

Powerhouse



Julia Fourie is the CEO of HBD ("Here Be Dragons") Venture Capital, the company founded by Mark Shuttleworth which has invested just under \$120 million since 2006 and still actively manages those investments. She's also a mother of two with a passion for IT and an awareness of the value of communication at all levels of business

WRITTEN BY CARA BOWMER





CAREER TIMELINE

1973: Born in Cape Town on 28 October to Colin and Judith Hooker – “and yes, that was a rather challenging name to grow up with!” She was raised in SA, but spent some of her pre-school years in the UK. “I have two half-sisters who live there, Jackie and Cathy.”

1999: Earlier in her career she worked as Bookkeeper/Office Administrator at Triple H Hotels, Bookkeeper at Vernon Swemmer & Co and HR Administrator at B&E.

1998: Worked with Mark Shuttleworth at his digital certification company, Thawte Consulting, where she rose to the position of Head of Development. She was with Thawte when the company was sold to VeriSign in 1999.



When did you discover your passion for IT?
 At an early age – before computers had hard drives and we all used floppy disks. It was quite logical to choose to follow this route when deciding what to study. My mom

What aspect of HBD's ethos is the most
 actually wanted me to become a chartered accountant, but that prospect didn't excite me at all. So I worked for a few years, but spent that period thinking about what to commit to in the future.

HBD's acclaimed for unearthing and
 The nature of our company is really expressed in the name “Here Be Dragons”: we explore uncharted territories. We're all about investigating new possibilities.





My ability to bring the team together and help them perform to their full potential. How do you juggle motherhood with your high-paced career?

Alex got very upset with me. She said she didn't understand why my job was more important to me than she was and pointed out that when it was school holidays, I'd still go to work. I then realised that she didn't understand how leave was structured. Once I'd explained it to her, she felt less hurt. Having children is wonderful, but they do miss out on one-to-one time with me, so I have regular lunches with each of them. It's a great opportunity to sit and catch up with them. Robin even dresses up specially for our "dates"!

What's your life philosophy?
To achieve a state of true awareness, which enables one to make the choices that best reflect one's values. Life's all about balance: it's not good to take anything to extremes.

FOURIE'S MENTORSHIP MANTRAS

- Always communicate clearly – especially changes.
- Treat everyone equally.
- Don't procrastinate. **D**

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2007: Obtained an Honours degree in financial analysis and portfolio management from the University of Cape Town.

2006: Promoted to CEO of HBD Venture Capital. She's also a Trustee of the Shuttleworth Foundation, an NPO that supports innovation in education, and is a Director of BSquare Communications.

investing in exceptional early-stage local businesses such as Moyo, Csense and OrderTalk. What elements need to be in place to ensure a business makes it to the next level?

It should always start with the leader, the team and the vision and values. Growing a business can be very stressful, as you have to make many first-time decisions. Who should you hire? When will you find time to integrate that person into the team? Vision and values are especially important when everything's moving fast around you. Many times you end up expanding and then contracting. You end up being successful when the contraction's less than the expansion.

What are the common misconceptions about venture capital?

Firstly, the structuring of the capital: most people think of it as a kind of bank loan, but it isn't. Then understanding the partnership with the venture capital company; again, many people think of us as a bank, but a bank doesn't get involved

LEARNING CURVE MOMENT

Julia Fourie recalls a formative experience in her career

"There have been many different challenges I've experienced and the wisdom they've taught tends to be the same. For instance, if someone lets you down by not finishing a task on time or a deal falls through due to negotiations falling, both those incidents are about people, the relationship and the task. You always need to be clear in your expectations, understand the risk you're taking and manage the outcome, while building the relationship."

2004: Completed her B Tech in Information technology.



2000: She was part of the team that set up HBD Venture Capital, playing a key role in the investment team of HBD's first venture capital fund, HBD Fund1.