

EF-Active, a cost-conscious and sustainable hygiene business



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

26 May 2021

At the height of the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic, a quality, cost-conscious and sustainable hygiene business, EF-Active, was born. Since then, the brand has grown exponentially to become a trusted household name, with an ever-growing range of products sub-Saharan African markets continue to embrace and champion.



Finding a market in the gap has always been something EF-Active founder and CEO, Salil Dhingra, does very well. Armed with a B.Com, post-graduate degree and an MBA in strategic marketing, he has successfully shaped and grown a business at a time when the markets remain staked against many an entrepreneur.

■ ***Can you tell us a bit about EF-Active?***

EF-Active is a proudly South African brand which started up at the start of the pandemic with revolutionary, innovative solutions to sanitising products that provide increased protection from bacteria and viruses. A prominent brand and growing household name, EF-Active continues to re-invest in the business to grow what is a proudly South African success story with many more tales to tell.

■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

At the height of the global pandemic, we saw an opportunity in the market; we embraced our circumstances and committed to launching innovative solutions to help curb the spread of Covid-19 which included a range of health & hygiene products under the EF-Active brand. What has resulted is a sustainable, cost-conscious and game-changing hygiene business with an ever-growing range of products that have now also expanded into the skincare sector.

■ ***can you elaborate on EF-Active's purpose and product offering?***

The brand is fast building loyalty due to our commitment to quality, affordability and intention to keep consumers safe and sanitised during the unprecedented times.

EF-Active's products are proudly South African (developed and manufactured in SA) and family-friendly. Our sprays are multi-purpose and NRCS approved for both surface & hand use with a unique scent.

Some of our products include:

- Mistizer – a unique aerosol sanitiser that is ideal to fog small enclosures within a short amount of time
- Moisturising sanitiser hand cream – anti-bacterial, a first in the market
- Sanitiser aerosol sprays – in a variety of sizes and scents

EF-Active has also recently launched a number of products in the skincare range which range across Eucalyptus oils, camphor creams and glycerine products.

▣ ***What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?***

I made the decision to branch off on my own personal venture at the beginning of the year. With the pandemic on our hands, we had to change our original course of the company to take an opportunity that we saw within the market to develop and manufacture an affordable, high quality and growing range of hygiene and sanitising products – from sourcing the right resources and ingredients to placing the product in key markets was key.

The premise of a new company and launching a new brand, EF-Active, into an already highly competitive FMCG market at the height of a global economic meltdown was a challenge but what has resulted is a sustainable, cost conscious and sustainable business and recognition and investment from some of the biggest retailers in South Africa and certain markets within Sub-Saharan Africa.

▣ ***What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?***

I always prefer to speak to what's ahead, what impact I can have in realising my ambition to make a difference. Apart from drive and determination, I always aim to visualise success and to know which risks to take, which opportunities to seize. When I accepted the opportunity to work in South Africa, I was eager to try new things in a country and market that excited me and where I knew I could add value; it's about nurturing passion and integrity and being confident.

I have invested in myself over the years. Academically, completing a B.Com and post-graduate diploma in ecommerce as well as an MBA in strategic marketing; and in my career, working in both a corporate environment building a subsidiary from the ground up to exploring my own ventures.

“ It is about not being afraid to re-invent yourself and being willing to learn – whether it is learning from competitors or learning from your own mistakes, constantly working hard to continue to grow. ”

I have had to work hard for my achievements; doing whatever it takes to reach my goals that I have set out for myself and for my business. I am in touch with ground realities and keeping in close contact with all levels of the business – one has to walk the streets to be in touch with the pulse of the consumer.

■ ***What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?***

The future is now about innovation and convenience, along with localization. The constant evolution of brands is now more important than ever and at a much faster pace to address ever evolving consumer habits and needs.

If companies and startups can just do three basic steps to CREATE, INNOVATE and EVOLVE, then they have a winning formula.

■ ***What would you like to see changed in the Africa startup landscape?***

Education is key to all startups. Access to information and exposure to the international markets are two key factors that are lacking for our youth. Both government and private sector needs to encourage youngsters who need guidance to make their concept a reality.

■ ***Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights***

My personal business journey began at the most unlikely and unprecedented time – March 2020.

After a 12-year commitment as CEO in a highly successful local subsidiary of a multi-billion-rand global business, I made what seemed the rather untimely decision to take the best of my experience, my respected relationships and networks that I had fostered over the past two decades (with over a decade in leadership positions) and consumer understanding and committed it to my own company (Great Africa Hair Company – 100% proudly South African and BBBEE Level 1) and to the development of my own brand, EF-Active, and in a turn of events at the height of a global pandemic, the company's focus diverted its attention towards a market demand for health & hygiene products.

I took calculated risks and revolutionised the hygiene sector at a critically important time. What has resulted from my vision of creating a sustainable, cost conscious and sustainable hygiene business and a passion for creating a local brand with international standards is near-immediate recognition and investment from some of the biggest healthcare and lifestyle retailers that the products have infiltrated.

Like any new business, the challenges are making sure to stay ahead of our competitors, staying ahead of industry trends and making an impact on our customers all while elevating and stimulating growth of our business in an extraordinary time in our history. We had to maximise existing infrastructure without major capex investments.

■ ***Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?***

Every person has a hidden entrepreneur in them, but the biggest struggle is to leave your job security and chase your vision. Only 5% of people take that big step. But if you believe in your concept, back it up with work experience and education and then take that big step. Your chances of success are much better then.

■ ***Where would you like to see EF-Active in the next 5 years?***

Covid has ultimately changed our perceptions, our ways of living and has shifted ways in which we conduct our businesses. The effects of the pandemic will be felt for many years to come. Having established ourselves within the

hygiene sector and taking into consideration that the virus may still be around for a substantial amount of time, our efforts moving forward will be to continue moving along with consumer demands and pushing the boundaries of innovation and manufacturing. We want to continue exploring new ways of capturing the market and to become an established household name.

Over and above the hygiene and sanitising products, our company has invested in a growing range of hair care, self-love and beauty products that is a flourishing industry with immense potential.

We have already been acknowledged as a trustworthy brand, with an impressive market penetration; we have cemented strong relationships with key retailers and have branched into markets in Sub-Saharan Africa and our vision is to continue to build on those relationships and to secure our businesses outside of the borders of South Africa.

We aim to have consumers engage and share in our investment in keeping us all safe, not only as lockdown restrictions lift but well into the future.

For more, go to [<https://www.facebook.com/EFAActiveSA/>].

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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