

The POWERSTAR brand has built its legendary track record in the local market diligently through sheer performance and reliability tenacity. Some fleet owners may claim that the demand was built purely on the fact that it is a less sophisticated but rugged vehicle design short to medium operations in tough terrain.

Yet its simplicity is not to be understated. The POWERSTAR vehicles are designed to meet the rigorous demands of the South African market cost-effectively. Although the design of the product range features advanced engine technology such as direct injection, turbo charging and inter-cooling, it steers clear of sophisticated electronics which can cause complications and additional expense for the owner. Thus; an exceptional value for money investment.

It is a known industry fact that mainstream operators are conservative in their approach to purchasing new brands, irrespective of pricing, until ample evidence of their reliability, and durability under local operating conditions has been proven, supported by guaranteed level of service and parts support. At POWERSTAR, our business philosophy is as simple: "to keep your business running".

POWERSTAR has proven itself as a legendary performer over the years. More recently, Leithcons Civils and Earth Moving, based in Hercules, Pretoria, purchased its first POWERSTAR truck in 2005, and has subsequently acquired a total of 14 similar units. These trucks were put to work in a mixed fleet of 200 on-road vehicles, including directly comparable products of European and Japanese origin, engaged in mining and construction contracts across several provinces of South Africa. Typical operating conditions encountered by Leithcons' vehicles include working around the clock, seven days a week, on dirt roads, with shifts of drivers taking turns at the wheel to enable distances of 800 kilometres to be covered in a working day.

One of the Leithcons' vehicles, a POWERSTAR 26-28K tipper, has now reached the highly significant milestone of 1 million km's, under these tough conditions, without any unscheduled maintenance to its major components. Two other vehicles in their fleet have reached 800 000 km's. This unit is a 6 x 4 tipper chassis, rated at a Gross Vehicle Mass of 26 tons. It is powered by a 9,7-litre Weichai WD615 Euro-2 compliant turbocharged and intercooled 6-cylinder diesel engine, developing 206 kW and 1160 Nm of torque, driving through a 9-speed 5S150 GP synchromesh gearbox to a pair of HL7 hub reduction rear drive axles.

Other specification features include ZF 8098 power steering, dual-circuit full air brakes, and 315/80 R22,5 tubeless radial tyres mounted on 9,00x22,5 single piece steel wheel rims.

Leith Polson, Managing Director at Leithcons, says: "Our original decision to purchase POWERSTAR vehicles was influenced by highly attractive front-end pricing, well-proven major components, and the excellent 10 cubic metre Cargolite tipping body built at their Pietermaritzburg plant. We recognized that choosing a product with limited operational history in South Africa was a bold move, but we were encouraged by POWERSTAR's declared commitment to parts supply, and the exceptional value for money that was on offer. We can now say that POWERSTAR have delivered on their promises, and that we are impressed with the minimal downtime experienced with our POWERSTAR trucks, beyond normal monthly servicing. The performance of this vehicle, together with a number of others that are not far behind in terms of distance covered, has totally justified our decision to purchase POWERSTAR, and we plan to add more to our fleet in future".

Frans Cloete, CEO of POWERSTAR's South African distributors, comments: "The performance of this truck, which has come as no surprise to those of us at in South Africa and the Bei Ben plant in China, serves to underline the superb value proposition that these products offer to the South African market. However, we realize fully that our claims of design integrity, durability and serviceability can only be substantiated by operators under real-world conditions, and Leithcons' experience, amongst others, confirms that POWERSTAR trucks can take on extremely severe local conditions, and achieve the levels of performance, reliability and operating economy demanded by the most discerning of operators. Our strategy for Africa is simple: basic design, like for like performance, exceptional fuel consumption and service support where you need it when you need it, all at very affordable cost! The track record continues."

“Our strategy with POWERSTAR has been to position it differently from other Chinese products in the market, in that we have been fully transparent in reporting our detailed monthly sales volumes to the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (NAAMSA). To-date, nearly 1 400 POWERSTAR units have entered service with South African operators, and, with the confirmation and endorsement of the product’s capabilities now provided by the million-kilometre Leithcons vehicle, we have established a solid platform from which to offer our extensive range of premium-payload products to the full spectrum of South African users, from individual owner-drivers to the largest professionally managed fleets, with full confidence”.

The POWERSTAR brand is set to continue its legendary track record in the local market diligently, based on sheer performance and reliability. Some fleet owners may claim that the demand was built purely on the fact that it is a less sophisticated, but rugged vehicle design suitable for short to medium operations in the toughest terrain.

Given the unprecedented markets, SGIP went about its business in a very focused way; managing outexit businesses, whilst at the same time securing and positioning the ongoing POWERSTAR business.

“The market has responded very positively”, says CEO, Frans Cloete “and we have recently added some impressive customers to our already satisfied and growing loyal customer list. We are proud to announce that Aqua Transport took delivery of their first 10 x 2628 water tankers last month. This is further testimony of market confidence and support of our product and also in our people and ability to deliver full after sales support and service.”

Meanwhile it is business as usual for the POWERSTAR team to ensure that they continue to build on their track record. Cloete comments: “Our strategy for Africa is simple: basic design, like for like performance, exceptional fuel consumption and service support where you need it, when you need it, at affordable cost.”

Strong operational attention has also been focused on the assembly of SKD units including the implementation of the last of the quality improvement aspects to ensure the continued high level of quality being specified by the SA market. “Apart from that,” says Cloete “we have resolved some technical problems like the prop shaft vibration and the transmission back end problem on our 2642 TT with PTO. I am extremely proud of our Technical team in SA who have diagnosed the problem correctly and designed a solution that has been tested in a number of units over several months and proven to be 100% fail proof!”

The entire parts warehouse has received a full overhaul to consolidate all the POWERSTAR stock, rebinning it correctly and adjusting the systems accordingly. The end result is that POWERSTAR now claims a 100% accuracy through these efficiency and interim manual interventions. Large stock orders are on their way from Chinese supplier and commits to offering POWERSTAR customers a first world supply rate and unbeatable pricing.

The local progress is mirrored by their international business partners. Full support was secured from CCB (China Construction Bank) and Rand Asia to guarantee sufficient working capital and operational support until the official handover takes place.

“Further progress has been made to such an extent that we have seen it through the negotiations for the investment into the POWERSTAR business by Norinco Motors, the holding company of Bei Ben (the OEM supplier of the POWERSTAR product).” Cloete added.

The above transaction has now been concluded barring the formalities and will be fully implemented in the new year. This means that the future of POWERSTAR in SA is not only secured, it is poised to grow in quantum leaps with the direct support and investment from the manufacturer and its consortium of Chinese companies.

For additional comments:

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