



Arnold Retief,
CEO of ThermoWise



ThermoWise and Germany's Viessmann turn up the heat together

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For ThermoWise, one of the country's leading suppliers of innovative energy-saving and mechanical turnkey solutions across numerous sectors, 2020 has been a significant year.

In January the company started construction on a new warehouse and head office complex in Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal. This represented the first phase of building on the 15,000m² plot of land it purchased in late 2019 and marked the kick-off of its growth plans for the next 24-month period. In February it entered into a partnership with Viessmann, a major German player in the development and manufacturing of heating, cooling and ventilation systems. ThermoWise's collaboration with this internationally recognised enterprise, which has more than 12,000 employees in 74 countries, will lend immense weight to its expansion strategy.



ThermoWise Viessmann head office, Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal

Arnold Retief, CEO of ThermoWise, tells **Asset** that the new offices will be ready for occupation in early November, with a custom-built 4,500m² warehouse acting as the main stockholding facility for its divisions in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and those in the Eastern and Western Cape.

“We’re moving our manufacturing here as well because we’ve outgrown our current facilities. The collaboration with Viessmann opens a big new market for us from an export point of view. The products we manufacture here will be exported through their supply chain. The warehouse will also serve as a base for us to showcase our product to engineers from around the country. The next phase of construction will be the development of a training facility for up-and-coming engineering professionals, which will allow them to accumulate CPD points.”



Lenmed Ethekwini Heart Hospital plant room



ThermoWise was established in 2008 and Arnold labels its core business as “water in water out”. The company specialises in air-to-water heat pumps, the design, supply and installation of all hot and cold water applications, and offers mechanical end-to-end solutions. “Our project teams plan, initiate, execute and close-out multi-disciplinary projects managing the design, supply and installation of all hot and cold water applications in various industries.” Its vast portfolio of projects includes extensive

work in the healthcare and hospitality sectors, retail and residential complexes as well as student accommodation.

Viessmann’s 40% stake in ThermoWise gives the South African arm of the business access to a wealth of technical expertise and product knowledge. The German enterprise, headquartered in Allendorf in the north-west of Hesse, was founded in 1917 and is a fourth-generation family-run business. Its mission is to “create living spaces for generations to

come with a range of heating and climate technologies in the climate solutions area which set the standard in the industry.”

Arnold credits co-CEO, **Maximilian Viessmann**, as being “very dynamic and very in touch with tech. He is highly skilled in knowing how to adapt the installation of mechanical equipment in a modern tech-dominated environment. There is smart tech on all their equipment and they are continually developing new products.



Lenmed Ethekwini Heart Hospital



Lenmed Kimberly Heart Hospital

“They have renewable energy technology which is incredibly cutting-edge which we now have access to. It’s a huge advantage for us to have them on board. Their operating platforms in terms of reporting and online building management are very advanced so there’s a real value-add for us from the perspective of the day-to-day running and management of our business.”

Although the vast majority of ThermoWise’s equipment is locally manufactured, Arnold stresses the value of knowing that those products which they import from Viessmann will have been manufactured under conditions of strict quality control and will be reliable imports, even if manufactured in factories outside of Germany. ThermoWise staff will receive specialised equipment and installation training on-site at Viessmann once international travel normalises, he says.

ThermoWise’s commitment to utilising intelligent solutions in order to lessen energy consumption and thereby reduce a building’s carbon footprint, aligns well with its many clients who strive to achieve high green building ratings. The choice of heating and cooling equipment and the way in which it is installed plays a determining role in how well a building ultimately scores. As Arnold points out, the rating process includes a thorough investigation of the heat pumps, the heat losses and the installation on the ring mains.



Cintocare, Growthpoint's Pretoria Head and Neck Hospital

At Growthpoint’s Pretoria Head and Neck Hospital – which is the first green building healthcare unit in South Africa - the process was even more exhaustive, he says, because hospital standards are non-negotiable when it comes to water treatment and heating. “In hospitals water has to be heated to 60 degrees continuously because they mix it. So the equipment is no different to what we’d use for student housing, for example, but the installation is different.”

To maximise cost savings for clients and increase profitability, energy savings are carefully quantified. The affiliation with Viessmann will give ThermoWise exposure to its world-class innovations in this area. “The size of their new product development division alone is the size of our entire company of 400 people. This opens up a whole new world





SUN 1, Richards Bay



Timo Tauber, managing director of Viessmann Investment, says, “In ThermoWise we have found the perfect partner who provides us with a strong platform and long-term access to the South African market and other fast growing African markets.” For ThermoWise, which takes pride in its technologically advanced systems designed to be gentle on the environment and provide substantial financial and energy savings, the partnership with Viessmann is equally valuable.

“We have always kept abreast of the latest innovations. By partnering with Viessmann, a leader in its field for more than 100 years who is positioned at the forefront of smart tech innovations, we will be able to help our customers make wiser energy choices that save them money and are kinder to the environment. Together with our staff, partners, clients and suppliers, we aim to reduce the human carbon footprint. We are convinced that intelligent solutions can make a big difference.” **A+**

of smart, green technology to us. At present we can cut 66% of heating costs. If clients want further energy savings and are prepared to invest more in the short-term, we install heat receivers which harness the heat from chillers that is essentially wasted. Using this wasted energy can achieve cost savings of up to 75%. Clients such as the City Lodge group, Life Healthcare and Netcare are already doing this.”

Arnold emphasises the importance of working closely with FM teams, with standard service level agreements put in place once installation is complete. “All our offices around the country have full service departments and we tie in with clients’ building management platforms. We are however in the process

of building our own platform and will look at incorporating learnings from the Viessmann platform which is already in place. From a longevity perspective, it is critical to maintain equipment properly to extend its lifespan and positively influence the return on investment for the client. By offering superior after-sales service and maintenance, we add value to our clients’ projects and enable them to achieve the most sustainable outcomes.”

The range of skills needed to manage and operate a company like ThermoWise is extensive. With a premium international partner such as Viessmann on board, the challenge of securing human expertise to match the standard of equipment innovation intensifies, but Arnold says the company is

prepared for this. “We realised a number of years ago that we needed to invest in superior in-house training to maintain a comprehensive skill pool. We must be able to meet the demands of where our work takes us. We play in the construction field, and we both import and manufacture our own equipment; we have a full-blown design department which plans and executes project design for clients, plus we have installation and maintenance departments in four provinces. We have electrical and mechanical engineers, plumbers, refrigeration technicians. The skill-sets required are considerable, and need to be maintained at optimal levels. This is why training is so vitally important to us and why we are investing in the construction of a purpose-built training facility here in Ballito.”