

Sappi bids Van As farewell as CEO

After twenty-five years at the top Sappi's CEO, Eugene Van As, celebrated his retirement at a tributary farewell held in Johannesburg.

Van As took on the role of Executive Chairman at the end of 2002, with Jonathan Lesley as his successor. He joined the company in 1977 as Managing Director of Sappi Kraft. A year later he was offered the position of Group Managing Director and CEO of Sappi.

The function, hosted by events company O'MAGE Limited, shed light on the contribution van As has made to Sappi, taking from a small South African company to a leading global player. In a relaxed but formal atmosphere, a select group of guests were wined and dined whilst enjoying a tributary video. The video marked the influence of a great leader and major developments that took place during van As' time as CEO of Sappi.

At the event van As said that Sappi's success was due to the influence of many people. "It has been done by a team, people who have worked together and inspired each other," he said. "We had a wonderful journey." Concluding that "being a leader will always be Sappi's role", he emphasized that his successor has the ability to expand the company and take it from strength to strength.

Changes that took place during van As' role as CEO

- Major developments began with the purchase of Stanger Pulp and Paper in 1979, and continued with the formation of Sappi Timber Products in 1980.
- 1981 saw the acquisition of Venus Timbers and major expansions at Enstra and Ngodwana. In three short years, Sappi became the largest producer of pulp and paper on the African continent.
- In 1988 Sappi acquired Usutu Pulp Company in Swaziland, a world leader in unbleached kraft production. The following year Saiccor, the world's single largest producer of dissolving pulp, was purchased.
- 1990 saw Sappi take effective control of five UK speciality paper mills.
- Van As then turned his eyes eastwards and Speciality Pulp Services based in Hong Kong became Sappi Trading in 1991.
- In 1992, the acquisition of Hannover Papier in Germany established Sappi as one of the top three European producers of coated fine paper.
- In 1994 Sappi became the world's largest producer of coated fine paper with the acquisition of 75% of the American company, SD Warren.
- The Sappi Group launched a new global corporate identity in 1998 when it listed its shares on the New York Stock Exchange.
- In 2002 Sappi acquired Pottlach Corporation's coated fine paper business and Cloquet pulp and paper mill in Minnesota, USA.

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