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COMPANIES
to Work for in South Africa
— 2006 —

7th EDITION



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FOREWORD



BUSINESSREPORT

SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL FINANCIAL DAILY



Foreword by Quentin Wray
Associate editor (acting), Business Report

Quentin Wray is acting associate editor of Business Report. A graduate of Rhodes university's economics department, Quentin grew up in Zimbabwe and was an accountant before moving into the media.

In the early 1900s, the words that defined the corporate environment of the time may have been 'production line' and 'unionisation'. By contrast, the early years of this century may not be remembered only for terms such as 'outsourcing' or 'casualisation'. The buzzwords of our business era are Enron, Worldcom, Masterbond and Randgold – massive corporations and multinationals. It is no surprise that the issue of corporate governance has come to the fore.

These days, companies that deserve the appellation 'best' are those that are prepared to adhere to and report on the so-called triple bottom line. Beyond sound economic bottom lines (accurate, internally and externally audited financial reporting that follows international best practice), really 'good' companies take into account the effect that their activities have on the environment and the communities, both human and animal, that are affected by the company's production activities. Such companies assess the environmental impact of their activities in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. In short, they are prepared to report on the environmental bottom line.

In addition, these companies report on the social bottom line. What makes a company enticing to employees? And why should managers strive to make this a goal? Should managers try to 'sell' their company to its staff? Why would they even bother?

The obvious answer is that the happier employees are, the less likely they are to under-perform or to resign. Apart from causing recruiters a lot of trouble in having to find replacements, high staff turnover has price tags: agency fees, training and skills development costs and impaired productivity among them. In addition,

running an enterprise below capacity, or refusing to invest in employees' needs, may make costs look healthy on the income statement in the short term, but the long-term effects of limited output from overextended, unmotivated staff can be expensive.

Company employees are more than a figure on a balance sheet. Because they are human, they cannot be treated as a fixed cost – regardless of how much some managers might wish that employees would behave as predictably and consistently as their other operational assets. The unquantifiable 'human factor' means that employees have to be treated differently to other costs, but that the benefits of doing so can be felt throughout the whole company, and often outweigh the costs incurred in the process.

Exactly how much harder, longer, more efficiently or creatively a happy employee works is hard to measure, but common sense (and anecdotal evidence) suggests the gap between 'performers' and 'coasters' is cavernous. Contentment is infectious, and an outbreak of it is likely to spread across an organisation, leading to such serious symptoms as extremely low staff turnover, hard-working employees and fierce loyalty.

Different working conditions make different employees happy. One may appreciate the fact that labour disputes are resolved transparently and fairly. Another may emphasise that a coherent black economic empowerment (BEE) strategy is in place and equity targets are being attained. A third may simply enjoy a competitive salary or regular working hours; a fourth the security of knowing that the company is financially secure and responsible; a fifth that staff participation makes employees feel that there is scope for their input to help shape the direction of the company.

HIV-positive employees will appreciate a company with an intelligent HIV/Aids programme; mothers of young children will value a company with flexible child-care provisions. Highly ambitious people will want a company in which good succession plans are made; community leaders will look for a company that maintains good relations in local communities.

All this suggests that if employees are able to identify, in important ways, with the values espoused by their employer, this is likely to be the strongest cohesive force to keep employee and employer together.

Since employees are so often mouthpieces for their organisations, imagine how much advertising spend can be reduced if staff broadcast positive messages about their place of work, free of charge!

Every year, Corporate Research Foundation (CRF) publishes its guide to the best companies to work for in South Africa. This, the 7th edition, once again lists and honours the achievers, and aims to encourage others by example to emulate their corporate behaviour. Companies are measured against a broad range of criteria (see p95), and are this year evaluated using CRF's human resources benchmark, in association with Accenture.

Corporate governance is a key area of interest for *Business Report*, and we are therefore proud to be associated with CRF's *Best Companies to Work for in South Africa 2007*.

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NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Every year, Corporate Research Foundation's (CRF) team of researchers seeks to create the definitive guide to South Africa's best employers. This guide is once again based on a well-researched nomination and selection process. Each company profiled in this main section of the publication has been investigated by CRF's team, armed with rigorous checklists of selection criteria (outlined below), which ensures that those chosen for publication truly represent South Africa's best employers.

Professor Linda de Vries of the University of the Western Cape, worked with CRF to ensure that the selection criteria for this 7th edition remain relevant and topical. CRF then approached a team of leading members of South Africa's business and financial press with the selection criteria and, based on it, the team proceeded to nominate those companies that, in their opinion, can currently be considered South Africa's best employers.

The nominated companies were invited to participate in the initial interview phase. Companies that agreed to be included in the initial research opened their doors to the business journalists on CRF's research team. These journalists interviewed key directors and staff to confirm whether the company qualified for selection and publication. If a company was selected for inclusion, the writer drew up a profile of the company's success story for inclusion in the publication. Selected companies contribute a fixed fee towards the research, production and marketing costs post-publication. Companies are selected on merit and not on their corporate contributions.

CRF's *Best Companies to Work for in South Africa* includes in-depth research on a variety of companies in diverse sectors: large and small, private sector and parastatal. A few companies declined to participate in this project. Their exclusion does not mean that they do not rank among the best but simply that, for various reasons, they could not agree to be included in the survey.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

MACRO CRITERIA

1. The company must be financially stable.
2. The company must enjoy success in its markets.
3. The company is likely to enjoy status and a good reputation.
4. The company must lead transformation in terms of its people.

EMPOWERMENT CRITERIA OF THE COMPANY

1. How is the company rated on EmpowerDEX?
2. Is it an empowered company, through external forces?
3. Was there a change of shareholders, management and workers? Whom does it represent?
4. What is the procurement strategy of the company? Does it embrace SMME/empowerment?
5. How much is the empowerment spend as a percentage of total procurement?
6. What is the participation of staff in the equity? Are there opportunities and mechanisms for staff to participate?
7. How does the company participate in SMME development?
8. Are there opportunities for staff to become outsourcing partners for specific areas?
9. How does the company fare in terms of broad based empowerment?
What does it mean for the company?

MICRO CRITERIA

1. SALARIES/BENEFITS/WORK ENVIRONMENT

- Pay/benefits
- Incentives and/or bonus schemes
- Work environment: office areas/facilities
- Physical situation
- Do employees see the company as an employer of choice?
- Do employees identify and support organisational vision, values and goals?
- How much opportunity is given to entrepreneurial efforts? Are there any such opportunities?
- How is this rewarded?

2. RECRUITMENT

- Recruitment strategies
- Source of employees/who they are
- Did the company recruit differently in the past and, if so, how?
- Level of staff turnover
- Employment equity, what has the company done to meet the targets set?
Is there any movement? What specific initiatives did the company embark on to address the employment equity?
- What is the male/female ratio? The black/white ratio? How much attention is given to diversity?
- What opportunities are given for internships, for learnerships, as well as for low levels of entry without work experience?
- How active is the company in career fairs and supporting institutions of learning events?
- Is there congruence between the company recruitment strategy and its development agenda?
- Are there specific strategies to employ the disabled and how is their participation encouraged?

3. CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT/INNOVATION IN PEOPLE PRACTICES

- Formal assessment/evaluation of staff
- How people are developed/degree of upward mobility in the organisation?
- How the company motivates employees?
- How the company manages organisational change and stress levels?
- Empowerment/training
- Continuous innovation, regular critical reviews
- High-performance work practices such as multi-skilled teams, performance-related pay
- Strategies for attracting and retaining talent
- Flexibility of work practice
- How much emphasis is given to creating a learning organisation?
- What is the level of support provided for external as well as internal training opportunities?
- Opportunities for innovation and new practices allowed and celebrated?

