

CROSSING THE DIVIDE FROM STUDENT TO WORKING ADULT

GRAD

MANAGING
MONEY

PERSONAL
BRANDING

PREPARING FOR
AN INTERVIEW

HOW TO
LOOK FOR A JOB

START YOUR
OWN BUSINESS

WRITING CVs
AND COVER LETTERS

NETWORKING

EXTRA

WIN

A SMARTPHONE

Details inside

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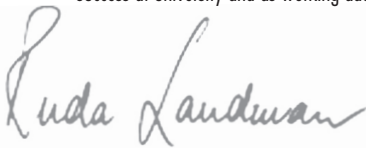
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WISH YOU ALL THE BEST!



In 2024 **StudyTrust** is celebrating its 50th birthday. On 13 June 1974 a few
farsighted individuals decided to actively combat the lack of opportunities
available to the majority of young South Africans determined to fulfil their
academic and professional potential. Assisting our bursary beneficiaries in
preparing for transitions is part of our approach to student mentoring. This
guide is one more initiative in helping a broader public of final year students
on their way. Use it well and often.



As you begin the journey and transition to the next phase of your
life, here is an opportunity to think long and hard about how and
where you would like to contribute your talents to the world of
work. Be it in public service, in private enterprise, in the not-for-
profit sector or as an entrepreneur – your talents and your interest
are key to finding meaning in your life.

We wish you success in navigating this process!

Cathy Sims
Executive Director, SA Graduate Employers Association



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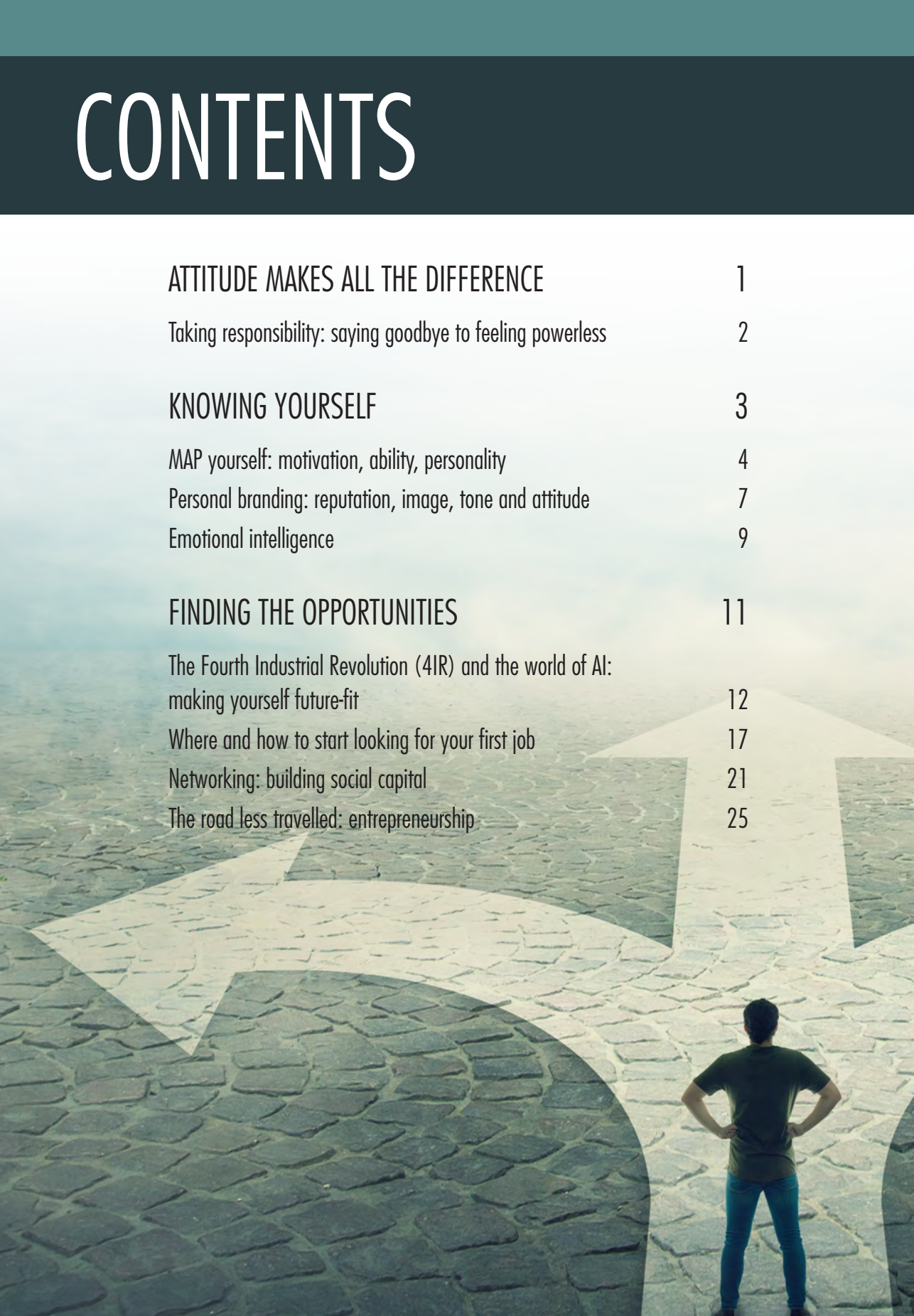
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**ATTITUDE MAKES ALL
THE DIFFERENCE**

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY: SAYING GOODBYE TO FEELING POWERLESS



When Letshego Zulu's husband Gugu died on Mt Kilimanjaro in July 2016, her life came crashing down around her. They had been together since they were teenagers. Their daughter was one year old. Gugu had been a top sportsman, South Africa's first black racing driver, and was in peak condition. There was no reasonable explanation for this catastrophe.

Letshego could have blamed the trek leaders, the doctor, the people who carried him off the mountain, the emergency caregivers. Or fate. Or God. She could have withdrawn into herself, becoming a passive bystander in life, just getting by. Instead, she wrote a book called *I choose to live*. Three years after Gugu's death she was running her own business as a biokineticist and fitness coach and giving her all to her little girl and her extended family.

It is a very human trait to feel sorry for yourself, to feel powerless in the face of forces outside of your control.

- ▶ It may be your circumstances: "I grew up poor, so I will never really make it."
- ▶ It may be society and social structures: "Other people have networks, which make their lives easy. I don't, so I will always struggle."
- ▶ It may be fate: "My mother died when I was young. I have never had a chance."
- ▶ It may be specific people: "My lecturers did not support me, so I could not do well."

The first half of every one of these statements may be absolutely true. Life is often hard. Life is not necessarily fair. You may have experienced extreme abuse or hardship, which may have left you feeling helpless and useless. It is understandable, and it is not your fault. But as long as you see yourself as a helpless casualty of circumstance, you give away all your power. Whatever has happened, has happened. You have no control over past events. You do, however, have control over your response. You are response-able.

Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right." The moment you *choose to live* in spite of shattering loss; the moment you start saying "I can" instead of "I can't", you make everything possible. You take the direction of your life into your own hands instead of sitting back passively, believing that others/fate/God are in charge and you can do nothing about it.

At this crucial moment in your life, as you prepare to embark on your future as an adult, you are the one in charge. You have the power. Your decisions and your actions are yours to celebrate – or sometimes to regret and learn from.

This is how one recent graduate answered the survey question, "What have you learnt about yourself and the world since you started working?"

The world does not owe me anything. However my life turns out is up to me. Yes I have no control over some things, but how I feel about situations and how I react all depends on me.

The successful person blames no one and no one who places blame will ever become successful.



KNOWING YOURSELF

MAP YOURSELF: MOTIVATION, ABILITY, PERSONALITY

Every so often we arrive at crucial crossroads in our lives, when a choice one way or the other will shift our path in a different direction. Choosing your university was one such moment; as was choosing what to study. Now you have arrived at another one: you have to decide where to start your career. You want to find a match between yourself and a possible job. To do that, you need to get to know yourself first – what makes you tick, what makes you fearful, what you want, what you hate. You need to MAP yourself.

If you put your nose to this page, you won't be able to read anything, and the pictures will be little more than a jumble of colours and lines. You need to pull away to make sense of it. Our relationship with ourselves is a bit like that. We live inside our thoughts and activities and emotions all the time, too close to see patterns or understand cause and effect. In order to see ourselves in context, we need to take a step back and draw a MAP.

There is no right and wrong. We are all different. The only "right" answers are the ones that lead to self-awareness.



M

IS FOR MOTIVATION

Think of something you enjoy doing regularly. Let's say you're a member of the debating society, or the soccer team, or that you mentor students at your old school. Motivation is the answer to the question, "Why?"

- ➔ Why did you start?
- ➔ Why are you persevering?
- ➔ Why are you giving it your all (or not)?
In other words, what determines the intensity of your engagement?

These answers will lead you not only to your motivation but also to your **values**. You started mentoring because **you believe**

in giving back. You keep going because **you believe in honouring your commitments**. But you do the minimum because **teaching and guiding younger people doesn't really turn you on**. You joined the soccer team because your best friend plays and **friendship matters to you**. You carry on because you have found that **you like using your skill and your physical energy**. That's also the reason you give it your all – but you don't go to the extra practice on Saturdays because **you also value your academic achievement** and you'd rather spend the time studying.

Make a list of all the values and motivations you can come up with. Then move on to A ...

A

IS FOR ABILITY

Another word for ability is skill; it is the answer to the question, "What can you do?"

This may seem obvious. You are studying computer science so that you can improve your skill in writing programs; English is one of your majors because you can write well. List all of your skills. These are the basic abilities, the "hard" skills, which will determine the content of the job you will do.

Other skills may not be as obvious. According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report for 2020, the skills most commonly sought by employers are:

- ➔ Complex problem solving
 - ➔ Critical thinking
 - ➔ Creativity
 - ➔ People management
 - ➔ Collaboration
 - ➔ Emotional intelligence
 - ➔ Judgement and decision making
- ➔ Service orientation
 - ➔ Negotiation
 - ➔ Cognitive flexibility

These are not skills one learns in a classroom, but you may have picked up more than you think. Consider your formal studies and all your other activities with this list in mind.

Many projects that you had to complete as part of your studies will have involved problem solving, critical thinking and creativity. Group activities force you to collaborate and negotiate, which teaches you emotional intelligence – the ability to be aware of your own and others' feelings and emotions and to act accordingly.

If you are studying social work, you may have faced tricky situations during your practical training. Perhaps you had to deal with a difficult father who wanted to see his children outside of his allotted times. If you managed it well, you

have the ability to stay calm and not give in to emotion in difficult situations – evidence of emotional intelligence. It also shows a service orientation: you wanted to give both the father and the rest of the family the best possible solution. You had to use your judgement and decide what to propose. There's a whole basket of skills in that one experience.

In your personal life, you may have taken the lead in the commune you stay in, organising people to clean the common areas and proposing rules about the use of the fridge. Perhaps you have organised a group of people from your residence to club together to buy food. That shows creative thinking, leadership and the ability to collaborate, negotiate and manage people.

Make a list of things you have done both as part of your coursework and in your personal life. Think of the skills they may demonstrate.

Own them, tell yourself “Well done!”, and write them down.

When considering your list of abilities, you also have to think about areas in which you could improve. Some are practical. If you cannot use basic computer programs like Word, Excel and PowerPoint yet, find a free online course and learn. These are essential skills for the workplace. So is the ability to write – not poetry, just clear English for emails or reports.

Other gaps in your skillset may be emotional or intellectual. If you cannot control your temper or you tend to be inflexible in your approaches or your views, you need first to be aware of the weakness and then find a way to work on it.

Ask a friend to do this exercise with you. You can serve as a sounding board for each other, identifying both your strengths and your weaknesses.



..... P IS FOR PERSONALITY

There are various models for categorising personality types and ways of thinking. Some of the best-known are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Herrmann Whole Brain model, the Big Five personality traits, and the Enneagram test. Google these if you're interested; you will find fascinating information.

Here are some of the basic variables. Remember that you will fit somewhere on a continuum – in other words, you may be only slightly introverted, or extremely so. Very few people are at the extremes, so that they respond exclusively in only one way.

- How do you recharge your batteries/from where do you draw your energy? Do you withdraw with music or a book, or do you seek out friends for a party?
- Do you like working with other people, or would you rather work alone?
- Can you sit at your desk all day working away at a problem, or do you have to have variation and change?

- Do you like working with detail, or would you rather think about the big picture?
- Do you like nature, being in “the bush”, or do you prefer the city with all its busy-ness?
- Does it matter to you that you may offend people, or do you go for your goal without worrying about that?
- Do you look for new projects, new people and new information all the time, or do you prefer stability, routine and certainty?
- Do you keep all your options open until the last moment, or do you plan ahead in detail?

Of course, this is not an exhaustive list. Think about an average week in your life. Think about what you enjoyed and what you had to force yourself to do. What does that say about your preferences? Make a list.

Now you have a MAP of yourself. It is not final. You will change it many times as you grow and learn. However, you have a picture of who you are and what you can do at this point in your life.



PERSONAL BRANDING: REPUTATION, IMAGE, TONE AND ATTITUDE

Whether we realise it or not, we are building our reputation and our personal brand in every interaction we have with others. The way you dress, the way you speak and your posture, the way you carry yourself: all of these factors create an impression long before you have said anything meaningful at your first meeting with a stranger. The pictures and posts on your Instagram, Facebook, X, formerly known as Twitter, and LinkedIn profiles tell a long and colourful story about you to friends and strangers alike.

This fact is neither good nor bad. It's just the way it is. But from now on, as you enter the working world, you have to be aware of it and manage it consciously.

How do you want to be seen?

- As creative, colourful and free-thinking?
Why then are you wearing a conservative suit and tie in your LinkedIn profile picture?
- As dependable, serious and conscientious?
Why does your Instagram feed still feature that night when you danced on the table?
- As confident and articulate? Why was that handshake so weak, and why are you speaking in a whisper?

Go through all your online platforms; check your Facebook, Instagram and X, formerly known as Twitter, accounts, and **delete** all inappropriate photos and posts on all your social media. Employers are often on these sites, scoping out possible employees. Don't let them see something you'd rather they didn't. **DON'T** think you can keep personal and professional separate. You cannot. For example, relationships go wrong. Explicit selfies you send to one very special person can go to all his or her contacts with one click. If you blow off steam in colourful language in an email to someone you trust, it could be forwarded to someone else in a second. Always remember: if it's digital, it can and probably will be distributed beyond the first interaction. Not without reason is one of the best books on the law and social media titled *Don't film yourself having sex* (Emma Sadleir).

Everything out there must “hang together” and give the same impression. Decide who you are and what you want to project, and do it consistently. The best way to achieve this is to be authentic. If you try and pretend, you will be found out sooner or later – and you'll probably be under constant strain until the day it happens!

Think about your audience

If you are going into accounting or the legal profession, for example, you know that your audience has quite specific ideas about appropriate dress. Buy a few basic skirts and pairs of slacks and one or two jackets that you can jazz up with tops and accessories (women); or one suit, two or three pairs of slacks, neutral shirts that go with everything and a jacket (men). The less memorable your clothes, the better – no one will notice if you wear the same black pencil skirt/dark pair of trousers three days of the week.

Invest in a good bag that can hold a laptop, and good shoes. Ladies, when you can afford it, you can buy a pair of shoes for every outfit. At this point you will have one or two pairs for work. They must be stylish, but timeless and comfortable. Stilettoes do not work on public transport,



and will be a distraction at the office.

Dressing well does not have to be expensive – street markets and second-hand (thrift) shops offer a goldmine of clothes of every possible description. The advertising industry or IT will not need nearly as much thought or planning when it comes to your wardrobe!

Good photographs for use on your CV and online profiles cost nothing in the age of cell-phone cameras. Ask a friend to take the pictures for you. Dress with your audience in mind. Think about light – don't squint into the sun, or stand under a tree with splotches of sun and shadow on your face. Never stand against a featureless white wall, especially if you have a darker skin tone. Choose a plain background in a fairly light colour. The most flattering pictures are taken out of direct sun but with lots of light, for example on a shady veranda. Let your friend take a series of head-and-shoulders shots for you to choose from. Do not be embarrassed about doing this, it is part of being professional. You would reciprocate if someone asked you.

Just like social media or your dress sense, the same principles apply to putting together your CV or a website: keep your audience in mind and be very clear about the image you want to pro-



ject. Do not use an intense orange background with curly, colourful fonts unless you're in the creative industries. Even if you are, the point of any communication should be the content. Don't let your presentation overwhelm it. Clean and clear is almost always best.

