

# GIJIMA

## THE SEARCH FOR DIFFERENTIATION





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*One of South Africa's largest IT support companies is looking at how it can remain at the top by developing different niche markets*

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Meeting in progress  
at Gijima offices

Even for the most sophisticated of IT companies, who are busy developing products so advanced that customers aren't yet aware that they exist, there still has to be an eye on where the bread and butter comes from.

In the case of Gijima, one of South Africa's leading IT providers, this amounts to managing and supporting in excess of one million devices of one kind or another, all around southern Africa. This is the kind of work that dedicated IT departments do; in fact, the origins of Gijima go back to such a department in one of South Africa's major mining companies. In the mid 1990s, though, the management thinking of the time was to divest all non-core activities and to outsource as much as possible. As such, the department was hived off and re-launched, first as AST until this business eventually merged with Gijima a decade later, into what we have today.

"Just over half of our R3 billion turnover," says Shane Cooper, strategy execution officer for Gijima, "comes from Managed Services, which ostensibly talks to the support of the infrastructure layer. As you can imagine, with almost 90 per cent of the country's top 100 listed companies on our client list, this is a wide remit that varies enormously from banking and public services, through to mining and hospitality—all of them requiring different kinds of support."

To keep the wheels turning, in addition to its Johannesburg headquarters, Gijima has 70 'points of presence', as they are





Gijima field service engineers



Occupational health and safety lab



Taking part in corporate social responsibility initiatives

referred to, which can vary from a regional office to an embedded desk within an organisation’s own premises.

But as important as this source of revenue is, Gijima is well aware that it is essentially a commodity activity and therefore one that is vulnerable to attack. At the top end of the market, large companies like to deal with other large companies and the 2,700 employees at Gijima certainly make it a large concern in South African terms. But it’s all relative and Gijima therefore works

hard to guard against perceptions that it is not a global player.

At the lower end of the offerings spectrum, though, the barriers to entry are small. Here, price rules the roost and new market entrants are obliged to win their first contracts by undercutting the opposition. As such, the emphasis at Gijima is on developing the professional services side of the business, which takes it into areas that are much more difficult for competitors to replicate.

**“WE REPRESENT SOFTWARE SUPPLIERS; IN FACT WE ARE ONE OF SAP’S LARGEST PARTNERS IN AFRICA”**

“This side of the business,” explains Cooper, “is largely project-driven. We do represent software suppliers; in fact we are one of SAP’s largest partners in Africa. But as well as off-the-shelf software from the likes of Microsoft and Oracle, we are among the largest bespoke developers and systems integrators in the country, performing a good deal of our work with the government. Currently, for example, we are helping to digitise all the country’s title deeds.”

As far as Gijima is concerned, the trick is to keep as far away from generic products and solutions as possible so it focuses its



attention on the four key industries it has identified as most important: financial services, industrial (including mining and manufacturing), public services (which currently accounts for one-third of revenue) and commercial (a somewhat broad category

that includes hospitality, health, retail and education). The ideal is to develop elegant industry-specific solutions—solutions that address client pain points in a unique way.

It’s not always easy to measure ranking but with a reasonable degree of certainty, Gijima is first or second in most segments and is definitely the number one SAP



partner for SAP support services. In the mining industry, it has products that put it at the highest levels of the global market.

