



## THE FUTURE OF POSTNET IN SA

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The first thing that project manager Ben Nkuna PostNet, a subsidiary of Alt-X listed OneLogix, has a network of over 218 franchised stores situated in retail locations and business nodes nationwide. “We are planning to roll out another 15 in the next 12 months,” says MD Chris Wheeler.

PostNet stores serve in excess of 32 000 ‘walk in’ customers a day country-wide. There are four product brands within PostNet; PostNet Copy and Print, PostNet Digital, PostNet Stationery and PostNet Courier. Two types of customers are serviced through the stores. These include retail customers that walk into a store and account customers that rely on PostNet to service their business needs within their own infrastructure. This type of account customer makes use of the collection and delivery infrastructure of PostNet locally for bulk copying, printing and courier services.

The corporate courier service caters to a large and diverse customer base. In total, PostNet services 8,000 account customers ranging from SME’s, SOHO’s to large corporates and multinationals. “Each store has the capacity to collect parcels from the customer’s premises and courier them to any local or international destination. We see a healthy growth in PostNet Courier and are aiming to grow this side of the business exponentially within the next year,” he says.

PostNet first opened its doors 13 years ago when there was an urgent need in South Africa for an operation that could deliver a range of business solutions efficiently and safely. Founders, Ian Lourens, now the chief executive of OneLogix, and Chris Wheeler identified a gap in the market and embarked upon changing the face of business service delivery in South Africa. Based on the international model, the first store opened in Benmore, Sandton in 1993.

Historically 1993/94 was an exciting time in South Africa. Great changes were taking place. A new constitution was being mooted, the first democratic elections were held, and the government’s affirmative action policy was very much top of mind forcing people to relook at their career options.

“Luck was on our side,” says Lourens. “Our timing was perfect. We had a totally new concept and an affordable product to bring to the market. Entrepreneurship was a new buzz-word. Franchising was still undeveloped and those that existed were mainly in the food and petroleum sectors. There were over 1,000 enquiries in response to our first, and last, advertisement and from those; we sold 17 stores in high profile centres to some excellent business partners (franchisees). By the end of the year we had 35 stores up and running, and the following year we added another 35. Our products supplied a need in a one-stop-shop environment.”

The same formula exists today, although more products have been added to the company’s repertoire. One such innovation is the facility to access copies of over 400 same-day international newspapers printed on demand at local outlets. Another is the introduction of an international Excess Baggage product whereby international travelers can send Excess Baggage through their nearest PostNet to meet up with them at their international destination. This way travellers can move around and not have to carry heavy items from one city to the next. Even better, PostNet can provide this service at up to 40% cheaper than regular airlines.

The company is looking to launch some exciting new products soon. “We are constantly adapting our product mix according to the needs of our customers. There are huge opportunities for PostNet in the near future,” says Wheeler.

“The combination of a reputable brand, a sound franchise infrastructure, relevant products and strong business partners has proved to be a successful mix and that’s what I believe franchising is all about,” concludes Lourens.

End

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