One final word about personal interactions. You may come from a cultural background where it is considered rude to look people in the eye, or to stand up straight when that means that your head is higher than your superior's. The professional world in South Africa by and large runs on a different set of expectations. Walking into a room with hunched shoulders and sitting down immediately, looking at no one, will be seen as signs of either weakness, apathy, over-familiarity, or a lack of respect. When you meet someone, stand up straight, look him or her in the eye and shake hands confidently. Don't squash the person's hand; just give a firm, pleasant grip. Speak

clearly and with confidence. Show respect for them, but also for yourself. Usually, one waits to be offered a seat before sitting down. Similarly, wait to be offered refreshments rather than simply helping yourself.

Trust yourself. Be true to yourself. But remember that every one of us has a whole cast of personalities inside ourselves. You are a girlfriend, a daughter, a researcher, a mentor; a brother, a soccer star, an engineer, your gran's favourite. You bring something slightly different to every one of those roles. In your job, you want to be a professional, respected member of a team. Adapting and fitting in does not mean being false and hypocritical. It only means taking the correct personality to every occasion – do not take the sexy girlfriend to the boardroom, or Granny's spoilt baby boy to the mining indaba. Take the grown-up professional. Dress, act and speak appropriately.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Think of someone who helped you on your way in life, who supported you to flourish. It could be a teacher, your mother, perhaps a mentor at university. Let's call this Person A. How did he or she behave towards you? You may have thoughts such as, "He always made time for me," "She really listened," "He never made me feel stupid," "I could say anything and know she would not be offended," "He cared about my success."¹

¹ Thank you to Karina de Bruin of JvR Academy for sharing insight and intellectual property for this section on emotional intelligence.





Now think of someone you have found it impossible to work or cooperate with. Let's call this Person B. Why was it so difficult to be with him or her? Possible answers may be that he or she is self-centred, is cold or unsympathetic, always interrupts, never listens, is easily offended, or just is not interested in anything that isn't about himself or herself.

You have just described someone with and someone without emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence, sometimes referred to as EQ, is not an airy-fairy concept with no real content. On the contrary, it is only too real and practical, because it manifests as our behaviour and our reactions in various situations. Imagine if you were an HR person who had to hire someone for a job. You have two candidates who are equally skilled. One behaves like Person A and the other is like Person B. Who will you choose? Person A will get the job every time, because people with a high EQ can work in a team. They are open to change. They bring out the best in others. They are strong enough to accept criticism. Those are the people you want to work for you and with you.

The good news is that EQ is a skill that can be learnt and improved. The basic building blocks are:

- Self-awareness – recognising your own emotions, understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and having faith in yourself
- Self-management – emotional self-control, adaptability, initiative, taking responsibility, optimism
- Social awareness – empathy with others, awareness of how you are being perceived or understood, listening
- Relationship management – the ability to motivate and influence others, to settle disputes, to create the basis necessary for change

Neuropsychiatrist Dr Dan Siegel² uses the hand as a model for the brain. Make a fist with your thumb on the inside next to your palm. The thumb and the palm of the hand represent the brain stem and limbic region. That's where your emotions live, and from where you react to intense feelings like fear, anger and anxiety; going into fight, flight or freeze mode without thinking about it. Dan Siegel calls it your “downstairs brain”.

Your fingers, at the outside of your fist, represent the frontal cortex or the “upstairs brain”. This part of the brain allows you to think before you act. It is the home of decision making, empathy, concentration and self-control. You cannot recognise or control your emotions unless you move them from your downstairs brain to your upstairs brain, where you can name them to tame them.

When you lose control, you “flip your lid”, says Dr Siegel. Open your fingers to see what he means. You take your upstairs brain out of the way and the downstairs brain has free reign. Next time that happens, see if you can't keep a lid on it. Bring all those fierce emotions upstairs, where the frontal cortex can consider your options before you act. In practical terms, that means buying yourself some **time** – count to ten, walk round the block or make some tea while taking deep, calming breaths and **thinking** about what is causing your anger/irritation/fear. That is the path to emotional intelligence.

If you want some more practical help on this journey, go to www.jvracademy.co.za and try their free lessons. They are clear, easy and fun.



FINDING THE OPPORTUNITIES

THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (4IR) AND THE WORLD OF AI: MAKING YOURSELF FUTURE-FIT

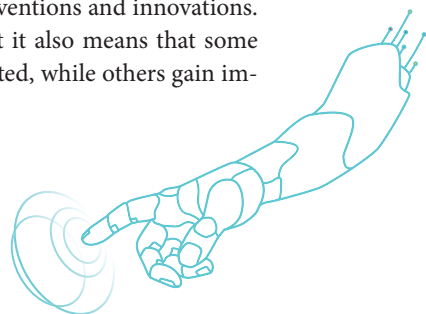


Over two hundred years ago, around 1800, factory workers in England revolted against their bosses in what we might describe as rolling mass action. For a number of years, sporadic violence erupted across the industrial heartland as skilled weavers and other craftsmen destroyed newly invented machines, which were making it possible for their bosses to employ cheaper, less skilled workers instead. The rebels became known as the Luddites, after a semi-mythical leader by the name of Ned Ludd. The government sent in the army. The revolt was ruthlessly quashed. Machines were introduced, increasing manu-

facturing capacity and bringing a sharp rise in the standard of living, but costing many jobs.

In 2019, bank employees in South Africa threatened a strike “to make a point” about the impact of digitisation, automation and internet banking on their livelihoods. Like the Luddites, they wanted to stop, or at least slow down, technological change. Like the Luddites, they have no chance. Change is inevitable. Technology is developing ever faster. It brings exciting inventions and innovations. It changes lives. But it also means that some skills become outdated, while others gain importance.

WHY IS THIS CALLED THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION?



The Luddites opposed a wave of change that we used to call simply “the industrial revolution”: the introduction of machines to do work previously done by hand. But that was only the beginning, only the first industrial revolution. Soon there was a second, with the advent of electricity, the steam engine, railways, the telex, etc. That led to the third: computer technology, progressing from huge machines operated by experts to personal computers accessible to everyone thanks to graphical user interfaces like Windows.

We are in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The term was coined in 2015 by Klaus Schwab, a German engineer and economist (who

also founded the World Economic Forum), to describe the current wave of new technologies once again changing the way we live.

By far the most dramatic development in this field is the availability of AI (artificial intelligence) bots or platforms which have learnt NLP, or natural language processing. That means they understand ordinary human language and can communicate as if they are human beings. This makes it possible for every one of us to use AI, no matter how much or how little we know about computers. **Do not be scared of AI. It is the most powerful tool you will ever have – but like any other tool, you have to learn to use it.**



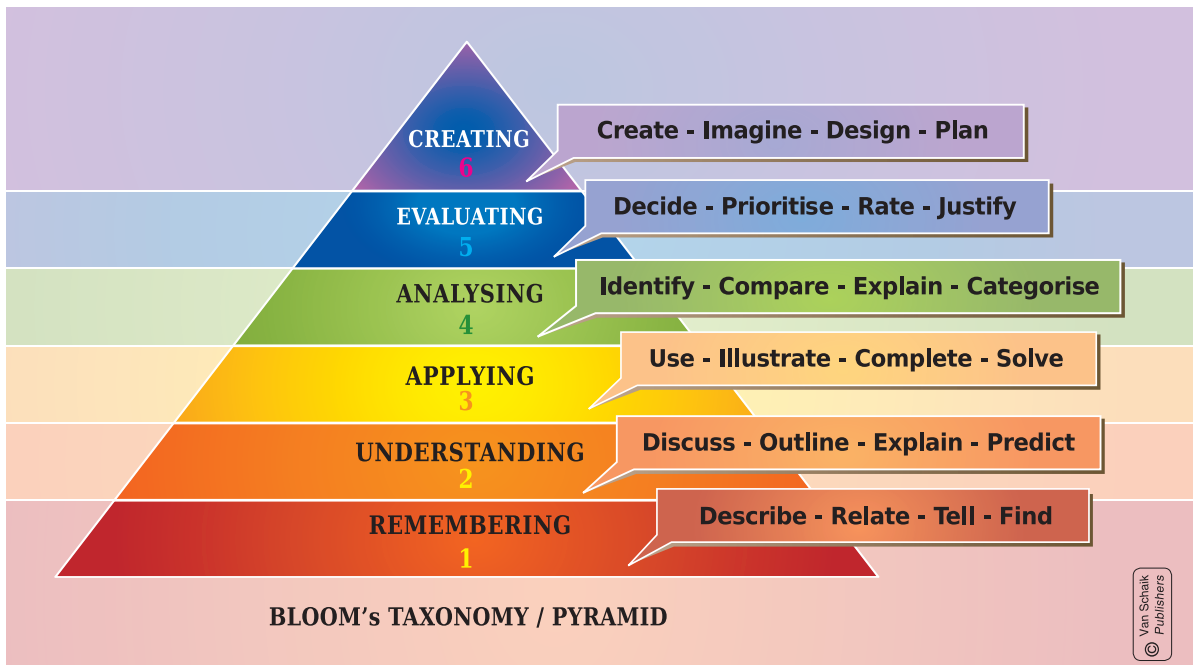
HOW TO SURVIVE – AND THRIVE – IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE WORLD OF AI

Technology in general and AI in particular is moving so fast that what you study at university, especially in the IT field, may be outdated by the time you enter the workplace.

So why study at all?

You will always need to know the basics of whatever field you are in, whether it is literature, engineering, social work or IT. Even that outdated programming language you learnt two years ago taught you the principles of creating a way for humans to interact with machines. No learning is wasted – provided you use it as a foundation to build on, not as an end in itself.³

Let's look at a model to help us think about how we learn and grow: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.



³ Thank you to Johann Smit (www.ima-sa.com) for invaluable input to this section.

Bloom's Taxonomy was created by the American educational psychologist Dr Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in 1956. It is a kind of classification of learning outcomes and objectives. In the more than half-century since, it has been used for everything from framing digital tasks and evaluating apps to writing exam questions and assessments.

- Learning starts with **remembering**. This is when you memorise a poem, recall the nine provinces of South Africa, remember maths formulae, or learn a programming language.
- The second level is **understanding**. You organise the animal kingdom based on a given framework, illustrate the difference between a rectangle and a square, or summarise the plot of a story.

These two levels of learning can almost completely be replaced by AI. You can find any fact including the classification of animals and the plots of stories online in seconds. **Even so, you still need to know enough to ask the right question. You need to know that the animal kingdom is organised in a certain way, or that there are geometric figures which play different roles in calculations. You no longer need to learn the details, but you need to have an overview in your head.**

- The third level is **applying** your knowledge. You use a formula to solve a problem, select a design to meet a purpose, work out how a new law would progress through a government system, or write a computer program for a specific purpose.
- On the fourth level you will be **analysing** information and knowledge. You may identify different elements of democracy, explain how the steps of a scientific process work together, or identify why a machine isn't working.

On these two levels, AI will be able to give you possibilities, but it will not be foolproof or perfect. It is not human. It has no way to judge its own information. It simply gives you what it finds all over the immense knowledge base of the internet. **You have to decide whether its suggestion is the best one.**

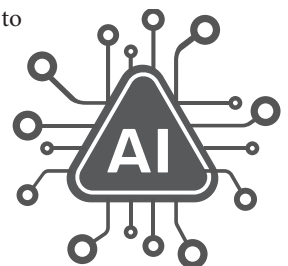
- The fifth level is **evaluating**. Now you may have to make a judgement regarding an ethical dilemma, interpret the significance of a law of physics, or illustrate the relative value of a certain kind of technology in farming.

AI cannot do this. Train yourself. Make this your strongest suit.

- The sixth and final level is **creating**. This is when you design a new solution to an "old" problem, write a persuasive essay drawing on different sources, or write a poem on a given theme.

There is enormous debate around this. AI can indeed write poems and paint paintings. Can it ever be as good as a brilliant human being? How are the artists who created the works that the AI was trained on, compensated? For now, for you, it is enough to be aware of the debate.

To thrive in this new world, you have to change your focus from memorising and understanding to applying, analysing, evaluating and, eventually, creating. A programming language you learn is not an end in itself. It is only a tool, to be used in the same way as MS Word or Excel: to create something else. Approach all your course content with that same mindset. For example, don't just memorise the eight functions of a typical business. Consider the challenges these functional silos create, their continued value or lack thereof, and what you might put in their place. The secret is not in less learning, but in more: think further than the content you are presented with.



Self-guided learning and curiosity is one of the central skills that will “future-fit” you as part of the workforce. Be obsessive about learning. Choose jobs where you will learn, even if those jobs do not offer the best salaries. Read widely. Talk to people. Visit networking events, not to make money or sell products, but to learn about other people’s worlds.

Some other skills to “future-fit” you:

Make friends with AI

This is becoming non-negotiable. Your job will not be taken by AI, it will be taken by someone who understands AI. Start learning and practising today – it’s easy and fun!

At the time of writing, two AI platforms are gaining traction: Bard, developed by Google, and Bing, developed by Microsoft using Open AI’s ChatGPT technology. Find either of them by typing the name in the search box in your browser: “Bing” or “Bard”. Bing has a number of options, but the one you’re looking for is “chat”. Click on that and you get a box saying, “Ask me anything.” Bard is more formal: “Enter a prompt here.”

These prompts or questions or queries are the key to a good outcome. Think carefully what it is you want to know or to do.

- Be clear and specific. Instead of asking, “Write me a poem”, you could say, “Write me a poem about love that is both sad and hopeful.” If you have a style in mind, add that: “... in the style of Maya Angelou.”
- Add context.
 - If you’re looking for information on labour law in this country, add “South Africa”.
 - If you’re asking how we can make buildings more sustainable, add “for the South African climate”.
 - If you want to know how accounting standards should be applied, add “to comply with SA Revenue Service standards”, “in an international company” or “in an NGO”.



- Ask open-ended questions. “Is coffee good for you?” will only get you a yes or no answer. Rather say, “Explain the benefits and drawbacks of drinking coffee.”
- Check for grammar and spelling mistakes. AI cannot interpret what you really meant. It gets confused by wrong spelling and grammar.
- AI quickly learns what you personally want and will always give you more of that, in the same way that a music app learns your taste and suggests similar clips. Make a point of asking for information that may contradict your own views. Say, for example, your assignment is on labour law in South Africa. You believe that companies always discriminate against women. If you ask, “Give examples of discrimination against women,” you will get a long list supporting your preconceived idea. If, however, you ask a more neutral question like, “Give examples of rules governing the employment of women,” the answer will cover a wider range.

Both platforms give examples of prompts. Don’t be scared. Nothing can go wrong. If you don’t get the right answer the first time, ask again. Play. Make it fun.

Multi-disciplinary view

Being an expert in one area might be helpful, but the world is moving towards a multi-disciplinary approach. HR managers need IT skills. IT people need strategic skills. Marketing people need data analysis and evaluation skills. Actors need business skills. If you identify a shortcoming in your skillset, find a way to remedy that. YouTube and Google are good starting points, offering (among other things) TED Talks and Talks at Google. If you need more in-depth learning, look for accredited online courses, and masterclasses, short courses and weekend workshops near you.

IT skills

Regardless of your field of study, knowing at least a little bit about the most prominent technologies will elevate you beyond your peers, making you a preferred candidate for a position. Some examples are:

- Data sciences (including SQL and databases)

- Some form of software development (computer programming)
- Cyber security
- Social media advertising

Many of these skills can be acquired for free or relatively cheaply through online learning platforms such as Codecademy, Udemy, Coursera and many YouTube channels. Every new skill you acquire will distinguish you from those without it, making job-hunting so much easier.

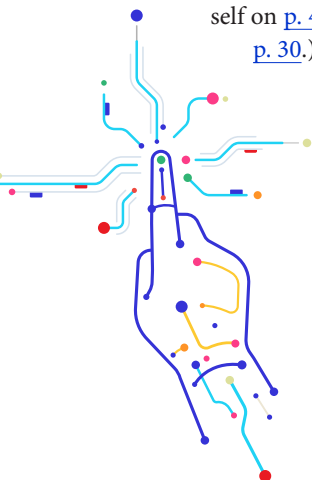
Check out the 4IR Skills Programme, which focuses on building digital skills that can be applied across numerous sectors. It is led by the South African Ministry of Communications, in partnership with Deviare, Microsoft, Cisco, Leaders in Motion Academy, and Global Entrepreneurship Network. More information is available at www.4irskills.africa.

