

## in for the long haul

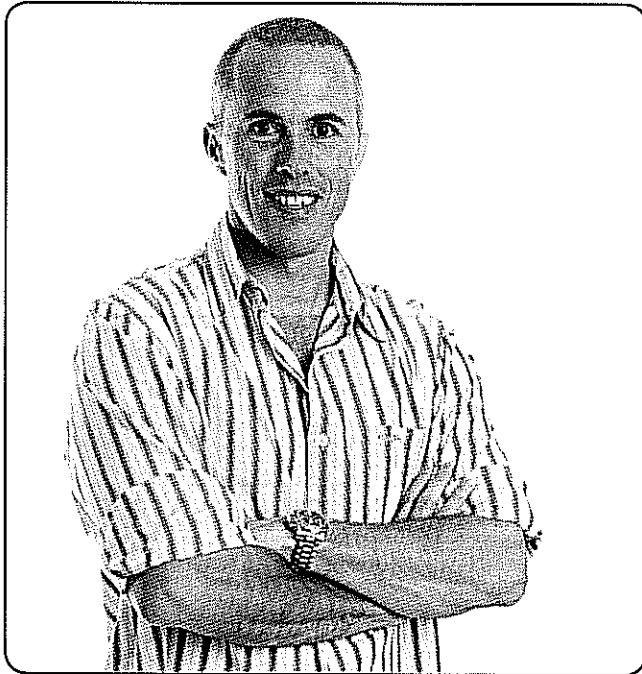
► *Hendrina Westoll*

When a company can count on one hand the number of people that have left since its inception 14 years ago, its composition is unique. Sit up and take note.

Founded in 1994, Atterbury Property has concentrated a remarkable skills set within a tight-knit, passionately committed management and staff body that has become a force to be contended with in its industry. It is no surprise that its peers throughout the Country have acclaimed it as an acknowledged leader in the field of property development.

Managing Director James Ehlers is unassuming and quietly proud of Atterbury's achievements. He reflects, in every statement he makes, the firm belief in South Africa and its future which clearly permeates the Company. "Our view is long term," he explains. "We believe in the potential of this Country, and indeed of the continent, so we make decisions based on long-term prospects. This alone gives us considerably more depth and creates more confidence than short-term operators." A strong sense of ownership is promoted through shareholding in the Company, by both management and staff.

"Long term" affects every aspect of operations at Atterbury: a flat and flexible structure whose versatility enables it to adapt quickly to the volatile industry, on-going skills development, appointment of key personnel who will fit snugly into the Business (and stay there), succession planning that is sensitive



Managing Director James; Atterbury Property

to individual potential, development and changing circumstances, identification of projects, investments, pride in performance and achievement and, above all, relationships.

Focused almost exclusively on the development and management of A-Grade business and commercial nodes, Atterbury has forged a reputation as a preferred partner with financial institutions, industry players and property development and investment partners. "Over the past 14 years, we have built up an impressive portfolio in this space, developing upmarket offices, regional shopping centres, residential lifestyle estates and, more recently, industrial parks and leisure developments. These are projects which tend to be less vulnerable in volatile markets, so there is a greater measure of financial stability and long-term security," he points out.

Consistent, organic growth has been a feature of this South-African bred Company from its foundation as a two-man outfit to its current 60-strong complement with offices in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town. Strategic location and long-term development cycles, according to Ehlers, are among factors that will enable Atterbury to weather the economic turmoil successfully.

"We conduct our business within two focus areas," he continues: "property development, through greenfields and brownfields projects, and asset management through a property investment vehicle: Atterbury Investment Holdings (AIH)." Its wide-ranging skills enable Atterbury Property Development to handle the total development process from inception to final delivery, while AIH, as the holding company, invests in premium grade assets in the most prestigious business nodes in major metropolitan centres.

To date, Atterbury has developed over 700 000 square metres of commercial space. While it meets the traditionally more conservative requirements of large corporate partners, it is known for its innovation and creativity; keeping in touch with global trends and developments, particularly in terms of energy efficiency demands.

Through the Atterbury Foundation, the Company plays a significant role in community upliftment, supporting immediate local needs for facilities and skills development. The relevance of such projects is demonstrated by SAPOA's award to Atterbury's Bergriver Skills Training project in 2007 for innovative excellence. The Atterbury Trust provides financial assistance for tertiary education and school infrastructure improvement.

"We continue to grow the Company with our focus primarily on South Africa, but also considering opportunities in neighbouring countries such as Mauritius, Namibia and Angola," Ehlers concludes. "Our Country has considerable potential, and we are admirably positioned to play a valuable role in developing it." ▲