

A cat, a tailor and an entrepreneur walk into a bar exam...

By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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What do 18th century tailors, cats and the 21st century legal industry have to do with local entrepreneurship? Graeme Wilson, CEO of [Whipping the Cat](#), makes the connection for us as we chat about how his firm is disrupting the local legal industry.



Graeme Wilson (middle) receiving the African Law Firm of the Year - Small Practice Award from Legal Week's Natalie Hill

■ Tell us the story behind the name "Whipping the Cat"?

It's a great story - I'll tell you the short version. In 18th century England, emerging tailors wanting to spread their wings beyond high-end Savile Row would break away from their master tailor and offer quality services to a wider market. At the time, they coined this practice "Whipping the Cat", and this is what inspires our name. Those tailors offered an affordable alternative and disrupted the industry. We are doing a similar thing in the legal service market through our customized - or "tailored" - legal services.

■ What differentiates your offering from other legal firms, and what made you decide on this model?

The most important differentiator is that we threw away the clock and time sheets: there is no hourly based billing at Whipping the Cat. We started the business by seeing things from the client's perspective, and then working backwards to offer the right services and the right billing model.

■ What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned in your first four years of business?

First, to remain customer focused – if people aren't buying, you are probably selling the wrong thing. And second, to realise that it may take longer than you expected to get where you want to be, but when you get there the uptake may be faster than you think. You need to be prepared for both!

■ Whipping the Cat was named African Law Firm of the Year - Small Practice at the 2017 African Legal Awards. What does this accolade mean to you?

Receiving the award is a great feeling. I am very proud. We were judged by fellow lawyers and came out top, which says

something about Whipping the Cat's quality.

▣ ***Where do you see the company by its 10th birthday?***

I have twins who are turning 10 soon – and their birthdays are all about having fun. When Whipping the Cat turns 10, I think our team and our clients will still be having fun too.

▣ ***What advice do you have for aspiring entrepreneurs?***

I have three pieces of advice:

1. Get someone credible to stress test both your ideas and your resolve as an entrepreneur.
2. Make sure that you have the support of those you love, and who love you – you are going to need to lean on each other.
3. Have a game plan. Stick to it. But don't be rigid. Your plan should be a framework – and a framework that allows freedom to move within it.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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