

Alexandra Miszewski's bold vision for business

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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A young Cape Town entrepreneur is making waves in the world of business both locally and internationally. At just 22-years-old, Alexandra Miszewski, a student at UCT Graduate School of Business, runs businesses with the goal to make the world a better place for pets, people and animals as well as affordable health care.



Alexandra Miszewski

■ ***You're the founder and managing director of Novita Biotechnology. Tell us more about your role here***

Although my role as a founder is still very broad, I am lucky to be able to spend more time on my strengths now that our team is growing. In addition to working closely with many of our clients and stakeholders on a daily basis, a large part of my role entails working with various regulatory consultants to ensure that Novita is compliant with the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) requirements.

In addition to this, I spend a lot of time working with our R&D team on improving our current offerings and developing new ones.

■ ***When, how and why did you get started?***

All the companies I have been involved in have usually started not with the intention of necessarily becoming businesses but through me trying to solve problems I was experiencing in my personal life. Specifically, relating to the affordability and accessibility of niche healthcare products that I was needing for an injured horse of mine. As time went on, I realised many of these challenges weren't unique to me, so decided to try create a solution to minimize the number of people who came after me who were faced with the same problem.

Novita however was somewhat different. 2019 was a tough year for me personally with losing one of my horses on the operating table, a friend of mine being murdered and my best friend committing suicide, all in the space of six months.

At this stage I was in the fortunate position that my other two businesses were doing well, but helping people that had what are typically considered “privileged problems” wasn’t enough for me anymore. And with that, in February 2020, Novita was born with a unique business model of hope.

“ Novita is a vehicle for creating hope, and it achieves this through the sale of affordable niche healthcare products in the Orthopaedic, Aesthetic, Veterinary and Ophthalmology spheres. Around 30% of our profits are directed towards social initiatives for people, pets and the planet – my own take on the triple bottom line. ”

Through this, not only are those who need these niche healthcare products the most, able to access and afford them, but many people and animals that would never normally be able to benefit from such products are able to do so.

■ As you said, Novita isn't the only business you run, tell us more?

My entrepreneurial journey first started when I was 17 with a business called Equinetendon.com. At that stage, the company was a startup with a small client base, but has subsequently grown to a much larger company with a multi-national presence. My involvement in Equinetendon has always stemmed from the ability of the technology to do good and to reduce the number of soft-tissue injury-related euthanasia's in horses.

The second business I run is Regenesi Vet which has developed the world's first and only commercially available systemic regenerative treatment through a unique system of processing horses own blood. The technology essentially enables us to isolate and harvest a cascade of growth factors from the horses' blood in order to extract the components of the blood that have healing properties.

In doing so, we are able to extract a serum that is rich in the targeted healing factors. This can then be injected back into the horse or frozen and stored for later use. Unlike blood-doping, the Regenesi System does not influence or increase the level of oxygenated blood to enhance athletic performance. Rather, it works over a much longer period of time to drastically improve the body's ability to heal itself naturally.

I am incredibly grateful to have leading biomedical scientist Dr Judey Pretorius (PhD Pharmaceutical Chemistry) involved as our Head of Research at Regenesi who is helping us constantly improve the system. Dr Judey and I have recently started a separate company, BiologiXX Therapeutics, which will be further developing and adapting the technology for use in the Private Healthcare sector.

■ How do you keep a balance of running these businesses?

Definitely with difficulty! To be honest, keeping a balance is something I still struggle with at times, but I think that is unfortunately the reality of entrepreneurship (at least in the early days). I believe the key to having as much balance as possible is setting firm boundaries in order to get some down time. Having said this, I am incredibly grateful to be doing what I love, so a lot of the work we do doesn't actually feel like work. I am also very fortunate to have a team alongside me that shares the same vision and is equally as passionate about what we do!

■ As a young female entrepreneur, have you faced any challenges in the industry? If so, how did you overcome them?

Although I do believe we have made huge advances in gender equality, I still often find myself in situations where I have to work twice as hard or achieve twice as much to be given the same level of respect that many of my male counterparts are given from the outset. I do also think this is partly related to the industry that I am in which is predominately large-corporate and male-dominated. Additionally, there have also been instances where males have tried to attack my credibility because I am young and a female.

In terms of overcoming the abovementioned challenges, I believe a lot of it has come down to consistently delivering a quality product and/or service that ultimately speaks for itself.

■ **What can governments do to help drive female leadership in South Africa?**

There are so many incredible organisations, foundations and resources out there that exist to help and support female leaders and entrepreneurs that many do not know about.

“ From this point of view, I feel governments could do a better job and directing people to these places and raising awareness around how these resources can be accessed. ”

Additionally, I believe that governments can increase the amount of capital and resources allocated towards female entrepreneurs and the development of female leaders. This can also be done through organisations with a proven track record of developing necessary leadership skills in women.

■ **How do you think South Africa can help in the fight against GBV?**

I do believe we have made progress from a legislation point of view, but I do think more needs to be done around the implementation of legislation that currently exists. I believe a lot of it comes down to education and accountability. Communities need to hold each other accountable for GBV against women and we definitely need more support for victims of GBV.

“ GBV needs to be something that everyone is talking about, we need to speak up and raise awareness. We need to call it out, especially where it might just have been something subtle, that way we can let those who perpetrate GBV know that it will not be stood for under any circumstances. ”

Most importantly, we need to show more help, support and acceptance of GBV victims, they have done NOTHING wrong.

■ **What advice do you have to share with the future generation of businesswomen?**

The best advice I could give a young person wanting to start their own business is to first identify a problem that resonates with them and then to just start doing something about it. I strongly believe that if one takes imperfect messy steps toward their vision you are a few hundred steps ahead of everyone else who has brilliant ideas but never takes that first step towards where they eventually want to be.

Adding to the above, I think it is so important to be working towards something that one feels passionate about. I have found entrepreneurship to come with unbelievable highs and extreme lows – so having an overarching purpose and vision that both you and your team are incredibly passionate about makes it so much easier to get out of bed in the morning and keep pushing forward, especially when times are tough.

Lastly, be unrealistic in your goals, but practical in your approach. Dream big, fight for your seat at the table and turn your pain into purpose.

■ **As we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa. Do you have any words of encouragement for all the women out there?**

Turn your pain into purpose, stay humble and always be kind.

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