

A Long Road to the Top

Leading business people will tell you that the road to success is long and can be bumpy. Sam Lubbe from Lubbe Construction has travelled this road, first by bicycle, then by car and now, at the head of his successful construction company, he continues to do so - only this time it is in a shiny new Mercedes Benz. Sam has worked hard to get to the point where his business is successful and capable of undertaking large scale projects using its own funds, equipment and manpower.

It all started 30 years ago when Sam was retrenched from the company he had worked for since he was 12 years old. He had gained experience over the years and took the skills learned and used his severance pay to buy supplies in order to undertake small-scale private jobs. "At that time Soweto was in the process of being electrified and I was able to grow the business by installing electrical outlets in households. Soon the business was sustainable and we were able to fund our own small building projects and raise funds for bigger and better ones," says Sam proudly.

The business was thriving and through high standards of workmanship it became well respected within the industry. Lubbe Construction got its first real big break when Perm Building Society offered 100% mortgage bonds to any of his clients wishing to make improvements to their properties. By 1990, on the recommendation of Perm, he was awarded a major contract to build a high-rise block of flats in Israel. This is where the business really took off.

Big trouble

After the first democratically elected govern-



Sam Lubbe contemplates his next development. From humble beginnings Lubbe Construction has grown

ment was elected in 1994 he became actively involved in building RDP houses for previously disadvantaged communities. Soon the company was building houses at a rate of 160 houses per month and was able to invest in properties for development as well as machinery and manpower to take on some pretty ambitious projects. One such project, however, almost derailed the business and could easily have brought the whole operation crashing down around him.

"It was a massive shock when a development that was being undertaken by ourselves and another property development company, that we had partnered with, got into financial trouble. It was an ambitious development project at Piroville and I was shocked when our development partner went bankrupt and no further development could take place," he recalls.

"It was terrible, the company was not able to honour bank loans, nor could it pay for services and supplies that had already been used on site." For the first time

