

SPECIALISED ACCOUNTING THAT MAKES OTHER SMALL BUSINESSES SUCCEED

Involved in the day-to-day practical work of accountancy and playing a key operational role in producing reliable financial information, accounting technicians deal with financial transactions and are responsible for updating financial and balancing accounts. Meet Carlo Snyders, a driven, accredited and self-employed accounting technician. This is his story.

CLEVER KID

Born in Windhoek, Carlo Snyders, when still a toddler, relocated to South Africa, where his father took charge of various construction projects.

Settling at rural Queenstown in that country's Eastern Cape Province, Carlo excelled at school and Mathematics was his favourite subject. "Growing up in a small town was fun. I guess you could say I was your typical bright spark at school - a clever and determined boy; always top of his class. I kept all my certificates from those early years. Maths was my best subject", he reminisces.

"There was always just this thing about calculations. I simply couldn't walk away from a sum. I simply had to get it right. And when it was a bit too advanced for my level, I would pester my siblings to explain to me how to do it", Carlo notes.

"Mathematics was so much fun. And I believe that this early passion I developed for calculations stood me in good stead when I proceeded to high school and got introduced to the exciting world of accounting", he adds.

NEW DIRECTION

It was a teacher's passion for the subject that made Carlo realise that he wanted to make a career out of accounting "I fell in love with the subject when it was introduced to me in Grade 8. It also helped that I had a teacher, Mr. Lochner, who was very enthusiastic about Accounting. His keenness and the way he taught the subject made you understand the importance thereof. It made a huge impact on me", Carlo explains.

Carlo soon became equally infatuated and any spare moment he had was used to delve deeper into the intricacies of financial transacting and bookkeeping. Balancing the books was more fun than watching television.

"I got to a stage where I didn't watch TV in the evenings. I managed to get hold of old higher level text books with the examination papers included at the back and I would sit and work out these questions in the evenings. Often, my dad would ask why I was still awake so late. I simply couldn't sleep. I had to find my answers. So, that's where it came from", he notes.



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Carlo Snyders

Accounting Technician

TERTIARY STUDIES

Upon completing high school, Carlo enrolled at the Vaal Triangle Technikon, where he obtained a National Diploma in Internal Auditing in 2003.

“I soon realised that this was not school anymore. It was much more intensive and the expectations were much higher. You can’t risk missing classes and there’s no one babysitting you. It’s so easy to get distracted in that space. When it comes to getting to grips with the demands and expectations, you are very much left to your own devices”, he shares.

“Although very demanding, I truly enjoyed my studies. It certainly helps when you enjoy the subject matter. But still, you need to be focused and you need to put in the hard hours. The competition amongst peers was also much more intense. Whereas I was the top accounting student at school, all of a sudden, others - equally passionate and talented, surrounded me. I had to work my socks off”, he recalls.

WORLD OF WORK

Carlo soon landed an internship as a trainee accountant at the Charteria & Barnes Chartered Accountants firm in Queenstown. “The transition into the world of work was quite seamless. Somehow, I knew what to expect and I had to adjust my mindset to one under which I accepted that my qualification only served as a means to enter the labour market; but that the real learning started at the workplace; and that I still had a lot to learn from others”, Carlo explains.

Carlo’s thoroughness and keen eye for detail soon got him noticed and he got selected into an elite group of promising candidates to do audits for the Auditor General in South Africa. “I grabbed the opportunity with both hands. I mean, who in my line of work would not want a reference about work done for the country’s Auditor General in his CV?”, he highlights.

“The feedback from my seniors was very encouraging. To know that seasoned and experienced accountants already valued my work reassured me that I took the right career decision. But, more importantly, I think it was just so comforting to know you’re doing something you love. It was so uplifting, and it motivated me to work harder, and smarter”, he adds.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

Leaving Queenstown and its picturesque rural surroundings, Carlo moved on to Johannesburg in Gauteng, where he had stints at international auditing firm KPMG from 2009, and Chinese telecommunications

giant, Huawei Technologies from 2012. “The time was ripe for me to move on and broaden my horizons, and it just made sense that I tested my skill in Africa’s economic capital. I was really fortunate to have worked at two such leading companies. The different operational contexts generated good exposure and I was able to sharpen my skills, especially in terms of South African legislation and tax and financial regulatory frameworks”, he emphasises.

