

Absa
Jewish Achiever Awards

2022

ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS

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2022 

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THE ABSA JEWISH ACHIEVER AWARDS 2022

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Mazaltov to all our Heroes

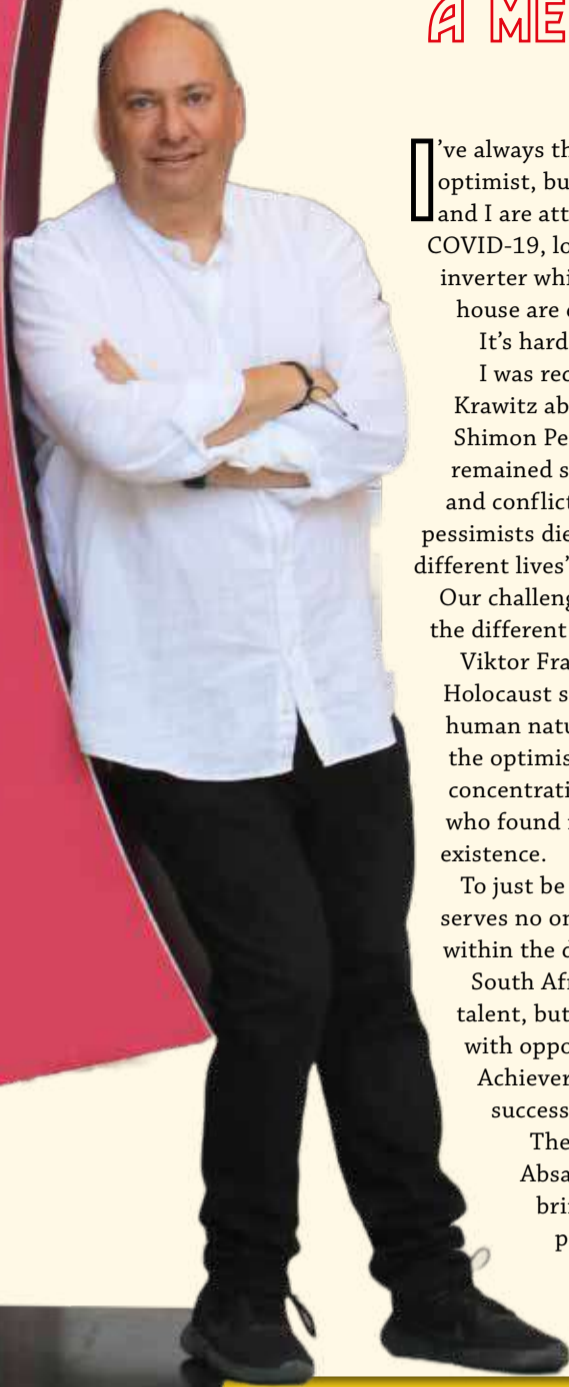
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



I've always thought of myself as an optimist, but as I write this, my family and I are attempting to recover from COVID-19, loadshedding has made my inverter whine, and the water taps in my house are dry.

It's hard to be an optimist in the dark!

I was recently told a story by Philip Krawitz about the late Israeli president, Shimon Peres. When asked how he remained so optimistic in spite of wars and conflicts, he replied, "Optimists and pessimists die the same, but they live very different lives".

Our challenge in South Africa is to live the different life.

Viktor Frankl, the famous psychologist, Holocaust survivor, and decoder of human nature, noted that it wasn't the optimists who survived the concentration camps, it was those who found meaning in their day to day existence.

To just be an optimist in a time of chaos serves no one, we need to find meaning within the disarray.

South Africa as a nation abounds with talent, but it fails to provide its people with opportunity. The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards celebrate not just success but opportunity as well.

The 23rd anniversary of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards brings much inspiration to people's lives. We celebrate the extraordinary, the unique, the exceptional, and the brave. We create role

models of those who have devoted their lives to serving others, who have started businesses from nothing, and who have built legacies that will outlast their time.

Together with Absa, we seek those who have turned the wasteland of apartheid into a liveable society. We honour those who have created opportunities for others and who have built South Africa. Together with the Kirshs, Europcar, the Lubners, and the Manns, we celebrate the very best that South Africa has to offer.

One of our judges, Romeo Kumalo, remarked to me that celebrations like these don't happen in the broader South Africa. We're not, as a country, seeking people to celebrate, sharing in their success, and creating role models to inspire everyone.

If we're to succeed as a nation, we need to understand that no one will help us but ourselves. Our government won't rescue us, it won't create jobs for us, it won't provide services for us, let's face it, it can't even fill our potholes or extinguish our fires. Those responsibilities now fall to us. It's a responsibility we never wanted, but now we have no other choice.

For those who have attended our awards before, you'll notice that the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards looks very different this year. Life has more or less returned to normal, albeit that the plague of COVID-19 isn't yet defeated. As we bounce back to life, we need to recommit ourselves to find meaning in each thing we do, to take our nominees and winners and hold them out to scrutiny so that we too can aspire to be like them, to build society, create jobs, bring water, and serve our country in a meaningful, impactful, and sustainable way.

There's no doubt that as the people of South Africa, we deserve better, but it's going to be up to each of us to ensure in our own way that we make an indelible mark on our remarkable land.

Howard Sackstein
Chairperson, SA Jewish Report and Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAIN SPONSOR, ABSA

It's often said that smooth seas don't make skilful sailors. As Absa, we're constantly inspired by those individuals and teams who find ways to get things done no matter the stumbling blocks. Those who rise to the occasion, and adjust their sails to lead with bravery and conviction. Those who are attuned to the needs and desires of the people around them, and consider every obstacle an opportunity to learn, grow, and excel.

Against this background, we're proud to be associated with the Jewish Achiever Awards for the 19th consecutive year. Over the past two decades, the Jewish Achiever Awards has become a highlight on our calendar, and a springboard for many of South Africa's most admired personalities. We value our collaboration, and firmly believe that solid relationships built through time remain a pivotal part of the success of any business.

Aligned with our firm commitment to be a force for good in everything we do while bringing possibilities to life for all our stakeholders, our relationship is based on a common aspiration to support, celebrate, and recognise individuals who accomplish extraordinary things.

Once again, this year's nominees and winners have gone beyond the call of duty in their respective fields and have demonstrated dedication, grit, and pure desire to defy the odds. As Absa, we want to thank and congratulate all of you for your leadership. Your contribution to communities, the arts, sport, science, culture, and business are important building blocks in our journey to create a prosperous South Africa and Africa.

We're excited to meet in person for this year's Jewish Achiever Awards for the first time in three years. May it be a celebration of hard work, determination, and success, and a timely reminder of what we can achieve collectively.

As we reflect on the road we've travelled, may we all embrace the lessons we've learnt

to enable meaningful contributions in our circles, and celebrate our progress as a powerful reminder of our resilience, agility, and tenacity.

Once again, congratulations to all the nominees and winners.

Faisal Mkhize
Chief executive for Relationship Banking at Absa Group

MESSAGE FROM LUBNER FOUNDATION, SPONSOR OF THE HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Giving isn't a sometimes event, it's a way of life. Bertie lived this way, and taught his children this way of life. The giving continues as we teach our children to give. We're honoured to be able to associate with other individuals and organisations so that together, hopefully, we make the world a better place.

Marc Lubner
Chairman of Lubner Foundation



MESSAGE FROM MANN MADE MEDIA SPONSOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Mann Made is incredibly proud to sponsor this year's Community Service Award, awarded to a Jewish person or organisation that has served the Jewish and/or broader community with distinction.

We're delighted to join in honouring a member of the community who has dedicated extraordinary time, effort, and attention to serving others. All those nominated in this category represent some of the very best among us, and we look to them as beacons of hope in our future, stewards of society, and role models for the next generation. Community is everything, and we thank them for their selflessness in serving so that we may all thrive.

Mann Made is a family run business – something that our customers are able to feel in their personal experiences and interactions with us. The three Mann brothers have built the business on personal relationships, and have passed onto their team an ethos of caring about all they take on, a trait well embodied by the nominees and winner of this category.

The company was founded in 2000 by the three Mann brothers, and the very soul of our company is the art of storytelling – finding creative ways to tell the inspirational stories of the people we serve through a variety of media. That's why we're thrilled to be part of telling the story of this year's Community Service Award winner.

At Mann Made, we love people, and are committed to leaving the world better than we found it. That's why we're a proud partner of Singularity University (SU), with co-founders Shayne and Mic Mann also serving as co-chief executives of Singularity South Africa.

We're dedicated to bringing the most exponential technologies to the African continent, believing that every African deserves to experience the benefits of the world's latest advancements to improve their lives and better serve their communities. In keeping with this philosophy, we're at the forefront of bringing Web 3.0 technologies and the potential they offer to the African continent, having established South Africa's very first metaverse, named Africarare.

Mann Made and SU are also proud partners of the Maharishi Institute, a non-profit organisation established in 2007 to

develop a new generation of leaders for South Africa, which is a cause very dear to us. We honour the 2022 winner of the Community Service Award, as well as all those nominated alongside them. Thank you for your service.

Shayne Mann and Mic Mann

MESSAGE FROM EUROPCAR SPONSOR OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD

Europcar has proudly sponsored the Europcar Jewish Women in Leadership Award for eight consecutive years. We have been privileged to learn about an incredible set of individuals through this process.

What the candidates have achieved is exceptional, and we hope this award continues to highlight the significant role they have played.

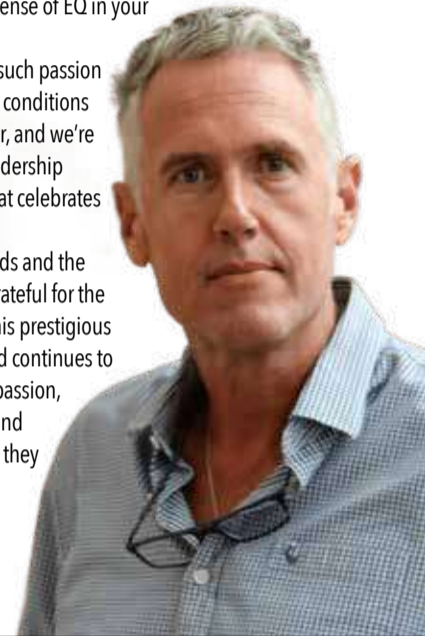
We were once again presented with a phenomenal list of nominees within the Women in Leadership category, and we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the nominees and thank them for sharing their inspirational stories with us. It's a humbling experience to learn about your exceptional achievements, and the positive impact you have made and continue to make in your respective fields.

We were intrigued to learn about the vast areas in which the nominees operate and truly excel. These include the broad fields of business, management, communications, education, property, dentistry, hematopathology, franchising, retail, religious teaching, advocacy, fundraising, and corporate social investment. We commend you for all that you have achieved while wearing multiple hats, balancing work and family responsibilities, and always applying a strong sense of EQ in your respective practices. Congratulations to each one of you.

To our award winner, Carol Steinberg, your work shows such passion for human rights, and for working tirelessly and in difficult conditions for social justice in South Africa. You're an exemplary leader, and we're honoured to present you with this Europcar Women in Leadership Award. It's a privilege for Europcar to provide a platform that celebrates your remarkable achievements.

Our sincere thanks go to the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards and the *SA Jewish Report* for your continued partnership. We're grateful for the opportunity to participate, and for your efforts in putting this prestigious awards ceremony together. We're delighted that this award continues to create a platform where our nominees' stories, learnings, passion, compassion, drive, discipline, and tenacity can be shared and celebrated. Their example brings renewed hope to all who they interact with.

**Yours personally,
Martin Lydall
Chief Executive Officer**



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THE BERTIE LUBNER HUMANITARIAN AWARD IN HONOUR OF CHIEF RABBI CYRIL HARRIS

By fulfilling the dreams of children with life-threatening illnesses, the Reach for a Dream Foundation has been brightening the lives of families in the darkest of circumstances for more than three decades. For Reach for a Dream Chairperson Mervyn Serebro, who himself lost two children, it offers a source of healing.

From arranging trips to Disney Land to building swimming pools in drought-stricken areas to facilitating meetings with international celebrities, Reach for a Dream is dedicated to fulfilling every dream that comes its way.

"One Cristiano Ronaldo dream from a child named Keegan really tore at our heartstrings," recalls Serebro, speaking of the unspeakable power of fulfilling dreams. The Reach for a Dream team was delayed in getting to Ronaldo because of all the intermediaries involved, and by the time it reached the man himself, Keegan was in a hospice in a coma. Ronaldo, however, sent a signed jersey and a video clip.

"Keegan's mother went into his room," says Serebro, who always gets emotional when telling this story. "She said, 'My darling, I have a message for you from Ronaldo and a jersey that he signed.' Keegan opened his eyes, looked up at his mother, and said, 'Mommy frame it for me. And put it on the wall so that I can look down at it from heaven.' Keegan rallied for a few days, and then passed away. Yet it gave his mother a memory she'll never forget."

With countless other incredible stories of dream fulfilment, Reach for a Dream has become an internationally-recognised brand, and it was recently voted South Africa's best non-government organisation. It fulfils an average of six dreams a day for critically ill children between the ages of three and 18.

"We have branches across South Africa run by branch managers with a team of volunteers and YES [Youth Employment Services] interns who are all psychology graduates," says Chief Executive Julia Sotirianakos. "One person in each branch is dedicated to co-ordinating the dream. We want to make that day magical for the child and for the family to remember. Over the years, we've established a rhythm with a constant flow of dream assessments and fulfilments."

Serebro, who has been with Reach for a Dream for 25 years, has a personal connection to the organisation. Having lost two children, his second to a cot death and later, his firstborn, Darren, to leukaemia, Serebro has long pursued projects with purpose. "The foundation has been a healing space for me because every child whose life we can touch, every child who experiences the magic of dream fulfilment, is enabling for me and helps me to think that my son, Darren, who was 23 when he died, would be smiling down," he says.

"It gives me a great sense of joy and comfort. When you see the delight on the face of a child who has a dream that to them seems utterly unimaginable and you make it happen, how do you explain the joy that that gives a family? We've seen miracles. It's the most beautiful space to be in, and it's the most beautiful experience to enrich a life."

Serebro's journey resulted in the establishment of the South African Bone Marrow Registry, which is now linked to a global network of registries, and it was through the registry that Serebro came to Reach for a Dream.

"When I lost my son," he says, "I realised the importance of South Africa having a bone marrow registry, which we didn't have at the time. At a Rotary and Lions Club event where I spoke about this project, a guy with a beard and ponytail came up to me. His name was Brian Miller, and at the time, he was chairperson of Reach for a Dream. He said, 'I love what you said, and I have a quid pro quo - if you help me, I'll help you.' That began a lovely friendship, and he and I worked very closely together."

When Miller, who had battled cancer for 26 years, later became too unwell to continue with the foundation, Serebro took over. "Mervyn is inspiring," says Sotirianakos. "To work with a person who's had so much grief, loss, and suffering, yet still shows up and gives different parts of himself every day and doesn't get paid for it, just speaks to his soulfulness. He doesn't have to do it; he could do it for other charities, but he does it for us."

"It's become a place for him to find meaning and healing in a space that many can't fathom - the space of losing a child. There's not a person who meets Mervyn and afterwards doesn't say, 'Wow, you're just incredible!' His story has defined him, but it's also created a space where he can do good."

Serebro is equally inspired by Sotirianakos and the Reach for a Dream team. As an example of its work, the team adapted to

WINNER

Reach for a Dream

COVID-19-pandemic restrictions by developing a Dream Box concept. It worked with pro bono partners DHL to deliver dreams even during the highest levels of lockdown, whether to hospitals or homes. The boxes, almost big enough to hold a washing machine, provided a treasure hunt specifically designed for each child.

"So, if it was a girl who loved princesses, we would put in tiaras, a little wand, and some glitter, with the actual item she wished for like a tablet at the bottom of the box," Sotirianakos says. "There'd be some raffia, then there would be another layer of surprises as well as a cooler bag with sweets and goodies all topped by a balloon. The balloon would pop out as they unwrapped and opened the box." And so, the children experienced magic even in the toughest of situations.

It's through sharing in the process of weaving magic that Serebro finds meaning. Though it's difficult to explain how he survived losing two children, he says it's a combination of the fact that his other children needed him and that he was determined to find ways to heal. He's also grateful for his second wife, Sue, who he describes as a G-dsend.

"It was about wanting to believe in purpose again, which was a long journey. The support system that came into my life, and working to help people in pain, particularly people who have also lost children, encouraged me find that purpose. It gives me the energy to breathe, and my work with Reach for a Dream heals me in the same way."

"It's become a place for him to find meaning and healing in a space that many can't fathom - the space of losing a child."

Mervyn Serebro



MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING IN 2022

As 2022 draws to a close, we are ever mindful and reflective of the year that was. We are more so circumspect about all that we had set to accomplish and achieve over the few months as we prepare to look to the new year ahead. As an organisation vested in the holistic development of young people, our values are entrenched in sustainability, empowerment, quality, and creating a lasting and palpable impact.

For us, our continuous commitment to ensuring the eradication of youth unemployment and developing lasting solutions to equip our young people in disadvantaged communities remains paramount. As Jonas Salk quips: *“Good parents give their children roots and wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what’s been taught them.”*

At Afrika Tikkun we indeed affirm and live by the latter sentiments. To this end, post the Covid-19 pandemic and throughout this year, we have sought to fortify and improve our Cradle-to-Career and 360° Social Support Services model within and beyond the communities in which we operate.

AFRIKA TIKKUN OUTREACH MOVEMENT (ATOM)

Afrika Tikkun is scaling up its Cradle-to-Career (C2C) model in an effort to reach more young people. The initiative is called the Afrika Tikkun Outreach Movement (ATOM). We have partnered with like-minded organisations (termed Strategic Partners) in targeted communities and built their capacity to replicate all aspects of our Cradle-to-Career model. In addition to impacting more young lives through scaling up the C2C model, the programme has also built the capacity of community-based organisations to offer comprehensive services to young South African people. In this way, they contribute to young people being able to access the economy as productive citizens.

THE YOUTH ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME (YAP)

Since the inception and piloting of the Youth Accelerator Programme last year in 2021, we are proud to announce the roll-out of the programme at all our five community Centres of Excellence this year. The programme empowers young people to engage and direct their own lives through good decision-making, active citizenry and meaningful skills. The programme targets young people aged 18 to 21 years and aims to create a space for interrogation, development of character and a positive sense of self. It develops personal and public confidence and creates an awareness and appreciation for active citizenry and community involvement. YAP offers guidance on careers and career opportunities and through a range of activities, young people develop the basic skills needed to enter the world of work.

360° SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES (SSS)

This programme addresses issues such as limited access to health care, gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV), discrimination as well as nutrition and food security. The 360° SSS conducts screenings for all young people registered at our community centres during the first quarter of the year and provides on-going psychosocial support to all registered young people and their families. The programme supplies daily centre meals and food parcels, offers primary health care services including growth monitoring for all our registered young people and equips parents/primary caregivers with the necessary knowledge and skills. In addition to promoting family preservation by preventing families from reaching crisis points, the programme assists families to access social grants and acquire civic documentation such as IDs or birth certificates. The Empowerment programme within 360° SSS works to improve the quality of life of children with disabilities through the provision of appropriate support and a responsive community-based programme.

To date, 4671 beneficiaries have received assistance via the varied interventions offered through our 360° SSS programme. This includes the distribution of 1164 food parcels distributed to families, 1605 orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) households assisted as well as a total of 73 014 persons who have been vaccinated at our healthcare sites.

Young people born in under-resourced areas are stuck in a generational cycle of poverty which remains difficult to break free from. Our holistic approach is based on our belief in the importance of seeing the whole child and appreciating the social, economic and psychological factors that influence learning.

As we prepare to forge full steam ahead into 2023, we are proud of all the strides achieved to date. However, in constant pursuit of quality, sustainability and continuous commitment to the youth of South Africa, we endeavour to chase relentlessly our goal of eradicating poverty and youth unemployment.

For more information visit www.afrikatikkun.org





MANN MADE MEDIA COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

WINNER

Mark van Jaarsveld and the management team of CAP

He may not sport a flowing red cape or satin underpants, but Mark van Jaarsveld is every bit a modern-day superhero saving lives and putting his own life on the line every day to protect the community.

As chief executive of Community Active Protection (CAP), he has been instrumental in growing the organisation from its proactive yet flimsy inception into what it is today – a world-class crime combatting machine.

Van Jaarsveld started as a 23-year-old, gung-ho volunteer in the early 2000s already actively involved in the Community Security Organisation. Fresh from his BCom LLB, he took a gap year, becoming more active in communal work.

"I loved criminal law and the idea of putting criminals away, but I didn't see myself building a career in the prosecutorial space nor could I see myself defending people who were potential criminals," he says.

CAP started as a community, grassroots, volunteer-driven movement after a string of tragedies following violent crime. Crime had reached unprecedented levels in Glenhazel and surrounds, home to hundreds of Jewish families.

"There was so much fear and trauma. Hardly a day would go by without hearing of another violent crime having taken place in our community," says Van Jaarsveld, 38.

Recognising the pain and anguish in the community, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and a handful of top, concerned business people sought innovative ways to curb it.

Van Jaarsveld knew he wanted to be a part of this purpose-filled initiative from the start.

It took brainstorming sessions, consultation, energy, and will to get something off the ground. "We started by empowering ourselves with information about what type of incidents took place, where and at what time they occurred. We created a database, and tried to gain an understanding of what was happening in the environment," he says.

Slowly, a plan was devised. It took many tweaks to consolidate, funds were raised, there were voluntary contributions by a handful of ultra-generous people, and for the first time, there was hope.

"I was just the guy who ran around, answering calls from the community, fielding, collating, and distributing information to the leadership," says Van Jaarsveld, who ran the call centre. He also attended crime scenes and saw first-hand the psychological effects and toll on each victim, helping to debrief them.

"It was a heart-breaking time," he recalls with tears. (He may look like a strapping, tough guy on the outside, but admits he's an emotional softie.) "It was also exciting being part of a dedicated team of people helping to build something from the ground up."

CAP was finally formed in November 2006. It was originally called GAP – Glenhazel Community Protection.

In those days, about 18 violent crimes were committed a month. GAP immediately resulted in a decrease in the crime rate. Soon, its success spread to neighbouring areas, and the innovative framework was shared, evolving into what's now known as CAP.

"From a single community initiative, CAP spawned a number of non-denominational, proactive, multifaceted, integrated, and community-run security schemes across several areas in Johannesburg," said Van Jaarsveld, "It's an amazing story of volunteerism, police, and community involvement." He downplays his own dangerous, frontline, crime busting contribution, in which he worked 20-hour-long days, putting himself in danger night after night and at enormous personal sacrifice.

"I've not enjoyed as many bath times with my children as I would have liked [he tears up again], and my hugely supportive wife, Jessica, has often been left alone to raise them," he says.

Being community-driven as opposed to profit-driven and growing the organisation has had its challenges, requiring innovative thinking to survive and thrive.

CAP's chief operating officer, Sean Jammy, says he admires Van Jaarsveld's "genius, integrity, and tenacity".

"Mark's vision doesn't just extend to security functions. At a time when CAP was financially precarious, he took on a business-leadership role, and established CAP at Home, a uniquely non-profit, armed-response organisation, which has driven our long-term financial sustainability," says Jammy.

"At a time when CAP was remarkably successful, Mark understood that we had to push harder to understand crime and established an analytics and intelligence division that's unique even in international terms. This function has grown to drive the arrest and prosecution of thousands of violent criminals."

Van Jaarsveld's childhood helped shape his communal instincts.

Born and raised in the tightly knit, sheltered Pretoria Jewish community, he attended Carmel Primary School. He regularly went to shul and sang in the choir. His father, who was Afrikaans (hence the surname), passed away tragically when he was 10 following complications after a horse-riding accident. The *laatlammetjie* in the household,

Van Jaarsveld says he was a "bit of a *zulik* [reprobate]".

His mother decided some discipline and structure would do him good, so enrolled him in Pretoria Boys High School, where he experienced first-hand antisemitism, bullying, and difficulties fitting in.

Things settled down after interventions were made, and in hindsight, he's grateful for those years "They taught me life skills. I had to be tough, even though it isn't innate," he says.

"In a world where success is often measured by financial gain, the fact that Mark chose a communal-service role is a resounding indicator of his character," Jammy says.

"Although his leadership talent and modesty means he will give credit to our team, the truth is that Mark has been directly responsible for building CAP into the self-sustaining, lifesaving institution that it has become. I have one rule regarding my personal safety – if I'm in trouble, call VJ."

There have been many notable arrests in which Van Jaarsveld and his team have played an instrumental role, from the recent apprehension of the Johannesburg arsonist to arresting those accused of the murder of Gauteng senior health official Babita Deokaran. However, celebrating these arrests isn't a simple matter for him.

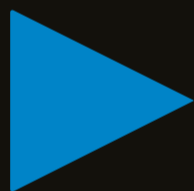
"Every arrest pulls at different heart strings," Van Jaarsveld says. "How do you celebrate the arrest of a murderer when it resulted in so much trauma? People have lost a father, mother, or a child?"

It's because of everyday heroes like Van Jaarsveld we can sleep easier at night. It's because of his super-hero-like qualities – a mission to serve others, great courage, and a steadfast moral conviction in seeing justice in an unjust world – that we can live, work, and play in this crazy city called Jozi.





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**KIRSH FAMILY
LIFETIME ACHIEVER AWARD
IN HONOUR OF HELEN SUZMAN**

WINNER

Helen Lieberman

At 80 years old, Helen Lieberman regularly ventures into the Western Cape's townships and ganglands to help communities find solutions to the challenges that plague them. So for her, it feels strange to receive a lifetime achievement award when she's nowhere near done with her life's work.

