

Holistic entrepreneurship tips from Jodene Shaer

 By Leigh Andrews

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She believes in the power of the digital detox and has tattoos of her life motto ('chop wood, carry water') and her spirit animals the wolf and dragon on her inner arms to remind her to be brave and true. Here's how Jodene Shaer, co-owner of Lifeology and Chat Factory, lives life as a holistic entrepreneur and why she followed this not-easy path.

Shaer has been on quite the transformational journey since I [last interviewed her](#) almost two years ago.

But we first met long before that, when Shaer was blogging daily and celebrating her 500th blog post on 'Project Me', and her career had already been almost two decades in the making, with an interesting start, because she scraped through school as she didn't get the point of what she was studying, so people didn't think she'd amount to much. She flourished at secretarial college though, ending the year third top in the class with a secure secretarial position at a division of the head office, but it took her less than six months to realise the corporate world was not for her, and that she was born for entrepreneurship.



Shaer taking a break.

Not having much direction at the time though, she started working in the back office of her mother's beauty college. She was young, sociable and, having loved the business side she learned in college, started helping the students with their business management studies during lunch and tea breaks. In what she calls a 'college coup', those students convinced her mother to fire their current teacher and so her teaching career began. She studied the 'Train the trainer' course, which qualified her to teach a skill she already had and ended up setting and marking exams for the national industry body of health and skincare. She went on to become deputy principal of the college, studying elements of beauty and healthcare so she could advance her teaching, but within five years knew it simply wasn't what she wanted to do with the rest of her life.

So, not wanting to disappoint her family, she continued on and split her time between the college and a wellness spa she co-owned with a fellow teacher. The spa boomed in popularity, even winning the 'Best of Joburg' award, but she still wasn't happy. So she studied further, going into the holistic side of the therapies, hoping to find happiness there. Instead she decided to settle into her reality and be grateful she had a business at all, but *The Holistic Entrepreneur* emerged as she consciously chose defeat and settling. Then, on 1 August 2004, Shaer's business burned down. Nothing was the same again, and through the holistic elements she introduced into her life, she knew she had to begin her true pursuit of happiness. She didn't change much, and tried to find happy mediums within the same career, so let go of her role in the college and opened a recruitment agency for the industry, soon contracting for an international cruise line company, which gave her incredible insight into the fierceness of business abroad. Eventually, money was the indicator that she wasn't being true to herself, and both the spa and recruitment agency were drowning in debt. Shaer took risks in trying to feel her way to happiness, and finally knew that the combination of teaching and the holistic journey she was on was how she wanted to make a living. So, she sold herself out of the partnerships by settling her side of the debt and founded Lifeology with her current business partner, Greg Arthur, in 2009. To this day, people still marvel at the way they approach their business, how they make money and continue to grow and succeed. Chat Factory is their second business – a social online agency focusing on the 'social' of media.



Shaer with team ChatFactory.

Shaer's current roles include #GirlBoss to two incredibly committed employees of Chat Factory, because they've opted to have an 'office anywhere' policy. Both businesses operate from wherever life takes them, and the team were selected on the basis of being personally driven to succeed. Without a deadline ever being missed, all work from where's most productive and fun. Within Lifeology, Shaer's current role is a new author of the book *The Holistic Entrepreneur*. Shaer has been blogging her Project Me story for almost seven years now and continues to share the fundamental teachings of Lifeology – living with courage, consciousness and a sense of humour – through her writing, coaching and speaking. Shaer is also about to embark on her first full online Project Me course, launching in January 2017, and within Chat Factory, continues as head strategist for all social media clients, specialising in social media influencer marketing. Chat Factory has also launched #SocialSalad, where social media services are made affordable for anyone's budget. Shaer's passion lies in socialising events, exhibitions and brands in the online space, and she's known for creating and driving hashtag campaigns online. She's also a speaker in the arena of the importance and best practice of community management, where she believes there's a significant lack of focus.

Here, she talks us through the qualities that make a good entrepreneur and her favourite lesson learned in her personal journey as an entrepreneur...

1. Talk us through the importance of entrepreneurship, particularly in SA.

Shaer: Although I am not new to entrepreneurship, with over twenty years of creating my own careers and opportunities, I believe the options of entrepreneurship are the golden key. We are ever-evolving and although some people's personalities

suit the stability of the corporate world, many desire the freedom that can only be found through entrepreneurship. From travelling the world, I always return home with the gratitude that it truly is possible to make entrepreneurship a reality in South Africa.

The world is evolving into more of an “anything is possible” place, with people choosing their own service offering and making up their roles and titles. We will always need the traditional services of those who study some of the oldest trades, but even they are pioneering entrepreneurs because of the freedom it provides to explore our limitless potential. Entrepreneurship is vital for the pace at which the dynamic of money and the world is changing.

