

NELIA ANNANDALE, DIRECTOR:
KEEDO INTERNATIONAL

NKHENSANI NKOSI: FASHION
DESIGNER AND FOUNDER: STONED
CHERRIE

Success, she says, is directly proportional to effort.
**“It’s also about believing unconditionally in your
product or offering and refusing to allow obstacles to
daunt you.”**

LYNETTE MAGASSA, FOUNDER AND CEO:
BONISWA CORPORATE SOLUTIONS (BCS)

hope to get my PhD by 2015.”

I OF THE BEST

DESTINY's pick of SA's most tenacious and fastest-rising stars on the entrepreneurial scene



NANA MAGOMOLA, CHAIR:
BATHABILE HOLDINGS

Having started her career in formal employment, Magomola realised she could use what she'd learnt there to empower herself as an investor. "This was in 1993, when the dismantling of apartheid meant more opportunities were becoming available to black people, especially since a number of companies were seeking to invest in SA," she says.

Her primary criterion was that her investments should match her core values. This rather fluid model enabled her to build a portfolio which stretched from athletic goods and pizza companies (her first investments) to more recent acquisitions of a medical aid administrator and entities concentrating on technologies in this space. "In the past eight years, my focus has shifted: I'm now more interested in South African companies who are seeking black partners," she explains.

"We started out at a time when black people were just being introduced to the business world, so financial institutions were reluctant to take a risk with us. As a woman, I believe I encountered even greater resistance. Nowadays, many financial institutions are headed by black women who understand the path we've walked. Added to that, SA's middle class is growing, so there's more spending and our markets are increasing – it's an ideal environment for entrepreneurs," says Magomola.



NELIA ANNANDALE, DIRECTOR:
KEEDO INTERNATIONAL

Children's clothing brand Keedo exports to 16 countries worldwide, yet its roots are very much home-grown. Annandale, its founder, says her own childhood, as well as the birth of her twins, inspired her successful enterprise.

"I grew up on a farm, so I had to rely on my own initiative for entertainment. This planted the seeds of entrepreneurship," she explains.

Those seeds came into full flower when her children were two years old. "At the time, I was recovering from a near-fatal skiing accident and realised life was too short to postpone my dreams." So the brand was launched – and, just six months later, a customer from Switzerland purchased merchandise to sell back home, alerting Annandale to the brand's export potential.

Today, Keedo has 12 company-owned stores, supplies numerous wholesale boutiques and operates several stores-within-stores for a major national retail chain. All the garments are manufactured in SA, enabling Annandale's operation to provide employment for over 200 people.

Ultimately, Keedo's success is due to quality merchandise, great service, hands-on leadership and a South African brand that resonates with the local and global market.

Photographers: Sarah de Pina & Tim Hulme. Hair & make-up: Kathryn Marnewick



DR ANNA MOKGOKONG, FOUNDER:
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT HOLDINGS

Mokgokong, who describes herself as "a self-made serial entrepreneur", started off selling handbags before moving into the retail and, later, restaurant industries. However, it was after the advent of democracy that Mokgokong truly

found her stride, taking advantage of a business context that favoured SMMEs (particularly black-owned ones) to enter the economic mainstream. The business she co-founded is a diversified conglomerate with interests in healthcare, mining, infrastructure, telecommunications, ICT, energy, power and

logistics, with turnover in the billions. Mokgokong's also part of a women's group with interests in gas, petroleum and rail.

"I initially started my businesses as a student wanting extra pocket money – but then they became an obsession," she says. "They provided challenges which I valued because I hate being bored."

She's also driven by a political agenda. "As women, we have to rise, create role models for the youth and set examples of what we can achieve. We still have to address challenges around gender representation in the corporate world or our hard-earned democracy will have been in vain. We need activists in the boardroom to ensure the voices of women are heard."

Her most valuable attributes? "Self-confidence, positive thinking and being unafraid of either failure or success."



SARAH THABETHE, ACTRESS AND
FOUNDER: GPRODUCTIONS

When did you decide to become an entrepreneur?

I always wanted to work for myself. After working behind the scenes on SABC1's *The Chat Room* and acting in e.tv's *Scandal!*, I knew it was time to register my company and start pitching for TV work under the banner of Gabaza Productions, with myself as Executive Producer of the content it created. That was

when GProductions was born. It produces responsible TV programming and has created a multitude of corporate videos. It also now has event management, promotional and merchandising wings, including brand consultation.

What challenges did you face? Earning the respect of male producers, cameramen and other crew members as an entrepreneur, rather than just a presenter.

Do you have other business interests?