At the same time, she's grateful for the recognition, especially if it can help her non-governmental organisation, Ikamva Labantu (IL) (the Future of our Nation) in isiXhosa. The award is also meaningful because, when she first started going into the Cape's poverty-stricken slums, the Jewish community largely disapproved of it. Today, she's proud to work alongside multiple Jewish organisations confronting South Africa's challenges, and many acknowledge her for blazing that trail.

Lieberman came from a humble background. Her father was a poor immigrant from Lithuania and her mother came from England. They lived on a farm in the poor suburb of Grassy Park. Lieberman was the eldest of five siblings. Because she interacted with children from all backgrounds at home and later at boarding school, she "didn't know any different".

"I didn't have small ambitions," she recalls. But just as she was about to spread her wings, her father became paralysed. Newly married, she and her husband, Michael, took on the care of her siblings and parents. It was in the middle of all this, at the age of 20, that she discovered the townships.

When working as a speech therapist at Grootte Schuur Hospital, her black patients were often discharged too early – against her wishes. One baby that Lieberman treated had "a very deformed mouth" so she took it upon herself to follow up. She found the baby living in a shack. Since that day in 1962, she never looked back. "I had to do something about the hell and horror," she says. "I left my old life behind. I just couldn't keep away."

In some ways she lived a "double life", dropping and picking up her three children from school and dashing off to help the children of Langa and Nyanga in between. Both felt like family, and the contrast between their worlds horrified her.

White people needed permits to enter the townships, so to avoid the police, she would hide in the very same bushes that hid the area. One day she crawled out from a bush to find a woman holding a key. The woman offered her home as Lieberman's first office. But not all people were as welcoming. One "mama with eyes of steel" confronted Lieberman, asking what her intentions were.

"I was terrified of her," Lieberman recalls. But she must have said something right, because that woman, Tutu Gcememe, "taught me everything I know. She is my soulmate, and we talk every day."

For 25 years, Lieberman was essentially on her own. She soldiered on, "pulling in anyone who would participate, creating a movement in which each person carried a little bit for the next person." This grew into a network of organisations and businesses across the country, including childhood and youth development, disability care, foster homes, shelters, elderly care, economic empowerment, and food security. Today, IL is one of the largest non-profit organisations of its kind.

It's only in more recent decades that financial support increased and she grew her team. IL advocates for communities and provides support for grassroots projects driven and owned by community leaders. "We believe that people know exactly what they need in order to thrive," says Lieberman.

This "ground-up" approach champions local knowledge and solutions. IL is made up of more than 100 field workers, most of whom come from the same communities they work to uplift. "I have the most skilled and powerful team," says Lieberman.

Lieberman's vision came from her work as a speech therapist. "Every speech therapy case begins with an assessment and then a plan for remediation. So all I did was create pathways to remediation. I didn't do much. I only helped people help themselves." She emphasises that her work isn't charity. "It's about power, pride, and ownership."

Today, babies she helped to survive have grown into thriving adults. Seniors who were "rotting

in shacks" are cared for at "our 21 magnificent senior centres, and 50 people look after those who are bedridden". A total of 330 000 nutritious meals are provided at senior clubs annually.

Women have trained as early childhood development educators, starting schools that are recognised by the government. Afternoon Angels keep children off the streets. Ikamva Design empowers older women through a crafts-based social enterprise. Ikamva Ventures, born from the devastating effects of COVID-19, offers mentorship and resources for micro-businesses.

"It always amazes me that ubuntu – that spirit of compassion of the mamas and the tatas in the townships who share what little they have – is practiced by some of the poorest people on earth," says Lieberman.



Sharing a message she received overnight about a fire in Khayelitsha, it's clear that she's also addressed as "mama". She's an esteemed elder, a port of call, a mother to many, and a rebel at heart.

But she admits that her path has come at a cost. "It's hard and lonely," she says. Most of her friends are from the townships not the Atlantic Seaboard. She knows those dusty roads better than the leafy suburbs. She's grateful to her husband, who never questioned her need to do this work, her children, who shared her with so many other children, and her children-in-law and eight grandchildren, who bring so much joy to her life. She says that since the pandemic, fundraising has been more difficult, and she's grateful for every donor.

Lieberman points out that South Africa faces systemic social ills that one organisation cannot overcome alone. IL regularly partners with other non-government organisations, community-based organisations, government departments, and donors.

Jewish values and history are at the core of her outlook. She also helps the needy within the Jewish community. "I'm a Jew first," she says. She asks people to consider the "desperate needs" of their domestic staff, and learn about their lives.

She has had to come to terms with the fact that she cannot help everyone, and knowing that people are still "living in a piece of tin" while she has a roof over her head. But she also emphasises that she is "lucky to have lived a wonderful life. Every day I wake up with magic and wonder in my heart." Her advice? "Don't live in a bubble. Find the magic."



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ART, SPORT, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE AWARD

Being an artist and having your work in someone's home is gratifying, but being able to say you were involved in sculpting the skyline of Johannesburg's business district is an achievement on another level.

Architect Anthony Orelowitz and his business, Paragon Group, have undoubtedly designed and built a large proportion of the modern commercial buildings in Johannesburg.

Orelowitz, the winner of the 2022 Absa Jewish Achiever Art, Sport, Science, and Culture Award, believes it's a true gift for an artist "to be able to inhabit his own sculpture that has a functional component to it".

And in his case, his career hasn't – for the most part – felt like work. "It's extraordinary to be able to make a living by having fun and to have done it for at least 30 years of my life," says this King David Linksfield alumnus.

For Orelowitz, 57, his architecture is so much more than the structure of the building and what it looks like. "The aesthetic of the building is 5% of the value we bring to the table," he says. It's much more about how the building functions, its longevity, how it enhances the culture of the companies or people who inhabit it, how it drives efficiency, and saves costs."

In its commercial buildings, which is what Paragon's reputation is based on, the aim is to entice people to "want to go to work rather than being at home. Since the pandemic, this has become even more important".

Orelowitz was born in the farming town of Bethal in Mpumalanga. His father had a furniture shop. The family moved to Johannesburg so the children could live in a Jewish environment.

Orelowitz's future was evident already in nursery school, when he would spend his days building forts with the building blocks in the play area.

When he was seven, his parents built a house on Observatory Ridge in Johannesburg and Orelowitz's fascination with the process convinced him that he had a future as an architect.

He was artistically talented, so his parents enrolled him in the Bill Ainslie Foundation, then an acclaimed art academy. At 12, he began sculpting, and Ainslie invited him to join the adult classes.

"I remember walking into the first adult class where there was a female model posing totally naked. It was bit weird for me, but after a month, it became the normal way of being."

He worked with clay until he moved on to welding large sculptures. "They would find a whole lot of metal junk and taught me to weld. I would stay out in the garden and weld these huge structures together. It was extraordinary. I still hanker to go back to that."

So, when choosing a degree, there was no second or third choice. "Architecture wasn't a G-d-given talent, I was just so passionate about it, almost to it being an obsession," Orelowitz says.

As he was about to go into the final year of his degree, his future came into question when he thought he might be going blind.

"I woke up one morning, and couldn't see. My central vision had become a grey block," he recalled.

HIV/Aids was the big fear at the time, and doctors wouldn't give him medication to bring down the swelling in his head until they were certain he wasn't HIV-positive. After 10 excruciating days of waiting, they put Orelowitz on cortisone which brought the swelling down, but damage had already been done.

From November until January, when his eyesight improved enough to see, he had already conceptualised his whole architectural thesis in his head.

Doctors were still unsure whether Orelowitz had a degenerative disease which would blind him, saying that it would take five years to know for sure. So, Orelowitz qualified as an architect, spending a year working before going on to do an MBA to acquire other skills just in case.

He then worked at Standard Bank in property finance, working with developers, understanding risk, skills that would later enhance his business.

On the day the five-year window was up, Orelowitz opened an architectural practice. In fact, he took on work before having an office.

The bank referred clients to him on the Friday he left, and they wanted to meet him the following Tuesday. Orelowitz turned a large space in the home he rented on Linksfield Ridge into a fake office for this meeting. "I did a quick layout, and asked to borrow furniture from my dad's shop. On Monday, they arrived and set up the false office, with partitions and all. I called on a fellow architect to 'lend' me staff, who needed to make as if they were working."

The clients were none the wiser, and gave Orelowitz two houses to design. And so his business launched in 1997.

Not long after that, when Orelowitz was 32, his parents died tragically, and he had to take care of his father's business until new owners were found for it.

WINNER

Anthony Orelowitz

Once back in the saddle and looking for clients, Rodney Weinstein from Zenprop told Orelowitz that he wouldn't give him any more work until he got other big projects. "He told me he would work with me again only when I was designing a building with a lift," Orelowitz said.

Orelowitz and the newly named business, Paragon, entered a competition for one of the smaller buildings in the Melrose Arch development and secured one of them, which was to have four lifts.



From then on, Weinstein gave Orelowitz all his commercial work.

"Your strength in architecture is in relationships with developers. If you have great relationships with top developers, you lessen the risk of what's essentially a very risky business," says Orelowitz.

In his late 30s, Orelowitz married Zahava Aarons, who was also a King David Linksfield alumnus. They have two sons, now aged 22 and 18.

Over the years, Paragon built many seminal commercial buildings in Johannesburg and Pretoria, including Norton Rose, the Sasol building and Alexander Forbes in Sandton, and the Rosebank Link.

Five years ago, Orelowitz and his team decided they wanted to branch out to other types of buildings.

"Thank G-d, because that world we knew, building all those large corporate head offices, was going to come to an end for a while what with the latest recession and the pandemic," he says.

Now, they're working on housing, student housing, industrial work, schools, retail work, and large residential blocks.

While Orelowitz's legacy is indelibly linked to the Joburg skyline, he hopes it will also be linked to developing architectural competence as he embarks on training in-house architectural graduates from 2023.

WINNER

Albert Bourla

Pfizer Chief Executive Doctor Albert Bourla pushed his employees to develop a COVID-19 vaccine fast in partnership with German biotechnology company BioNTech. Because of that, the world has ultimately tamed a pandemic that has killed more than 6.6 million people since March 2020.

For this achievement, Bourla has been awarded the Absa Jewish Achiever 2022 Special and Extraordinary Award.

Bourla, who is of Greek American origin, has been at the helm of Pfizer, one of the world's premier biopharmaceutical companies, since January 2018.

His company gave the world the COVID-19 vaccine within 10 months of the virus arriving in the United States.

Although it was a big risk to produce a vaccine before getting approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration, Bourla, who is based in New York, made safety and effectiveness a priority. He was quoted as having told his team, "Financial returns shouldn't drive any decision."

Bourla is also responsible for overseeing the company's drug development, strategy, manufacturing, and sales. He restructured Pfizer, and produced the company's consumer healthcare business.

"Pfizer has demonstrated the value it can bring to society," Bourla said recently. "We did it in a dramatic way. That helped a lot of people to change their opinion. They started not only liking us, but actually loving us."

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was 100% effective in preventing illness among 800 trial participants in South Africa in April 2021.

"The high vaccine efficacy observed up to six months following a second dose and against the variant prevalent in South Africa provides further confidence in our vaccine's overall effectiveness," Bourla said.

He said he was proud that Pfizer made it onto this year's list of Fortune's World's Most Admired Companies. It was the first time the company placed in the top 50.

Bourla is profoundly connected to his Greek Jewish roots. He comes from a family with a history in the bustling Sephardic Jewish community in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki, where he was born in 1961.

His Sephardic parents, Mois and Sara, were two of the small number of survivors of the Holocaust in Greece's second-largest city. "In a city of 50,000, only 2,000 survived," Bourla said. "You do the math, that's 96% extermination."

Mois and his brother witnessed their family being deported to Auschwitz from the ghetto in Thessaloniki. The brothers survived the war in Athens with forged papers courtesy of sympathetic Catholics influenced by Athens' archbishop. They then got a job at a Red Cross warehouse.

Sara, the daughter of a prosperous family in the silk trade, hid as a teenager in the house of her older sister, who had converted to marry a Christian government officer.

During one of her occasional walks outside, she was spotted and betrayed by a neighbour. She was transferred to a prison, where she was lined up against a wall before a firing squad.

However, her life was spared thanks to a bribe from her brother-in-law to the head Nazi in Thessaloniki.

"The most important thing for me was that my parents spoke to me about their story of survival," said Bourla, a doctor of veterinary medicine with a PhD from the Veterinary School of Aristotle University in his birthplace. "But they never spoke to me about revenge. They never told us that you should hate those who did that to us. The way their stories always ended was a celebration of life - 'Look at us, we're alive. We were almost dead, and we're alive. Life is wonderful!'"

Bourla said that if it hadn't been for his mother and father hiding and escaping execution at the last minute, he wouldn't be here today, let alone heading up one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies.

Bourla joined Pfizer in 1993 as a doctor of veterinary medicine and technical director for the company's animal health division in Greece. When he was in his early 30s, he received a promotion and left Greece with his wife. Since then, he has lived in seven different cities across four different countries.

He served as area president for Pfizer Animal Health's Europe, Africa, and Middle East division from 2005 to 2009. For the following two years, he oversaw the Europe, Africa, and Asia Pacific division. In the latter role, he managed the merger of Wyeth's Fort Dodge Animal Health business with Pfizer in these regions.

Bourla created demand for Pfizer's drugs, which had lost patent exclusivity, while serving as president and general manager of the company's Established Products unit from 2010 to 2013.

He went on to serve as group president of Pfizer's Global Vaccines, Oncology, and Consumer Healthcare business, leading the company's work



on various drugs and helping to launch Eliquis, an anticoagulant, and Ibrance, a breast cancer treatment drug.

Pfizer Innovative Health's revenue increased 11% while he was its group president between 2016 and 2017 before succeeding his mentor, Ian Read, as the company's chief executive.

He has received numerous honours, such as being awarded the Genesis Prize by Israeli President Isaac Herzog for his leadership in delivering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. He gave the \$1 million prize to Holocaust education and the Holocaust Museum of Greece.

He has been crowned "pre-eminent Greek leader" of the global pharmaceutical industry, and has been ranked America's top chief executive in the industry.

Bourla has served on the health section governing board of the Biotechnology Innovation Organisation, the largest biotechnology trade association worldwide. He's a board member of Catalyst, a global non-profit organisation promoting the advancement of women, and he's a member of the Business Council, an organisation of business leaders headquartered in Washington, and the Business Roundtable, a group of chief executives of major American corporations established to promote pro-business public policy.

He has fulfilled the two dreams his father had for him. "He wanted me to become a scientist, and was hoping I would marry a nice Jewish girl," Bourla is quoted as saying. "I'm happy to say he lived long enough to see both dreams come true. Unfortunately, he died before our children were born, but my mom did live long enough to see them. That was the greatest of blessings."



THE PFIZER CHIEF WHO PUSHED THE COVID-19 JAB



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ABSA BUSINESS ICON AWARD

GROWING POTATOES. NOURISHING PEOPLE

"As a farmer, you can do everything right and work as hard as you can, invest as much as you want, but at the end of the day, it's all in Hashem's hands as you're dependent on the weather. You have to be resilient and have faith in a higher power," says 85-year-old Frederick "Fred" Kadish of Fremax Farms.

Yet, even with so much out of his hands, he has taken his business to new heights. Kadish is now known as "the potato king of South Africa". On top of leading a thriving business, he makes sure to enrich the lives of the people on the ground.

"In this day and age, it's rare that we as farmers nurture the world as opposed to destroying it. Fremax has given four generations an opportunity to work, as well as educating them in the school that was built by Fremax Farms," he says.

In the past year, Kadish, 85, has continued to invest and expand by purchasing additional ground, increasing production and nurturing the surrounding community through employment and other initiatives.

"If I ever get the opportunity to do good, let me not delay, for I may never walk this path again."

"After 67 years of farming, I still love what I do every single day," he says. Fremax Farms is located in Mpumalanga, about 210km from Johannesburg. It specialises in potatoes, maize, soya, and cattle. In 1955, it was one farm which was about 600ha in size. In 2022, Fremax Farms comprises eight adjoining farms exceeding 9 000ha.

On an annual basis, Fremax Farms plants 140ha of potatoes, producing 10 000 tons (10 million kilograms) of potatoes, and is one of the biggest suppliers of potatoes to Mozambique. In addition, it plants 3 600ha of maize, which produces 24 000 tons of maize annually, and 140ha of soya on dry land, which produces 280 tons of soya.

Fremax Farms has a herd which exceeds 5 000 head of cattle, of which more than 3 000 are breeding cows. The farm has a feed lot which can accommodate up to 1 200 cattle.

The farm employs 110 people full-time, most of whom are fourth-generation employees. All employees have permanent housing and amenities, yearly flu vaccines, and are fully cared for by the farm.

Kadish came from humble beginnings and remains down-to-earth. He was born in Bethal, a small farming town in Mpumalanga. His father, Lazar, was born in Lithuania, and arrived in South Africa in 1927. His mother, Rae, was born in South Africa.

Growing up, he lived with his family and cousin. The house had concrete floors, no ceiling, and an outhouse bathroom. Kadish travelled to school daily by horse and cart. He matriculated from Mayfair High School. He and his brother, Max, would catch the milk train from Davel in Mpumalanga to Johannesburg each term to get there.

In 1955, "my father gave me an ultimatum either to study after matric or join him on the family farm. This was no question for me, the obvious choice was to farm," says Kadish. He had no formal training, and started to learn the ropes with Max at the age of 18. To communicate with colleagues, he learned to speak Afrikaans and Zulu and to date, is fluent in three languages.

He married Hilary, and had four children and 12 grandchildren. Hilary died in 2001. In 2003, Kadish married Yelta, to whom he is still married. They live in Johannesburg.

In 1981, Kadish built a school on the farm grounds so that employees' children wouldn't have to travel far for an education. Now, the school is backed by the South African government, and has 410 students, including the children of fourth-generation farm employees. Students are bused to school and receive a daily meal. As a point of pride, one of the farm's senior managers was a student educated at the school.

"Fremax Farms has managed to navigate a tumultuous and complicated political landscape in South Africa by ensuring that its employees are well cared for and creating an environment where all are treated fairly and with respect, which in turn has created a happy work environment that runs like a well-oiled machine," says Kadish.

In recent years, Kadish partnered with the South African Rugby Legends Association to provide food for communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. He also provides potatoes to Yad Aharon & Michael, local old-age homes, and schools. He has donated cattle feed to areas which have been affected by drought and fires, and partnered with OneSpark to provide maize for more than 30 000 people who were affected by the recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal.

"With all the uncertainty in South Africa, we have continued to invest and expand



WINNER

Fred Kadish

in our beautiful country by purchasing additional ground, increasing production, and nurturing the surrounding community through employment and other initiatives," Kadish says. "Farming is a unique profession, the beginning of the production chain that provides countless job opportunities, from the person who plants the seed to the one who sells at the market."

He sees his role as "continuing to provide food and nourishment for the broader community; continuing to educate and upskill future generations of people living in our surrounding community; and continuing to be socially responsible to the broader South African community".

He has also faced challenges. "After my family home on the farm burned to the ground, I had to be resilient to continue with the same passion, as hard as it was at the time." Another challenge is to maintain a work/life balance, "as the farm is more than 200km away. Even now, at 85, I leave at 04:30 and return after dark. My leisure time involves spending quality time with my special family. I treasure these moments."

The farm uses modern technology such as GPS, drones, self-guided tractors reducing carbon emissions, as well as irrigation and fertigation practices which reduce water wastage.

Fremax Farms continues to be a family run business, now employing fourth-generation Kadish family members who are modernising and developing the farm while maintaining its core ethos.

On his nomination, Kadish says, "To be nominated at 85 and to be recognised for my passion, commitment, and sacrifices over the years is humbling. It's so important to me, as by doing this I feel I'm giving kavod to my late father, Lazar, and late brother, Max."

He hopes to "continue to encourage and mentor other farmers and try instil the same passion that I have for the age-old profession of farming. I'm so grateful for the privileged life I have lived in business and with my special family by my side. I would re-blaze the very same trail."





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ABSA BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

DR NATACHA BERKOWITZ City of Cape Town

Public health clinician and epidemiologist Dr Natacha Berkowitz is only 36, but she led the City of Cape Town's COVID-19 response and vaccine campaign, "ensuring that we protected the most vulnerable within our communities in a collaborative, evidence-informed, data-led, innovative, and compassionate manner".

Leading the city's COVID-19 vaccine response meant that the Cape went from having 14 clinics providing vaccinations to more than 50. "This included integrating vaccinations into routine services," she says.

"These have been the most professionally fulfilling – albeit challenging – years of my career," she says, referring to the pandemic. "I have grown tremendously as a public health clinician, and gained a huge amount of experience by networking across sectors."

She also collaboratively established the SACCESS (South

African Collaborative COVID-19 Environmental Surveillance System) network during the pandemic, which is researching the monitoring of waste water for COVID-19 surveillance, and is the City of Cape Town's lead for its partnership with Vital Strategies and Bloomberg Philanthropies Healthy Cities Campaign.

Berkowitz has a passion for urban health and wellness, and has ensured that the City of Cape Town "recognises health as a key priority for all citizens, as well understanding the impact that city-mandated services have on health and well-being. This has been accomplished by spearheading the IDP Urban Health Monitoring Programme."

Working in Khayelitsha as a GP in the public health system "sparked my interest in treating communities rather than individuals, and started my path to public health," she says. "A healthy country is a prosperous

country. Though provision of individual healthcare is important, protecting and promoting the health of communities is essential. By ensuring that health is considered in all policy, we can create a healthy society, built from the ground up."

The past few years haven't been without challenges. "My father was diagnosed with dementia, and now has late-stage disease. My greatest challenge was balancing caring for him, my family, as well as attending to my job at the start of the pandemic. He was also admitted to hospital for six weeks with COVID-19. Being both a medical practitioner and a daughter at that time was extremely difficult – to manage emotions, expectations, and the well-being of the city."

"The health sector, which is traditionally very demanding, has shifted gears, recognising the need to look after our mental health and well-being," she notes. "I escape to the mountains often to clear my head and schedule friend and family time."

To the country's future medical professionals, she says, "Go and experience the lived lives of people who don't talk or look like you. Engage on a personal level with your patients, and learn from each one of them. Try not to be jaded but rather find opportunity in the challenges. Be bold and innovative and make your voice heard."



PROFESSOR RYAN BLUMENTHAL University of Pretoria/Forensic Pathology Services

Professor Ryan Blumenthal has performed more than 10 000 autopsies and is one of six pathologists to perform the autopsy on a president of state. He assisted with the Marikana and Life Esidemi autopsies. "Forensic pathology isn't some side show. It's a main arena," he says.

"From my autopsy table, I can tell you if a new gang has moved into the neighbourhood. I can tell you if there's a new or emergent drug or disease. I can even tell you the health [physical, mental, and psychological] of the nation. I can tell you all this without even venturing outdoors."

Blumenthal is a senior specialist forensic pathologist and associate professor at the University of Pretoria's department of forensic medicine. His chief interest is the pathology of lightning trauma (keraunopathology). He says his life changed when "in 2001, I was called to the death scene of an adult female in the veld. Initially, it looked like a rape-homicide case. After a thorough forensic examination, the true cause of her death transpired to be lightning! This singular case led me to further my studies into lightning."

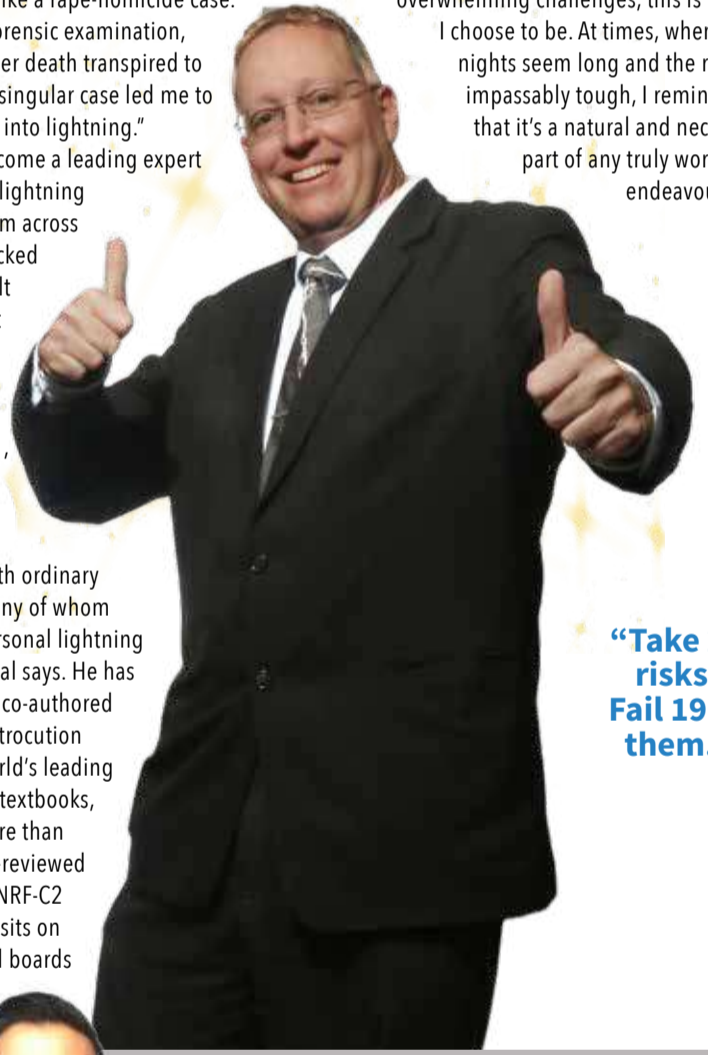
He has since become a leading expert on the topic, and "lightning strike survivors from across the world have tracked me down to consult me". His eight-part documentary, *Lightning Pathologist*, aired in November 2021, and was viewed by more than 2.2 million people.

