



# #9

## Davis & Shirtliff

PUTTING PURPOSE BEFORE PROFIT

Over the past decade, there has been a paradigm shift in what a successful brand represents, the result of the cumulative impact of both international and local, external and internal forces. Consumers, employees and others are now attracted to brands that resonate with their own values and look beyond the bottom line to make a positive impact on the societies in which they operate. There is no doubt that Davis & Shirtliff is such a brand.

It is the leading water and energy solutions-provider in the Eastern African region and beyond, and has for 75 years been improving lives in the communities it serves. The firm is driven by “putting purpose before profit”, and this lies deep within its culture. It is real and meaningful at every level of the company, from the board to the youngest recruit, from head-office to the field offices, from back-office to front office.

The company’s mission is to tackle one of Africa’s biggest challenges – the lack of access to water. And every solution it provides, from ones for solar pumping that harness the power of the sun, to water treatment ones that turn the murkiest of waters into clean, potable drinking water, improves lives by increasing access to water and clean affordable energy. In a continent where 66% of its land is either arid or semi-arid, water is a precious resource, in very short supply. Which is why Stockholm Water Prize Laureate Rajendra Singh proclaimed that the next world war will very likely be fought over water if nothing is done about this crisis. So, the activities of Davis & Shirtliff also contribute to peace and security.







Over the last four years, Davis & Shirliff's "Improving Lives Initiative" has transformed the lives of over 780,000 people in Kenya alone. This is been through CSR projects that directly provide underserved communities and public schools with access to water. During this time the firm has undertaken over 350 water projects. 70% of these are in rural Kenya and the other 30% are in public schools and densely populated informal settlements. Many of the projects are carried out in partnership with partners, from those who supply them with product, to NGOs and media companies, to Rotary Clubs.

Noteworthy is how the company designs such projects in ways that make them sustainable in the long term, as a result of which they readily align with two of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, SDG 6; and to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, SDG 7.

Sustainability is at the core of Davis & Shirliff's thinking – which is why it has survived and thrived over the 75 years of its existence, showing remarkably consistent growth in scale and in its product and geographic spread. From humble beginnings in Nairobi's Westlands area, it now has over 70 outlets in nine countries, including over 40 branches in Kenya. It has seen its business revenues double in the last decade, and

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its growth potential remains substantive.

This successful track record is built around how well everyone in the company lives its three values (yes, only three, and all taken very seriously): Quality, Integrity and *Altiora Peto* – the last of which is Latin for "seeking higher things". By "higher things" they mean such attributes as excellence, innovation and continuous improvement, and it relates well to their purpose statement which they expressly state as, "Improving people's lives by providing water and energy solutions across Africa".

It is also reflected in how the company grows its staff, with higher level positions typically filled by promotion from within – now with >>



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>> increasing gender balance. The focus on personal and career development earns Davis & Shirliff the right to attract and retain excellent people, ones who are proud of the brand and continue to strengthen it further. The good working environment is reflected in the above average service years served by staff and at their headquarters in Nairobi is a board with over a hundred staff who have each served a minimum of 25 years.

Here's Davis & Shirliff's "Guiding Principle", an important way to promote teamwork among its staff and with all its partners: "One person working alone is limited in their endeavours. Many people working together have no limit to their achievement."

Among its recent innovations a very significant one is iDayliff, a remote monitoring facility that allows clients to monitor the health of their pumping systems from any location in the world. Generally, the company has applied technology in many ways that support its brand and its values. In keeping with the times, Davis & Shirliff has developed inhouse, free apps like the D&S Flo App, Dayliff App, PumpCalc App, SolarCalc App and PoolDoctor App all of which make it easier for customers and staff to access very helpful information that was previously not in the public domain.

Davis & Shirliff holds itself to the highest standards in many ways. Prime among these is treating all key stakeholders fairly; offering value for money to customers; providing an excellent work environment for its staff; feeling part of the communities in which it operates; developing and enjoying long-lasting relationships with suppliers and other partners, ones based on trust; contributing to influencing the development and implementation of national policies that sup-



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port the development of clean water and energy; and being dedicated to operating in compliance with government laws and regulations and to paying the taxes it should in each of the countries where it operates.

About 60% of the items sold by Davis & Shirliff are sourced internationally, from 15 different countries and about 35 different leading manufacturers. Water pumps remain Davis and Shirliff's main business line, and it offers the widest range of products in the region. For its pumps and other products, the firm has very successfully developed its own brand, Dayliff, allowing it to benefit from a wide variety of sources and therefore to offer a large selection of affordable quality products – all well supported.

Consistency is part of the company's brand statement too. All its branches are designed and equipped to the same high ISO 9001 certified standards, and in each of them a dedicated and professional sales and technical team is available. The service in Davis & Shirliff is driven by well trained and highly qualified

engineers, and each staff member attends at least one online training session a week, with topics ranging from technical to financial management and customer service issues. Also, once a month an online staff development session is led by a member of the executive team.

Company Chairman Alec Davis understands that "To be in service for 75 years is not by sheer luck, as there have been many things that have been done right, including the continuity and consistency of the strategic direction that is made possible by the stable ownership and an almost obsessive commitment to our values. Davis & Shirliff has premised its business on embracing continuous change, excellent supplier networks and building a large loyal and committed customer base throughout Africa".

The Davis & Shirliff Group is a company that fully expects to be "world class" in every aspect that this entails, and not least in continuing to improve people's lives by providing clean water and energy solutions across Africa. ■