

Fastjet shares climb on news of new chief executive

By Lauren Davidson

FASTJET has named Nico Bezuidenhout as its new chief executive after a campaign from Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, a major shareholder, to oust senior management.

Shares in Fastjet rocketed on the announcement, which Sir Stelios said was “better late than never”, climbing by 14pc to 25p.

Sir Stelios, the easyJet entrepreneur, who co-founded and holds a 12.6pc stake in the low-cost African airline, launched his rebellion earlier this year after the company warned for a second time that it would miss forecasts.

The former chief executive, Ed Winter, announced his departure a month earlier and had planned to stay on until a replacement could be found and then act as an adviser for a further 12 months. But Sir Stelios called for his immediate removal, along with the airline’s general counsel, Krista Bates, saying he had “lost faith in the management and current board”.

The pair left the company in March, a week after Fastjet issued its third revenue warning. The airline blamed a loss of £25m in 2015 on political turmoil across Africa and currency devaluations in Tanzania, which makes up 99pc of its business, and warned that losses would continue well into 2016.

Mr Bezuidenhout is currently the chief executive officer of Mango Airlines, the low-cost division of South African Airways.

Fastjet said that under Mr Bezuidenhout’s leadership, Mango Airlines “achieved the lowest unit cost within the South African aviation industry through high aircraft utilisation and sustained good load factors”. Mr Bezuidenhout said: “Although market conditions are currently challenging, I am confident that we can build on the air-

line’s existing operational base to strengthen and develop the business.”

Fastjet’s chairman, Colin Child said the board was “delighted” to appoint Mr Bezuidenhout.

“Nico first appeared on a list of candidates put forward by a head hunter I had to hire last November,” Sir Stelios said. “Colin Child has managed to procrastinate for seven months during which time Fastjet burnt through another \$25m. Colin Child is not the right man for the job of chairman.”



Nico Bezuidenhout said he was confident the business could be strengthened despite challenging conditions

