's great achievements since 1994, he says, is that all races and religions have learnt to do business and politics together. "But they have never learnt to do leisure time together,"

Paramount, says Ivor, is a "proudly African Company which works globally." His mission has always been to project Africa's skills and expertise to the rest of the world.

He founded the business in 1994 with a very small team in a time of great adversity. This team built the group into the global operation it is today. "From our humble beginnings, Paramount Group is today recognised as a very important player in the Global Aerospace and Defence Industry," says Ivor.

"It is also recognised as THE player on the African continent," he adds, which is why Boeing Defence Systems had selected Paramount Group as its Primary Partner in Africa.

Paramount celebrates its 20th Anniversary this year and has proven in that short time that "Africa is able to produce world-class products capable of competing with the main defence technologies in the world," he says.

PARAMOUNT IS A MAJOR HI-TECH EMPLOYER

The Group employs over 600 engineers and technicians who are considered to be amongst the top experts in their respective fields. Paramount Group believes, says Ichikowitz, "that our ability to innovate comes from the fact that we have a unique set of skills in South Africa, which resulted from our country's rich and diverse history."

This, he says, has given South Africans a "Can Do" mentality in which failure is not an option.

Paramount has developed appropriate technologies, cost-effectively, with applications in global markets.

Although Paramount's personnel are almost all South African-based, the group only recently started to do business inside the country – the business was built without any dependence on the domestic market.

To relax, when he has the time, Ivor Ichikowitz devotes time to his foundation and his family. His hobbies are flying and photography.

Ivor lists his greatest business disappointment as the failure to acquire the Lions Rugby Team. One of SA's great achievements since 1994, he says, is that all races and religions have learnt to do business and politics together. "But they have never learnt to do leisure time together," he says.

He had hoped that, through the Lions acquisition, "we would be able to transform the sport of rugby in South Africa and make it a multi-leisure sport." In the time he was involved, they brought thousands of Black spectators to Ellis Park.

Going forward, says Ivor, The Aerospace and Defence Industry is one of the most important drivers of innovation in any economy – and feeds hordes of sub-suppliers, sub-contractors and services providers.

"The current geo-political climate in the world dictates that there will be a significant growth in this industry over the next few years," he says, and Paramount's objective is to use this reality as an opportunity to grow significantly and to attract young talent into the Industry in order to ensure that the "Can Do" mentality is passed on to future generations.



MICHAEL RUDNICKI
KPMG

If you want to cover your back in corporate South Africa, KPMG's Michael Rudnicki is the go-to guy.

After matriculating at Herzlia in 1987, Michael proceeded to build an impressive list of degrees – starting with a Rhodes University BCom which he completed in 1990. This was followed by a Hons, BCompt, in 1992 from UNISA, then from UCT a BCom, Hons Taxation, in 1995 and then a stint at UJ where he earned his MCom Taxation, in 2001.

Along the way he also collected an Academy Financial Markets: Higher certificate and Higher Diploma in 2000, and his CA(SA) in 1993.

What Michael refers to as his “work journey” is just as impressive: He did his articles at Zeller Karro from 1991 to 1993 and joined Alan Huth & Associates from 1994 to 1996 when he joined Price Waterhouse – now known as PWC until 2000.

His last move was to Arthur Andersen/KPMG in 2001 where his star has risen so far and so fast that he hasn't needed to look anywhere but forward.

In the field of M&A and private equity, Michael is: Head of M&A/Private Equity, Tax and Legal; a member of National M&A/PE Executive Group; a member International M&A/PE Group; and a member SAVCA Legal and Regulatory Council.

In this capacity (yes, there are more capacities to come), his major clients include: ABSA Private Equity, including portfolio companies such as Enviroserv, Safripol, Bravo; Kagiso; Medu Capital, Nedbank Private Equity, Theko Capital, Actis; RMB Corvest, Harith, Safika, Sanlam Private Equity, Investec Private Equity, Vantage Capital, International Housing Solutions, and Rockwood private equity.

