

## **Transcript for Group B: Interview 8**

**Interviewer:** [...] All right, so I'll try not to be long. So my research is basically based on micro credentials. That is what I'm looking into. You know, micro credentials sort of micro qualifications, short courses that people are doing these days. So what I'm trying to show is that entrepreneurs can use these micro credentials or micro qualifications to upskill themselves. Because a lot of research, I mean, they're pointing out that a lot of businesses are failing and things like that, especially in South Africa and one of the key reasons is lack of skills, right.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So how do we improve?

**Interviewee:** Somebody who's not formally educated. Now because of you know apartheid, there's a narrative and it's unfortunate, without going into it too deeply. Yeah, there's a narrative, unfortunately, in countries like South. Africa, where everything is somebody else's fault because of the past, we can't eradicate what happened in the past. Yeah, but what happened in the past? And I was part of it, my parents could never afford to educate me and I was so desperate to earn a living and get ahead that I went out to work and although I did certain training eventually with the companies that I managed to grow within a short time, it was just huge amounts of tenacity and sticking with it.

But what I gained on the job versus what I learned out of the textbook. It's all been well and good to have it on paper and I remember. One very quick example, just to sort of amplify what I mean. When I was the marketing director of a big record company, I had big promotions and a marketing team. I had probably 300 people reporting to me at one point, we were a big business. Then certain people in the company started saying you need to bring somebody in with an MBA. Which I did. Theoretical people but understood nothing about practicalities and it didn't work for the business. So I'm not saying that it's not important to have theoretical knowledge. It's very, very. Important, but the practical side is even more important.

**Interviewer:** The main thing I'm trying to show, I'm actually sort of comparing them to traditional qualifications like your degrees. Like you're saying, that just like an MBA is very broad, very generic, whereas micro credentials are a bit more focused. So you can have a specific you know micro credential in a particular thing. So like a particular skill, they're very like very focused as compared to a general degree or diploma and things like that. So I think it's a good starting point if you need a certain skill as an entrepreneur.

**Interviewee:** Totally agree with you.

**Interviewer:** So I have a few questions, so there's no right or wrong answer. So whatever you think is good and it's correct.

**Interviewee:** I'll give it my best, though my attention span is very short.

**Interviewer:** Not a problem. All right, so talking of micro credentials, we know they are typically offered online now, especially post covid, you know, a lot of things are happening online. You can still go to a class and take your short course. But I think people probably prefer to do it remotely and online. The first question I have here is what are the technological skills that you think that an entrepreneur will need to acquire?

**Interviewee:** Technical skills, I think. If you've got a basic understanding of Microsoft, or of the equivalent on Apple, you know, maybe a little understanding of things like Excel. You know or putting things into a structure and so on. Obviously a decent computer.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, then the next question I have is how much effort do you think it takes to complete a micro credential program? How much effort, time and do you think?

**Interviewee:** First of all, with your research, in other words, look into what interests you. Knowing exactly where you are, so you're setting yourself a goal, let's say six months. Turning in on that area and you know, sticking to it, so doing your research around it so that you're prepared once you know what it is that you're aiming towards. So start with the end goal in mind I. Don't think it's too much effort.

**Interviewee:** A single household might be looking after siblings that are young. It's a very challenging situation in South Africa. To give you another just to sort of back up what I'm saying, I went to Business School seven or eight years ago, one of the lecturers said people that really don't have a reliable transport system, how are they expected to get out and look for a job. Can the person be distributed from point A to point B? How much time does a person have in a day because of all those encumbrances and frustrations and challenges they've got to deal with? So that for me, I would think is to align yourself to something that you have a passion for and be realistic in your outlook. I think if you're motivated by a passion. It's more achievable.

**Interviewer:** That is a good point.

**Interviewee:** Use the Internet and what have you, put together what you believe to be achievable and set a goal for yourself. Then it should be fairly simple.

**Interviewer:** Right, very valid points. Thank you very much. Then the other question we have here is what are the facilitating conditions that you need to acquire micro credentials? And by that I mean like things that you need right in order to be able to successfully complete your program. Time obviously, that's one thing you definitely need, if you're doing it online, you need Internet connection. You need a gadget, laptop, things like that. Are there any other things that you say one would need?

**Interviewee:** I think it's all about by your passion, doing a little bit of research and so on beforehand, talking to many people as you can. Those are the key things you know. I've always said to my kids, and I'm sure I've said the same thing to anybody else who listen, If you've got a passion, if you do something that you love you will succeed.

**Interviewer:** Hmm, that is so powerful. Right then the next one we have here is how easy do you think it is to access these micro credential programs?

**Interviewee:** I kind of anticipated that question, I thought to myself, I. Wonder what it is you're going to ask me and the immediate thing that comes to mind, to me, is if you have reasonable speed broadband and access to the tools that you need, like a computer or a smartphone. You don't necessarily need to be going to a big learning institution. Let's say for example, you don't really have the funds to you know go and pay for that type of thing, there's nothing stopping you going on to Apple tutorial or something like Udemy which is not expensive or bridging courses and learn a lot [...]

Micro credentials are very focused. You can know too much to everything. In other words, general understanding of everything but master of nothing. You have to focus and that goes back to your passion. You've got to be flexible.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much. Then how do you think acquiring micro credentials contributes to an entrepreneur's skills?

**Interviewee:** It gives you a base of knowledge and it opens your mind to different approaches and possibly even different ways of doing things. So it's basically empowering yourself with more knowledge and then like I said earlier on, taking that knowledge that you've obtained and learned and showed interest in and applying it practically.

