

# Fort's Shukri Toefy takes on dual role as CEO of Fortified Group

 By Jessica Tennant

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As of 1 June, Shukri Toefy, co-founder and CEO of Fort is taking on a dual role of remaining CEO of his production company and stepping into an additional role as CEO of Fortified Group, of which Fort is a subsidiary. The Group is an investment holding company with interests in media, film, professional services and property.

The new role, which serves to solidify a vital role he has already been performing over the past 18 months, will see Toefy focus on the growth of the group and its subsidiaries, with specific emphasis on entertainment opportunities and an upcoming feature film project with partners in Los Angeles.

During his time as CEO of Fort, Toefy has overseen the launch of Fort's production network with partner offices across Africa and the Middle East and has pioneered an industry-leading shared prosperity model. He has also been recognised on a global scale as a brilliant entrepreneurial mind and business leader. The latter is evidenced through the launch of #CreateMovement, his appointment as an entrepreneurial expert to the Entrepreneurship Centre at Saïd Business School of University of Oxford, and as a finalist in the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Awards in 2019.



Fort's Shukri Toefy who is now also CEO of the Fortified Group.



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That said, there are a number of new announcements they plan to share in the coming months, new projects, new ventures and a new acquisition, but for now, Toefy tells us more about his new appointment and of course, the timing, given the global crisis and national lockdown, and how they're navigating growth in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic...

## ■ Why this move after 14 years at the helm of your production company?

At Fort, our management team has been together for the past 10 years and they have built Fort into a formidable South African production company.



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My new role as CEO of Fortified Group merely formalises a role that I have been playing for the last few years, as I've organically begun to look towards larger group strategies and new opportunities.

I am very excited to be focusing on the growth of the group, particularly some of the exciting projects that we have been

working on, like our new entertainment business.

■ ***Comment on your new role as CEO of Fortified Group.***

Fortified Group is an investment holding company with interests in media, film, professional services and property. Fort will continue to focus on being an industry-leading commercial production house, while I steer the group towards other interests, investments and the media and film industries.

■ ***And the timing, given the national lockdown and global economic crisis.***

This has been part of our plan for over a year now. We were hoping to solidify this change earlier in the year but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we decided to delay it until June. Once it became clear that the lockdown and its subsequent impact might be with us for the foreseeable future, we decided to act. We hope that the timing would allow us to take on the potential opportunities that come with an economy that is slowly reopening. There's a lot of opportunity to build right now, and we'd like to play an active role in that.

■ ***Comment on the opportunities/challenges that have come about as a result and speaking of opportunities, tell us more about your new entertainment business and your upcoming feature film project?***

Our official announcement will be coming shortly, but what I can tell you is that it is a very exciting feature film which is going to be a great example of our ability to tell a South African and African story to a global audience. We will be working with partners in Hollywood, and the announcement will be formalised in the next few months.

■ ***Tell us about your partnership and representation of South Africa at Oxford University.***

I've always had an affinity for knowledge sharing, so working with the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, where I am an entrepreneurship expert was a really natural fit. I have been selected as part of their network group of lecturers where I represent both an African perspective on things, as well as a creative and media insight to a really compelling panel of lecturers and contributors to Oxford University.



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■ ***Comment on how your business, the Group and/or industry has been affected/impacted.***

Fort has the benefit of having a diverse content creation offering, which has allowed us to adapt many of our active projects into animation work while under a full lockdown. Quite beneficially, under Level 4, the film production industry has been given the go-ahead to resume operations under strict public health guidelines. But it allows us to continue to make great stories for brands. And in a time where most brands need to say something, this has allowed our business and the industry to keep active and keep trading.

“ We're hoping to see a thawing of the global economy in the coming months, and the awaking of the local and international commercial industry again. ”



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■ ***And how you've responded, your growth strategy(ies), etc.***

Covid-19 has certainly stymied our growth plans for 2020. However, we feel it is prudent to still continue with the new restructuring and to give me the time and space to take on new opportunities that are on our horizon.

■ ***What are you most excited by or looking forward to?***

I am very excited about the opportunity to take our story to a global audience. We've always positioned as a global business, and I'm looking forward to committing more time and energy on this.

■ ***What is your key message to fellow industry folk – a word of advice or encouragement during this difficult time.***

My word of advice would be to hang in there and to do whatever you can to survive. Continue to see the opportunities and realise that entrepreneurs can thrive in disruptive times.

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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