Michael's main type of work in the M&A and Private Equity includes: Fund set up with coordination from accounting, legal, and governance; Purchasing and vendor due diligence; Tax structuring of portfolio companies; Post due diligence implementation work, globally South Africa commenced with this service line within KPMG; and Presale exit strategies and clean ups.

In the field of financial services, Michael is: Head of Financial Services, Tax and Legal, with a fee budget of R60m; a member of National Financial Services Executive Group; and a member of Global Financial Services Tax Group.

Here, his major clients include: ABSA/Barclays Africa (largest KPMG Tax and Legal client), Standard Bank, JPMorgan, UBS, Macquarie (lead partner for firm nationally, member of global Client Service team), HSBC, Deutsche Bank, and Sasfin.

Michael's main type of work in Financial Services includes: Derivative structuring and reviews; General consulting to most banks in the Financial Services Sector; Client and public lectures on tax and accounting implications on derivative instruments; Structured product and finance reviews; and Bond buy backs and FEC valuation reviews.

Michael's Other interests and responsibilities include: Head of knowledge management for Tax and Legal; Responsible for KPMG internal Tax affairs; a member of SAVCA tax committee; and a member of SASF tax committee.

“In the year ahead, our primary goals are to maintain a premier advantage, attract entrepreneurial talent and retain quality staff.”

As if that wasn't impressive enough, other major clients who pick Michael's brain include: Microsoft, Siemens, Macsteel, Gijima AST, Eskom, Sinosteel, Fidelity, and Mitsubishi.

Now you can understand why Corporate South Africa wants Michael Rudnicki behind them.

Michael lists his greatest achievement as: “Working with a diverse and energised team and being part of what is regarded as the premier Corporate Tax team in the country (Financial Services, Mining and Mergers & Acquisitions sectors).”

And his greatest disappointment? “Not always being able to retain talented individuals.” He says.

On the subject of how he deals with a work/life/community balance, Michael says that although KPMG is a proponent of this balanced philosophy, he finds it is difficult to maintain. “The harsh truth is that fees won't be generated if client relationships aren't nurtured,” he says. “Regular exercise and quality family interaction are very important to me.”

KPMG, he says “focuses on employing graduates as opposed to focussing on only recruiting qualified professionals.” This strategy allows the company to mould individuals according to their business philosophy. “I like to provide insight into what the ‘real world’ is by speaking at schools, community halls, universities and the like,” he says. “Academics is a small part of being a successful tax practitioner, being street-wise is often grossly under-played.”



CLIFF GARRUN
garrun group

58-year-old Cliff Garrun had the stereotypical Johannesburg upbringing. HA Jack Primary School, Highlands North High from where matriculated in 1973 as Head Prefect and with the Governing Body Award.

Then it was off to Wits where he earned his B.Com in 1979, his L.L.B in 1982, and his Higher Diploma in Tax law in 1984. He was admitted as an Advocate in 1985.

Cliff's life, from high school to date, speaks to his civic-mindedness.

He was a member of the Law Students Council in 1982, an Associate of the Insurance Institute of SA and an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Insurance (UK).

The Garrun Group is a short term insurance intermediary (broker) and consults regarding employee benefits. They employ 307 staff nationally.

What is unique about his business, says Cliff, is that they offer a "National strength/Local signature" relationship-based business model with well-developed and efficient centralised functions."

He is especially proud of having "grown an organisation into one that is respected within the industry and has a recognisable and self-sustaining brand," says Cliff.

Cliff Garrun is an achiever at everything he puts his mind to and a serial civic contributor and sportsman

Cliff says the business "will continue on our path of acceptable growth and improving structure and efficiencies" in the future. His senior staff and management have, by and large been with the company for many years. He tries to give staff "an opportunity (with responsibility) to the emerging generation."

"One's business serves the individual," is how he sees business, "be they the owners or the employees."

Cliff is also involved in the property management business.

In 1988 Cliff was elected to the Joburg City Council for the Ward of Pullingerkop. He served on the Planning & Environment Committee and was Chair of the Democratic Party Caucus Sub-Committee dealing with Group Areas and related matters.

In 1990 he became Chief Whip of the Democratic Party Caucus and initiated the formation of a Task Group on urbanisation and Inner

City Working Group.

