

Nico Bezuidenhout takes off from Mango for Fastjet

By [Nicky Smith](#)

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Nico Bezuidenhout has resigned from Mango to become the CEO of Fastjet, the London-listed pan-African low-cost carrier. Bezuidenhout, who will leave Mango, the low-cost airline of South African Airways (SAA), at the end of July, twice took the role as acting CEO of SAA during one of the state-owned airline's most turbulent times. He clashed repeatedly with SAA chairwoman Dudu Myeni, who is a close friend of President Jacob Zuma.



[Image source: Flights Watcher](#) - Nico Bezuidenhout

Bezuidenhout started Mango 10 years ago and built a sustainable business which now enjoys about 25% of market share. The airline has been profitable for eight out of 10 years and has generated free cash flow of R800m over this period.

In a statement confirming his departure, Bezuidenhout makes no mention of SAA or its board. Rather, he focuses on the Mango employees who he says have become "an extended family".

"I thank the Mango board and its chairperson Rashid Wally, the executive and management of Mango as well as every member of the Mango team and, most of all, my family, for your exceptional commitment and support," he said.

It is understood that Bezuidenhout was unmoved by multiple entreaties from business people and politicians who had tried to keep him on at Mango in the hope that he may be able to take over as SAA CEO. But Myeni's grip on the airline and her defiant standoff with National Treasury - which appears powerless to select the board members they prefer for the airline -

are believed to have acted as powerful deterrents.

Wally said it was with "immense gratitude and a measure of sadness" that the airline was saying goodbye to Bezuidenhout.

Colin Child, the chairman of Fastjet, said the airline was "delighted" to have hired Bezuidenhout, who will begin work at the airline on August 1. "He brings strong commercial and strategic skills and a wealth of experience of operating a low-cost carrier. This experience, together with his detailed knowledge of the markets in which Fastjet operates, will be invaluable to the company as it seeks to capture the growth opportunities in the region."

Commenting on his new responsibilities at Fastjet, Bezuidenhout said he was confident the airline could build on its operations in Africa and strengthen the business to deliver on its potential, despite the very challenging market conditions.

Source: BDpro

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