

35-UNDER-35

They say the roughest roads often lead to the top. In the profiles of twelve Top 35-under-35 finalists below, successful young CAs(SA) prove that there is much truth in this statement and that circumstances are not definers of destiny but rather that you can choose to overcome adversity and be extraordinary.

Not accepting failure as final, deciding to give up comfortable employment to start business ventures from scratch, and losing parents are just some of the challenges these young people have encountered. Not losing sight of their dreams, they continued with hopeful ambition, setting high goals and putting in many fine hours of hard work and dedication. It has paid off and they are now all in successful positions – the very reason that they've been selected as Top 35-under-35 finalists.

For more information visit: www.accountancysa.org.za/35-under-35

CONTINUE TO BE INSPIRED AS YOU READ ABOUT OUR FINALISTS. AND KEEP WATCHING THIS SPACE AS THERE ARE YET 11 MORE AMAZING PROFILES TO BE REVEALED...



And within this wonderful month of September, each of the finalists will be going through a judging process by a panel of distinguished business leaders. All the finalists will then be attending a glitzy cocktail evening and this is where the competition will culminate as the winner is announced.

Watch the front cover of the November issue as The Top 35-under-35 winner makes their grand appearance!



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GAVIN LUCAS**Founder and CEO of the Stor-Age Self Storage Group**

“It was a beautiful day – I remember it clearly. I was 22 years old and I was sitting in my new little VW Chico. I looked at the mountains and down at the suit I was wearing and I had a life-changing moment. I thought to myself, is this what I am going to do for the rest of my life – sit in traffic, go to work in suits and not necessarily be totally passionate about it – for the next 40 years, for the best years of my life (20 to 60), for the best hours of the day (08:00 to 17:00) and on the best days of the week (Monday to Friday)?”

This sparked a journey of thought for Gavin where he realised that separating work from one’s life and trying to box it into certain hours of the day and certain days of the week, wearing certain clothes and sitting in traffic, was merely what society expects of us. Little did he dream that in two years time he would have stepped out the box completely.

The opportunity came quite unexpectedly at the age of 24 and during the second year of his articles at KPMG in 2005. Gavin had an idea which had ignited literally through light conversation over a braai. It led to starting a business with his dad and older brother – a genuine start-up from scratch. A mere year later he was able to move straight from articles into full-time employment with the business they had started.

Now, with Gavin at the age of 33, the company has more than 370 employees and a portfolio value in excess of R1,5 billion and is well on its way to meeting its target of being a R2 billion, 40-property portfolio by 2015.

“When I think back to when I was 24 and what I set out to achieve I shudder at the thought. I think in part it was because I was so young and just didn’t have anything to fear.

“One of the best business lessons that I learnt right at the start of our venture is that while business is business and it is inherently tough, there is never ever an excuse for someone to raise their voice and/or treat anyone with disrespect. It’s just not needed – ever.”

Gavin loves spending time with his wife, Leanne, and their two baby boys in the outdoors, whether it’s mountain walking, taking the boat out at the Breede River, or skiing in Europe. He also plays cricket, runs, surfs, and plays golf.

“I’m really enjoying the adventure that I’m on – I love what I do and I love my life. It really isn’t about crossing a finishing line for me, it’s about the journey. Clichéd for sure, but it’s the truth.”

**WIKUS LATEGAN****Financial Director of Calgro M3**

Wikus started working for SG Frankel Pollack Stockbrokers to help pay for his studies. Unfortunately, as a result of him focusing way too much time on sport and “building relationships”, he failed his second year and then pleaded with the student dean to be allowed back into the university.

“This gave me a hard reality check and from then on I studied much harder and focused less on my ‘sporting career’.”

Wikus completed his degree and started his articles at the then Moores Rowland – now Mazars – studying part time for his honours/CTA, which he passed first time round.

“I realised that one must never stop striving to achieve one’s goals, and although I had to write QE1 and 2 each three times, I eventually passed.”

Today Wikus is one of the youngest FDs on a listed company. He has been instrumental in restructuring and growing Calgro M3 from a R30 million company to a R1 billion company since he joined as financial director in 2008, as well as restructuring and growing Calgro M3’s JSE Main Board listing in 2012.

“I believe that the best way to overcome any challenge is to forget that it’s a challenge, take it in your stride and get the job done. The best way to get through a difficult challenge is to identify what worse could have happened and then the challenge on hand is not insurmountable.”

The single greatest lesson Wikus has learned is to be trustworthy and streetwise, and to respect and treat all people equally. He adds: “Be up to date with what is going on in your specific sector and in the financial and capital markets. Always make sure you are on top of your game.”