"It resonated with ordinary South Africans, many of whom have their own personal lightning stories," Blumenthal says. He has also authored and co-authored lightning and electrocution chapters in the world's leading forensic reference textbooks, and published more than 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals. He is an NRF-C2 rated scientist. He sits on esteemed editorial boards and committees.

His most recent book, *Autopsy* (Jonathan Ball Book Publishers 2020), became a bestseller and made the long list of the Sunday Times Literary Awards (The Alan Paton Award) and the short list of the SA Booksellers awards. It has been printed seven times, and a sequel is due in 2023.

"The sign of a good leader isn't how many followers you have, but how many leaders you create," says Blumenthal, a passionate educator. "Many of my students are found across the world." At the same time, "South Africa's biggest challenge is the manpower shortage in forensic pathology services. The shortage will have a negative impact on South Africa's ability to render a quality death-investigation service."

Over the past 20 years, Blumenthal has been invited to work in four different international forensic facilities. "I chose to stay in South Africa," he says. "This is my home country, and I want to be part of the solution. In spite of all the overwhelming challenges, this is where I choose to be. At times, when the nights seem long and the road impassably tough, I remind myself that it's a natural and necessary part of any truly worthwhile endeavour."



"Take 20 risks. Fail 19 of them."

DR HANAN BUSHKIN The Anxiety and Trauma Clinic

Dr Hanan Bushkin has chased innovation and excellence in psychology throughout his career, from opening an Anxiety and Trauma Clinic to pioneering the Anchor Based Approach (ABA), which has been taught to hundreds of counsellors and therapists all over the globe and has reached thousands of patients in South Africa alone. The system has been accredited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

"I was bullied daily at school: emotionally, physically, and verbally. This propelled me to go from a meaningless existence to finding hope in something meaningful – in my case it was sports and psychology," he says. "I remember as a young boy constantly questioning the meaning of life and death, and I credit my parents' love of a fearless existence for encouraging me to pursue that answer. The quest for an answer turned into a career path and my adult obsession."

His clinic was founded in 2002, when Bushkin observed that in spite of the availability of therapists, psychological resources, books, and articles, there was still a lack of a collective and structured approach to patient care specifically for the diagnosis and treatment of anxiety disorders and trauma.

"Our mission is to educate, teach, help, guide, and support individuals, couples, families, and groups in

managing their emotional state in a facility that's multidimensional and specifically designed to empower patients with a structured framework that's more robust than their stressful environment," Bushkin says.

He specialises in the treatment of mood disorders, and has worked for more than 20 years on the problem of behavioural patterns and their effect on mood and cognition. "I have also been involved in frontline crisis intervention and organisational training. My life's mission is to empower therapists and patients with structured tools to make their lives rich with meaning and purpose."

Though the clinic is based in Johannesburg, "we're accessible through our network of accredited ABA therapists all over the globe", says Bushkin. "Thanks to the advancement of virtual technology, we're

able to connect any person or family with a professional from five continents."

He's most proud of being the pioneer of ABA. "It's so structured, that one ABA therapist can start with a specific patient and the exact same patient can continue the sessions with another ABA therapist without starting all over again." Bushkin is acknowledged not only as a pioneer and thought leader in the field, he's considered an expert in the treatment of anxiety and depressive disorders through the ABA system.

On South Africa, he says, "The country is going through significant changes. But the truth is that that was always the case and it's our responsibility as individuals, communities, and a nation to take control over what we can and let go of what we cannot. By controlling what we can, we will each contribute a skill aligned with our strength, ultimately making a difference."





DR DINA SIMMONDS GULAN

Orthopaedic Surgeon, Charlotte Maxeke
Johannesburg Academic Hospital

As an orthopaedic surgeon in a tertiary state hospital, Dr Dina Simmonds Gulan's primary focus is to service indigent and vulnerable children in the state sector. She's the first Jewish female orthopaedic surgeon to qualify in South Africa, and is a specialist orthopaedic surgeon in the paediatric orthopaedic unit at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital. She also has a limited private practice at Netcare Alberton Hospital.

"Studying medicine is a bit of a 'calling'," she says. "I've always told young people that if there's something else they would be happy doing, then do it. But if their life wouldn't be complete on any other path, then this is the one to follow. It isn't easy, but it's incredibly fulfilling. Not only are we involved in the educating of tomorrow's doctors, therapists, nurses, and technicians, but even our patients provide an opportunity for us to uplift and encourage people to reach their full, productive potential.

"We work daily to maintain a standard of care we can be proud of, to bring appropriate care to the most vulnerable children who have orthopaedic fractures and deformities. We try and uplift the ward and in some cases, in a small way, to assist children at home. The other aspect is to identify those children at risk of abuse, and work toward their protection.

"Probably the greatest challenge in the past 18 months was the fire at the hospital," says Simmonds Gulan. "I worked to relocate and restart our clinic within the space of a couple weeks, finding donations of materials to restart our clubfoot plastering as

"This too shall pass."



quickly as possible. We're working hard at managing backlogs for surgery. "Additional projects I'm involved in push either to uplift members of society, source resources for those in need, or to improve the position of the vulnerable within our communities. As the founder of Do Christmas, I work to partner donors around the country with needs in our ward and the community at large.

"As a founding member of SA-Child (the Southern African Academy for Childhood Disability), I have been involved in assisting with webinars and education opportunities and sourcing resources for disabled children in our country.

"As a founding member of SAFOSS (South African Female Orthopaedic Surgeon's Society), I'm involved in highlighting diversity and equal opportunity within a field that's very male-dominated. As an academic, I seek to encourage academic performance and excellence. We're offering workshops in orthopaedic surgery to undergraduate students to promote the profession and diversity within the profession. We're also doing face-to-face training for allied professionals within our smaller hospitals for the recognition and treatment of club foot."

PROFESSOR BRIAN KANTOR

Investec Wealth & Investment International

At the age of 80, emeritus Professor Brian Kantor's commitment to his work, sharing expertise, and improving South Africa doesn't come by chance. The highly respected economist advises others to "take joy in life, and stay actively involved for as long as possible".

He has taken his own advice in his multifaceted and long career, serving as investment strategist and economist at Investec Securities, and subsequently at Investec Wealth & Investment International. He's currently chairperson of the Investec Wealth & Investment Research Institute.

His contributions to the University of Cape Town span five decades, where he went on to become professor of economics. He was also head of the school of economics and dean of commerce. As a visiting professor, he spent time at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, and at Columbia University's Graduate School of Business in New York.

His research focuses primarily on monetary and financial economics, and he has published widely, including three books. He served on South African government commissions – as a member of the Competition Board, and as an advisor to the Margo Commission on tax reform.

Kantor has consulted locally and internationally. In South Africa, his clients have included Volkswagen (SA); Rightford, Searle-Tripp, and Makin (later Ogilvy Mather SA); BMW SA; Investec Securities; and Investec Bank. Overseas clients include the Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis; and Smith Barney, Stock Brokers, New York; GT Fund Managers, Hong Kong; and the Fraser Institution, Canada.

Kantor is the previous non-executive chairperson of Acucap Properties, and the founding chairperson of the V&A Waterfront. He says he's most proud of developing the Waterfront, but if there's one thing he would have done differently, it would have been to privatise the

development. The most challenging moment of his career was "leading the Waterfront through its early days – raising the capital and maintaining buy-in from the shareholder, Transnet".

Asked about his greatest business achievements, he says, "The Waterfront and the growth of Acucap.

As chairperson, the share price moved from R10 on listing in 2002 to R45 on acquisition by Growthpoint in 2014." He's also proud of his contribution to the success of Investec Wealth & Investment International.

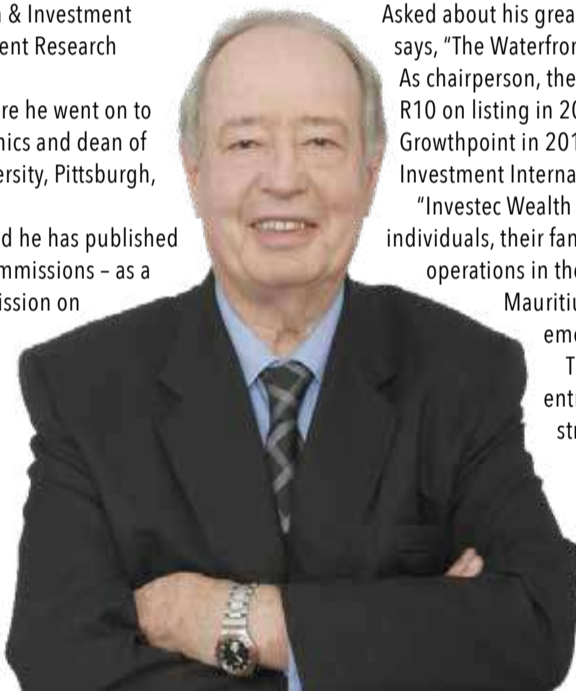
"Investec Wealth & Investment International specialises in partnering high-net-worth individuals, their families, charitable trusts, and pension funds," he says. "We've established operations in the United Kingdom [15 offices], Switzerland, the Channel Islands, Mauritius, and South Africa, offering a deep understanding of developed and emerging market fundamentals."

The company employs more than 8 200 people. "We have an entrepreneurial, founder-led culture as well as a truly global investment strategy," says Kantor.

In addition, "through Investec's corporate social responsibility division, we focus on education and entrepreneurship. It makes me proud to be associated with the company", Kantor says.

On being nominated for the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards, he says, "I'm a proud Jew, and to be recognised by my Jewish peers would be a highlight of my career."

"Take joy in life, and stay actively involved as long as you're physically able to do so."



JUDGE DENNIS DAVIS

As first judge president of the Competition Appeal Court, Judge Dennis Davis created an important judicial institution in South Africa during the two decades he was in the role. He was also judge of the High Court in the Cape for 22 years, and judge of appeal at the Supreme Court of Appeal from 2018 to 2019. He has written more than 200 reported judgments, including more than 20 in the area of competition law.

But, for him, his greatest impact has been on education, including 45 years of teaching at the University of Cape Town (UCT), University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), and more recently, the University of the Western Cape. Two of his students have been Constitutional Court justices, and 14 others judges. He has also received best lecturer award at UCT and Wits.

In his long, storied career, Davis says his "key judgments on socio-economic rights and discrimination of cannabis" were his greatest achievement, along with "mentoring young judges and creating the most transformed court in the country". He has taught for free at three

universities since his elevation as judge. This includes "a full professor load, and trying to contribute to a transformed bench".

He has delivered papers at numerous conferences, been a visiting professor around the world, and has advised everyone from trade unions to presidents to the United Nations.

Looking back, the road hasn't always been easy. In fact, Davis says his greatest challenge was "becoming a judge in 1998. It was a huge professional challenge, and I had to stop doing a host of public intellectual work."

Asked if there was one thing he would do over again, he says, "Probably not accepting the appointment as a judge". At the same time, his most life-changing moment was "becoming a judge and thus changing my personal and professional life".

His advice to young people starting out in law is to "try to get good professional training at a law firm, contribute to legal non-government organisations which promote the rule of law, and obtain a specialist

postgraduate law degree".

Davis retired from the bench at the end of 2020, but didn't see it as an opportunity to take it easy.

"I had to find meaningful activity, thus joining SARS [the South African Revenue Service] as consultant to the commissioner, and significant teaching online during the pandemic". He especially enjoyed the many lectures he delivered to the Kirsh Foundation's

"Try to live meaningfully."

Lockdown University on law, classical music, chazzanut, and philosophy.

His work in the media, especially in television, is "devoted to promoting the spirit of Constitution", and he also given many public lectures "holding power accountable to the promise of the Constitution". He continues to write widely, and has authored a number of books.

He finds it difficult to strike a balance between work and family, but says he tries to keep part of the weekend for family and recreation. He loves mountain climbing, music, and is a huge sports fan.

Though he has received many awards, "I have great reluctance to support awards in that I never did anything for reward. But celebrating the achievements of our community is important."





RODNEY LUNTZ Broll Property Group

"I wake up every day unemployed, and I'm only as good as my last deal," says Rodney Luntz, the head of Gauteng commercial broking at Broll Property Group. "I work purely on commission. Each deal is an achievement, especially in the current environment. Every industry is under pressure, especially the office environment where I play. So every deal – no matter how small – is celebrated."

"Living with positivity, sensitivity, confidence, and kindness to others."

Luntz is a qualified attorney and has been involved in all aspects of commercial property for the

past three decades. These include the relocation of the United States consulate, the relocation of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the sale of Healthcare Park to Aspen Pharmaceuticals, and the relocation of the University of South Africa.

"The office market is the worst performing market in the commercial property industry," he says, "but through hard work, positivity, tenacity, resilience, and determination, I have had one of the best years in my career. I have shut out the noise and the negativity, controlled the controllables, and carried on doing what I do best."

Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, he says, "I've ensured that I show up at the office every day to inspire others to do the same. I don't believe in the 'work-from-home' strategy. We're social animals that depend on interaction with others. The way deals happen is by talking to your team and bouncing ideas off each other. This doesn't work if your team is fragmented."

"The best and most trusted way of finding new business is by cold calling," Luntz says, "so I make sure that I cold call regularly to find business. The rejection rate is probably about 90%, but all one needs is that 10%. I go back to basics every day, and do what others aren't prepared to do to get results."

He makes sure to assist as many of his peers as possible. "It's a very difficult industry to break into, and new entrants need a mentor. Being in the industry for 30 years means I've been exposed to many deals, so my experience is invaluable as well as my network."

He has also made changes. "The property industry is difficult to break into especially if it's a commission only position. What I have implemented is a starting salary to cover basic expenditure of new entrants for a limited period to get the new entrant on his or her feet."

He has experienced tough times. "My life-changing moment was when my late sister was killed in a motor vehicle accident," he says. "It taught me the fragility of life and not to sweat the small stuff, as you really don't know what tomorrow might bring."



bursary plan for families who had lost income to the point of not being able to afford our school."

In addition, "the sudden onset of turning our school into a remote learning centre during the pandemic" was a challenge. "To co-create [almost overnight] new teaching methods so that we could maintain nurturing relationships between our teachers and pupils [as well as those between our teachers, and also those between our pupils]" was also a tough adjustment.

"I'm proud of our achievements during this time, although I regret not being more responsive to the loss of income among our parent body [many of whom are freelancers]," he says. However, the school is "one of the few micro-schools which survived the recent challenges of emigration and flight to government schools, especially during COVID-19."

"Kairos means learning for life," he says. "When life at school is happy and meaningful, children are able to go out into the world and have a positive impact."

RICHARD HIRSCH Peresec Prime Brokers

"The fact that my father was a leading financial planner may have played a part in my interest in equity markets. I can still remember opening up the paper each morning to check share prices with him," says Richard Hirsch of Peresec Prime Brokers, which he joined in May 2022. His journey to this point has been defined by curiosity, innovation, and calculated risk taking.

When, as a student, he realised that auditing wasn't for him, "I approached my father with the prospect that I wasn't going to become a chartered accountant. His response was that I needed to find another professional qualification. I stumbled upon the chartered financial analysts (CFA) qualification, not well known at that time."

He completed his honours in business management (finance) while studying to be

a CFA. "These studies led me to discover the world of derivatives, an unknown asset class at that time, and still not fully understood by many market participants today," he says.

"It led to me being offered a role by Société Générale's equity derivatives division. Our desk was one of the pioneers of equity derivatives in South Africa. I was headhunted 18 months later by Standard Corporate & Merchant Bank [more well known as SCMB], where I spent 21 years."

His role evolved over these two decades. "What began as a pricing and selling of listed options expanded into a variety of derivatives that allowed clients to take on risk. More importantly, we educated clients on how to mitigate risk by overlaying derivatives over an equity holding," Hirsch says.

"As our business developed, my partner, Brett Duncan, and I took over the running of the Standard Bank online share trading platform, housing more than 100 000 clients. I ran the derivatives and product suite, opening up a world of products to clients, all executed online. We grew our business from a R40 million revenue stream in 2001 to more than R550 million in 2021."

During this period they also launched a structured products business that educated clients on alternatives to direct equity investing. "These products have risen in popularity across the banks. The other side to this business was the mitigation of risk for executives and high-net-worth clients that had concentrated equity holdings. Once again, very little was known about these products and we saved clients billions of rands."

But after 21 years in a corporate bank, he felt "unable to achieve a lifelong goal: of becoming more entrepreneurial. Peresec Prime Brokers was the perfect fit. It's the leading broker on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, with a highly experienced and leading derivatives team," he says. "Since making the move, I have loved the entrepreneurial spirit and level of knowledge and professionalism that sits within the business."

and accountability instead of rules and punishments.

He's most proud of not giving up during tough times. "We kept the school alive in spite of very significant challenges that threatened our survival these 12 years," he says, and also of the "intentionally empathic ethos in our school and the well-articulated social and emotional curriculum we've developed. I'm especially proud of seeing our graduates flourish in high school and adulthood – academically and psychologically. We've acquired a name in Joburg as the go-to school for alternative, progressive innovation in primary school education."

This isn't to say that the journey has been without its challenges. "We weren't quick enough to adapt to the enrolment crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic," he says. "At the onset of the pandemic, we could have created a temporary

MARC LOON Kairos School of Inquiry

How to educate children in our community not just for excellence but to become mensches is a critical question, and Marc Loon is at the forefront of answering it.

Loon describes his Kairos School of Inquiry in Parkview, Johannesburg, as "a small, nurturing school celebrating the art of seeing the child, and an educational home for creative teachers to be themselves. We're a joyful, nurturing, empowering eight-year experience of schooling that builds children into balanced, empathic, resilient, and academically strong participants in society."

"I enable wholeness, beauty, and connection."

The school employs 13 people. Says Loon, "Kairos School of Inquiry is neither a conventional primary school nor a radical rejection of how schools operate. Our third, common-sense way is an integration of cutting-edge educational solutions appropriate for the 21st century society and our children's future. We're a role model for what school education in South Africa could be."

The school's innovations include teaching non-violent communication to staff and pupils, teaching methods of trauma-sensitive schooling to staff, an in-house school currency to teach entrepreneurship and economics, and using agreements



TIFFANY MARKMAN

Tiffany Markman Writing, Training & Speaking

"My unique impact is to share knowledge and skills with others," says Tiffany Markman. "I'm a copywriter by profession, but I'm a teacher and trainer in my approach to work and in my philosophies about life. Whether I'm educating individuals or teams on best-practice global communication, or teaching communicators how to craft and land messages with impact, I'm happiest when helping people to develop specialist skills."

She also describes herself as "a loud, proud protagonist of successful self-employment; of building, running and growing solid, distinctive, lucrative small businesses".

Markman founded Tiffany Markman Writing, Training & Speaking in 2005, which focuses on creating and delivering copy, thought leadership,



scripts, training programmes, and stage talks for large and small audiences.

She has extended her reach "into 15 [and counting] countries so far, touched the brands of 450+ [and counting] companies worldwide, and taught 10 000 people in person and more than 25 000 online. I consider this reach to be my greatest professional achievement so far. Happily, though, I'm nowhere near done."

She recently received three major international awards, including Freelance Copywriter of the Year in 2020 from Corporate LiveWire.

Markman is also a prolific media contributor, where she shares insights on writing, marketing, and business.

Her path to success hasn't been easy. "When my father passed away unexpectedly in 1987, my mother and I found ourselves

in financial difficulties that plagued us into my adulthood. Thankfully, King David made it possible for me to attend school on a significantly subsidised basis until I matriculated with six distinctions and was able to earn bursaries or scholarships for all of my postgraduate study.

"Everything I've achieved is the result of a combination of exceptional schooling, wonderful parenting by a single mom, a lot of hard work, a mammoth if irrational fear of poverty, and more than a big chunk of privilege – I don't really believe in luck. I've also worked to create a stable base for my own family."

She saw the pandemic as an opportunity. "In late 2020 and early 2021,

I amalgamated my two decades of small-business ownership experience into a comprehensive online course, 'Rockstar Freelancing'."

Making the course available at cost, she was able to guide 25-plus "solopreneurs" to establish and run a "side hustle or main hustle" during 2021.

She believes that "strong, sustainable small businesses in particular, and high-quality writing and messaging in general, are among the best ways to create jobs and develop skills in this country."

Being nominated, she says "feels like wonderful recognition from my community. In addition, as an almost entirely subsidised King David kid, it feels like coming full circle in a way – like showing the South African Board of Jewish Education that I was worth investing in 34 years ago."

"No writer can commit to seven words."

STEVEN NATHAN

10X Investments

Steven Nathan says he has an obsession with driving change in the retirement industry. "South Africa has a retirement savings crisis as 94% of people with a retirement fund retire with insufficient savings. Part of the blame lies with individuals who fail to save adequately or cash-in their savings before retirement. However, poor industry practices contribute meaningfully to these failures."

The founder of 10X Investments, Nathan says, "I had a front-row seat witnessing this ugly face of capitalism. While my peers, colleagues, and I were enjoying outsized financial rewards, this was often achieved at the expense of unknowing and unsuspecting individuals. People were retiring poor while the industry was thriving."

He founded 10X Investments (10X) "specifically to give people a better chance of achieving a dignified retirement. I developed a simple, unique, and disruptive business model that more than halved investment fees. We improved the client experience with a vertically integrated model comprising direct distribution, administration [and reporting], and investment management. In the 12 years since launching 10X, our long-term fund outperformed the average fund manager. We thus helped our clients save investment fees and earn higher investment returns."

When Nathan left 10X in January 2021, it managed R15 billion for more than 100 companies including Deutsche Bank, African Bank, General Motors, Virgin Active, M&C Saatchi Group, In2Food, Tourvest, Balwin Properties, Lindt & Sprüngli, UCS Technology, and tens of thousands of individual savers.

In founding 10X, Nathan helped to raise awareness of poor industry practices to the media, the regulator, and the public. "I helped to popularise index funds and simple,

low-cost investing in South Africa. I have directly helped investors save hundreds of millions in fees. Indirectly, I have helped investors save far more, as many competitors launched low-cost index funds or reduced their existing fees in response to 10X's low-cost model."

"Everyone dies, but not everyone lives."

For many years, Nathan engaged with pension fund trustees, the Financial Sector Conduct Authority, National Treasury (on retirement reform), the media, employers, employees, and trade unions on how to achieve better long-term investment outcomes for their stakeholders.

Though he has won many awards as an investment analyst and achieved many accolades at 10X, "I'm most proud of having the courage to leave a high paying and privileged job at a global investment bank, return to South Africa, and follow my purpose, my heart, and my desire to help others."

"Starting 10X was a big financial risk," he says. "I funded the business myself for the first eight years. In spite of the challenges, we showed that an investment business can do well by doing good."



MARK OPPENHEIMER

Johannesburg Bar Advocate

Advocate at the Johannesburg Bar, Mark Oppenheimer, came uncomfortably close to not realising his destiny. "After finishing law school, I worked in Israel as a photographer and seriously considered not practicing law," he says. "While working on a shoot at a law firm, the other photographer I was with noticed me picking up Israeli law reports and talking about the difference between our two legal systems. He urged me to return to law."

Since then, Oppenheimer has "publicly fought those who wield power against the marginalised. I have brought disparate organisations together to ensure that we're able to live in a country that treats everyone with respect. I inform the public about the threats we face."

He has appeared in the Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court in cases that seek to determine the boundary between freedom of expression and genuine hate speech. He has authored submissions to Parliament on the Hate Speech Bill; to stop expropriation without compensation; and to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on escalating racial tension.

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced him. "Seeing how quickly we can lose our civil liberties has emboldened me to fight harder to protect them," he says.

Oppenheimer's achievements include stopping the Bill of Rights from being

"Pursue truth, beauty, and goodness."

amended to allow for expropriation without compensation; striking down the unconstitutional definition of hate speech in the Equality Act; stopping the ban on ecommerce during the lockdown; stopping forcible quarantines; and stopping the finance minister from setting preferential procurement policy.

Recently, he ran a nine-day hate speech trial against Julius Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) for chanting "Kill the Boer" at rallies and outside a court building where those accused of

killing a 21-year-old farmer were being arraigned. "I hope that my calm demeanour inspired others to be fearless in the face of adversity," he says. It was tough "being surrounded by an angry mob of EFF supporters chanting 'Kill the Boer' while entering and exiting court, but our approach was to take the high ground."

He's always seeking to uplift others. "The Bar trains pupil advocates at no cost to ensure that a new generation of lawyers is equipped to serve businesses, government, and ordinary citizens.

I had the pleasure of training Khupi Ramarumo as my pupil, and my door is always open to colleagues who need advice."

He has also coached and adjudicated, and has been interviewed on eNCA, CNBC Africa, and Cliff Central to discuss the Bill of Rights and rule of law. Along with Gwen Ngwenya, he hosted the podcast Freedom Versus, and he currently hosts the popular series Brain in a Vat. He's co-author of the Conversations about Philosophy series.

He's also a council member of the Institute of Race Relations, advisory member of the Rule of Law Project, and advisor to the Free Speech Union.

His advice to up and coming lawyers and opponents with respect is, "Treat your but act fearlessly in pursuit of your clients' interests. Some will despise you for telling the truth, but you will sleep better at night."



