



Wayne Hill, CEO, Bidvest Prestige

# “FOCUS, DIFFERENTIATION, SPECIALISATION AND KEEPING IT REAL.”

*Bidvest Prestige CEO, Wayne Hill, sheds light on the industry – looking at the opportunities, challenges and importance of a clear and compelling vision that staff and stakeholders can understand.*



info@presclean.co.za



www.bidvestprestige.co.za

“This is a people business,” says Hill – moments after ending a call relating to the hijacking of a company vehicle in Johannesburg. “Every day is different. What’s urgent and what’s important is mostly not the same thing. . .”

It’s a few weeks before the end of 2020 and Hill has been the CEO of Bidvest Prestige for a few months – taking over at one of the most challenging times in modern history.

“I started and spent a lot of my professional career in the hospitality industry,” says Hill. “This is a very different animal. Hospitality is always about ‘what the customer wants’ whereas retail is all about low margins and high volumes – two philosophies I tried to marry to some degree when joining Bidvest as Hospitality ME from previous endeavours.”

Hill considers those initial 18 months as some of the hardest in his career, spending 16 hours a day opening hotels was easier than this. He also considers it as the most humbling and complicated.

## Industry challenges

“Cleaning is not a simple trade,” says Hill. “It’s a multiB rand business that’s built on increments of R28 per hour.”

Add to that the challenges of pay codes and titles, department of labour requirements and a competitive landscape that is often not only government funded but, also, trained-up by larger industry players (as

part of transformation), it makes finding a balance between worker and client expectations – against the backdrop of these complex times, that much harder.

## Standards, expertise and technology against what the market is willing to pay is another notable challenge.

“There’s an expectation that we have to be better than everybody else but that our services need to be charged at the same or similar rate to our competitors,” says Hill. “In some instances, that’s like wanting, or needing, a supercar to win a race – but hoping a small hatchback budget will do the same job.”

## Not all cleaning is the same.

Bidvest invests in specialists that enable the company to deliver a fit-for-purpose service, e.g. in industries where the risk of contamination is an absolute “no go”, such as Healthcare or Food Manufacturing.

In addition to human capital the company also invests in the best technologies – bringing international best practice and solutions to our shores where, sometimes, our market may not yet be ready for it from a cost perspective, but certainly its presence opens up conversations about where we are (or should be) heading.

“We sit on a lot of professional bodies and we bring innovation here,” says Hill. “We research chemicals, technology and equipment from around the world and invest in the best, which is important – especially

for our international client base who measure our operations against strict Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) guidelines, but South Africans still prefer the costs of a mop and bucket brigade.

We go through several audits a year to maintain those standards but all of that, of course, comes at a price.”

Given these challenges it’s really **important for Bidvest Prestige to create a clear and compelling vision** that stakeholders can understand and buy into . . . while, of course, trying to remain nimble in current conditions.

## Looking ahead

“We operate in an environment where our customers expect X from us and we expect Y from our employees,” says Hill. “However, we don’t necessarily treat employees with the same level of attentiveness.”

New ways and levels of engagement are needed.  
**An understanding of the value of time, is needed.**

Historically significant energy and resources would go into new processes and policies that did not really add value to employees – something that Hill is at pains to avoid going forward.

“We’ve had to redesign processes and then digitise them,” says Hill. “The reality is that we are a decentralised business that works with centralised controls– this requires finding ways to share ideas and expertise as well as drive engagement in a way that’s affordable and, most importantly, useful for all our team members – regardless of location or skill-level.”

In order to achieve this “connection”, Bidvest Prestige is working with hardware and software partners that can help amplify the practical application of mobile technologies.

A significant exercise in Research and Development – especially in the creation of intuitive platforms that employees would actually want to use – is in the works as **Bidvest Prestige looks to understand:**

- where employees are coming from (in relation to suggestions or concerns)
- what they need in order to succeed
- how best the company can contribute to their well-being and advancement

“Technology is one thing but we also need to spend more time with our people to uncover their inputs and ideas.” Says Hill. “We have to create time to ‘go to the floor’ – which forms part of our obligations in terms of our ‘Ownership Chart’ which binds together our levels of engagement.”

## **“We are not there yet”**

Hill makes it clear that, while a lot of progress has been made to date, there are still many touchpoints that need attention – including better strategies in relation to Corporate Social Responsibility, the responsible use of robotics in the working environment (possibly deployed to remove late and unsafe working hours) and the overall perception of the industry in general.

**“I want to elevate cleaning from a job to a career,”** says Hill. “I want people to understand that, if I do A, B and C I can become a hygiene expert. We need to become proactive in our community engagements and help citizens understand the importance of cleanliness and hygiene.”

## **It’s about “Authenticity”**

That which best describes Bidvest Prestige and its vision for its people and the country is its focus on sustainability, humble respect, honesty and passion, bound by authenticity.

“My job is keeping it real, telling it like it is and making sure everyone understands that, while we are not perfect, we are doing the right things for the right reasons,” says Hill.

“We need a more positive message in this country – we need to stand up and make a positive change . . . and I think we will grow our business by doing just that.”

**We PASSIONATELY believe in HONESTY, HUMILITY and RESPECT for each other. We are focused on protecting our ENVIRONMENT and creating cleaner spaces with great CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES**