

Cosmo: doing the business the South African way

In response the transformational agenda in South Africa, Cosmo Industrial has introduced a range of consultancy, training and admin services to make it easier for its clients to earn local procurement, recruitment and skills development recognition points, along with SETA approval for training grants against the Skills Levy.

Cosmo Industrial opened its one-stop welding and industrial superstore in Silverton, Pretoria back in 2009, this following a decade and half of servicing the equipment needs of South African Industry.

But both Cosmo and South Africa are significantly different today. "As well as the walk in store, we have also opened several distribution businesses: Cosmo Manufacturing Supplies; Cosmo Construction Suppliers; Cosmo Railways Suppliers; Cosmo Mining Suppliers, Cosmo Automation Solutions; and Cosmo Training Academy, which are all Level 2 B-BBEE companies specifically set up to make doing business with Cosmo as easy as possible," says Van Nieuwenhuizen, adding that Cosmo Automation Solutions has recently been launched and is busy servicing its first customers.

All companies in South Africa now have to do business in a new way, engaging with the rules of the day in order to support South Africa's transformation while, at the same time, promoting eco-

nomie success and growth. "We have now restructured our company, not only to comply with these rules as an approved supplier, but also to help our customers extract the maximum benefit available from employment, training and local procurement incentives available to those that do comply.

"We are making it easy for South African companies to do business the South African way," Van Nieuwenhuizen says.

Every company has to pass a percentage of its pay role over to the Skills Levy, for example, but that money can be reclaimed if the company implements a skills development programme for its employees. "But our customers are in manufacturing, mining, maintenance and construction. Their focus is not on the business rules and reporting that has to be applied to get any money back. So they tend to lose out.

"If, as part of supplying the equipment that customers need, we can also implement solutions to help clients

comply better with skills development, B-BBEE, local procurement, youth recruitment and enterprise development, then everybody wins," he notes. "By coupling our normal business with services such as these, customers start listening in a different way," he adds.

Describing the solutions that Cosmo can now offer clients over and above the supply of welding, cutting, manufacturing and PPE products and equipment they need, he says that, by spending their skills levy and procurement budgets more deliberately, South African businesses can grow much faster. As well as the procurement recognition that accrues from doing business with a Level 2 company on the B-BBEE scorecard, recruitment and skills development points can also be accrued by adopting skills-based training.

Through the Cosmo Training Academy, Cosmo is offering a turnkey skills development solutions. "We are offering skills development facilitation (SDF) services, where we are able to compile workplace skills plans (WSPs) prior to implementing skills training. Then we produce annual training reports (ATRs), in the required format after each year. These reports are essential in order to secure the training recognition points and they enable companies to claim back against the skills levy paid for that year.

"Through this service, we take over all of the responsibility for the admin required, taking a huge burden off customers. Companies have to comply with very specific reporting formats to get any recognition and this is often just a step too far for them. So now we offer it



The Cosmo Training Academy was dedicated to welding stalwart Fred Bernardo (centre), who trained both Cosmo directors Pierre van Nieuwenhuizen (left) and Rossouw van der Merwe (right).

as part of the Cosmo service package," Van Nieuwenhuizen reveals.

The service involves consulting on how to use Skills Levy investments in the most effective way: producing all the reporting and the learner management functions: from recruitment, psychometric testing, pretesting and screening to make sure candidates are suitable; procurement of the necessary training; and all the way through to reporting and re-evaluation. "And we can do this for any skills shortage area identified: welding, boiler making, health and safety, fitting and turning, etc – all the way up to SAQA N4 Engineering trades," he tells *African Fusion*.

"Industrial customers also have admin staff sitting in offices that need upskilling. We are able to evaluate a whole business to identify the best way the company's skills spend might be employed," he adds.

Citing a current example, Van Nieuwenhuizen says that Cosmo is currently delivering its skills development services to Penbro Kelnick, the industrial electronic equipment manufacturer. This involves compiling a WSP report and submitting it for approval to the Merseta. Then we advise on what type of training courses the staff needs.

"We are also recruiting suitable unemployed people to fill gaps, as well as identifying those currently employed for upskilling. And the identified training can happen anywhere, on site in factories, in their office facilities or, if practical training workshops are required, in the Cosmo Academy," he explains.

The Cosmo Training Academy is being accredited for welding-related courses, all the way up to the new QCTO – Qualification Council for Trades and Occupations – Welder Training. "And we are about to become an SAIW Authorised Accreditation Body (ATB), which will also allow us to offer internationally recognised IIW-accredited training courses," he notes.