In 1992 Cliff was elected to the Executive Committee Central JHB Partnership (CJP) and also elected as Alternative Delegate to the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber. He initiated City Council decisions on differential rating for mixed use inner city buildings which applied to both rates and services.

In 1994, on the formation of the Transitional Metropolitan Council, Cliff Garrun ended his term of service of the Joburg City Council.

Cliff is married to Robyn (Gishen). They have two children: Kim, 20, and Matthew, 23.

A serial civic contributor, Cliff plays a major role in community organisations:

- In 2008/09 South African International Games Committee for the SA Delegation to the 18th Maccabiah, In 2010 Cliff was elected Chair of SA Maccabi. From 2011 to 2014 he was the Head of the Africa Confederation of Maccabi World Union (MWU) and Vice-Chair of the MWU. In 2013 he was Deputy Head of Delegation for SA the 19th Maccabi Games and in 2014 he was appointed to the International Sports Committee of the MWU.
- From 2002 to 2009 he Chaired the School Governing Body of Highlands North
- From 2010 to 2014 he Chaired the Highlands Boys Foundation NPO

Cliff is a sportsman as well as an administrator. Today, his masters swimming, golf, general fitness, and hiking keeps him on his toes. But as a younger man, he participated at top levels:

- From 1971 to 1973 he represented the Junior Springboks, SA Schools and Transvaal at swimming
- He earned his School Colours in Swimming, Rugby, Cricket and Athletics
- In 1973 he Represented SA at the Maccabi Games and came home with 2 Bronze and 1 Silver
- From 1978 to 1980 he was Treasurer of the Wits Rugby club
- In 1979 and 1980 he was Vice-Chair of the Wits All Sports Council and was awarded University Colours in swimming, water polo and rugby

The list goes on and on – and then some, culminating in his winning a silver and bronze medal for SA at the 19th Maccabiah Games last year.



COLIN LAZARUS
lazarus motor company

Colin Lazarus' unlisted Lazarus Motor Company (Pty) Ltd is a multi-franchise dealership which is located in Centurion, on the Joburg side of Pretoria. The company consists of five retail automotive dealerships, namely Ford, Mazda, Jaguar, Land Rover and Kia - with its core activities being sales of new and used vehicles, workshops, parts sales and a fitment centre.

But growing a small family-owned country tractor dealership into the state-of-the-art six-brand facility, the first successful multi franchise dealership in the country, required Colin Lazarus to take a number of huge risks along the way. They paid off, and today Lazarus employs a staff of 292!

The business's humble beginning was as a tractor retailer in the small rural town of Bronkhorstspuit. 67-year-old Colin grew up as a dinkum boere-Jood, attending Laerskool Du Preez van Wyk and Hoerskool Erasmus in Bronkhorstspuit, before switching to Carmel High School Pretoria for grades 9 to 12. He was Head Boy of Carmel, won the Good-fellowship Award and captained the first cricket, rugby and tennis teams.

After matriculating, Colin did a Ford Management Development Programme before joining the family's tractor business in 1980. This solid country grounding taught Colin what he calls "the paramount importance of customer service and to never take a customer for granted."

He carried these through when, ten years later, Colin made the bold decision to move the dealership to the big city. This decision, says Colin, would prove to be one of the biggest risks that he would take in his professional career. "At the time," he says, "there were no reserves in the business and so there was no other option but to make this calculated risk work."

Fortunately everything went according to plan and, ten years later, after acquiring various other dealerships within the Pretoria area, Colin made another bold decision to move all the dealerships to a central prime location under a single roof and formed what is now known as Lazarus Motor Company.

In 1985 Colin married Jenny (nee Kahn) and the couple had three sons in rapid succession: Ross in '86, Dean in '88 and Jed in '91. Today, Ross is a CA (SA) and joined Lazarus Motor Company in 2012, after completing his articles at one of the big four audit firms. This makes him the fourth generation Lazarus to be actively involved in the business. Dean is also involved (elsewhere) in the motor industry while Jed is a fifth year Medical student at the University of Pretoria.

