



A FIRST

The exclusive new Crossways Farm Village, 30 km from Port Elizabeth, has chosen Brent Oil to brand the only service station to be constructed within the development.

Said to be a first of its kind in South Africa, Crossways Farm Village is an innovative concept conceived and developed by CMAI and Dr Chris Mulder, the pioneer of Knysna's Thesen Island project. The prime piece of countryside will be developed in line with the large golf estates, except, instead of golf, Crossways will be a farm estate where residents are promised a safe, unspoilt country environment on a self-sustaining working farm that's both environmentally friendly and educational.

Construction of the Brent Oil site is set to start on 1 March 2012. Said Brent Oil retail manager Terry Webster, "We intend to offer this exclusive, captive residential market the top quality service associated with the Brent Oil brand."

For further information: www.crosswaysfarmvillage.co.za

Thriving on pressure



In charge of 18 people as depot manager for Brent Oil Gauteng, Karen Erasmus actually looks forward to any new crises and pressures brought forth daily. Not only does she manage the day-to-day running of the depot, she's also in charge of finance and HR. And she says she'll do "whatever it takes" to keep the operations running smoothly.

Erasmus describes her biggest challenge as getting the financial side of the business ship-shape and ensuring that stocks are sufficient every day. "I really enjoy the management function the most and my aspiration is to keep the cash flow in a good state, plus reaching a volume of 2 million liters per month in the next year."

Happily divorced with two sons aged 21 and 19, Erasmus enjoys socialising with friends in her spare time.

FAST FACTS

Date of birth: 17 January 1969

Food & drink: Biltong & tequila

Favourite actors: Gerard Butler & Sandra Bullock

Spectator sport: Rugby & cricket

TV programme: Masterchef

Best holiday: Cape Town



Country flair

Any Wellington local or regular traveller to Bainskloof in need of a friendly chat and some good-natured banter while filling up will know to visit Brent Oil Wellington in Church Street. Owner Adriaan Botha believes in this personal touch. "Petrol is the same at any service station, but good service isn't. That's why we pride ourselves on service excellence and throwing in some country hospitality with a good chat."

After being closed for more than six months, Botha bought the service station and started trading in June 2010 with a staff complement of 10. He said, "Initially it was a bit of a battle seeing that the facility was closed for so long, but slowly we started gaining regular customers.

Now we have a marketing programme in place and business has picked up significantly."

To give the service station a country feel, Botha opened a farm stall-type convenience store called *Good Day Market*, stocking it with jams, preserves and home-baked goodies. "Our home-made pies are extremely popular and people come from far and wide to sample these," he commented.

Another attraction is Botha's quirky roadside blackboards, which change daily. His signs, such as "Don't be cross, make one!" during the local elections

and "Fuel it, it is here" during the 2010 World Cup are so good that they've attracted media attention on several occasions.



Winning service attitude

When a furious customer expresses his dissatisfaction, he should be given what he wants. Because, according to the most advanced service companies, a badly handled complaint influences many customers.

If the customer is still cross after putting the phone down or leaving your premises, he will express his displeasure to about a dozen people. If the story is convincing, each of those 12 people will repeat it, generating a disastrous rumour of your business. On the other hand, if the customer is satisfied with the service quality, he will recommend you to an average of five people. These, in turn, will pass on the story to others, positively influencing about 15 potential customers.

So, in the company's interests, you should examine the client's disagreement and give him what he wants. You might fear that other clients will claim the same thing. But, the fact of the matter is, nothing is as expensive as a bad reputation. And a satisfied client is worth more than any half measures. Firstly, the loyalty becomes repeat sales. Secondly, his satisfaction transforms him into a sales force capable of persuading new customers.

Exemplary service is the truly winning attitude.



That personal touch



Since converting his former Total service station into a Brent Oil site in 2009, John Stamatiou's business has gone from strength to strength. He originally purchased the site on the busy N8 route from Gauteng to Mpumalanga – between Middelburg and Belfast - in 1989, but wanted to propel the business into a new realm with better service and an upmarket look.

Today Brent Oil N4 has liter volumes of about 295 000 a month, sporting a neat on-site mini-market with a bakery and restaurant. Despite opposition from a new Total site a few kilometers away, with franchises such as Mugg & Bean, Steers and Spur, Stamatiou has retained his customers. "I've actually increased liters sold since the opposition site opened," he said. He ascribed his success to being a family-run business with strong customer-centric interaction. "We forge strong relationships with our customers and they keep coming back for that personal touch."

Soon a brand new pylon will be erected at the entrance to Brent Oil N4 and this should definitely increase the site's visibility further. Brent Oil retail manager Terry Webster praised John's customer relationship skills and said, "We're proud of Brent Oil N4 being one of our best sites."



SWISH REVAMP



Kenton garage in 1969

After holidaying in Kenton for many years, Eugene and Ruleen De Witt have settled there permanently after buying the Kenton Garage. Eugene is a widely travelled entrepreneur with a background in senior management and the hospitality industry. Ruleen is a registered nurse who still has an interest in a healthcare company. The De Witts still own the Benoni restaurant Levos which was recently voted Johannesburg Gem for Dining.



The Brent Oil Kenton garage today

At the Brent Oil service station, which was revamped beautifully recently, they sell fuel, tyres, batteries and spares, as well as airtime and charcoal. There's an ATM inside the spare shop and they offer a tyre repair service and trailer rental. It's said that their attention to detail and friendly service are work ethics that have filtered through to the service station. Said Eugene, "Our philosophy is to support local business as much as possible – even if it means paying a slightly higher price."

Work also has started on installing a 24-hour convenience shop. This will open before the busy December holiday period. It will be the only 24-hour shop open for holidaymakers in the Bushmans River and Kenton-on-Sea areas.