

Q&A Water Equipment People by Kenya Farmer Magazine

Interview with Davis & Shirliff Group Chief Executive, Alec Davis

Q. Davis & Shirliff started when and for what reason?

A. The company was founded in 1946 by my father who had worked as a water engineer for the military in Kenya. The company's primary business then was water supply, though today we have diversified into other product segments including boreholes, swimming pools, water treatment, solar and power generation.

Q. Describe the company and its scope?

A. Water Pumps have traditionally been our core business and we have developed from a project oriented organisation to one focusing on wholesale and distribution within East & central Africa. The strategy has been supported by the development of a branch network and Davis & Shirliff today has 25 branches across the region. As well as developing business established markets we are now also focusing on new emerging markets such as Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Q. You are best known for what?

A. Our brand – Davis & Shirliff is well known in our markets and is synonymous with professionalism and technical expertise. However, I would say that our core competence is distribution. Our approach to logistics is scientifically driven towards efficiency and we are well resourced with an extensive warehousing facility and a fleet of delivery vehicles. Our supply chain management expertise is a great strength that enables the group to sell a wide range of products throughout the network with low stockholding and at low cost.

Q. What's the size of your company and what can be attributed to its growth?

A. With a workforce of over 340 employees at 25 sites, our primary focus has been to improve on our technical capacity. We have doubled our size over a period of 3 to 4 years and have managed our growth to a sustainable 30 % per annum. The principal growth drivers have been the expansion of our product lines, the increase in the number of branches, the growth of the market in general and our disciplined and focused approach. The trade environment in East and Central Africa is ever more competitive and we attribute our success to our company values of quality, integrity and continuous innovation and improvement.

Q. How strong is the company brand name?

A. Put it this way, we are known by our slogan- 'The Professionals.' Besides, the company has invested a substantial amount in building the brand which is now a household name within our markets.

Q. Describe the latest product and how the market has responded to it?

A. New products are the life line of any business. Market research has suggested that there are opportunities in waste water management so we have developed a water recycling plant that has been an instant success due to its user friendliness and flexibility.

Q. What makes the waste water treatment plant from your company unique?

A. Our waste water recycling plant conforms to international standards and gives the user the possibility of concealing the unit underground so as save on space and reduce the environmental impact while processing raw sewage into clean, safe water.

Q. What are prospects for the company?

A. The region is growing fast and the demand for water and solar related equipment seems to be on the rise. Increased development in infrastructure as well as general economic growth will drive the demand for the company's wide range of products. Furthermore, i foresee Davis & Shirliff retaining its competitive edge over other companies owing to the quality of its products and its competitive pricing.

Q. How does the company give back to the society?

A. The company has a well established corporate social responsibility plan. As part of its commitment, the company focuses on installing pumps that provide a sustainable water supply to under privilege schools and communities in the rural parts of Kenya. Last year Davis & Shirliff completed 42 projects benefiting over 30,000 people.

