

Creating something from nothing

By  Evan-Lee Courie

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Cape Town-based startup, Creative Crafting Club is the brainchild of sisters, Stefanie de Wet and Christelle Janse van Rensburg. The startup, founded in 2018, aims to bridge the gap between entrepreneurship for stay-at-home parents and education for tots-to-tweens.



Christelle Janse van Rensburg and Stefanie de Wet, founders of Creative Crafting Club

The multifunctional online subscription site offers tried-and-tested creative crafting lesson plans, teaching resources and business acumen for parents, educators and budding entrepreneurs, to kick start their own kids' creative crafting club in their community.

It was through the success of their franchise [Canvas Club](#), which has expanded to over 50 franchise locations across three countries in two years, that the powerful pair saw the need to develop a worldwide business model that not only encourages creativity in kids but entrepreneurship for parents too.

Stefanie shares the story of [Creative Crafting Club](#)...

What is the Creative Crafting Club?

Creative Crafting Club is a global online membership site that offers women step-by-step lesson plans, an online business toolkit and support to kickstart their own kids' creative crafting clubs in their communities.

Creative crafting is to create something from nothing. It is a process of exploring, discovering and connecting. It's about developing skills and nurturing conscious curiosity. Most importantly, it's about having loads of fun while you learn!

A “creative crafting club” is a home/school/church/community centre-based after-school club where kids aged 2 to 12 gather once a week to practice creative crafting. In a creative crafting class kids get to work with different materials, problem-solve and think outside the box to create interesting crafts/toys/games. All the lessons have been developed on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics)-principles to promote logical and systematic thinking in kids.

One of our 9 year old students accurately described creative crafting recently as, *"We make cool things that can do stuff"*.

■ **When, how and why did Creative Crafting Club get started?**

We started a creative crafting franchise called Canvas Club early in 2018, which expanded to over 50 locations in two years.

The demand that we saw for this type of business was the seed to develop a product that could service the global community. So the Creative Crafting Club was born.

■ **What is the core function of Creative Crafting Club?**

One of the biggest struggles we see moms face is finding a flexible way to generate extra income. The Creative Crafting Club membership offers moms an opportunity to join a community of like-minded women and run their own small business that works around their families' schedules.

The purpose of creative crafting classes is to nurture conscious curiosity in kids. We believe that for our children to thrive in this technological work, we will have to equip them with the ability to be curious. And creativity unlocks curiosity. Each activity is designed to ensure kids play, create, think, learn and develop a number of important skills that will help them to become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

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

The women we work with are extremely passionate about what they do, but guiding them on how to effectively market their product has been a big learning. People have a mental block against marketing. The secret is that modern marketing doesn't mean you have to be 'salesy' to sell. If you have a product that you really believe in, it is your responsibility to get it in front of the people you are meant to serve.



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

We are still learning a lot every day, therefore I will say this:

Start before you are ready!

“ You are only going to regret the things that you do not do out of fear and insecurities. Lean into the future and take the leap! You can figure out the rest as you go along. ”

I also think it's really important to find clarity around what you are passionate about and what impact you want to create.

We love this quote from Michelle Obama: “I think that in order to be successful, women have to figure out what they're passionate about first. No matter what you aspire to, you've got to love what you do in order to be successful at it.”

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

My dad always says, ‘Don't think about who can create an opportunity for you, think about the opportunities you can create for others.’

What really inspires me is the incredible team of women we work with and seeing their transformation and the change that they bring in their communities. One of our crafting teachers recently wrote: “Canvas Club has given me the opportunity to pursue my passion for art and teaching. It has given me the freedom to discover who I am and what I enjoy, without the pressure and commitment of going through formal training and the expense of studying. It has made my dream come true.”

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

I think it is easier now than ever to run a small business. If you have a passion for something the chances are good that there are other people somewhere in the world that share that passion and who would be willing to pay for a quality product or service.

Online communities - especially social media - makes it easier to understand the struggles, needs and desires within niches.

I believe the future of entrepreneurship lies online. Online entrepreneurship enables you to start businesses without massive financial outlays.

There is a big trend growing, big and small companies in all kinds of markets are shifting to a recurring revenue model, like membership sites. I believe this is an enormous opportunity.

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

Entrepreneurs need support to build their businesses. Accelerator/incubator programmes play an important role for startups especially in emerging markets as it gives new businesses support and a better chance to succeed. It also makes a lot of sense if you are looking for potential investors.

Regardless if you join an accelerator/incubator programme or not, the one thing that I do believe to be of major importance is to have a mentor. There is great value in having someone who you trust and respect, who can give you guidance and feedback and tough-love.

“ Positioning yourself to learn from someone who has gone before you and who has made success in the areas where you want to succeed can give you a headstart from day one. ”

Your mentor can even be a virtual mentor, someone you have never met in your life. There are so many successful entrepreneurs to follow online, who provide courses, insights, support and inspiration that will help you grow your business more effectively.

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

We would love to see a greater focus on entrepreneurship and exposure to “business” at school level. Teaching kids to problem-solve and to integrate business concepts into everyday life should be the centrepiece of a contemporary education. This would create opportunity and upliftment and promote confidence from a young age.

Traditional, "chalk and talk," education, where kids memorise and then repeat back word-by-word seems like the very nemesis of innovation. Entrepreneurship is key to South Africa's economic freedom and it's crucial that we develop our youth.

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

We believe all the C's are crucial to the success of any business owner: Courage, confidence, compassion, consistency and most importantly, commitment.

“ It's important to keep sight of the bigger-picture and hold a longer-term view, as success very seldom happens overnight. That's when commitment and being able to 'stick to it' plays an enormous role. ”

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

Managing to find work-life balance while building a business has been difficult. We are a bit obsessed, in a good way. We see the impact our business is making and are placing a lot of pressure on ourselves to succeed.

A major highlight has been that we were lucky enough to be featured on a few TV programs, radio stations and publications in the last few years which has led to exponential growth. That's contributed to us building up a team of amazing women. Working with them and learning from them every day is a privilege.

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

Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. If you have passion, a yearning for freedom, an appetite for risk and a never-ending keenness to learn then we would encourage you to take the leap today.

Being an entrepreneur is the best feeling in the world, however, that nice feeling only lasts if you have enough passion and determination to stick it out.

▣ **Could you share any future plans of Creative Crafting Club?**

Our vision is to empower women around the world to run a curiosity-led creative club in their community. We are continuously listening to our customers, to understand their needs and will endeavour to grow the business to serve them as best we can.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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