

# PEOPLE UNDER THE SUN

It's time to embrace all the opportunities that the World Cup is offering us, says managing director Graham Wood as he outlines Southern Sun's 2010 preparations.  
By Kerry Dimmer

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FOCUS



**H**ow significant an impact the 2010 Fifa World Cup will have on South Africa and her people will depend on any number of variables.

However, according to Graham Wood, Southern Sun's managing director, there are three unique factors that are 100% South African, offering any Fifa World Cup visitor a singular and completely holistic experience: 'Space, time and, more importantly, people'.

So, it is significant that 'people' is the focus for Southern Sun, not just from a hospitality point of view but also from a development aspect as personal growth is inseparable from that of group growth. And while the Fifa World Cup is a highlight on the upcoming calendar, the group's focus is set beyond 2010, continuing to develop and refine its six core values – respect, integrity, innovation, people-centred, teamwork and reliability.

Southern Sun had been gearing up towards its business vision of being Africa's leading hospitality brand before South Africa secured Fifa's World Cup endorsement. The six-point value system is a result of 18 months of roadshows, interviews and grassroots investigation of a broad variety

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Wood sees 2010 as another step in the process of future development in general, providing an opportunity to help raise South Africa's brand to international standards and enhancing the abilities of all Southern Sun employees.

'Our focus now is on behaviour. Our six values must come alive through our people. We are thinking holistically about

In preparing for 2010, Southern Sun has created manuals, as it does for every major event, outlining the impact the Fifa World Cup will have on the hotels and what specific requests could be expected. Every individual staff member is exposed to the expectations and possible behaviour of guests – and when Wood says 'every individual', he means it. 'We are training our staff in the idiosyncrasies of the differing cultures that will make up the mainstream of soccer supporters. Be they German, Italian, South American, even South African, our staff will have the knowledge and capabilities to offer extraordinary service because they will

understand specific behaviour patterns, food preferences and cultural procedures of other nations.'

Southern Sun has secured the potential to accommodate a significant portion of the expected 400 000 Fifa 2010 World Cup guests across the country. This is through the endorsement of Match Hospitality, Fifa's chosen exclusive rights holder for the sales of the 2010 World Cup hospitality packages. Wood emphasises that the accommodation packages being marketed by Match also include South African corporates who will be hosting guests at various centres where matches will be taking place.

Rates during the 2010 World Cup were determined some time ago and as Wood says, 'it would be relationship suicide for us to try to maximise on a single event, even the biggest ever hosted by South Africa, to gain higher profit margins. We remain focused on our commitment to use the 2010 World Cup to create a lasting legacy for South Africa and its tourism industry in particular.

'Within the year Southern Sun will continue its expansion programme, opening new hotels in Hyde Park in Gauteng, Emalahleni in Mpumalanga, Pietermaritzburg and a further hotel at Montecasino in Fourways.'

Wood is himself an example of what it means to create a leadership footprint in Africa. He believes in making a difference in people's lives.

'I think of myself as a people's leader without the pedestal. I cannot emphasise enough that all South Africans have to take responsibility for the 2010 World Cup. It is time for each individual to embrace the opportunities that the Fifa World Cup presents to each and every one of us.

'The Fifa World Cup will make a significant difference in people's lives and will create a co-operative culture that's going to take us way beyond 2010. Visitors will experience the warmest welcome in the world and the ability of all South Africans to embrace strangers will be the reason they will come again. Our people will be the lasting impression.'