

## ENTREPRENEUR

## Documented proof of success

*Focusing on customer relationships, not just selling products*

"BUSINESSES do business with business, but people buy from people. This truth underpins the business model of the venture," says Gerrie Roodt, professor at the Graduate School of Management of the University of Pretoria and chairman of Itec, a company established by Jacques Duyver in 1999.

Duyver, who studied aeronautical engineering at the University of Stellenbosch for a year, has succeeded in making his business idea soar, but he doesn't have his head in the clouds and admits to being aware of the many challenges facing business.

After an exciting but unsuccessful time at varsity, Duyver, who has since his teens dreamed of one day owning his own business, started out as a salesman for an importer of office equipment.

"I soon wanted to go it alone and set up a franchise. With only R2 000 in my bank account, I was granted a R30 000 credit limit by the parent company, with which I bought one copier back in 1992. Once I had sold that, I paid the debt and bought the next copier. This laid the foundation of how we still operate," says Duyver, whose company has never used an overdraft, has no outside investors and has this year reached turnover of R800m.

After running his franchise operation for six years, Duyver bought the rights to import Konica products six years ago. Konica and Minolta in Japan merged last year and the products are now branded Konica Minolta.

Duyver says the importers and distributors of machines such as copiers, fax machines and printers – known in

the industry as office automation and document solutions – used to stick to one brand to trade under. "Lately there has been a move towards registering and promoting an own brand name. This is why we decided on the Itec brand name for the Konica Minolta product we import."

A month ago, Itec embarked on establishing the brand in SA and is in the process of trademarking the brand internationally. "It is a very lengthy process. It will take some three years to have the trademark established worldwide," says Duyver. The company is also discussing the possibility with its overseas principals of an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) deal that will allow it to put its brand name on the equipment it imports.

Duyver, whose company has 600 employees in 65 branches and serves over 18 000 clients in industries ranging from food processing to financial services to retail, agrees with Roodt that its success is rooted in an understanding of how to meet the needs of the people in the businesses it serves.

"Our company was one of the first in SA to invest in customer-relationship software long before CRM became a buzzword. We're not a 'box dropping' company; we focus on providing total document solutions and not merely the supply of document output machines. Products of excellent quality are just the beginning. The real value we provide is customer commitment, on-going training and service."

At the Itec College, the company, with its head office in Sunninghill, north



Jacques Duyver... establishing own brand.

of Johannesburg, provides national support and training to sales and service staff on all products offered by the company.

Roodt, who as a founder judge of the SA chapter of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, has insight into many of SA's leading entrepreneurs, says Duyver has true entrepreneurial traits such as vision, understanding and the ability to tackle risk and take full responsibility. "I've been involved with the venture from the start and as chairman I still play the role of mentor, sounding board and devil's advocate. This synergy works for us."

COLLEEN NAUDE

cnaude@ffw.co.za

## TECHNOLOGY

## Setting a new agenda

*Boardrooms changing from detention centres to playrooms*

DRAWN-out boardroom brainstorming, workshops, strategy sessions and committee presentations are the necessary evils of the modern business environment. While the jury is still out on the business value of tying up highly paid profes-

sionals for hours on end, increasing productivity and participation during these sessions go beyond decent snacks, a well-stocked beverage counter and comfy chairs.

The modern meeting space can be fitted with a number of ►► 58