

NASHUA MOBILE

CELLULAR ORGANISATION



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South Africa's growing SMEs need effective communications but want to avoid heavy investment and long-term commitments—and Nashua Mobile believes it has the answer

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No-one needs to be reminded of the serious effects of the global banking crisis. South Africa's Nashua Mobile, for example, saw its bad debt ratio just about double during 2009 to 2010. After such shocks, it is not surprising to find that smaller businesses (SMEs: small-to-medium enterprises) are wary of committing to big investments in communications—but they need to have effective IT if they are going to grow and prosper; it is a chicken-and-egg situation. Fortunately, Nashua Mobile maintains that it has the answer.

“We are seeking to provide a full, in-house service solution to SMEs,” says Chris Radley, managing director of Nashua Mobile. “We have the solutions to enable a small office, of five to 50 people, say, to run a fully mobile office solution. We can provide the network, the handsets, cloud computing, and website hosting. Plus, we can supply printers, faxes and so on—full, end-to-end office communications functions.”

Nashua is known across the world for its copiers and fax machines; its mobile communications operations are unique to South Africa. But that doesn't mean it is lacking in experience—far from it. The company was established in 1994 as NedTel Cellular, before becoming Nashua and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the JSE-listed Reunert Limited Group, which also owns Nashua, Reutech and CBI-electric. Headquartered in Midrand, Gauteng, it employs around 750 people and now stands as an independent telecommunications solutions provider offering a range of



Employee at Nashua
Mobile offices

WE VIEW BUSINESS IN A WAY THAT IS BOTH GROUNDED AND EXPANSIVE



Allied Mobile Communications, (AMC) is one of the largest integrated supply chain solutions partners supporting operators, service providers and retailers. Our footprint spans across 4 continents and 24 countries and we have more than 10 years' experience in the communications industry. AMC is the first and only supply chain partner to offer a world class, fully integrated, procurement, stock control, delivery and reverse logistics system.

We have developed and perfected our support infrastructure system, which is the core of our business and key to our success. Our customers have access to the latest mobile phones and cellular related mobile technology services, with the added advantage of unsurpassed customer service. Our solutions are constantly customised to meet the growing demands of both the industry and our customer requirements.

Using AMC as your cellular supply chain partner is a good call.



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broadband, internet service provision and mobile data through to messaging and cellular voice solutions. It is one of South Africa's largest independent cellular solutions providers and one of the few to offer all four mobile networks (Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and 8ta).

The company operates through four divisions: Business; Retail and Franchise; Strategic Partners and LCR; and Specialised Services. It has over 880,000 contract subscribers that include 170,000 data card customers and 15,000 email customers. Nashua Mobile offers subscribers a broad range of voice and data services through a single point of contact.

"Our value proposition is the single-source provision of service for all networks," says Radley. "Individual subscribers can have one service for themselves, another for their family, another for work or other connections; we will provide all of them

ALLIED MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS

Allied Mobile Communications (AMC) and Nashua Mobile first joined forces in 2003 and the synergies and relationship between the companies has grown from strength to strength over the years. AMC now supplies a large part of Nashua's product range, which is distributed throughout South Africa.

"We work closely with Nashua to make sure that we provide the unique service that they require from a supply chain partner and we always have the latest cell phones and cellular technology in their stores, on time," said Jason Harmsen (GM for South Africa Region). AMC and Nashua are working on some exciting new ventures for the future, so watch this space.

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"WE ARE SEEKING TO PROVIDE A FULL, IN-HOUSE SERVICE SOLUTION TO SMES"



Chris Radley, managing director of Nashua Mobile



in one, with a single bill. Instead of having various invoices coming in at different times of the month, why not have the convenience of dealing with Nashua Mobile as a single provider?”

Nashua Mobile’s role as a cross-platform supplier is an indication both of its flexibility as a solutions provider and a reflection of the reality of the communications infrastructure in South Africa. Western Europe and North America both have long-established land-based telecoms networks, which have evolved from purely voice connection to be the backbone, skeleton and many of the functioning organs of IT, from EDI to super-fast broadband. Africa would have a long and expensive task of catch-up to undertake if it decided to mimic the north—but that isn’t Africa’s way. It is better to innovate and use the cheaper and easier-to-spread mobile networks. The growing demand helps to create a virtuous circle; the network providers can see that their investment will generate growth and fairly rapid return on investment (ROI). The signs are already a lot stronger than straws in the wind.

“We have definitely seen an increase in the number of smartphones, even in our lower packages,” says Radley. “The typical high-end user may well have a PC on their desk,

a laptop and will have a decent smartphone. The prepaid market will probably have a lower-end handset and mostly use it for calls. The higher end, corporate user may have four or five devices, covering all ends.” The users who may in the past have been viewed as being at the lower end of the corporate market, the SMEs, are in the area that has the potential for most growth. By offering prepaid, as well as contract

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Customers can choose from a range of handsets

offerings, Nashua Mobile is seeking to stimulate the growth still further. It isn’t just about providing standard solutions, either: it’s about innovation.

“Together with Nokia, our partners, we were the first company worldwide to launch a product called Xtreme Data,” Radley says. It is a similar idea to the BlackBerry Internet Service (BIS), which allows internet browsing, emailing and instant messaging at a fixed cost, but, uniquely, it is Nashua Mobile as a service provider and Nokia as the hardware specialist that developed it, rather than the networks. “We launched Xtreme Data before the networks were able to offer



anything similar. Limitations of the network may restrict what it can do but there are further possibilities that we will be able to exploit and to expand, as things progress.” It is a manifestation of the company’s proposition, to extend low-cost access

to a full range of IT services.

Nashua Mobile is also concerned with accessibility and efficiency in customer services. Interaction at its stores is almost completely electronic: customers sign on a tablet and the contract is emailed to them.

“We are working our way back up the whole process. The next step is full, online engagement,” says Radley. “Nashua

Advising
a customer

750

Current employee headcount
at Nashua Mobile

Mobile has a sizable base, across all market segments: our offer can be adapted to suit manufacturing, services, banking and so on. The different segments and what they need are critical in determining the applications we offer.” It has already proved its concept in practice at its own stores and franchises—it has over 200 outlets altogether. Quality reviews of stores have completely eliminated manual paperwork, for example. “We have a GPS facility that we use when we visit. We take photos and upload them, directly to our central system. This has other applications too, for example, readings at remote water reservoirs. Using this technology can enable businesses and government agencies to improve their efficiency ten-fold.” The combination of innovation and dedication, along with progressive employment and training—it has been recognised both under BEE and women’s emancipation—are helping Nashua Mobile to take the country forward. **BE**

For more information about
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