The succession plan to carry the company forward is in keeping

with Colin's firm belief that "the key to the success of the business is that it is run with solid family values while always maintaining a strong corporate governance culture."

Colin Lazarus is a serial entrepreneur and is also involved in various property developments. He is also the "Captain of Industry for Pretoria" for the Reach for a Dream project.

He is a keen golfer and the vice-President of the Wingate Park Country Club.

Colin's key attributes, which have made him so successful and respected within the motor industry, are his passion for the motor industry, his interpersonal skills, high standards and expectations that he sets for both himself and his organisation, his sheer determination to succeed and, most notably, his active involvement in his community.

The Lazarus Motor Company sponsors Pretoria's three big sports teams, namely: The Titans, The Blue Bulls and SuperSport United - all of whom use the company's vehicles to go out into the surrounding areas and engage previously disadvantaged communities in sports development and various initiatives with local schools.

"Lazarus Motor Company prides itself on being a family business run on strong corporate governance principles - while being committed to its customers and their communities," says Colin.

Among the company's many accolades within the Motor Industry, include: Ford dealer of the year for the past 10 years; Being invited to be part of the Ford's International Presidents circle; Kia Dealer of the Year 2013; Mazda Dealer of the Year 2013; and Land Rover Dealer of the Year 2003.

Colin's greatest joy comes from being part of an individual's journey through the company, from young apprentice to maturity and work their way up through the company and become a strong leader.

Colin never had the opportunity to work with his father, Gerry. After receiving his diploma from Ford Management Development Programme, Colin joined the family business on 29 March 1980. His father passed away from a heart attack the very next day!



GILLIAN EZRA simfy africa and exactmobile

Gillian Ezra is a finalist for the Absa Unlisted Award for her involvement in two music businesses: she is COO of simfy Africa [Pty] Ltd, a music streaming business; and a director of Exactmobile, a music download company.

For the uninitiated, the difference is access versus ownership – downloads one pays for and owns, while streaming one pays a monthly subscription fee for access to, and loses access if the user stops paying. Both offer access to 23-million licensed tracks across the continent and the world.

“We are a digital music business,” explains Gillian. “We license and format the music so that people can stream it via our applications.”

simfy Africa, says Gillian, is the first ever music streaming business in South Africa and, indeed, in Africa. It is fully licensed by all the majors and independent labels, she says, making it a “huge achievement both in licensing and technology.” The businesses employ a staff of 20 and are based in the business-hub of Johannesburg.

Gillian Ezra matriculated at Greenside before qualifying for her BA [Industrial Psych]. LLB, LLM: “But I’ve always worked in music – what I do now is music licensing,” she says. She’s the one who makes sure everyone in the value chain earns their due. The music industry is clearly where her passion lies. Little wonder that she relaxes by doing ballet.

MTN South Africa became the first mobile operator in the country to launch a streaming music service in May 2014 following an exclusive partnership which Gillian had concluded. The service became available to the public from 4 June. Now, for R49/month, MTN customers are able to listen to all of their favourite music via streaming or in an offline mode.

Customers can access an endless supply of music across multiple devices including their computer, tablet and smartphone. All customers will have the opportunity to try the full service, and enjoy all of its features during a two week free trial period.

Gillian says that she is confident that the ground-breaking deal with MTN will push their subscriber numbers up in the coming year and that their businesses and brand will become more well-known. But, she adds, dealing with a multinational conglomerate like MTN means that decisions and actions happen more slowly than she is used to. She is frustrated as they have yet to start advertising the service.

They had hoped to have a larger subscriber base by now at simfy Africa. However, says Gillian, the high cost of data is holding them

back. She says the company looks for talented, committed people with the specific skills when recruiting.

Gillian is not too up-beat about SA in the coming year. She gives her view in a single word: “Troublesome.” The country needs to end strikes “and focus on building the economy and make businesses feel welcome to trade,” she says.

“So much to learn!” says Gillian Ezra about the cutting edge tech that her industry is involved in. The high cost of data in SA is holding back iBusinesses.

Her personal business philosophy is her belief in hard work “and grabbing every opportunity that presents itself. Life and business are about taking risks – you never know which will be the one that launches your career,” she says.

