

Tribute to industry stalwart: Henk Louw (16 August 1939-11 September 2023)

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This week, we mourn the loss of Henk Louw (16 August 1939-11 September 2023), a visionary, serial entrepreneur, and fervent advocate for marketing.



Henk Louw

Louw's business motto and guiding principle in life was simple yet profound: "You have to change, or you'll die." True to his word, Louw continuously evolved, leaving behind an indelible mark through legacy businesses like Homemakers Media Holdings, Thaba Eco Hotel, and Thaba Eco Village. Everything Louw achieved was in partnership with his devoted wife, Nelléne, who stood by his side through every venture and challenge.

In the 1970s, Louw, who already owned several retail outlets, understood the critical role of marketing and the importance of reaching potential customers in their homes. A pioneer ahead of his time, he grasped the value of collaborations. By pooling resources with other businesses for shared advertising space on hand-distributed pamphlets, Louw achieved cost-effectiveness and added value for each brand involved. Louw considered his co-workers as family, instilling a strong sense of community and shared purpose in his endeavors.

This initial effort eventually morphed into Homemakers Fair, one of the country's most successful knock-and-drop publications four decades later. During that period, Louw also launched the country's first permanent exhibition center specialising in home improvement - a groundbreaking idea at the time. Always adaptive, the center evolved into annual exhibitions and eventually an online platform in the early 2000s.

Beyond publications and exhibitions, Louw's passion for hospitality led to the creation of the award-winning Thaba Eco Hotel, which celebrated its 21st anniversary this year. Situated in Johannesburg's Kliprivier reserve, the hotel is a testament

to Louw's vision and dedication.

As a true philanthropist, Louw believed in uplifting communities as he grew his enterprises. His work with organisations like SOJO and Dignity Boards made invaluable contributions to many lives.

In partnership with his son Reuben Louw, Louw's dream of sustainable living materialised in the Thaba Eco Village. This legacy project, two decades in the making, embodies Louw's belief that we are obliged to plant trees whose shade we will never sit under.

Henk Louw's impact transcends his immediate and work families; his influence is felt by countless others who will metaphorically travel the roads he carved. He will be sorely missed, but his life's work and wisdom will continue to inspire us all.

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