

DIGGING INTO GREATER EFFICIENCIES

By Tarren Bolton

GDM Plumbing & Projects (GDM) was established by brothers David and Gareth Buirski in August 2012, when they saw the opportunity for reliable plumbers committed to delivering projects on time and hassle-free.



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David Buirski (left) with members of the excavation team on site at The Hills Eco Estate, Mooikloof, Pretoria.

Operating in the greater Gauteng area, the company specialises in plumbing — including water, sewer and stormwater lines, and mainly trench excavations. With a focus on providing clients with quick and professional services, no matter what their plumbing and drainage requirements, GDM completes all work according to national and local by-laws.

The business grew from two employees and one vehicle in 2012, to 16 employees and three vehicles by 2015. Then, in 2015, David and Gareth were joined by younger brother Matt, a quantity surveyor. Today, the company consists of over 100 employees and 15 vehicles.

Customer-centric focus

The growth and the success of GDM can largely be attributed to the company's emphasis on clear communication and follow-through procedures to ensure that their clients' objectives are a top priority in both planning and executing projects. What sets them apart is the company objective of ensuring that every customer knows that they are important and valued. "We understand that everyone's plumbing needs may differ, and that is why we constantly endeavour to provide a specialised service, at the most reasonable price," says Matt. This focus on providing customers with 'assurance' of optimum delivery of services by the most experienced and qualified people, is one of the main reasons that GDM invested in their first Kubota excavator — the U30, a 3t excavator — in 2016.

"We've never looked back," says Matt. "In a few short years, the internal landscape of the business has changed in that the ratio of skilled people to

Roll-over Protection System (ROPS): the operator is protected from any potentially dangerous situations where an excavator may roll — provided the operator is in the seated position, with his seat belt on. “A built-in feature is that, should a unit fall over, the engine will shut off automatically,” says Kemp.

When it comes to increased production, Matt says, “One of our success stories, and to illustrate the capabilities of the U30, is when we were working on a residential project out in Eye of Africa. To start with, production was very slow. We spoke to the engineers who allowed us to use the U30 on site, and we eventually outpaced the other contractors at such a rate that they asked us to stop because they couldn’t keep up,” enthuses Matt.

It’s all in the service

Matt says that Smith’s after-sales services has been great. “Downtime is minimal to non-existent, and we’ve never had any incidents,” says Matt. Kemp adds that what has impressed him about GDM, and what makes them competitive, is the equipment owner’s presence on site. “Should any problems arise, there is always someone available to address it then and there. And Kubota is proud to be a part of that. In terms of reliability, we have spares readily available,” says Kemp.

Kemp says that a trend they have noticed in the industry, is that a lot of people are mechanising — in construction and in agriculture. “When it comes to efficiencies, it just makes more sense. In the long run, it is far more economical too,” he concludes.

And where to from here for GDM? Matt says, “We have been fortunate enough in the plumbing industry to have been kept very busy, and our vision for GDM is to build up a good fleet of plant — specifically the mini excavators. From a professional perspective, people are quite surprised when we arrive on site with an excavator in tow. And then they are impressed at the rate of our turnaround time. This has been a good reflection on our business — and attests to our professionalism, which will go a long way towards our future growth.” 🌟



Matt Buirski, director at GDM Plumbing & Projects (left), with Charl Kemp, area manager for Kubota Construction.

unskilled has been drastically reduced — and this is owing to the excavators themselves,” he adds.

Purchase decision

“Among the factors that assisted us in our purchase decision was the first impression created by Smith Power Equipment, Kubota’s distributor, who provided us with very good service after my initial enquiry,” states Matt. “Another appealing factor was the size of the excavator. We generally work in confined spaces with limited manoeuvrability, so compact equipment for us is key. Our purchase decision was also influenced by labour expenses. We found that sourcing and utilising casual labour was becoming a costly exercise. Manual labour — guys with a spade and a pick, digging trenches — is time-consuming and often, to an extent, unreliable. In terms of feasibility, it made more sense to purchase,” says Matt.

Then, in 2018, GDM purchased their second Kubota excavator — the U15, a compact 1.5t machine. “The U15 is for our residential market, and the U30 for our commercial business. Productivity has improved tremendously. For example, typical turnaround time for a house drain would normally be eight to 10 days, whereas now it’s three to four days. This translates to half the time, with fewer staff overheads,” enthuses Matt.

Attractive features

“GDM was first to market in South Africa for the U15 model,” says Tom Bloom, general manager for Construction. He adds, “One of the U15’s best features is its compact size. This translates into ease of transporting and ease of mobility.” Matt explains, “The U15 can be transported on a trailer on the back of a bakkie; it’s just a matter of loading it on and transporting it to site. The excavator’s mobility was a big selling point for us. Often, a site has limited, or tricky or tight spaces, so both the size and the mobility of the excavators is very important to us.”

Charl Kemp, area manager for Kubota Construction, says, “One of the key features of the U15 is the accessibility it provides with its ability to retract its tracks in order to fit through narrow openings.” Kemp adds that the accuracy and time saved when excavating at a site is a plus point. “An excavator pivots on points and removes the soil fairly quickly, saving on time and increasing productivity,” he says.

“One of the major features of the Kubota excavators is the auto-idle feature. When the machine comes to rest, it goes into auto-idle mode, and as soon as the operator touches any of the controls, this brings the rpm up again, and the work continues. This translates into fuel savings,” adds Kemp.

Kemp explains that in terms of safety, all Kubota products come with the

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