

# PAN AFRICAN SHOPFITTERS

[www.panafricanshopfitters.co.za](http://www.panafricanshopfitters.co.za)

CORPORATE BROCHURE



# Setting up shop in South Africa

Pan African Shopfitters set up its own shop a long time ago and today, the retailers of Africa and beyond depend on it to turn their brand identity into reality on the street



ow under the management of the third generation of the Blumenthal family, Pan African Shopfitters is nothing if not a dynastic enterprise, with all the advantages that entails. It is close knit, with shared values and policies; and it is agile—decisions about strategy, policy and investment can be made very quickly.

That's more than a good thing when you are serving retail customers—it is essential, says director Michael Blumenthal. "The retail trade is unforgiving and when a customer decides he wants to open up a new shop he can't afford to wait, which is why lead time is something we live or die by."


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**Krome Metal Chemicals (PTY) Ltd**

Krome Metal Chemicals (PTY) Ltd is a specialized chemical blending operation based in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa. The company manufactures, supplies and services the electroplating, anodising and powder coating industries. Krome was founded by Ryszard Orlik, Struan Orlik and Arn Orlik with a vision of becoming the chemical supplier of choice to the metal finishing industry. With extensive knowledge the family business aims to be the supplier of choice through ongoing technology development, sourcing and relationships. Krome is the proud supplier to Pan African Shopfitters, the South African MINT, Girlock Braking Systems and Zinkast, among others.

Michael's grandfather Gunther Blumenthal emigrated to South Africa in 1936, escaping the terrible persecution that was building up towards Jewish people in Germany at that time. An architect by training, he soon managed to find employment as a draughtsman in a shopfitting firm in Johannesburg. Twelve years later, in 1948, he set up the company that was destined to become the largest player in southern Africa, calling it Pan African Shopfitters. Ironically, as part of its growth, Pan African bought up the company where Gunther started off during the 1960s, in which decade his two sons Stephen and Arnold Blumenthal both joined him in the business.

Today, four members of the third generation including Michael Blumenthal run the company together with Charles Jankelow, who joined as a director in 2008. "As we expanded we have bolstered our resources in any areas that we felt were weak, and brought in additional people to deal with our clients and put us in a position to handle the expansion we have had over the years, both nationally and

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internationally,” says Blumenthal. “The main thing, though, is that whether the client is a small boutique or a huge department store, we all work as a team to give them equally satisfactory results.”

That means delivering exactly what the client wants, on time and on budget. It’s well enough known that South Africa has seen huge economic growth and massive expansion in consumption over the last couple of decades. In particular the construction boom of the 2000s has seen a transformation in the size and make-up of the retail scene as global brands have moved in and local retailers have expanded into city centre and out-of-town malls.

Every new clothing store, every bank or department store and every franchised food outlet has to be designed and installed, and once the decision has been made to open a site, every day’s delay costs the client money. Pan African’s unique selling point is that it has all the skills and techniques under a single roof including electro plating, anodizing, powder coating, glass, Perspex, solid surfacing etc—while competitors may be able to offer metal work, joinery or wizardry with plastic or lighting, very few, if any, can integrate all of these elements. The plant’s state-of-the-art machinery has just been augmented by two new pieces of equipment—an oil polisher and a CNC timber forming machine, both imported from Germany. “As new technologies are introduced, and the demand for them grows, we upgrade our machinery continuously,” he says. “Not only do we stay ahead of our competitors, we stay ahead of ourselves by constantly talking to our clients.”

That may seem a paradoxical claim, but when it is considered that Pan African’s customers include world leading companies like British Home Stores and Clarks, whose designers are onto the latest marketing devices a season before the trade ever hears of them, the opportunity to leverage these trends for the benefit of its smaller customers is evident.

Nevertheless, the main technological advantage the company has is perhaps its unique software system. Job Control was developed in-house some 20 years ago and has been continuously upgraded ever since,

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says Jankelow. Despite its name, it looks more like an enterprise system than a workflow package. “From the technical point of view the system does two things: it controls the entire life of a particular contract, starting with the point where we receive drawings, through estimating and price quotation right through to manufacturing, despatch, delivery notes and invoicing; and it also keeps track of inventory, all our financials and business processes too.”

So as well as allowing Pan African’s manufacturing processes to be lean and responsive, Job Control works directly in the interests of the client too. With all the scheduling, capacity and stock information on hand at the touch of a button, they know they can depend on the specification, the quality and the delivery time they have been promised, Jankelow adds.

Every step of the design and build is carried out at the company’s 40,000 square metre premises in Germiston from where it is packed into one of the company’s 120 owned trucks, delivered and installed by trained Pan African personnel. Only the most specialised trades are bought in from third parties, for functions such as tiling, glass or electrical work.

A further advantage of the Job Control system, says Jankelow, is the transparency it provides into tenders the company has failed to win, as well as its successful bids. “Knowing the exact margin either way makes it easier for the company to secure competitive work.” It has helped make Pan African the lean and agile

supplier it is, he adds. “We don’t carry nearly as much stock as we used to. Our goal is to minimise inventory and take much of the cost out of the procurement process. Being able to group materials means we can procure larger quantities at more competitive prices and with shorter delivery times.”

The strength of the rand has put a brake on Pan African’s overseas exports in recent years, including its portfolio of household names in the UK. That trade will undoubtedly return; in the meantime the company is focusing its marketing efforts on the large-scale department stores being opened in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and the spreading footprint of existing clients like La Senza, FCUK, Diesel or Hugo Boss within the region.

The economic growth of neighbouring African countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia is another opportunity, says Blumenthal: “We can service all these markets directly from our Germiston facility, and follow the brands that we have worked with over the years as they expand.”

That said, Pan African is not about to overreach itself, he insists. “Sustainable long-term growth is our ultimate strategic goal.” [www.panafricanshopfitters.co.za](http://www.panafricanshopfitters.co.za) ■



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