

# Spring Lights Gas



## Fostering a positive use for energy

**S**pring Lights Gas (SLG) commenced its operations on 1 July 2002. *Leadership* magazine chatted to Motsamai Koapeng, the company's chief executive officer, about the SLG's business approach and objectives in the energy sector.

### What is the main business of SLG?

Motsamai Koapeng: Our main business is the sale of natural gas (MRG) to industrial customers in KZN. And also supporting those customers on a day-to-day basis to ensure that their energy usage is optimised and their experience of gas with SLG is better than any other energy supplier.

We aim to be industry's first choice energy partner - clearly a long-term commitment. Our key statement - "your future in clean energy" - says it all. It energises us towards continuously improving ourselves to be relevant both today and even more so in future - for the customer's benefit.

### What services do you offer?

We offer a wide variety of technical support services based on the needs identified in the market at no cost to customers, for example:

- Safety training (gas related) designed to take into account the customers plant/factory specifics;

- Energy efficiency and optimisation of processes;

- Reviewing thermal efficiency of equipment and recommending modifications;

- Reviewing of heat exchanger safety and energy balance issues;

- Increasing the technical capacity of low level/operating staff as well as senior level and improving operational/technical understanding;

- Helping to enhance ability to manage and improve efficiency of the thermal processes;



*Mthoko Mbatha receives the awards from Dr Johan van Zyl - CEO and President of Toyota*

Increase the capability of companies to be self-sufficient in operating their boiler equipment. This is a dying skill in some companies where it is considered to be non-core, and often out sourced when it doesn't need to be. As a result of this, customers are able to save on management fees which they incur from outsourcing these services.

### What are some of your leading products?

We only sell one product - Natural Gas (MRG), which is currently one of the most environmentally benign energy sources available. It provides around 4% to 6% of the South Africa's total primary energy supply, but has the potential to achieve between 10% and 15% over the long-term, if the regulatory environment allows.

### Tell us more about your business approach?

I suppose, like any business, we endeavour to fulfil our responsibilities to shareholders by ensuring that we satisfy the requirements of our customers (this includes potential customers). I think that those are two sides of the same coin.

All this must be founded on sound values that support all our stakeholders. As a result, our first and most important value is *People first*, which I believe encompasses all our activities and operations.

This ensures that all we do should be people-directed and be measured in accordance with its positive effects on people - whether it is safety, environment, profit and corporate social investment related, etc. Whatever we do has a people element in it. Everything else follows that.

### What would you say has been key to SLG's success?

In one word I would say: Partnerships.

Firstly the partnership between our shareholders, Coal Energy Power Resources (CEPR) and Sasol, which is very strong and supportive to our vision.

Secondly, the partnership we have with our customers.

Thirdly, the partnerships we are developing with the communities around us.

Lastly, we are closer to our regulators and local provincial and national government.

### Elaborate on the partnership between SLG and industrials in KZN?

Our purpose as a company is to be Industry's first choice energy partner this means we always strive to establish the kind of long term, value-based relationships that tap into each customer's value perspective and preferences.

We try to understand - intimately - the customer's business so that we can tailor our service offerings to the unique character of their operations and organisational culture. We often assist customers in the conversion to gas by providing funding if required to do so. This displays our commitment in going beyond our own value chain, to improve the benefits of gas as a preferred energy source for our customers.

Our technical support service requires us to have an intimate knowledge of the issues that are critical to each customer and to live up to the lessons that the customer is learning in order to excel in their chosen field.

### What have been some of the highlights and/or achievements for SLG?

We have a long way to go before we can be in the same league as some of the major players in our industry, therefore some of our

milestones pale into relative insignificance when they are viewed in comparison to what companies like Sasol, Eskom, Engen, and the other energy majors achieve on a daily basis. But we are constantly making positive contributions to the energy landscape of South Africa.

We are particularly humbled when we are recognised by our customers for the work we do and we have received a number of awards over the past few years in recognition of this (e.g. the Toyota Supplier Awards received for the last three years, and the FNB Top Business Award for KZN).

We have recently connected our first Independent Power Producer (IPP) customer (Newcastle Cogeneration - IPSA) which we believe is making a positive contribution to alleviating the power shortage crisis in our country.

### How do you keep your staff motivated and committed?

I consider this to be one of the most interesting problems managers can have. But I believe that some of the solutions to it lies in tapping into what people already value most in their lives, and aligning that with what they do on a daily basis. Therein lies the challenge.

I think at SLG we try to identify the values that unite us as an "organisational family" and use them to propel us to greater heights, despite the daily challenges that may persist.

Of course this means that from the onset we must attract and retain those employees who are already well attuned to this way of thinking, and who apply themselves accordingly.

They are encouraged to have a wider span of influence than just their immediate area of responsibility. When accompanied by an unshakable unity of purpose, this approach

can produce sustained gains and consistent results.

### You do quite a bit of work in your CSI division; can you share a success story?

We believe that CSI projects should complement our responsible business practices and our impact on the communities within which we conduct our business.

It is for this reason that our policy and strategy are underpinned by our Standards of Corporate Conduct and specifically our Business Values.

Our key focus areas is education, recently we donated a computer lab, complete with networking to Zwelibanzi High School in Umlazi, Durban. This school has shown great achievement over the years in terms of their matric pass rate and has become a shining beacon of what excellence with minimal resources means.

Our partnership with Zwelibanzi ensures that learners will widen their scope of reach and have valuable information at hand to plan their futures beyond school. The internet access will ensure that they gather information about careers, tertiary institutions and opportunities that are available to them after Zwelibanzi High School.

### Is there anything else that you would like to add?

We aspire to live justly, mercifully and to walk humbly. These ideals appear to epitomise the life of our elder statesman and father, the Honourable Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

We would like to wish Madiba a blessed birthday and may his wisdom continue to bless the nation. ▲

*For more information please visit [www.slgas.co.za](http://www.slgas.co.za)*