



ENTREPRENEUR AND CHAIRPERSON OF CONSTRUCTION SETA

Part of the Mechanical Engineering class of 1990, Ray remembers vividly how interesting the programme was. It was considered one of the most challenging qualifications, and his classmates were often referred to as the “Arabs” because there was no time for games - all their time was dedicated to studying and submitting projects and assignments.

Raymond (Ray) Cele - Class of '90

It was this value system that catapulted him to become an avid businessman. Ray is the current chairperson of the Construction SETA, a position he has held since 2014.

What was to be a five-year term has since been extended until 2020 because of the transformation he has brought to the SETA. He believes that his transparent leadership style, a sound turnaround strategy and empowerment of black-owned businesses are part of the legacy that he has built for the organisation.

“In my few years in office, as Construction SETA we have introduced skills development in rural areas and built 13 skills centres, five of which are located in rural parts of KZN such as Dundee, Ingwavuma and others. These centres we built from scratch in partnership with local TVET colleges and municipalities. We have provided funding for training programmes in these centres and have also funded 300 TVET college students on a study programme in China,” explains Ray.

Ray's varied career has thrown him a lot of knocks and bumps but his resilience and entrepreneurship acumen have enabled him to rise above them and propel other entrepreneurs (some of whom are fellow MUT graduates) to do the same. In the early stages of his entrepreneurship journey he had to downscale to a point where he sold his house and car; however, he never allowed setbacks to take over his life. Instead he reached out and created new

friendships and networks that saw him get back into the game. His big break came in 2002 when he secured his first big contract with Portnet to build struggle carriers in partnership with a company in Finland - a contract worth R240 million.

From there on, things started to change for Ray. In addition to his knowledge of mechanical engineering, he had gained some knowledge of construction through his previous work which enabled him to start his own company, Sika Engineering, named after his late father. Sika was the first company to be contracted by the Department of Education to fast-track delivery of classrooms in KwaZulu-Natal. They later moved to other provinces where they continued to do the same to eradicate teaching under trees in rural schools.

Ray is not just a businessman, he is also an avid traveller who is now taking private pilot training lessons. A philanthropist who in 2016 funded the MUT alumni dinner which launched a bursary fund for MUT engineering students, Ray is passionate about giving back to the community of Umlazi's K-section where he grew up. Together with his wife Nokuthula Cele, they have set up a foundation called KM Family Trust and each year the foundation provides food, clothing, uniform, and school fees for more than 200 families. He has also empowered many businesses owned by fellow MUT graduates through mentorship, funding and creating networks.