

RISE Academy nurtures youth to follow their passion



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

31 Oct 2019

RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship isn't just your average academy, it's core function is to make business skills available to the youth in a way that speaks their 'language'.



Sue Green, co-founder of RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship

Sue Green co-founded RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship, an academy that offers various courses and workshops for the youth that includes DJing, performing, dancing and modelling across Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

Green co-founded the academy with her brother who is equally as passionate about youth development, with the intention of distributing basic business and life skills to teenagers who want to start their own businesses or careers but weren't given the basic tools to attempt it.

We chat to Sue Green to find out more about the journey of RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship...

■ **Can you tell us a bit about RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship?**

RISE Academy is all about making business skills accessible to the youth so that they are equipped to self start and make something of their passions.

We desperately need more entrepreneurs to grow our economy but no-one is making entrepreneurship look attractive to the youth and no-one is presenting business skills in a way that is engaging to teenagers.

RISE Academy is all about 'making entrepreneurship sexy.' We use what the youth already care about, music, DJing, performing, and we use these interests to teach the business skills they need to go out and build a business around themselves.

“ *RISE Academy is more than a music school; it's a community that nurtures raw talent from the classroom to the stage* ”

No teenager is interested in learning about how to invoice a client - but if you're teaching them how to DJ and they need to invoice their new client for a booking that weekend, all of a sudden that class on invoicing is engaging, exciting, and relevant. This is how we teach business and encourage entrepreneurial thinking and pursuits.

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

I had been working with the largest under-18 events company in SA and could see first-hand how passionate and engaged teenagers are when they're interested in putting together an event around what they love - music. I could also see how much talent there was but it was taking the young DJs and performers nowhere because they had no guidance around business basics.

The owner of that events company and I decided we could solve the problem by grooming this talent - focusing on business skills - and then giving them these massive stages on which to launch their careers. We launched in 2014 and have never looked back.

■ ***What is the core function of RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship?***

RISE Academy is all about making business skills available to the youth - in a way that is engaging and speaks their 'language.'

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

South Africa has a surprising amount of red tape when it comes to starting and growing a business. Figuring out how to continually be compliant without letting the costs of this crush the growth of the business sometimes feels impossible. It's a continual challenge to navigate South Africa's small business landscape.

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

Just start. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll fail and failing is good. You won't get your product or service right until you've failed a few times, learnt from the failures and used those lessons to perfect your offering.

■ ***What has been your proudest achievement thus far?***

Two of our DJ graduates were booked to play at Ultra SA this March. It was proof that young students can learn business skills and apply them. When you give them the basic tools, they can take themselves all the way to the top. Ultra SA is the most prestigious music events for a DJ to be booked for in this country - we couldn't be prouder!

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

RISE and other SA initiatives are starting to make entrepreneurship look more attractive to the youth so I think we'll see an increase in young startups in the future. If we can collectively support these young businesses and help them over the red tape we could see some serious economic growth come from an increase in successful entrepreneurial endeavours.

▣ ***What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?***

More access to business skills, more education around what entrepreneurship is, and a rolling back of the regulatory environment that kills so many young businesses.

▣ ***What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?***

Creativity and resilience. Entrepreneurship is like a continual creative problem-solving career. Fixing the problems that no-one else can, creating solutions to continually overcome setbacks are what most successful entrepreneurs spend their time doing.

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

The challenges that our government is facing are extraordinary. I strongly feel that it's our civic duty to roll up our selves and get stuck into solving the problems we see. This is not a situation the government can turn around on its own. There aren't enough jobs to go around - if you have the resources to create your own job you're doing your part in solving our unemployment crisis.

▣ ***Where would you like to see RISE Academy of Entrepreneurship in the next five years?***

RISE is ready to expand into its third city next year. In five years time RISE will have a presence in all major SA cities, we will have changed the narrative around entrepreneurship for South African teens (from it being a boring career choice to being a way to follow what you're most passionate about no matter how crazy that is).

Some of the biggest names in SA music will have graduated from RISE and these public figures will be helping to change the perception that learning business skills to empower yourself is 'cool.'

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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