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PROFESSOR BERNARDO RAPOPORT

The Medical Oncology Centre of Rosebank

Many people would find the idea of working in oncology difficult, but for Professor Bernardo Rapoport, it's a life passion. "Being a medical oncologist is an extremely fulfilling profession, and I would follow the same career path again," he says.

He has been in private practice as director of The Medical Oncology Centre of Rosebank since 1993, offering patients high-quality oncology care. "I've also been involved in clinical trials for more than 25 years, giving patients for whom standard care is no longer effective or only partially effective access to new treatment options," he says.

Rapoport is a pioneer in the field of immunology, successfully treating several patients with an otherwise dismal outcome. In addition, he has been involved in teaching most of the younger registered medical oncologists in the country, sharing knowledge, experience, and expertise.

He's also extraordinary professor in the department of immunology, faculty of health sciences at the University of Pretoria. After earning his medical degree in 1978 from the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, he completed an internship at Tel Aviv University in Israel. He then specialised in internal medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand, and served as a fellow in medical oncology at the University of Pretoria. This is where he became certified as a medical oncologist and subsequently worked as a senior consultant and senior lecturer until 1993.

Looking back, his biggest challenge was "to be accepted as registrar in medicine. I worked extremely hard to get a specialist qualification. This hard work laid the

foundation for future success – hard work, dedication, and commitment is key."

He now helps others achieve the same levels of excellence, in turn uplifting the country. He continues to train young oncologists, and supervises several young scientists. Along with teaching, he continues to treat patients as well as remaining involved in cancer research "to help advance cancer care".

Rapoport is the chairperson of the South African Society of Medical Oncology, and serves on the board of directors of the South African Oncology Consortium. He also serves as chairperson of the Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer Neutropenia, Infection and Myelosuppression Study Group, as well as the Immuno-Oncology Sub Study Group. Rapoport is an examiner for the medical oncology certification for the College of Medicine of South Africa. He's a former examiner for the MMed Clinical Oncology postgraduate exams for the University of Natal.

In recent years, he has been involved in numerous pivotal trials of several groundbreaking therapies. He has delivered more than a 250 lectures at local, regional, and international conferences and symposia. He advises up and coming medical professionals to "always have the patient's interest at heart, stay abreast in the field, and participate actively in local professional activities".



Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

2022



MICHAEL RUDNICKI

Bowmans Law

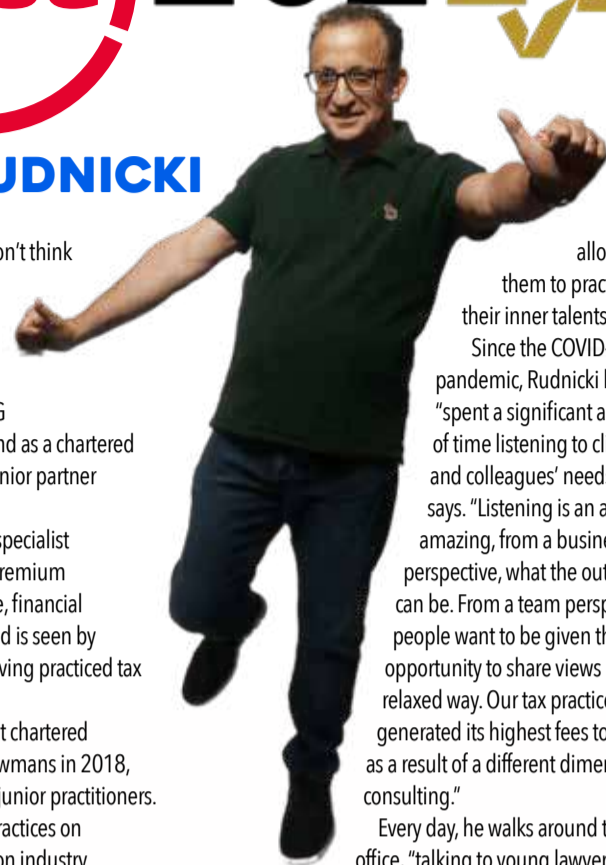
"At school, I was shy and reserved. I don't think many gave me a chance to succeed," says Michael Rudnicki. But he became a partner at the relatively young age of 34, heading up the private equity markets sector at KPMG over and above his tax partner role, and as a chartered accountant, Rudnicki was offered a senior partner position at Bowmans.

Rudnicki provides solution-based specialist tax advice to local and international premium organisations, mainly in the corporate, financial services and private equity sectors, and is seen by many as a leading tax practitioner, having practiced tax law for 28 years.

"It's unusual for a law firm to recruit chartered accountants," he says. "I moved to Bowmans in 2018, following by a number of senior and junior practitioners. We now have one of the largest tax practices on the continent, with a particular focus on industry specialisation.

"Clients love solutions, not answers" he says. "I still love finding solutions for clients, being bold, involving my team in client consultations, and looking for opportunities outside our tax practice. It's what keeps me going – developing relationships with clients and staff and being able to maintain them in unique ways."

He insists on a "principle of collaboration" within Bowmans. "It's unusual in professional services firms, particularly a law firm, but it provides for broader learning experiences and a better service offering to clients. I've instilled this principle in many of our junior lawyers,



allowing them to practice their inner talents."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Rudnicki has "spent a significant amount of time listening to clients and colleagues' needs", he says. "Listening is an art. It's amazing, from a business perspective, what the outcomes can be. From a team perspective, people want to be given the opportunity to share views in a relaxed way. Our tax practice has generated its highest fees to date as a result of a different dimension to consulting."

Every day, he walks around the office, "talking to young lawyers about how privileged we are to work at Bowmans. I make the point that academics alone won't help achieve their potential. I used to tell my kids when they were at school to 'focus and participate' in class. Participation in whatever form achieves confidence, results in buy-in from colleagues and clients, and ultimately, is a profitable practice.

"When I look at who I was as a teenager compared to the top tax practitioner I am today, I can say that anything is possible," Rudnicki says. "Pushing through inner fears is hard but, in my circumstances at least, it resulted in success."



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JULES SCHNEID SIP Project Managers

Quantity surveyor Julius "Jules" Schneid came from humble beginnings, but went on to establish the discipline of project management in South Africa, leading to a career that has made its mark around the globe.

After university, Schneid travelled for two years, mainly by Vespa scooter, and then started his own quantity surveying practice. Looking back, this was "considered a bold step so soon after the Sharpeville incident, when doom and gloom was the order of the day. Nevertheless, during this period, my practice was awarded prestigious appointments for international pharmaceutical headquarters as well as major shopping centres and Hyperamas.

"The Checkers/Sanlam Group also played an important role when we were appointed to a joint role in building about 20 major shopping centres in a record 30 months, as well as revitalising various CBDs. The OK Bazaars development division awarded my practice many important appointments for shopping centres and Hyperamas."

In 1968, Schneid was invited to join the board of Hofman Property Development, becoming, at the age of 29, one of the youngest directors of a company on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

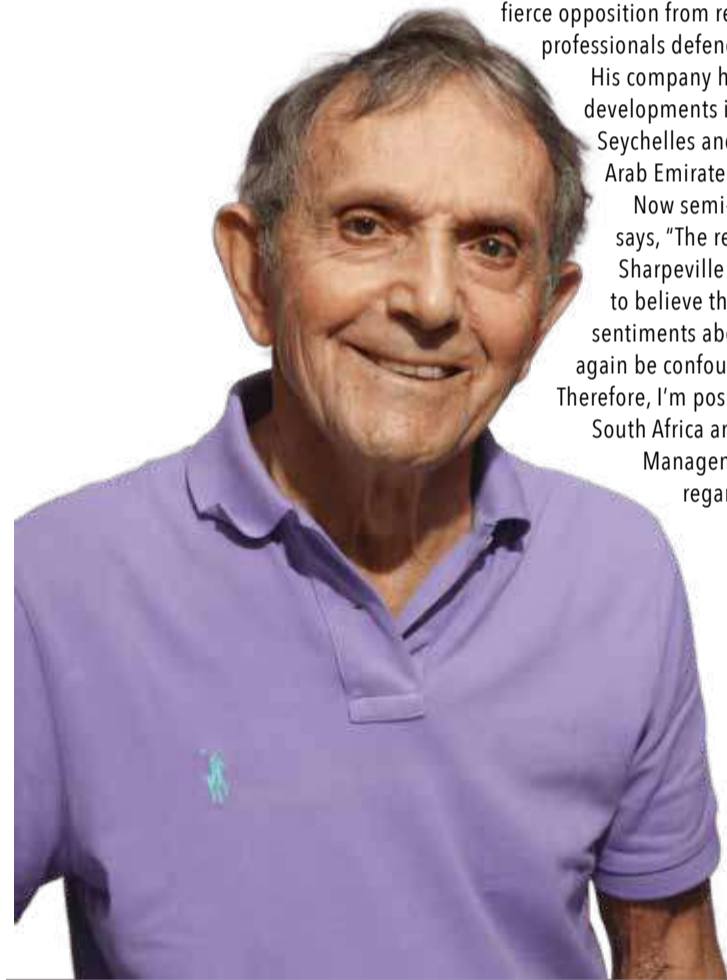
"Setting up in-house quantity surveying and project management divisions was invaluable in developing a hands-on and comprehensive approach to project management as subsequently practised by my company, SIP Project Managers," he says.

But "the demise of Hofman Property Development meant that I lost everything that I had worked for. Nevertheless, I didn't abandon ship, remaining on as long as I could, working with the liquidators to ensure that, as far as possible, consultants and creditors would be paid their due.

"I couldn't even afford King David school fees," he remembers. "Only my parents stood by me with limited but valuable financial assistance. It taught me a lesson about self-reliance, and the value of family. Although negative, it spurred my career, changing the direction of my life and the building industry as a whole."

Sol Kerzner soon appointed him to be project manager on the yet-to-be-built Sun City.

He developed project management after he "sensed a gap in the provision of professional services in the building industry in South Africa". Establishing the discipline "was against all odds and against fierce opposition from relevant entrenched professionals defending their turf".



**"Per ardua ad astra."
(Through struggle/
adversity to the stars.)**

His company has since been involved in developments in South Africa, Mauritius, Seychelles and Comoros, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.

Now semi-retired, Schneid, 87, says, "The recovery from the post-Sharpeville period encourages me to believe that the current gloomy sentiments about the economy will again be confounded by a similar recovery. Therefore, I'm positive about the future of South Africa and the role that SIP Project Management will play in this regard."

JORDY SANK Sanctuary Films

Director, screenwriter, and producer Jordy Sank is only 30 years old, but he has already won a host of prestigious awards locally and overseas. "My company, Sanctuary Films, is committed to creating narrative films and documentaries that highlight important social issues and are catalysts for conversation," he says. "We create a sanctuary for audiences who believe in the power, impact, and artistry of storytelling."

Sank also wants to improve the lives of other South Africans through filmmaking. "Film in South Africa is a multimillion dollar industry, and we also happen to have some of the best locations and professional crews," says Sank. "We've applied to the Presidential Employment Stimulus programme with a film concept that will create jobs and pave the way for an international investor to see it and develop it into a limited television series, which will bring investment and employment."

His first internationally recognised film, *I Am Here*, hit especially close to home. "Our spirited Holocaust biography of 101-year-old Ella Blumenthal won Best South African Documentary at the Durban International Film Festival 2021 and many more international awards. Growing up knowing Ella has been life-changing. I needed to capture her remarkable life story, and share her special zest for life with the world."

In addition, *Leemtes en Leegheid*, my Afrikaans short film about an elderly woman's grief and isolation after the passing of her husband, won Best Short Film among other

awards at kykNET's Silwerskermfees 2022."

He's passionate about "pushing the envelope of South African storytelling and sharing meaningful films with the world", so for him,

"If you will it, it's no dream."



"the greatest recognition has been the winning of two SAFTAs (South African Film and TV Awards), one for Best Documentary Feature and the other the Emerging Filmmaker Award, which is awarded to one filmmaker who is making waves in the industry."

The journey hasn't always been easy. "The biggest challenge has been breaking into the industry and being able to pitch to streamers, television channels, and studios," says Sank. "The strategy was to create impactful and well-crafted films without them so that they could see the level of excellence of each production and the deeply meaningful and emotive human stories we like to tell."

He has learnt that "the people you work with are key to your growth and a cohesive working environment. You work with a large group of people throughout the production. I'm constantly pushing people to put themselves out there more and to take risks, often connecting them with others in the industry who will give them opportunities or that I believe will have synergy with them."

He's grateful to have a supportive family who believes in what he does. "I want to continue making films that do the community proud," Sank says.

PROFESSOR ROY SHIRES Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and Wits University

"Despite the trials and tribulations of working at Baragwanath, I would do it all over again. It's satisfying to one's soul to serve the disadvantaged; and undertaking research that addresses the problems affecting our population is meaningful to me," says Professor Roy Shires.

A professor of medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), he became the first head of the division of endocrinology at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital (Bara), the world's third largest hospital and the only tertiary medical facility serving the people of Soweto.

Shires has personally delivered and overseen the delivery of excellent clinical services in endocrinology, diabetes, and general medicine to the disadvantaged population of Soweto, the largest urban population of underprivileged South Africans, who can least afford health services.

He has also trained thousands of medical students and hundreds of postgraduates at Bara and prior to that, at Johannesburg Hospital. "All these now, in turn, either serve society in a public or private capacity," he says.

Asked what he has done to uplift or give hope to those in this country, he says he has "served the

**"Strive to be
the best you can."**

Soweto community and beyond with dedication and devotion, showing them that there are people who really care and have their interests at heart. Bara patients are generally highly appreciative. There's also tremendous camaraderie among the medical and nursing staff."

Looking back, he feels that his greatest achievements have been "my ability to carry out excellence in clinical service, teaching, mentoring, and administration". This has been recognised through the awarding of honorary memberships of the South African Endocrine and Diabetes Society and of the National Osteoporosis Foundation. He was also given the Distinguished Service Medal of Excellence from Wits University for "excellence and dedication in clinical services, teaching, and research in endocrinology".

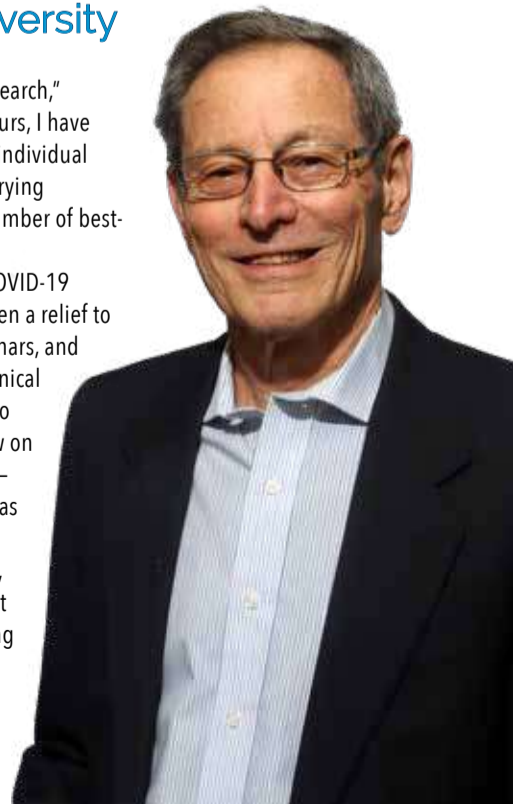
He won the Endocrine Society's (United States) Laureate Award in 2020 for International Excellence in Endocrinology. The society is the foremost body for endocrinologists worldwide, with 20 000 members including Nobel Laureates.

"Working in an under-resourced, overcrowded environment, at the biggest hospital in the southern

hemisphere, leaves little time for research," Shires says. "But by working long hours, I have been able to undertake meaningful individual and collaborative research, often in trying circumstances." He has received a number of best-research publication awards.

His work has changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. "After lockdown, it has been a relief to bounce back, oversee teaching seminars, and avail myself to assist with difficult clinical cases. My enthusiasm for returning to academic and clinical activities - now on a voluntary, non-remunerative basis - has been welcomed and, I believe, has inspired others."

He remains a passionate educator, describing it as a cornerstone of what he does. "I encourage [up and coming medical professionals] to work hard and identify a good mentor. Be dedicated - do the best you can for the benefit of mankind. As you sow, so shall you reap."



PHILIP SMITH Super Group

"In 2009, Super Group was on the verge of collapse," says its current chief operating officer, Philip Smith. "The new chief executive and I believed in the business, and had a very clear vision of how it could be great again. We had to make some difficult decisions, and had to convince employees and shareholders of our plan and then ensure it was seamlessly implemented. Happily, our efforts paid off."

Today, Super Group provides logistics and mobility solutions across sub-Saharan Africa, the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australasia. Headquartered in South Africa and listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the group partners with blue-chip clients across multiple industries across the world. It leverages world-class expertise and cutting-edge technology to offer a variety of supply chain, dealership, and fleet solutions. It employs more than 14 900 people, and operates in 21 countries.

But keeping the business going during the COVID-19 pandemic and July 2021 riots also presented major challenges. "As an essential service provider, a large part of Super Group kept working throughout the pandemic. Keeping people focused required empathy and determination. Keeping teams motivated as volumes and revenue declined also required ongoing effort and concerted optimism that things would eventually get better," he says.

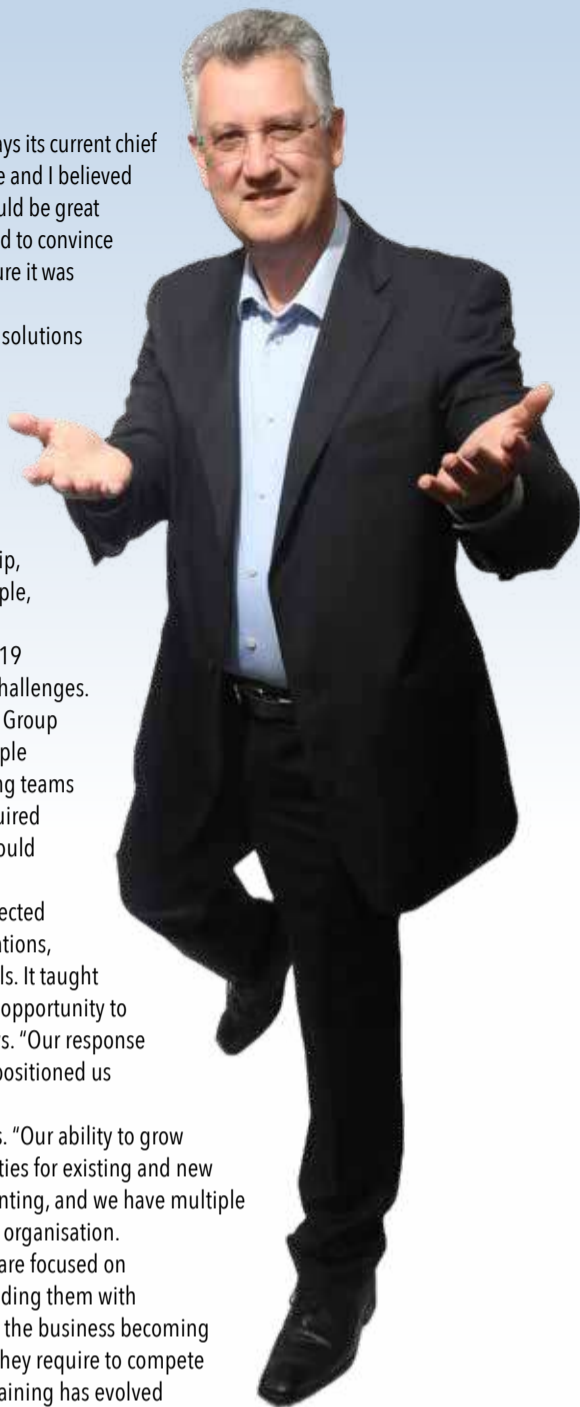
"The lockdown and related restrictions naturally affected our business, and by rationalisation of business operations, we have worked hard to recover to pre-pandemic levels. It taught us some extremely valuable lessons, and we took the opportunity to streamline and really embrace technology," Smith says. "Our response resulted in recovery to pre-pandemic levels, and has positioned us extremely well for the future."

He sees giving back as an important part of success. "Our ability to grow our business creates job and advancement opportunities for existing and new employees. The focus on skills development is unrelenting, and we have multiple development programmes in place at all levels of the organisation.

"Our learnership and apprenticeship programmes are focused on unemployed youth and people with disabilities, providing them with education, practical skills, and meaningful work. With the business becoming increasingly digitised, equipping staff with the skills they require to compete in a fast-changing world is critical and the nature of training has evolved substantially.

"I take my work seriously, and love what I do," Smith says. "The logistics business never sleeps, and demands a great deal of time and energy. I work hard every day to be the best leader and employee I can be, but being a good husband and father is far more important to me. The time dedicated to my family is sacred, and I never work on Shabbos."

On being nominated, he says, "I'm grateful to have been nominated among so many remarkable leaders. It will inspire me, my team, my family, and friends to continue striving for success in all our endeavours."



DR GARY SUDWARTS The Microsurgery

"We're known as pioneers, and are often called on to provide micro-invasive procedures in unique and complex cases – even on animals," says Dr Gary Sudwarts, who founded The Microsurgery, the leading provider of interventional radiological procedures in South Africa located in four cities.

Building an independent interventional radiology practice in South Africa "was thought to be impossible in South Africa", Sudwarts says. However, he made it a reality. "This is the international standard, and allows us to hone our skills with large numbers of cases, advance rapidly, and provide the highest possible level of skill and care."

Interventional radiology "offers diagnostic and interventional procedures that weren't previously possible or much more risky," Sudwarts says. "It gives hope and offers cures to people with cancer and innumerable other medical conditions. Rapidly expanding the field of radiology is desperately needed in South Africa."

For example, "embolisation is known to be a first line, non-invasive, low-risk treatment for fibroids of the uterus for many years. It was massively underutilised and therefore not accessible in South Africa. I perform the most procedures in the world each year. We've allowed many women to have babies, and not only changed, but saved lives."

He has also taught many students at the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, mentored doctors specialising in interventional radiology in South Africa, other African countries, and the United States, organised congresses and international experts to visit and share information, and supervised degrees and medical publications.

He's also an unremunerated specialist (honorary appointment) at Groote Schuur Hospital, and is the medical director and head of Ezra, an organisation offering a free emergency medical response service to the Jewish community of Cape Town.

Sudwarts has also been the doctor on the Trans-Siberian express train from Vladivostok to Moscow,

a flight doctor for Airmed Air Ambulance Service in the United Kingdom, the emergency doctor at the Isle of Man Motorcycle TT race, and has worked with the Red Cross Air Mercy Service on aeromedical evacuations in Cape Town.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an intense time, but "I sustained the practice through the toughest



"Move fast, think faster."

challenge in our lifetime on the frontline of the epidemic."

One recent memorable moment was when "I was contacted by a vet to assist in closing a complex congenital shunt in a dog's liver. I have never operated on a dog, but I managed to surround myself with the best people, convinced the human hospital to admit the animal, and performed the procedure – one of the first in the world!"

Regarding his nomination, he says, "It's great to showcase Jewish talent in South Africa. My patients are almost all non-Jews in extreme life situations. They trust me to care for and honour them as Jewish doctors have done for almost two centuries in South Africa."

ROMY WATERS Gesher Small Business Relief Fund

"This has been a project like no other," says Gesher Fund executive Romy Waters. The Gesher Fund was created in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as a "bridge" for businesses that were enduring stormy seas, and Waters was called on to assist.

"Working as a chartered accountant in a typically commercially orientated environment for 11 years, it has been humbling and gratifying working in a community-led non-profit organisation," says the 36-year-old mom of two.

"I have been the glue ensuring that almost every aspect of the fund has been able to operate according to its founding mandate. Processes, policies, and systems have been built along the way.

Managing more than 50 volunteers together with being the sole contact for almost 140 businesses has meant that I've ensured that I'm available almost all the time – especially during the COVID-19 waves that we experienced. Many of our clients still face huge amounts of financial distress, and requests to restructure existing loan agreements are an ongoing occurrence.

"Never waste a good crisis."

"Witnessing despair, panic, and uncertainty all around me" meant that the pandemic was probably "the most challenging period in my career", says Waters.

But her motto is "never waste a good crisis" and she realises that "if the pandemic hadn't been, I wouldn't have made the career shift, and Gesher wouldn't have been established. I'm a firm believer that opportunities always present themselves whenever there's a storm. While it's incredibly difficult to see opportunities while trying to

weather storms, they have taught me to be patient, positive, and proactive."