This invaluable experience and exposure counted in his favour when Carlo applied for professional membership at the Accounting Technicians Association of South Africa. “I am a full and accredited member. The association, in considering my application, took into account my experience and qualifications under its Recognition of Prior Learning arrangements, and they didn’t take long in issuing me with full platinum membership”, Carlo explains.

“This is a valuable membership to have. It helps in allaying fears prospective clients might have about your ability, skill and standard. It puts their minds at ease that they are dealing with a professional who is recognised by peers in the industry. There are just too many chance takers out there, nowadays”, he adds.

COMING HOME

In 2014, Carlo decided to return to Namibia. “Although I went to school south of the Orange River, Namibia stayed in my blood and somehow I always knew that I would one day return to my country of birth. And since my siblings left South Africa and came back home already, it was actually a very easy decision to take”, he shares.

Not long after arriving back in his hometown of Rehoboth, Carlo started to do accounting work at a Windhoek-based company, Rent-a-Drum, where he soon made some sweeping changes in the accounts department. “You know what they say about new brooms! Yes, I would think that I managed to add a lot of value to the company in streamlining processes and reporting, and strengthening the existing checks and balances. The owners appreciated my work and diligence”, notes Carlo.

Carlo’s return to Namibia more or less coincided with the introduction of the online tax submission system introduced by the Ministry of Finance. Having amassed experience in this aspect whilst in South Africa where a similar system was introduced earlier, he saw a gap in the market that convinced him to go solo and offer his services and expertise to others.

OWN CONSULTANCY

Feedback from clients, who appreciated the diligent approach to his work, motivated Carlo to set up his own consultancy, Carlo Snyders Consulting. Working from his home in Rehoboth's Block C suburb, he offers accounting and bookkeeping services.

"It was a true leap of faith. I mean, how else would you describe giving up the security of a fulltime job and then venture into the unknown, knowing that you are yet to secure your first client? But, something in my gut just told me to trust my instincts and forge ahead. I've not looked back since.", he shares.

Carlo's ability to work under pressure, strong interpersonal and communication skills, an eye for detail, excellent commercial sense and good IT skills continue to stand him in good stead in growing his clientele. The future seems bright for this methodical, driven and passionate young man, eager to share his knowledge and skills with those businesses he serves and supports.

"Yes, I'm still working from my home office, but don't be fooled by appearances. I've managed to land some sizable contracts with local construction companies and entrepreneurs. It has been worth my while and the word of mouth is out there about this diligent and thorough accounting technician that brings order to your books", Carlo highlights.

CAREER CHAMPION

Accounting Technicians enjoy excellent career prospects. They can work in a wide variety of finance roles for many types of organisations. Carlo's journey demonstrates that those who pass Grade 12 with Accounting and Mathematics can easily access this career path.

"Knowing what others have done in nurturing me on my own career path, I make it a point to return the favour and share with young people the career potential of venturing into the accounting field. I tell them that not everyone needs to become a chartered accountant or a partner in a big accounting firm; that the market is growing fast and when you operate at my level, you can target the hundreds of small and medium enterprises out there", he notes.

"So, I tell them that if they're good with numbers, love working with people and enjoy helping them to succeed, to give this line of work a full go. The bottom line is that you work for yourself. And the most rewarding aspect is when you can see a small business is growing because of your work, and the advice you've offered them along the way. That's the most fulfilling part" Carlo stresses.

Carlo has big plans to grow his consultancy firm and appreciates that he potentially can be of service to the growing number of small and medium enterprises who often cannot afford and access the services of bigger accounting firms. "Often these businesses fail, not because of them not being viable businesses, but because owners undervalue and neglect their bookkeeping. Often, all such businesses need to stay afloat is someone to take full charge of managing its accounts. And this is where I come in", says Carlo.

Away from his computer and meticulously kept files, Carlo enjoys the company of family and friends, who appreciate him as a caring person, strong in his convictions and views. "I also became a father quite recently. My daughter, Caelyn is now a mere nine months old. She is everything to me. It's no more just about Carlo and his dreams; it's about making a success of my venture to ensure that I secure her future", he concludes.

Carlo Snyders: diligent, methodical and thorough. His story teaches us the importance and value of taking ownership of our work. That there are no shortcuts to quality and that every action is an opportunity to improve. That good quality is never an accident, but always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution. He is working his dream. He is living his passion.

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