

Melissa Jantjies embraces a limitless mindset



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

5 Aug 2019

There was a time when you went to a university, studied a specific degree and were then expected to, and were likely to, create and follow a career in that exact field. But thanks to the transformation in the current job market, young professionals are being challenged to expand their education to enter fields they would not have previously thought they could.



Melissa Jantjies, Associate Systems Engineer at SAS South Africa

You are no longer confined to a box. Someone who has studied economics does not need to become an economist and even an economist now needs skills such as coding.

In fact, Melissa Jantjies is an example of this. She completed an Honours Degree in Economics at the University of the Western Cape but is currently employed as an Associate Systems Engineer at SAS South Africa, a trusted analytics powerhouse for organisations seeking immediate value from their data.

Jantjies' jobs entails everything from data management to advanced analytics to deployment, but her area of specialisation is analytics and data visualisation. Because of this transformation in the job market, young graduates need to equip themselves with the skills relevant to and high in demand within the job market – and right now there is a massive demand for data scientists locally, on the continent and globally.

What most young graduates don't understand is that a university can only teach you how to learn, it does not give you all the practical work skills required. Additionally, most are just unaware that there are broader career options available.

It's not just technical people who can benefit from acquiring skills in areas such as analytics with data science being used in fields like retail, banking and journalism.

This [Women's Month](#), we chat to Melissa Jantjies to find out about taking a leap into the technology landscape...

■ **Could you describe a typical day in your job?**

A typical day in my job would be anything from meeting customers to help determine their business problems to mapping technology and building demonstrations to show them how we can solve these problems. But, what I do love about my job is that there is no typical day. Every day is different, there's a different challenge in every day.

■ **What did you want to be when you grew up?**

When growing up I wanted to be a teacher, of course, like everybody else. The most significant thing I wanted to do was crime psychology or behavioural psychology and then branch off into criminology. So, the idea of solving crimes and figuring out why people do certain things, that always interested me.

■ **How did you get into the tech space?**

It was through a subject I studied for my economics degree - statistics - which was something that I absolutely loved. That's where I was introduced to programming. I like that you can actually build things and solve problems with it. Thereafter I applied for a job as a programmer.

■ **What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?**

The best advice anyone has given me was from my mom. She told me that you're only as good as you think you are, so it's important to have a limitless mindset.

■ **What advice do you have for the future generation of women wanting to get into the tech space?**

I would give other women looking to get into the tech industry the same advice my mother gave to me and I would also tell them not to be fearful of industries that are considered male dominated. There's a big shift towards women empowerment in these male dominated industries, it isn't something that should stop them from getting into these industries.

“ My hope is for more young girls to recognise that technology – and other typically male-dominated occupations - are career options they can pursue. I changed my mind many times before deciding to pursue technology, because I never felt suited to the other career possibilities I was exposed to. I studied five different courses – including the historically popular courses for females like Psychology – before being introduced to, and falling in love with, analytics and technology. ”

■ **Who or what is your biggest motivation?**

My biggest motivation is my family and friends. I think it's really important to surround yourself with people that are positive and contribute positively to your life. It helps to promote that messaging of believing in yourself, you should always have people around you who feed into that.

■ **Are South African women getting enough of a chance to shine in the tech industry?**

I think there's always room for improvement but I think we are making strides in the right direction. It's an industry that is evolving rapidly and that's not just in a tech perspective but also in what the industry looks like.

■ **As a female business leader, what's the least and most exciting aspect of your workday?**

The least exciting aspect of my day, as anyone would agree, is definitely administration. In order to build new things you obviously have to do a lot of project planning and administrative work which is a bit boring and doesn't really excite me. But,

being able to execute and build things and see that something was solved from what you've built is super exciting.

■ ***Women are considered to be natural problem solvers. Why do you think this is perfect for the tech industry?***

Because the industry is one that is constantly evolving and changing, which means there's always a new challenge that needs to be solved. So, having the ability and flair of a woman who is able to solve problems naturally is a great characteristic for the industry.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

Group Editor: Retail and Lifestyle

■ #AfricaMonth: A look at music publishing in SA with Eddie Hatitye of Music In Africa Foundation - 24 May 2022

■ #Newsmaker: Karena Orerar, new Edelman Africa CEO - 24 May 2022

■ Wonder celebrates a year of leading purpose-based brands - 24 May 2022

■ kykNET's *Kassie-Kuiers* reaches 500,000 views in six months - 18 May 2022

■ Castle Lager to embrace township economy in new brand positioning - 17 May 2022

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>