

Entrepreneurship is a way of life for many



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Michael Pretorius, intrepid entrepreneur and businessman who built CT Industries from the ground up, says, "Know what you want and be prepared to have your own beliefs challenged. Understand that failure is not finality, but dwelling on it is the quickest way to derail your future success."



Michael Pretorius, intrepid entrepreneur and businessman, built CT Industries

"Being an entrepreneur requires a specific mindset," Pretorius says. "It's about the thrill of the hunt, gaining the competitive edge, a passion for finding real workable solutions and the incredible victory dance when the client says 'yes'."

This Global Entrepreneurship Week, Pretorius shares more about his entrepreneur journey...

■ ***Tell us a bit about CT Industries***

CT Industries is the holding company for three businesses: CT Floors, CT Mining and CT Environmental.

■ ***When, why how did it get started?***

I started CT Industries in 2002 after closing the skylight installation agency that I had for two years prior. I didn't like the skylight business and wanted to create a career for myself by building my own business.

“ My main objective at that stage was to start a small business that would enable me to empower people who work in the business to create careers and lives for themselves. ”

This would inevitably give me purpose as well.

■ ***What are some of the main obstacles you had to overcome?***

I started the business with nothing. Not having money, and lacking experience, I had to become rather creative to survive.

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

Know what you want, but be prepared to have everything challenged. Accept a setback graciously as another step in your learning process, and move on to the next challenge as soon as possible.

“ Dwelling on failure is the quickest way to derail your future success. Never be a victim. ”

▣ **What is your proudest achievement to date?**

The business is turning 20 in a year's time. We serve some of the biggest businesses in South Africa. Every time my team and I close another major deal sends my heart soaring!

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

Entrepreneurship is the future! It takes special people to envision something, let go of all their comfort, inspire people and investors to join them, and go out there to create a business that will inevitably benefit so many more people than the entrepreneur him/herself.

“ In so many ways entrepreneurship is the lifeblood of innovation: it is nimble, creative, risky, scary, raw, beautiful, and so rewarding when things come together! ”

▣ **How important is it to have mentors?**

I wouldn't be here without the mentors in my life who have blessed me with their time, insight, experience, patience, inspiration and example.

▣ **What would you like to see change in the SA entrepreneurship landscape?**

Legislation that makes it difficult to get rid of wrong appointees makes it risky to hire new people. There would be so much more opportunity for people if the labour laws were not so strict. Entrepreneurial startups lack the financial backup to carry bad and under-performing employees. This so often mean that the entrepreneur tries to do everything him/her-self, and as a result, so many great small businesses remain just that:- small.

▣ **What traits do you believe an entrepreneur needs to succeed?**

- **Grit:** the ability to stick things through to the end, even during all the massive challenges and setbacks that inevitably will come your way.
- **Vision:** you have to know where you are going.
- **Systems focus:** if you don't systemize your business, you will forever be an employee inside your business.

▣ **What is your biggest struggle as an entrepreneur and what has been your biggest highlight?**

- **Struggle:** Finding the next big idea that can form a business.
- **Highlight:** Making that idea work.

▣ **What are the "must win" battles in entrepreneurship**

Your own limited self-beliefs and fear of inadequacy

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

I believe entrepreneurship is one of the few vehicles to experience the vastness and diversity of business life: Each business that you are involved in gives you the opportunity to experience another “world”.

“ Most people only experience one “world”, but if you are an entrepreneur, you can create the opportunity to touch so many more worlds and work disciplines as what you can dream and would want to handle. ”

The point is, entrepreneurship, if done right, gives you freedom.

▣ **What is the importance of entrepreneurship – especially in a country such as SA?**

In any developing country, job opportunities are not always available for everyone. If you can't find a job, you really have two choices; go beg, or go create something that can earn you an income. If you do the latter, you can classify yourself as a beginner entrepreneur. If you work at it diligently, and start to build a business, you can begin to classify yourself as an entrepreneur. Now you can start building your identity with pride instead of waiting for an opportunity that might never arrive. In our country, entrepreneurship should be encouraged as a way to build a future.

▣ **How do you see your entrepreneurship story evolving in the next 5 years?**

My heart is in business. I love the thrill of pursuing new opportunities. One of the businesses that I'm working on will branch out internationally soon. In the next five years I plan to be a global player.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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