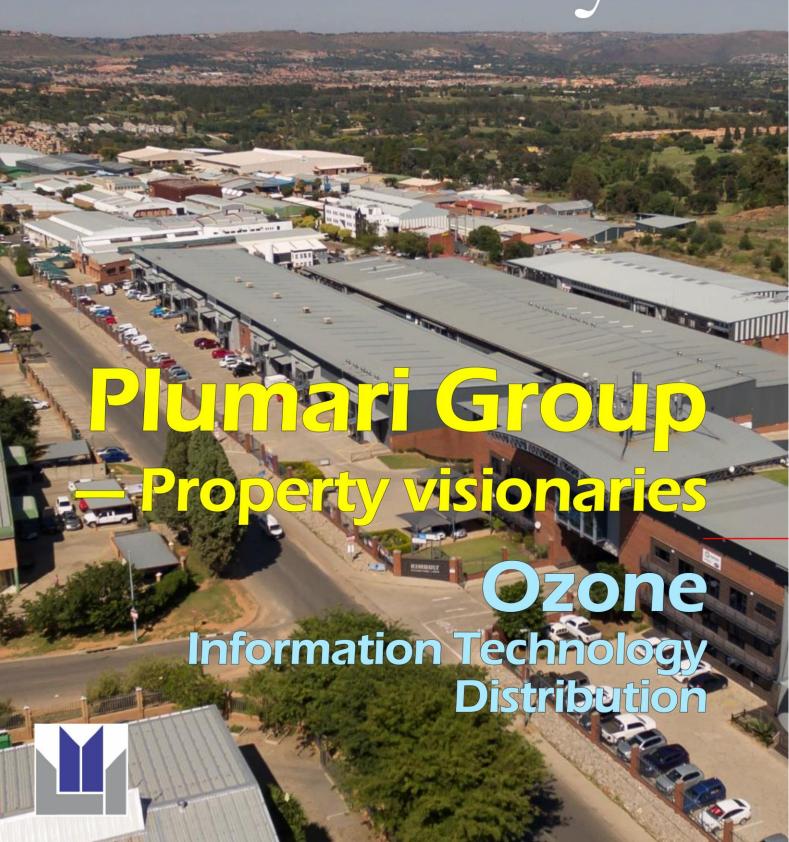
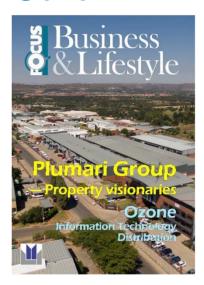
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Marc Pendlebury CEO, WhiskyBrother&Co

hiskyBrother&Co is a very unique purveyor of the finest whiskies available today, with two specialty branches in the Hyde Park and Nicolway centers and a magnificent Whisky Bar in Morningside.

Helmsman and founder, Marc Pendlebury is a proud South African who was fortunate to have a wonderful opportunity to complete his academic path in Canada and then graduated from one of the top 10 universities in the USA.

"Alongside my corporate career, I began developing my passion in my early 20s, having been drawn to the wonders of whisky.

"In early 2012, I decided to instead make the change and pursue my passion for whisky as a full-time business. By that time, I had a small but successful whisky blog, which I started in 2009, and I believed from my exposure to the local whisky community and interaction with other whisky enthusiasts, that a small whisky retail store could work.

"The motivation was primarily due to my frustration with the lack of offering as a consumer, as well as having travelled and seeing for myself just how much was available in other markets.

"I then quit my job, sold my car, cashed in my provident fund, raised additional capital from my uncle who had not only encouraged me but had become a mentor of mine, and the rest, as they say is history.

"The first two years I practically worked every day, seven days a week, serving customers in the store, conducting whisky tastings in the evening, and managing the business at night.

"That wasn't sustainable, and the best decision I made, once the business could afford, was to bring on my business partner, a life-long friend and a member of my whisky club, to help me manage the business.

"Since then, the team has grown steadily, and I consider myself fortunate every day, to not only do what I love, but to do it with a team of like-minded individuals, many of whom I consider family now, who share the same passion for the products, and for the people that enjoy those products," Marc shared.

The business and the team have grown, and their challenge is to maintain the high standards to ensure that no matter where customers interact with them, they consistently provide a world-class experience.

"This has, for better or worse, resulted in myself and my senior team being fairly hands on with the operation. We are able to stand-in for any shift throughout the business, from working at the bar, to helping customers in a store, to fulfilling online orders.

"As a business, before the global pandemic, it was never possible that one's business could simply be forced to close for an undefined period of time. Having to unwillingly shut our



doors, send our team home, and even turn off online orders, was beyond a nightmare.

"Although all revenue ceased, our obligations to our landlords, suppliers and staff, did not. Looking back now, I sincerely believe the only reason we made it through, was that our business was already on a firm footing prior to the pandemic. We would never have made it through if we were over-indebted, had poor relationships with our suppliers and didn't have the support of our customers.