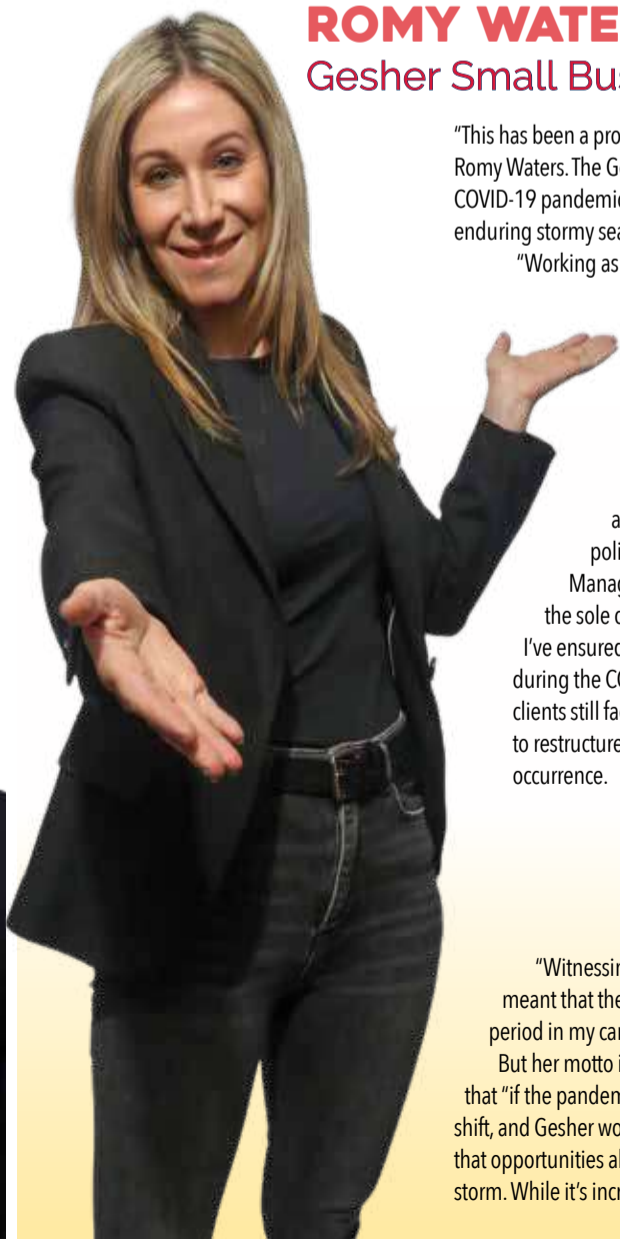
Her greatest achievement at Gesher is to "successfully collect more than 50% of our loan book back to date. The funds collected will be donated back to the community to assist other individuals who so desperately need assistance."

Looking back at how far things have come, Waters says, "Gesher has made a meaningful contribution to members of our community at a time when livelihoods evaporated overnight. Not only were the business owners assisted, but the thousands of people they employ and their many dependants as well as countless suppliers.

"By safeguarding businesses during the pandemic, we helped preserve jobs for all South

Africans and further our long-term mission of supporting the broader Jewish community. The hope was also to keep as many people as possible from needing welfare, and enable them to continue to be productive members of the community, to operate their businesses, and support their staff and other stakeholders."

Therefore, she says, "I feel uncomfortable accepting this nomination in a personal capacity and have requested that the entire Gesher team is recognised for its contribution to this project. It's sometimes easier to give money – time is far more difficult to give. This nomination acts an immense thank you to our entire team."





ABSA BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD



WINNER

Rob Leon

Leadership has “no magic formula”, says Rob Leon, 38, the youngest head of investment banking within RMB, “what works is empowering people to make their own decisions but always being around to offer your views and some insights.”

RMB operates in Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and India. Leon is a member of RMB’s main boards, and was the youngest head of a major business unit in the Investment Bank of RMB (the corporate and investment arm of the FirstRand Group) at the age of 32.

“If it doesn’t kill you, it makes you stronger.”

“People may not get it right 100% of the time,” says this year’s Absa Business Leadership Award winner, “but the process of learning how to evaluate the risk/return trade off by making a decision isn’t something that one can learn from watching others. If they made the wrong call, I don’t berate them for it either. That creates fear and limits their ability to improve next time.

“If they aren’t able to run independently and make calls, then your business can never scale outside of the time you have to devote to it.”

Says Absa Jewish Achiever Awards judge Dionne Ellerine Hirschowitz, “Rob deserves to win the Absa Business Leadership Award not only for his rapid rise in the finance world, but for inspiring younger generations with the astonishing trajectory of his career – and it’s only the beginning!

He’s the consummate professional, an extremely commercial business partner who cuts through complexity to provide optimal solutions,” she says. “In spite of his success, he has remained humble and continues to exceed his clients’ expectations.”

Leon’s career has had its share of obstacles, the most challenging of which was dealing with long-term major client Christo Wiese and his company, Pepkor, during the Steinhoff debacle. Steinhoff had bought a 20% share of Pepkor in 2014, three years before the Steinhoff accounting scandal.

“Christo Wiese called me and three of my colleagues just before the Steinhoff debacle was about to be made public,” said Leon. “He asked us to fly down to Cape Town that day as something had just happened, and he needed help to work through it.

“I left after I got the call with not even a bag, and stayed for weeks, including missing most of my family holiday, trying to understand the lay of the land and work out how to save Christo, Pepkor, as well as limit the banks’ exposure.

“It was a difficult environment to work in. I spent the next few months travelling and engaging with many local and international stakeholders on the situation and how to create some stability. It was tough because it was a very public event – you didn’t know what was real and what wasn’t, as well as who you could trust. It was a tricky and emotional period, and trying to handle it was certainly challenging.”

As co-manager of the largest team in the investment banking division, he says the core pillars of the business are large and mid-market private equity, investment holding companies and their portfolio companies, back economic empowerment solutions, family office group and growth capital. This business also manages the bank’s preference share book and corporate derivative funding transactions. “I was heavily involved in building all of these from the ground up, and have originated and executed transactions in all the silos. All heads and their underlying teams reported into me.”

Leon was also directly involved in or led key capital structure, restructuring, or general advisory mandates, as well as capital markets issuances for many of his major clients.

Earlier this year, he took on the added responsibility of RMB’s sponsor and specialised client segment. In this area, he says, it’s his vision to work with the “best and brightest” to innovate and build a business whose client relationships, service, and delivery stand head and shoulders above the rest.

“RMB has an incredible depth of diverse talent and a client list that has been instrumental in building up corporate South Africa,” he says. “I love the people I engage with daily, and RMB promotes a culture where everyone is entitled to their views. In fact, they actually have a duty to raise them, no matter how controversial they may be, which is something that keeps me on my toes and continually learning. No day is mundane, and I’m really grateful for the opportunity to work in such a vibrant and empowering environment.”

The pandemic was a particularly challenging time, but Leon took it in his stride. “Sometimes it’s about growth, sometimes it’s about survival. You need to be there for both,” he says.

“RMB has been supportive of its clients,” says Leon of the pandemic. “We could have been very strict, which would have cost jobs and destroyed good businesses, however we chose to partner and stay with them over the period which allowed most of them to come through relatively well. Now, we need to support them as they seek to grow and get back to normality. We also have a big role to play in the privatisation of infrastructure, which is something this country desperately needs.”

He admits that it was tough for everyone. “Our clients were in trouble, our staff was distanced, and we lost lots of good people over the period.

But we’re picking things up. Our digitisation journey, which we had embarked on prior to the pandemic, allowed us to manage our business remotely without massive inefficiencies or putting people at unnecessary risk.

“We have a good client base and really smart dealmakers who helped us navigate the tricky times, which meant that our balance sheet was still strong over the period even

though we had lots of volatility to deal with,” he says. “Thankfully, we’re spending more time back in the office and with our clients again. We’re certainly able to offer employees more flexibility than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but being together is also crucial. I would argue that these face-to-face interactions are even more important now.”

A sports enthusiast and self-proclaimed team player, Leon is a King David Linksfield and University of the Witwatersrand alumnus, having a BSc in actuarial science and maths stats, as well as a BSc Honours in advanced maths of finance. He’s an associate of the Wits faculty of actuaries.

He says he’s a product of his upbringing and the values he learnt along the way. “My parents instilled the values of hard work, always trying your best, and never giving up,” he says. I like to think I’m grounded, and try not to take life too seriously. My family keeps me sane, and I enjoy being a good all-rounder.”

He describes himself as a “proud South African Jew”, but says overall, he’s most proud to be a “husband to an amazing wife and father to three beautiful daughters”.



WINNER



Professor Wayne Derman

Not only did Professor Wayne Derman play a vital role in bringing sports medicine to South Africa, he excelled in the field and continues to lead the way locally and internationally. At only 59, he has played a role at the Olympic Games, Paralympics, FIFA World Cups, and even as flight surgeon to Cosmonaut Mark Shuttleworth – bringing professional excellence to everything he touches.

Running down the road not taken is an important part of his journey. After eight years and two Olympic Games as chief medical officer (CMO) of the South African Olympic team, Derman was assigned as team physician to the South African paralympic team. "Initially, I insisted that my expertise was for 'elite' athletes," he says. "Yet a colleague advised me that the best thing for me would be to experience a Paralympic Games. "I accepted the position, and I'm so grateful I did. Through my role as medical officer in Beijing and CMO in London in 2012, I was able to grow academically, clinically as a physician, and emotionally as a human being."

Derman is the executive head of the department of exercise, sport, and lifestyle medicine, and professorial chair and director of the Institute of Sport and Exercise Medicine (ISEM) at Stellenbosch University (SU).

"The institute's vision is to become a global leader in sport and exercise medicine through research, teaching, and translation to the community, thereby optimising the health and performance of all of its clients," says Derman. "A strong research thrust is safe sport and exercise for individuals with disability or impairment, improving life for those with disabilities in South Africa and internationally."

The department he heads has a high profile in research and service provision in low-resourced parts of South Africa. It recently developed one of the first sport and exercise medicine clinics in the public sector, at Tygerberg Hospital.

Derman is also director of the FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence and co-director of the South African International Olympic Committee (IOC) Research Centre for Injury Prevention and Protection of Health of the Athlete. In 2010, he served as medical officer for Cape Town for the FIFA World Cup.

Derman serves on the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) medical commission (as research lead), the IPC scientific commission, the independent expert panel of the IOC, and on the Health and Research Committee of the World Anti-Doping Agency.

He's also a past president of the South African Sports Medicine Association. Last year, he was appointed associate senior editor of the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, the primary journal in the field.

But when he began his career, "there was no formal degree, and no established career path in sports medicine", he says. He played a key role in the development of this specialty.

"I wanted to practice across a wide clinical spectrum, and sports medicine encompassed orthopaedics and internal medicine," he says. "The fact that this was medicine at the extremes of physiology was even more appealing – studying humans at speed, at maximal exercise, on top of the tallest mountains, and at the depths of the oceans."

The ocean was where it all started – he was born and raised in Cape Town, and attended King David Linksfield in Johannesburg. After graduating from medical school from the University of Pretoria, he completed an internship at

Baragwanath Hospital (Witwatersrand University).

"While studying medicine, I developed a passion for sport and chose to combine a medical career with my passion for exercise. I earned a BSc Hons [Sports Science] at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which I completed with distinction in 1988. I realised the positive impact that science exerted on my medical practice, and began my PhD while working in general practice and at the Sports Injury Clinic at UCT. In 1993, I graduated my PhD."

From 1990 to 1994, he worked as one of the founding members of the Sports Science Institute of South Africa, and established a partnership practice (Derman & SchwelInus), which served as a research and teaching platform for UCT, with many graduate sports physicians passing through its doors.

He was appointed senior lecturer with the division of exercise science and sports medicine in 1993, promoted to associate professor in 1998, and promoted to full professor in 2008. In 2015, he joined SU as founder and professorial chair of the Institute of ISEM.

"The Paralympics gave me an extra layer of complexity," he says. "Yet, when I went to the literature to learn about sports medicine for athletes with impairment, there was very little research."

So, in 2008, he approached the IPC to initiate a research programme to determine where the medical challenges lay in Paralympic sport. "I was subsequently appointed to the medical committee of the IPC as research leader of the Paralympic Injury and Illness Surveillance Study. With the assistance of fellow committee members and colleagues, I designed the first online tool for the collection of injury and illness data, as well as exposure data from the medical staff who accompanied teams to the Games."

Sports during the COVID-19 pandemic took on a whole new dimension, and Derman was appointed part of the international expert panel to oversee countermeasures to ensure safe delivery of the Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022 Paralympic Games. He also felt the impact of the pandemic personally. "My father died of COVID-19, as did family members on my wife's side of the family," he says.

Derman is also a passionate educator. He has supervised or co-supervised 11 PhD students, 39 MSc/MPhil students, and 26 Honours students. He has also published widely, lectured in more than 25 countries, and raised/co-raised more than R40 000 000 in research funding.

"Sport and exercise medicine is now a recognised career path," he says. "Posts for medical professionals are being created at four universities in South Africa. Students are playing an important role in enhancing quality and quantity of life for South Africans, particularly in lower-resourced environments."

Looking back, "I would choose the same career and research path. It's been such an honour to have been a pioneer in a new medical field and specialisation, as well as to conduct meaningful research that led to safer sport for athletes with a disability."



RUNNING DOWN THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD JUDGES

DAWN NATHAN-JONES
CEO, OVER THE RAINBOW

DR DORIANNE WEIL
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

MARTIN LYDALL
CEO, EUROPCAR

TARYN MARCUS
GROUP HR EXECUTIVE, METAIR INVESTMENTS

JOHANNA MAKGALEMELE
GROUP CEO, TRAVEL WITH FLAIR



CONGRATULATIONS

CAROL STEINBERG

The 2022 Europcar
Jewish Women
in Leadership Award
winner!



and Mazeltov to the nominees

**ANN | CLAUDINE | CORINNE | DEENA
GABI | GALIT | GINA | GRACE | JULIA
LAUREN | LINDA | MICHELLE | NADINE
PENNY | ROBYN | STEPHANIE**

Europcar is once again proud to honour the inspiring contribution that these remarkable women have made to South African society through exceptional leadership in their businesses and communities.

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EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD



MICHELLE BROWN Brown's PR

"I've always enjoyed co-ordinating, connecting and, dare I say it, being in control, so events management, public relations, and communication are a good fit," says Michelle Brown. Thirty-four years after launching her public relations and events company, Brown's PR, Brown continues to work from her home office in Gqeberha.

"I am my business," she says. "I manage several retainer PR corporate accounts; I mentor several younger and older women from graduates to entrepreneurs to those working in start-ups and corporates; and I connect people within a business framework." Today she counts Rand Merchant Bank, M&C Saatchi Abel, and Vodacom among her steady client base.

"I loved to organise at school and beyond," says Brown, reflecting on how she came to start her business. "Perhaps I took my cue from my late mom, Judith Harrisberg, who was also an organiser. Until her passing, she was international vice-president of the Union of Jewish Women, and highly regarded around the world." Brown says her late mother and father, who were her role models, taught her that "the game is always bigger than the man, and that we must never forget where we started".

"I've tried to ingrain the lessons they taught me into my two children," she says. "My greatest achievement is that my children have gone on to spread their wings, learning to manage life outside of their home comforts

"Stay true to your values."

while remaining loyal to the ties of family and the manner in which we raised them."

Having made a promise to give back when she first started her business, Brown is involved in various mentorship initiatives. "Being able to pay it forward and share my networks, experience, and guidance warms my heart," she says.

One of these mentorship projects is a Grade 11 boys workshop called #mentorthelboys, which exposes boys to various work possibilities, enabling them to develop their careers after matric. Twelve schools are invited to send 10 boys and a teacher to a free morning workshop offering inspiring guest speakers, food, and networking opportunities. The workshops are sponsored by her client, Vodacom.

Brown herself has benefitted from ongoing mentorship opportunities. "I'm never too old to learn more from those more experienced than I

am," she says. Working under

world-renowned event organiser Colin Cowie, who incidentally attended Selborne College in East London, at a three-day event for Oprah Winfrey in California in 2014, was an invaluable learning experience, she says.

Being employed as venue media officer at the 2010 FIFA World Cup was another goose-bump moment. "It proved to me that I could do the job," she says, "which meant that I could compete on a world stage. This was life affirming."



ANN BERNSTEIN Centre for Development and Enterprise

Ann Bernstein is focused on bridging the divide between policy and ideas that exist between business and government, academia and public policy, according to this founder and executive director of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE).

With a special focus on the role of business and markets in successful development, the CDE is an independent policy think tank established in 1995 that's deeply involved in finding solutions to South Africa's many core challenges.

"We 'speak truth to power' and are heard at the highest levels," says Bernstein, CDE's founder and executive director.

Brought up in Helen Suzman's parliamentary constituency, Bernstein ran Suzman's youth movement and later worked for her in Parliament. "My professional life has been spent trying to make South Africa a better place for all its citizens," she says. Long acknowledged as one of the country's leading development experts and policy analysts, she has done just that.

In her 27 years of running the CDE, Bernstein has made an indelible impact on the country. "I'm a South African optimist," she says. "I think we can build



"Bearing in mind I'm in the business of telling the country what to do, to be a good friend, always anxious about how little I know and how much I have to learn."

a great country, even today. We can consolidate our democracy and make sure that it delivers for everyone. Business-funded independent organisations have helped me to make a rather different contribution to building a better society."

Understanding South Africa and the best way of improving people's lives comes with listening to and engaging with different people from across the country. Speaking of her leadership philosophy, Bernstein says ideas and individuals matter.

"People who want to be leaders need to have courage,"

she says. "What always matters is the future of the country and its citizens, not position, vested interests, or past affiliations. Individuals and small groups with courage and some good ideas can bring about great change for the better."

Bernstein has spearheaded countless projects. One recent example is the largest initiative ever funded by the CDE. "In 2020, I arranged the involvement of the world's leading growth strategy thinkers, Professor Ricardo Hausmann and the Growth Lab at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, to work in South Africa with National Treasury and wider government to deal with our fiscal crisis, addressing the challenge of faster growth and much more inclusion." This will continue through to late 2023.

Ultimately, Bernstein is proud of having established a unique organisation that has survived for the past 27 years, and of building a team of people committed to what the CDE does and how it does it. "Creating a space in South Africa where we're respected and heard by many people who sit in different places in the country - government, political parties, nongovernmental organisations, journalists, and others is also a considerable achievement," she says.

DR PENNY BERNSTEIN

As a haematopathologist, a doctor trained to diagnose diseases of the blood cells, Dr Penny Bernstein is one of the intermediaries between patients and clinical doctors. In her 16 years at Ampath, Bernstein was in charge of haematopathology at various private hospital laboratories including Linksfield, Fourways/Broadacres, Sunninghill, and more. She also worked at one of the main reference laboratories, Metalbox.

"As medical professionals, we had less chance to 'leave' real life during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, doing work as usual in addition to extra family responsibilities such as home-schooling," she says. For the mother of 11-year-old twins, multitasking and maintaining a work-life balance has been one of her biggest challenges. "I work in the

mornings and have been on call after hours and on weekends for the past 16 years in private pathology practice," she says. "Afternoons are spent being a 'taxi driver' to our amazing sporty and social children."

Yet, for Bernstein, life is about to change. "I'm about to embark on my next medical adventure," she says. "I'm returning to my alma mater, Wits Medical School/NHLS [National Health Laboratory Service] to pursue my higher academic degree PhD and further research. I will also be lecturing and teaching medical students and registrars haematology and molecular medicine."

This new journey ties into her belief in an educational and transformational leadership. Always seeking new learning and

"Intelligence (IQ) and emotional quotients (EQ) are equally important."

teaching opportunities, Bernstein says she wishes there was more time and money to travel the world. "The out-of-classroom or lecture-theatre education and learning opportunities are immense."

She stresses the importance of leading by example, remaining level-headed and persistent, and honouring trust and ethics in all one does. As such, she's inspired by her mother and late grandparents, all of whom she considers to be her role models. Bernstein's family legacy is entrenched in the medical field. "My late maternal grandfather, Professor Ralph Bernstein, was a chemical pathologist at Wits/SAIMR [South African Institute for Medical Research] for many years," she says. "He was a brilliant, humble, and considerate academic doctor, researcher, father, husband, and grandfather."

"My late maternal grandmother, Dr Mary Salkinder, was a cancer researcher and radiologist, a woman before her time. She won the Eleanor Roosevelt award and worked on the Philadelphia chromosome mutation BCR-ABL which we now use in daily haematology/oncology practice. She was exceptional in all spheres - medicine, home, and family life."

Her mother, Irene, isn't just an excellent and hard-working occupational therapist, she's also always been a great source of support to Bernstein and her family. "I hope to utilise all the morals and values my special and dear family has inculcated in me over the years in both my work and home life."



GALIT COHEN Ripples for Change

Israeli-born and East London-based Galit Cohen is the director and founder of Ripples for Change, a non-profit organisation that empowers rural communities in the Eastern Cape through strategic partnerships. "I believe that if we strengthen rural areas and offer more opportunities to people, we can rebuild vibrant rural communities and slow down the pressure on cities and towns," Cohen says.

Among its extensive work, the non-profit organisation supports 212 early childhood development centres and runs a range of initiatives to help youth and entrepreneurs ensure their own livelihood. "We work with rural communities, working with their existing structures, and building the capacity of local leaders and change agents," she says. "We support the development of sustainable initiatives rather than interfering in communities' structures in a way that could have unintended consequences."

Cohen's journey of working in nongovernmental organisations and development programmes began in 2002 when she joined Afrika Tikkun, initially as a volunteer and ultimately as national director of projects. "Ann Harris is my role-model for many things," she says. "She was my first immediate boss in Afrika Tikkun, she taught me many things including how to write proposals with our secret 'red-pen alert', and she gave me enough freedom to find my way. She demonstrated the kind of manager I became."

Of all her accomplishments, Cohen considers her family to be her greatest. "I built my family brick by brick," she says, "from being a respite mother of a wonderful five-year-old boy, to adopting him, to buying a home for us, to getting us a dog, and adopting my second son". Though being a single working mother with a demanding job and ambition brings challenges, Cohen is grateful for the ongoing support of her "South African family" and friends.

When her oldest son recently faced a wave of traumatic memories from his past, Cohen experienced the lack of mental health-services for young people in East London. Though she got him the help he needed in Johannesburg, she decided to help change the situation. "I'm planning a committee in East London that will bring the entire referral system including counselling, a diversion centre, psychologists, and psychiatrists specialising in children and youth, as well as a youth wing in our local St Mark's Clinic," she says.

She's also negotiating with potential donors to offer scholarships for psychiatrists with an interest in specialising in children and youth, a massive gap she's identified. "In a country where most of the population are young, we can't allow such a shortfall," she says. "We need to act, together."

It's this unwavering passion for collaborating to change social ills that has led Cohen to building such an inspiring and impactful organisation.



GINA FLASH Mensch

Gina Flash believes that through Jewish social justice network Mensch, she has been the catalyst for creating new spaces for Jewish South Africans to live their values and create a better country for all.

"Life is a wonder!"

Flash is the founder and executive director of Mensch, which supports individuals, organisations, and communities to create a fair and equitable South Africa.

Mensch works with more than 120 individuals and organisations, offering them skills training, collaboration, funding, and mentoring opportunities so they can have the most impact. It also focuses on community service, offering opportunities to do good, and gives philanthropic advice, partnering with donors seeking to make transformational change.

Flash's passion for social change and development was born during her many years of living abroad, where she ultimately found meaning in Northern Thailand. She ran the field office of a small nongovernmental organisation working with refugees from Burma, immersing herself in the world of international development and aid. She ultimately decided to return to South Africa and continue the work of improving lives in her own country.

In her subsequent job as communications and social change manager for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies' Cape Town office, Flash encountered many Jewish individuals working to transform South Africa. "Yet our community was largely unaware of them," she says, "and broader society was unlikely to know that they were Jews doing this important work. There was no network or formal Jewish grouping to connect them to each other and the Jewish community."

Armed with the desire to form such a network and just R120 000 to start it, Flash took a leap of faith and left the Board. The organisation's success is testament to the power of her vision.

Flash believes in shared leadership. "That's because leadership shines brightly in different people at different times," she says. "Leadership doesn't mean you have to be up front, always in the limelight, or telling people what they should be doing."

"It's about listening and being sensitive to what people and communities need and are looking for, and then creating and holding space for it to grow. It's about shining light on examples of things that are working and positive, and fanning those flames to light the way for others."

Flash learnt the power of lighting the way for others after being forced recently to take a step back after having a baby. Yet, by empowering her second-in-command and taking maternity leave, she learnt the value of time off, realising that "a lot can grow if we sometimes get out of the way".

She's since taken on a far more strategic role, focused on honing the organisation's direction and improving donor relations and fundraising efforts.

"I hope to continue to grow Mensch from this angle, empowering others to increase our impact on the ground," she says.



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GABRIELLA FARBER Political Activist

Wits law student Gabriella Farber aims to bring change, hope, and renewal wherever possible, and she's involved in multiple organisations that help to fulfil this calling.

Among her many roles, Farber is the spokesperson for the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League Gauteng executive and the deputy secretary general of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) at Wits. She's also an active member of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), where she formerly served as chairperson.

Farber believes she brings a message of hope to the Jewish community and the country as a whole. "I have put myself in environments in which people don't expect to find a white, Jewish girl," she says.

"Instead of being complacent and continuing with my life, I decided to get involved in the place in which I find myself, something which, unfortunately, has become rare amongst young Jews, South Africans, and the world at large. My message is to stop complaining, and start doing something to bring about change."

Farber considers "being a proud, religious Jewish, Zionist, white girl in the ANC" to be among her greatest achievements. Faced by a protest on her first day of university, Farber was disturbed by how black and white students gathered in two different corners. "It was a living textbook of apartheid," she says. When she subsequently decided to get involved in SAUJS, Farber was again disillusioned. "Through that experience, I was faced with a lot of hostility," she says. "No student group would work with us as we were labelled the racist, Zionist colonisers and supporters of apartheid. Once again, it really



disturbed me. I knew something had to change."