I have a passion for selling baby designer clothing. It's taken off beyond my expectations and a proper business plan has to be drawn up for it. I'd also like to enter the mining sector.

DR BRIDGETTE GASA, MD:
ELILOX GROUP



Infrastructural programme management company the Elilox Group was founded in 2008, born of Gasa's fervent desire to establish her own entity.

"At the time, I was receiving a number of requests for my services, but I couldn't balance them with my corporate obligations. That was one of the reasons I wanted to leave formal employment; it was time to explore whatever other talents I had," she says. While she admits her entrepreneurial road hasn't been easy, she's never regretted her decision.

Her biggest challenge was funding: "Financial institutions aren't always as supportive as they claim to be. I established my business from my own cash reserves, as I was considered a business risk – purely because I didn't have any debts."

It's a puzzling business model, she maintains, since once an entrepreneur's proved their worth, banks are only too eager to provide the funds they needed at the outset. However, she focused on working hard. "I was lucky to have clients who paid me promptly. This enabled me to grow my business and establish an organisation that's never been in the red."

Now is a great time for other would-be entrepreneurs to make the leap, adds Gasa, because the current economic environment – while tough – is fertile ground for people with innovative services that save clients time, money and stress.



SIBONGILE MANGANYI, MD:
INDIGO KULANI GROUP

“The starting point for any business is the vision you have for it. If it’s something you truly believe in, you’ll work hard to protect it,” says Manganyi.

She established her two-person architecture firm in small, loaned offices in 2006, when she was 26 years old. As the company gradually became a multi-disciplinary concern, Manganyi decided against outsourcing services and focused on building an in-house team. “That way, I knew that if I made a promise, I’d be able to deliver on it,” she explains. By 2010, the company was able to offer turnkey solutions.

Manganyi guides the company by using its reputation as a lodestar.

“Once this is the starting point for your business culture, you realise the importance of integrity, honesty and transparency,” she says.

These traits are equally important when building business relationships, she says. “We’re a young company, so it’s crucial for us to honour our commitments. Keeping in touch with clients and maintaining sincere partnerships is part of this.”

Her next step? Helping others through the Kulani Indigo Foundation, while planning an expansion route into Africa.



IPELELE MKHARI, INDEPENDENT
NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
KAP INTERNATIONAL HOLDINGS,
FOUNDER: PHOSA ILISO CCTV AND
CO-FOUNDER AND COO: MOTSENG
INVESTMENT HOLDINGS

Mkhari’s business, Motseng Investment Holdings, is a diverse investment group that focuses on property and industrial sectors. In partnership with Marriot Property, it’s grown to serve clients such as government departments, telecom companies, retail groups and international organisations.

With its commercial property assets already listed on the JSE, Motseng also has a strong philanthropic side. Mkhari works with entities such as the Tomorrow Trust to support and educate underprivileged young people. “As an African and youthful business, we have a focus on health and education, as we believe young, healthy minds will contribute immensely to our country,” she says.

With all her responsibilities, Mkhari admits that she battles to achieve a work-home balance. However, she’s learnt to plan business transitions better and manage growth in her company. “Being an entrepreneur has nothing to do with being smart and everything to do with believing strongly in yourself and working tirelessly to achieve your dreams,” she says.

KURISANI MASWANGANYI, MD: KULANI
ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY

Maswanganyi believes the current recession is the best possible time for new start-ups, pointing out that most *Fortune* 100 companies were established during the USA’s Great Depression.

It might be easy for an engineer, specifically trained in problem-solving, to adopt this outlook. But Maswanganyi points to a McKinsey survey indicating that by 2020, 50% of Africans will be living in cities. “Africa will need resources and infrastructure: telecoms, water, schools and shops. African entrepreneurs therefore have a home advantage and we should position ourselves to ensure we’re not dictated to or overtaken by our global competitors.”

She says the business regulatory environment, especially around tax compliance, can be complex for a newcomer to the industry. “Corruption is another issue. In our industry, we encounter it every day when interacting with people at local government level. I’ve made a commitment to adhere to the code of ethics laid down by the Engineering Council of SA.”

She admits that she’s often experienced prejudice as a black woman in a white male-dominated industry. “The solution is not to act like a man, but to command respect through what I do and the values to which I ascribe. A consistent approach is key.”

Access to markets is another consideration. “I’ve learnt to reinvest in my business so that I have resources to seek new markets and generate new revenues,” she says. “It’s not always easy, but entrepreneurs need to be resilient.”



