

## A FRESH NEW START FOR PDM ALUMNUS

The true value of postgraduate study, say many alumni, is the opportunity it gave them to re-think their career paths and explore new options. It also frequently happens that a PDM (postgraduate diploma in management) or an MBA turns out to be the impetus for would-be entrepreneurs to start a new business.

Wits Business School alumnus Vuyisile Zondi is a case in point. For Vuyi, her PDM (which she completed in 2015) was the kick-start she needed to become an entrepreneur. She now balances her time as a management consultant and owner of her own natural skin-care company, [Corium Skincare](#).

“The two years I spent at WBS moulded me into becoming the entrepreneur I am today and enabled me to switch careers,” she says. “I gained a wide bouquet of generalist skills, while working and interacting with different professionals and age-groups. Syndicate work was especially valuable as it taught me how to work with people and being receptive to different viewpoints.”

Vuyi launched her business in April last year with R40 000 from her savings. It took her less than a year to recoup her capital and start operating at a profit. She attributes her success, in part, to interacting with and educating her customers on the benefits of using natural skincare ingredients.

“If Mother Nature didn’t make it, you won’t find it in any of our jars,” she says. “We are all about all-natural, handmade skincare products, focusing on body butters, cleansers and serums.”

The name ‘Corium’, she says, is the Latin word for dermis, the deepest layer of the skin. “The dermis can be translated as the ‘truest skin’ which is the foundation of what we are about: simplicity, purity and credibility.”

With two full-time employees, Vuyi markets her products via social media. She has a Twitter following of more than 10 000 people and is in a partnership with a courier company.

While all Corium’s ingredients and raw products are tested, individually certified and given a batch expiry date, Vuyi is focusing now on becoming Ecocert (organic) accredited, with the Ecocert logo on all her products.

“We would like to start owning and controlling more aspects of our value chain; to expand and gain further market channels and enter into business-to-business selling.”

For now, the balancing act continues for Vuyi and she admits that both jobs leave her short on sleep.

“Each day is different, and I’ve learnt my rhythms as I’ve progressed. It is difficult though, and I mostly dedicated my weekends to working on my enterprise. I think I’m able to cope because I enjoy both ‘careers’ and apply my passion equally.

“The drive to success has always been there... it was the range of business skills (particularly strategy and HR) that I learnt at WBS that provided the impetus.”