



Lead boldly for growth

These are economically challenging times but we have proved to ourselves over this year that, as the saying goes, who dares, wins. This year, we have diversified strongly, expanding our product offerings in Africa and launching our first showroom in the USA.

This happened because we re-examined our South African business and realised we could see the growth ceiling—a clear challenge to the leadership of any company. With 120 years of specialised craftsmanship behind us, we are still proud market leaders in our sector and we are determined to keep it that way. Over the decades, we have launched the best of local and international bedding and lounge here, from Sealy Posturepedic and Edblo to La-Z-Boy and GommaGomma. But we had to recognise that growth opportunities are currently limited for us in SA. To sustain and grow our group, we needed to look for export opportunities.

We are witnessing the rise of the African middle class. More than a third of Africa's 1 billion or so inhabitants already live in urban areas. Comfort is our business—and that African urban middle class wants a more comfortable lifestyle.

Strong, sustainable growth is built on solid foundations. For us, those foundations consist of our confidence in the quality and value-for-money offered by our products and our experience of many years of exporting to SADC countries. We have found substantial assistance within the networks built thanks to the government's links with the African Union and the East African community, consolidating this with activities such as attending the Nairobi Manufacturing Indaba. We heartily encourage other SA companies to make the most of these opportunities.

While we respond to consumer demand, we are also injecting retail and manufacturing jobs into the continent, creating opportunities and building expertise. Our seven world-class SA manufacturing plants in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban and surrounds employ nearly 4 500 people. They also make components in SA for our assembly plants in Zimbabwe, Namibia and, from this year, Tanzania.

The Bravo Group is growing in Africa and has also successfully exported our Alpine range of lounge suites and sofas to the UK for a number of years. We have even supplied the premium cinema seating we produce for Cinema Privé in South Africa to the renowned Leicester Square cinema.

These successes have prompted us to look even further afield and this year, we also opened our first North American showroom in Dallas, Texas. This market has welcomed the quality and value of our full-leather chairs, sofas and lounge suites. The "Out of Africa" background of our African Heritage Collection, a range that features more exotic leathers such as buffalo and gemsbok, has also been a hit.

Finding and taking growth opportunities is a risk. But if you ensure that it is a calculated risk which you are able to control, you should build your business's vitality despite difficult economic times.

We believe we are typical of many Proudly South African businesses and products that could follow a similar strategy—to the benefit of their bottom line, their employees and our country's economy. ▲



Greg Boule, Group Chief Executive Officer, Bravo Group