I always say to my sons, it doesn't matter where you are. You can be a young guy in South Africa as a white guy and there's affirmative action. And all these other realities that are there. But once you put your head through the door and show that you're somebody who is interested and loyal and contributing towards the company and you have the right outlook and you're enthusiastic and you've got some skills. A door eventually is going to open for you. That's always been my belief. Learn as much as you can. And then once you get those micro credentials, you're showing companies that you aren't kind of taking a shotgun approach you're taking more of a rifle shot approach.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, man. If you were to enrol in a micro credential program for example, how would you decide which micro credential program to choose?

**Interviewee:** Well, first of all, I'd look at what it is I want to do. Then say to myself how realistic am I being? What sort of demand is there in the market for that type of thing? If there is no demand. How can I create demand and what is doing to be required to get a

level of demand for what it is that I'm trying to offer the market. Based on those core things, I then decide on what course it is that I want to do.

**Interviewer:** OK, that's great. Thank you so much. Then the next question we have here is how much flexibility do you think macro credentials allow a person in comparison to a traditional qualification?

**Interviewee:** I think a lot more. Because if it's a short course, it's a shorter space of time.

**Interviewer:** Great. Thank you. Would you say micro credentials are credible as traditional qualifications?

**Interviewee:** I think they certainly can be. I mean, if you're studying by yourself and you're doing a tutorial, you can learn a lot. There should be credibility and there's more credibility attached obviously to an institution providing that micro credential.

I'll say to people well I did that advanced management diploma at UCT there was a lot of times where I questioned the lecturers because I was talking literally from a point of experience and they were teaching theoretically from a textbook, and I went to ask these guys, they've never been project managers. They're theoretical people. So it's a fine balance. You know, for me, an entrepreneur is somebody that wants a wide base of knowledge and be able to learn them.

**Interviewer:** I absolutely agree with that. Alright then the last question I had, just a fun question. What method of learning do you prefer between game based learning and the traditional setup where you sit in a classroom you know? You have a game. Game based. There's a concept of gamification through games, actually. So it's very visual than the concepts you learn you know in the classroom, you learn them in a game instead.

**Interviewee:** That's something to think about. One thing I do agree with, and I suppose it's aligned, is, some people are more left brained, some are more right brained. Some people are more technically inclined, some people are more academically inclined, some people are more patient, some people are less patient, some are less aggressive, more aggressive. In other words, a guy that can go boxing and play rugby is a guy who likes high energy. Yeah, a guy that does chess is somebody who's more ethereal. I like it. Having said all of that, I do believe that pictures are a really good way to get something across and some people will grasp it in graphic form better than trying to go through tons and tons of literature. People with dyslexia, for example. You know, so I think it's got its real merits my only concern is when it turns into a game. We've got huge issues around the world now with mental health.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Interviewee:** Lady, during COVID people were locked up, glued to their TV screens, glued to the phones and one of the reasons that companies are now offering distance learning or are allowed to work in a hybrid way from home, where it's more comfortable as you say, and convenient. It's because they've been exposed that they have the technology and ability all along for people to carry on. But it's had an adverse effect, where too much time in front of that blue screen is affecting people. So I think in other words, to answer your question, I would say if there's a hybrid of the so called game learning.

And going back to what I said earlier regarding the physical routine getting dressed, having the breakfast sitting behind your computer three days a week, going to the office I think is important as well.

**Interviewer:** That's a very good point. So you're saying. You prefer a hybrid, so a combination of the game based and the traditional setup.

**Interviewee:** From a mental health perspective, physical activity is important because physical activity affects the way the brain works. And you get to also with the traditional setup, you get to meet other people, which is very important for mental health, instead of just being alone the whole time.

Clever people in my lifetime not necessarily academic at all, just really clever people. But they can't work out of a textbook and stuff, they've got dyslexia. They've got some sort of other disorder, you know? So I think gamification is a very good idea in some respects.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Alright. Thank you so much. That is very, very insightful.

**Interviewee:** I hope I helped you a little bit.

**Interviewer:** You did a lot actually. Do you have any last comments that you have on micro credentials?

**Interviewee:** I'll tell you what there is in South Africa. If you're a non-white and I don't mean to say this and I know it's kind of sensitive you know, there is huge opportunity for you. Anybody who has at this point in the country's history, yes, there are massive challenges but there are so many opportunities for people to grow.

If there's one thing that I learned in the music business early on when I was running international labels for three years. They would put out a big record. Particular or peculiar today market and say we're having a big hit. We want you to promote it. So a very kind of Eurocentric approach or American approach, right? We are smaller markets and I say to myself, Australia, New Zealand started to punch well above our weight, next thing England, which is their main market saying wow, we're selling more records in South Africa than we're selling in England. Maybe we need to be looking at those smaller markets collectively and one of the important aspects of artists like that was they went

so big was because they appealed to the mass market. Look what's happening with amapiono. You know, so I think if somebody has got a bit of flair. Most importantly, they've got passion and enthusiasm [...]

If you don't have basic structures in place. It's very difficult to control the growth. If you mess it up and overspend and make irrational decisions, for example, because you're tired and exhausted because you didn't put systems in place. And that's all the things I've learned. The most important thing that drives it is that have you researched it?

**Interviewer:** Wow, very insightful. Thank you so much. I've actually learned so much from this discussion that we've had. So thank you so much.

**Interviewee:** [...] So I'll tell you what. If I were you, Sharon, as a so-called marketer and entrepreneur, whatever you want to call me, I would put my idea of spreading micro-credentials into a concise manner which you'll be able to do as somebody at your level and register that brand name and go and find a company that might help. You just need to find one company that has a sense of public responsibility that might want to jump onto this. Take the concept and they perfect it, in your instance you want to be the Udemy of short courses [...].

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for your time, this has been very insightful.