

How, with TLC, Wendy Nwankwo found success in The Living Collective

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Wendy Nwankwo is the founder of [The Living Collective](#), a full-service self-catering accommodation rental company with properties in KwaZulu-Natal. While facing various challenges in her entrepreneurial journey, Nwankwo's perseverance, wit, hard work and ability to recognise opportunities has seen her attain success, but she admits that it didn't all happen overnight.

"It's important to be patient with yourself and growth as an entrepreneur. Success doesn't come overnight. I feel it's also important for businesswomen to pave the way for others to participate in industries or spaces that are male-dominated. Know that you will fail but don't be discouraged. Get up and start again," she says.

The Living Collective has properties in The Gates in Hilton as well as 24 apartments in Pietermaritzburg which mostly cater to professionals.

We chatted to Nwankwo to find out more about her startup story, how her business has been affected by Covid-19, and some the most important lessons she's learnt as an entrepreneur.

📌 *Share with us your startup story.*

The idea to start the company came when my family and I were faced with a unique dilemma of relocating from Durban to Pietermaritzburg. The house we were building in Pietermaritzburg was still under construction and we had already sold the property in Durban.

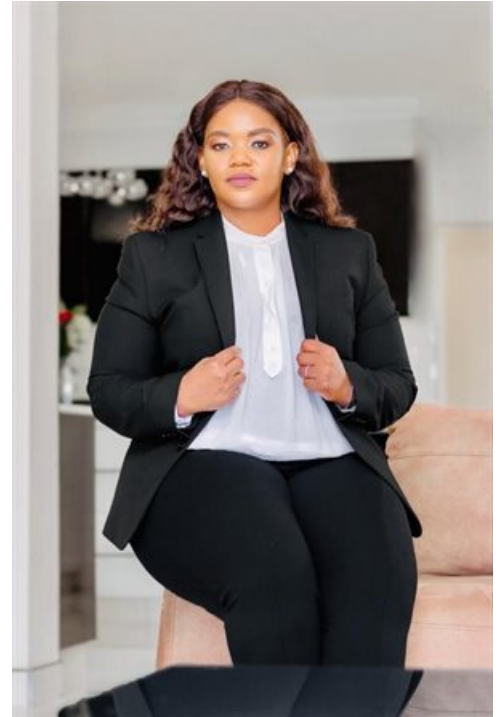
We faced several challenges trying to find alternative accommodation in the Pietermaritzburg area that could cater to their short-term lease needs and was fully furnished. This presented the perfect opportunity to bridge the gap in the market by providing a hotel alternative with the same standards and luxury, but with space and the comfort of a home at a fraction of the costs.

📌 *Tell us more about The Living Collective - what's your business about?*

The Living Collective is full service self-catering accommodation rental company offering guests the option of short- or long-stay accommodation, furnished or unfurnished apartments, with the added value of an in-house car rental service.

As The Living Collective's abbreviation implies, we do things with tender loving care, kindness, and careful attention to detail. Our collection of homes and apartment options has been sensibly designed to provide guests with the perfect combination of convenience and luxury; enjoy the comfort of a home with the luxuries of a hotel.

Our service offering caters for clients looking for short- to medium-term leases, allowing guests to have a sense of property ownership without the financial burden that goes with it. Whether you're looking for a sophisticated lifestyle in the countryside or cultured urban living.



Property entrepreneur Wendy Nwankwo, founder of The Living Collective



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How has the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic affected your business?

Like any other company in the hospitality industry, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the operations of the business. We have had to adapt and look at other innovative ways to stay afloat. Instead of focusing on leisure travel, we focused more on corporate clients and attracted people to stay longer by having more favourable deals for longer stays.

Have you always had a passion for property - was this space your goal while attaining your MBA?

I've always loved the idea of owning a business and really being responsible for how my day is spent, however property was not always on my mind, but I think it basically found me.

“ When I started with a few investments in this sector, the idea was not to open a property business but the experience gave birth to the idea and I ran with it and never looked back. ”



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What do you love most about what you do?

I get to interact with people and design how these properties will look. These two are my passion and I'm super excited to get to do these on a daily basis. If you love what you do, you never have to work a day in your life.

What are some of the most important lessons that you've learnt as an entrepreneur so far?

I have learned that being an entrepreneur is not glamorous at all. You always have to put the business first and ensure that you invest back into it in order for it to grow. You must be willing to listen to your customers and understand that feedback is important for the growth of the business.

I've also learned that you must be able to practice fluidity in your business and be willing to change direction and adapt.

“ You must always look for innovative ways to improve your business in order to stay ahead in the game. ”



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The property sector still has a long way to go in terms of transformation - what are your thoughts on the progress the sector has made thus far?

Property plays a significant role in people's lives. Not only is it a basic human right to have shelter, but it can also be an asset that assists in wealth creation. Reports and studies have shown that more needs to be done in transforming this sector.

For me, transformation means a change in the racial and gender composition of property ownership, control and

management and to enhance the participation of Black people and more specially women in the SA property sector. More needs to be done in improving access to finance for property ownership and development, and to promote employment equity in the sector. The financial institutions need to do more in opening more doors for disadvantaged groups.

“ We have more people landing finance to purchase cars but as soon as you are looking for a bond, it's a whole different ballgame and that really needs to change. ”



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What would you like to see change in the South African entrepreneurship landscape?

We have a lot of policies that are meant to support entrepreneurs in South Africa. More effort has been placed into creating a conducive ecosystem for entrepreneurs to thrive. However, the reality is many entrepreneurs remain challenged by barriers to entry.

Courses alone cannot assist people to become more sustainable in business. Mentoring and coaching by people who have experience and have gone through the journey will go a long way. Simplifying the process of accessing government assistance will ensure that more small businesses are able to benefit from those programmes.

What does the future hold for The Living Collective?

Growth. I would like to carry on with the concept and have representation in the key targeted areas of South Africa.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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