As a South African, with many potential obstacles in the way, I believe it is vitally empowering for as many entrepreneurially spirited individuals to rise up and prove to ourselves and the world that we have the potential to succeed with integrity and creative thinking. The essence of entrepreneurship is in going to market knowing you have something unique to offer and finding any means (within integrity and by fair play, of course) to make money and live off your life passion and purpose. As South Africans, we have an incredible tenacity and can figure our way through anything. We have a fighting spirit, which is ideal for the making of great entrepreneurs. The more there are of us, the greater we become as a force who stand together, forgetting all the surrounding issues, and therein helping South Africa rise to a force to be reckoned with in the world. Entrepreneurship has no age restriction and we have the potential to show our youth that they don't need to rely on any infrastructure and have the ability to make money in a socially acceptable way. We need to guide them in the thought pattern that ‘less is more’ and having the imagination and network to make small pockets of money is the healthiest, most honest and sustainable ways to provide for themselves and everyone around them. That's all everyone is truly trying to do.

2. List a few qualities of a good entrepreneur.

Shaer: As a holistic entrepreneur, with the focus on putting your self-worth before your net-worth, I believe the qualities lie in a steadfast and strong relationship with self. Being an entrepreneur is grueling on one's self-esteem and far too much of the guidance is focused on pushing harder and tirelessly giving up everything to achieve success. The most important qualities of an entrepreneur is knowing how to take care of yourself, which in-turn ensures you take care of your clients and growing team, too. One needs the qualities of self-respect, in not berating ourselves when things don't work out, and balance, in not neglecting our health and happiness during financially hard times. With more entrepreneurs emerging on a daily basis and the opportunity to offer something truly unique being a daily challenge, it's vital to have the qualities of going with the flow, working from ease, harnessing imagination, flexibility and mastering the ability to feel the fear but do it anyway. Where I thought I would be as an entrepreneur and where I am, are two completely different places and I weigh my happiness and success on these qualities. Entrepreneurs have to believe in their vision, especially because of the number of people who are not brave enough to take the steps and will question yours. Don't listen to anyone but yourself, but you cannot do that unless you harness your relationship with you. Blood, sweat and tears is not for everyone, but living a happy and fulfilled life is. I have proven time and again that money is a reflection on how you treat yourself and your business because it is purely energy. Its history started with energy exchange and although it evolved into something tangible, the essence is still the same. Everyone banters the word ‘passion’ around, but at the end of the day, it's always about the money. It's the challenge of every entrepreneur to figure the way to make money from passion, which is far beyond thinking we can wake up each day and do what we love. The passion is the golden thread running through your connection to everything, from your daily tasks and money to your clients, your vision, your time and your world outside of entrepreneurship.

3. Share your favourite lesson learned in your personal journey as an entrepreneur.

Shaer: It's one I still have to convince myself of when a client resigns or the direction of my business begins to shift. I have two failed and now two successful businesses, and through the ones that didn't work and the ones that did, the lesson has become clearer over time: You don't need a plan or a goal or to find success. Well, you do need a goal, but it should be happiness. It's been a challenging message for me to impart on entrepreneurs, because every form of self-help or business guidance begins with the goal and forces the plan. However, when you sit around a dinner table and sincerely ask people if they know what they truly want or the direction they should be moving in, less people have the answers than imaginable. I

had goals and plans, because I read dozens of books when I began my entrepreneurial journey. Honestly, had I stuck to them, I would be the most miserable person today. I would not be in the proud position to be sharing my knowledge with you and I would most probably still be fumbling around unsuccessful business opportunities.

Life is unexpected, and just like the corporate world works for some, forging ahead with one particular goal or a set plan may work for some, but I very much doubt it works for many entrepreneurs. We are the captains of our own ships and all the growth, lessons and uniqueness is not lying in the rationally set-out plan, that's for the corporate world. For us, our true journey of success is in setting our compass to happiness, tossing the plans out the window and feeling our way through our unique entrepreneurial path.

4. Elaborate on the double-edged sword or starting a business as a female in SA.

Shaer: I always tentatively respond to this question, because although the obstacles are real for female entrepreneurs in South Africa, I also believe each of us has the opportunity to rise above them. We have to put them down first, though. It hasn't always been easy and I was once referred to as 'the tea lady' in a boardroom full of corporate males, while trying to sell my social media services. Each day I'm not given equal opportunity or when I forge my way through the obstacles I remind myself that I'm still here, but the business that did that to me is no longer in operation. I believe it's a privilege to be born into our race, gender and time and because of that, I see the obstacles as opportunities. You'll never see me fight – the word doesn't even come into my vocabulary, because I don't believe we need to use our energy to fight for anything. We have much better use for that energy and I believe harnessing it into self-confidence, assertiveness and graceful leadership is where we, as females and entrepreneurs, get to put the swords down. Within this year I have been discriminated against and lost income because of it. I don't turn a blind eye to the challenges and obstacles and I find myself fearful and disheartened on many occasion along my entrepreneurial journey, but it doesn't stop me and I don't take my eye off my vision. As we say, the struggle is real, but so is the inner warrior each one of us is born with. That's the true gift we, as women, are born with.

Entrepreneurial inspiration at its best. Follow Shaer on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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