

Hustling from builder to entrepreneur, one brick at a time

 By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Builder-turned-entrepreneur, 33-year-old Nhlanhla Ndlovu was recently selected as one of 16 participants for the 2017 intake of the Red Bull Amaphiko Academy, an incubator for grassroots social entrepreneurs.



Founding director of Hustlenomics, an initiative that looks to turning backyard dwellings into sustainable living space, Ndlovu knows the value of teamwork. In an interview with the Red Bull Amaphiko Academy, he said that you don't have to be an expert in every aspect of your business, but you can meet those needs by collaborating with people who have the necessary skills. "It's about being aware of what your own strengths are and being willing to work towards shared goals with other people."

"The fact that I work with people whose skills support the needs of the business gives me a sense of confidence that we can make this whole thing work."

Here, Ndlovu tells us how growing up in a small house with a backyard shack was the inspiration and foundation upon which his dreams for bigger and better things were built.

Who are the brains behind Hustlenomics?

I'm a qualified builder, qualifying in bricklaying at the [Builders Training Centre](#) in Soweto. I have now recently gone into partnership with Terry Mathebula, 29 years of age, who has a BSc (hon) Computer and Information Systems Management.

Tell us about your start-up and the inspiration behind it?

My qualification as a bricklayer was a result of living in a four-room house in Soweto with a big family. Having to share a small living space, growing up I had to then make an alternative within our yard to build a backroom shack to create my own living space. My qualification then allowed me to use my skill by putting it to the test in building our formal structure in our backyard. This is the same structure that today has assisted us in expanding our living space for our family to create a dignified home.

From this I saw the opportunity and same need that many other families in and around the townships had. I then had the idea to focus on identifying homes with low incomes and backyard shacks that we could work with in removing and replacing their backyard shacks. This would provide for them better homes, and a sustainable income in the long run while the company solves the social ills of the community with providing employment to the skilled and unskilled youths of the community.

▣ ***Where do you plan on taking it from here?***

Hustlenomics has identified a few low income households around the townships with backyard shacks that will benefit from the projects that we will be implementing going forward. These families will serve for our pilot projects that will give birth to other projects which will benefit low income households and earners residing in townships.

▣ ***How important do you feel it is to be introduced to entrepreneurship and innovation at educational level?***

It is very important. I've realised that with every opportunity to learn comes development and growth. I have learned that opportunity comes in different forms; even with those that I'd conventionally think I cannot benefit from, it takes one factor from each situation to learn from. As an individual I have realised that there is no end to any type of learning which is beneficial to me and ultimately replicates to my business.

▣ ***How necessary are initiatives like the Red Bull Amaphiko Academy to the development of entrepreneurship in South Africa?***

These initiatives are very important because they provide a platform for exposure. Part of the process I believe is important as it provides different learning and development opportunities that otherwise a normal emerging entrepreneur would not be exposed to as an opportunity to grow as an individual and for the business.

I know that it is a struggle already for anyone to have a start-up business and try to sustain it, but with the right education combined with the ambition of the individual, I am pretty sure that they are bound to thrive. Should there be failure, these opportunities will align the mind-set that the focus is purely not on the failure, but with every challenge comes an opportunity to learn, strengthen, and make informed decisions to grow.

▣ ***What advice do you have for young entrepreneurs who are just starting out themselves?***

Entrepreneurs need to learn to understand what they actually do to be confident enough to see it through. Through every challenge comes an opportunity to learn and grow instead of taking the easy decision to give up. It is all about aligning the mind in understanding the process to achieve the end goal.

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