4. HUMAN CAPITAL METRICS

- Identification, measurement and evaluation of performance using particular indices/measures – including retention and turnover of talent
- Productivity performance metrics, such as sales volume and profit per employee, return on human capital
- Balanced scorecard on similar individual, team and organisational measures
- Rate of absenteeism and sick leave
- What is the staff turnover?
- What is the per capita spend on HIV/Aids programmes?
- How much is spent on employee/corporate social responsibility?
- How much is spent on stimulating and development of SMMEs?
- What is the amount spent on internal communication as % of marketing budget?
- What percentage of staff are counselled for HIV/Aids?
- Education level/performance/salary indices
- What is the percentage of accidents at the workplace? How does the company rate as a safe environment?

5. INTERNATIONAL STANCE

- Company stance regarding internationalisation and globalisation
- Company's participation in global terrain/ utilisation of home staff/ opportunity for global assignments
- Level of global codes adhered to?

6. JOB SECURITY/HANDLING CORPORATE CHANGE

- Capacity for withstanding and/or containing structural changes
- Retrenchments/restructuring
- Employability security (rather than job security): continuous learning opportunities, varied Career opportunities, retraining and redeployment, active career development programmes and internal mobility.

7. THE HUMAN FACE OF THE COMPANY

- Type of people who flourish in the company
- The kind of people employed
- How the company aligns working hours to needs of individuals
- Are there any policies in terms of childcare/facilities?
- Any policies to assist women in leadership or management or to assist their growth and participation?
- What kinds of events are celebrated in the company?

- How do they celebrate them? Golf days? Family days, or is it neutral in terms of celebration of diversity?
- The way the company deals with crisis occurring to staff?
- Are there policies in place representing the company as a corporate citizen?
- How does the company relate to its immediate local communities?
- Are employees allowed to give/share/or allocate time to developmental issues that fit the corporate identity?

8. LEADERSHIP DYNAMISM

- Company culture
- Shared vision and values
- Clear human resources priorities aligned with organisational strategy
- Relate to current context/How do they interpret this context and are there mechanisms in place?
- Is there effective communication of the external and internal strategies to employees?

9. WRITTEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- Widely espoused and publicly known within the organisation
- Effectively operationalised ('lived')
- Aligned with organisational strategy and performance goals
- Is there a public evaluation system, which is consistently implemented?
- Does it relate to empowerment?

10. THE 'LABOUR FACE' OF THE COMPANY

- Labour disputes; strikes/lockouts; cases at the CCMA; dismissals; disciplinary charges and grievances filed
- Legal compliance with Skills Development Plans, Employment Equity and Balanced Scorecards
- Does disability integration and empowerment feature in strategic equity activity?
- The kind of employment contracts relied on, for example, degree of outsourcing, use of temporary staff
- SMME profile

11. COMPANY ETHICS AND MORALITY

- Corporate governance
- The company's stance on ethical issues
- Board Composition (King II) – do they annually measure their board's effectiveness?
- Triple Bottom Line – does the company focus on money, the environment and social responsibility?

12. CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT (CSI)

- How does the company define this?
- Does CSI embrace the philosophy and ethics of the company?
- How does the company lead in this terrain?
- Are there any Private Public partnerships (PPP)?
- Does the company respond to requests or do they lead and have a specific focus?
- How do they respond to environmental issues?
- Are there policies in place?



The Accolade Property Group is an umbrella brand name for a number of individual property companies, consisting of three development companies, a construction company and several property investment companies.

OUTLINE

Accolade has enjoyed the benefits of a strong property market, and despite expanding, remains focused on its core passion – to consistently supply clients with quality products. The group is positioned across the property spectrum – from residential entry-level to upmarket luxury homes, including leisure and a small commercial portfolio. It is one of the top four residential development companies in Gauteng.

BIGGEST PLUS

The company's commitment to product quality is underpinned by motivated, loyal and committed staff and an innovative management team with a clear vision, backed by sound business ethics and practices.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Sourcing suitable land for development is an ongoing challenge as it is difficult to come by, especially within Johannesburg's parameters. Town planning and environmental approval processes are prohibitively slow.

THE PEOPLE

Accolade's roots are in two separate family construction and development businesses founded in the late 1950s and mid 60s respectively. Gert Etsebeth and Darrell Gebhard are second- and third-generation 'born in a cement bag' individuals, who merged their entrepreneurial skills in Accolade Construction in 1999. Etsebeth's hands-on site input produced the quality product, and Gebhard steered company operations in the office.