Adaptability and “soft” skills

The idea of one job or even one career for the rest of your life is becoming less and less realistic. Think in terms of tasks, rather than a position or a job, when you plan your work life. Digital marketing can be done on a contract basis for a number of clients; negotiating skills are needed in a wide variety of fields, from the police to divorce mediation; a good educator/trainer can find work in almost any environment.

Furthermore, in every job you will need reading comprehension, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Active listening and the ability to collaborate will make you a valuable employee. We all have and employ skills that we may not recognise or value. (Remember to MAP yourself on [p. 4](#), and see how to write a CV on [p. 30](#).)

Artificial intelligence is not creative, loyal or empathetic. Your essential human traits cannot be digitised. Build on those. Think wider than your field of study – the majority of engineers from top US universities (Harvard and Yale) work in consulting and financial services.



A study by international business consultants McKinsey⁴ on the impact of automation on the workplace comes to the following conclusion:

The hardest activities to automate with currently available technologies are those that involve managing and developing people (9% automation potential) or that apply expertise to decision making, planning, or creative work (18%). These activities, often characterized as knowledge work, can be as varied as coding software, creating menus, or writing promotional materials. For now, computers do an excellent job with very well-defined activities, such as optimizing trucking routes, but humans still need to determine the proper goals, interpret results, or provide common-sense checks for solutions. The importance of human interaction is evident in two sectors that, so far, have a relatively low technical potential for automation: healthcare and education.

The world is changing. We cannot stop that, but we can be aware of it and train ourselves to be as flexible and adaptable as possible. One of the recent graduates who responded to our survey in 2019 sent the following answer to the question, “What have you learnt about yourself and the world since you started working?”

The main thing I've learnt about myself and the world is that learning never stops. I had expected that once I finished formal education, there would be little more to learn, until such time that I went back to study. However, I have come to realise that there is always an opportunity to expand and grow. It could be something as simple as learning a new shortcut in Excel, or it could be volunteering to take on the role of first-aid officer for your floor at the office. Life doesn't need to be linear, and there is no formula for success. Take on new roles and responsibilities, even if it doesn't match up completely with what you call yourself professionally – you'll be better for it in the long run.

4 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/where-machines-could-replace-humans-and-where-they-cant-yet>



WHERE AND HOW TO START LOOKING FOR YOUR FIRST JOB

It feels overwhelming, but it can be done. Every working person out there has had to do it. You can too. Take heart from the fact that **only 8% of graduates in South Africa are unemployed.** (Check it at <https://www.71point4.com/revisiting-graduate-unemployment> if you don't believe it!) The figure is higher for younger people, however – we are not saying it's easy. Worldwide, the economy is under pressure, even before Covid-19, and young people everywhere are finding it hard to land a job. You are not alone.

Recent graduates tell us that if you send off less than ten applications you haven't even started. In many cases it takes twenty applications and months of concentrated effort to find that first job. Do not give up, even when you get no response to applications. Don't take it personally. It is not about you. The lives of those HR personnel are full and complicated. Keep going. Finding a

job is a job in itself. Set aside at least three or four hours a week to work on it, starting NOW. Do not wait until December and think you will have an income in January.

Still: don't panic. There are jobs out there. At some point you will align with one of them. But where should you start?

For most people, their first job is simply an entry point into the world of work. At some point in the future when you're looking for your *next* job, hopefully you will be employed, with a secure base from which to work. You will have started building experience and networks. Then you can afford to be more selective, more picky. At this point, the practicalities like salary and benefits, distance from where you live and available transport will most probably override everything else.

This section, therefore, is not only for now. It's also for next time.

Here's the reality of our working life in one snapshot.⁵



As we said above, for your first job you will probably place more emphasis on the bottom two circles, or even just the one on the left – you may start out working for free or for very little money. You need to get into the market and start building experience.

Here are some pointers to get you going.⁶

➤ First of all, what kind of job will you consider? Your first job will most probably not be your dream job. Every industry is like a big anthill – it looks impenetrable from the outside, but once you find a way in, you can see pathways and connections you could not even imagine. Take one example: you may dream of being a newsreader on TV. The chances of getting that job when you start out are close to zero, but that does not mean it is impossible. Get into the industry in whatever way you can: researcher at a regional radio station, reporter at a local newspaper, personal assistant at a production company. You need to get to know the industry and how it works, build up your CV, gain experience, and build a network. Then you will see the next opportunity when it arrives, and be ready to take it.

Here's a comment from a recent graduate to illustrate this:

I've always had this fantasy of working in one of the big media compan[ies], where it will be a fun and exciting environment. Turns out my first job had to be in a cloud service company, so definitely not what I've always dreamt, it's a totally different environment, one I had no knowledge about but that's what makes it exciting, the learning part.

- Develop a scorecard of factors that will influence your choice of employer. You will find a list of ideas below. What are dealbreakers (too far from home/not your field at all)? What is important, but not quite a dealbreaker (it's a start-up, not secure/you don't like the culture)? What are the nice-to-haves that you would like, but you can live without? Rank them from top to bottom, drop the ones that don't matter, and add anything else that matters to you.
 - Remuneration – salary plus benefits
 - Opportunities for growth
 - Opportunities in a specialist field/management
 - Security – permanent versus temporary appointments
 - Size of the company – a big company like a major bank may be more secure, but a smaller one may offer more development opportunities
 - Company culture – suit and tie or T-shirt and jeans; open-plan or separate offices
 - Where it is situated
 - Corporate Social Investment profile – does the company reach out to less fortunate communities, or are they only focused on profit
 - Availability of bursaries or support for study
 - Opportunities to work overseas

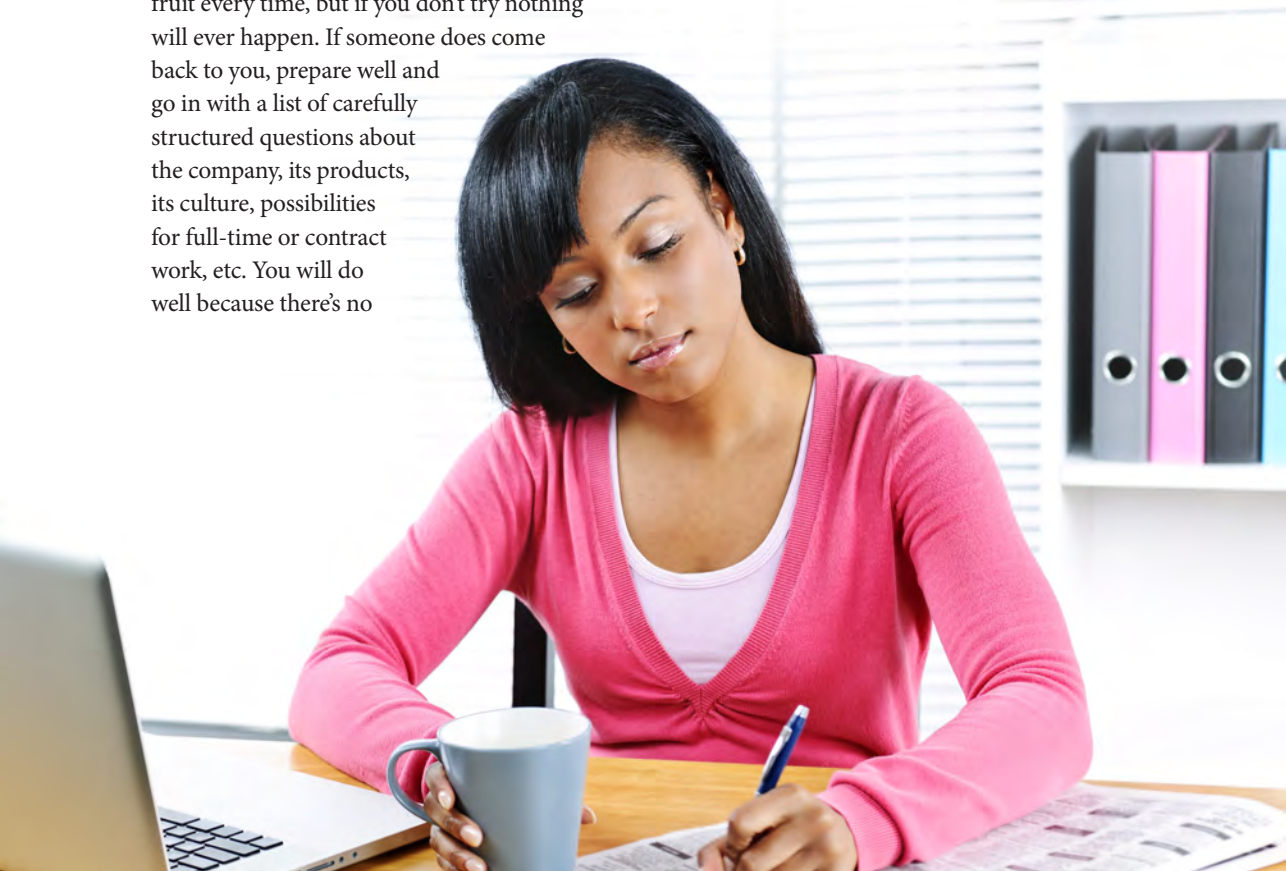
⁵ There are many variations of this idea. This one comes from Cathy Sims in a SAGEA presentation, 2019.

⁶ Many of these insights come from Lulu de Beer of CareerTraxion (<https://www.facebook.com/CareerTraxion/>).

- Make a list of companies where you would like to work. Also consider adjacent industries. If you want to work for eNCA or the SABC, also think of MTN, Vodacom, and the advertising industry. Do research on the industry and find smaller companies that may not be as well known. If you're in IT or digital media, check out your favourite apps, websites and social media campaigns and try to find out who designed and built these. There are dozens of small start-ups that may have room for an intern or where you may find contract work, which can lead to a full-time job or even your own portfolio of clients.
- Go to all these companies' websites, click on "Careers" or a similar tab and load your CV wherever you can and create a profile on Leap.ly.
- Look for the name and address of someone in HR or a head of department at a company you are interested in, send a personalised introductory letter and a CV, and ask if he or she can spare a few minutes for an **information interview**. You can even try the CEO – one never knows! Of course, this will not bear fruit every time, but if you don't try nothing will ever happen. If someone does come back to you, prepare well and go in with a list of carefully structured questions about the company, its products, its culture, possibilities for full-time or contract work, etc. You will do well because there's no

pressure – no job is on the table – and you will be remembered as someone with initiative and guts.

- CEOs and higher-ups are mostly very approachable individuals, who themselves have fought long and hard to get where they are, so they are often quite willing to give career advice to someone just getting started. They know what it's like to be in your shoes – use that! However, stay respectful of their time and keep your expectations to a minimum. Do not assume they have the time (or patience) to read through your entire thesis, but asking for advice on how they got to where they are is mostly welcome. The worst that can happen is that they don't get back to you.
- Company representatives love praise and flattery about what they do or how they have influenced people's lives with their product. Have you always loved All Gold's tomato sauce and now want to work at the company? Tell them that! Tell them why you love their product and describe what it meant to you in your life, as a child at birthday parties and as an adult at boerewors stands, for example.





- If you contact a company and they're not hiring, offer to work as an unpaid intern for a few months. Anything to get started! Nowadays, you need experience to get experience. It might feel undignified not to get paid, but this is all about getting that proverbial foot in the door and getting that precious experience banked. Remember, you have a lifetime of salaries ahead. Forgoing it for a few months at the beginning and settling – once again – for the umpteenth 2-Minute Noodles dinner will be a worthwhile sacrifice in the long run. The essential experience you gain at a company you admire will pay off in other ways, leading to other jobs or, if you impress your bosses enough, a permanent position following your internship.
 - However, be very cautious. Many companies will abuse the “internship” label to extract free labour from enthusiastic graduates desperate to break into a field. Any unpaid internship that goes beyond 6 months to a year should set off alarm bells.
 - Go on to LinkedIn and link with people who work at these companies. (See also [p. 24](#).)
 - For people in the field of data, technology and quantitative analytics, the SA Graduate Employers Association has a brilliant new tool specifically developed to help you on your way. It's called *Quantify your future*, and you can find it at www.quantifyyourfuture.co.za.
 - Consider doing volunteer work or job shadowing at companies or organisations in the field you want to work in. This will enhance your CV, build your network, and may lead to opportunities.
 - Join professional organisations in your field.
 - Use career websites like <https://leap.ly>, www.indeed.co.za or www.bizcommunity.com (for media jobs) to find opportunities and post your CV and other documents as prescribed. Then go further than that. Work as hard as you can to trace a “live” person with a connection to that position, to whom you can send a personalised letter and CV.
 - If you google “tips for job searching” you will find many websites with more information and advice.
- Most important of all: PERSEVERE. Nothing worth having comes easy. Even if you have dozens of rejection letters in your inbox, even if you've been searching for six months, even if all your friends have already found work, do not give up. Keep sending those applications. Eventually, the right job will come along with your name on it.

NETWORKING: BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Over the course of a successful and balanced life, you will build three types of capital.⁷ Your financial capital will be kept in the bank and in investments like shares or property. Your human capital, i.e. your skills and abilities, will live in your mind, growing as you keep learning. Your social capital lives in your networks and relationships.

The concept of social capital was popularised by an American author, Robert Putnam, in a 1993 book called *Bowling Alone*.⁸ His basic idea is that societies function better when people are connected in formal and informal networks, such as friendship circles, professional organisations, sports and social clubs, and so on. These networks have three characteristics in common: shared values, trust, and an expectation of reciprocity.

In South Africa, stokvels are a perfect example of this kind of network. Stokvels are savings clubs. In its simplest form, every member contributes a set amount on agreed dates, say once a month, and each contributor takes home the whole savings pot once a year. The participants share the values of saving, honesty and dependability. They trust one another explicitly. And each one expects that if she contributes this month when someone else gets the benefit, there will be a month in future when she will get the benefit – this is reciprocity.

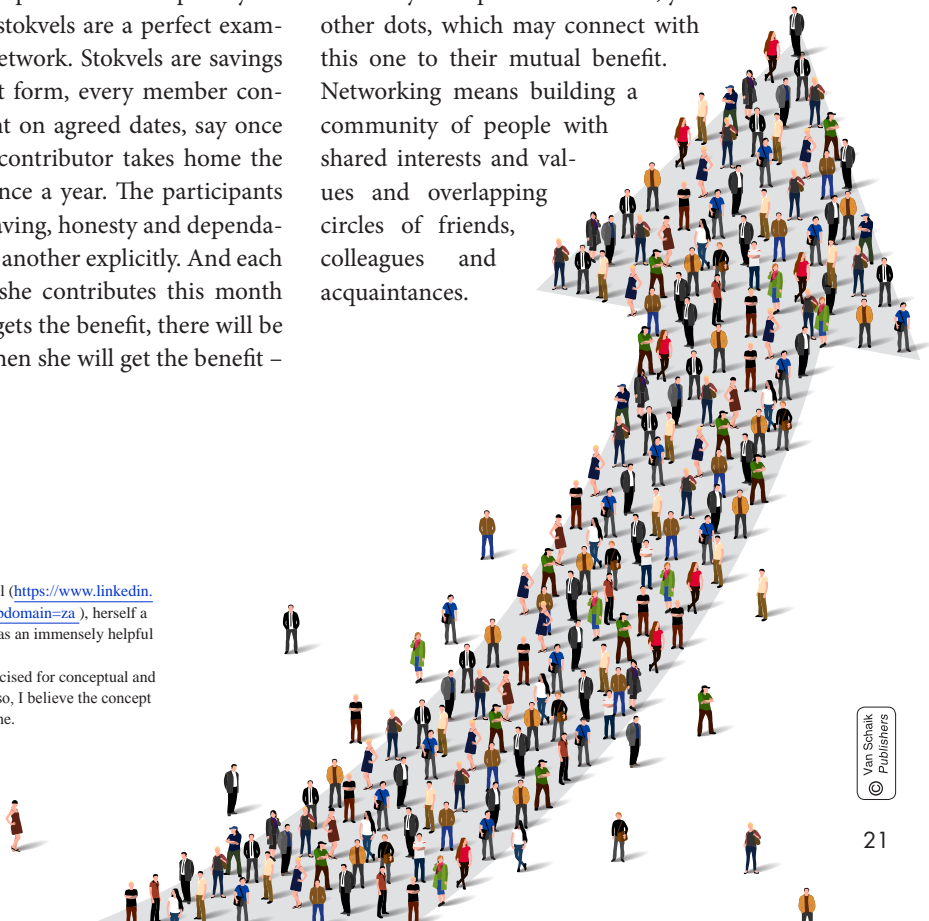
As you go through life, you will develop networks and become part of communities: in this way you will build social capital. Pay attention to it and do it consciously. It will support your growth and make your life more pleasant and easier. Whatever problem or task you are faced with, you will find someone to phone – someone you can trust because you share the same values, and someone of whom you can ask a favour because he or she knows that one day you will repay them in kind.

