



Jonathan McKey, National Sales and Marketing Manager at SEW-EURODRIVE.

**P**hase 1 of SEW-EURODRIVE's South African expansion – completed in 2022 – was essential, says Jonathan McKey, the company's National Sales and Marketing Manager. "Firstly, because we were quite literally bursting at the seams. To meet growing demand and take on more market share, we needed more stockholding capacity, more assembly stations, more product-handling capabilities, and more space to take on larger projects and customisations," he says.

Also, the assembly portfolio was decentralised, with Industrial Gear Unit assembly in Nelspruit and Servo Technology and Electronics in Cape Town. The Phase 1 expansion returned SEW-EURODRIVE's product assembly operations to Johannesburg, while retaining existing backup support capability.

This was an investment in local African capability that created confidence in the SEW brand: "The whole of the African continent now knows that SEW-EURODRIVE is committed to servicing their needs and supporting the continent's growth," says McKey.

The Phase 1 plant brought together the electronic automation and mechanical sides of SEW-EURODRIVE's offering – two complementary components enabling more automated drive options that embed advanced control technologies and predictive maintenance. Since opening the new facility, the stockholding value has more than quadrupled to half a billion rand. "We also enhanced our DriveAcademy for skills development, with a larger, more forward-looking facility: using augmented reality (AR), for example, to offer extensive and multifaceted practical product training," he notes.

A new sales division, the Business Development Division, now focuses on specific product ranges and industries. Within this division, Business Development Electronics (BDE) and Business Development Mechanical (BDM) portfolios have been established, along with Business Development Africa (BDA) to drive the Africa expansion strategy.

## SEW-EURODRIVE massively upscales after-sales service

Following the success of Phase 1 of its expanded operations in South Africa, SEW-EURODRIVE is now nearing completion of Phase 2 – a dedicated after sales servicing, repair, remanufacturing and training facility in Aeroton, Johannesburg that aims to deliver total reliability services.

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"We are already servicing 23 African countries across Southern and East Africa – from Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, DRC and Zambia, to Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia. BDA gives us a clearer focus with respect to suitable products, service opportunities, and responsibilities in each of these African markets," says McKey.

The Phase 1 expansion also enabled the company to employ more people. "Our staff complement has expanded fourfold. When I first came to Johannesburg, the Engineering and Sales division was made up of seven people. Now we have nearly 40 people taking care of the separate BDE, BDM and BDA portfolios. In Africa, we have employed local people where it makes sense, but we also have roaming teams that travel to various country branches, or where we don't have a permanent presence, to directly deliver services," he adds.

### Phase 2: BD Service

With the Phase 2 expansion well underway,

a new portfolio is being added – Business Development Service (BDS) – which will be housed in a 17 000 m<sup>2</sup> facility to massively upscale SEW-EURODRIVE's after-sales and service capabilities.

"Currently, after-sales services are managed through our sales division. Going forward, we will have a dedicated team for after-sales and related services, offering technical support, repair and equipment replacement, and a host of new uptime-related products that we intend to launch later this year with the opening of Phase 2," says McKey.

The Phase 2 facility is being equipped to enable significantly faster lead times for routine servicing, spares, repairs, and refurbishments. "By better controlling more of the elements surrounding after-sales, we will significantly improve onsite reliability and uptime," he says.

As well as a significantly larger repair facility and a 100 t lifting and handling capacity, a light engineering workshop will manufacture drive-system bases and metalwork. Component manufacturing services will also be offered for drop-in customisations or component repairs. The facility will handle aftermarket manufacturing and maintenance work, including motor rewinding and, for gearboxes, the manufacture of replacement of gear sets



SEW-EURODRIVE's existing facility is geared to support growing demand offering advanced assembly, testing and service capabilities tailored to the needs of the African market.



Left: SEW-EURODRIVE provides expert repair services for a wide range of drive systems, ensuring minimal downtime and maximum operational efficiency for its customers. Right: SEW-EURODRIVE offers specialised industrial gearbox repair services, combining expert diagnostics, precision engineering and OEM-quality standards to restore performance and extend equipment life.



for any OEM brand.

The DriveAcademy will be further expanded and moved into the new facility, with its offering extended to include servicing skills development for SEW's range of mechanical and electromechanical drives and automation products. The DriveAcademy will also be made available to complement tertiary education: "We are going to invite young engineering students into the facility to create more awareness and enthusiasm for mechanical and mechatronic drive technologies. This, we hope, will promote our industry, advance our skills base, and strengthen the pipeline for new engineering talent," he notes.

The idea underpinning Phase 2 is to offer a comprehensive range of support services for the product lifecycle of SEW installations. "We want to establish lifelong commitments with customers and to become fully integrated into their day-to-day operations – as committed to their success as we are to ours," McKey explains.

With that comes a guarantee of modernisation. "SEW-EURODRIVE is an innovative company, so a long-term relationship comes with the assurance of keeping clients up to date with technology trends, ensuring the best possible efficiencies, maximum productivity, and minimum downtime," he adds.

The role of BDS and the new SEW Service facility starts immediately after a drive solution has been delivered and installed. The after-sales team will initiate conversations regarding the future of the product and how to manage ongoing maintenance needs. "Recommended care accompanies every sale, but we intend to take this further by developing mutual commitments to manage equipment servicing across its life," says McKey.

With adaptability to manage both SEW and other OEM brands, clients can expect quality repair services to SEW-EURODRIVE standards for all of their drive equipment.

"This further closes the loop on our preferred supplier status for new drive and automation solutions, because we can also manage every aspect of after-sales and servicing for installed products," says McKey.

### Total reliability

To enhance the engineering capabilities that already exist, more design engineers, draftsmen, and service technicians are being brought on board. "We intend to introduce energy-efficiency surveys and to recommend innovative ways to improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions. A simple switch to new SEW IE3 or IE4 motors or the use of our Gen C frequency drives, for example, can make a significant difference to a plant's energy performance – and our new digital data interface (DDI) with our Gen C drives offers easy-to-access predictive maintenance capabilities."

Ultimately, SEW-EURODRIVE intends to offer total reliability and asset management solutions for its installed base. "We can assess the entire onsite infrastructure – not limited to SEW products – record concerns, identify criticality and long-lead-time items,

and then put in place measures to predict and proactively respond to impending failures," McKey explains.

The R384-million investment in this Aeroton Service facility is the first after-sales-focussed facility for the global SEW-EURODRIVE Group. "Germany is supporting us in this expansion initiative by expanding its own offering, with respect to manufacturing aftermarket gear sets, for example.

"We are one of five or six international entities that sit on SEW's Global Collaboration and Steering Committee and South Africa is seen as an authority for certain applications, such as conveyor drives in mining, and agitation and mixing systems. This gives us a voice with regard to what products and innovations customers in Africa expect in terms of reliability, durability, and sustainability.

"This South African service facility is very significant. We are pioneering new products in SEW-EURODRIVE's after-sales offering for the global Group," Jonathan McKey concludes.

[www.sew-eurodrive.co.za](http://www.sew-eurodrive.co.za)



SEW-EURODRIVE's investment in its new Repair and Service Centre enhances local support capabilities, ensuring faster turnaround times and improved service for customers across Africa.