

Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology

Is it possible to be a millionaire in South Africa at the age of 22? Ask Albert van Wyk

By Anthea Pretorius

Albert van Wyk is a self-made millionaire. He obtained a degree in industrial engineering at the University of Pretoria in 2015. Today at the age of 27, he is an entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker. His main ventures include his investment properties and his business, Gazzaroo.



Albert van Wyk

Albert's passion is to empower the youth of South Africa to become financially independent so that they can also make their dreams a reality. He achieved financial independence through his qualification, entrepreneurship and by presenting talks and courses at schools and universities across South Africa. He posts regular, exciting and helpful content on social media and sells his book *How to Become a Millionaire at 22*, which includes tips and tools he has used to create a successful financial future.

Growing up years

'I didn't grow up in a wealthy family. We couldn't afford the toys my friends had and I didn't receive pocket money. We relied on second-hand clothes and toys. There were many months that we battled to make ends meet. I dreamed of owning the things that others in our neighbourhood enjoyed. Both my parents believed in personal development and in chasing one's dreams. My mom and dad encouraged me to develop myself. One way, was to read many books. They were very supportive.

I started reading a lot of business books and then, in an effort to start earning pocket money to buy toys for myself, I started selling plastic "Scooby-Doo" strings at school. This turned into a toy store at school. After school I would mow lawns, wash cars and clean rooms for people in our neighbourhood. In high school I sold all kinds of things, from phones and laptops to play stations. Eventually I started buying and selling cars; I also got involved in construction projects. I used these businesses and the money I had saved up by then to buy my first property at the age of nineteen. I matriculated in 2011 from HTS John Vorster.'

How did you go about choosing a university and a degree programme?

'I wanted to study a recognised profession that was valued in society. I chose engineering instead of law or medicine. Industrial engineering was the best option, as I had a chance to learn about both engineering and business. To me it was the best of both worlds.'

Did any family members study at the University of Pretoria (UP) and did they encourage you to consider UP?

'No, none of my family members had the opportunity to attend university, so it was understandably important for my parents that I should go to university and obtain a degree. I was the first person in the Van Wyk family to complete a degree and the first to become an engineer.'

What challenges have you faced in your life that you would be willing to share with our JT readers?

'I faced many challenges, but I don't see them as challenges or failures. I didn't grow up in wealthy circumstances, which for some, might be a challenge. I lost R180k on a car sale that went wrong when I was 20 years old, which might be considered a failure. I lost R1 million on a property deal, which to many, would be a big loss. But I don't see it that way. Challenges are a part of daily life and the journey towards entrepreneurial freedom. Some challenges are bigger than others and some results are different from what I expected. That's all it is. Challenges enable you to figure out the right recipe that you can apply in your life. When you don't get the desired result, you change the recipe and then

you try again. I constantly adapt my recipe for success.'

What opportunities have you had that had a profound effect on you and your decisions?

'I believe we create opportunities. The universe presents us with opportunities when we are ready for them.

Opportunities are ALWAYS there. We just don't see them, or can't leverage them if we are not ready. Once we are adequately prepared and have put in the hard work required, the opportunities become clear to us. We can then use our experience and skills to make the opportunities work for us. The "perfect opportunity" will never present itself to you if you are not in the optimal position to make it work. There's never a perfect time, business partner, economy, government or opportunity to start a business or to make money. You need to MAKE it happen. Work hard, educate yourself, change your mindset and put in the effort every day. What other people define as "opportunities," will just be a part of the process for you.'

Where did the concept of entrepreneurship grab your attention and how has it developed over the course of your life until now?

'When I couldn't get the toys and other possessions my friends had in primary school, I started asking my dad why we couldn't afford the things people around us had. His answer changed everything for me. He said: "If you want to become a millionaire, you need to learn from a millionaire." I started reading my first business book. I became acquainted with the concept of entrepreneurship:

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“It doesn’t matter where you start or where you come from, you can create your own success.”

‘This was an amazing revelation, because we all start the race in life at different places. Some start the race before others. That’s just life. The concept of entrepreneurship levels the playing field and makes it possible for anyone to reach the top, no matter where you start or when you start. I started the race far behind many others, but when I started I gave it everything. I believe that entrepreneurship and being financially independent is the only way to survive the economic climate going forward into the future.’

How did you go about making your first million?

‘I used the money from all my small businesses as a big deposit and, together with a bank loan, I bought my first property at the age of nineteen. I ran the house as a commune for four years until it was a paid off asset worth R1.3 million.’

What is your dream job?

‘Exactly what I am currently doing. I don’t have a job, but I do have multiple endeavours. I am an investor, business owner and “impact-maker” in South Africa. I am making a difference in our country and I am financially independent. This allows me to fund things that matter to me and it enables me to live my dream. I am dreaming with my eyes wide open.’

What difference do you believe you can make in the world?

‘I believe that I can help the youth in South Africa to become financially independent. By doing this, they can also make their dreams come true and in turn can make a massive difference in the world themselves. Imagine if all Grade 12 learners in South Africa had no financial or time constraints; they would become sport stars, artists, entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, inventors and the list goes on! They would be able to change the world as we know it, completely. I managed to find a way to start from the bottom and I have become financially independent, I travel the country and share this knowledge with the youth so that they can do the same with their dreams.’

Other interesting things about Albert

‘I go to the gym every day and will go to the driving range every now and then. I am a massive Formula One fan! I hope

to start my own kart racing team soon. I love Marvel and DC comics and collect the fine art statues. I love dinosaurs and own a collection of them.

‘I wear slip slops to the office and I love my long hair. I am currently studying Spanish. I play the guitar and drums. My guilty pleasure is coffee with chocolate late at night and I like pineapple on pizza.’

My last words of inspiration to readers

‘It is possible to make your dreams come true no matter where you start or find yourself at this stage of your life. It is possible to start small and end up with more than one successful business and a property portfolio. I have done it and

so can you. The motto I live by is: MAKE it happen! Don’t wait for the perfect opportunity, economy, friends, family, government, country, business partner or anything else. I am taking what I currently have and just make it happen through hard work, drive, dedication and energy. All my profits go to financial education and entrepreneurship empowerment for the youth in South Africa.’

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↑ Albert sharing his story



↑ Albert giving a motivational talk at a school