

# Gerber Paper serious about print and packaging



*ExecuPAK*  
*Finesse*

*Adding Value to Paper*



What started out as a small family business in the paper importing and distribution industry has grown from strength to strength. Gerber Paper supplies the Southern African printing and packaging market with various grades of top quality imported paper products.

**G**erber Paper was founded in 1975 as a member of the Gerber Goldschmidt Group, which has international trade as its core focus. The Group was established in 1920 and has offices in 26 countries worldwide.

Gerber Paper consists of two main divisions; the Sack and Bag Division, and the Printing Paper and Packaging Board Division, employing a total of 25 staff around the country. The Sack and Bag Division has been the company's main business for the past 25 years and continues to grow under the leadership of Deon du Plessis, one of the Directors of Gerber Paper.

Approximately six years ago, Connor Birkett, Managing Director of Gerber Paper, oversaw the start up of the second division, the Printing Paper and Packaging Board Division. The new division saw Gerber Paper offering paper and paperboard products to various other printing and packaging companies. Six years down the line, Gerber Paper now has established

branches in the three main economic hubs, namely Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town allowing this division to offer a complete service to the industry on a national level.

Connor Birkett stated, 'Some six years ago, we responded to calls from customers in the printing industry who demanded better service delivery. I felt that with the right products and with the right team, we could fill this gap in the market and, on the back of this, our Cape Town branch was born, providing our customers with good quality, well priced paper and cartonboard products.

'Our business model is built 100% around our customers' needs and, in a sense, it is a logistic solution that we are providing to our growing customer base. In this competitive market, quality and price are simply a given and the secret to our success is about having the right stock and being able to deliver this stock at short notice. A key aspect that my team has to fulfill is forecasting what stock the market will need. They do this



Left to right: Connor Birkett (Managing Director) and Deon du Plessis (Director)

through their constant interaction with their customers as well as by using their market knowledge in order to bring in the right stock at the right time.

'I realised quite early on that, if we wanted to be taken seriously in the market, we had to acquire a logistics fleet and establish warehousing facilities in the three main hubs. It has been a long and interesting road, but six years later, I am pleased with the result and with the service we are now offering. This, with our leading product ranges – Finesse, for printing, and – Execupak, for packaging board, makes us the quality supplier of choice. I look forward to further expanding our presence in this industry.'

**Meet the team that drives the business forward...**

Lyntton Fourie, Manager of the Gerber Paper's Gauteng Branch, expanded further on the company's product range, 'We offer commercial printing and packaging grades for the lithographic, digital and the packaging print market. Our products range from printing grades such as Coated Art, Bond Paper, Label Paper and NCR, to products that are used for packaging applications, namely Kraft Back and Grey Back Duplex Board, high-end and low-end Folding Box Board (TMP / SBS), Metallized Boards and Polyboards.'

When asked what the success of a business in this industry is reliant on, he responded by saying that it is, 'based on competitive pricing, stock holding and stock management, and, ultimately, service delivery'. Gerber Paper has an extensive stockholding, including a full range of sheet sizes and reel widths to meet the needs of customers.

Lyntton has been active in the printing industry for over 13 years and he understands that packaging requirements have been on the rise, particularly with many of his customers who operate in the lithographic sector. He is now tailoring his service offering to accommodate this trend in the market. 'In the current economic times, best price with adequate stock usually take the cake!,' he added.

Wilma Beyers, Manager of the Gerber Paper Cape Town Branch, has been in the industry for over 25 years. When asked what sets Gerber Paper apart from other paper merchants in the industry, her response was simply, 'We listen to our customers' needs and try our best to assist. We keep our operation as lean as possible in order to provide our customers with competitive pricing.'

Her view of how Gerber Paper is able to function efficiently while operating three branches nationally: 'Each branch operates individually and independently. However, we are all connected through a strong and well-organised management team. We also have good systems in place, ensuring that there is constant communication between the three branches.'



Lyntton Fourie, Johannesburg Branch Manager



**DURBAN Warehouse**

Left to right: Jan Mashika, Charles Kunene, Rudy Moodley (Warehouse manager), Simphiwe Mbhele

The success of Wilma’s Branch is based on the fact that ‘we understand what our customers’ needs are and we give them a very good service. We treat our customers with respect, honesty, and confidentiality and never over promise. Good communication in relation to deliveries is essential!’

Ashley Murdoch joined Gerber Paper in May 2017. He came from an operation that specialised in the manufacture of carbonless forms. Ashley’s learning curve over the past 11 months has been steep and he now heads up the Durban-based sales team.

When asked how he feels about Gerber Paper’s network of suppliers, Ashley responded, ‘We have a very big network of loyal suppliers that we

source from, ranging from the Far East, to Europe and South America. This established network enables us to source nearly any product that may be required from our customers.’

Ashley focuses on, ‘being honest with the customers and always delivering on what we have promised!’

Deon du Plessis, who heads up the Sack and Bag Division provides top quality bag and sack kraft papers for a range of market segments which include: cement, milling and sugar, potato bags, grease resistant bags and bags for fast food applications. Deon attributes Gerber Paper’s success to, ‘our in-depth customer focus and interaction, and going the extra mile



Wilma Beyers, Cape Town Branch Manager



Ashley Murdoch, Durban Branch Manager



**DURBAN Office**

Back left to right: Jan Mashika, Charles Kunene, Rudy Moodley, Simphiwe Mbhele  
 Front left to right: Traci Zima, Amelia Moodley, Connor Birkett, Graham Briggs, Deon Du Plessis, Sumaya Nandhray, Nicola Inngs, Winnie Kunene, Ashley Murdoch, Lindene Claasens, Sinegugu Maqam, Natasha Horsley

to meet each customer’s needs!’ In his market, he feels that it is always essential to ‘be innovative and provide for alternative solutions’.

Gerber Paper may have three branches across three provinces, but it forms one national team striving to make further waves in the print and packaging markets. The strength and success of the business is dependent upon building up solid relationships with both customers and suppliers. A core function of the company is the role the staff plays in providing customers with technical assistance, ranging from production recommendations through to troubleshooting issues.

In conclusion, Connor Birkett emphasised that, ‘We strive on a daily basis to ensure that we operate true to our Company Motto: – “Investing in our team and our customers like our family in order to achieve our common goals!”.’

Give Gerber Paper a try and see how customer service, product range and sustainability combine to bring you the right solution for all your paper and board requirements.

