

BYTES DOCUMENT SOLUTIONS

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CORPORATE BROCHURE



Brand power

Thirty years on, futurologists' predictions about working in a paperless office are far from reality; but as Jeff Daniels learns, it's not for the want of trying

In the world of information technology, where brands come and go with the speed of light, there is a handful of names that have withstood the test of time and are just as important now as they ever were. One such brand is Xerox—in some parts of the world a generic synonym for a photocopy but in reality an influential source of new technology concerned with every aspect of office automation and data presentation.

Xerox has been a part of the South African business scene since 1964 but these days operates under the auspices of Bytes Document Solutions (BDS)—itself a subsidiary of the listed business of Altron, with Kagiso Trust Investments as its broad-based black economic empowerment partner. Altron also traces its roots back to the 1960s, when a small electronics business was started up by the legendary South African figure of Dr Bill Venter that has become one of the country's most important and wide ranging business organisations.





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Mondi is a leading international supplier of office paper and specialised printing and converting grades. We excel through our innovative product range and our fully integrated production capability. With our own forestry operations, strategically positioned pulp and paper plants, and access to a global market base, our paper covers the globe.

The Group has been recognised for its sustainability performance through its inclusion in the FTSE4GoodUK, Europe and Global indices in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and the JSE's Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) Index in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.



As we'll see later, BDS has more strings to its bow than just Xerox; but as the sole authorised distributor to 27 sub-Saharan countries of the complete range of Xerox document equipment, software, solutions and services, the brand generates 70 per cent of BDS's revenue.

"Xerox is a wonderful brand to be associated with," says BDS's CEO Hennie du Plessis. "By investing five per cent of revenue in research and development each year—some of it with outside organisations such as MIT which has carte blanche to look at green technologies, smart document technology, nanotechnology and micro electro mechanical systems—it remains among the world's leading innovators. Records show that Xerox has over 8,600 active patents and the 15 most prolific of Xerox's scientists have each exceeded 100 US patents. No wonder there is never any shortage of new ideas to take to customers."

And BDS has customers aplenty—more than 10,000 to be exact—making it the largest automation company on the African continent, with revenues exceeding R1.8 billion. In all there are 40 South African service centres and 40 more throughout sub-Saharan Africa, employing in excess of 1,350 people.

Xerox's list of firsts is nothing short of amazing; and collectively, they have an impact on every office worker in the world: the fax machine, the graphical user interface, the mouse and laser printing are all courtesy of Xerox. And the march towards greater efficiency and lower operating



Mondi rated number one in the WWF Paper Company Environmental Index

www.panda.org/PaperCompanyIndex

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costs continues unabated. As an organisation, Xerox has long embraced environmentally sound practices and is incorporating the same ideals into its products. When laser printers first took the commercial world by storm, the concept of sustainability and pollution barely existed. These days, though, it is known that a colour laser printer can produce more than 70 kilograms of waste in the course of producing 100,000 prints.

The Xerox solution has been to eliminate the need for toner cartridges and replace them with solid ink sticks which work like crayons that melt and adhere to paper. Not only do such printers produce a fraction of the waste, the latest models are even more frugal with energy and consumable packaging.


Similarly, Xerox’s emulsion aggregate toner uses a massive 60 to 70 per cent less energy per page than conventional toners as well as doubling the number of pages printed per kilogram of toner. But perhaps the most remarkable discovery by Xerox scientists has been to develop a way to make prints with temporary images, thus enabling the copy paper to be re-used repeatedly. It’s been estimated that as many as two out of every five pages printed in the office are just for daily use—emails, web pages, reference materials and the like that have been printed for a single viewing. Now Xerox has the power to make a considerable contribution to better use of the world’s paper resources.

Apart from its hardware, Xerox is also one of the world’s leading providers of imaging supplies, paper and other consumables. For many businesses, all they ever need can be obtained from the Xerox brand. But as du Plessis explains, Bytes wanted to offer more. “Some years ago BDS recognised that for a truly all round service to the market as a whole, additional strengths would be necessary. As such, the development of our business is reflected in a series of strategic acquisitions that have been made through the years. The most notable standalone names in the BDS stable are NOR Paper and LaserCom which contribute the remaining 20 per cent and 10 per cent

of Bytes’ turnover respectively.”

NOR Paper is in its own right one of the largest paper merchants for commercial printers in South Africa, with branches throughout the country, supplying clients which cover the full spectrum of companies from printing and allied trades, through stationers and small businesses. Whatever sizes and weights in coated, uncoated or carbonless papers clients need, they are quickly on their way via NOR’s own fleet of 68 delivery vehicles making scheduled deliveries twice per day.

LaserCom, on the other hand, represents the modern outsourced version of what once was undertaken in-house in typing-, print- or filing-rooms. Mundane but vitally important business-critical documents such as bills, statements, invoices, cheques and even examination papers rub shoulders with full colour, highly personalised marketing material. LaserCom helps design, prints and delivers—either conventionally or electronically—and then can even store the documentation on behalf of space-starved customers, providing them with access via LAN, WAN or across the internet.

With such a strong market share in Southern Africa, BDS is now looking further afield, wanting a presence in the remaining African countries and even across the waters into the Middle East. “The opportunities technology offers today,” says du Plessis, “means that developing countries are able to skip certain levels, giving them a shortcut to higher digital solutions. But to be truly successful, this can only be done with equipment and systems that are not only tried and tested in their own right but also work together seamlessly. In this respect, there are few organisations which can match what we offer, thanks to Xerox.” www.bdsol.co.za 

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