She draws inspiration from all of the people that she meets in her work. “So many people are inspiring to me for different reasons – charitable work, innovation, entrepreneurship. I don’t have any particular role model,” she says. However she does enjoy reading books about the leaders of various technology companies. “So much to learn!” she says.

Gillian is also involved as a volunteer and fundraiser for “Stand With Stan” – an NGO which helps fund amputees who can’t afford prosthetics.

Gillian is all about music, and has worked in many aspects of the music industry, from EMI to artist management, before she uncovered her passion for digital music. She heads up the music team at simfy Africa, as well as keeping an eye on the complex legal and operational issues involved with bringing digital music to life. She has recently earned her LLM degree, specialising in digital intellectual property.

Gillian’s personal music playlist is topped by “Safe As House” by aKING; followed by Last Kiss by Pearl Jam; Sabotage (2009 Digital Remaster) by Beastie Boys; Dance Me to the End of Love by Leonard Cohen; State Of Emergency by Simphiwe Dana; A Rainy Night in Soho; She Always Gets What She Wants; Suddenly I See; Never Let Me Go; El Manana; Only This Moment; Hurt; Mr. Brightside; When You Come Back 2010; The Weeping Song; Killing Me Softly with His Love; Sibongile; Kings And Queens; Turn Me To Stone; Creep; and I’ll Be Missing You.



LAURIE DAVIDOFF
the heaven group

Laurie Davidoff has been nominated in the Absa Unlisted Achiever category in his capacity as Managing Director of the Heaven Group (Pty) Ltd. The Heaven Group retails as Sweets From Heaven.

Laurie matriculated at Athlone Boys and went on to do a B Comm degree at Wits. The Heaven Group today employs around 500 staff and has stores throughout SA and in the UK.

The Heaven Group currently consists of a retail division, with over 100 outlets, operating under the brands Sweets From Heaven, Cosmic Candy, Brittans and Heaven Express. There are in excess of 55 company owned stores and 40 franchised outlets.

"The sweet life seems to be the sweet spot when it comes to resilience and investing" says Laurie Davidoff. Nedbank Capital Private Equity used to hold a significant minority interest in The Heaven Group, which Laurie bought back in mid-2012.

Laurie, who has guided The Heaven Group from its infancy, says that it has taken a lot of persistence, patience and self-belief, through an initial successful public listing on the JSE in 1996, a delisting in late 2002. Thereafter, Laurie and Greg Ginsberg, (CA SA) who joined the group in 2000 as Financial Director set about consolidating, re-energizing and growing the business.

Davodoff's son, Brent, who acquired a B Comm Ind Psych (UJ), joined the group in January 2014 in an Executive capacity. He brings with him his unique style of people skills.

Laurie Davidoff has always guided the business with an over-riding CSI philosophy.

"Sweets from Heaven pursues its mission wherein people dare to dream and passion fuels our vision," says Laurie, adding that it is a workplace "where fun replaces fear, integrity is our cornerstone and innovation our foundation." He believes primarily in leading by listening.

The company empowers through franchising and constantly strives to acknowledge the inherent worth of their employees, franchisees and customers alike. "It is from within this core that we draw our inspiration and measure of success," says Laurie.

The Heaven Group is committed to the cornerstone of the South African government policy, says Laurie, which is to enhance previously disadvantaged citizens through its BEE Policy. "The Heaven Group complies with all the BEE codes of practice as stipulated by Legislation," he says.

Laurie relaxes by helping others. When he gets the chance, he also enjoys a game of golf (he is a member of Houghton Golf Club) and other sport.

Always positive, Davidoff uses business disappointments as a learning process - to strengthen and focus the business going forward. He foresees the coming year as "exciting and challenging" for his group - and the SA economy remaining "much the same" as it currently stands.

In line with Laurie's strong beliefs in BEE and CSI, he tends to build his management team largely from within The Heaven Group. His motto has been: "Making your day a sweeter one!" since the inception of the business in 1988.

South Africa has "come a long way in 20 years," he says, "and we need to all follow Nelson Mandela's dream of an integrated and hard-working society."

