

GVK-Siya Zama CEO urges construction industry peers to remain positive

With the R100bn Infrastructure Fund now in full operation, as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his 2021 State of the Nation Address, Eben Meyburgh, CEO at GVK-Siya Zama Building Contractors, believes that the construction industry has the potential to help kickstart the economy. This after the industry declined in 2020 following an extremely difficult year due to measures taken to protect against Covid-19.



Eben Meyburgh, CEO at GVK-Siya Zama Building Contractors

“As the public sector is investing in various civils projects, we hope to see a positive knock-on effect when it comes to increasing work opportunities for related industries such as building construction, material manufacturing, engineering, architecture and electrical construction.

Challenges to persist

It is important to note though that it won't be smooth sailing as the industry is still anticipating another disruptive year, he adds. “Challenges brought on by the pandemic and slow economic growth are expected to persist into 2021, and although expenditure in the private industry is loosening up marginally, this, along with the slowdown in public sector work, may not be sufficient in the short to medium term. As such, the labour force may become more desperate due to unemployment which could result in the rise of disruptions by the construction sector mafia.” He adds that government has the opportunity of making a considerable contribution towards averting drastic risk to industry and the labour force by accelerating project awards and reducing lag.

Despite this, he points out that there is cause for optimism and that he believes the industry can start building its way back to positive growth in 2021. “The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan has helped to address some of the uncertainty in the construction industry and players in the sector are currently in engagements with government regarding the rollout of strategic integrated infrastructure projects to revive the economy.”



Better equipped to deal with Covid-19 challenges

Meyburgh is confident that the construction industry will be able to successfully navigate 2021 as the sector is now better equipped and able to deal with the continuing challenges brought about by Covid-19. “The lessons we learnt last year will definitely assist us to handle crises that we may face, and construction teams are armed with effective ways of ensuring their own safety and that of others on site and in their personal lives.”

“The sector, therefore, needs to be ready to take advantage of these opportunities, he says. “I believe that the key theme of this year is to accept and embrace change, partner with industry stakeholders to find solutions and create opportunities for growth, and growing people.”



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Embracing change and upheaval

Meyburgh points out that the team at GVK-Siya Zama has learnt to embrace change and upheaval. “More than anything, we place emphasis on the importance of retaining and building trusted relationships with all stakeholders and supporting one another through these difficult times. Working together and uniting with our colleagues, clients, sub-contractors, suppliers and other industry players has strengthened us as individuals and as a company.”

Meyburgh urges construction industry peers to remain positive. “It is incumbent upon us to contribute to the revival of the economy by being solutions oriented, improving efficiencies and driving alternative and sustainable building methods. “I implore industry leaders to proactively drive innovation and creative thinking to successfully grow the industry in 2021,” concludes Meyburgh.