

# Looking to the continent for growth opportunities

As a relative newcomer, Beyond Outsourcing™ has been focused on managing strong growth in its domestic business, but is now assertively pursuing opportunities across the African continent.

Says chief executive Suzanne Ravenall: "We're moving into a phase where our strategy involves a focus on servicing our on-going customer. Thereafter we shall be seeking out organic growth both locally and the rest of Africa, followed by targeted international countries, through sales driven by Beyond Outsourcing™ coupled with strong alliance partners."

She estimates that Beyond Outsourcing™ is approximately three years ahead of the market

in its business model, when applying the Gartner business model around business process outsourcing for positioning purposes, and the challenge is to re-

**"We're ahead of the curve and our strategy is to stay there"**

main ahead of the curve with a continuous stream of innovative solutions.

"We're ahead of the curve, and our strategy is to stay there,"

says Ravenall.

Apart from organically growing its presence along all fronts, Beyond Outsourcing™ is currently pursuing two specific tactics – developing international markets, initially in Africa and then the rest of the world; as well as pursuing black economic empowerment initiatives both at a holdings level and at a partner level.

One key business unit, Beyond Outsourcing™ Africa, is currently headed by Barry Sullivan, who has been appointed to head the business development effort. Sullivan is in the middle of negotiating local partnerships within each one of the targeted countries, with local operations to be rolled out region by region.

The beauty of international

expansion for Beyond Outsourcing™ is that it does not have to establish costly back office operations in each country – the costly back office engine already exists, and whether a front office is established in Cape Town, Lagos or Dublin is immaterial, it all operates in exactly the same way.

The company's field-based staff are operationally independent, though tightly performance managed through innovative technology solutions allowing access to an office regardless of their location.

While Beyond Outsourcing™ has a franchise model in place, Africa is seen as being more suited to the owner-run model.

"We're taking international expansion slowly. Though we

have the engine room in place, we're also aware of the diversity of each market. It's a matter of opening up one country, then two or three more, and then hitting the international market hard once the successful model is in place," says Ravenall.

The Beyond Outsourcing™ model is one which has tremendous applicability in developing countries where the education process does not leave school-leavers with the tools to implement ideas, "either their own as entrepreneurs, or as corporate players".

Businesses and governments alike in Africa do not always rate favourably in their capacity for implementation.

Ravenall has been in discus-

sions with potential empowerment partners for two years now, with a deal at various times imminent, only to be scuttled for various reasons – a lack of either

**"It's a question of hitting the global market hard once the model is there"**

investment capital or cultural fit.

As an entrepreneur herself, she knows that no deal will succeed unless the empowerment partner puts in an element of in-

vestment. There have been potential partners unfortunately with the ability to invest, but who wanted a passive relationship; and there have been those with much to offer the business operationally in terms of complementary products, services and skills – but no investment ability.

"A final deal is close to finality," says Ravenall.

In the meantime, what she has been cleverly doing is setting up new companies within the group with black empowerment partners who have been identified as having a strong capacity to add value strategically. In these transactions, the partner takes 25.1 percent of a new company within the Beyond Outsourcing™ group, and this establishes the de-

sired working relationship to the benefit of both parties. Ravenall says one such example is Vuyal Investments – a broad based black empowerment company.

Domestically, Beyond Outsourcing™ has grown handsomely over the past seven – gross and net profit have increased respectively each year. Ravenall expects the group to double in size over the next year, as a result of its growth strategy.

The repositioning of the public perception of the company from an operations execution company to a performance improvement company – providing a mix between outsourced operations managed services and private equity to deliver predictable outcomes is providing much of the growth.

## What separates Beyond Outsourcing™ from similar companies:

- ☐ Its employment of a generic and scalable toolkit that provides an end to end solution within each of the various verticals that Beyond Outsourcing™ provides its services within;
- ☐ the ability to run and manage the entire solution on an outsource basis to continually increase the performance improvement attained from the solution;
- ☐ Its ability to work across the consulting value chain with its group of companies: Consult, Design, Build, Implement, Run and support through Information Technology;
- ☐ Its on demand managed services and private equity;
- ☐ Its innovative deal structures providing the client with the ability to control and own;
- ☐ Implementation of the strategy/plans and the running thereafter on an outsource basis, the result being sustainable business transformation and performance improvement – predictable outcomes™

## Company has two models it uses in client relationships

Beyond Outsourcing™ has two models by which it enters into a performance improvement relationship with clients.

One is a straightforward outsource/co-source and the other is by means of a separate vehicle set up within the Beyond Outsourcing™ structure in which the client has a percentage ownership.

