

Walk In Freedom aims to create more female entrepreneurs

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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"I hate it when anyone tries to tell me that you can't help everyone. That might be true, but the least you can do is try". This very statement is the pillar that keeps Danielle Marais, founder of Walk In Freedom, strong-willed, courageous and determined in her dream of creating a staggering 3.5 million female-owned businesses within the next decade.



Danielle Marais, CEO & founder and Atlegang Matjila, director of Walk In Freedom

I find out more from Danielle Marais about her dream

Can you tell us a bit about Walk In Freedom?

The name Walk In Freedom is inspired by Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and the vision that he had for all South Africans to live equally and in prosperity. We aim to make this vision a reality and allow all South Africans to "Walk In Freedom".

“ Our name is inspired by Mandela 's vision of an equal society for all South Africans.

Let's Walk In Freedom together.— WalkInFreedomSA (@WalkInFreedomSA) [February 11, 2021](#) ”

To achieve this, I asked myself what the most pressing matter I need to address in order to improve the lives of our

people. I narrowed it down and distilled the most pressing matters impacting South Africans: Unemployment; Gender Based Violence and securing a future for the next generation.

Walk In Freedom is addressing these issues head on through female entrepreneurship. Under the broader definition of unemployment, we are facing an unemployment rate of almost 40% vs. the global average of 5%.

“ *This is why Walk In Freedom helps create female owned businesses - to balance the scales and give women back their power.* ”

Two out of three South African children are raised without their father. Who better to secure the best future for our children than their own empowered mother.

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

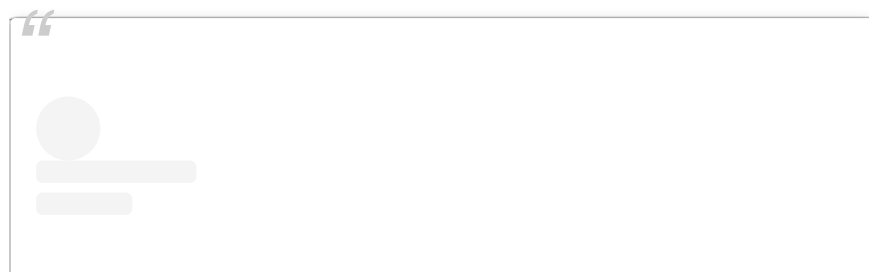
Since I was six-years-old I have always known that I wanted to use my life to serve. This purpose later got a name - My dream is to run a charity. Walk In Freedom's purpose is very close to my heart.

My dad inspired the core of the organisation which is to create entrepreneurs. He showed me that through entrepreneurship you do not only economically empower your own family, but a whole community. We had to leave South Africa when I was a little girl due to the lack of unemployment opportunities that so many South Africans can relate with. But my father brought us back home and built a business that now sustains 13 families.

It is through his example that I knew that this was the way that I would impact as many lives as possible. I went on to get my Honours in Marketing Management and Entrepreneurship from NWU in 2018. This allows me to mentor the women in starting their own businesses. I started working in 2018 and used two years of my saved income to start up Walk In Freedom in October of 2020 - in the midst of a pandemic no less. I thank God for blessing me in such a way that I may share my blessings with his Kingdom. It is through his guidance that I was able to start Walk In Freedom in very uncertain times.

■ **What is the core function of Walk In Freedom?**

To create better lives for South Africans through female entrepreneurship.





[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Danielle Marais 💎💎💎💎 (@marais_dani)

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

Due to the pressures women face in our society, a lot of the women who want to start their own businesses do not have the self-confidence. I see a lot of self-destructive behaviour and I know that it is not due to lack of grit from the ladies but rather due to years of circumstances that have formed a mindset and a way our women see themselves that we need to reset before they are able to believe in themselves enough. We do not empower women - we just enable them to unleash the power that they have always had. Their light may have been dimmed by societal norms and unequal gender roles engrained into our cultural and corporate world - but their fire will never die! We just help them to reignite.

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

It is not about how hard you can hit. It is about how hard you can take a punch and still get up.


“ The way I assess whether someone will be a successful business owner or not, is the way they experience failure. ”


As an entrepreneur, you need to know that the chance of failure is high - but a successful entrepreneur will simply call that failure a lesson.