As the group's chief executive, Gebhard soon realised the value of stable workflow and payment security, and embarked on various development partnerships, which over time have settled into three specific development companies. Each company is a separate, independent legal entity, although the group's financial director, Keith van der Linde oversees all of them and the common shareholding of Darrell Gebhard holds them together.

DHS Projects supplies entry-level homes. Heading this East Rand development company (from a family of doctors and actuaries) is Hans Brombacher, along with Dave Finlayson a fellow shareholder.

Three-year-old Fire Ring Trading's visionary is Mike Russell, who has years of corporate big-budget project experience, and this company concentrates on the Vaal Dam area.

Ninval Properties has an impeccable track record in producing successful cluster schemes since 1999 and is led by legally qualified Kevin Gebhard.

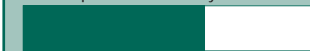
Accolade looks for people who are self-motivated, adaptable, with the right attitude to respond quickly to change, and who will enjoy a dynamic environment where entrepreneurial

SCORECARD

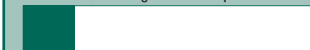
Salaries and benefits



Internal promotional mobility



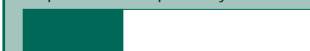
Education, training and development



Flexible working arrangements, communication and working atmosphere



Corporate social responsibility



Diversity



SOURCE: CRF SA HR BENCHMARK 2006

FACTS & FIGURES

Absenteeism and sick leave during the last financial year: 1,01%

Women employees: 33%

Women in leadership: 9%

PDIs in leadership: 0%

SMMEs established/supported: 50% of suppliers are SMMEs

Workplace accidents in the last year: None

Total number of staff employed: 57 (full-time)

Annual turnover for 2005 (RSA only): R157 million



qualities are valued. Gebhard says, 'Accolade staff need to be team players, but should also be happy to work independently, not requiring continuous supervision.'

Gebhard emphasises that honesty, sincerity and integrity, and a passion 'to do things properly' are traits that Accolade seeks in the recruitment process. 'We have fortunately recognised the value of having people with these traits in the company, and are determined to look after them, and have them participate in and contribute to our 50-year vision,' he says.

The beneficiaries of Accolade's corporate social investment include, amongst others, an orphanage, two missionary organisations, and a church being built in Cosmo City, to which the company is contributing funding.

THE BUSINESS

Accolade's growth is impressive, considering its humble beginnings. It has grown from a staff of six (one of whom was the accounts department), and a few bakkies with files on the front seats, into a company that earns around R12 million in revenue monthly.

The Accolade group has a flat management structure and concentrates on being flexible, streamlined and efficient. The group's financial director, Keith van der Linde says, 'Essentially we're not a construction company, we're a project management company, with several subcontracted units working for us.'

Honesty, sincerity and integrity, and a passion 'to do things properly' are traits that Accolade seeks in the recruitment process

The development companies develop a site and sell building contracts, and the construction company then builds the houses. Accolade's business model is that the construction company almost exclusively services the development companies, giving them quality products at a more competitive price, which they pass on to their clients. This in turn makes the business sustainable and encourages repeat clients. The company has a philosophy of 'pay on time, every time', which stands out in the building industry. Accolade expects the same from its clients, and therefore is uncompromising on specified quality and service levels.

The group recently moved into the leisure market. A development on the Vaal Dam – Harbour Town – is the first of its kind, and Accolade has other land-holdings with plans to build an estate large enough for people to ride horses,

and is attempting to secure more land for a golf course, a hotel, and a marina project as part of a 10-to-20-year project.

COMPANY CULTURE AND STYLE

There is a strong emphasis on trying to retain the qualities of a close-knit family business, where any office politics are frowned upon, and teamwork and entrepreneurial skills encouraged. Accolade is not driven by rules and regulations, and self-motivation is key.