If there is a requirement for black economic empowerment in the transaction in line with the client's strategic objectives, Beyond Outsourcing™ will accommodate that requirement within the vehicle, provided it is synergistic to the overall engagement or an empowerment partner of the client can be used.

Explains Ravenall: "The end result required by the client is scoped, a joint balanced scorecard put in place, and the vehicle then works towards delivering the leading performance

improvement indicators as agreed."

Beyond Outsourcing™ is paid a management fee – financial savings generated within the operating structure are typically re-invested back into the vehicle. The purpose of this is to facilitate the roll-out of further performance improvement areas that the client needs to address.

The vehicle model accelerates the performance improvement by making unexpected available savings. These funds are then ring-fenced as it might otherwise be utilised elsewhere.

Ravenall explains that the model allows the service to move smoothly from one phase to the next.

Through the vehicle, Beyond Outsourcing™ acts as the principal and uses hand-picked channel partners for specific integration efforts such as technology, property or facilities management.

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# Bringing innovation to business in Africa

Suzanne Ravenall, the chief executive of Beyond Outsourcing, despite being a youthful 36, already has a string of awards and business nominations to her credit, for her role as founder of one of the most innovative business concepts in Africa.

Earlier this year she was nominated as one of the Managers of the Year by Corporate Research Foundation, as well as one of the five finalists in the Nedbank Business Women Of The Year Award. More recently she was nominated as one of the four finalists for the London-based Africa Investor Business Women of the Year Award for 2004.

The award was ultimately won by Pfizer's Konji Sebati, but Ravenall, as part of the last two finalists, received a "Highly Commended" quoted as: "The judges felt that Suzanne should be highly commended as a su-

perb role model for her leadership in a technology-centred environment."

In addition Beyond Outsourcing™ has been voted:

- One of the most promising companies for two years;
- One of the best companies to

**“Many people have the ability but lack the staying power to succeed**

work for for three years;  
□ Top 300 for two years

These awards reflect Ravenall's entrepreneurial spirit. She left school in the UK, with a short stay at college, but then immediately went to work with a UK ferry company and then cellular company in the area of out-

sourcing. With 18 years work experience, including 14 in outsourcing, she is among the most experienced in her niche in South Africa.

She created Beyond Outsourcing™ seven years ago as a result of her years' experience in outsourcing, many of which were in Europe where trends tend to be more advanced, as well as several years in operations implementation.

She combined the two into a business model which remains unique in South Africa today.

Ravenall is wise beyond her years and has a passion for life and business which is projected in all that she undertakes. Where she differs from most is in her will to succeed. She taught herself early on, not to see adversity and to learn from every interaction.

"We have had many people who came here with nothing. They've had to learn to stand on

their own two feet and carve out a career for themselves," she says.

These are people who, like herself, have the will to succeed.

"That too often differentiates successful people from the average - many people have ability, but lack the will, the staying power to hang in there," she says.

This comes with a frank understanding of her strengths and weaknesses, which are complemented with a management team, whom she encourages to be brutally honest - some of whom have been with Beyond Outsourcing™ from the very beginning.

Being an entrepreneur, Ravenall is a hands-on executive, taking part in the company induction programmes and making a conscious effort to be part of the experience in the front line.

"This allows you to experience reality at the rock face as you should see it," she says.



**ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT** Suzanne Ravenall, the chief executive of Beyond Outsourcing



## Business needs doers as well as thinkers

In business, there is rarely a shortage of new ideas. Rather, what has typically been lacking is successful implementation of those ideas.

Today companies are experiencing a responsiveness to changing conditions sometimes grindingly slow at a time when the business world is speeding up – innovation, technology and competition introduce volatility and speed and this in turn places huge pressure on business to improve performance in terms of productivity and the bottomline, and to implement faster and more efficiently than ever before to remain ahead of the curve.

Over fifteen years ago Suzanne Ravenall, peering into the future, correctly identified a widening gap developing between what companies want to achieve, and what they had the capability of achieving.

Explains Beyond Outsourcing™ director Kobus Pienaar: "To cater to this rapidly changing business environment, corporates began recruiting management with tertiary qualifications, who brought an immense ability to think, design strategy as well as technical capability. Unfortunately, in a large number of cases the ability to



Kobus Pienaar

operationally execute these strategies was lacking. The best laid plans and strategies are meaningless without execution. Today it is widely recognised that strategic thinking and operations execution are skills provided by two different types of people.

"Organisations did not always balance their recruitment of highly qualified people with the same amount of 'doers' to enable the execution of their plans. So this gap of execution and

staying ahead of the business curve remains firmly on every chief executive's agenda," he says.