In a TED talk called “An introvert’s guide to networking”, Rick Turoczy describes this rather fuzzy and even scary concept as “collecting dots”. Every person you know is a dot. The better you know him or her, the clearer you can see them. If you step back and reflect, you will see other dots, which may connect with this one to their mutual benefit.

Networking means building a community of people with shared interests and values and overlapping circles of friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

7 Thank you to Alexandra Kögl (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexkog1/?originalSubdomain=za>), herself a recent graduate, who served as an immensely helpful sounding board.

8 Putnam has been widely criticised for conceptual and methodological flaws. Even so, I believe the concept of social capital is a useful one.



You may think that at this point in your life you have no network to call on, that you don't know anyone who matters in the big wide world out there, that you have no social capital. That is not true. "The best way out of your circle is through your existing circle," says David Burkus in another TED talk called "How to hack networking".

Start quite simply with the people you know. Think back to your home. Who lived down the street? Perhaps the old lady next door has a grandchild in the music industry and you want to be an audio engineer. Go visit, and ask for his number. What about your school? The teacher who helped you understand maths and became your mentor studied somewhere. Ask her about classmates of hers who are now in finance, consulting or auditing. Would she be willing to give you an introductory note? Think about senior students whom you met as tutors or in your residence. Where are they now? Could they give you a name of someone in their company to whom you could send a personalised CV and ask for an information interview? (See [p. 19](#).)

For now, you may be thinking of "networking" as "finding people who can be useful to me". That is not really what it means. Networking is building social capital. It is a two-way street of giving and receiving (reciprocity) which can enrich both your personal and professional life. You don't have a professional network yet, and you may think you have nothing to give. That is not true. Your active participation in your study group, your support for a friend who had to get home for her grandmother's funeral, the time when you allowed someone to sleep on your couch – all of those were instances of giving. Now think about times when you were the one who received kindness and support. Note it. Value it. Value the people it came from. This is the beginning of your network for the rest of your life. You are collecting dots and building social capital wherever you go.

Here are a few pointers for successful networking:⁹

- Networking is a mindset. Be aware of the "dots" you collect and think about possible connections, whether these involve you personally or not.
- It is about giving first. "Give without remembering, receive without forgetting":¹⁰ give whatever you can of your time, your interest, your connections, without expecting anything back; but when someone gives you time, or shares their knowledge or their contacts with you, be sure to follow up with a thank you note, and remember to say thank you again when next you see that person.
- It is active. Stay in contact with your contacts, belong to groups, join and get involved. Facebook groups and websites like www.meetup.com and www.whatsapp.co.za can be a good starting point. Go to conventions, talks and workshops.
- Deliver what you promise and be a resource for others.
- When you meet someone, be interested, focus on them. Talk about them more than about you. The idea is to find out why they do what they do and perhaps to learn from that. Go beyond just asking, "What do you do?" A possible follow-up is, "Would you choose that again if you could start over? Why/why not?"
- Look out for people who share your values. Do not waste time with malicious gossipers and people who are witty at others' expense. They do not build up, they break down.
- Be trustworthy. If someone confides in you, do not spread it around. If you promise to send a contact number, make sure you do that. Expect the same from others.

⁹ Much of this information comes from *Savvy Networking* by Andrea Nierenberg.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Bibesco, English writer and poet.

- Always remain honest and transparent about your intentions. People can smell an agenda from a mile away, and no one likes to feel used. Be open about where you are in your professional journey, and it may strike a chord with someone who is further along that road. Say things like “I’m just starting out and I’d so love to have a job like yours one day. Would you mind telling me about your journey?” Another approach could be, “I’m a little bit lost as far as networking goes – I’m new to this. Do you think you could help me reach out to X?” Remember, everyone you admire and look up to was once where you are now. They understand how hard it is to start out and will often want to help.
- There is such a thing as being overly eager: don’t force yourself on people when they have said no, seem annoyed or have shown no interest in a professional relationship. Often potential contacts won’t come back immediately because they are too busy and a gentle nudge reminding them of your presence may be appreciated. Don’t, however, spam their inbox with dozens of emails or call them demanding to know why they aren’t engaging. There is a fine line between determination and being a nuisance. Know the difference.

LINKEDIN

In your toolbag for networking and job-hunting, LinkedIn is your secret weapon.¹¹ It is so much more than just “Facebook for professionals”.

Right now, it may feel like an app for later on, once you’ve climbed your career ladder and have a big list of contacts. But with 20 million companies listed on the platform and 14 million open jobs,¹² it’s a paradise for job seekers and graduates alike. LinkedIn essentially acts like a digital CV that represents you and your skillset to the world 24/7.

Here’s how to set yourself up.

- 1** Visit [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com), click on the “sign up” button and follow the on-screen prompts. After signing up the real work begins.

- 2** Upload a recent, professional photo of yourself. This is the first impression a person will have of you, so make sure it’s a good one. (Also see [p. 7](#) for more on reputation and personal branding.) Ask a friend to take a photo of you in good light, but not squinting into the sun. Don’t stand against a white wall, especially if you have a darker skin tone. Choose a neutral, plain background. The crucial part is to look neat, professional and friendly – smile for those potential contacts and employers out there, and dress for the job you want.

- 3** Write a short, effective profile headline to showcase at a glance what you do, something like “Engineering graduate seeking position in software industry” or “Marketing graduate specialising in PR”. Have a look at profiles of other people, especially those in your dream industry and job, for ideas of how to do this.

Complete this survey and WIN
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT TEXTBOOKS?

Complete this online form and stand a chance to win a R1000 Takealot voucher. Competition closes 30 September. Ts & Cs apply.

<https://bit.ly/textbookcomp>

¹¹ Thank you again to Alexandra Kögl, who shared time, insight and writing skills on this topic.

¹² <https://kinsta.com/blog/linkedin-statistics/>

4 Fill in the “summary” section of your profile. Keep it short and simple. In 100–150 words, sum up who you are, what you’ve done and what you hope to achieve professionally. Use strong adjectives to describe yourself, but stay away from clichés like “hard-working” and “fast learner”. Open that thesaurus and look for unique ways to describe yourself, with words like “committed,” and “effective”. Find a job description in a field you’re aiming for and look at the adjectives they list. Mirror those that apply to you.

5 Fill in your CV and history. (See How to write a CV on [p. 30.](#)) Divide your education into secondary (high school) and tertiary sections. Mention any special prizes and achievements, like “top achiever in mathematics”; “chair of the debating team”. Under tertiary, mention your majors and any distinctions, whether it was for a module or for the degree as a whole or graduating with honours.

6 Next, list any awards or achievements that are **relevant** to the direction you’re going in. For instance, if you’re an engineering grad, you’ll want to list things like science week awards or being in the top tier of your maths class at varsity. Mention any internships, part-time jobs or job-shadowing you’ve done, but leave out any side jobs you did to “get by” like waitressing and retail work (unless these fields line up with your career goals). If you have any experience doing volunteer work, be sure to mention it.

7 Finally, your skills section will showcase the tools you’ve mastered to work in your field. For instance, a graphic design graduate will list all the software programs they work with, like Photoshop and InDesign. A film student will list skills like editing and directing. An economics graduate

will list business strategy and data analysis. The key is to be honest: do not list skills that you cannot confidently demonstrate. If you only speak a few phrases of isiZulu, do not claim that you are fluent. A handful of strong skills you are confident in is better than a long list of flimsy claims.

8 With your profile set up, you can unlock the best feature of LinkedIn: making contacts. Start simply and humbly. Invite friends, family and varsity classmates. LinkedIn’s “Alumni Tool” will help you find all the classmates from your university. The people who accept your invitation will become your “first contacts”. LinkedIn automatically shows you the contacts of your contacts (these are called second contacts), giving you the chance to send an invitation to someone you may not know, but share a mutual contact with. Dream big! Add people you admire, a CEO perhaps, or people overseas. The worst that can happen is they don’t accept your invitation. But if they do, you’ll have an amazing contact on your list who just might open the door to a job! Always send a short but professional note when extending invitations to people you don’t know. This will increase the chances of you being accepted and making an invaluable new connection.

With a complete profile and a few contacts, take full advantage of LinkedIn’s power. You can search thousands of jobs. You can look for companies you admire and follow their company pages, where jobs are often posted. You can build relationships with your contacts, perhaps using the private messaging tool and asking for career advice. You can take a few LinkedIn skills quizzes (they’re free!) that leave competency badges on your profile, so connections know you’re “legit”.

You’ve now joined a global online community, giving you the best possible chance of making all your career dreams come true.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED: ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Do you want to start something yourself rather than getting a job? Let's look at what it takes to make that work.

❶ What makes an entrepreneur?

Some people are born entrepreneurs. They start acting like it long before they know there's a word to describe it.

Rap artist Slikour,¹³ or Siyabonga Metane, borrowed money from a family friend when he was barely 15 to build a studio in his parents' back yard and start recording himself and his friends. His tapes sold enough to pay back the loan.

Ntsako Mgiba¹⁴ was still at school when he started selling baked goods and washing cars in his neighbourhood. Before even finishing his engineering degree he founded Jonga, providing low-cost security systems in townships.

Aisha Pandor, co-founder of app-based networking company SweepSouth, obtained a business qualification at the same time as finishing her doctorate in genetics, because she knew she wanted to get into business.

Is that true of you? Have you always found ways to earn money, selling anything from your mother's cookies to your own time and labour? That's one of the signs of a natural-born entrepreneur. What's more:

- You think out of the box, and
- You have the drive to make things happen.

You also need other personality traits. Think back to your MAP of yourself. Entrepreneurs have to be

- able to live with insecurity, not getting a salary every month;

- ready to carry the responsibility for all elements of the business;
- willing to live on as little as possible in order to invest in their business; and
- willing to work much harder than the average employee.

The list is probably much longer, but that will do as a base line.

❷ What is the right product or service?

A business does not survive because it offers a product or a service. It survives because there are **customers** who want that product or that service and are willing and able to pay for it.

Tebello "Tibz" Motsoane started what would become the ShowLove events and marketing company because he wanted hip-hop parties for himself and his mates. He knew there was a market, because he was part of it. The same is true of rapper Slikour, Siya Metane.

Aisha Pandor and her husband needed a stand-in domestic worker during the holidays. They came up with SweepSouth, which works more or less like Uber, to address the need of thousands of people who will pay for cleaning and housekeeping, and thousands of workers who need to earn money.

¹³ Slikour's story, like that of Aisha, Tibz and Zola, was drawn from an interview I did with him for the website www.changeexchange.co.za, sponsored by Brightrock. The series of interviews is called "Ruda talks change" – Ruda Landman, March 2020.

¹⁴ Ntsako's story comes from UCT Careers Service's excellent 2019 guide, *Own your future*. You can find it at http://webcms.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/211/UCT%20Career%20Guide%202019.pdf



Ntsako Mgiba, founder of Jonga security, realised people need affordable security in poorer communities when his aunt and five of her neighbours were robbed on the same evening. He says an entrepreneur has to “identify a real-world problem” and understand it “by speaking to the deeply-affected people”.

Design your product to be a solution to people’s needs.

3 Consider your skills

Aisha Pandor’s husband and business partner, Alen Ribic, is a software developer. He has the technical know-how for SweepSouth, and she has the business skills.

Ntsako Mgiba has a BSc Engineering (Mechatronics) degree. He and his colleagues have the skills to build the systems which then became Jonga. He teamed up with a financial person and a systems engineer. Together they have the skills to build the systems that became Jonga.

TV chef and author of two award-winning cookbooks Zola Nene worked in restaurants in England for two years, peeling vegetables and washing dishes, to understand the business. Then she did a three-year course at the Institute for Culinary Arts. She learnt her craft before venturing out on her own.

Think about your skills and your interests. What do you do better than most other people? Can you find a way to sharpen those skills, so that when you start on your own you are even more sure of yourself and your product?

4 Build a team

No one has all the skills to run every aspect of a business. Link up with people who are good at the things you struggle with and (if possible) who have more experience than you have. Some of these people can end up being your business partners. Also, find older people to serve as an informal circle of advisors. Ask them to give you an hour a month to talk about your business and help you see where you’re going, mistakes you’re making and possibilities you’re missing.

5 Find some start-up capital

You will need money for your living expenses such as rent and food, as well as the initial costs of running the business. You may be lucky enough to have parents who can provide that. That is start-up capital in itself. Otherwise, you have to find a way to earn some money while setting up your business. Spend a certain number of hours a week working as a waiter/handyman/script editor to pay your way, and every other waking hour building your dream.

Think about whether you can lay your hands on some cash. Is there something you can sell, like a video game/a pair of soccer boots/good clothes that no longer fit? Will the proverbial “crazy uncle” (someone who loves you and who has enough money to spend some of it on you) give you an interest-free loan? Think laterally. Jonga’s website features three “angel investors”. Who’s out there that you may be able to convince to put in some money?

Now, how does all this work in practice? Let’s look at an idea called “the lean startup”.

THE LEAN STARTUP

In 2011, the American entrepreneur, blogger and author Eric Ries published a book called *The Lean Startup*,¹⁵ which has since taken the world by storm. He applied “the scientific method” to entrepreneurship: start with a problem, develop a hypothesis for a possible solution, then test the hypothesis and adapt it on the basis of measurement and observation. Scientists, in theory at least, are always open to the real world and willing to trade their hypotheses for better ones, which provide a better solution to the problem.

A “lean startup” works in the same way. It does not invest large sums of money and effort to create a big structure, trying to be “fail safe”. It starts small, risking little, knowing that the original idea will probably be adapted before it is launched into the market. In the language of complexity theory, “don’t try and be FAIL-SAFE, rather be SAFE(to)-FAIL”. If you can try out your idea without investing huge sums, it won’t bankrupt you or your investors if your original idea fails, and you will have resources left to adapt it, or “pivot”, if customer feedback guides you in a new direction.

An example of such a pivot is one of the business ideas that emerged from the Socionext Social Entrepreneurship Challenge at a StudyTrust Winter Seminar. The team (who chose the name *Tailor Swift* for their business) responded to the perceived problem that students could not afford individualised clothes. The business idea was to deliver tailored clothes to customers who have ordered

online. The “disruption” was provided by technology that makes it possible to take someone’s measurements online and then produce designer clothing for that person in their choice of style and material.

The only problem was that there was no market for such individually tailored clothing. The team asked a small number of potential customers whether they would pay a little more for individually tailored clothes. Without exception, the answer was no. They abandoned the plan. But the original idea, of providing students with affordable “differentiated product” to give them flair in a world of mass-produced, but super affordable clothing, lived on in the pivot. The company now produced beautiful accessories that could be added to the mass-produced clothing. This time their market research came up with a yes – student customers would buy the affordable accessories.

The lean startup approach doesn’t see startups as smaller versions of big companies. Startups are different. They move quickly from failure to failure, pivoting, adapting and improving their original idea as they learn from customers.

When it comes to that scary, complicated-sounding exercise of writing a business plan, you can turn to the Business Model Canvas framework.¹⁶



¹⁵ Watch this video for a summary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSaIOCHbuYw>

¹⁶ Available at: <https://medium.com/seed-digital/how-to-business-model-canvas-explained-ad3676b6fe4a>

Make a big version of the diagram, stick it up on your wall and fill it in. Start in the middle, putting down your business idea (“value proposition”). To the left you will sketch the shape of your business; to the right you will define your customers. Go to the website given in footnote 16 to get details about this process.

Once that’s done, go and test the idea out on the street. If you’re planning to sell home security, walk up and down the streets where your potential customers live and ask them: Will the product solve your problem? How much will you be willing to pay? What part of the product do you like most? Go back to your idea and change it if necessary. Then do more market testing.