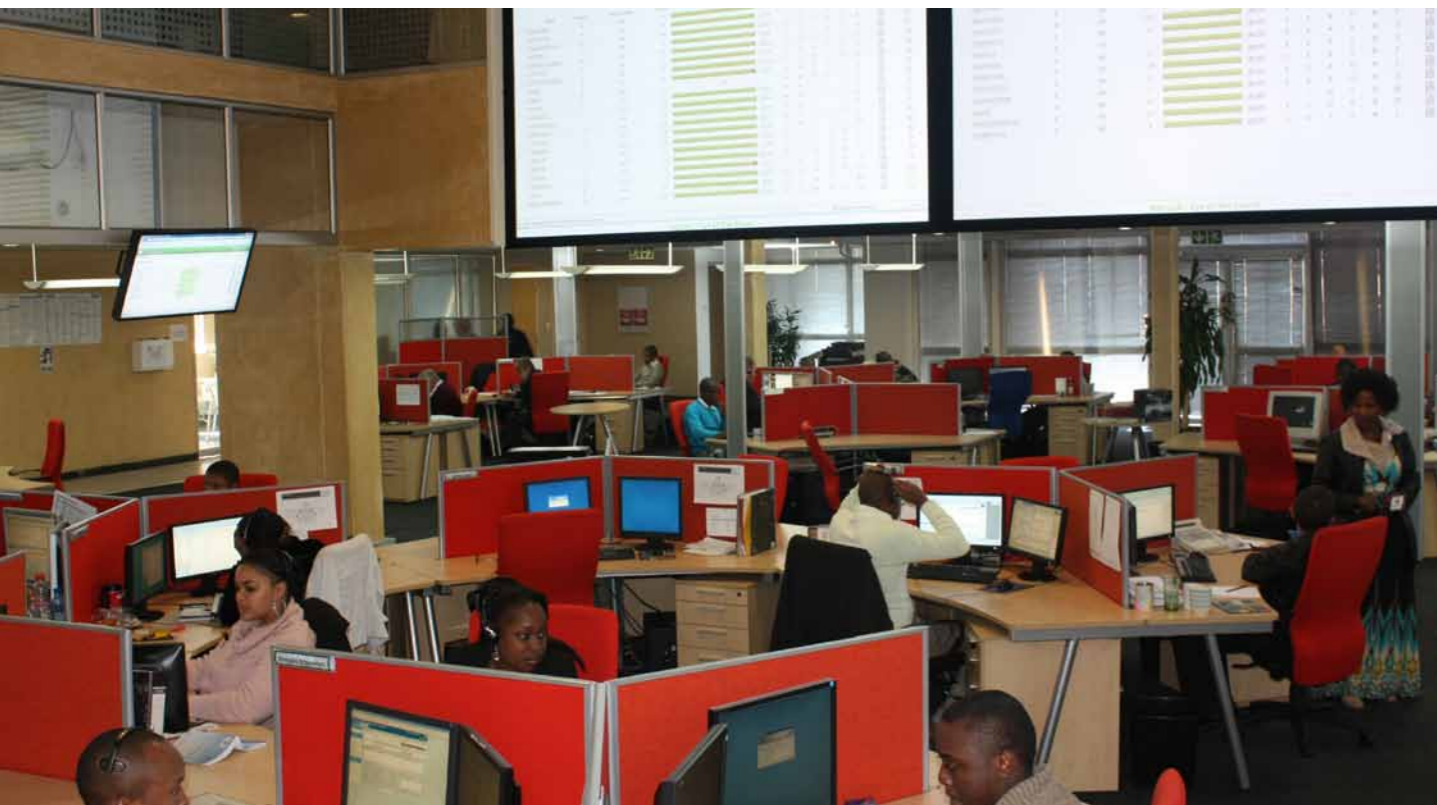
All of this, though, is historical and Gijima is more interested in what comes next, as it is here where the greatest opportunities lie to leapfrog over the competition.

“Cloud computing has been around for several years,” says Cooper, “yet it still has to capture wide enterprise appeal—although we consider that it is only a matter of time.

Being able to work on the move has become crucial to the way business is done today. There is still a lot of apprehension about data security, but when given the opportunity to explain properly, the benefits are being recognised and clients are responding.”

In fact, this ability to talk with the CEO of prospective client companies, rather than at the purchasing level of an organisation, is high on the list of objectives for Gijima over the forthcoming years. “In

“IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE WAY, WE ARE TRYING TO DIFFERENTIATE OURSELVES FROM OTHER SUPPLIERS”



Gijima Integrated Services Centre



Gijima exhibition

every conceivable way,” says Cooper, “we are trying to differentiate ourselves from other suppliers.”

Gijima must have done well in this respect with Apple, as it has recently been awarded systems integration partnership status—the first in Africa and one of the very few anywhere in the world. “More and more work is being done on tablets and notebooks that Apple pioneered,” says Cooper. “We are geared up to provide mobile management or bespoke packages; anything clients need to remove pain points.”

Prior to the financial crash five years ago, Gijima had been pursuing an ‘all things to all men’ approach. Now though,

in an attempt to put clear space between itself and the rest of the pack, it is focusing tightly on its four key industry sectors and in particular, on developing the new services it offers. This doesn’t mean that Gijima is any less ambitious than it has been in the past: if given the chance to see its Vision 2025 video, viewers will see that Gijima has a very clear picture of how the future might look and the many different roles it could be playing. **BE**

For more information about Gijima visit:  
[www.gijima.com](http://www.gijima.com)



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