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

I have been privileged enough to meet 70 amazing women from Cosmo City who all showed up, ready to change their lives and the lives of their communities! Getting to meet these women, hear their stories, and seeing how Walk In Freedom brought back hope for them was my proudest moment.

Album **Events**

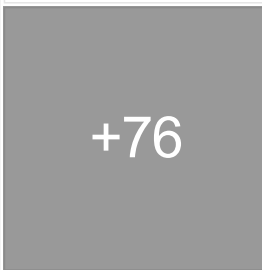
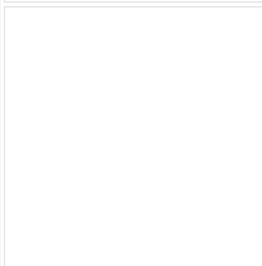
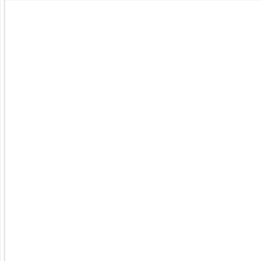
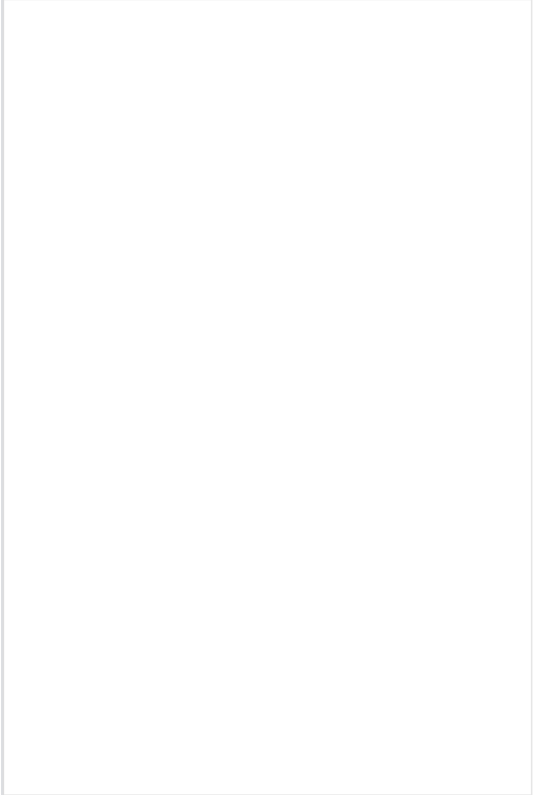
**Walk In Freedom**
about 3 years ago



Thank you to everyone who made Walk In Freedom's first event such a big success! Thank you to each one of the 70 ladies who attended and who decided to take their future into their own hands!




South Africa simply does not have enough jobs - so let's create them together!

Walk In Freedom's goal is to create 3.5 Million female owned businesses within the next 10 years - in turn generating the 14 Million jobs needed in South Africa. These 70 ladies are the first of these 3.5 Mill... [See more](#)



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

With the technological revolution, it truly is hard to predict the future. I can go into dark stores and online shopping which will probably take over within the next ten years, but honestly, this would be an educated guess. I would rather speak about what I am hoping entrepreneurship will look like in the future. I am hoping for (and working towards) fewer billionaires and more healthy competition in the entrepreneurship environment.

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

We need more women to be empowered to start their own businesses.

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

You need to have a healthy appetite for risk and be able to assess opportunities. You also need to understand your consumer. You need to be willing to listen and lastly and perhaps most importantly, you need to have grit!

■ ***Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.***

As someone who has run startups before, it is no easy feat to compete with bigger corporations which have economies of scale and can, a lot of the times, give a better product at a lower cost to consumers. It is important to assess your strengths and use them in this situation. In most situations, it is the personal touch that draw consumers to smaller companies.

■ ***Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?***

Because of the example my dad set for me, showing me how entrepreneurship can not only change your life, but the lives of a whole community. I used to help less fortunate people write their CV's until I realised the situation South Africans are facing. Under the broader definition of unemployment, we need about 14 million jobs. So, if I help someone with their CV - this will only give them an advantage above someone else and this would have no impact on the lives of South Africans as we simply just do not have enough jobs. This is why creating jobs is so important.

■ ***Where would you like to see Walk In Freedom in the next 5 years?***

Our long term goal is to create 3.5 million female owned businesses within the next 10 years in order to create the 14 million needed jobs.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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