

**Success story**

# Sport tools now business

It is not uncommon for a sportsman to turn the tools of his trade into a business. Unfortunately many of these projects never really get off the ground. In the case of former racing boat champion Mark Louw, his boat building business is not only still afloat, but is today producing a product that is in demand all over the world.

When Mark started Mako Inflatables in 1995 he already had extensive experience with inflatable boats. He was heavily involved in the racing scene here, in Australia and the USA, and was South African champion from 1992-1994. His brother Rob started a similar business ten years earlier and they were actively involved in the research and development of a uniquely South African racing boat.

Back in the early days almost their entire market was local. Since then the exchange rate has improved and today 90% of their boats are exported to West and East Africa, Europe, Asia, America, New Zealand and Australia.

The fully inflatable boats have also made way for semi-rigid craft and lately they produce mainly larger boats. Their latest development is a 9,5 meter boat that is ideally suited for rigging with gunships as military and coast guard patrol boats. With the shift in design the target market has also changed and local leisure applications, which were once their bread-and-butter products, now only account for 2% of their output.

As their target market is mainly overseas clients, Mako Inflatables found it very beneficial to use the Internet as a marketing tool and already had a web presence six years ago. With CAPEMAC's assistance this marketing strategy was further developed and a service provider was contracted to produce a CD that

shows prospective clients video footage of the boats in action at sea. It also shows the range of products, accessories and services on offer. These CDs are reproduced and distributed by Mako at minimal cost and help to promote the professional image of the company. As a direct result of the use of the CDs, the company's turnover has increased by 100% and 10 additional staff members were appointed.

CAPEMAC also assisted Mako in gaining their ISO 9001:2000 accreditation and certification. This involved the training of all management and staff, the compilation of documentation for recording and monitoring quality control and processes, as well as writing procedural manuals and policy documents.

Thanks to this intervention the factory has seen a 30% increase in productivity and added job satisfaction as individual staff members are now accountable for their part in the production process.

"The company and factory went through a huge growth phase and this intervention came at the perfect time," says Mark Louw. "Production has tripled and we would not have been able to cope with the increase without the quality management system in place."

As a result of the increase in production Mako is in the process of relocating their factory to larger premises in Lansdowne. *pb*

**Fact file**

**Name:** Mako Inflatables

**Address:** 17 Induland Ave, Lansdowne, 7780

**Tel:** (27) 21 692 4022

**Products:** Semi-rigid inflatable boats

**Markets:** Europe, Asia, America, Australia, New Zealand & Africa

**Started Operation:** 1995

**Employees:** 40



▲ A 7,8 m semi-rigid boat manufactured by Mako Inflatables in Cape Town is put through its paces. Mako now also produces a 9,5 m boat - the largest semi-rigid made locally.



▲ Stanford Jonkers and Karl Sheldon polish a hull in the factory.