

Sunil Sewmohan: Leading Ford SA's product development and marketing efforts

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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Naresh Maharaj recently caught up with Sunil Sewmohan, product development and marketing at Ford Motor Company Southern Africa.



Sunil Sewmohan, product development and marketing at Ford Motor Company SA | image supplied

■ **Who is Sunil – tell us about yourself?**

I am a husband to Prasheen and father to two adult children who are very much part of our daily lives. My approach to life is with a sense of probity in all that I do. I believe in the motto to “work hard and play hard”. On the “work hard”, I have a can-do attitude (if someone closes the door in my face, I find other ways to get in). I approach problems with a sense of urgency, rigour and robustness. I love making things happen and not be a “victim” of a situation. I value mutual respect, trust, transparency/candour, fairness, courtesy and commitment in my interaction with colleague's/team members.

■ **When did your journey at Ford Motor Company begin?**

My journey started 38 years ago, April 1985. Incidentally, I think that I still have a rejection letter for an earlier job application from Ford, but I tried again.

■ **Talk us through a day in your current role?**

We spend many hours in standing or ad-hoc meetings. The good thing though is that in my job every day comes with a different set of problems to be solved. A day in my role is interacting with members of my team; guiding and coaching them on how to approach the job at hand or challenges posed by any given programme.

Where required I teach, coach and counsel individual team members on the required job skills. My bias in all team interaction is towards learning and development and developing a reputable department and personal brand rather than just getting a task completed.

🔴 **What are the biggest challenges you face in the workplace?**

The biggest challenges that both my teams face is an interplay between external environmental factors and internal global business decisions. Our bread-and-butter, Ranger and Everest are IMG designed, developed, and manufactured with significant volume/scale for developed and less developed markets; therefore, we have flexibility to navigate around the environmental factors for these products.



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To compete in the market, we need to have a portfolio of product. To supplement Ranger and Everest, FMCSA relies on availability of right-hand drive products that are primarily developed for the UK market. There is a significant lag in South African regulations (fuel quality, emissions, etc.) compared to the UK that precludes import of a standard European product. The engineering and complexity required to make the vehicle compatible to local conditions makes it difficult to develop a compelling business case.

🔴 **What makes your job rewarding?**

In my earlier years product creation and delivery were my rewards. There was always a sense of pride when a couple of years of work culminated in a product launch. In the middle years it was both business and product strategy, it was most rewarding when business and product plans that I led were adopted by the Company and then came to fruition years later. In my later years and currently, it is more about people development.

It is time to now give back. I make a conscious effort in every interaction to help my team and individual team members learn from my experience. I drive to help my teams grow and be the best they can be (within my limitations) in how they approach and deliver the work that they do.

🔴 **What do you do in your spare time?**

I do as many activities as possible to connect with my family. This includes braaiing or making special meals together, playing table tennis, billiards, board games, walking etc. I am an avid DIYer for all things around the house driven to some extent by a crazy, I can do it better/more efficiently myself mentality.

I love gardening; it is peaceful, not complicated and helps clear the mind. I restore/repair and maintain old cars. My dad was a mechanic, so I have been doing this since I was around 12 years old. I have two old timers, a 1961 Ford Thames and a 1974 Jaguar XJ6 both maintained by myself. I love to travel, and up for a game drive anytime.

🔴 **Who is your role model?**

Wow, if you are asking for “a” role model it is difficult to answer. I have many role models that I look up to and who would

guide my moral compass depending on the opportunity or challenge at hand. This ranges from both my parents for different aspects, and then the many direct and indirect managers/leaders that I had in the work environment over the years.

I adopt the “good” from a role model at any point in time and reject the “bad” from the same or others. I look up to people who share the same values as me.

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nmaharaj321@gmail.com

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