

Van Zyl to head Toyota's Africa drive

A global management shakeup at Toyota Motor Corporation has hit African shores, with local Toyota chief Johan van Zyl called in to head the new position of chief executive of Toyota's operations across Africa



Dr van Zyl, a "giant of the local motor industry" according to Econometrix chief economist Azar Jammine, is one of two non-Japanese executives now tasked with heading the region, along with Toyota America's Jim Lentz. It is a demonstration of the conservative Japanese company's desire to embrace its global appeal and its targeting of Africa as a key emerging market.

"Toyota has been restructured into two main businesses," Van Zyl told *Business Day* last week.

"There is Toyota Number One, which is the developed markets (the US, Europe and Japan), and Toyota Number Two, which are the developing markets. Under that I have been appointed chief executive of the Africa region," he said.

The management changes, Toyota hopes, will help the company see off a challenge from Volkswagen and General Motors in the US and China, the world's largest car market, and Chinese vehicles advancing in Africa.

Van Zyl said he would report to Toyota executive vice-president Yasumori Ihara's office.

No immediate changes at the company's head office and regional sub-Saharan office, in Johannesburg, are foreseen. He confirmed he is to stay on as president and chief executive of Toyota SA Motors.

Van Zyl said the continental focus showed Toyota's "commitment to further growth in the African market".

"We need to make sure we have the structures in place to capitalise," he said. As part of his new role, Van Zyl will take control of product planning, production and sales on the continent.

Jammine said last week that Van Zyl had "built up a lot of experience" and it was "highly unlikely he would have been

promoted to such a position without being exceptionally successful at a local level".

Toyota president Akio Toyoda has had to shift the culture of the company in the face of several crises, including product recalls since 2009 and damages from the earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge

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