

Rags-to-riches: the journey of Penny Streeter (1/2)

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Entrepreneur, Penny Streeter, seems to have an uncanny knack of turning bad situations into gold. Her nursing recruitment business has made her one of the wealthiest women in Britain, and her foray into the South African hospitality and wine market is set to soar.

Like any good rags-to-riches story it needs to start with a...

Once upon a time

A beauty therapist walked into a recruitment agency looking to change her career. As luck would have it - or karma or whatever you want to call it - the agency was looking for someone to join them, which is what Streeter did.



Penny Streeter

Fast forward to a few years later. Streeter is made redundant, so she and her mother decide to go it alone and set up their own recruitment business. But then the spectacular UK property crash in the latter part of the last century wipes out her business, leaving her a broke single mom of three living in homeless accommodation.

When she recalls that time of her life the distress is still plainly etched on her face.

The light bulb moment

Funded by the money she and her mother make from a mobile children's disco and working from a borrowed corner of a friend's workshop, Streeter decides to give it another bash.

It is a late-night phone call from a care facility looking for a nurse that provides the spark to launching her healthcare recruitment empire.

"Most recruitment companies operate from nine to five, but nursing placement should mirror the healthcare industry, which is a 24-hour business. You can order a pizza anytime, but not a nurse," says Streeter.

No looking back

From that point there is no looking back for Streeter and her company, Ambition24hours, and it virtually doubles in size every year from inception, rapidly becoming the largest privately owned nursing agency in the UK.

But it is in the early 2000s that Streeter faces another challenge, staffing data theft threatens her business. So while on holiday in Cape Town, she decides to move the sales operations to South Africa in 2004.

Two years later, she starts up her local operation with the acquisition of Nursing Services of South Africa, a well-established agency that supplies around 3000 temporary nursing staff per month, mostly to government hospitals.

From wards to corks

So how does a recruitment specialist move into the wine and hospitality trade?

By accident...

Part two coming soon!

To story image source: <http://adamastorbacchus.blogspot.co.za>

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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