"By offering South African clients this turnkey solution for optimising their procurement, recruitment and training spend, we are engaged in business partnerships that take the idea of turnkey solutions to another level. We are merging skills development and B-BBEE recognition with enterprise spending and procurement to make it much easier for companies to be successful while fully complying with South African laws," Van Nieuwenhuizen concludes. ■

Cosmo Automation Solutions

Cosmo Automation Solutions, a Division of Cosmo Industrial Holdings, is a new distribution business set up to meet the increasing need for automated cutting and welding solutions in South Africa.

Operating out of brand new offices in Jet Park, Gauteng, Cosmo Automation Solutions is a Level 2 B-BBEE company that represents the MicroStep CNC Cutting Machines Brand along with Lincoln Electric Plasma cutting in South Africa.

"Integrity is the foundation of our business, combined with quality products and solutions that we provide that add value to our customers and suppliers," says Ludwig Oellermann, Cosmo Automation Solutions general manager.

"The MicroStep Group, which is based in Slovakia, has been in operation since 1991. Globally to date, more than 2 200 machines have been installed with 80 of these systems in the Southern African market," Oellermann adds.

A world leader in the design and manufacture of CNC cutting machines, MicroStep offers fibre laser, extreme-definition plasma, high-pressure water-jet, oxyfuel and router cutting systems.

Lincoln Electric was established in 1895 as the world leader in the design, development and manufacturing of arc welding products and robotic arc welding systems and has a leading global position in the brazing and soldering alloys markets. Its plasma and oxyfuel cutting equipment includes: welding machines, mechanised automation; flexible automation solutions, cutting equipment and tables, along with power sources and controllers.

Through Cosmo Automation Solutions, Lincoln Electric's small and compact Torchmate 4400 and 4800 plasma-cutting solutions are now being made available to South African fabricators.

Another cornerstone of Cosmo Automation is the BUG-O Systems range. BUG-O is Division of the Weld Tooling Corporation founded in 1948, a manufacturer of a system of drives, carriages, rails and attachments designed to simply and cost effectively automate welding guns, cutting torches and other hand held tools.

BUG-O's inexpensive, modular building block family of portable machines provides precise path and constant speed control in any plane or position. Use of the system can help users to solve fabricating problems with standard, interchangeable components at a fraction of the cost of custom designed machines or robots.

Oellermann highlights six ways that automating welding and

cutting can save on fabrication costs:

- Increased production: Continuous travel increases process "ON" time.
- Improved quality: Precise speed and path control improves appearance and quality.
- Reduced material handling: A small lightweight machine can be taken to the workpiece and used in all positions.
- Reduced distortion: Automation provides uniform heat input, putting the right amount of weld in the right place.
- Improved worker's environment: Keeps the worker further away from the arc and reduces operator fatigue.
- Adaptability: Flexible modular construction can be adapted to quickly suit the job at hand.

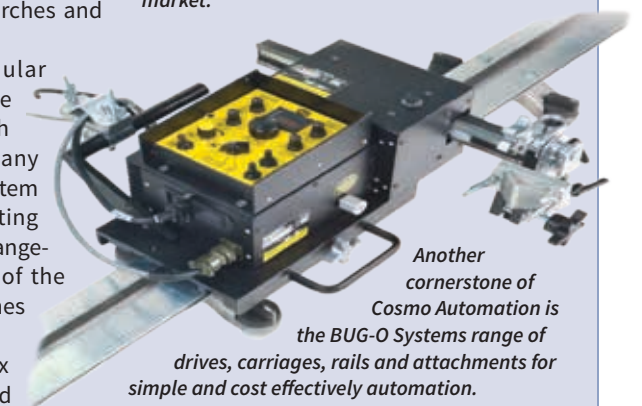
To complement its range, Cosmo Automation Solutions also supplies and services: press brakes, guillotines, sheet rollers, dished-end forming machines, welding booms and manipulators, I-beam welding systems, and fume extraction systems.

"By doing so, our customers are able to have their entire operation supplied and serviced from a single source, saving time and costs.

"Under the leadership of its hands-on management team, the Cosmo Group of Companies understands that the driving force of any company is its employees. We can offer continuous training on the latest technology and trends, providing the necessary skill and knowledge to assist our client towards increasing success," Oellermann concludes. ■



More than 80 MicroStep CNC cutting systems have now been installed in the Southern African market.



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