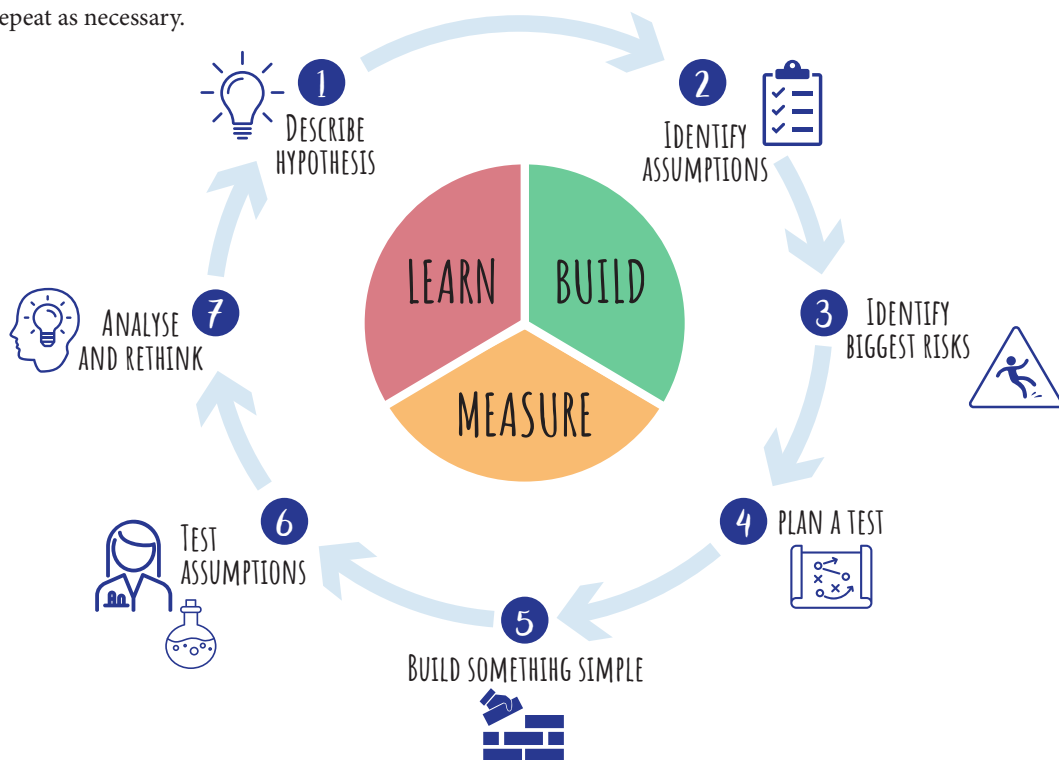
To summarise the steps:

- ➔ Identify a problem that needs to be solved.
- ➔ Develop a product or service that solves this problem.
- ➔ Create a prototype, one example.
- ➔ Ask potential customers if the prototype actually solves the problem.
- ➔ Further develop the product, discover a new target market if need be or even change the product entirely based on consumer feedback.
- ➔ Repeat as necessary.

Always remember that a business lives or dies because it has customers willing to pay for its products or services, or not. “Customer discovery” is a key concept in the lean startup approach (that large companies now also use, because they have to change rapidly in this era of 4IR). Keep going back to your customers to check their experience of your product. Listen to their feedback, adapt, change, try again.

There are many online resources around entrepreneurship, like the Business Model Canvas we used on the previous page. You can also find free training, for example on HP Life (<https://www.life-global.org/>).

The most important point is not to see failure as a catastrophe spelling the end of your dream. It is simply part of the process. You will make mistakes. You will fail. Rethink it and try again. That’s how babies learn to walk.





GETTING THE JOB: PRACTICALITIES



HOW TO WRITE A CV

Curriculum vitae (CV) means “course of life” in Latin, and that’s just what it is: a concise document summarising your educational and professional history, your skills and experiences. But it is also more than that. It is a marketing tool. It has to catch the eye of an overworked HR person, not because of decoration and weirdness (which will land it straight in the bin), but because it’s clear and easy to take in. It has to demonstrate **as directly as possible** that you have the qualifications and the skills to do the job for which you’re applying.

AI (see [p. 15](#)) can do this for you, but a document written by AI will not reflect your unique voice. If you use it, use what it gives you as a first draft. Build on it, change it, make it your own.

Apart from AI, there are dozens of templates available online. They can be helpful, but the pre-set formatting can also be difficult to use. A simple, clear Word document will work just as well.

A few dos and don’ts:

- **Don’t** cut and paste – tailor your CV (especially the profile and skills sections) to the specific job.
- **Don’t** go over two A4 pages.
- **Don’t** use slang and abbreviations.
- **Be honest!**
- **Do** check spelling, grammar and punctuation twice.¹⁷

Step 1: Introduction

Start with a good head-and-shoulders picture (smallish in the top corner), your name in a clear, fairly large font, your cellphone number and an email address (professional, not something like hotlips@gmail.com). A physical address or at least your city will give the recruiter an idea of how far from their offices you are based.

¹⁷ Be very careful with apostrophes. They are never used to form the plural in English. That wrong usage is known as “grocer’s apostrophe” because one so often finds signs saying “tomato’s” instead of tomatoes, or even “bean’s” instead of beans. Don’t make that mistake. The apostrophe indicates possession (Jabu’s cat) or that a letter is left out (don’t instead of do not).

Step 2 (optional): Profile

You can kick off with a “profile” paragraph. If you do, it should be short and to the point, **specifically framed in terms of the job you’re applying for**. Say you’re doing construction management. If the job is at a construction company, you may write something like:

“Currently completing BSc Construction Management at the University of the Free State. Particular interest in big infrastructure projects. Vacation work experience on building sites in Bloemfontein. Maths tutor at local high school.”

If it’s at a consulting firm, that middle sentence may change to:

“Fascinated by the process of project management and interaction in teams.”

(Provided, of course, that it’s true!)

Language and communication is a major issue in South Africa. If applicable, add a summary of your language skills:

“Fluent in English and four other South African languages.”

Step 3: Education

Start with the most recent and work backwards. You can include your grades, for example:

2019: Completing Postgraduate Certificate in Education, University of Johannesburg.

2016–2018: Bachelor of Arts, University of Johannesburg. IsiZulu 64%, English 70%.

2017: Completed online course in Microsoft Word.

2015: National Senior Certificate, Upington High School. Four distinctions.

Step 4: Work experience

Put down anything you have done, whether you were paid for it or not. Internships, waitering, child-minding and tutoring all belong here. Give a brief description of what the job entailed, for example:

2019: Tutor for matric students at local high school. Mathematics, two hours a week.

Dec 2018/Jan 2019: Waiter, Country Club, Johannesburg. Part of the job was doing stock-take in the bar.

Step 5: Skills

Go back to the exercise you did when you MAP-ped yourself. Choose four or five skills most relevant to the job you’re applying for and motivate with a short example of where you have used each. Let’s say you’re a law graduate wanting to do your articles at a big firm. You may write:

Flexibility – I come from a very conservative rural community. Adapting to the city environment could have derailed me, but I found my feet and finished my course in the minimum time.

Judgement and decision-making – the process described above necessitated hard choices.

Communication – wrote for the student newspaper; active participant in the debating society.

Collaboration and teamwork – ran the annual choir competition in our residence.

Do add language skills:

Fluent in English, isiZulu, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. Understand Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

Step 6: Achievements/ Leadership/Sport

This can include sports at school and university, student representative council membership, committees and clubs, community outreach programmes, tutor- and mentorship. Organise it as above, starting with the most recent and working backwards.

Step 7: Referees

Find at least two people who know you well (no family members). Contact them beforehand and ask their permission to use them as referees. Tell them what you are applying for and send them your latest CV. List their details as follows:

Professor Elna Meyer, Head: School of Journalism, Rhodes University. e.meyer@ru.ac.za. Cell: 082 354 8777*

Mr Thabo Maganedisa, Training Manager: Country Club Johannesburg. thabo@ccj.co.za. Cell: 084 876 0846*

*These are not real people/details.

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Every CV you send should be accompanied by a cover letter. This is your chance to show your understanding of the company and the position, and to indicate why you think you are a good fit. IT HAS TO BE CUSTOM-MADE. DO NOT COPY AND PASTE. This is your chance to catch the recruiter's eye from among the dozens of other applications on her desk. Give it your all.¹⁸

Do not put your cover letter in the body of an email. Recruiters often print out all the documents and may overlook the content of an email. State the purpose of your email clearly in the subject line:

RE: Application for position as

Then simply write:

Dear (name if you know it/title if you don't: Ms Brown/Appointment committee)

Please find attached relevant documents.

Yours sincerely
John Tshabalala



The cover letter, marked as such, is your first attachment.¹⁹ Give your attachments names that will make sense to the recipient. For instance:

Your surname_Initials_CoverLetter_Name
of Company_Date

¹⁸ Also check out www.themuse.com. Their Advice section has practical, useful information.

¹⁹ Many of these tips come from the UCT Careers Service Guide, 2019.

Start with the following information in your cover letter:

Name of company representative (if you know it)

Title/designation of company representative

Company address

Date

Then, as in the email itself:

Dear (name if you know it/title if you don't): Ms Brown/Appointment committee

Subject line:

Re: Application for ... as advertised in ...

Paragraph 1:

- Where you are and what you are doing:

I am a final-year Food Technology student at the Durban University of Technology.

- List all attached documents:

Please find attached my CV, transcripts of ... and two testimonials.

Paragraph 2:

- Show that you have done your research, you know what the company is about and what the job will entail. Then state why you think you are a good fit:

I would love to work at your nut products factory in White River or any of your other food product factories, because I know your company is constantly innovating and putting new products on the market. Rethinking existing staple foods is my special interest.

Paragraph 3:

- Highlight specific skills, qualifications and experience, which fit with the requirements listed in the advertisement:

I work well in a team and can think out of the box. I have worked at a canning factory during my holidays, so I understand the discipline of a big operation. Many of your team members are young people and I will fit in well with them. I speak four South African languages, which makes it easy to get along with diverse teams.

Paragraph 4 (optional):

- Mention any personal issues you would like to put on the table:

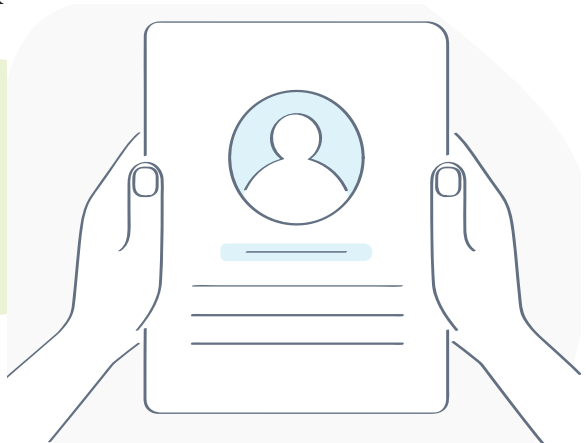
I am willing to relocate/I am hearing-impaired/...

Closing:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be considered for this position.

Yours sincerely
Lungi Hlongwane

Check grammar, spelling and punctuation. Make sure that all the promised attachments are in fact included, and that they are titled for ease of use by the recipient. He or she may receive thousands of applications – make yours easy to use. Press send, and wait for your call!





INTERVIEWS

You're invited to an interview. You're exhilarated but scared out of your wits. Let's get some feedback, advice and reassurance from recent graduates who went through the experience.

*I remember being in a room of eight people all looking at me and I was there just thinking to myself can I really do this? A thought crossed my mind and I remembered I had made myself a promise that I am going to get my job from my first interview and that is exactly what happened. Remember I said first interview not first job I applied for.**

I was very nervous and could not think straight but at the end I got the job.

All they wanted to know is about me as a person, how I handle conflicts, if I am a team player, how I handle pressure, etc. They gave me scenarios and I had to answer in my own perspective, no wrong or right answer, they wanted to hear how I think.²¹

Being invited for an interview usually means that you meet the basic requirements for the position. This personal interaction gives you the opportunity to convince your prospective employer that you are the one they want. Let's draw a map of how to approach it.

*This is a very important point. In 2018, successful candidates applied for six or seven jobs on average.²⁰ That number has probably doubled since.

20 SAGEA Research Seminar, 2018

21 StudyTrust online survey, September 2019

BEFORE: PREPARATION

1 Prepare an answer to the question, “Tell me about yourself.” It must be short and to the point. It must connect what you offer with what they want. Remember, they don’t want to know you as a friend, but as a potential colleague. Practise your answer out loud.

➔ A possible follow-up question would be, “Why did you apply for this position?” Think carefully about why you want this job (apart from the salary!). How does it fit into your career plan? What will you enjoy about it? What do you like about the company and the industry?



2 Study the job description and the requirements for skills and qualifications. Go back to your MAP of yourself and to your CV, and match your skills to those mentioned in the ad. Prepare examples that you can mention to demonstrate your skills.

In preparing examples to demonstrate especially soft skills, try using the STAR technique.²² For example:

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to show leadership in a group.

Situation: I was living in a commune with seven other people. The place was always filthy, and no one was taking responsibility.

Task: I convinced everyone to come to a house meeting late one evening after people had finished studying or were back if they had gone out. It was difficult to keep the discussion focused and civil, but we managed.

Action: We agreed that our rooms were our own affair, but that we all liked the shared spaces to be clean. We agreed that everyone would wash his or her own dishes. We drew up a roster so that each of us would get a turn to clean common areas: the kitchen and the lounge would be cleaned twice a week. We set up a kitty to fund cleaning materials and I went to buy supplies the next day.

Result: It doesn’t always work, but at least we have a basic agreement so we are all accountable for our actions.

3 Research the employer. Go onto their website and pay special attention to the “About us” section and to the leadership team. Try to establish who will probably be doing the interview if possible. Make a note of questions you may have about the company.

4 Research the industry. Know the latest news and developments.

Make sure of the location, how to get there and how long it will take. If you can, do a practice run to make sure you arrive on time for the real thing.

5 Think of what you will wear, which outfit will suit the culture of the specific work environment.

Don't go to a law firm in torn jeans or to an advertising agency in a boring suit. On this day you must fit in. They must notice *you*, not your clothes. The same goes for your hair. This is not the time or the place for a statement hairdo, unless you're going to a modelling agency or a design company. Women, leave those showstopper stiletto heels at home.

Here's one more comment from a recent graduate:

I remembered that I didn't have proper formal clothes and really felt underdressed when I met other candidates. It's safe to say I didn't get that job, even though the interview went well. First impressions count!

ON THE DAY

1 Give yourself plenty of time to get there **on time**.

2 You will be nervous. Don't fight it – if you were an athlete, you would welcome the extra adrenaline for the race! Even so, it must not paralyse you. Sit quietly on the way there or in the foyer, take deep breaths through your nose, relax your neck, your shoulders, your arms, your hands. You may want to try repeating a mantra to yourself, something like, “I am going to show them my best self. I can do this.”

3 When you walk in, pull your shoulders back and straighten your spine. Look people in the eye. Shake hands firmly without trying to crush the other person's fingers. Wait to be offered a chair before you sit down.

4 Perhaps the most important of all: **listen carefully to the questions. If it's not clear, ask for it to be repeated.** Don't rush to answer – take your time and think before you speak.

5 Be open rather than defensive about areas where you are not as strong as you may wish. Tell them how you think you can improve that skill.

6 If there are gaps in your CV or failures in your academic record, be ready to account for them. Don't try to excuse or justify yourself; rather tell them how you overcame whatever it was.

7 Do ask questions when given the opportunity. Ask them about:

- Anything you noticed on the website that you would like to know more about
- Opportunities for further study/training if that's relevant to you
- The size and structure of the team you may be joining
- The next steps in the hiring process

A final word from one of the recent graduates:

I thought that I had to go there and impress, which I now know is not true. The interview process is a time when you and your interviewers check to see how compatible you are with the company's values, vision and ethics. There's no reason to be under pressure there; I was just supposed to present who Lindi is, and see if she fits into the company's vision.



THE CONTRACT

Unless you've studied law, your employment contract may appear confusing and overwhelming. Don't take the easy way out and just sign. Take it home and read it carefully. It will clarify the rules of the game, and it will be crucial if something goes wrong.²³

Here are the most important points to check before you sign.

Job title and job description

Make sure that what's in the contract reflects what was discussed during the job interview. Your job title will be on your CV for the rest of your career. The job description ensures that you and your employer agree on your duties and responsibilities.

Remuneration

Make sure that the salary stated in the contract is what you discussed and agreed upon. It should be clear how and when you will be paid.

Note that there is a difference between gross salary and nett salary. Gross salary is the total amount you earn. Nett salary is your take-home pay, the amount that will be paid into your bank account. There are a number of reasons for the difference.

