



UP CLOSE

WITH

DENNIS MAISTER

PSD recently had the pleasure of interviewing Mr Dennis Maister, Chairman of Claude Neon Limited, which is celebrating 70 years in 2005. The admiration and respect that every staff member in the Group has for Dennis Maister is evident in the fact that he is known and fondly referred to as "Madiba".

What did you do before Claude Neon?

In 1955 I joined the family business, Maister Directories (Pty) Ltd, the advertising contractors to Telkom S.A. Ltd for the Telephone Directories and Yellow Pages, which was started in 1952 by my father and was appointed Managing Director in 1973. Over the period 1978 to 1997 various entities were bought and sold by our family, being:

1978: Purchased Metropolitan Outdoor Advertising Company – Company which had bus advertising rights and billboards.

1981: Shareholding restructured and new Company MAISTER DIRECTORIES (1981) (PTY) LTD formed, including Nasionale Pers and Perskor as shareholders.

1983: Purchased Brilliant Signs.

1985: Acquired Advertising Outdoor Displays (Pty) Ltd – Largest billboard company in South Africa and merged with Metropolitan to form "Maister Outdoor Marketing". (Held 70% of outdoor market).

1986: Argus Company became shareholders.

1986: Started Info Holdings (Pty) Ltd – The Electronic Yellow Pages.

1990: Merged Maister Outdoor Marketing with Rent-A-Sign company and retained 25% of merged company.

1991: Sold Electronic Yellow Pages software etc. to Portugal and Ireland on Royalty basis.

1993: Sold Brilliant Signs to Claude Neon Ltd.

1994: Sold Electronic Yellow Pages software to

Australia Yellow Pages company.

1995: Together with ITT, Maister family bought out all other shareholders.

1995: Sold shareholding in Rent-A-Sign.

1996: Purchased Claude Neon and Brilliant Signs.

1997: Formed joint venture with Telkom S.A. for publishing of Telephone Directories and Yellow Pages.

The most important acquisition, of course, being that of Claude Neon/Brilliant Signs in 1996. At this point the decision was made to phase out Brilliant Signs and continue to trade under the name of Claude Neon Limited only.

In 1998, I retired as Managing Director of Maister Directories and took up the permanent position as Chairman of Claude Neon Limited.

How long have you been in the industry?

I have been in the signage industry for 22 years.

What book is on your bedside table at the moment?

Giuliani – Leadership.

Do you have any children?

Yes - 3

Are you a collector of anything in particular or do you have a hobby?

Travel is our Hobby.

Who do you consider to be your best friend or close friends in the industry?

The loyal and dedicated staff at Claude Neon, most of whom have worked in the signage industry much longer than me.

What global issues do you feel the strongest about?

How do we stop the terrorism throughout the World

that is playing havoc with our lives.

What will you be doing in ten years?

Retired – hopefully.

If you had a wand and you could change anything, what would it be?

Have peace and stop the on-going fighting between Countries and different political factions.

Do you travel a lot?

Yes, extensively.

Which country or place did you enjoy the most?

Italy is our favourite country.
London our favourite city.

What are your thoughts on the signage industry?

Clients are becoming more and more demanding and the challenge will be to meet all their quality needs, as well as to deliver in the time requested.

How do you keep your staff motivated?

It isn't easy. 60% are motivated by themselves and through ones efforts and 40% are not, whatever you do.

What advice would you give a small business that has just started in the industry?

Sales is not everything, cash flow is more important.

**For more information contact
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