So she became involved in the Progressive Youth Alliance, an alliance between the Students Union, the ANC, and the Young Communist League. "I felt so connected to their causes, beliefs, and loved how much change they were making for students who didn't have the opportunity or ability to make the change themselves," she says. Farber later successfully led a national protest called WitsAsimali, "Fees Must Fall 2.0",

which took off in universities across the country, raising R20 million in both 2021 and 2022

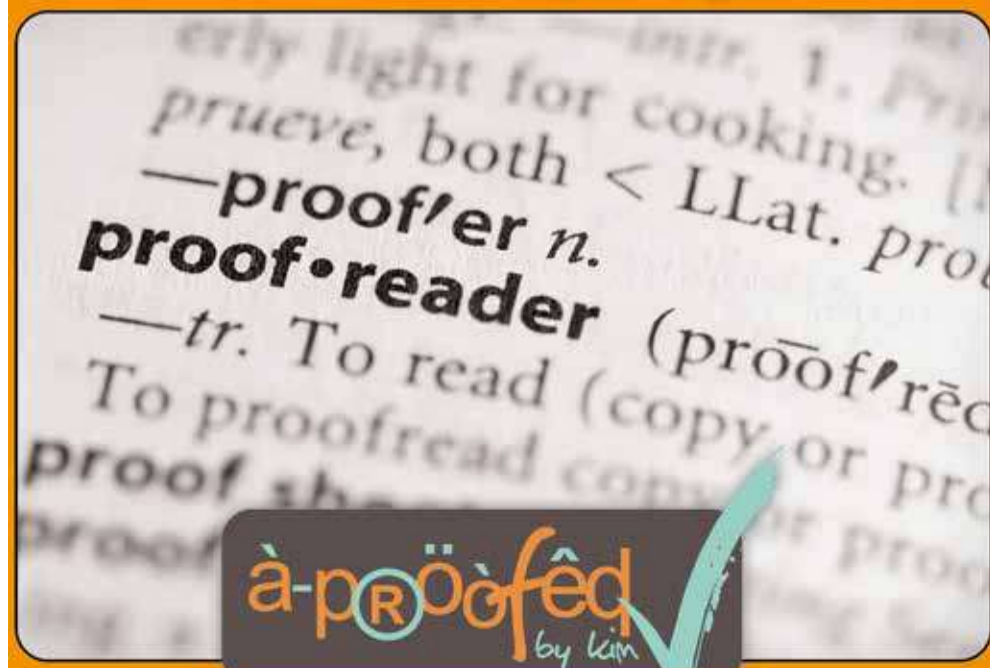
to register students who were financially excluded. She's also fought misconceptions

about Israel, even taking politicians previously aligned with the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions organisation on an Israel discovery trip.

Farber ultimately plans to run for parliament and change the education system to bring about sustainable solutions to South Africa's challenges. It's clear she has the tenacity to make it happen. "People view me as a leader because I'm brave and have done the unexpected, things that have never been done before," she says. "Through it all, I've stayed honest and proud of who I am, no matter who might try to stop me."

"Don't complain until you do something about it."

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LINDA GREENWALL
 Dental Wellness Foundation

Dentist Linda Greenwall wanted to give back to this country in the only way she could, by helping improve the dental health of South African children in need. So far, she has helped 18 000 children at 369 schools in the Cape Town and surrounding areas.

"Dentistry is my vocation," says Greenwall. "I'm inspired to do good and make the world a better place. I have provided the highest standard of care for patients over the past 38 years. I wanted to give back, and had a vision for influencing positive change in the lives of the less fortunate. I was determined to be the change that was necessary."

High rates of tooth decay in South African children was in the news, and the Western Cape was among the biggest problem areas. After seeing oral health inequality for herself in the inadequate facilities and lack of basic oral healthcare, Greenwall contacted the mayor of Cape Town and the province's health minister to find out what could be done to make a difference in the oral health of children.

She founded the Dental Wellness Foundation (DWF) in the United Kingdom in 2011 and in South Africa in 2014. "Prevention of dental



"There's no better way to flood life with meaning than to have lifted others." – Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

disease is the focus of the foundation," she says.

As part of its mandate, the DWF's LiveSmart supervised toothbrushing programme teaches children the basic skill of cleaning their teeth daily and handwashing to prevent oral and systemic disease. It has grown substantially since it launched in four schools in the townships of Khayelitsha and Mfuleni with 100 children and one teacher.

The programme employs and trains toothbrushing supervisors known as "toothbrush mamas" from township communities.

"We created jobs for more than 25 women, and built them up to be leaders in their different communities," says Greenwall. "The toothbrush mamas innovate on the best ways to deliver oral health and be relevant and beneficial to children in the communities they serve. They do this through song, dance, and a positive outlook on life. Through hope and love for the children, they help to give them a brighter future. I have learnt a great deal from them."

DWF SA also reaches these children after school through the same programmes and soup kitchens, established at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and still functioning to address lingering food shortages. It's also in the process of running a new dental research study, and launching new outreach programmes in communities through a mobile dental clinic in collaboration with the University of the Western Cape's dental school.

Through it all, Greenwall lives by her belief, "Be positive, and roll up your sleeves to do whatever needs to be done by getting involved in the cause, the issue, and the community."

GRACE HARDING Ocean Basket

Ocean Basket Chief Executive Grace Harding has led the transformation of the Ocean Basket brand as well as its growth into 16 countries with 230 restaurants. Being in charge of this now international South African seafood casual dining restaurant group, Harding is a born disruptor, jumping in to work on a transformation project and never looking back.

With a track record that includes more than 10 years' experience in fashion retail and 15 years running her own consultancy specialising in employee engagement and leadership, Harding was well-equipped to take the reins when Ocean Basket came knocking in 2012.

Harding is especially proud of bringing the brand into the United Kingdom (UK), a deal forged in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We found and negotiated our first site online, put together a team, and opened on 14 February 2022," she says. "Entry into the UK is a huge milestone for Ocean Basket – the beginning of true global expansion." But this was just the latest territory. To date, Ocean Basket has restaurants in Cyprus, Mauritius, Dubai, Kazakhstan, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Qatar, Kuwait, Malta, Zambia, Namibia, and South Africa.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Harding formed The Restaurant Collective to unite and represent the sit-down restaurant industry. "My leadership through COVID-19 was probably the biggest achievement to date," she says.

"I not only held our brand together – there were no retrenchments at our support centres in Cyprus or South Africa – but also took the lead in starting non-profit operation

The Restaurant Collective," she says. "We provided support, training, manuals, and guidelines for all restaurants, held Zoom sessions on understanding TERS [the Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme], and led positive engagement with key government departments." The NPO continues to educate and upskill people in hospitality.

Accessible and approachable, Harding sees herself as a true "servant leader". "I don't really speak or feel like other CEOs," she says. "I tell it like it is, spend my time 'on the shop floor', I am insatiably curious, and put others first. I drive the activities that produce the results. I truly live by the mantra of 'it's not about me'. I've always strived to make business better through people."

Describing herself as an insatiable teacher, mentor, and driver of success, Harding wants to be remembered as a rule breaker dedicated to people and leadership development. "The building of a management team is never-ending," she says. "I obsess with my leaders. They are my focus. We invest in coaching, therapy, group discussions, and abundant feedback. I must create the environment, and they must own their part. We're a team, each accountable for a piece of our brand. We're all chief executives of our own work."

A committed wife and mother, Harding believes in integration rather than balance. "I have always managed to blend my family and work," she says. "My work isn't work. It's my purpose. My kids have come to meetings and have been exposed to amazing things."



GRACE IS ALSO A NOMINEE IN THE PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE CATEGORY

NADINE HURWITZ Gript Refuse Bags

Nadine Hurwitz understands the unnecessary frustration people have in trying to identify which side the trash bag opens and how to do it easily.

So, she developed and launched Gript Refuse Bags. These gold and blue-coloured refuse bags open with greater ease compared to standard black refuse bags, says Hurwitz, a qualified chartered accountant.

"Through the placement of the logo, one can easily identify the top and bottom of the bag. They are strong at 25 microns, and are produced locally."

The refuse bags, aimed at everyday consumers, are made from recycled materials, are eco-friendly, ultra-durable, and spacious, Hurwitz says. "They don't tear easily, even when gathering garden refuse."

Hurwitz, who loves doing outreach, Pilates, and teaching ballet barre, says she's planning on expanding to make other everyday products more easy to use.

It was because she was retrenched in 2020 that she was able to launch her business, which she believes will thrive with its philosophy of "honesty, transparency, and

improving lives". Hurwitz says businesses should adopt an equitable distribution of income, which will help create jobs, improve education, and develop skills in South Africa.

She believes in organisational psychologist and bestselling author, Adam Grant's, quote, "The most meaningful way to succeed is to help others to succeed."

"I believe in making a lasting impact on my colleagues, clients, and business," she says. "I've brought this belief to fruition by investing in my team's professional development, driving the Nashua Children's Charity Foundation CSI [corporate social investment] initiative,

mentoring the article clerks during my audit career, and growing the business." She also believes Jewish principles help her to maintain balance between work, family, and community commitments.



NADINE IS ALSO A NOMINEE IN THE EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CATEGORY

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RABBI JULIA MARGOLIS

Beit Luria Progressive Synagogue

Formerly the only female rabbi to hold office in South Africa, Rabbi Julia Margolis is a member and was until recently chairperson of the South African Association of Progressive Rabbis.

"I founded Beit Luria in 2016 when it came to me that there was a need for South African Jews and their friends to feel accepted as they were," she says. "I wanted to create a space that was more contemporary, celebrating the Jewish faith in a more modern and inclusive way."

Raised in a family with deep roots in the reform movement, Margolis is the daughter of female rabbi, Rabbi Elena Rubinstein. Born in Moscow in the then USSR, Margolis was 12 years old when she and her family made aliya. Her mother was the first Russian-speaking female rabbi in Israel.

"I knew early on that I wanted to follow in her footsteps," says Margolis. "The journey to getting there was interesting and fulfilling."

Serving as an education officer in the Israel Defense Forces, she went on to study, attaining a master's degree in Jewish Studies amongst other qualifications. Later ordained as a rabbi in Germany, she has worked in the reform movement in Israel and around the world.

Coming to South Africa in 2009, Margolis worked in different progressive synagogues before founding Beit Luria. "As a young community, we focus on providing a welcoming environment of trust, friendship, and common ground to all who seek to be part of the shul," Margolis says.

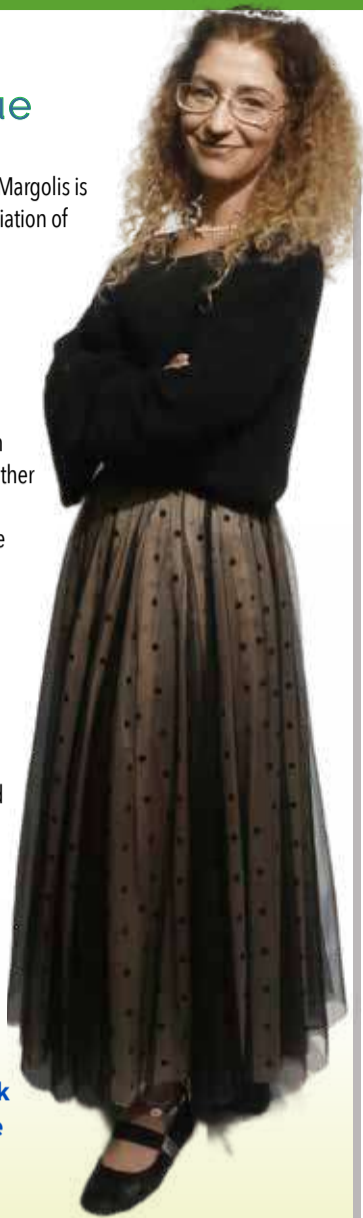
During COVID-19, the shul pivoted to offer online services, with the unexpected benefit of having Jews from around the world join the community. The shul continues to offer hybrid services with in-person and online attendance.

"I believe in guiding others to find their own solutions in life," says Margolis, speaking of her leadership philosophy. "I'm there in support, to talk or debate, but ultimately, I find it incredibly rewarding to watch someone find their own solutions and know that I was a part of it in some small way as a witness."

As a rabbi, Margolis says there is no balance. "I love being a rabbi. It doesn't feel like work," she says. "I'm blessed beyond words to have loved ones who support and understand that just as I'm a mom, I'm a rabbi. The two go hand in hand."

Margolis says her greatest disappointment is being judged purely on her gender. "When we ask why we need women rabbis, we need to realise that at the same time, we may ask why we need female lawyers or doctors," she says. "No matter what one faces, it's important to stand up for what you believe in, to stand tall, and keep trying."

"We must seek truth in our world and not be afraid to live according to those truths. And we mustn't be afraid to speak up when those truths are questioned."



ANN NUROCK

Relationship Audits and Management

Reinventing her life at the age of 55, Ann Nurock resigned from her high-powered top job in Toronto, choosing to return to her beloved Cape Town. Having worked for Grey Advertising for a total of 20 years, first in South Africa and then as Grey Advertising Canada's president and chief executive for three years, Nurock took a brief sabbatical upon her return.

In 2012, she was appointed partner for Relationship Audits and Management Africa, a global consultancy rooted in extensive marketing experience that specialises in the measurement and optimisation of business-to-business (B2B) relationships.

"We use our proprietary online tool, Radar, which provides a real-time and accurate picture of key business relationships," Nurock says. This yields actionable intelligence that assists companies in managing risk, driving growth, and attaining a competitive advantage through the quality of their business relationships.

Starting the company in South Africa from scratch, Nurock was forced to reintegrate herself into the country's business environment. "I began all over again after 30 years in the advertising industry in a different sector of business," she says. "Through enormous hard work, consistent commuting between Cape Town and Joburg, tenacity, and passion, I grew the company from nothing to

one that operates on a global scale."

Though the transition her move and new role required was far from easy, it was undoubtedly worth it, says Nurock. "My greatest challenge was trying to adapt to the Canadian way of doing business. I wasn't well versed in their culture and made numerous mistakes. It had a major impact on my confidence."

Realising that she missed South Africa, Nurock resigned from Grey and returned to Cape Town with her husband. "My perceived failure in Canada was probably my greatest gift and lesson," she says. "It brought me to Cape Town, and I found a new career path where I can truly make a difference."

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges but it opened the door to virtual connections, enabling Nurock to expand her client base internationally and hire more employees. "My business doubled in 18 months, which also allowed me to employ women with children who had research experience but no work due to COVID-19," she says. "Over the past three years, my staff complement grew from two to six, with three of the six being women of colour."

During the pandemic, she also fulfilled her passion for giving back by launching a mentorship programme for small, black-owned advertising agencies to assist them in challenging times.

Now 66, Nurock is often asked when she plans to retire. "As long as I'm healthy enough, I want to keep on working and paying it forward," she answers. "I believe ageism is a fallacy, and shouldn't discourage women from following their dreams."



CORINNE OSSENDRYVER

Jewish Interactive

Corinne Ossendryver, the global chief production officer for Jewish Interactive (Ji), believes she is privileged to be able to develop tools for Jewish teachers around the world to help them teach Hebrew, Jewish Studies, and a love of Israel in a way that young children can relate to.

As a founding member of this non-profit organisation dedicated to providing joyful Jewish learning anytime, anywhere, Ossendryver has combined her creative talents with her ability to simplify concepts that need to be taught. She then combines these ideas, working with graphic artists, animators, sound engineers, and programmers, to bring them to life.

"My experience over the years with teachers and their difficulties has given me a unique insight into what's needed to design and develop the best new platform for Jewish teachers and students," says Ossendryver.

She began back in 2010 in Johannesburg creating apps for young children to learn about Jewish topics in a fun way. Now, Ji has team members in Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It's operational in Jewish schools, synagogues, and homes in more than 80 countries. The surge of the COVID-19 pandemic led to major growth for the organisation, as demand for virtual learning skyrocketed.

As such, Ossendryver has led the development of Ji's educational platform,

Jigzi. It addresses the unique needs of Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers, enabling them to create their own interactive content and games.

Post pandemic, Ossendryver is getting "back to life" by returning to classrooms to show teachers the innovations Jigzi brings. "I love seeing their excitement at the new features, including automatic game generators, Hebrew text tools, and a vast image library of Jewish and Hebrew topics."

"Always do the right thing."

With remote work becoming the new norm, however, Ossendryver misses the stimulation of being in an office with "live" people. "I'm on Zoom all day and in the evening with various team members around the world, making decisions, discussing issues, and finding solutions, but it would be great to be around a table, in person," she says.

Indeed, Ossendryver's leadership style is rooted in meaningful interaction. "I listen to all sides, all suggestions, and all creative ideas, and then together, we decide on the best way forward - with a little 'push' in the direction I believe a product should go," she says.

Among her proudest accomplishments, which include raising exceptional children and being happily married, Ossendryver cites Ji Alef-Bet a Hebrew-reading series that she recently wrote and produced.

"This is especially true when I hear from teachers around the world how their children's Hebrew reading has improved, and how they love the series. I'm particularly proud since I applied the teaching method that my grandmother, Rebecca Ostrowiak, and my mom, Edna Freinkel, a previous winner in this category, developed to teach children and adults to read."

CLAUDINE ULLMAN

Jittery Citizens and Mrs SA Finalist

"Powerful leadership is about knowing who you are and what your superpower is, and having the confidence to show up fully as you and share those gifts with the world," says comedian and entrepreneur Claudine Ullman. Through her improv comedy company, Jittery Citizens, Ullman does just that.

Jittery Citizens offers corporate training, entertainment team building, and comedy shows. As the only improv comedian who offers accredited international and local improv and stand-up comedy courses to corporates, Ullman has found a way to translate her passion into a thriving business. "The work I do allows people to find their authentic voice and operate from their creative genius," she says.

Having lost two Jittery Citizens members during the COVID-19 pandemic, one to COVID-19 and the other to suicide, Ullman also uses comedy to promote mental health. She created an online offering during the pandemic called Comedy to Curb Anxiety, which offered weekly Zoom sessions.

"Our feedback was incredible. We saw the power of using comedy to combat mental-health issues," she says.

Ullman plans to turn that Zoom training into a pre-recorded offering so people can access this training whenever they need it. She also offers

"inspired improv" which allows people to circumnavigate the post-pandemic world and live inspired lives.

Ullman is also proud to be a Mrs South Africa finalist, joking that the most surprising thing about her is probably that she's a beauty queen. Yet, considering her commitment to motivate women to be the best version of themselves, it's fitting that she would be regarded as a strong female role model.

"I want to empower my fellow comedians and businesswomen to upskill themselves, find their authentic voice, and share their superpower with others," says Ullman. Yet, she argues that many women don't feel safe enough to

"I uplift the world, spreading joy and light by giving others the gift of laughter."

DEENA PITUM Jawitz Properties

Deena Pitum has made a massive impact on the property market in the three years that she's been a full-time property professional. She won National Agent of the Year in her first year, and was a runner-up in her second. It's all the more impressive considering the fact that she started at Jawitz just three months before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

"I ensured that I kept in contact with all my clients during lockdown and came out firing, so much so that I sold 54 properties within 10 months after lockdown," she says. "As a single mother both financially and emotionally, I had no choice but to make a success of my career in order to support my children and my parents, while also dealing with a teenager with severe anxiety, which came with huge medical expenses."

Having previously worked as a conveyancing secretary, Pitum was eventually headhunted by one of her property clients to become their sales manager. This opportunity allowed her to earn a small living while learning the business and completing her professional property practitioner qualification, which helped to shape her future.

"Yet, balancing being a single parent to two daughters, working a full-time job including evenings and weekends, as well as studying and mentoring 26 agents became quite a challenge," she says. "After three years, I took the giant leap to become a full-time real estate agent."



That's not to say that her role doesn't come with its challenges. "As a commission earner, I earn only when I sell properties," she says. "It's all about building relationships, exceptional service, and trust. Working 18 hours a day, seven days a week is the only option."

Yet, Pitum's managed to create a better work/life balance by enlisting the help of the team she's built around her. "At first, I ran my business totally on my own," she says. "Eventually, when you reach burn out, you need to get help." She therefore now has a full-time assistant, a telephone canvasser – her mother – and a part-time pamphlet dropper for marketing. "This has been life-changing, allowing me to take half days off on the weekends to spend with the family as well as short holidays," she says.

Yet, she says, success is all about attitude. "One of my unique assets in this industry is that I have a great attitude, a constant smile on my face, and a good sense of humour."

"My dream is eventually to become a motivational speaker to help women who have experienced what I have, who are feeling totally alone and desperate," Pitum says. "We hold our future in our hands, it's all in the mind, but sometimes we need something or someone to help us to see the light."

"Live with integrity, honesty, and kindness, and be hardworking and charitable."

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LAUREN SEGAL Constitution Hill Trust

Lauren Segal has a unique blend of skills as the founding director and curator of research, heritage, and design company, Trace, and the curator of the Constitution Hill Trust, a nongovernmental organisation that she helped set up to promote the Constitution.

"I'm a storyteller, historian, educator, and leader of multidisciplinary teams," she says. Along with her curation work, Segal has written several books and produced multiple drama and factual television series. "I like to think that I bring a distinctive combination of intellect and emotional intelligence to my work, and that this aspect of my leadership approach has greater impact on my colleagues and our audiences."

Through her work with Trace, Segal has researched and curated several high-profile exhibitions which include the permanent exhibition at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, which tells the story of the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide through the eyes of survivors as well as the archive of victims.

"I'll never forget the face of one of the Holocaust survivors when she saw a doll that she had kept during her years of hiding in the newly opened Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre exhibition," says Segal. "She had never told her life story before, and in that moment of sharing her story publicly for the first time, something transformational took place."

"Live fully, authentically, and generously."

For Segal, a four-time cancer survivor, telling her own story through her personal memoir, *Cancer, A Love Story*, written at the time of her last diagnosis, has been integral to her journey of healing. "I found an inner courage to face each of these diagnoses with a sense of hope and possibility in spite of the immense terror that I



felt at the time," she says.

"My book, published in 2017, was both a way of making sense of my own experience but also using my skills as a writer to encourage others to face challenges, lean into the pain, and have the courage to draw strength from others to heal even when it feels impossibly difficult to do so."

Segal has subsequently become involved in the Breast Health Foundation to ensure that women in a similar situation are educated and given access to treatment, something she says is sorely lacking in South Africa. In addition to the family that she and her husband have raised together and her work with Constitution Hill, Segal considers providing access to breast-cancer treatment to be among her greatest accomplishments.

"I helped set up the first testing and chemotherapy treatment centre in the small town of Bushbuckridge, where women have for decades had no treatment for breast cancer unless they travelled three hours to Johannesburg." She hopes to continue to facilitate such treatment projects and spread breast-cancer awareness.



start their own enterprises or perform, especially in light of the country's high rate of gender-based violence.

Having herself been the victim of sexual assault at a comedy event, Ullman decided to create *Sisters Who Slay*, a community forum to empower females in the industry. "The comedy industry has no human-resources team to which we can report such incidents, so we have no support or way of feeling safe when we perform," she says. "Through *Sisters Who Slay*, we work toward giving women a platform to express themselves and offer support to females in our comedy community."

Ullman knows she's capable of anything she puts her mind to as long as she remains authentic and open to new experiences. "I've walked on hot coals, performed in front of thousands of people, and walked the runway in an itsy-bitsy-teeny-weeny-yellow-polka-dot bikini," she says. "What can I not do?"

STEPHANIE WEIL Miss South Africa Chief Executive (Weil Entertainment)

"Miss South Africa has been a passion and empowerment platform not only for me, but many young women in this country," says Miss South Africa Chief Executive Stephanie Weil. In a history spanning more than 60 years, The Miss South Africa company has been owned by various entities and individuals. In 2019, Weil bought it and its assets through her company, Weil Entertainment.

"The pageant had always been a project that was close to my heart," she says. "My goal was to redefine pageantry, not only in South Africa but around the world. I've managed to reshape the narrative of a beauty platform into one of empowerment with the ideal of creating an army of strong female leaders."

Weil's link to Miss South Africa stems from her late mother, well-known public relations (PR) guru Suzanne Weil who, in her PR capacity, transformed the look of the pageant for the new millennium. "She was a dynamo, a visionary who inspired me both with her incredible work ethic and her vision. After her passing, I was determined to grow her company and its values in her honour."

The pageant was the perfect vehicle for Weil to achieve this goal. "Realising what an incredible platform this could be for women in South Africa, I made the decision to take over the pageant at the age of 29 with a clear vision of what pageantry needs to become."

Championing inclusivity, Weil has transformed the concept of beauty pageants and beauty itself, going beyond a certain shape, size, skin, or hair colour, and including women who can be anything from straight, gay, transgender, married, or mothers.

Today, Miss South Africa is a year-round business that creates a platform for women's rights and social justice.

"My greatest achievement is winning Miss Universe 2019 with Zozibini Tunzi," says Weil, "and changing the narrative of what an international beauty queen looks like and stands for."

"Adapt, improvise, and overcome."

Weil most values the belief that she and Tunzi shared in one another.

Yet, she's faced her fair share of controversy, particularly when former Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane faced calls from the government, business, and the public to boycott

Miss Universe 2021 as it was being held in Israel. For Weil, this was a source of great disappointment.

"On a professional level, however, I was able to overcome this by consulting with individuals of an aligned value structure, and remaining focused on the overarching goal of empowering a young South African woman to live out her dream on the global stage," she says. "On a personal level, I stayed true to my core beliefs, and held on to the support of the Jewish community and the importance of being a Jewish woman in today's world."





WINNER

Carol Steinberg

SENIOR ADVOCATE



EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD

FEAR AND LINGUISTICS - COUNSEL AGAINST CORRUPTION

Human rights advocate Carol Steinberg has spent her varied career “using words to bring social justice to South Africa”. As a senior advocate at the Johannesburg Bar, she has specialised in constitutional and public law.

In the post-state-capture era, she has spent much of her time “trying to claw back some of the billions that were stolen”.

She also led the Nugent Commission of Enquiry into the South African Revenue Service, and prosecuted former South African Airways boss Dudu Myeni and had her convicted as a delinquent director for life. Steinberg has a special interest in freedom of expression, and recently stood up in the Constitutional Court on behalf of the Holocaust & Genocide Centre to win an antisemitic hate-speech case.