Core to the culture is the meaning of the word 'acolade' – the company strives for 'strong praise or approval' or 'an award or honour' from clients. Its flat, lean structure and open-door policy encourage people to act quickly. Since 2004 the company has changed its philosophy towards open engagement, and management of its staff's expectations and ambitions. This has already borne fruit, with more open and honest communication, and more tangible incentives and structures now in place.

Accolade is a democratic, entrepreneurial business and is always revising systems and procedures, always asking questions, and focusing on how to improve.

Van der Linde points out that building a home or moving is third in trauma only to death and divorce. 'It's difficult work, but incredibly rewarding at the end of the day. It's a tangible thing you're producing.'

Russell says that if chief executives build new offices, they might go once a month or so to check out the site. 'But if it's your own house, you are on site every day or two, surveying each brick.'

The close-knit family theme extends to real family – members of Gebhard and Etsebeth's families

DARRELL GEBHARD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

'The best investment we ever made was the decision to invest in our people, to coach and grow them, and to assist them in accomplishing their dreams, all the while remaining true to our core values and vision. We are truly blessed to have such talented, passionate and professional people.'

WHAT SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS WERE ACHIEVED BY YOUR STAFF THIS YEAR?

A highlight was one staff member's personal crusade – using company and supplier resources to completely revamp an Aids orphanage. A number of other staff members have passed exams, and improved personal circumstances.

WHAT HAS YOUR COMPANY DONE THIS YEAR TO IMPROVE EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONS?

Office hours have been adjusted by democratic vote, head office layout and equipment has been revamped, site working conditions improved, and staff were rewarded for their contributions and loyalty. A family-oriented trip was arranged, which has had a positive effect on staff morale.

WHAT WAS THE MOST INNOVATIVE IDEA OR SUGGESTION BY AN EMPLOYEE THIS YEAR?

The idea was to use the appraisal process to garner feedback, no matter how small, on real issues in terms of immediate work surroundings, remuneration and other aspects of work, encouraging each person to see that their job function is vital to the whole, and that their opinion is important.



are involved in the business in one way or another. Accolade works hard at building its 'family' relationships. Over Easter in 2006, the whole company and their families went to Sodwana Bay for a weekend. Says Van der Linde, 'There were no organised activities, just a family weekend away on the company.'

HUMAN RESOURCES PRIORITIES

Since 2004, there has been a change from 'what could we get out, to what difference can we make,' says Gebhard, 'and we have seen a huge difference in people's approach to work since then'.

The company recognises the value of experienced, honest, competent staff and, therefore, the importance in having structured incentives and a positive work environment.

It offers performance-based remuneration incentives, loyalty and longevity rewards, and conducts staff surveys, where contributions are thoroughly examined and, where applicable, implemented.

Accolade's corporate social responsibility could be defined as 'providing the fishing rod and not the fish'

Accolade's annual assessment review asks probing questions, which together with a promise of confidentiality, ensures that employees have the opportunity to raise real issues in a secure environment. Accolade uses its annual assessment process to gather feedback, with the objective of improving human resources relations and conditions.

Gebhard says the company does not hinder people's ambitions. 'Only they can do that,' he says. Although career opportunities are limited because the company is not particularly large, there is a determined effort to support staff who wish to broaden their scope of development. For instance, a receptionist has become a project manager; and a 'Girl Friday' became a creditors clerk, then a senior accounts clerk and is now studying towards a B.Com., so that ultimately she can do articles.

With regard to corporate change, Accolade makes an effort to communicate effectively and disrupt minimally. It has consulted professionals to guide it in the area of succession planning. Stability and job security are seen as essential. Site staff are incentivised, so if they complete projects timeously, to Accolades required quality with minimal snags, and are under budget, they gain financially.

Senior managers are incentivised on the bottom line. The company recently embarked on a participative revised working hours vote process, which has been a great success.

RECRUITMENT Accolade first looks internally to those who have made their career path preference known within the company. Failing this, it will use a recruitment agency, which will be briefed with particular criteria. However, generally recruitment tends to be by word of mouth, either through people who work within the company or people they know in the industry.

Various tools are used, including personality profile software and, if required in senior appointments, external psychometric evaluations. Gebhard says three criteria are important: 'honesty, competence and communication'.

