



Gary Slamet and Adele Strachan (MBCV Cape Town) are pictured (second and third from left) with the rest of Gary's team. They are, from left, Merle Slamet, Hein Slamet, Renfred Slamet and Garian Slamet.

## Gary grows **successful business** from small beginnings

**G**ary Slamet used to keep an old newspaper in his truck. And although there are many uses for an old newspaper, Gary, at the time a municipal refuse truck driver, used his exclusively to hide behind – in embarrassment – when he came across people he knew in the streets of Windhoek.



Today, Gary doesn't have to hide behind any old newspapers. He owns Quality Airfreight Services, a family-run business that manages a fleet of 22 Sprinter vehicles across South Africa and Namibia and boasts high-profile customers such as Mercedes-Benz South Africa.

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Success, however, did not come easy. Gary endured 14 years of his life, working 28-day months, behind the wheel of a long distance operator's truck before he decided to take a demotion and accept a position as refuse truck driver for the Windhoek Municipality in Namibia.

"I needed to spend more time with my family," is how Gary defends his decision to take a salary cut of four times his previous salary. The decision to drive a refuse truck did ridicule him in the eyes of some. "People laughed in my face," admits Gary, but that just made him more determined to succeed.

During this time Gary developed a back problem for which he had to receive regular treatment in Cape Town. Because they had to visit Cape Town so often, Gary suggested to his wife that they move to the Mother City permanently, and she agreed.

It was in Cape Town that they decided to start their own courier business – from scratch. Gary owned an old BMW and, with a trailer hooked to the back, started doing collections and deliveries. As the business grew he rented a Kombi and with the seats removed (without the rental company's knowledge of course!) went about his deliveries.

It was not unusual for Gary to leave Cape Town early evening and drive through the night to deliver 14 hours later in Windhoek. "I used to take my son Hein along," remembers Gary, "and it became Hein's responsibility to keep me awake! I also made sure that I delivered before office hours so customers remained unaware of my somewhat 'unusual fleet'."

Gary's hard work paid off and they were soon able to afford their own vehicles, although obtaining finance remained a challenge. Gary eventually managed to secure a deal with Adele Strachan from Mercedes-Benz Commercial Vehicles Cape Town and has never looked back.

One of his first Vitos is still in operation today with over 400 000km on the clock! The rest of his fleet is replaced every 18 months by Adele with whom Gary has established a close working relationship over the past five years.

"There is complete trust from both sides," says Adele, "which is what makes the working relationship work so well."

To Gary there is no other brand than the three-pointed star, whether for business or private use. "I can't comment on poor service, because I've never had any," laughs Gary. "Adele and the team are always on hand to assist with any queries I may have and I will never look at any other brand."

Gary's business philosophy is simple. "I have a choice to either live a life of relative luxury (and work hard to achieve this) or sit on the street. Of course I choose the former and therefore get up every morning to come to work."

Holidays are usually nothing more than an extended weekend and even then he keeps tabs on the business. There have been many obstacles and challenges along the way, but to Gary and the family that's just part of business. "I am truly blessed and count my blessings every day," he says earnestly.

"There is complete trust from both sides."