

Celesté – from social worker to successful app developer



Celesté Swanepoel is living proof that you don't have to start out as an expert in order to run a successful business. In fact, you don't even require formal funding or previous experience in business. As long as you have a dream, are motivated and enjoy a good support structure you are well on your way.

In 2015 Celesté, a registered professional social worker, found that her job no longer challenged her professionally and she was put before a choice: continue to work as a social worker within the non-governmental (NGO) sector, or take a leap of faith and take up a completely new challenge. She chose the latter and bid farewell to a career spanning more than a decade.

After hearing from a colleague at work about the Enterprising Women Programme (EWP) at the North-West University's (NWU's) campus in Vanderbijlpark, Celesté immediately jumped at the opportunity. "My goal was to first and foremost address my boredom. I thought if I could start a small business to supplement my income it would be a bonus as we were struggling financially," says Celesté who today is the

proud owner of Edutastic (Pty) Ltd. Edutastic is a start-up company registered at the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) as a Private Company.

As the mother of a young autistic boy, Celesté drew on personal experience to come up with the idea behind Edutastic. “At that time my son was six years old and had only recently started talking. He was saying some three word sentences and felt so proud that he was finally able to express his needs. While my son was still pre-verbal I was always looking for products that could aid in his speech development and it was frustrating that the products available did not take into account the specific challenges my son faced when learning new information and learning to speak. The products that were available, were also only available in English.”

Through Edutastic, Celesté assists families with autistic children by offering mobile applications (apps) that can help them in the educational development of their children. These apps are autism-friendly, takes into account the unique South African context, are affordable and easily accessible to all South African families.

A dream and a desire to be challenged

“When I enrolled for the 2015 rendition of the EWP, I had no business knowledge or start-up funding,” explains Celesté and adds that when looking back on this time in her life, she can attest to the fact that the programme has been one of the most life changing endeavours she has ever been part off.

According to Celesté the programme empowered her to not only develop a solid well thought out idea for a start-up business but also gave her confidence a boost. “When presenting my business plan to the panel at the end of our course I felt confident and proud in a product that I knew would make an impact in the South African market.

A few months after finishing the programme Celesté got the opportunity to work as a social worker in the private sector – something she had dreamt of for a long time but never had the courage to even attempt. “The confidence I gained during the EWP training helped me to take this big step and I have never looked back,” says Celesté and explains that because of the big career move, she initially had to put Edutastic on the back burner. “After finding my feet, I applied what I learnt in the programme

and raised funds via a crowdfunding webpage to enable me to develop the mobile app I have been planning for so long. The biggest reward I gained through this programme was to realise that I should dream bigger and look beyond my own experience and knowledge.”

More about Edutastic

About 1 in 100 children in South Africa (186 000 children) is autistic. About 25% of people on the autism spectrum are non-verbal and some make use of alternative communication methods. Autistic children also learn in ways that are sometimes different from other people. “I want to develop products that embraces these differences and allow autistic children to be themselves and learn words and concepts in a way that they will find exciting,” explains Celesté.

In the development of Edutastic, Celesté consulted extensively with professionals working in the field of autism, as well as parents and autistic adults. The first mobile app is currently being developed and will be sold via the Google App Store before the end of the year. For more information contact Celesté on 074 630 5166. You can also follow her on Facebook by liking the Edutastic Page