

ON THE QUALITY TRAIL

FOR Pietermaritzburg precision spring manufacturer Webroy, the recent attainment of ISO 9002 was a significant step forward in its quest to be at the forefront of South Africa's emerging spring industry.

Webroy's commitment to impeccable quality standards is to the ultimate benefit of all our customers. Whether we're making a handful of springs or a million, getting it right first time means cost savings in the long term, says marketing director Buzz Kopp.

In addition to success in its ISO 9002 programme, Webroy has also been A-rated as a supplier for Volkswagen and the company has now set its sights on a QS 9000 rating, a new United States automotive quality standard.

Webroy's customer base extends to various industrial sectors and "our expertise is passed onto each and every one - everybody benefits," says Kopp.

He says Webroy's commitment to quality, which began with the inception of the company in 1975, is a never-ending journey. From the outset founder and chairman

Don Royston knew that if Webroy was to become the country's leading springmaker, his company would have to be more quality conscious than anyone else.

This early philosophy was vindicated and Webroy's management still believes that if a South African company is to remain competitive both locally and internationally it must have an unremitting approach to quality.

"The local automotive industry is as demanding as the international. South African suppliers are expected to be in the same quality league as those overseas. We have to regard ourselves as an international source," says Buzz.

"The Japanese, North American and European parent companies of South African automotive manufacturers insist that their subsidiaries subscribe to a global standard.

For that reason we have had to adopt a

long-term approach to quality and now its paying off."

On the road to ISO 9002 Webroy discovered that it was not only the customers who shaped a culture of quality; suppliers also played their part. It became important to form partnerships with raw material producers, such as steel suppliers, to be able to offer a consistently high-standard product.

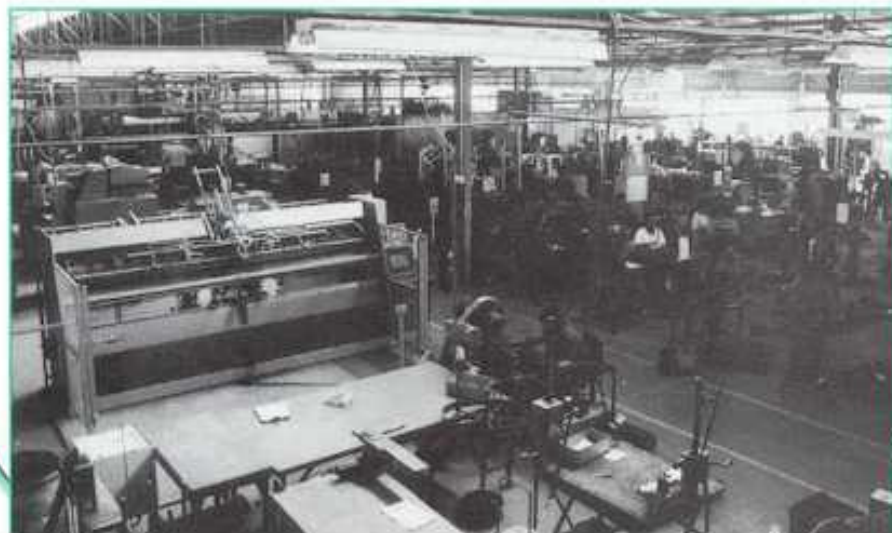
"We are being forced to source overseas in more and more cases as some of our local suppliers apparently do not want to meet the international standards. This seems the wrong time to retreat from the market now that global potential is available to SA industry for the first time in 40 years. This attitude is forcing us to find new supply partners."

Quality became an attitude that entrenched itself in every aspect of Webroy's activities. It established itself as a two-way process within the company: management transmitted the message to the shop floor and the 130-strong workforce in turn communicated it back to management. Kopp maintains that any local company that wants to be competitive on local or international markets should be striving for quality-driven goals such as ISO 9002 or QS 9000.

"But we should all accept the challenge that these achievements are not destinations in themselves, but rather milestones on a road of continuous improvement."



Directors Bill Armitage, Robin Royston and Buzz Kopp and ISO 9002 certification.



Webroy's factory at Willowton outside Pietermaritzburg.

POULTRY POTENTIAL IN EMERGING ECONOMIES



AS South Africa's only ISO 9002-rated poultry equipment manufacturer, Webroy is well poised to take advantage of an industry that is growing in Africa.

Marketing Director Buzz Kopp says Africa's poultry market has tremendous potential and is one industry that is currently reflecting impressive growth.

"If one looks at the demographics and increasing growth rate of potential poultry consumers, it becomes evident that this is a good market for a poultry equipment manufacturer to be in."

Buzz says that the regional market is being given a fillip by international donor aid organisations as it has been generally accepted that raising poultry is one of the most efficient means of producing meat protein for less developed markets.



Bill Armitage sharing the moment with supervisor Lawrence Mnculwane.

"Obviously the production technique centres around the word efficiency and this is why Webroy is so well placed. Our wire-forming equipment optimises this type of appropriate technology for poultry production.

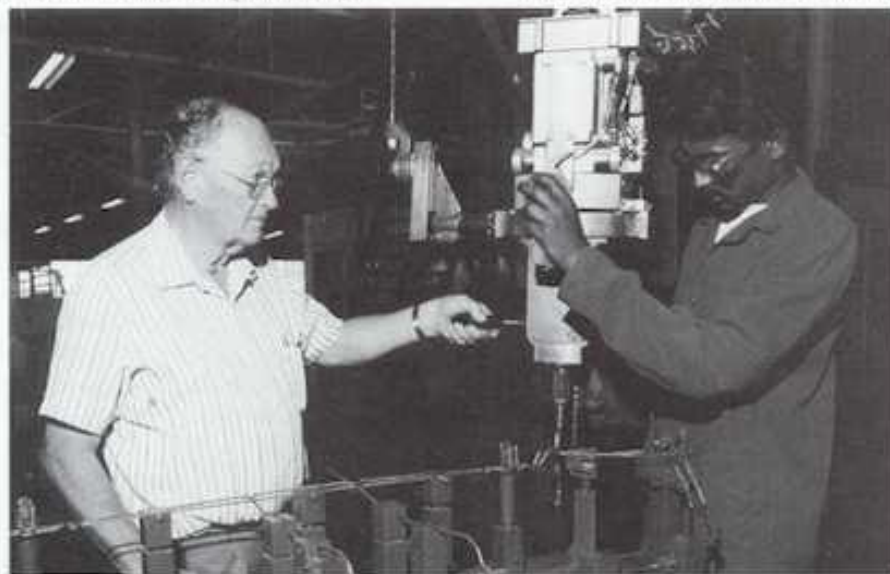
"The international organisations also

look for quality assurance procedures to run through the entire production process, so our ISO 9002 status now becomes a big plus," adds Buzz.

Webroy's entry into the poultry equipment market began with the takeover of Hilay Products in 1986 along with its entire poultry equipment product line. This was a significant move for a company that up to then had built its reputation around being a precision spring manufacturer.

Looking back Buzz says that although meeting exacting requirements of the poultry industry was not always easy, the Hilay development broadened Webroy's product range.

"It enabled us to look at a wider market than what the spring arena offered. Right now for us, the African poultry market is particularly exciting," he said.



Bill Armitage with operator Nigel Naidoo.