There are plans to invest more time in coaching staff to ensure that they understand, and buy into, the company's strategy and its 50-year vision. Accolade has incentives to encourage new recruits and current employees to make a career at the company, rather than viewing it as a step on the way to the next job.

SALARIES, BENEFITS, WORK ENVIRONMENT Accolade ensures that its salaries and benefits are market related, with enough other offerings to eliminate money being a catalyst for staff to look elsewhere. 'We try to ensure we're at the top end of the market in terms of salaries,' says Van der Linde.

Monthly remuneration is worked on a cost-to-company basis and the company is flexible, allowing employees to structure their own packages. Leave is increased after four, seven, and eleven years. Study assistance is provided, with no work-back clause, provided the candidates

CHANTAL VAN DER WALT, DEBTORS AND ACCOUNTING

'I enjoy working for Accolade because it's dynamic and everyone's professional. It's fun and people are caring and supportive. They make you feel like you belong. There's a family bond. They encourage you and acknowledge achievements. The company paid for my B.Com. You give your heart and they give 110%.'

CHRIS BACON, QUANTITY SURVEYOR

'It's a great place to be. I've been with Accolade nearly seven years and I enjoy it. The people are fantastic and it's a pleasure to come to work. I'm nearly at the end of my career and this is definitely the best place I've ever worked.'

CLAUDIA DE BRITO, INVOLVED IN SALES, CONVEYANCING AND FIRE RING TRADING

'Accolade presents exciting challenges, and allows you to take initiative. I'm honoured to be part of Accolade and I've grown while I've worked here. I've been given opportunities and faced challenges both professionally and personally. And I've always been able to get through with the support of the incredible people.'

KEY PLAYERS

Darrell Gebhard (group chief executive); Gert Etsebeth (construction director); Keith van der Linde (group financial director); Hans Brombacher and Dave Finlayson (shareholders in DHS Projects); Mike Russell (co shareholder in Fire Ring Trading); Kevin Gebhard (managing director of Nival Properties).



pass their exams. Gebhard says, 'Our staff must have the tools to do the job.' Another incentive is that site vehicles are bought for certain site managers. Says Russell, 'If employees stay with the company for a couple of years, they will own the vehicle. This makes an incredible difference to those individuals' lives.'

BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Although Accolade has no BEE rating or shareholding at present, many small subcontractor companies are black-owned and run, and several form an integral part of the team required to get the job done.

CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT

Accolade's corporate social responsibility could be defined as 'providing the fishing rod and not the fish'.

The company has completely revamped a home for orphans, has been supporting a local police station for years, is involved in uplifting a community church in Diepsloot (an informal settlement north of Johannesburg), and assisting with construction of another in Cosmo City, among other projects. 'It's not something we feel we have to do, but something we want to do,' says Gebhard.

INTERNATIONAL STANCE

Accolade does not operate outside South Africa at present, and has no plans to expand offshore, saying it is a question of resources. The skills base is not big enough yet to go beyond South Africa's borders.

THE FUTURE

There will always be demand for Accolade's products, even if volume and market conditions change. The group has plans for developing on land it has secured for the next five to seven years. It has developed a particularly good product fit locally, as well as at the Vaal Dam and in the East Rand. 'Our strategy – buying land, servicing it, putting in the necessary infrastructure, and selling a very competitive land and building package – has worked for us and our customers,' says Van der Linde.

Russell says the company does a small amount of commercial work, but this is not a core focus. 'If you've got the right vision, the right product, and the right people, you can operate in virtually any interest rate environment and market,' he says. 'It's only the size of the business that will scale up or down.'

The company is unfolding its 50-year vision. Gebhard says 'Because I truly believe this is God's business, I believe that for as long as it has those values at its core, it will not only exist but will flourish.' He believes that this long-term vision will be easy to achieve, provided that the company has a well-planned and implemented succession strategy and that it continues to supply consistent, above-average quality, and value for money. This will enable Accolade to sustain its business model through higher interest rates or a tougher economic environment.

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