

inter alia

by Kylie King

Berco Turns up the heat:

The Extra Degree

When it comes to building your company's culture and encouraging employees to go the extra mile to get the job done, there is no better way than to lead from the front. Berco CEO Andy van der Velde has done just that, having already conquered the world's highest mountain, he recently endured temperatures around -40°C to reach the North Pole.

Andy van der Velde, CEO, Berco

Van der Velde is possibly one of the greatest brand ambassadors that a company can hope to have. Not only did he take the Berco flyer to the top of Mount Everest in 2007, but this year he took it to the Arctic in April. His expedition to the North Pole also ties in with the type of culture Berco is encouraging in the organisation with its 212°F campaign.

"The idea behind this campaign is to get employees to go the extra degree. On the temperature scale, at 211°F water is very hot, but at 212°F it boils," he explains. "The one extra degree can create steam and power locomotives. This mentality of putting in the extra effort in life and in business can make all the difference."

In keeping true to the Berco campaign, Van der Velde and the team of South Africans put on their skis and travelled the final degree from 89° to 90° to reach the North Pole. Going the extra degree made the expedition a success.

The expedition to the North Pole was the first South African run expedition where the team members pulled sledges with their food, tent and sleeping bag. The trip was organised through Adventure Dynamics with a team comprising nine South Africans and one American. After flying to the Polar Ice Cap, it took the expedition team eight days to reach the North Pole on 22 April.

"All of us are mountaineers and have climbed many mountains, including Mount Everest. So we decided to do something different," says Van der Velde. "Two of the members, Sean Disney and Vaughn de la Harpe, were going for what is called the 'grand slam', which involves climbing Mount Everest and going to the North and South Pole." Only a handful of people in the world have reached this milestone, an elite club of which Van der Velde hopes to be a member in the future.

While Van der Velde did not meet Santa Clause in the North Pole, he did return to South Africa with a renewed respect for the South African climate. "I learnt that I need to appreciate the warmth of South Africa more, as it was unbelievably cold in the Arctic. One day when the temperature dropped below -40°C, one of our team members took hot water from his flask and threw it in the air. The water froze in the air; that's how cold it was!"

Van der Velde's pursuit of excellence, whether he is tackling adventures outdoors or in the boardroom, was recognised when Berco was rated fourth in the Leadership Excellence 2010 Awards by the CRF Institute. The CRF Institute identifies leading executive managers and teams who display management best practices during recession times as well as times of high success. These companies are scientifically researched according to the CRF Institute's method and are evaluated according to whether they have achieved an international standard of management excellence.

Berco's approach to management is to build a common thread in the business by running campaigns like 212°F. "This helps employees feel part of a programme that is not just about profit but about culture," he says.



"If your culture is right, your profit will follow; the 212°F campaign is a team effort and it involves every single employee, from the couriers through to management."

Berco has also carried out other internal initiatives that have been successful. When the recession hit South Africa, Berco was proactive and launched Project 850. This campaign encouraged all 850 Berco employees to contribute to sales in return for an incentive. "This resulted in so many potential client leads coming in that the marketing representatives could not keep up. Not only did we not have to retrench any employees during the economic downturn, but Berco had a record sales year and actually grew during this period."

Berco has also grown its business through expanding its service complement from couriership to include warehousing, clearing and forwarding, and international couriership. "We have four strong businesses that are growing, and from a sustainability perspective we can offer clients a one-stop service for all their needs and focus on building a partnership with our clients, rather than being just a supplier."

Van der Velde explains that Berco's strategy has never been to be the biggest courier; rather, it has opted to provide the best-quality service and have the best image. "We have, however, grown into one of the biggest logistics companies, but this has never been our main goal. We will continue to ensure that our focus is on quality and our reputation," he concludes. □

Berco Drop-Box: Making Couriership Easy

Berco is rolling out its new Drop-Boxes to 260 Pick n Pay stores across the country. This new concept will make sending parcels around South Africa even easier and faster. Customers will be charged a flat rate of R99 for a Drop-Box Retail Pack containing a waybill, a large plastic envelope and step-by-step instructions. Once the waybill is completed, it goes into a transparent pouch and a copy of the waybill is kept for reference purposes.

Parcels need to be dropped into the Drop-Box before the collection time indicated on the box itself, which is usually between 16:00 and 16:30. Delivery will be before 10:30 the following business day to all main centres. No account is required and all parcels can be tracked online.