

**MARK SOUTER**  
**ICT MANAGER/MANAGING MEMBER**  
**ULTIMATE EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS**

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**Company:** Ultimate Exhibition and Displays was created in 2004 by ex-colleagues from Ndlovu. I small entity that manufactured custom built stands, retail outlets, receptions, forecourts and specialised modelling.

**Date:** April 2005 – February 2010

**Responsibilities:**

- Grew Ultimate Exhibitions from 480 000 to 4.6 million in 2 years.
- Design and installation of Network
- Server integration with FTP protocols
- Project Management at Exhibitions for all IT and audio visual projects.
- Design and Installation of networks for all new customer office refurbishments and shopfitting.
- 3D Animation and 3D designs for Conventions and Trade Shows
- Procurement and Risk management on Company IT needs
- Microsoft and Pastel support
- Managed client accounts Government, agents and corporate's.
- B2B consulting to Government, agents and corporate's.

I was nervous with starting up with Ultimate as they were still new, it was a lot of money to invest and ultimate hadn't really established themselves in the market yet, GP was not promising and I had my first child on her way. The thing is, I was excited, new start and now I had two babies to help grow. The team at Ultimate were enthusiastic and willing which is all we needed.

I then started my mission to grow the company, I created a website to start with so that we were on the map. I designed newsletters, with incentives to get some feedback from prospective clients and we were now able to create a database. I designed a small network and installed it which now enabled us to have a system in place to improve work flow. We now had a network that stored data, managed data, created a smoother sales channel, was now secure and had a much higher redundancy through protocols put in place and higher security.

We also now had an IT offering to offer when manufacturing and installing retail outlets, we could also now install a fully functional POS system that would manage store sales, keep records and maintain stock levels while presenting the necessary reports. I was also called out to various other stand builders to install their systems at the exhibition trade shows. I also jumped in as a 3D exhibition architect and shop designer so as to not trail off sub designers. I managed our sales team, providing them with the right tools to build their client profile and increase our revenue. I pulled in strategic sales agents to share our offices who were a BEE entity and were awarded all the governmental projects. Our organic growth had almost doubled in year one and from achieving 480K per annum we were now at 4.6million.

As we grew so did our risk factors, we were branded as last-minute dot com for the simple reason is that what most companies could not build, we could at the last minute. Unfortunately, our debtors were slow players and some would just disappear. With lack of funds coming in due to bad debtors and the continuity of legal letters going back and forward was to much of a strain and sadly Ultimate had to foreclose.