Firstly, the company is legally obliged to deduct tax (PAYE or pay as you earn) and your contribution to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

Secondly, companies offer different benefit packages as part of your remuneration. This may

²³ Thank you to Isabella Steyn (Risma), Johandie Wahl (VVM) and Lulu de Beer (CareerTraxion) for invaluable input.

include medical aid, a retirement fund, provident fund, life and disability insurance, and smaller benefits like travel expenses and a cellphone allowance. This does not come for free. The company may contribute, but you will be the main contributor and the cost will be deducted from your salary. All of these should be clearly stated in the contract, with the criteria according to which benefits will be paid where applicable.

Period of employment

The contract should clearly state whether you are appointed for a specified period on a contract, or in a permanent position. If you are on a contract, the start and end dates need to be clearly stated.

There may be a probation period as determined by the employer. If so, that should be specified in the contract as well.

Resignation/Termination (leaving the job)

Your contract should spell out under what circumstances you or your employer can terminate the contract before the agreed end date, and how that would have to be managed. It also has to stipulate a notice period.

All employers have policies and procedures that have to be followed. Read these carefully, because failure to adhere to them can result in disciplinary procedures or even dismissal.

Working hours and place of work

Working hours should be stated, whether in terms of “office hours” like 09:00–17:00 or a given number of hours per week. **Note that agreeing to working hours means that you are obliged to arrive on time at the start of the working day, and to stay until the agreed time.** Consistently arriving late and/or leaving early is not acceptable.

The place of work should also be stated.

If flexible working hours or the right to work from home form part of your agreement, make sure that the contract includes this.

If your job is likely to involve overtime, the rules governing this should be laid out, such as the overtime rate of remuneration, or a system of “time off in lieu of hours worked”.

Holidays and sick leave

South Africa’s Basic Conditions of Employment Act stipulates that employees are entitled to 21 consecutive days (15 working days) of annual leave per year, or (by agreement) one day for every 17 days worked. Make sure that you know the company’s rules and expectations about the time of the year in which leave should be taken, and whether you can carry any days over to the next year.

An employee is entitled to six weeks’ paid sick leave in a period of 36 months (three years). This means 30 working days for a 5-day worker and 36 days for a 6-day worker over the 3-year sick-leave cycle. During the first six months you are entitled to one day’s sick leave for every 26 days worked. **It is very important to understand that sick leave is only available if you really are sick. You may not take these days off if you’re not sick.** Your employer may require a medical certificate before paying you if you’re absent for more than two consecutive days, or if you are frequently absent without a medical certificate.

A pregnant employee is entitled to four consecutive months’ **unpaid** maternity leave. A father is entitled to 10 consecutive days of **unpaid** parental leave from the date that the child is born.

Read your contract carefully. Do not be afraid to ask questions if you don’t understand. This is the beginning of a very important relationship. The rules should be clear to both parties.

Once you have joined the company, make sure that you read and understand all the policies and procedures. If there is an induction programme, be sure to complete it. It may feel boring and unnecessary, but it will help you understand the rules of behaviour and performance that are required of you, as well as the procedures that you must follow to access the benefits offered by your new employer.



BEING A WORKING ADULT

ALL BEGINNINGS ARE HARD

Entering the working world for the very first time is one of the hardest transitions you will ever make. As a student, your time is your own; you decide what to wear and where to go and when to do so. Now you become part of a much bigger machine with its own rules and culture. These are the practical realities:²⁴

It was a huge adjustment from varsity because you now don't have an option of skipping classes and working from home ... in bed. Your time isn't yours anymore like in varsity. But the thought of getting paid sorta makes it feel better.

Then there's the challenge of the job itself:

My first weeks at my new job were terrifying. I had to play catch-up very quickly. Getting myself familiarised with the terminology, then the work, and understanding what I had to do. It was very tough.

You may be lucky with supportive colleagues, or not:

I thought I was going to get nice people who care about developing other people. I learned to swim on my own, Google was my help. I wasn't expecting the frustration you get from dealing with people's behaviour. But I didn't let it change me.


Those first weeks do pass, however. It is worth hanging in there:

The first few weeks are always the most difficult ones because at that moment you find yourself out of place. Remember this is a different environment that you just entered; you are away from your friends from varsity, now you have to adjust to your new surroundings and make new friends. But above all you need to enjoy these moments because they are the ones that build your character.

Sometimes you need to adjust your views and your expectations:

I concluded that much of what I had learned over the course of my degree would be utterly useless to me in my new role, and that a lot of what I was responsible for were tasks no one else wanted to own. I soon realised that reality fell well short of my expectations. It took me a while to calibrate my expectations, gain some perspective and realise there was a lot to learn, room to grow, and ample opportunity to apply myself and build a fulfilling career.



A 3D maze with a person's silhouette standing at the entrance of a bright opening. The maze is composed of light blue rectangular blocks, creating a complex network of paths. The person is a dark silhouette of a man in a suit, carrying a briefcase, standing in a bright, glowing opening on the left side of the maze. The overall scene is set against a dark blue background, with the light from the opening illuminating the maze's walls and the person's shadow on the floor.

In the end you will find your way, even if the beginning was not promising at all:

By the end of my first week, I firmly believed that I was not meant for the working world. On my first day I showed up at the wrong building, ended up being late for a team meeting, asked to leave at a decent hour (my team had been working overtime) because I had concert tickets that I had purchased a year in advance, and then got sick the next day and had to ask to leave work early. I am also a coloured female who doesn't really speak Afrikaans, and the client that I had been placed on (for auditing) was an Afrikaans client. In addition, my team consisted of only white Afrikaans males, so I felt very much out of place, and did not think that it was the right fit for me. I gave it some thought, with the hopes that this wouldn't be my whole articles experience, but I must admit that after spending a month with my team, we bonded so much, and ended up being a really close, tight group of colleagues who looked out for each other and who always helped each other where we could. They mentored me through my articles, and even assisted me in my search for jobs post articles. To this day, we remain close, despite the fact that we're all currently working at different firms. It was definitely one of the biggest lessons that I've had in my career (possibly my life) because I had an expectation that I'd work with people who came from a similar background as me. But instead we ended up collaborating, learning about each other and our traditions, and we have such a great respect for one another!

PROFESSIONALISM

At a recent StudyTrust seminar on mentoring, someone asked the panel members about the one thing that young people entering the workplace need to know. The answer came from Setlogane Manchidi, a man who grew up in a mud hut in Limpopo, was awarded a StudyTrust bursary to go to UCT, and now heads up the Corporate Social Investment division of Investec.

Yes, your degree is an achievement, he said.

The ululation at the graduation ceremony was appropriate. But now you need to know that you are only one of many. Your qualification will remain merely a piece of paper if you do not give it meaning by the way you conduct yourself in your job. You can fake it in the interview, but once employed, you have to prove yourself every day. You do not have to know everything. You can and will learn new skills – your university education is only the beginning. The one thing that cannot be taught is a “can do” attitude. That will make you stand out.

That answer encapsulates the essence of professionalism: the key to building a successful career, no matter what your field or your expertise. Let's think about it in more detail. What does professionalism mean in practice? How should you “conduct yourself in your job”? One framework portrays concentric circles with you in the middle.



You as a person

- Never be late. Especially in the beginning, however difficult it is, just show up on time. For work in the morning, for every meeting, for a scheduled phone call. It's the first and most obvious characteristic that people will notice.
- Be well groomed and appropriately dressed. Not too sexy, not too sloppy. This may change over time as you get to know the unspoken codes of your workplace, but in the beginning, rather be boring and even a bit too formal.
- Eat correctly, get some exercise and sleep enough so that you are at your best at work.



You doing your work

- Take pride in your work. If you're not sure what is expected, ask – and then do it to the very best of your ability.
- Be humble. Resist the urge to try and prove how smart you are. Accept supervision and take your time as you master routine tasks.
- Be focused. Distractions like social phone calls, internet surfing and posts on social media do not belong in work hours (unless social media is part of your job description).
- Go beyond the obvious. If you're putting together a presentation, spend half an hour finding a particularly apt image. If you're teaching Grade 10s, dream up a way to engage even the most wayward minds.
- Be willing to go the extra mile. If the job needs to be done today, stay at your desk even if five o'clock has come and gone. (If after three months you realise that the boss is taking advantage and making you work unpaid overtime constantly, you have to draw a line, but that's after three months. Not the first time it happens.)
- Complete the task within the deadline. A deadline is a promise. Honour it.
- Be absolutely reliable. If you say you will call someone back, do it. If you promise to find information, bring back more than was expected. Make a note of every promise or undertaking, so that you do not forget.
- Always check your work for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Twice!!
- As far as possible (we are human!), keep personal issues out of the workplace. If you are going through a personal crisis, which you know will spill over into worktime, take your boss into your confidence and negotiate time off to deal with it.
- Be open to feedback. We are not the best judges of our own behaviour. Listen with an open mind if someone points out behaviour that may not be professional.

You as part of a team

- Step up. Do not drift along passively. Give whatever you have to give.
- Respect everyone around you: your colleagues, your clients, your organisation.
- Do not be late. Your time is no more important than anyone else's. It is disrespectful to make people wait for you.
- Listen to others. Listen in order to understand, not only to find a gap so that you can start talking.
- Prepare for meetings so that you are ready to make a contribution. Meetings are not an end in themselves. They should be a way to find the best solutions to whatever needs to be done, and those solutions should be implemented as soon as possible.
- Take the initiative if it is appropriate. If your idea is shot down, that's fine. It's better for the team to have half a dozen ideas to choose from than just the one the boss came up with.
- Be positive and supportive. The team should work better and more smoothly because of you.
- As time goes by, you will build closer ties with some colleagues than with others. Choose your confidantes with care – they can support your development or undermine it. Steer clear of people who are cynical and witty at the expense of others, however smart they seem. Befriending them may lead to loss of motivation and a downward spiral of negativity. Instead, associate with and learn from people who are positive and motivated.

When it comes to professionalism, you will reap what you sow. Here's a final comment from our graduate survey:

I'm someone who always went the extra mile, but I also took away a lot more than my colleagues and peers. I was offered 2 international secondments, and got to work alongside partners on unique projects. I definitely worked a lot harder than I would like to admit, and I do think that other aspects of my life may have suffered due to how much of myself I gave at work. However, I believed that what I put in was what I'd take away, and I do think that that's the reality of my experience.

CLEAR AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Whether you are speaking or writing, always remember that the purpose of language is to communicate, not to impress.

Before you start writing, clarify your message in your own mind. A clear, well-structured text should answer these seven questions:²⁵

- 1 *What* is being done?
- 2 *Who* is doing it (with/to whom)?
- 3 *When*?
- 4 *Where*?
- 5 *How*?
- 6 *Why*?
- 7 *How much* is involved (resources, time, etc.)?



Don't write this:

At the appropriate stage, the necessary steps will be taken, and sufficient funds committed to tackle the problems arising in several departments.

Instead, write this:

Over the next six months, Treasury will provide the Eastern Cape Departments of Health and Education with R500m to upgrade 30 schools and four hospitals.

If you were in charge of a dilapidated school or hospital, which of these statements would you rather hear?

Try not to communicate if you have nothing to say (yet). Instead of the meaningless statement above left, rather say, "We are working on budgets and priorities. We will let you know as soon as we have clarity, no later than 15 September 2023."



Focus on the reader

Ask yourself:

- **Who** are you writing for? Think of their background, where they fit into the organisation, what they know already.
- **What** do they need to know? Give them only the information they really need.

Don't write this:

As you are aware, the committee you appointed to look into possible improvements to fire regulations in our factories has spent many hours deliberating. We are glad to inform you that we have finalised our report and to be able to forward the same to you.

(* Why tell him or her if they are already aware of what you're writing?)

* Work is about output, not about input. They don't have to know that you spent many hours. The value of what you achieved should speak for itself.)

Instead, write this:

Please find attached the report from the committee on fire regulations.

Appropriate tone and language

This has to be a separate point because so many people, especially young people, get it wrong.

When you consider your reader, also consider your relationship to that person. Imagine standing in front of him or her and saying the words you're writing to his or her face. Would you feel comfortable addressing your boss with, "Lol, Mr Mazibuko"? Would you start talking, or walk away after the conversation, without a greeting? Probably not.

With that in mind, a few dos and don'ts:

- DO start all professional emails with "Dear xxx". Use the first name if that's how you would address him or her in person, otherwise stick to Mr/Ms.
- DO always end with "Regards" and your name.
- DO use capital letters and punctuation correctly. Check extra carefully – three times even – when you're typing on your phone.
- DO remember that ANY digital communication can and very well may be forwarded. Before you press send, read it again and consider how you would feel if this was circulated to the whole office, or even more widely.
- DON'T use slang and social media abbreviations like ICYMI.





Keep it short and simple

Be as concise and clear as possible.

- Split long sentences and paragraphs into shorter ones.
- Cut out unnecessary words. Using verbs instead of nouns will help you do this (e.g. to be in control of a moving vehicle = drive).
- Replace complex phrasing with simple, everyday language (but not slang).
- Use bullet points for lists of facts or information.

KEEP IT
Simple

Don't write this:

It is inadvisable to be in control of a moving vehicle when suffering from fatigue.

Demonstrate the relevance of the proposal to the needs and constraints of the target groups and final beneficiaries.

The number of women in management positions is lower in comparison to the number of men.

In the event that you decide to work from home, please ensure that this information is conveyed to your line manager.

Your employment contract confers on you an entitlement to full remuneration for one calendar month in the event of your medical incapacitation.

Instead, write this:

Do not drive if you are tired.

Show how your proposed project will meet the needs and constraints of the people it is intended to benefit.

There are fewer women than men in management positions.

If you decide to work from home, please inform your line manager.

Your employment contract entitles you to full pay for a month if you fall ill.
(Another example of verbs instead of nouns: medical incapacitation = fall ill.)

Here are some simple alternatives to help you make phrases more concise.

Instead of:	Consider using:
With reference to With regard to On the subject of In relation to	About
Accounted for by the fact that Due to the fact that For the reason that In view of the fact that Owing to the fact that	Because
In the event that Provided that On condition that	If

Be concrete, not abstract

Replace vague, abstract expressions with concrete language. The text will be clearer, more meaningful, and often shorter.

Don't write this (abstract language):	Instead, write this (concrete language):
Remunerated employment	Paid work
Hierarchical superior	Boss, line manager
Human capital development	Staff training
Ensure the universal availability of	Ensure that everyone has access to
Commonalities	Shared/common aspects/themes/goals

Stay clear of jargon and clichés

Every field has its own set of jargon, from a cameraman shouting “Kill the blonde”²⁶ to IT people speaking a language only they understand. Remember, focus on the reader. If you're writing an email to a colleague in the same field, you can use abbreviations and insider-language. If your reader is an outsider, make sure it's clear.

Also be careful of fancy-sounding words or phrases that have become tired and irritating, like blue-sky thinking (clear/visionary thinking), deliverables (results, outcomes), keep in the loop (keep informed), going forward (in future).

Big words do not make you sound smart. Instead, they are pompous and often unclear. Ask yourself: Would your friends understand it? Are all instructions clear? Does it sound natural?

Write and speak to communicate, not to impress.

²⁶ A kind of light used on TV sets, usually big with a yellow head, is called a blonde. They have largely been superseded by smaller, stronger variations.



MANAGING TIME

Time is like money: a limited resource, which often seems in very short supply. We all sometimes feel overwhelmed by things we want to and have to do. How can you fit it all into a day with only 24 hours, and a week with only seven days?

The first step on the way to money management is drawing up a budget. (More on this later.) It may not be as obvious, but the same is true for time management. What do you spend your time on? Keep a precise diary for a week, writing down how you spend every minute of your day. Let's start with your personal time, outside office

hours. Include everything: Shower and getting dressed – 40 minutes. Travelling to work – 1 hour. Lunch – 45 minutes (What do you do in those 45 minutes?) Travelling home – 1 hour 15 minutes. Cooking supper – ... you get the idea.

Do the same for time at the office. Settling in at your desk – 10 minutes. Sorting email and discarding things that do not need action – 30 minutes. Meetings – ... and so on. Chart an average day. You will quickly see where your time goes!

Now start taking control. How do you decide what is important, what should be done first?

The following handy tool has been adapted from Stephen Covey’s book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX – time at work		
	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis • Medical emergency • All deadline-driven projects • Last-minute preparations for scheduled activities 	<p>B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular work • Planned and focused meetings • Preparing for and following up after meetings • Planning your schedule • Teambuilding
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions, calls • Some emails • Unscheduled meetings for activities you are not directly involved in 	<p>D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Some messages/emails • Escape activities • Aimless internet surfing

The top two quadrants are where you have to focus.