"And now, as it looks like the worst is behind us, we are more eager and confident than ever to accelerate our growth. To manage both the existing operations as well as continue to add new avenues requires us to keep our heads down and focus on what we are doing and worry less about others. That's not always easy, but I honestly believe that what we offer, how we offer it, and why we offer it, continues to be unique in our market," he added.

As WhiskyBrother&Co approach their 10-year anniversary this year, they are well-established within the



whisky community. "To simply maintain our current market standing requires constant work to give customers sufficient reason to return, while growth means actively expanding the community and introducing new consumers to our products and services.

"For our physical stores this means finding the right location; for our online store it is about engaging the community online and optimizing our store for people to find us digitally. A key channel of finding new consumers for us is whisky tastings. "Since the early days we've offered these services, to the point we easily conduct over 200 tastings per year. This is one of the best ways for us to reach a new audience whilst having the opportunity to share our passion and knowledge. It's personable, intimate and gives unknowing or hesitant individuals the chance to experience what we are all about.

"Now that we also offer more than just whisky, we have the opportunity to do so many more tastings for fans of other drink types, which is bound to open the door further. "I sincerely believe there is still so much opportunity in SA for our business, and the majority of consumers can benefit from our offering. And although we have an online store that ships nationally, we know there is still demand for brick-and-mortar retail stores.

"With that in mind, we are currently working on our third retail store, located in Bedfordview, Johannesburg which is expected to open in April 2022. These satellite stores help reach new customers and our hope is, that once they have discovered us, assuming they like what we do, they will

explore the rest of our ecosystem.

"This year will also mark our first international expansion. I can't say too much on this yet, but we believe we run a world-class operation (and multiple international awards support this) and our ambition is to have a small, strategic footprint overseas that will enable us to grow globally, while at the same time further benefiting our customers here at home."

Innovation has always been at the forefront of Marc's ethos – he has never had a lack of ideas but has wisely expanded as finances were available.

"Opening the retail store in 2012 was the first step, since then we've constantly added to the offering as we've grown, and resources have allowed. This means moving from only offering physical retail, to online, tastings and events, then opening our whisky bar in Morningside in 2017, and in the same year, starting our own whisky festival. We are not done by any means and have lots more ideas we'd love to rollout in future.

"As passionate consumers of our own products, we know the full ecosystem that exists



around whisky, we want to provide this to our community. It's not about a whisky or drinks enthusiast simply seeing us once a month to buy a bottle or two, but instead we can be part of their entire journey.

"Introducing them to new products, teaching and sharing with them on what's in their glass, hosting tastings and events, etc. During the varying alcohol restrictions, we also diversified our product offering, for the first time 8 years, to move beyond offering strictly whisky.

"Although not a decision we made lightly, in retrospect it was a great one and we've seen the uptake from our existing customers, as well as seen new ones that have discovered us due to our expanded range. We made the decision with one nonnegotiable rule: that it didn't mean we were diluting our offering or specialty, but rather as new additions to our portfolio that we could bring the same level of passion, knowledge and service to.

"Of course, COVID has severely impacted the drinks industry, particularly in South Africa. What we have seen in the drinks industry though, is a 'V'-curve recovery, but I think both globally and locally there are multiple impacts that will still be felt for years to come.

"Globally, similarly with most industries, there are massive supply chain impacts that we are only starting to experience. This will mean a lack of products, not specifically due to a lack of liquid, but the bottle itself, corks, closures, labels, etc.; rising prices and delays due to shipping.

"Locally, what the pandemic did do was accelerate ecommerce adoption in SA by several years. Although this will taper off to a degree, it will still remain well above prepandemic levels and continue to grow from there. This a great trend, especially in this country, and I hope it will allow small business to flourish, create employment and give consumers more choice.

"With bars closed or restricted for several months. and consumers confined to their homes, we've also seen a trend for more elaborate and experiential consumption at homes - home bars, experimenting with new drinks and cocktails. I think the home bar experience will continue, but not at the expense of restaurants and bars. These experiences complement one another and aren't necessarily a trade-off. "I would add that South Africa has serious social issues regarding alcohol consumption, which need to be addressed. The government can't scapegoat the entire industry during a pandemic, and then simply ignore the problem when the pandemic ends. "We need more education and awareness to promote responsible drinking, and more support and options for individuals who are

struggling. The onus also falls to those within the industry, which I feel as a whole is not doing a good enough job.

"I have been fortunate that whisky has allowed me to travel to dozens of distilleries across the world. Since these visits often entail some enjoyment of the "produce", they can get very entertaining with wonderful whisky people. This sometimes results in sore heads in the morning, not only for me but for my hosts too, and has resulted in postponed meetings, disappearing hosts and even a missed ferry or two.

"One of the stranger moments that comes to mind was when I arrived for a private tour at a distillery in Speyside in the town of Rothes, Scotland. The distillery had a tradition, which I was unaware of beforehand, of raising the flag of the visitor's country outside the distillery, alongside the Scottish flag. Much to my confusion when I arrived though, the owners had an old South African flag that they raised to warmly welcome me... much to their total embarrassment when I informed them it was the old flag and not the one we now proudly fly at home."





Whisky Brother & • •

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