

Systems Automation and Management – contained client base increases service capabilities

Systems Automation and Management (SAM) was founded in June 1988 and has grown to a complement of 60 people, comprising mostly technical and engineering staff with six administrative personnel and nine panel builders.

“I come from a background in the power generation industry where I was involved in instrumentation. I saw a gap in the market and started SAM to provide clients with uncompromising systems integration service,” said founder Claudio Agostinnetto.

SAM has its head office in Johannesburg, with branches in Durban and Saldanha, as well as a satellite office in Lephalale and a small office in Denmark. “We have formed a niche market for ourselves and have gained vast experience and skill in management information systems (MIS),” said Agostinnetto.

SAM services three major industries – mining, power and process plants. They provide a comprehensive turnkey offering, from audits right through to maintenance of plants. The company also builds panels and provides customised software to suit specific applications.

SAM has based its success on four business philosophies:

1. Concentrates on blue chip clients.
2. Sources its products from the top three or four players in each field.
3. Do not compromise on quality. “Clients want a long-term solution, so products should be able to endure for many years,” said Agostinnetto.
4. Believes in developing long-term relationships with its suppliers, clients, staff and subcontractors.

“Most of our installation work is subcontracted out,” said Agostinnetto. “We utilise the same subcontractors and in this way we ensure that



Outside the offices with the team at SAM

the quality is an overriding factor. These subcontractors know exactly what our requirements are and what is expected of them.” On the smaller jobs SAM uses its own team.

“Our dealings with Eskom extend back to our inception and we also have a long-standing relationship with Toyota, dating back to the opening of our Durban branch,” Agostinnetto said. Other blue chip clients that support SAM with repeat business are Anglo Platinum and Anglo Coal. “We believe in nurturing our relationships with our clients. By maintaining a small but niche portfolio of clients we are able to set ourselves apart from other companies that ‘take on’ any work they can find.”

“Customer service is a very important part of our business and for this reason we are prepared to put in the long hours required to ensure that our position is not compromised,” added Agostinnetto.

Agostinnetto said that the company has a very progressive approach towards training and upgrading of skills. “We currently take two or three engineering students from Universities and Universities of Technology and provide them with the practical training for their degree/diploma

requirements. In some cases, these students eventually become permanent employees.

“In addition, we also assist our current employees in a number of ways with regard to upgrading of skills. We have mentorship programmes in place and for those employees who wish to further their studies, we refund all their tuition fees once they have passed their exams. Finally, where needed, we send employees to our suppliers for full product training,” he said.

Some notable systems integration projects that the company has recently completed include work for Anglo Platinum’s PP Rust plant; the upgrade of the HMI system at Saldana Steel; and the building management system, which controls 5000 lights, at the FNB and WESBANK buildings. “In addition, we were also involved with a complete control system for a brewery in Romania and the upgrading of the old control equipment to a completely new system at the Finsch Mine, Goedehoop and Kleinkopje collieries as well as at Kriel Power Station,” said Agostinnetto. 🔌

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