JO-ANN STRAUSS,
FOUNDER: JO-ANN STRAUSS
PRODUCTIONS (JSP)

Former beauty queen and lifestyle presenter Strauss is proving that business is yet another of her many talents. Having produced the first-ever African online presenter search, JSP has now released a new show for e.tv, *Glambition With Jo-Ann Strauss*, which she describes as a celebration of the beauty and strength of African women. The show’s secured guests such as Melinda Bam, Bridget Masinga and Johanna Mukoki.

Strauss says establishing her own production company was an “evolutionary” move away from presenting SABC3’s *Top Billing*. “Now I can use behind the camera what I’ve learnt in front of it,” she explains, but adds that the change hasn’t all been smooth sailing. “Nothing in this industry happens overnight.” She relies on surrounding herself with knowledgeable and positive people and working systematically to overcome obstacles.



CAROL BOUWER, FOUNDER: CAROL
BOUWER PRODUCTIONS (CBP)

Bouwer’s always had an interest in the impact the media has on society. This led her to develop her own production company where she could positively influence the content it produces.

CBP has produced SABC2’s SAFTA award-winning show *Motswako* and also hosts the

Mbokodo Awards, which have honoured impactful artists such as Sibongile Khumalo and Letta Mbulu. Additionally, the company collaborated with Tswelopele Productions to bring SABC3’s *No Reservations* to our screens. Bouwer relishes such collaborations, as she considers opportunities to learn, teach and grow in the industry.

She cites numerous challenges in the industry, primarily the lack of material reflecting our national identity. “There’s simply no creation of new content that reflects who we are today as South Africans,” she says. Accordingly, CBP aims to show the current realities of our society and remain relevant. Its longer-term goals include encouraging the development of more national channels and possibly a women-centred channel too.

Naming Dr Anna Mokgokong as a role model, Bouwer offers aspirant entrepreneurs the following advice: “Look at what everyone else is doing and leave that well alone. Our failures mainly come from assimilating and not being original.”

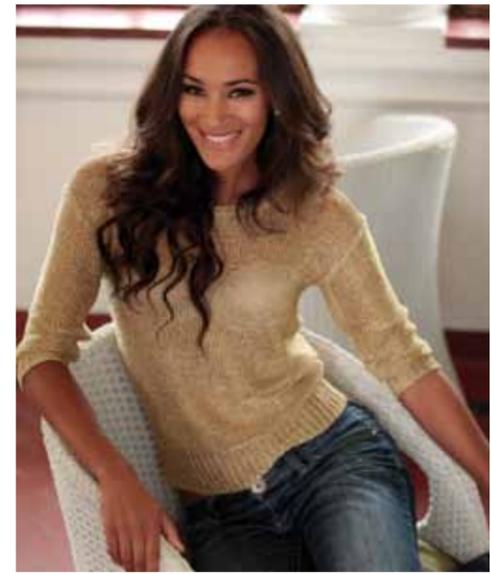
Eskom Tips:

GET TO GRIPS WITH YOUR CASH FLOW

The primary challenge new businesses face is managing their cash flow. Balancing what’s coming in against what’s going out can be tricky – and many people lack the knowledge to do this.

In SA there’s a huge demand for basic business education and the Eskom Development Foundation is addressing this need through the Eskom Contractor Academy. The academy offers an intensive course that takes operational, registered small and medium contractors through the basics of business, finance and project management to put them on the path to success.

JSP places a strong emphasis on using storytelling as an approach in the content it generates. Clearly, Strauss's own story is just beginning. "I told the CEO of one of the top media companies that I wanted to be in his role and run my own media empire. Maybe JSP is the beginning of that," she laughs.



OLGA GOODMAN, FOUNDER:
OLGA JEWELLERY DESIGN

Goodman opened the first of her jewellery stores in her native Cape Town in 1977 and has consequently opened a number of other boutiques, with the matriarch business located at the V&A Waterfront. With every piece it sells a distinctive work of art in a satiated industry, the business is renowned for its personalised attention and services clients with very specific needs. Goodman's team of SA's finest goldsmiths are so efficient that she has the time to manage her other interests in the property sector.

She runs her "multi-million-dollar" business with her husband Colin, and their son Warren at their side. Goldman's exceptional work ethic was inspired by her Yugoslavian Jewish parents, who survived the Holocaust and immigrated to SA after World War 2.

"My passion is design and my main objective is to have a very satisfied client leave my studio – it's that simple," she says.

Having originally studied to be a teacher, she found her real passion to be jewellery and – with Colin's encouragement – has steadily built her design studio over the past 30 years into one respected internationally for its impeccable products and distinctive aesthetic. Her clients have included singer Celine Dion, former American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Irish rock star and philanthropist Bono.

