

# CASE STUDY

**BE EXCEPTIONAL. THE HENLEY WAY.**



**Dennis Zietsman,**  
Co-Founder and  
Deputy Group  
Chairman, Servest  
*on the benefits of the  
custom programmes*

## Servest facts and figures

Servest was first to market  
with a integrated self-delivery  
platform

**40,000** – Employees

**24,000** – Sites

**85%** – of clients have been  
with us for over 6 years

**11,000** – Washrooms serviced  
per month

**20,000** – Cleaners cleaning daily

**1997** – The company was  
founded

**950,000** – Meals produced  
monthly

## Servest the company

The Servest Group provides multi-service solutions to over 7,000 clients throughout Africa and the United Kingdom. The Group's operating divisions' services cover facilities and energy management, camp management and catering, cleaning, hygiene, building and maintenance services, landscaping and turf, marine, and office, parking and security.

The Group has built strong client relationships through its focus on delivering value through innovation. Management has a high level of equity invested in the company at 51% and Kagiso Tiso Holdings at 49%. The company has over 40,000 employees. Servest is the first black-owned facilities management group in South Africa.

Recent successes include securing parking facility contracts in Ghana and Nigeria, and public-private partnership projects with Statistics South Africa, and in the UK with the BBC, Post Office, Cross Rail and Kings College London.

## Servest's executive education requirements

Servest recognised the need to develop future senior leaders within the Group, both in South Africa and the UK, and pool their competencies. The aim is to provide input around global best practices. The desired outcomes are to develop leaders with leadership skills in the Servest way, while still preserving individualism.

When talking to Dennis Zietsman, Co-Founder and Deputy Group Chairman, he stresses that Servest's philosophy is to develop managers as leaders with high emotional intelligence, who think strategically, make effective decisions and have an adequate skills set.

He says, 'Effective leaders are able to understand the different ways that people in finance, operations, sales, HR and marketing approach business, and the various tools and metrics that each discipline applies to solve problems or perform their job. Leaders must be able to make decisions that are good for the business as a whole and who are able to evaluate and grow the talent in their teams. The goal is to produce self-thinking leaders.'

'In addition, leaders know the metrics for evaluating performance as well as how to recruit people to manage areas in which they themselves are not experts.'

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'Our aim is to instil into these individuals a different way of managing and to apply what they have learned. This generally involves a number of objectives including a shift in behaviour and leadership style.'

'While we believe that there is no right or wrong way of managing, we want to give the individuals attending the Henley programme a toolkit to build on their strengths and work on their weaknesses,' says Mr Zietsman. 'We believe that leadership is a life-long journey and that learning is part of this journey.'

## **Selection of Henley**

Servest began its search for a provider of an executive education programme that would be suited to its specific requirements. The need was for a flexible course run by a reputable business school. 'We researched the top business schools to evaluate what was on offer. They all seemed to have a similar approach and subjects covered,' says Mr Zietsman.

## **Henley's approach**

Henley's approach caught Servest's eye. The other business schools had proposed fixed programmes, whereas Henley investigated Servest's requirements and designed a programme specific to their needs. It was this hands-on and personal approach, along with Henley's top credentials with a South African focus and its international links, which drove Servest to choose Henley as their preferred supplier.

'Henley's approach was different. Firstly, they identified our needs and then designed a programme to fit our requirements. They were not prepared to provide or suggest a solution until they had completed a full needs analysis,' says Mr Zietsman.

'Their representatives, including Jon Foster-Pedley, Dean of Henley South Africa, listened to our requirements over a number of meetings. They even went as far as to include scans of the flipcharts we developed in the meetings into their proposal.'

'Henley customised the course, dubbed the "Alchemist" programme, around our exact needs therefore creating a tailored programme. As an additional benefit, we were able to run the programme at Henley's facilities in South Africa and the UK, addressing the Group's full needs,' says Mr Zietsman.

## **Subject matter covered**

The participants covered an equal mix of Servest staff from South Africa and the UK. The second semester focused on the 'Business School Model'. The Alchemist programme includes coaching and mentorship, done within Servest's framework of values – namely, working to a common goal.

The programme ran over two years, the first year internally at Servest and the second year at Henley. Year two consisted of four blocks in total. Block 1 included Strategy and Innovation and the second covered Finance. The third focused on Strategic Marketing and Supply Chain Management with Block 4 covering Facilities Management.

'Facilities Management is something not normally found in a business school programme,' says Mr Zietsman, 'This included drawing up bid documents to assist Servest management with tender and contract bidding as well as "standing in the clients shoes" in order to understand their needs.'

## **Executive education benefits to Servest**

Mr Zietsman says the key factor that Servest was looking to achieve was personal development of the Group's management.

'Following the first stage of the programme, it became evident that there was a marked shift in behaviour and leadership qualities in those attending. The Alchemist programme began by providing our managers with the toolkit that we originally set out to achieve: to build on their strengths and for each individual to be more aware of their weaknesses. One of the greatest benefits we have now identified is the level of confidence and additional skills our managers have derived from the course.'

'The results have been exceptional. Individuals who were reserved have become more outgoing and participate and lead meetings. The programme has enhanced each individual's business skills, their decision-making capabilities and confidence levels.'

'Overall, we found Henley to be proactive. They regularly provided us with honest feedback. The programmes constantly evolved to enable Servest to get the most out of their services. We are very grateful for their hands-on approach to education,' concludes Mr Zietsman.

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