Ravenall's vision was to build a comprehensive toolkit, generic and scalable, consisting of process as the driver, methodology and enabling systems for the purposes of execution. The objective being that this toolkit could operate across borders and industries and could be placed in the hands of anyone regardless of qualification, and yet capable of delivering sustainable business transformation on an outsourced basis.

She established IDCS, of which she recently commenced the remaining process to Beyond Outsourcing™, and is the chief executive officer.

Beyond Outsourcing™ is an "outsourcing operational implementation company" that, in a nutshell, delivers performance improvement, whether it be increased effectiveness, efficiency, shareholder value or reduction in costs.

The company is not a consulting firm – although it does house Beyond Capital™ as one of the companies within the group providing the management consulting ability to structure and de-

Beyond Outsourcing™ is an "outsourcing operational implementation company" operating a "factory" (managed services, married with private equity) in the business process outsourcing environment, delivering business transformation and compliance within the following areas:

□ HRM – human resources

management; training, human resources and labour management services;

□ CRM – customer relationship management; field servicing, customer branded academies;

□ BOM – back office administration;

□ EAM – enterprise asset management (to be launched shortly)

### How the company is structured:

□ SCM – supply chain management, procurement services (to be launched shortly)

The actual implementation is delivered by means of a toolkit, a step-by-step instruction manual focusing on the how-to in all aspects of operations:

□ management methodology, □ processes □ systems

Typically, once the benefits of one service had been proven to a client they often rolled out into other areas.

The company painstakingly developed a toolkit during its initial five years, all of which is geared to delivering to clients performance improvement.

"With the focus being on market convergence and execution to stay ahead of the curve, Beyond Outsourcing™ performance improvement is perfectly positioned and this concept is now well understood by the market," says Pienaar.

The company is able to unpack its toolkit at companies across diverse industries because these functions are generic and scalable.

"When we sign up with a client, we look firstly at the client need and what end-result it requires. This may initially be a single aspect of its end-to-end offering, but typically adds on more services as the toolkit delivers savings and efficiencies.

"That's because we are one of the few companies that ties results back to the client's bottom-line objectives," says Pienaar.

Whereas consultants can often spend years tailoring a company's processes to an off-the-

shelf system Beyond Outsourcing™ has systems already proven in company after company.

Once a client is aboard, the toolkit is unpacked and it becomes the rule book spelling out how to handle every conceivable situation. A service level agreement is entered into going into detail of every outcome, which is measured and quantified on a monthly basis.

Beyond Outsourcing™ is highly particular in its choice of clients – it must be one to which it can add value and one with which it is also capable of progressively growing together. Beyond Outsourcing™ works at the level of "trusted advisor" within the transformatory outsourcing layer.

The secret of the success is that other than the initial design of the toolkit, it does not take a highly qualified person to do the job, in the main.

It is all highly automated, and the company's staff all have access to either laptops, desktops or palm-held devices which enable the required performance management.

The philosophy of Beyond Outsourcing™ is to enable the client to focus on its core business.

### Employees encouraged to have fun

Chief executive Ravenall recognises that all successful businesses are those where people have fun at work. Consequently, the toughness of the working environment is softened by inculcating a culture where staff can take calculated risks without fear of failure.

"Whenever something goes wrong in the organisation, our first response is to look at what we as an organisation are doing wrong, rather than blame any individual. We then recognise which people need assistance, and in this way people are better motivated."

Ravenall puts her stamp on the company's values and corporate personality. "In our line of work honesty and integrity are non-negotiable. These are things we can prove to clients at any time."

Beyond Outsourcing™ has a relatively flat structure with only three management layers. As is typical for such organisations upward mobility is limited to the number of layers, but opportunity is not.

## Research by-products find commercial value

Information technology is key to the successful conduct of Beyond Outsourcing™ business. The company has spent the last five years developing the systems that support a highly automated toolkit.

Earlier this year the company realised it had an underutilised asset in its software development factory, which presented a business opportunity in its own right.

It was therefore moved to a commercial engine within Beyond Outsourcing™ under the Beyond Technology™ banner and established as a separate company called Seven S Technology.

Managing director of Seven S, Gerrit Bus, says the new company took on the software and intellectual capital from Beyond Outsourcing™, which is now serviced as a major client – but only one of many.

The software that underpins Beyond Outsourcing™ market offering in performance improvement and implementation, can now be bought by companies involved in one of the areas where the group focuses: human resources and recruitment; back office management; field-force automation; and performance management.

Holland-based Bus has 26 years

experience in this field, most often running his own business in Europe and the Middle East, assisting primarily US start-up companies to get established through the application of business intelligence.

"I was approached to join Beyond Outsourcing™, but not before I conducted my own due diligence on the company and what I saw immediately persuaded me to join," explains Bus.

He realised that to flesh out a complete solution from what was already an attractive product offering, business intelligence would have to be added to the suite.