LYNETTE MAGASA, FOUNDER AND CEO:
BONISWA CORPORATE SOLUTIONS (BCS)

Armed with a B Tech in informatics, Magasa formed her telecoms company eight years ago with a start-up investment of R700 000. Initially, it was intended to be a national installation subcontractor to Vodacom and MTN. However, she realised that by adding equipment supplies, she'd turned it into a full turnkey solution. She subsequently expanded to four southern African countries, rising above her major challenges of cash flow and gaining acceptance in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

"We've been able to survive even in a tough economic environment. We also managed to get the company aligned with international industry standards certification," she says.

She credits the growth of BCS – which has 70 employees and an annual turnover of R46 million – to being creative, decisive, assertive and open to new ideas, and is now eyeing a stock exchange listing for the company.

"I learned to accept failure and always maintain a hands-on approach," she says of her leadership style.

Juggling being an entrepreneur, wife, mother, student and leader doesn't faze Magasa. "I've proved that, given a chance, a woman can lead a successful organisation. I started out as a receptionist and today I'm studying towards my Master's degree in IT."



DR NDILEKA SHUENYANE,
OWNER: STRUTT BOUTIQUE

At the height of a rewarding medical career, Shuenyane closed her private practice to launch a lingerie boutique which sells high-quality women's underwear.

Situated in Parkhurst, Johannesburg, Strutt caters for women of all shapes and sizes, whose needs Shuenyane felt were underserved by mainstream stores. She successfully persuaded her investors, led by her husband, to plough in the R600 000 capital required to get her dream off the ground.

Her main aims were to change perceptions and stereotypes surrounding beauty and also to create a safe haven for voluptuous, fuller-figured women to embrace their femininity.

While financial returns and sales volumes have been slow, the emotional rewards have exceeded Shuenyane's expectations.

"I appreciate being able to create my ideal working environment and have the freedom to choose which projects to get involved in. For example, I'm doing a lot of work for breast cancer awareness, including hosting workshops at the boutique on this subject," she says.

"As an entrepreneur, the buck ultimately stops with you, so you need to understand the ins and outs of your business and stay on top of things. Do as much research as possible on your industry and find someone who can mentor you." 

NKHENSANI NKOSI, FASHION DESIGNER AND FOUNDER: STONED CHERRIE

What made you open your design studio in Parkmore, Johannesburg?

Our vision was always to build a lifestyle brand, rather than a fashion label. The philosophy of Stoned Cherrie was to express what it means to be African in the 21st century. I opened the studio with the aim of providing merchandise suitable for good living, within an African context. Over the years I've learnt to be flexible and able to respond to changing market conditions. Our studio serves as our showroom for both private and corporate clients who can come in and see how our wallpapers, ceramics and upholsteries actually work in a living space.

You've been in business for more than a decade. What entrepreneurial lessons have been critical to your success?

I learnt that you must be absolutely resolute about the direction you want to take and know when to say "no". I've had to dissolve relationships that weren't aligned with my own brand identity, although this cost

me revenue. I've also learnt that turnover is vanity: it's easy to fall into the trap of growing too quickly without assessing your profitability and rate of return. Turnover isn't necessarily a reflection of how well a business is doing. Another lesson is the importance of passion in any entrepreneurial venture. I've learnt to serve my passion by acting out every goal I've set each day. I'm a stickler for "to-do" lists: I feel totally out of control without them.

Do you see yourself playing an increasingly large role in the home and decor market in future?

I'm crazy about home and decor and would love to do more in that area. We also recently entered into an exciting licensing relationship with a company in New Zealand which produces tailor-made books using some of our prints and graphics. Having spent the last 13 years building brand equity, we'll be growing the business through similar licensing arrangements in both homeware and apparel.



EVA BOGIAGES, FOUNDER AND
MANAGER: THE TUITION CENTRE



An education graduate from the University of Pretoria, Bogiages taught English for 25 years at various schools in Pretoria. She started The Tuition Centre in that city as a response to the dire need she found among high school pupils for extra tuition, in order to gain acceptance into tertiary education institutions. The centre offers extra lessons in English, Afrikaans, maths, physical science, accounting and biology for students aged 13-18.

Starting the tuition at home, she had to move to bigger premises within the year. The Tuition Centre now has an annual turnover of R1,4 million, with a second campus opening soon. "Today I employ 21 part-time tutors and at the end of last year we had 300 registered students attending extra lessons," she says.

"Since I have no formal training in running a business, I had to rely on my instincts," she says. The business has grown purely by word of mouth and now offers A-levels as part of its repertoire. Bogiages also plans to explore adult education as another future offering.