- **Quadrant A** is the urgent and important stuff that needs to be done NOW. You don’t really have a choice. If you spend all your time in A, however, you function in crisis mode. Perhaps you do not plan your time well, or perhaps you procrastinate and only do things when it’s almost too late.
- **Quadrant B** is what we often overlook or postpone, because it is not urgent – **but it is important**. This is what Covey calls the “Quadrant of Quality and Personal Leadership”. These activities require planning and initiative. They also require time to reflect. If you find time for Quadrant B, you are a time manager, not a crisis manager.
- **Quadrant C** is filled with things we get into because we can’t say no. Learn to do so.
- **Quadrant D** contains the things we do because it is easy, mindless, and helps us avoid the hard stuff. Social media, gossip at the coffee station ... These are the REAL time wasters!



One can draw up a similar matrix for personal time:

TIME MANAGEMENT MATRIX – personal time		
	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis • Medical emergency • Last-minute preparations for scheduled activities, like a friend’s birthday party 	<p>B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Cooking, cleaning if that is your responsibility • Friends and family • Study/personal development • True recreation/relaxation
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions, calls • People who keep you on the phone because they are bored 	<p>D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Some messages/emails • Escape activities • Aimless internet surfing

When you feel overwhelmed:

1. Make a list of all the things you have to/really want to do.
2. Consider them according to Covey’s matrix.
3. Put the important, urgent ones at the top; and then the important, not urgent ones.
4. Try and delete the ones that fall in the bottom quadrants.
5. Now make a to-do list for today.
6. Make another one for this week.
7. Start at the top and complete the first task.

Consider the idea of “found time”: time when you are occupied with unavoidable but boring or frustrating stuff, which you might be able to rethink. The two hours in the taxi or train to work and back, the hour spent cleaning your flat, your lunch time – all these leave your mind unoccupied. There are wonderful podcasts and TED talks that you can download for free. Invest in a good pair of ear-phones, and suddenly vacuuming the carpet gives you time to spend on personal development.

Perhaps the most important thing is to be aware of what fills your time. Do not slip into a pattern of staying at the office till seven or later, having fast food for supper and watching television till the early hours. Your job description should not be so intensely heavy that it forces you to work overtime

constantly. Knock off at a reasonable time, eat healthy food and go to bed in time to get at least seven hours of sleep. Use weekends to hang out with friends or to play sport. Go to a movie now and again. Read a novel. If you have to catch up on work over a weekend, contain it. Don’t let it leak into all seven days of the week.

To stay happy and healthy, you need all of the following:²⁷

- Time in – quiet time for meditation and reflection
- Focus time – concentrated, productive work
- Physical time – exercise the body
- Play time – being spontaneous and creative
- Connection time – friends and family, but also connecting to our surroundings and the natural world
- Down time – just being by yourself, quietly
- Sleep time

The time you allocate to each of these will vary from day to day and week to week, but you have to make time for all of them. Your body, your mind and your spirit all need to be nourished. If you plan your time, there is enough of it.

²⁷ The Healthy Mind Platter was created in collaboration by Dr David Rock, executive director of the *NeuroLeadership Institute* and Dr Daniel Siegel, executive director of the *Mindsight Institute* and clinical professor at the UCLA School of Medicine.



MANAGING MONEY

I was excited when I received my first [salary] payment. Since I was not financially literate, I did not save or invest. I spent most of my money on family and outings. A year later, I took out a loan to build my family home. The loan was an eye opener. In hindsight, I learned that you pay twice as much what you had initially asked for.²⁸

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MONEY STARTS WITH YOUR FIRST SALARY

The start of your working life is an exciting new chapter. Yes, adulting can be hard and there will be challenges and responsibilities. But you also have new opportunities and exciting things to look forward to – not least of which is your first salary.

Whatever your dreams and ambitions, your income will be an essential resource. What you choose to do with your money each month will impact your life now, and in the future. So take an interest in your money from the start. Because the more you understand it, the more empowered you'll be to make it work for you.

²⁸ All the quotes in this section come from recent graduates in a StudyTrust survey in 2019.

MANAGING YOUR MONEY BELIEFS AND EMOTIONS

Understanding financial concepts and good money habits isn't hard, but to consistently put the theory into action can be more complicated. Everyone grows up with ideas, beliefs and fears about money. These influence your daily decisions – often without you realising it. In order to manage your money, you need to balance what you need and want **now**, with what you need and want for your **future**. Often, this is about how you manage your emotions and the impulses they create. So, pay close attention to your money emotions, and the ways they shape your actions.

What do you want your money to do for you?

You will always have important and fabulous ways to spend your money *right now*. The good news (and the bad news) is that no matter how much you earn, it's only the money **you don't spend** that can grow. It doesn't matter that much whether you earn a small, average or large salary – it's how much money you save, instead of spend, that will dictate whether you can achieve your dreams.

Think about what you *really* want your money to do for you. Maybe you want to travel widely, start your own business, raise a family or build a career you love. When you're clear about your big, lifelong dreams and aspirations, it's easier to make the choices and sacrifices required to get you there. If you don't know what you want your money to do for you, you're going to end up spending it on unimportant things that don't really matter that much.

What do you dream about?

Make a list of four or five big dreams you'd like to realise in your future. Once you've written down what your dreams are, it's time to break them down into practical financial goals. Some of these might be directly related to achieving your specific dream, while others might be a step that will help you get there.

For example, if you want to start a business, you might want to start saving towards this specifically. However, you might also have goals around further education, buying a reliable car, or making sure that you avoid (or repay) debt, so that it will be easier to manage an unpredictable income later on.



How long will it take?

Order your goals into short, medium and long term:

- Short-term goals Within 2 years
- Medium-term goals 3 to 10 years
- Long-term goals More than 10 years



GET SMART

Next, you need to make sure your goals are SMART. SMART is an acronym – each letter stands for something, helping you to remember all the elements for creating a goal you can achieve.

SMART goals are:

S ➤ **Specific.** Vague goals aren't helpful. Be specific about what you're working towards. Write down exactly what it is, how much it will cost, where you will find it and by when you want to achieve it.

M ➤ **Measurable.** How much do you need to save and how much will you save each month? This way you can measure your progress and see how you're getting closer to your goal.

A ➤ **Achievable.** Will you be able to consistently afford the amount you plan to save each month?

R ➤ **Relevant.** Is this goal going to contribute to your bigger dreams?

T ➤ **Timely.** Give your goal a timeline, with a start date (even if it's a few years from now, after you've accomplished other goals), and the completion date you're aiming for.

Example

How to make your goals SMART

Goal: Repay your student debt

I'm going to pay R400 extra (Measurable and Achievable) into my student loan account every month (Specific and Relevant) to repay the loan in 4 years instead of 5 years (Timely and Achievable).



HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR INCOME

Over a 40-year career, there are 480 monthly salaries. That's 480 chances to decide what your money will do for you. Every salary payment can help you build your dreams, your security and your freedom – if you choose to prioritise this.

So how can you structure your spending and your saving to make each salary count?

Ideally, there are 4 key categories to split your salary into each month:

1. Building the future you want
2. Creating a safety net that gives you security
3. Spending to meet your needs and enjoy your life now
4. Sharing with your family and community

On the opposite page you can see a breakdown of the various elements of each category. You may not be able to contribute to every one of these **elements** every month, especially when you're starting out, but try to make some contribution to each **category** each month.

We will only cover some elements in more detail, but take the time to read and learn more about all of them. Understanding these elements and thinking about how you can use your money most effectively in each category will help set you up for financial success. This is how one recent graduate described the process:

Earning a salary brought joy to me as I would be able to do things that I had always wanted to do and also help my family with groceries and paying school fees. I had always been good with managing my finances and saving so this was not a challenge for me. Setting out a budget was the first thing I did before spending my salary and I made sure that I stuck to it. It was discipline that helped me and knowing when to say NO to someone, because everyone around me thought I was now 'rich'.

UNDERSTANDING 'TAKE HOME' PAY

My first salary was very exciting, it felt like I was finally my own person now. I didn't however expect my deductions (taxes and all) to be that much. Managing the money wasn't a problem because I made a lot of mistakes with the money I was receiving from the bursary scheme so I learnt a lot of lessons about money management during my time in varsity.



To see exactly what and how much gets deducted each month, look at your payslip. You'll also use your payslip as proof of your employment and your income, and when applying for credit. Therefore, you need to understand the information on your payslip throughout your career.

You have a right to understand your payslip and your salary deductions. If you don't, speak to someone from your company's payroll or HR department, or directly to your employer.

Your first payday is an exhilarating milestone (and, to be honest, so is every payday after that). But the money that's paid into your bank account won't be the full salary specified in your job contract. That's because your employer will make a number of required deductions before you are paid.

how to structure your income smartly

to build your financial future and grow your wealth



Over a 40-year career, you will earn 480 monthly salaries. That's 480 chances to decide on the best way to spend and grow your money.

Common deductions

Personal income tax

Once you start earning, you will need to register with the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to receive a personal income tax number. Every month, if you earn more than a certain amount per year, your employer is legally obliged to deduct personal income tax from your salary before you are paid. This will be included as a deduction on your payslip called PAYE (pay as you earn) tax.

Income tax is charged as a percentage of the money you earn. In South Africa, the tax rate works on a sliding scale, which means the more you earn, the more tax you pay. These incremental increases are called tax brackets. You can find the latest information regarding the rate you are charged in each tax bracket at www.sars.gov.za.

Unemployment Insurance Fund

You will also make a compulsory contribution to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). If you become temporarily unemployed (or go on unpaid maternity, adoption or sick leave) after being employed full-time, you'll be able to claim a small monthly amount from this fund. 1% of

your salary will be deducted for the UIF contribution each month, up to a maximum of R148. Your employer contributes another 1%.

Retirement contribution

Your employer may allocate a monthly contribution to a company pension or provident fund (a savings vehicle specifically designed for retirement saving). This may be compulsory, but you may be able to choose what percentage of your salary is deducted.

Medical aid

Some employers may also deduct a medical aid premium from your salary. This is generally an optional deduction, i.e. you can choose whether or not you want to belong to a medical aid through your employer. Your employer may contribute to the cost of your medical aid, meaning that less is deducted from your salary, and your medical cover will cost you less. Medical costs can be enormously expensive, so while this is a big monthly deduction, medical aid (or a medical insurance plan) could protect you and your family in the event of large medical expenses.

Salary terms explained

- **Basic pay/salary:** The rate agreed between you and your employer as your set pay, without any additional income, such as bonuses or overtime. For staff who are paid monthly, this is usually one-twelfth of your annual salary.
- **CTC:** This stands for “Cost to Company” and is a term for the total salary package of an employee. It is the pre-tax salary and includes all benefits the company is offering.
- **Gross pay/salary:** Your basic plus any additional income such as overtime or bonuses, before all deductions.
- **Nett pay/salary:** The amount that gets paid into your bank account, that you will take home after deductions.
- **IRP5:** This is your tax certificate. It's issued to you at the end of each tax year. It details all employer/employee-related incomes, deductions and taxes. You will use this to complete your income tax return every year.

CREATING A BUDGET

Getting my first salary was exciting ... I felt like an adult! I didn't use it so wisely, but soon had to learn how to manage what I thought was "big money". Fortunately, I had learnt all about budgeting through my bursary stipend, but sticking to the plan can be tough if your peers are doing lavish things!

To get the most from your money each month, you need to plan and track your spending. A money plan, or budget, gives you clarity about how much money you have and what you plan to spend it on. It's the best way to make sure you spend your money wisely, and have enough when you need it.

Here's how to get started:

1 Write down your total guaranteed monthly income. Sometimes only a portion of your salary is guaranteed and the rest is performance-related, such as commission. It's best to use a conservative estimate at the start. Once you've built up a track record, work with an average from, say, your first six months.

2 List your expenses. Don't forget to include all your regular monthly expenses (such as transport, rent, data and air-time, food, toiletries, entertainment, etc.) as well as infrequent expenses (such as festive-season spending or getting your car serviced). If you're not yet sure how much is a realistic amount for a category, put down your best guess and then adjust your budget over time based on your actual spending. For infrequent expenses, work out how much you need to save each month. Include this as a saving in your budget. Set this money aside each month to make sure you have enough money when you need it.

3 Track your spending. No matter how small, each expense adds up. Keep tabs on your spending by using your banking app, bank statements and receipts. Regularly review how much you spend to see if you're on track. At the end of the month, compare your planned spending with your actual spending (you can do this in the 'actual' column on the budget planner on the next page). If you find you consistently overspend in one category, you may need to adjust your budget.



Tip

Work out how much you have to spend on food and entertainment per day (divide your food and entertainment budget for the month by the number of days in the month). If you overspend one day, you know you have less to spend the next day. For instance, you might want to make sure you spend less on weekdays so that you can spend a little more on the weekend.

Sticking to a budget doesn't have to be a painful exercise. Treating yourself from time to time isn't bad; you just need to be sensible about it.

At first I thought my salary was a lot of money, but as time goes by I needed more as I had signed up for services such as the gym, Wi-Fi, etc. Family also expects you to assist financially as you have a job, so that also impacts finances. Learning to stick to the budget is a bit of a challenge given that you have to say no to family, etc. and resist buying takeaways that seem necessary given long working hours.

Your money plan

Income	Current	Planned	Actual
Salary	R	R	R
Other income	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Basic needs	Current	Planned	Actual
Groceries	R	R	R
Clothing	R	R	R
Transport (public transport, car maintenance, fuel)	R	R	R
Rent	R	R	R
Medical expenses	R	R	R
School fees	R	R	R
Bank costs	R	R	R
Levies	R	R	R
Rates and taxes	R	R	R
Childcare	R	R	R
Family support	R	R	R
	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Financial protection	Current	Planned	Actual
Car insurance	R	R	R
Home and contents insurance	R	R	R
Disability insurance	R	R	R
Funeral cover	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Income

R



Basic needs

R



Financial protection

R

Debt repayment	Current	Planned	Actual
Loan repayment	R	R	R
Credit card repayment	R	R	R
Vehicle repayment	R	R	R
Home loan	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Debt repayment

R

Savings and wealth creation	Current	Planned	Actual
Retirement contributions	R	R	R
Emergency savings	R	R	R
Education	R	R	R
Investments	R	R	R
Stokvel	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Savings and wealth creation

R

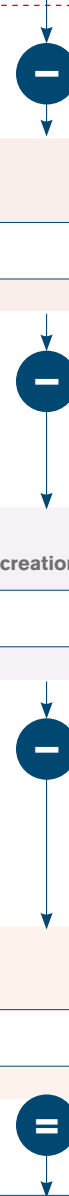
Lifestyle spending	Current	Planned	Actual
Holidays	R	R	R
Entertainment	R	R	R
Cellphone	R	R	R
TV licence/DStv	R	R	R
Furniture account	R	R	R
Clothing account	R	R	R
	R	R	R
	R	R	R
Total	R	R	R

Lifestyle spending

R

Surplus or shortfall

R



STAYING ON TRACK

Review your needs and wants

Some of your expenses are essential (needs), such as food, rent and textbooks. You need these things to stay safe and healthy and productive. Others are nice-to-haves (wants) like takeaways, concerts and fancy clothes.

There's nothing wrong with spending money on fun things, but you will have challenges if you don't take all your essential expenses into account first.

Good spending habits

Be smart about how you spend your money. Get into the habit of checking and comparing the prices of items and services. You can do this at shops or online – not only for big purchases, but also for small items that you buy regularly. You can also consider buying items second-hand, as you'll often snag a good deal at a great price.

Make credit a tool, not a trap



Credit can be a great tool to help you achieve your goals, but it can also become a trap that makes it much harder to reach your dreams. Most people will use credit at some point, so it's essential to understand how it works, and how to make smart decisions about when to use it.

Credit is an amount that you borrow from a credit provider who is willing to lend it to you. When you use that credit, you create debt. For example, if you have a store card, credit is the total amount you're able to spend on the card. Each time you use it to make a purchase, you create debt.

When you use credit, you are spending money that you haven't even earned yet. This means that for months or years to come, some of your salary already belongs to someone else. If you're using credit for daily expenses, or to buy things that



don't add long-term value to your life, you will always be paying for past decisions, instead of using your money to build your future.

But credit can be valuable when it's used to help you reach your goals – like buying a home or reliable car, or equipment that could allow you to earn more, or to start or grow a business.

How much is credit actually costing you?

When you decide to use credit, you need to understand how much it will cost you and then plan for the full monthly expense in your budget. Just as you would for a big purchase, you should compare your options and find the best offer available.

The **total cost of credit** is the amount you borrow, plus all of the interest and fees you will pay.

