

'Living your best life' with Pride Factor

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Dene Botha, a self-taught entrepreneur has been recognised as one of Avance Media's 100 Most Influential Young South Africans for 2019 because of his life-skills academy, Pride Factor, which aims to inspire and guide youth to overcome the issues of unemployment and inequality...

With a busy schedule, Dene Botha took some time out to share his journey as a social entrepreneur...

■ *Can you tell us a bit about Pride Factor?*

Pride Factor is a modern life-skills academy dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of youth around the globe through motivational live events and relevant content delivered on widely accessible multimedia platforms in an easy to understand but impactful manner.



Dene Botha, founder of Pride Factor

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

The company was launched six years ago when I was involved in the Success Summit industry where middle-aged executives are inspired, shown how to solve their problems and to achieve success.

My previous experience in entertainment, coaching and MC'ing large events presented an opportunity to repurpose that model by making it cool, fun, rewarding and exciting. We call it 'edutainment' and ensure that the messaging resonates with the youth and addresses the issues they face as they move into adulthood and become the leaders of the future.

■ *What is the core function of Pride Factor?*

The core function of Pride Factor is to inspire, guide and mentor young people to live their ultimate lives.

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

As is the case with most startups, the major obstacle was generating sufficient finance while developing a sustainable business model, particularly in the education/social enterprise space usually filled by NGO/NPO's.

Realising that the youth demographic, who benefit most from our programmes, are those least able to afford to attend the workshops or paying for the online courses. We had to create (and are still fine-tuning) a model that provides corporate entities with a viable return on investment.



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Another obstacle is convincing government departments and philanthropists that their contributions will reap positive outcomes for the next generation and society in general - youth who are motivated and given access to life skills that assist them to become taxpayers by finding employment or becoming entrepreneurs who employ others.

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

Entrepreneurship takes commitment, so it's advisable to start out in a field you're passionate about. Secondly, you need patience because building a sustainable business is a marathon, not a sprint.



You also need to find the right partners and mentors to assist you, which often only comes through the experience of working with the wrong ones, to begin with! And once you've settled on your path, remain authentic and relevant to your

core functions while developing your unique selling proposition and scaling your operations.

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

I see Pride Factor as the culmination of my life's work, so my proudest achievement is leading a team of dedicated people who are developing and implementing the Pride Factor ethos.

It's also incredibly satisfying to see how well some of our students have progressed over the past six years.

“ To date, we've interacted with 57,000 youth at nearly 120 live workshops in three countries and 19 cities and towns, and we're just getting started! ”

It is gratifying to note that according to their feedback, our online academy LMS platform has a 92% approval rating, but the most rewarding aspect of our business is seeing the positive impact it makes in the schools, universities, tertiary institutions and communities we have reached.



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

Entrepreneurship has the potential to reduce South Africa's unacceptably high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth.

I'm hoping that some of the annual promises made by the government actually translate into legislation that will make starting and running a business easier, provide access to financial support for SMME's and supports programmes and organisations that offer training in entrepreneurial and work-readiness skills that are relevant in the evolving marketplace.

■ **What do you think is the importance of startup accelerator/incubator programmes?**

Startup accelerator/incubator programmes are very useful in providing the framework, support and networking contacts required to foster and encourage startups.

I've haven't personally attended any such courses, but Pride Factor has conducted a number of interactive workshops in collaboration with organisations that run them.

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

As mentioned earlier, the South African startup landscape needs the implementation of legislation that will reduce corruption, improve the ease of doing business and incentivise big business and the public sector to support the growth of SMME's.

The country's education system also needs revamping with public schools still using outdated curricula and controlled largely by unions whose members prioritise their own best interests ahead of those of their students.



We must do more to close the inequality gap in education

Stacey Brewer 21 Feb 2020



While the Department Of Higher Education is running an increasingly effective entrepreneurship programme in their academic institutions, the shortage of trade schools and technical colleges should also be addressed urgently.

We would also like to see more programmes that provide first-time work opportunities for school leavers and also access to finance in the risky startup phase.

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

The most important trait for an entrepreneur is passion.

“ Identifying what you are passionate about provides the springboard to becoming an expert in that field and going on to create a successful business. ”

Perseverance is also vital as there will be tough times because starting and running a business is a marathon and not a sprint, while self-belief, communication skills, lateral thinking and high energy levels are also valuable attributes

▀ **Tell us about some major highlights in your journey**

Some of the major highlights include overwhelmingly positive feedback received from audiences that Pride Factor and it's Inspired Youth, Empowered Youth and Online Academy platforms have reached.

Also, the tremendous support we have received from corporations, government departments and charitable foundations has enabled us to run interactive workshops; visit nearly every university; expand into Kenya and the UK; and to provide bursaries to students for our online courses in life skills, financial management and entrepreneurship.



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Another highlight has been the significant amount of coverage accorded to Pride Factor's activities by our media partners including SABC's Espresso Morning Show, CliffCentral.com, magazines like *Fast Company* and *GQ* and the many bloggers and social media platforms who have ensured that Pride Factor's successes reach a broader audience..

▀ **Where would you like to see Pride Factor in the next 5 years?**

Over the next five years, I'd like to see Pride Factor expand its reach in South Africa and the Anglophone countries on the African continent, develop and grow similar operations in the UK and to follow up on some of the opportunities we've been offered in Australia, India and the Philippines.



Our medium-term priority is to research, compile and provide pertinent content for the online academy and scale that up to reach tens, if not hundreds of thousands of young people via Global Education & Mentoring Platform.

■ **You've been recognised as one of the 100 Most Influential Young South Africans for 2019 by Avance Media. How do you feel about this?**

Being recognised as one of the 100 Most Influential Young South Africans for 2019 by Avance Media came as a surprise, but a very proud moment! Education is hugely important, both in South Africa and internationally, so to be acknowledged in the Social Enterprise and Philanthropy category was very special.

“ I'm honoured, elated, proud and so excited to have been recognised in this prestigious group of leaders who do so much to inspire others. I'm merely the front man for Pride Factor and it all comes down to team-work, collaboration and the relentless pursuit of enhancing the quality of life for the youth of our world. Together we can! ”

The media attention the award generated has allowed us to highlight what we are doing to inspire and guide young people to address the problems they face and how they can create fulfilling careers and lifestyles.

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