

# Building? Choosing the right company is key

The key to a successful building project is careful and thorough planning coupled with selecting the right professional team and the best contractor for the job.

This is the view of Allen Bodill, the newly appointed executive director of the Master Builders' and Allied Traders' Association of the Western Cape (MBA).

It would be wise to heed the words of Mr Bodill, a Constantia resident, who had just moved into the MBA offices in Belmont Square, Rondebosch, when I interviewed him.

Mr Bodill trained as a mechanical engineer and worked for a large engineering company, before he started his own construction contracting firm in 1983. His company joined the MBA Western Cape in 1986.

"I have served on the executive committee of the MBA since 2001 and I was elected as president of the association in 2010. I served as president from September 2010 until September 2012 and I was appointed executive director on March 2, this year."

Mr Bodill has been in the building industry for more than 30 years so he speaks from experience.

One of his tasks is to grow the membership and to improve the



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service delivery and status of the association.

"When hiring a contractor, it is prudent to check his track record and the length of time he has been in business; visit sites and talk to people for whom the contractor has completed recent work; in particular check the contractor's willingness to return to attend to defects and the quality of his 'after-sales' service," Mr Bodill said.

"Always ensure that the contractor is registered with the Building Industry Bargaining Council for the Cape Peninsula, which regulates rates of pay and terms and conditions of employment of the contractor's staff.

"Always check that the contractor carries valid Coida insurance (Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act) as well as contractor's 'all risk and public liability' cover, before any site work begins, in the event of an accident.

"Familiarise yourself with the current Occupational Health and

Safety legislation. If in any doubt, consult an employer's association such as the MBA to ensure that you have adequately discharged your legal obligations," said Mr Bodill, who advised people to notify their own insurers when they were having work done on their property.

"Always notify your own insurer of the nature, duration and cost of the proposed works to your premises or home, so that there are no surprises in the event of an unforeseen accident or damages to your premises.

"Insist on working with standard model contract documents which have been tested in law. These are available from the MBA's offices in Rondebosch. They cover many vital areas, which tend to get overlooked when appointing a contractor," said Mr Bodill.

A contract is vital. "Consumers always have recourse to law and the courts, but this is likely to be very costly and it can take a long time to resolve any issues which may arise. Model documentation will assist in addressing these issues and will provide an accurate framework and record of rights and responsibilities, which is a vital reference framework in resolving any disputes which arise in construction contracts.

"There are also a number of

alternative dispute resolution procedures, which are enshrined in the various standard contract documents, and which are, generally speaking, less costly and provide quicker results than having to wait for 'one's day in court'," Mr Bodill explained.

He said standard contract documents confer rights and obligations on both parties to the agreement, and seek to equitably apportion the risks involved, so the importance of their use cannot be overemphasised.

Do you think people try to cut corners when they hire a contractor?

"In my own experience, it is always wise to appoint a professional architect, quantity surveyor, project manager or engineer to oversee the work.

"While this adds to the consumer's cost, the introduction of an independent professional between the consumer and contractor can help to avoid unrealistic expectations and disputes.

"Hopefully it will ensure that the accepted quotation has been realistically priced, as well as regulating progress payments/ retentions to ensure that they are fairly applied and dealt with.

"In addition, each of these consultants will carry professional

indemnity insurance cover, which is an additional 'blanket of comfort' for the consumer, in the event of an unforeseen event," Mr Bodill said.

What is the standard of work like today compared with say 30 years ago?

"The construction industry has, for various reasons, become increasingly fragmented during the 32 years that I have been involved as a general contractor.

"Sadly, the industry has also lost some of its valuable training resources over this time, resulting in a scarcity of skilled tradesmen and supervisors. Our association is actively involved in training and the Western Cape MBA leads the country in training these resources for the industry.

"Simply put, in my own view, the secret lies in carefully selecting the contractor who operates ethically and has a record of taking pride in their work. There are still many firms who have these high standards. The trick is to find the right one," Mr Bodill said.

● The Master Builders' Association Western Cape is at Belmont Square, Belmont Road, Rondebosch. Write to the MBA, PO Box 382, Rondebosch 7701; email [info@mbawc.org.za](mailto:info@mbawc.org.za) or you can visit [www.mbawc.org.za](http://www.mbawc.org.za) for more information.

## Primary schools prepare for the stage

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boundaries for participation; it is an opportunity for youth to explore their potential in a fun, developmental way.

"The dramatic increase in feedback compared to previous years shows more participants than before realise that access to the arts is a fundamental human right and theatre can contribute significantly to human development and motivation", says Kseniya Filinova-Bruton, festival director for the Shakespeare Schools Festival South Africa.

Workshops will be held in various

regions prior to the festival for participating pupils and teachers to meet.

The Western Cape festival will be a basis for upcoming festivals to be held in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape provinces.

Each year, the festival encourages schools to perform 30-minute versions of Shakespearean plays in their local professional theatre, giving them a platform to voice their creativity and broaden their horizons by experiencing the magic of live theatre.

For details on the festival, email [themba@sceproductions.co.za](mailto:themba@sceproductions.co.za) or call Themba Mzondi on 078 113 5216.

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