Interest

This is the money you pay in return for using credit. It is charged as a percentage of the amount that you owe. Every month, part of your credit repayment is used to pay this interest – so the more you pay back, the less interest you pay every month.

Fees

A portion of your monthly payment also covers fees. These fees could include an initiation fee, monthly service fees, and credit life insurance fees. Before you take up credit, make sure you understand the total cost (interest rate and fees) and use this to compare offers.

You will keep paying interest and fees for as long as it takes to repay your debt. If you miss any payments, added interest could even start increasing the amount that you owe. Remember that the longer you take to repay debt, the more it will cost you. But this also means that with most debt the sooner you repay it, the less it will cost you.

Here's some good advice from a recent graduate:

Moving to stay alone and trying to manage on my small salary was not helpful. I had to adjust but with time I managed my finances well and was cutting down on debts and stopped spending money I did not have. The most important part is to have less debts and try not to be impulsive when spending.

Avoid common debt mistakes

Avoid a (car) debt trap

Buying a car is a big goal for many young South Africans, but overspending on cars is also one of their most common financial regrets. Remember, a car starts losing value the moment you drive off with it, but the payments will keep coming off your account for years to come.

Consider the following:

- 1 Don't** let your dream car cause you nightmares: Spending more than you can afford will have a serious impact on your cash flow and ability to meet other financial priorities. Shop to meet your practical needs, not to impress. It doesn't have to be a brand-new BMW.
- 2 Don't** take a balloon payment: A balloon (or residual) payment is a lump sum portion of a loan that you only repay at the end of the loan term. This means that your monthly instalment is lower, but at the end of the loan agreement, you will need to pay the full outstanding lump sum in one go. In most cases, people have to take out another loan to pay for the balloon payment – meaning even more time and money spent on interest and fees.



3 Do save for a deposit: Before you buy a car, save up for a deposit. A deposit could help you qualify for a better interest rate, and you'll also pay lower monthly instalments and reduce the total cost of the car because you will borrow less and pay less interest.

4 Do take a shorter repayment term if you can afford higher instalments: The longer it takes to repay a loan, the more it costs you in interest and fees.

For example, if you buy a car for R100 000 and pay it off over **48 months** at a 12.5% annual interest rate, you'll pay about **R27 500** in interest. Extend the repayment period to **72 months** and the total interest rises to around **R42 500**.

5 Do budget for all of the extra costs: Cars come with many extra costs like insurance, petrol, maintenance and licensing. Make sure you've planned all of these in your budget *before* you decide how much you can comfortably afford to repay each month.

How much deposit do you need?

To save for a deposit, work out how much the instalment will be for the kind of car you hope to buy. Then add up all of the additional expenses, and add this total to the instalment amount. Save this amount for at least 3 months. This gives you savings for a deposit, but also gives you a chance to test how comfortable your budget feels when you can't use this money each month.

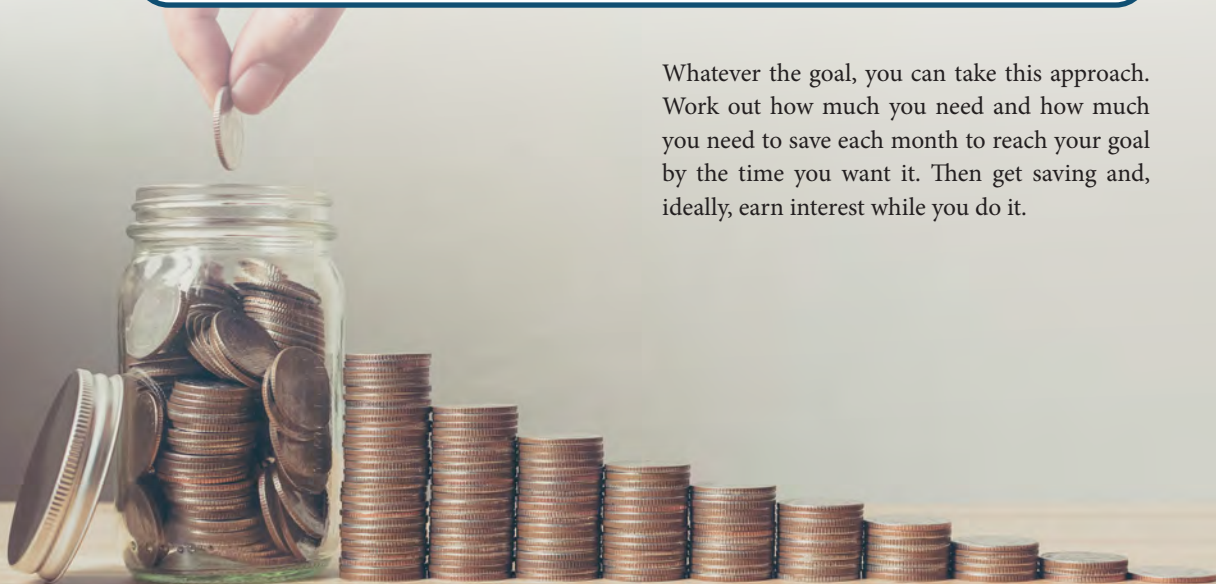
Real-life example

Save and then spend

Whenever you can, get into the habit of saving to make purchases – whether it's a TV or a holiday – rather than buying on credit. This habit can save you a fortune. Here's why:

- Let's say you want a new HD TV. You've found one with a 39-inch screen and a built-in soundbar. The price is R3 600. If you buy it on credit over 12 months, and the monthly repayment is R355, the TV will end up costing you a total of R4 260. In other words, you'll pay an extra R660 in interest and fees.
- If you wait to buy the TV, and save the R355 for 12 months instead, you could buy the TV for the R3 600 cash price, and then use the R660 for other goals.
- It gets even better. If, for example, you saved the money in an account that pays 4.75% interest a year, after 12 months you'd also have earned R93 in interest. So, saving for the TV gives you an extra R753 in total in your pocket.

Whatever the goal, you can take this approach. Work out how much you need and how much you need to save each month to reach your goal by the time you want it. Then get saving and, ideally, earn interest while you do it.





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SAVING

Let your money grow

If you want to build wealth, you need to get into the habit of saving a portion of your salary every single month. Even if you start small, build this habit into your budget right from the start of your career. You will thank yourself for decades to come.

Saving for emergencies

No matter how carefully you plan, life will still happen. Whether it's a big repair, a medical emergency, or a temporary job loss – you might need extra money quickly to handle an emergency. One option is to use a credit card or a personal loan, but you now know that credit is expensive and will make it harder to reach your other goals.

To prepare for emergencies, it's recommended you save enough to cover between 3–6 months' household expenses. So, if you need R5 000 a month to cover all of your expenses, you need to save between R15 000 and R30 000 for emergencies. It will take some time to build this up, but as it grows, you'll find that these savings give you peace of mind and confidence, because you know that you can handle whatever life throws at you.

Saving for retirement

This is the longest of your long-term goals, as you will probably need your whole working career to save enough to retire comfortably. If you can start from the very beginning of your career, you will benefit enormously from all the years your money has to grow.

If you contribute to a retirement-specific savings product, you will also qualify for certain tax benefits. Learn how to make the most of these. There are many good, free sources of information online and in the media that you can use to educate and empower yourself to prepare for retirement. You could also speak to an FSCA-registered financial adviser.



Early access to your retirement fund

Ordinarily, money in a retirement-specific vehicle cannot be accessed until you are older than 55. If your employer contributes to a retirement fund on your behalf, you will be given a chance to withdraw your retirement savings if you leave the company. This can be very tempting, but will cost you a lot in tax, and will significantly set you back in terms of reaching your retirement goals. So rather transfer these savings to another retirement product or leave them where they are. Keep saving consistently, and leave your retirement until you retire, even when changing jobs.

Compound interest: the money superpower

If there's one money concept you need to understand as early as you can, it's compound interest.

Compound interest is what makes money grow – and the more time you give it to grow, the more it will work for you.

Let your money make money

When you save, you earn interest. The higher the interest rate, the more interest you earn. Over time, you will keep earning interest on your original savings, and you will also start to earn interest on the interest you've just earned (as long as you don't withdraw it).

This is known as compounding. The growth may not seem like much at first, but given enough time, these repeated cycles of growth on growth make incredible things happen. Like a snowball rolling down a hill, gathering speed and increasing in size, your savings will grow bigger the longer you leave them alone.

WHEN you start matters MORE than how much you save.



Consider the following examples of the impact of time on your money:

Example

- Qondiswa invests R500 per month in an account earning 10% interest, compounded monthly. She begins at age 23. At age 33, she stops. She has invested a total of R60 000 over the 10 years. She never contributes again. She doesn't withdraw any money from the account until she is 65, staying invested for a total of 42 years.
- Hlomla invests the same R500 per month in an account earning 10% interest, compounding monthly. But he starts where Qondiswa left off. He begins investing at age 33 and continues the monthly R500 investment until he retires at age 65. Hlomla has invested for 32 years, contributing a total of R192 000.
- Even though Hlomla contributes more than three times as much as Qondiswa, she still reaches retirement with significantly more money than he has, simply because she started saving 10 years sooner than he did.

	Own money invested	Years contributed	Years invested	Total balance
Qondiswa	R60 000	10	42	R2 500 248
Hlomla	R192 000	32	32	R1 404 168

- As a final example, consider Nicky. She invests R500 per month in an account earning 10% interest, compounding monthly. She begins contributing at age 23 and continues until retirement at age 65. She has invested for 42 years and contributed a total of R252 000. Although she has contributed only R60 000 more than Hlomla, she can retire with R2.5 million more than he does, simply because she started saving 10 years sooner.

	Own money invested	Years contributed	Years invested	Total balance
Nicky	R252 000	42	42	R3 904 416

- But, Nicky can actually do even better. Each year, when she gets a salary increase, she increases her savings contribution by 6%, which helps her savings keep up with inflation. This means that she will put away R1 million over 42 years, and with compound interest, by the age of 65 it will have grown to more than R7.5 million!

	Own money invested	Years contributed	Years invested	Total balance
Nicky	R1 055 703	42	42	R7 647 945

The moral of the story? **If you start early enough, time will contribute more to your savings than you ever could.** So start building a savings habit now – even if it's just to build an emergency fund. Prioritise saving and investing from your very first salary. Don't worry if it's only a small amount at first – you have time on your side to do all the heavy lifting for you.

Get interested in your money

Money will be a central part of your future and your life. There are many quality online, print and podcast resources available to help you understand the principles of managing money well, making it grow, and avoiding easily-made mistakes. Keep learning and empowering yourself.

Capitec offers a series of free online courses to make you money smart. Check it out and register at www.livebetteracademy.com.

ADULTING IS NOT EASY: MONEY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

One of the questions in our 2019 survey of recent graduates was, “Describe how your experience of having a job matches up with your expectations.”²⁹ These are some of the answers:

Honestly there isn't much gap between my imagined career and what I'm currently doing so I feel a sense of fulfilment. However, adulting is not easy. Working comes with a lot of responsibilities I was not looking forward to. Like taking care of your family.

I always thought having a job would make my life better, I'd be able to take care of my loved ones, but I think now ... my family expects too much from me which is impossible sometimes. ... I would like to continue with my studies but it is not easy now because if I leave my job people dependent on me will struggle ... I don't want to look selfish ...

... knowing when to say NO to someone, because everyone around me thought I was now “rich”.

Many young South Africans are not only the first in their family to graduate, but also the first to earn a good, reliable income. Many of you have parents who are unemployed or pensioners. Your younger siblings may still be at school. In the extended family, few people may have jobs, and even fewer will have jobs with good salaries.

Your family expects you to help. You *want* to help. Of course you do – their sacrifices probably made it possible for you to get to where you are, and if you can give your siblings a helping hand,



their future will be brighter too. Improving their lives can be an enormous achievement.

The survey answers quoted above capture how difficult it can be to decide about this budget item – because like every other expense, you have to fit your family support into your budget. How much can you allocate to this priority while still making provision for everything else? If your dream is to be an attorney, you will have to do articles (at very low pay) before taking a “real” job. How important is that to you? It will matter for the rest of your life. If you want to continue studying, which will cost time and money, can you find a way to balance that with other expenses, including family support? Perhaps your employer has a study support scheme; or you can do one module at a time. Think creatively. Talk to older people who may have a wider view.

Giving up your own goals and dreams to fund someone else’s aspirations could leave you resentful and bitter, not functioning optimally. Be clear about your priorities and the reasons that you rank them in the order you do. That will make it easier to negotiate the situation: both in your own mind and with family and relatives.

Adulting is not easy, but we all have to do it!



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DIVERSITY

South Africans come from numerous race groups, language groups, religions and cultural beliefs. That makes life complicated. It is hard to live and work with people who are different from yourself. You have to watch yourself constantly. Nothing can be taken for granted, not even what is a joke and what isn't. It's hard work.

However, if we can manage it, diversity is an enormous advantage.

- In an editorial team, having people from diverse communities around the table means that you will find many more stories than only those from one corner of society, and they will be more thorough and balanced because you have different points of view. (The arguments will be spectacular, though!)
- In an engineering team pitching for a project, you need people skilled in maths, in design, in accounting and in marketing. That will mean many different attitudes and personalities.

- Business consultants need to talk and relate to male, female, old, young, black, white, accountants and creative writers. The strongest team will be the one with representatives from the most diverse groups.

Reams of research provide proof that diverse teams produce better results than homogeneous ones. But, as we said, it is not easy. South Africa has a special set of problems at this point in our history, as our workplaces are changing from white male-dominated to much more representative, diverse environments. It is difficult on all sides of all the divides.

At a SAGEA conference in 2019, Lerato Nxomani-Pakade, MD of Regent Career Architects, delivered a presentation titled "Black in the Boardroom". She focused on the experience of being in the minority, the first and only one like you in that environment. "Colour blindness is harmful," she said. Our backgrounds, the soil we grew up in, matter. They shape what we are.

She used the metaphor of the same kind of flowers, some red and some pink, planted in different environments. The red ones, growing in rich soil, nourished and supported on all sides, would necessarily end up stronger and more

beautiful than the pink ones coping with a hard-scrabble existence where only the bare minimum is available. People may look at them and think red flowers are just inherently better, while in reality circumstance has made the difference.

Translated to the workplace, that means that people in the majority (still most often white males) need to recognise and admit their unconscious bias that people like them are inherently better. A young black person may join the team with confidence, but even small, perhaps unintentional slights and put-downs can wear them down.

Lerato pointed out that bias does not only exist between races. Your hair quality, a darker skin tone, your religion, your age or your gender can also separate you from your colleagues. Some black people are not used to taking instructions from another black person, which can complicate life for black managers, especially if they are younger than the people they have to manage.

As a young black woman herself, Lerato spoke about imposter syndrome: because there are so few role models, new black entrants into a workplace may doubt their own ability or their right to be there. They may believe that they are not really good enough (an imposter) and that they will be caught out sooner or later.

She quoted from feedback they got for a research project on this subject:

I walk in distracted because there are so many questions in my mind about whether I belong and there is doubt being cast about whether I deserve to be there. (Sometimes people even look at you like you are in the wrong meeting). I am constantly negotiating my worth, which definitely affects my ability to do the best work I can.

You sit in a meeting and you want to contribute ... your mind is saying it, but your mouth isn't cooperating ... I feel like my thoughts need to be perfectly arranged before I can contribute, yet others seem to interact much more freely.

Her advice to young people is to go back to basics. Believe in yourself. You are there for a reason. Companies and organisations need to find the best people, regardless of race or gender or anything else. Strengthen yourself through thorough preparation. Keep your eye on the ball: the common purpose that your team is working towards. Michelle Obama said if you believe in yourself **and** you do the work, anything is possible. Both those elements are equally important.

In the age of YouTube and the internet, you can find role models far away from your immediate circle. Choose them carefully – the latest celebrity gossip will not necessarily inspire you or help you build your sense of self-worth. A profile of Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, medical doctor, entrepreneur and chancellor of UCT, will.

From our graduate survey came another valuable insight: be humble in the beginning. Obviously, other people will have more experience. Be open to learn. In time, you can earn their respect.

Diversity is a plus in any context. That means whoever you are, from whatever background, you must be who you are, fully and completely, and allow everyone else to be the same. If you come from a more privileged background, be aware of it and appreciate it. Use it to be the best you can at your job, and also as a supportive colleague. If your background is less privileged, do not let your emotional reactions (irritation, insecurity) make you clam up and withdraw. Step forward, give what you have to give. Then give your colleagues space to do it too. Listen. Communicate. You may find that the world is a wonderful, surprising place.





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