Steinberg is a founding executive member of the first non-racial group at the Bar, Thulamela Chambers. She hasn't just made her mark as a human rights advocate, she previously spent years building a career in the arts.

She co-wrote three critically acclaimed plays, all of which were published by Wits University Press, and performed in South Africa and abroad. Lecturing at the University of Witwatersrand School of Dramatic Arts and leading the first arts and culture department in the Mandela government are among her many accomplishments.

During her time in government, Steinberg became fascinated with the law. “By the time I left government in the early 2000s, I could see that public officials were beginning to abuse their powers. I went to law school with an eye on developing a practice that would specialise in the control of the exercise of public power, the law of freedom of expression, and general social justice.”

Steinberg found surprising synchronicity between her two careers. “When I started my practice, I quickly learned how useful my skills as a playwright would be. Advocacy, like theatre, is about text and performance. I believe my work as a human rights advocate brings together the hybrid skills I developed over the years. It satisfies the need I have to try and make South Africa a fairer, more just country, and to work with word craft.”

Steinberg is a senior member of the Bar, which puts her in the position of developing the profession. “The particular challenge that South Africa faces is to strive for inclusivity without compromising excellence,” she says. “I believe leaders must provide opportunity to the marginalised, protect the vulnerable, and speak for the voiceless, but insist that everyone strives for excellence.”

She recently became the General Council of the Bar's representative on the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), where she's responsible for selecting and disciplining judges – a role she was initially reluctant to undertake because it's “a highly politicised and combative environment”.

“The judiciary is the only branch of government that withstood state capture, but it's being undermined by the appointment

of incompetent and weak judges. The JSC is largely to blame. However, on reflection, I realised that the only way to stop the decline of the judiciary was to participate in the institutions with the power to make a difference, and to try and find the courage to speak truth to power.”

Passionate about empowerment, Steinberg is a dedicated mentor to young advocates and to the young women working in her chambers.

“I have a group of about 10 young advocates who consult me on a regular basis on their cases, the struggle to juggle a demanding profession and family life, and tackling sexism in the legal community,” she says.

In inspiring young advocates, Steinberg would like to change the solitary nature of her profession, where one works on court papers and opinions alone. “This makes it difficult for young advocates from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn the ropes,” she says. “I have had to conform to this methodology.

However, as I become more senior in the profession, I'm trying to persuade those I work with to experiment with an approach in which the team of advocates and attorneys develops a litigation strategy more collectively. In this way, young attorneys will be exposed to the thinking and planning beneath the end product.”

Steinberg considers standing before the Constitutional Court in the Bongani Masuku hate-speech case to be her greatest career achievement. “I stood up as both an advocate and a Jew,” she says. “I felt gratified that I could use my skills to fight antisemitism and humbled that that role fell on me.”



“Be kind.”

In spite of her considerable achievements, Steinberg has suffered from fibromyalgia, a chronic illness that involves periods of depression and debilitating physical pain, for about 25 years. “I have had to learn over the years what exacerbates the symptoms and how to heal myself. I try to see it as a blessing in that it has made me a more empathetic person who can relate to vulnerable people, and has taught me how to receive support graciously.”

Steinberg's condition has done nothing to diminish her fighting spirit. The fact that she fights her cases “without fear or favour” is just one of the reasons that she's seen as an exemplary leader. “I have taken on powerful figures like Tom Moyane, Julius Malema, and Dudu Myeni, and have suffered verbal abuse, anonymous threats, and even a physical attack in a court foyer,” she says. “I refuse to be intimidated, and continue with the cases.”

With a keen awareness of the financial barriers impeding access to justice, Steinberg ensures that one-third of her practice is dedicated to pro bono work at any given moment. “Here, I take cases that have the maximum impact, for example, increasing the age of children who qualify for a social grant,” she says.

For Steinberg, nothing is more important than being a mother. “I made sure I was always available to my now grown-up children, and watched closely for signs that they needed more of me, at which point I cut down my work where possible,” she says. “The support of my husband, who shared the childcare responsibilities and encouraged me at every turn, was indispensable. Finding the right balance ultimately entails earning less money, and that's a sacrifice I have willingly made.”

Chase the dream



Brothers Fats and George Lazarides opened the first Ocean Basket with just six tables in Menlyn Shopping Centre in Pretoria in 1995. At the time, seafood was a delicacy and luxury available only to the wealthy, and few believed the concept would succeed.

Inspired by their mother, Liza Lazarides, the brothers were determined to make quality seafood available to everyone. Her generosity and obsession with wholesome food served in abundance, together with the warmth and love that was found in her home became an essential part of Ocean Basket's winning recipe.

Just 27 years later, we have over 230 Ocean Basket restaurants in 16 countries including Cyprus, Mauritius, Dubai and parts of Africa. This year, we have celebrated the opening of two Ocean Baskets in London – Bromley and Kingston upon Thames.



Our inspiration –
Liza Lazarides



We are honoured to be a nominee for this year's Jewish Achiever Award and hold the support of the Jewish community close to our hearts – thank you!



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ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

JOANNE CIVIN Flavourpro

You may not have heard of Flavourpro, but that freezochino you bought yesterday may just be a product of this business. Or, perhaps the vegan mix that was used to make the delicious muffin you ate recently.

Joanne Civin's Flavourpro, launched in 2020, is a turnkey solutions company in the food and beverages industry. It custom designs solutions and creates products and ingredients for a number of companies.

Civin, a King David Linksfield alumnus, has mixed her unique qualities into the business and its culture. "I'm my own person. I have a can-do attitude and positive energy. I'm headstrong, but I am also adaptable and willing to learn. I never back down from a challenge. I care about others. I always remember where I came from, and believe in giving everyone the benefit of the doubt."

Civin says she prides herself in her ability to develop concepts, market insights, and innovate, tailor-making any category within the food and beverage industry. She's customer centric, delivering the best of the best every time.

"Flavourpro is able to tap into a variety of brands and people," she says. "We're aware of what's needed and the gaps we need to fill. We're creative, and love to innovate. For us, it's not just about a sale, it's about building lasting and loyal relationships."

Civin has been in the food and beverage industry for almost 20 years, and has won various awards for innovation. She says Flavourpro was "a dream and a gut instinct" she was determined to follow. "There were days



"Personal integrity should guide every action."

when I was scared and had doubts, but I persevered and ensured that this

would become a reality." Business challenges are learning curves, Civin says. "We can't just give up when faced with an issue. We need to make a plan. It's all about thinking out of the box and finding the best solution."

She believes this period of "getting back to life" after the pandemic is a second chance for everyone. "The pandemic has made me braver and stronger in every aspect of my life. It has made me more hungry for success, and given me the ability to continue taking

those risks because we never know what tomorrow will bring. I won't waste time wondering if I should do something, I'll will leap at the opportunity."

Civin has selected a team with the same values. "The bottom line is we get things done," she says. "Each person's role has been carefully thought through, allowing them to shine, to work under pressure, and plan for those unexpected moments."

Finding balance in life is about "working smartly and using time correctly". It's about "setting goals daily, having a clear strategy, and being organised". She does this by keeping lists, which she's teased about.

Civin says she's motivated to uplift people and to teach them further skills. She also enjoys giving back to various charities.

JONATHAN AYACHE LIFT Airline

It's no mean feat to launch an airline in the middle of a pandemic while airlines around the world are folding. But that's what Jonathan Ayache, the co-founder and chief executive of LIFT Airline, calls his greatest achievement. And he did it in 90 days.

The Israeli-born Ayache admits it was challenging. "Being new to the industry, I don't think I appreciated just how difficult and significant the impact of the various waves of the pandemic would be. In particular, the second wave in July 2021, during which Gauteng was 'locked down' and all leisure travel in and out of the province was banned," he says.

"Given our flexibility, passengers started to cancel their flights in droves. We had to make a really difficult decision to avoid flying empty aircraft. Ultimately, we chose to cancel flights in July. The entire team worked tirelessly to ensure that all passengers received their refunds or had alternative travel arranged."

LIFT Airline has operated more than 5 000 flights and moved about 800 000 passengers to date. It employs more than 200

"Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today."

people, operates routes between Cape Town and Johannesburg, and has just expanded to Durban.

"We give travellers more control with unlimited, penalty-free changes, no cancellation fees, and quick and easy pay-outs into

your LIFT wallet. On board, we offer both a premium [business] and economy class offering, and industry-leading flexibility."

LIFT is unique because, the Herzlia School-alumnus Ayache says, "Our single purpose is to help build South Africa's most loved airline. We're totally customer centric, and are sensitive to the needs of our passengers."

Now that COVID-19 restrictions have lifted, LIFT is even more relevant, Ayache says. "People are able to move freely and travel again. Travel and tourism are key drivers of the economy. We're excited to play our part in enabling more locals and foreigners to see our beautiful country."

In the next 12 months, LIFT will focus on the expansion of its fleet and route network.

LIFT spent considerable time getting the right people on board. "In certain roles, it's definitely advantageous to bring in industry experts, but in others, we've opted for people from outside the industry. It's this mix of perspectives that has helped us navigate the journey to date."

LIFT focuses on building a culture in which its teams are excited to deliver their best, Ayache says, citing the famous quote, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Ayache's role model is the airline's co-founder, Gidon Novick. "He finds amazing people and gives them support and trust, enabling them to perform at their best."

Ayache has two young children. "During the week, I make a concerted effort to get home early enough to spend time with them."



SEBI COHEN GroWise Capital

Sebi Cohen may be just 27, but he has already had an impact on many small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa with his business, GroWise Capital.

Cohen, his brother Maximilian, and high-school friend Jonti Strimling started the business in 2019 with the mission of giving small businesses in South Africa - and by extension Africa - easy access to working capital.

"GroWise offers tailor-made funding solutions based on the cash-advance model to South African SMMEs," Cohen, the company's

chief executive, says. "Since its inception, the company has provided funding to thousands of SMMEs covering a broad spectrum of different industries."

Cohen, a King David Victory Park alumnus, says his unique quality is his ability to identify opportunities and pursue them. "My age makes me feel young in a field alongside well-established captains of the industry, but I see it as a strength."

GroWise sees every applicant as unique. "To this end, we structure intricate, tailor-made solutions to assist with funding. With youth on our side, our team is always staying ahead of trends," Cohen says.

He says his greatest business achievement is being able to empower thousands of South African businesses by giving them access to working capital, while solidifying GroWise's position as a leading funding brand in South Africa. In this process, the company has created opportunities for its employees, of whom there are 40 based in South Africa and the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the company's biggest challenge to date. A two-pronged approach enabled it to navigate and ultimately survive the pandemic, says Cohen.

"Commercially, we dealt with the challenges that arose by effective structuring as well as balance sheet and income-statement streamlining. Ethically, we adopted an 'everybody is going to hurt and we're in it together' methodology. This materialised through working together with our clients.

"Maintaining balance through



lockdowns and adjusting quickly to a work-from-home environment was crucial,"

says Cohen. "As is the case with most of life's challenges, the minute you allow panic to set in, the hurdles become overwhelming and seemingly insurmountable. I

put my head down, worked hard, and was

conscious of not allowing negativity to take over."

He says it was by virtue of having a team built on loyalty, hunger, and a moral compass that they managed COVID-19. "By focusing on these core values when building our management team, we were able to ensure that when the going got tough, we were tough enough to keep going while still being driven by our core values."

Over the next 12 months, Cohen is focused on expanding the business, the current buzzword in his workplace.

"The objective is to grow GroWise while making it technologically sustainable and at the same time, driving productivity and profitability."

GroWise is a proudly Jewish company. "This comes through in every facet of how we operate. We can attribute our success to our strong rooted connection to our community."

JONATHAN BLACKBURN iMed Medical Group

Jonathan Blackburn's company, iMed Medical Group, was thrust into uncharted territory during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the country's first privately owned forensic toxicology laboratory, but it was well positioned to help.

"iMed sprang into action as the virus began to spread, mobilising new systems to handle testing," says Blackburn.

iMed delivered on every test it administered, he says, pointing out that his company didn't record a single false test result.

"iMed played an active role in reducing the spread of COVID-19," he says.

iMed employs 33 people and operates internationally, with physical branches in Cape Town and Pretoria.

Its main function is the advancement of medical technology and medical research, providing fast, cost-effective, and reliable testing services and related products. "iMed Distributors imports and supplies various types of point-of-contact test devices related to identifying several illnesses including malaria and tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, and drug use," Blackburn says.

iMed Pharmaceuticals manufactures and distributes medical products. "iMed Laboratories

provides forensic toxicology testing services including COVID-19 PCR testing, hair drug testing, DNA relationship testing, forensic DNA profiling, and medical cannabinoid testing services."

The company is building the first private forensic DNA genetics laboratory, which will open in March 2023. "Our laboratories will continue to maintain strict security measures to monitor the safety of all our employees against intrusions and risks of exposure."

Blackburn has built a team that doesn't quit when challenged. "Our multi-disciplined and highly skilled staff has expertise in forensics,

molecular biology, chemistry, and various other specialities in medicine. Our people truly care about the health and safety of our customers."

Blackburn, a recovering drug addict who has been clean for 14 years, is grateful to have created a business that, through testing products and services, assists addicts.

It's something he holds close to his heart with his history of addiction, which led to him spending time in jail, four drug rehabilitation centres, and two mental-health facilities.

Blackburn suffered from addiction since the age of 12. He was a crushed and broken man in his mid-20s, he says, homeless and stealing from others to buy drugs.

"By attending Narcotics Anonymous [NA] meetings consistently, I found the community I was craving. This assisted in overcoming addiction. I became a NA leader, instrumental in expanding the programme across South Africa."

Today, he lives a well-balanced lifestyle with his family, friends, and community. "My wife has softened my heart, and taught me the principle of being more loving and understanding to my staff and work colleagues," he says.

Blackburn believes rapid diagnosis of infectious disease is critical to addressing the country's health issues. He suggests that the government drive the testing of various diseases "to help our population get correct diagnoses. Rapid tests are easy to roll out, and will help prevent the spread of disease."



"Trust G-d; clean house; help others."



SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE

Sandton Convention Centre is South Africa's leading event venue, offering prestigious multi-use event spaces and venues. Ideally located in the heart of Johannesburg's vibrant business and commercial hub, with direct access via skywalks to upmarket shopping malls, and numerous restaurants, bars and hotels, including Southern Sun hotels – Sandton Sun & Towers, and Garden Court Sandton City – offering a variety of accommodation options. Conveniently situated close to the Gautrain Station – Sandton, the Sandton Convention Centre provides ease of access to and from OR Tambo International Airport, among other local and international destinations.

South Africa's premier, elegant, multipurpose venue, Sandton Convention Centre is suitable for any event, large or small. The 'SCC', as it is affectionately known, has an impressive 22,000m² of flexible event space with a total of 17 venues that include two large exhibition halls and 13 breakaway rooms, accommodating

anything from 10 to 10,000 people throughout its various venues. The venue can host large-scale banquets and gala dinners for up to 2,200 guests and 4,000 cocktail guests in the Pavillion's uninterrupted space.

Food and beverage is one of SCC's winning differentiators and high standards are maintained to suit the venue's highly discerning guests and clients. It is renowned for providing world-class food and beverage services and offers a wide range of tailor-made menu options to cater for any occasion, event, palate, and dietary requirement.

Every event at SCC can be tailored to suit particular requirements, with an excellent range of services, amenities, and facilities to cover all needs – whether these be for clients, organisers, exhibitors, or visitors, including audio-visual, décor, IT services, security, freight or drayage.



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RONIT AND ARIEL GARBER 2.0 Strength and Fitness

The gym and fitness industry was hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, but Ronit and Ariel Garber started 2.0 Strength and Fitness in 2020, and the business hasn't just thrived, it has expanded.

The Garbers, husband and wife co-owners of the fitness centre, were the former rabbi and rebbetzin of the Umhlanga Jewish Centre (UJC).

Now, they provide personalised strength and fitness solutions, in-person and online, to all ages, genders, and levels of fitness.

"We use training as a means to develop personally, with the results a way to access a host of psychological, physical, and even spiritual benefits," say the Garbers, avid powerlifters and the parents of three children. "Through our product offerings, we've been able to make personal training and programming affordable while maintaining quality."

In the process, from their premises in Raedene Estate, Johannesburg, they say, "We create career opportunities for talented trainers to work independently and focus on their craft. In the meantime, we take care of every other aspect of running the business including accounting, debt collection, advertising, equipment, and sales."

Their coaches aren't employees, but independent contractors. "They represent 2.0 but are ultimately their own bosses. In exchange for what we offer, we split the revenue 50/50."

Living by their motto, "We live what we teach", all of the coaches have competed on some level in their respective disciplines.

The Garbers maintain that they offer a training experience and a way to be physical that people love in an environment they feel comfortable in. All this to fulfil their company slogan: "Still you, but better."

"We believe a business must change and adapt while still maintaining its values, philosophy, and culture," they say.

Since the Garbers founded 2.0 Strength and



Fitness, it has grown from a 50m² room with a single trainer to two different training facilities with a floor space greater than 240m², eight trainers, an in-house physio, and biokineticist.

Ronit wasn't sporty at all during her school days at Beis Yaakov School, but after her and Ariel's time at the UJC ended in December 2014, she became a personal trainer at Virgin Active Balfour.

"Moving from being a fitness practitioner to becoming a manager and a business owner has been challenging," she says. "Experience has been my greatest teacher."

Ariel, a Torah Academy alumnus, says his greatest challenge has been accepting mistakes. "The turning point for me was realising that even some of the most successful businesspeople have also made mistakes. The point is to recognise and accept any fault, and grow from it."

The Garbers intend to master scale, not growth, in the next 12 months. They want to optimise what they have created, fine-tuning their services and internal business processes. They also want to look for ways to increase their online sales, not be limited by space, and to make their services known and used across a wider demographic.

NADINE HOCTER Sheer Bliss

Nadine Hocter has cornered the market in virtual reality massage – feeling the physical touch while being virtually transported to a magnificent venue.

Her company, Sheer Bliss, provides corporate and mobile massage for events and staff wellness. "We specialise in large groups for wellness days, sporting events, brand activations, and general staff appreciation. We offer massage with virtual reality, with customised content for marketing purposes," she says.

"Bringing technology into the massage space has been an incredible leap for Sheer Bliss. It has given our clients amazing experiences, and helped our staff to work in a more technological space.

"You get a physical massage from a therapist while you wear a virtual reality headset to enjoy your massage on the beach or any amazing environment."

Hocter won the ORT Jet Business of the Year Award in 2018 for launching the world's first virtual reality-powered massage experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a massive challenge for her business. "For a company that incorporates physical touch and specialises in large groups, the pandemic was catastrophic," says Hocter, a King David Linksfield alumnus who started the business in 2006.

"Fortunately, we managed to reduce in size and change our strategy to focus on individuals to keep some revenue coming in. Bikini waxes were in high demand, and I was doing treatments at night to

cover debit orders, but we made it."

Hocter had a bumpy start to her career, being launched into the adult world with a teenage pregnancy. She then undertook a doula course to assist young mothers and those in labour. "I have had the privilege of being there for 20 births, and made a big difference to the mothers delivering," she says.

It led to her starting Sheer Bliss with the philosophy of creating "a professional working space that empowers therapists by broadening their knowledge with ongoing education".

"Our therapists are able to be financially independent through flexible working schedules and by broadening their knowledge in the wellness industry."

Hocter believes merging technology with human elements can help the country create jobs, improve education, develop skills, and adjust to the post-pandemic environment.

She maintains a balance between work and family by "drawing a line in the sand. I have many pans on the fire. I don't always get it right, but when I'm in downtime, I switch right off."

This CrossFit and painting enthusiast believes that she sets a good example to her daughters of "what a fearless and independent woman looks like and what needs to be done to achieve your goals".

Hocter says it's thrilling to be a Jewish Achiever Awards nominee. "When you run a business, no one puts a cupcake on your desk to tell you that you're doing a good job."



NICHOLAS INGEL Emet Gyms

As a survivor of abuse and a former alcoholic, Nicholas Ingel deeply understands pain and sadness, but he has also learnt to understand happiness.

Ingel has been sober for 15 years, and 13 years ago, he founded Emet Gyms to sell "being happier" to his clients.

"Our clients should be happier leaving gym than before they arrived," says Ingel, pointing out that working doesn't feel like working because it's so much fun.

"We ensure that when they leave, they're happier with what their bodies can do than before they started training. We understand that mental health comes before physical health in terms of our quality of life. We use physical training to improve our clients' self-belief, mental tenacity, resilience, and thus the quality of their overall life."

Emet Gyms, operating in South Africa and internationally, trains individuals, companies, and athletes with a focus on strength and conditioning, Ingel says.

"Our training is outcomes-based, meaning that our clients come to us with an objective, and we design a training programme for them to reach their goal while constantly monitoring and adapting their programme."

Ingel says Emet puts clients' mental well-being ahead of their physical appearance or achievements. Through Ingel's Emet Academy, he trains young coaches from disadvantaged communities with the aim of empowering and developing subsequent generations of coaches. "The development of coaches is as important as the training of clients. Our clients value being involved

in the development of our amazing young coaches."

Emet pivoted his business when gyms were forced to close during the pandemic, wiping out 70% of its cashflow from on-site corporate training. He took Emet online, and developed new skill sets to be shared with trainee coaches.

"I believe the health of our business is my responsibility, and that was the most difficult time I had ever experienced sober," he says.

With Ingel's clients returning to gym following the pandemic, his company will be increasing the number of coaches in development.

"We have a goal of 20 new coaches coming through our academy in the next year. These coaches will either continue to work for us or will be able to start their own businesses under the Emet umbrella," he says. "It's my responsibility to share everything I know with them about running a business. It's up to me to empower them to move into management roles."

After all, Ingel believes, "We're South Africans, not South African'ts. We're an incredibly resilient nation."

Ingel fills every moment of his waking hours either with working or service, as "unoccupied time is very uncomfortable" for an alcoholic. "I've never been happier," he says.



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GREG SMITH AND JOSH KAPLAN

OneSpark

Greg Smith and Josh Kaplan's company, OneSpark, isn't in the business of fundraising, it sells insurance products. However, it raised hundreds of thousands of rands in a couple of days to help businesses and individuals affected by the civil unrest in June 2021.

"We rebuilt restaurants, tuckshops, schools, shops, etcetera," Smith says. They also fed more than 30 000 people by sending tons of food down to then food-scarce KwaZulu-Natal.

Smith says the social aspect of OneSpark is the company's greatest achievement. "This company was built to change the world – and especially South Africa."

On founding the Insurtech start-up company in 2021, they took the approach that, "Innovation in a car isn't taking off the old rims and replacing them with shiny new ones. It's about throwing out the old model and rebuilding it from the ground up, like Tesla," according to Smith.

"When we started, we weren't happy with how life insurance worked, so we decided to reinvent and rebuild it to what it should be."

Says Kaplan, "We moved life insurance away from a generic, one-size-fits-all, long-term, static policy to a dynamic, hyper-personalised policy which leverages off patented technology and smart artificial intelligence. We also created multiple product lines."

Today, OneSpark focuses on life, disability, illness, income, and funeral insurance for individual and group consumers.

Operating in Johannesburg and Cape Town, it has 30 full-time employees and hundreds of team members. It intends to grow to the United States in 2023.

"We created the world's first pay-as-you-need

life-insurance model," Smith says. "Our model uses world-first and patented AI algorithms to adjust cover dynamically as our clients' lives change, ensuring optimal protection. We created a globally patented algorithm called

"Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end."

the 'protection wheel' that quantifies how much cover an individual has relative to the optimal cover amount, allowing our clients to assess whether their current cover is adequate."

"We created a peer-to-peer structure to enable complete transparency and rebuild trust in an industry that consumers have lost confidence in," says Kaplan. His fellow King David Linksfield alumnus, Smith, says, "This model enables clients to see where every rand goes."

"By rethinking the way traditional life insurance is designed and by embedding smart technology into the foundations of the product, our premiums are typically half those of other insurers," says Kaplan. "Our world-first and patented 'no cancel discount' gives us a further competitive edge by allowing us to pass savings back to our clients through additional upfront discounts."

Kaplan says OneSpark spent 12 months creating an innovative funeral product which had the ability to change South Africa, but a mistake from an outside source meant they couldn't launch it.

"However, we persisted, put our heads down, and came up with a solution. Within a week, we had priced and designed a completely new product."

In 2021, OneSpark was named world's most innovative life insurer by *Wealth & Finance International* and South Africa's most innovative life insurer. Avid runners and hikers, Kaplan and Smith were among *Beyond Exclamation's* "Top ten most inspiring chief executives to watch out for" in 2022.

"Our vision is for OneSpark to be a global insurance player, known for its innovation and client-centric approach," says Kaplan. "We want to change insurance from an industry that's loathed into an industry known for the positive impact it has on consumers and the world."



SHALYA MALKA KATZEFF

Shalicious Nails

Shalicious Nails was the product of a dream Shalya Katzeff had during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"In the space of 30 months, Shalicious has grown from the dining room table to a 150m² salon with eight nail technicians including myself," the 21-year-old says of her greatest business achievement.

Based in Johannesburg, Shalicious Nails offers services such as gel applications, manicures, fizz deluxe pedicures, specialised hand-drawn art, and acrylic dips for strengthening.

"Our uniqueness is our personal attention, specialised hand-drawn nail art, as well as a social interactive networking hub. Through the welcoming and comfortable atmosphere, customers are pampered while feeling as if they're at home. The fact that the quality of service you receive remains consistent regardless of the technician you choose to work with is one of the things that sets us apart from our competitors."