Laurie Davidoff has always guided the business with an over-riding CSI philosophy.

The Heaven Group's CSI initiatives include providing a supportive network and skills development for the staff body and by investing in the upliftment of less-fortunate South Africans.

The Heaven Group also undertakes initiatives which often involve partnerships with grass-root NGO's where they provide support ranging from financial to facilitating donations and supplying exclusive confectionary products free of charge. Their largest partnerships of this kind are Childline and Harambee.

In August 2013 Heaven Group became a participating employer of the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator. By supporting Harambee, says Laurie, he aims to meaningfully assist in addressing the extensive problem of youth unemployment in SA. Harambee sources, assesses, trains and then places young underprivileged and inexperienced South Africans into good, entry-level positions in the formal economy.

"Harambee is Swahili for 'all pull together' says Laurie, and that is exactly what SA must do to solve what has been called the 'ticking time-bomb' of youth unemployment.



DAWN NATHAN-JONES
CEO europcar south africa

Dawn Nathan-Jones is a finalist in the Absa Unlisted Company category in her capacity as the CEO of Imperial Car Rental Division, a division of Imperial Holdings Limited, and has brands such as Europcar, Europcar Van Rental, Europcar Chauffeur Service, Tempest Car Hire and Gage Car Hire in her portfolio.

54-year-old Dawn matriculated at Durban Girls High School and later attained her MAP (1991) and EDP (2003) from the Wits Graduate School of Business. She is also a director on the "Imperial Vehicle Retail, Rental and After Market Parts Division" Board and the Head of Imperial Group's Brand Council.

Her business unit employs 1,311 staffers and operates in SA, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. In terms of International Operations, Dawn is a member of the Europcar Global Network Advisory Committee for over 150 countries.

The Imperial Car Rental Division is a vertically integrated business within the greater Imperial Group. There are five business units within the operational component of the Car Rental Division which manage areas of fleet procurement, rental and disposal of automotive assets. The largest structures are Europcar (a franchise brand) and Tempest Car Hire.

“Any business in the 21st century which is not adapting to the rapidly changing customer behaviours from a technological perspective will find it difficult to keep up.”

Europcar, the larger of the two, runs a fleet peaking at 20,000 vehicles with an asset base of R2-bil.

Despite the business having grown from operating five vehicles out of a small garage in 1979 to a fleet peaking at 20,000 vehicles across five countries, “we have managed to retain our constant focus on customer service,” says Dawn. “We place a lot of emphasis on recruiting like-minded individuals who complement this ethos.”

Over the past three decades the business has gone through enormous change - focusing on the implementation of various fiduciary, financial and governance enhancements. “The simple philosophy of customer centricity, however, remains at the heart of all structures within the business,” says Dawn.

They have invested heavily in technology over the past few years,

she says, “as we would like to see our business set a new benchmark in the global space.”

Some of the key milestones in Dawn's career:

- 1984 – Securing the first rights to operate at State airports
- 1986 – Becoming a Director of Imperial Car Rental
- 1987 – Acquiring the Hertz South Africa business
- 1990 – Becoming the largest car rental company in South Africa after 11 years in the market
- 1992 – Acquiring Tempest Car Hire
- 1995 – Acquiring the Europcar franchise
- 1999 – Taking over from Carol Scott as the head of the business
- 2004 – Beginning the process of consolidating, rebranding and launching more modern aspects of the business
- 2007 – Successful merger of two car rental brands (Imperial & Europcar)
- 2009 – Successful transformation of a well-known local brand (Imperial) to a relatively unknown international brand (Europcar) without losing one customer
- 2010 – Becoming the largest franchise in the global Europcar network (a position that Imperial continues to hold)
- 2014 – The implementation of a class leading, best practise technology platform considered the best in the world in our market

Dawn, who has spent her entire working career at Imperial Car Rental, is also involved in the Business Woman's Association, the International Women's Foundation South Africa, the Boss of the Year Club and various industry associations.

To relax, she enjoys pilates and spinning, walking, reading, traveling and spending time with her family, especially her 8-year-old son, Daniel.

