



**UMBUSO  
WAMAQADI**  
INVESTMENTS





**Briefly introduce us to Umbuso Wamaqadi Contractors.**

Umbuso Wamaqadi Contractors (UWC) was started in 2013, so we are 10 years old now. The name itself is inspired by one of the original owners from the 1980s, so there is a legacy that comes with that. We are a road and earthworks business, but we also have experience in civil structures, and we recently completed the first phase of a bridge project. In the last 12 months, the bulk of our revenue has come from our quarry management and crushing, and the completion of our very first asphalt paving job.

**What are some of the ongoing or recent projects that you are most interested in showcasing?**

The core of our business for the last five years has been based around gravel rehabilitation jobs, such as the one we are currently busy with in Mooi River, the client being the KZN Department of Transport. These projects have been key for us, and the sustainability of the business.” We have also been involved in the Pisang Bridge Project, drilling into rocks, and the next phase of this project will be the deck and road construction. This was our first big involvement in a bridge project, so that was very exciting. We have also worked with Raubex Construction, on the Newlands’ roads. UWC assisted with the resurfacing of three main roads in the Newlands area. Again, this was our first asphalt job, and we were very busy with the ancillary works. Finally, we have been supplying aggregate and gravel materials to Raubex Construction, and we have supplied them with G7 Gabian stone, minus 120mm pioneer materials and will soon start supplying G4.

**What, for you, differentiates your business from the competition?**



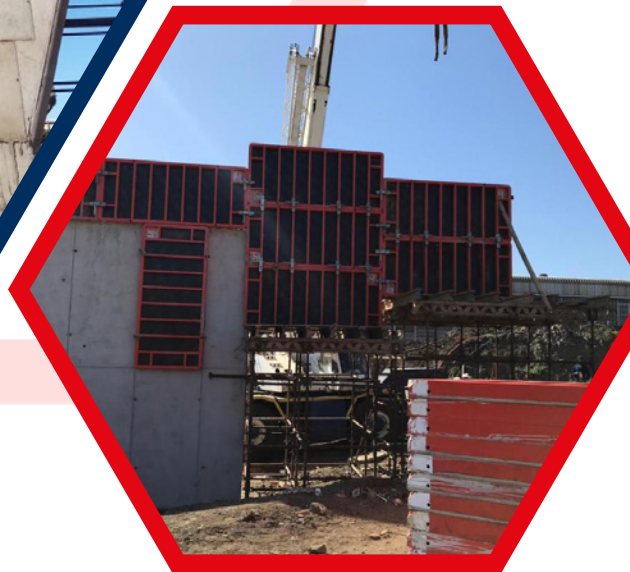
I think for us, it is the fact that we are always looking for new opportunities to gain experience and learn. A year ago, we knew nothing about crushing, and today UWC can say that that is about 50 percent of our revenue. That growth can only be done and can only be sustainable by capacitating yourself. That is to say that when an opportunity comes to you, you grab it with both hands and humble yourself in every situation so that those partners can continue to teach you and you can continue to grow. We learn from our mistakes, and we continue to build from there. So, what makes us different is the fact that we are always learning and evolving, and that is how we have kept our relevance. That is how we continue to grow and, honestly, that is how we do not feel trapped in a routine, coasting along, and so we are different in that way.

**Could you tell us about some of the major challenges faced within the industry and the business itself and then detail how these have been overcome?**

I think for a company of our size, there are two







main challenges: our access to funding and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of funding, there are often roadblocks along the way, whether that be due to the contracts themselves, or the commercial banks. We have had to stick it out, and now that we are a mid-sized company, I can comfortably say that having those conversations gets easier. But it was our willingness to stick it out that afforded us that comfort now. Banks are not easy to convince, especially within construction. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are not exclusive to us, of course. UWC, much like many other companies, struggled to find projects in 2020 and 2021. The main thing that helped us overcome this difficulty was having made connections before then and using that time to grow internally. In that first year of the COVID-19 pandemic we grew over 100 percent. Now, of course, we are looking at insurance options to sustain us if an event like that happens again, so we are learning to manoeuvre around these challenges.

### **What are your major future ambitions going forward and how will these goals be achieved?**

Our first major ambition, which was a target when we started the year, is to move from a CIDB Grade 6 to a Grade 7 CEPE. We are already busy with that application. Long term, our five-year plan is concerned with moving from predominantly subcontractor work to becoming the main contractor on projects in which we are involved. That means we need to get our revenue to about 120 million a year for three years. We have to make sure we have the right people to fill the right positions in order to achieve this and that takes time at careful attention.

### **Could you tell us more about your plans to address the challenges of youth unemployment and skills development?**

One thing that is apparent within the construction industry is the gatekeeping. People get settled and comfortable in their roles and that is fine, but we have chosen not to be that kind of contractor. So as far as offering young people employment, we can only take in as many people as we can. We have an opportunity to change the lives of people. We are helping two of our employees set up their

own business currently. These guys started as general workers in our Gabian laying team and they then became supervisors for two separate teams, so whenever we work on projects that require Gabian teams, we always turn to these guys. We wanted to open the industry up for them. We do not keep these opportunities for ourselves, instead, we value our communities. We want to help guide people on their career path, whatever that may be, and in terms of skills development, we also have a lot of inexperienced staff, new staff that have recently joined and they're already involved in various training programmes. Shadowing is also a big part of the training process here, as we feel this gives our employees sure footing a lot sooner.

### **What are you most proud of in relation to the company overall?**

We have a lot to be proud and thankful for. I am most proud of our growth in the last 12 months. We used to be a small business and I am happy to see that small business growing. A lot of people will say that too much growth in a short space of time is risky, but the people at UWC are ready to take it on and continue to evolve. We always have room for improvement, and I am proud of how we manage everything, but most importantly I am proud of the people we work with every day.

### **What does the next 12 months look like for the business?**

Mostly, we are looking for stability. We are amazingly comfortable in most areas, but, of course, there are still areas where we would like to develop more. We also want to keep up the stream of work and make sure that it is sustainable for years to come. Ultimately, we want to maintain our growth, continue developing our skills, and keep our people in business, particularly our newer staff.

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