He secured rights to a product called Business Objects, considered by both Gartner and Forrester to be the leader in business reporting.

"The moment you can present a solution offering business intelligence, as opposed to trying to sell products, it opens the door to the more senior executives of an organisation, because dynamic dashboarding of an organisation is precisely what they are all looking for today. It forms a more compelling value proposition for a board-level presentation," says Bus. "For one thing, a solution is typically cheaper than individual products."

In contrast, he says, Seven S is not selling a product with a promise of functionality – it is selling a business



Gerrit Bus

He relates the all-too-familiar scenario whereby a client is persuaded to buy the latest system.

"The system could cost millions, but it could also cost further millions – as well as years of implementation work – only then to find it delivers only a fraction of what was promised."

In contrast, he says, Seven S is not selling a product with a promise of functionality – it is selling a business

ness solution that is already battle-hardened and proven in company after company operating across diverse industries.

"We come from an outsourcing background where the software was designed with the purpose of being functional straight from implementation. They were never the product of research and development to be commercial systems, but were byproducts of what we needed for our own use in operations execution," says Bus.

"We have defined business processes that can deliver sustainably with guaranteed service levels. This is repeatable across any business and the robustness of the processes are pre-installed in our systems."

"So we don't need to sell a 12-month consulting service with our solution. That makes our offering a unique proposition."

The target market is both mid-market and large companies. The former, because the solution is affordable by companies that could not previously justify the expense; the latter, because they are looking for more cost-effective products and are buying down to mid-market prices.

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# Virtual organisation becomes a reality with Seven S Technologies

The virtual organisation has become a reality at Beyond Outsourcing™. Field operators seldom have to visit the offices, but are constantly co-ordinated through electronic communication, with their statistics and activities automatically downloaded each day by means of a geo-positioning system.

Each field operator has his or

her own geographic zone, and on a six-weekly cycle they get together for two days of review and training on client systems. Their daily instructions are all systemised, and where their activities involve stock, orders are within seconds relayed to the client for delivery to their retail outlets.

None of this would be possible

without the support of Seven S Technologies, a company which was initially the development arm of Beyond Outsourcing™ but has now been restructured into a separate company.

To its development capability, it has now added a business analysis and consulting arm, and a direct sales arm.

"When Beyond Outsourcing™

goes to a client and unpacks its toolkit, it consists of three components: methodology; individual processes and procedures; information and communications technology (ICT), and support," says Seven S head of sales, Mark Bannerman.

Seven S is involved in assisting with any information technology support required along

with other partners of Beyond Outsourcing™.

"We support Beyond Outsourcing™ clients, but we also undertake direct sales of our systems as a stand-alone company," says Bannerman.

That's not to say anyone can now replicate what Beyond Outsourcing™ achieves for its clients, says Bannerman: "The

intellectual capital resides in all three aspects of the toolkit."

"Our systems are primarily an enabler – the systems support the processes – although Beyond Outsourcing™ is a technology agnostic company."

Seven S has moved further since becoming a standalone company, becoming an ICT consultant offering business intelli-

gence and adding customer relationship management (CRM) to its technology product offering.

"Our proprietary technology forms the core of our offering, but we have sourced a number of other technologies to supplement, where we have identified good revenue generation possibilities and complementary solutions. Business analysis and the report-

ing would, for instance, enhance our other solutions and provide tremendous synergy," he says.

As a Microsoft service provider, Seven S is in the process of being certified as a Microsoft CRM vendor, which will enable it to offer two suites of CRM products. It is also about to release its own suite of products in Microsoft's .net format.

## Delivering maximum results for its clients

IDCS Beyond Outsourcing™ is able to improve performance of clients because it itself is performance driven.

"We are driven by accomplishments," explains chief executive Suzanne Ravenall.

"Although client value is conceptualised in planning, it can only be realised through successful implementation.

"Implementation is also a function of capability, as highlighted in our product and service offering," she says.

Ravenall outlines how Beyond Outsourcing™ delivers maximum results for clients:

□ "We are proven specialists in

Client value can only be realised through successful implementation

business results required."

□ "We are committed to, and invest, in reducing the actual costs of operation for our clients on an ongoing basis – always passing the cost-saving on immediately."

□ "We implement our own operations management software to enforce process efficiency and quality."

□ "We implement our own web-enabled reporting software to provide transparency of operations and performance to our client."

□ "We enforce a cyclical evaluation process that enables our client to redirect Beyond Outsourcing™'s priorities within very short time-frames.

the area of business operations, the management of operational performance and the development of operational skills."

□ "We implement a management methodology of Predictable Outcomes measured at each process level to ensure delivery of the



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