

## Faith, talent and an abundance of creativity: an entrepreneurial journey



Gabi Hendrich,(37), a graphic and interior designer and the owner of Living Stones Talent Factory, describes her decision to become an entrepreneur as a gradual calling from God to which she answered yes. This is the story of her journey thus far.

A few months before graduating from university in 2003, Gabi started to apply for jobs in the corporate world with the intention of building a career in either graphic design or corporate communication. “God, however, had a different - the best - plan for my life,” says Gabi. She went to Taiwan to teach English for a year. This experience changed the course of her life. “In this vibrant, creative and industrious nation, the seed to start my own business was planted. It was, however, only seven years and a leap of faith later that LSTF was born in 2011.”

Gabi acknowledges that, until she was in Taiwan, the thought of becoming an entrepreneur never really crossed her mind. After her time in Taiwan she went to the United Kingdom for a working holiday. One evening, while thinking about her future business and what she should call it, she came across the passage in Luke where Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem. While a crowd began to praise God, some Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke them. Jesus replied: “If they kept quiet the stones along the road would burst into cheers!” (Luke 19: 40). Gabi knew that her business was to be called ‘Living Stones’. The latter part of the name, ‘Talent Factory’,

encapsulates a mid- to long-term goal she has: to add services to the business so it can grow and create jobs.

In 2016, Gabi signed up for the Enterprising Women Programme (EWP), offered by the bhive Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) on the North-West University's campus in Vanderbijlpark. Participation in this Short Learning Programme (SLP) has reinforced the positive outlook she has on her business and she has learned how to apply the Business Model Canvas strategy to assist her in the planning and implementation of business ideas.

"Initially, I offered graphic design services only. In 2015, I added an interior design service and currently I am designing a product range called 'You frill me', together with my intern Nobantu Motaung who participates in a Green Learnership. For this product range, we make use of scrap fabrics to make beautiful scatter cushions. I would love to expand the business and employ people to manufacture furniture and accessories," says Gabi. With regards to interior spaces, she wants to focus on offering green and sustainable design solutions to corporate and residential clients.

According to Gabi, she gained valuable experience working in the graphic design industry for five years before setting-up shop and the year spent in the UK inspired her with regards to innovative design and business ideas.

### Challenges and highlights

"You are responsible for almost every aspect of building your business and certain aspects can detract you from focusing on your core business - that can be tough. I am blessed to have support from family and friends and if the scope and deadline of a project is too much to handle by myself, I have a few great contacts to whom I can outsource certain tasks," says Gabi. When she thinks back to the very first EWP session, she says that she has grown as an entrepreneur. "Wonderful people have been added to my network: people who can give advice, new clients and people who encourage you. I have gained several new skills that I can use to develop my business and offer support to other women embarking on similar entrepreneurial journeys," says Gabi.

Some of the biggest rewards for her are the people that form part of the story of Living Stones Talent Factory, the positive feedback she receives from clients and

being able to do what she loves. “Witnessing how the seed that has been planted many years ago is growing and the impact it has. God’s faithfulness runs like a golden thread through the years,” says Gabi.

Visit Living Stones Talent Factory’s website [www.livingstonestf.co.za](http://www.livingstonestf.co.za) and Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LivingStonesTalentFactory/> or call them on 016 932 4384

More about the EWP

The Enterprising Women Programme is an eight month programme geared to provide business support services to women who wish to establish their own businesses. During the course of the programme, participants will be taken through a programme to explore ideas, develop business models and subsequently initiate their businesses with confidence and entrepreneurial know-how.

Since its inception in 2015 the programme has grown in leaps and bounds and has in recent months also been extended to Sasolburg and Pretoria. The programme represents an NQF Level 5 certification. The programme coordinator is Leonie Greyling, an entrepreneurship development professional, and together with a team of experienced presenters – representing both academia and the business sector s – the programme offers women the opportunity to realise their business dreams.