"Get up, show up, never give up!"

"Because of the brand that we've built up, our customers are more than willing to experiment with different nail technicians with the expectation of receiving the same quality. We're one of the few salons that are owned by both a mother and a daughter, which I feel contributes to our one-of-a-kind status."

Shalicious Nails is committed to creating a warm and friendly workplace, Katzeff says.



"Shalicious values concepts such as 'winners never quit and quitters never win'; 'there's no 'I' in team'; 'Rome wasn't built in a day'; 'do you what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life'; and 'reach for the stars'."

Katzeff says businesses can help create jobs in the country by engaging in social upliftment through the use of practical workshops which teach simple skills.

Katzeff, a gym and indoor netball enthusiast in her third year of studying for a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and media studies, says maintaining a balance between work, family, and community commitments has always been important to her.

"At times, it becomes difficult, but then I remember that there are 24 hours in a day and I won't go to bed until my daily tasks have been completed. I'm an A-type personality, which contributes when it comes to finding a balance. Family and friends understand how busy I get, but also keep me in my lane regarding constant support and arrangements so that relationships never drift."

Katzeff is applying to do her honours in industrial psychology, which she plans to do while running Shalicious Nails. "My long-term goal is to bring my degree into the business."

Her mom and business partner has used her years of experience in the service industry to guide Katzeff. However, Katzeff said she learnt that "consistency, patience, tolerance, and respect are the cornerstones not only of business life as well" from her dad.

ROBYN KRAMER

My Abby

Robyn Kramer created an Abyssinian oil-based beauty range of natural hair, scalp, and skincare products, which has already won awards.

The company, My Abby, won the beauty and care category of the global buyers' award at the 34th SANA International Exhibition for Organic and Natural Products held in Bologna, Italy, this year.

It operates from Johannesburg, and has distribution agreements throughout Africa. "We're in the process of concluding contracts with international distributors," Kramer says.

She says her greatest achievement has been to launch and grow her business while simultaneously maintaining a happy home life with her husband and two small children.

Her uniqueness lies in "the passion and intuition I have when developing products, combined with my ability to build relationships within the health and wellness industry. My range is simple and covers all skin, hair types, and ages."

My Abby took an exceptional knock during the COVID-19 pandemic, which almost resulted in Kramer having to close her business. "I focused on developing the online aspect of the business, and salvaged it," she says.

Now, "There's a bright future. We're still in the inception phase of My Abby. Seven products are in the pipeline for launch in the near-to-medium future. I want to grow our reputation for providing genuine solutions to clients' hair and skincare problems."

Kramer has been "a one-woman show", but considers her service providers, distributors, and clients to be part of her team. "I build my team by encouraging them and sharing every bit of positive news and growth with them, no matter how small. I believe we're all as adaptable as our environment. If we see ourselves as part of a bigger picture, we'll inevitably adapt."

Kramer, an alumnus of Tafe College in Sydney, has moved around a lot in her life, but says, "The Jewish community has been my glue."

This Pilates enthusiast looks up to her mother. "My parents were divorced when I was seven, and my mother became the primary breadwinner. She didn't have an education in design but became very successful in designing her own handbags and developed her business, Gloria's Bags, to the extent that she had more than 100 staff working for her.

"We emigrated to Australia and again, as a single mother, she managed to support three children with her business."

"I have learnt more from her successes and mistakes than any other role model I have been exposed to in my business career. I have learnt that a combination of passion, tenacity, and purpose was the key to my mom's business success."

Kramer's business philosophy is to "keep improving and moving forward". She believes being *vasbyt* will be crucial during the coming year. "The country has major hurdles to overcome and adjust to, particularly in terms of loadshedding."

"Clear vision, never give up!"



ROBYN IS ALSO A NOMINEE IN THE EUROPCAR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CATEGORY

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MYRON KROST
Canna Trade Africa

Five years ago, Myron Krost was enmeshed in his family's business, but now he runs his own successful company, Canna Trade Africa, South Africa's first seed-to-sale cannabis distribution company.

"My journey here over the past four years was impossible to plan. It happened due to my unique character and experience," he says. "I understand that experience is knowledge, and this knowledge has led me to be the founder of a new type of store to support people on their road to better health."

His company has since opened retail stores, The Green Side, in Greenside, Sandton, and most recently, Pretoria.

Canna Trade Africa is about enabling continued economic growth of the cannabis industry through awareness, education, and community, Krost says.

"We facilitate this through trade, which entails assisting brands in establishing themselves in the local market; brokering, whereby we connect license operators to enable trade; and direct



detailing, our speciality, in which we view our customer as an evolving human being," says Krost, a King David Linksfield alumnus who enjoys hiking, mountain biking, meditating, and reading.

His business, launched at the end of 2018, now has 27 employees and distributes nationally.

"We set out to create a 'seed-to-sale experience' in which our customers' experience actually matters and our precious suppliers are handled with the care they deserve. Canna Trade Africa's product offering is governed by three pillars of strength: best products; best protocols; and best prices.

"Only products that meet all those criteria at once are worthy of representation. In order to achieve

"Be the change, spread the light."

this, we've partnered with the best partners, which truly has enabled us

to bring the best of local and global to the South African consumer. In so doing, we're helping to grow an honest, healthy, and thriving cannabis-centric economy."

Canna Trade Africa's flagship store is The Green Side in Sandton.

"There's no other store in the world that has brought cannabis lifestyle, cannabis wellness, growing of cannabis, and organic vegetables, an apothecary, a plant-based diner, and deli into one unique concept store. Besides being the chief executive, I'm also the wellness coach. I've become one of the leading experts in South Africa on medical cannabis," Krost says.

He says there are no bad people, only bad managers, and "a happy team will lead to a happy business", so he works hard to create it.

"Through my experience over the past 32 years, I've seen that in business, we're faced with cycles. We start with a good cycle that invariably leads to a bad cycle. It seems that all this up-and-down movement works in favour of the 'haves', and it seems to make the 'have-nots' poorer. I want to break this cycle by creating a new type of organisation."

JARRID LEVITAN
Mobile Dent Pro

Jarrid Levitan's Mobile Dent Pro focuses on getting vehicles back into shape without stressing their owners out.

The company comes to you to get those scratches and dents repaired, doing panel beating and restoration, even mechanical repairs, in the greater Johannesburg area.

One of its strengths is paintless dent repair.

"Our services are efficient and quick," says Levitan, a former judo champion.

His greatest achievement is having successfully repaired more than 2 000 cars and establishing an excellent reputation in the industry, with thousands of happy customers.

Mobile Dent Pro will be moving to an upgraded facility in the next 12 months, enabling Levitan's business to increase its turnover.

Levitan prepared his staff for the post-COVID-19 work environment by putting lean processes in place, building teams, and making sure communication channels were clear.

"I believe in a team ethos to provide an outstanding service at an affordable price, acting in an honest, transparent manner, and exceeding customers' expectations. Also always evolving and growing, and



finding new ways to adapt and improve."

Acquiring excellent staff was a challenge, Levitan says. "Over a period of time, I managed to build an efficient team. All members of the team are treated well and are happy to be working with us."

Levitan believes that by growing the business and increasing market share, it will create demand for jobs with skills like repairing cars. "In order to reach our full potential and supply our services, we'll need workforce and manpower," he says.

"In our new facility, we'll offer a training course on paintless dent removal and panel beating. Our academy will teach the methods we use and empower a new generation of practitioners to master their own craft and earn a good living."

Levitan is an avid runner and reader. He started his career selling used cars at Morso SA in 2002 before joining Citroen Bryanston, where he was the highest gross profit earner and sold more than 80 cars in eight months. He then worked at CMH Luxury Motors, trading as Lyndhurst Auto, where, amongst other achievements, he racked up record sales for the Lyndhurst Auto Mini department. After spells at a few more car companies, he founded Mobile Dent Pro.

"I'm a motivated and dynamic person with a passion for the motor industry, sales, technology, and marketing," he says.

"I plan to make the most of every opportunity that comes my way."

DARREN MELTZ
SecretEATS

Darren Meltz makes it his business to get people together who wouldn't ordinarily do so and ensure that they have a delicious and entertaining time. And until the last minute, they have no idea what to expect.

Meltz's company, SecretEATS, is in the business of connecting people through unique and meaningful dining experiences. Founded in 2013, it's an "events-management business with an emphasis on hospitality and creating memorable experiences". It operates in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Vietnam.

SecretEATS invites its guests to taste creative, chef-driven menus and curated cocktails served in unexpected locations for a unique evening they won't get anywhere else. "The best part? It's all a surprise until the moment you arrive."

SecretEATS prides itself on bring people together who otherwise may have never met to break bread around a communal dinner table. "It is about strangers coming together sharing a laugh and more often than not, leaving as friends."

Meltz says SecretEATS "creates the unexpected with elements of surprise and delight, a chance for our chefs to step out of their restaurant kitchens and create a magical culinary experience from the heart."

The COVID-19 pandemic put a spanner in Meltz's works, as his business was person-to-person, forcing him to adapt his model online. "We grew the brand into a new space which has continued even after the pandemic," he says.

"Not being able to host our guests or earn an income and not being able to do what means most to us brought the team to an incredible low," he recalls. "After many 'support sessions' across continents, we created our #TilWeDineAgain campaign to assure guests that we would return and that they were always top of mind.

"Our guests told us their favourite SecretEATS



memories, which we posted across our social platforms. This did wonders for the team and our guests' morale.

"We also moved our cocktail experiences online, which allowed guests to learn to be mixologists in their own home and raise a virtual glass to new friends all over the world."

Meltz, who enjoys acting, photography, writing, sports, travel, and serves as the editor in chief of More Than Food Magazine, says his best business feat was to

"grow SecretEATS from a small series of dinners to a brand offering unique and curated dining experiences across the country, and in so doing, creating a family of SecretEATS guests who return time and time again."

"G-d, I've used every talent you've given."

SecretEATS' Dining From A Distance concept focused on supporting its charity partner, StreetSmart South Africa, during the pandemic. "This new way of dining over Zoom raised much-needed funds for those in need, and provided an income for some of our chefs, restaurateurs, and wine partners.

"We also brought chefs and our followers together across continents for our #CookingForACause initiative to raise awareness and funds for the hospitality sector."

NEIL MEYEROWITZ
Plush Car Wash

Plush Car Wash co-founder and chief executive, Neil Meyerowitz, insists that his business isn't just about washing cars, it offers customers a unique experience, with passion and care. It's also the only company that offers steam, water, and waterless car washes at such a variety of sites around the country.

Though the company was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Meyerowitz used it as a challenge to rebuild for greater success. With improved systems and renewed appreciation, the business ended up growing more between 2020 and 2022 than in any other two-year period since it started in 2009.

Plush Car Wash washes and valets cars in malls, dealerships, hospitals, at golf courses, and offices, and it employs 677 people, a figure which Meyerowitz predicts will increase by more than 20% by September 2023.

"We're not in business just to make money or wash cars. We're committed to making the Plush experience unique and fun for our customers and our staff, offering services at reasonable prices."

He says his company gives opportunities

to people from all walks of life, including those with disabilities. "We've created a family environment, and with the waterless side of the business, we empower washers to run their own businesses and give them the tools to maximise their earnings."

Meyerowitz has founded and run a few businesses over the years, but starting something as small as Plush Car Wash and building it into a success has been a dream come true. "Discovering that I have so much drive, dedication, and grit has been incredibly humbling," he says.

His greatest challenge has been losing sites due to a lack of operational input, focus, and foundational procedures. "I've corrected this by building a solid team which I've instilled with my passion and attitude. I also go to the sites often, moving and washing cars, laughing with the staff, and talking to customers. It helps me understand the business on the ground."

For Meyerowitz, "back to life" after the pandemic means "fresh air, clean cars, and second chances. It means if you put your head down and push, you really can conquer".

He says his business philosophy is that "it's not

the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog" and that dedication, consistency, and perseverance is key to success. But, more than anything, "I want the best experience for customers, ensuring that they and the staff are having fun and that I'm having fun too. Life can't be serious all the time".

Having said that, he says he's getting better at finding balance because instinctually, he gives 100% to the business and 100% to his family, which doesn't leave much for himself. He has to remember to take care of himself mentally and physically because that makes him "a better person for everyone".





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NILA MILNER

YGS

Nila Milner prides her business, YGS, on helping women who have lived a life of luxury and have fallen on hard times to get back on their feet.

"Feeling overwhelmed by their new situation, these women often overlook the opportunity of what sometimes their only owned possessions [gifted items] can bring. They have amassed a substantial collection of gifted items," Milner says.

"My role is to step in when they're feeling overwhelmed and helpless, to help them regain a sense of control over their financial situation, in essence, bringing them 'back to life'."

YGS is one of South Africa's fastest-growing pre-loved luxury brand-consignment service – an online store that offers a safe and secure platform for buyers and sellers of personal high-end luxury products.

YGS's focus is handbags, shoes, and accessories including belts, scarves, and sunglasses by world-famous brands such as Chanel, Hermes, and Louis Vuitton.

"YGS offers a world-class experience to all our clients, with a personal touch, offering an exceptional concierge service as well as a rigorous



authentication process on all goods. We have about 60 000 followers, growing daily, thanks to our ongoing presence on multiple platforms."

YGS trades on consignment, allowing people to sell their luxury goods on the company's online boutique. "Due to our large database, passion, and industry knowledge, we can source highly rare and sought-after items that are unavailable on the market."

"Never judge a book by its cover."

Unlike most businesses, COVID-19 was boom time for YGS, with its best turnover to date. "Due to the ban on travel and closing down of malls, my ideal clients were looking for other ways to shop for their favourite high-end luxury items," she says. "I was able to provide a safe way for them to do so, with strict hygiene controls in place."

Now that the world is coming "back to life" following the pandemic, the sky's the limit for YGS, Milner says. "Many items we receive were bought on new shopping sprees abroad, and after my clients having second thoughts on their frenzy-driven purchases upon their return. This has allowed a fresh injection of brand-new hotlist items into our offering."

Milner, a King David Victory Park alumnus who enjoys doing "fun-mom activities" with her kids, says YGS' biggest achievement has been to help women who lived a lifestyle of comfort and luxury but now find themselves learning how to exist on their own due to unforeseen circumstances such as divorce or COVID-19-related business closure.

Milner says this year's Absa Jewish Achiever theme, "Back to Life" represents "my life's journey, in that I've had to overcome tragic events and situations and I've managed to turn myself around and thrive. It echoes the very purpose of my business: taking pre-loved items, returning them to peak condition through professional refurbishment, and giving them a new life with a new owner."

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STEVEN SCHULTZ Momentum Securities

Steven Schultz took on Momentum Securities in 2019, which was then notorious for recording significant losses for five years, and successfully turned it around.

He was its youngest chief executive ever when he started as a 32-year-old. "My greatest challenge was undoubtedly being tasked with transforming a loss-making business into a sustainably profitable stand-alone entity at an inexperienced age," he says.

"Unfortunately, upon arrival in the business, the existing management team experienced the transition as hostile, and therefore weren't forthcoming with the necessary support. I elected to persist with the turnaround strategy, and am proud to say that with minimum changes to the management team, we have collectively delivered on the intended business and people objectives."

The ambitious turnaround strategy was achieved by redesigning and implementing a conducive business culture, and being deliberate in growing market share in a competitive environment.

Momentum Securities offers a full range of stockbroking and investment management solutions. It has dedicated offices in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, and KwaZulu-Natal, and joint ventures across Africa and Europe. It employs about 100 people.

"Tracing its origin to 1938, the business is one of the oldest remaining stockbrokers in South Africa focused on traditional trade execution, private client investment management, full-service stockbroking, and specialist financial-market research."

Schultz says Momentum Securities has a

Absa Jewish Achiever Awards

2022



track record of client commitment "by providing solutions to suit each individual's circumstances, thus building enduring relationships with our valued clients".

"A unique quality of our business is our ability to combine a high-performance culture with a set of principles that never allows us to compromise our ethics and values," he says.

"I suppose what makes me unique is that I'm fortunate enough to form part of this experienced and exceptionally competent team in spite of serving as Momentum's youngest divisional chief executive."

Given the specialist nature of Momentum Securities, "we have placed deliberate focus on building a diversified team of experts who are able to operate in an environment with high levels of uncertainty and change", Schultz says.

Schultz believes culture is the only sustainable driver of performance, and culture starts with management. "Therefore, I place great emphasis on the day-to-day example that leaders set in our business."

As we get "back to life" following the COVID-19 pandemic, "virtual trends and the numerous catch phases on a 'new normal' have in many respects had a positive impact on the flexibility and efficiency within our business", Schultz says. "The ability of technology to connect and bring scale to many traditional business models has been forcefully tested and, in many ways, validated."

"The challenge we'll be required to navigate over the coming 12 months is for our people to remain connected on a personal level."



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MATTHEW ELAN SMITH
Pineapple

Matthew Elan Smith saw the need to trust and have easy access to one's insurance provider, so he launched Pineapple.

"Pineapple allows people to get insurance quickly, simply, and fairly via our app or website. We provide cover for single items as well as vehicles in less than two minutes. We work off a fixed fee, returning all unused premiums as a profit bonus to our members," says Smith.

He believes Pineapple is peerless because it provides an intuitive, quick, and entirely digital process for getting insurance, on any smart device.

Smith's biggest learning curve was being forced to halt the launch of Pineapple's physical presence in the United States (US) because of the pandemic.

"The funders had a freeze on deployments and had to pull out, and there was no way for the visa process to be finalised as the embassy was closed," he says. "It was difficult when the deal fell apart as I was excited at the prospects and had put a great deal of energy into the structuring and building of relationships and business opportunities."

Smith was unable to move to the US, so he was in South Africa one year later, in May 2021, when his parents fell ill with COVID-19 and were in intensive care. "It was the most difficult thing I've ever had to go through, with my father passing away that month. But being able to spend additional time with my dad, and

being there to help my mom and sister during this period, is something I was grateful for," he says.

"I learnt that no opportunity or exciting process is ever worth more than time with the ones you love.

"On the professional side, I re-focused my excitement on the prosperity we had and still have, and recalibrating patience for growing the business internationally, knowing that the South African side of things still yields a lot of excitement and prospects."

He says the most rewarding part of growing a business is seeing people develop and being able to help ameliorate the severe unemployment crisis.

Smith, a tennis, squash, rock climbing, padel, and gaming enthusiast, started Pineapple with three co-founders with complimentary skillsets. "We grew the rest of our management team by funding young but hungry and competent individuals who are passionate about the customer experience, the values of our business, and our mission."

Pineapple's management holds regular strategy sessions to understand what's working and what to focus on. "Our management team lives by the mantra of healthy debate. We love to challenge each other, and encourage the challenging of opinions to make sure that we get the best outcome."

Smith's business philosophy is to "fall in love with the problem you're solving, not your solution".

He believes businesses can help South Africa by positioning the country as a service provider with huge language, time zone, and cost advantages compared to those in the East.



"Diamond dealing is an industry that can sometimes take customers for a ride. I aim to ensure that this isn't the case. I create a seamless and collaborative diamond-acquisition experience, be it loose diamonds or uniquely designed pieces. My clientele is part of the process, from design to creation, ensuring that they get a custom-made piece of jewellery at a price that suits each and every budget. I don't believe that clients should pay hugely inflated retail prices."

His business philosophy is: "Work with a good hand and heart, and you'll be rewarded for it." Change in the world over the past two years has created new opportunities. "I've focused on structuring my business to take advantage of them," Sher says. "The COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, resulted in many organisations closing and lots of highly skilled individuals losing their jobs. With these unfortunate developments, many gaps have been created to take on new work and provide services where previous companies used to service the market.

"This is the perfect time to step up and grow the business locally and internationally while still creating opportunities for the many who lost so much during the pandemic."

"This is the perfect time to step up and grow the business locally and internationally while still creating opportunities for the many who lost so much during the pandemic."

NEVIN SHER
The Diamond Guy™

Nevin Sher - The Diamond Guy, has successfully pivoted from being a rough-diamond manufacturer and polished trader to competing in the retail market against large established jewellery brands and retailers in South Africa.

"Many said I didn't stand a chance," says Sher. "Without any prior knowledge or experience of the retail industry and no additional assistance, within three years, I've been able to achieve the status of one of the most sought-after private jewellers in South Africa."

He has created a strong social-media presence, doing his own imagery and marketing, which he believes has escalated his business substantially.

The Diamond Guy, based in Johannesburg, provides a full turnkey solution from source to finished product. His business is twofold: "I procure rough diamonds and manufacture them into polished diamonds and trade locally and globally in wholesaling them. I've also created my own wholesale and retail-distribution business under the brand Nevin Sher - The Diamond Guy. I have a jewellery making factory and facility in which I create custom-made jewellery, utilising my own sources of polished diamonds."

Sher, a King David Linksfield alumnus and avid cyclist, gym-goer, and boxer, is proud of being able to remove the retailer from his business transaction, and provide clients with competitive pricing by eliminating the "mirage" that retail diamond dealers usually hide behind.



supergroup



ENTREPRENEUR AWARD

Grant Friedman, brothers Justin and Greg Blend, and Nick Katsapas have become leaders in middle-income housing in South Africa with their business, Africrest Properties.

They have redefined the residential asset class by creating "build-to-rent" apartment estates in which they own and manage the entire property, ensuring top-class environments for their tenants.

Africrest owns more than 80 000m² of commercial space, and has developed and owns more than 3 000 apartments, employing about 100 staff members to manage its assets.

The company was co-founded by Justin and Nick Katsapas before it merged with Greg and Friedman's company.

The Blends and Friedman, alumni of King David schools, became one of the first developers to rejuvenate dilapidated buildings in Braamfontein into A-grade office, school, and restaurant spaces. "This work made a significant impact on the area that can still be seen today," they say.

Africrest moved to the northern suburbs of Johannesburg before creating a tenant partnership model in which tenants can own a share of their building without putting any money into the deal.

It shifted focus about five years ago, taking on middle-income housing in South Africa although it still has a commercial property portfolio.

"What separates us from conventional, sectional-title apartments that are rented out is that as we own and manage the whole property and environment, it's in our interest to ensure all tenants' happiness. As we control the whole property, we're able to get rid of one bad tenant so that all the surrounding tenants are happy.

"We give tenants the opportunity to live in an incredible lifestyle estate, very close to their place of work, at an extremely affordable rental. As we don't sell our apartments, we build only using the best quality materials and finishes."

In so doing, they can offer their tenants a lifestyle and community. "We employ a full-time community officer who arranges diverse and interesting events for our

"Obsession leads to greatness."

WINNER

Justin Blend, Grant Friedman, and Greg Blend

tenants. Each estate has a dedicated on-site management and maintenance team. This ensures that residents' queries are dealt with quickly."

Friedman and the Blends were recently asked by a banker why their vacancies were so low when other residential properties had such high numbers of empty flats. Their answer was extensive, but boiled down to the fact that it was difficult for anyone else to replicate what they offer.

Part of this is the challenge of finding large enough undeveloped tracts of zoned and serviced land so close to major commercial nodes like Sandton. "We therefore have to convert existing buildings."

Then, they say, most large buildings are owned by listed funds or institutions with which they already have established relationships and references. "This has given us an advantage when buying from them. Most of the listed funds sitting with empty office space don't have the expertise or will to get directly into this space."

Also, with their experience, they're able to "make sellers unconditional offers, not subject to due diligence or finance".

The Africrest team say it's beneficial to have all property management and leasing done in-house. The economies of scale per development allow Africrest to be more competitive than those entering the industry.

"Because of this, we can offer things like free fibre to all apartments due to us being able to buy in bulk, which all results in a more competitive rental for the tenant."

Plus, they have a large budget for security and security equipment, giving tenants more peace of mind – a factor "important in Gauteng".

They say developing just more than 3 000 apartments in a five-year period has been their best business achievement.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a huge challenge because many commercial tenants didn't use their premises and therefore didn't or couldn't pay their rent.

"We still needed to pay our bank debt [bond] and numerous other expenses in full," say the team. "We had a mammoth challenge in collecting rental from commercial tenants."

They did this by negotiating with each of their hundreds of tenants. "We needed to act quickly, implementing systems and processes to keep track of each tenant's deal. We recognised the need to help our tenants survive so they could still be tenants in our buildings post-COVID-19. What worked best was a rental reduction/write-off in exchange for the tenant signing a lease extension."

In addition, when lockdown struck, they were in the process of buying the PwC building called The Apollo to create hundreds of apartments in the Sunninghill area. It was a time of crisis when the seller phoned and said they were ready to do a deal. "Although we hadn't tested whether our model would be popular in Sunninghill, we had already committed to 500 apartments in the area and the PwC building would take us to more than 1 200 units in the area."

They took the leap. "It was a massive but calculated risk, and it paid off. The Apollo won first place at the International Property Awards for 'best residential redevelopment in South Africa'."

The Blends and Friedman printed large anti-corruption banners and placed them on their buildings during the height of Jacob Zuma's presidency.

Africrest encourages debate between all levels of employees. "At times, we argue with one another like crazy. But the sole aim is always to find a solution. Every Friday afternoon, the partners give each other a hug, which symbolises that no matter what we argued about during the week, we still love one another," say Friedman and the Blends.

Friedman and Greg Blend won the Absa Jewish Achiever Award for under 30s in 2016 (before the merger with Africrest). "Since then, we had the goal of keeping building, and not resting on our laurels so that one day, we could be in a position to win the main entrepreneur award."

Justin Blend said he first attended the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards at the age of 21 with his late father, Steven Blend, who was a long time Absa Jewish Achiever judge and mentor to all three of these winners, and went back every year. "It became a dream of mine to one day leave as a winner," he says.



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