Dawn is up-beat about the currently “exciting period” in the business. “Although market conditions are not favourable, we are transforming the way we do business,” she says.

With new technology platforms and the re-invention of key business processes, “I anticipate we will surpass many industry qualms by increasing our capacity and capabilities for the benefit of the customer experience. I believe any business in the 21st century which is not adapting to the rapidly changing customer behaviours from a technological perspective will find it difficult to keep up.”

She believes that mobile solutions and digital technology have a major part to play in the future.



ANTHONY ORELOWITZ
paragon group

Anthony Orelowitz' Paragon Group: Architects and Interior Architects is no ordinary professional enterprise. The company has a staff of 82, is Johannesburg-based and has projects running all over Africa.

Architecture, says Anthony, is a "constantly evolving practice. Always pushing the boundaries of design, innovation through new materials and driving our buildings within rigorous cost and performance constraints."

Paragon is benchmarking global best practice not only in design but through its management systems (ERP Systems), he says, and it is implementing these throughout its business units. They have set their sights high: their vision is "of to be the best practice in Africa."

Anthony, 49, matriculated at King David Linksfield before doing his BArch and MBA.

Apart from Paragon, Anthony is also involved in property development. He is also a member of both the Wits and UJ Architectural Design Review Panel SAPOA, and a SAPOA Awards Judge. His recreation involves biking, water skiing, playing guitar and reading.

We are always driving best design and innovation through new materials, investing in the education and skills of our staff, driving excellence through cutting edge software and striving for global best practice.

Paragon has played a significant role in changing the perception of Corporate/ Commercial Architecture in the SA market, says Anthony. "It has raised not only the idea that commercial buildings can be beautiful or enhance an organisations brand, but more significantly enhance how organisations function. Our buildings facilitate and enhance corporate culture, helping businesses become more productive and efficient in terms of their bottom line and function," he says.

Anthony is the competitive type and what he doesn't like, is when Paragon loses an architectural competition. He is also an optimist and says that Paragon is constantly evolving and learning as a business. "By year end we will be working on two of the largest corporate head offices in Africa," he says. "We will have increased our staff complement to over 90.

"We are currently expanding the typologies of our work. By the end

of 2014 we will be building retail malls, schools, inner city housing, hotels and industrial warehouses. We are currently expanding our work locally to Durban and the Cape, and are in the process of starting buildings in Mozambique, Gabon, Angola and Ghana."

Paragon has built a very strong HR, marketing and financial capability by employing highly competent professionals. "In terms of growing and managing our business," says Orelowitz. "We have selected three associates and given them different portfolios to manage. The one is driving our ERP implementation, the second helping with evolving the design culture of our practice and the third in driving typologies and the technical aspects of our production. They have large stakes in our profit share and shares in our globalisation structure."

In terms of general staffing, he says, Paragon try to employ only students and staff with excellent academic results and great working experience.

He believes that the commercial property market is going to come under pressure in the next year. "There is a lot of vacant space coming onto the market," he says. "This, coupled with high building costs, few competent contractors and sub-contractors and sluggish rentals has the makings of a 'perfect storm'," says Anthony.

"We are never complacent. We are constantly modifying, adapting and rebuilding our business in the name of excellence." Orelowitz believes that bringing direct foreign investment into SA through our skills and offerings will help the country in the areas of job creation, education and skills development.

"Through our work, our developers are able to employ thousands of people on site. We need to help at a university level by being concerned about the next generation of practitioners in our country and we need to identify and nurture the talented from previously disadvantaged communities through bursaries and employment in our organisations. At Paragon we do all of these things," he says.

Orelowitz also works hard on keeping the balance between his work and family where it should be. "My working life is very consuming," he says. And so, to cope with his family life, he gets up very early – at five on weekdays. This allows him to get to work early (and, no doubt, miss a lot of the traffic) so that he can get home before 6:30 in the evening.

"On weekends I try work in the early mornings while my family is sleeping, say from 7 to 10," he says. "This allows me to spend quality time with my family for the balance of the time. I generally ride and ski with my family on the weekends."