

Profiling Inspiration – Rikus Kotze

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I recently noticed the following post on the web: “For 14 years I worked for 7 days a week between 3 restaurants. Dig garbage out of a fat trap to clean it daily. Served thousands of clients with a smile on my face. And I love every second. I love the burn on my feet doing a 12-hour shift. The burn on my hands from the fryer. The complaint from a client that I turn into a regular. I am a restaurateur.... pick someone weaker to fail...because we don't”

These words intrigued me, especially so because of the impact on the restaurant industry due to the coronavirus, economic lock down and alcohol bans, so I sought out the author, Rikus Kotze. Naturally, we met in one of his restaurants, Oppiekoffie, in Tyger Valley mall. To say this man exudes passion for his industry is an understatement.

Rikus' background speaks volumes. After matriculating he initially studied architecture, but the creativity bug had bitten him hard and he pursued a career in art directorship and design. The entrepreneurial bug bit him next, and he learnt many tough and valuable lessons early on while establishing a design agency in 1995. Amongst many other things, this gave him an awareness of the critical importance of customer engagement and service.

Rikus bought his first restaurant in 2009, and the rest, as they say, is history.

As we spoke it became clear he knew the exact cost and origin of every single item, big and small, in their restaurants. They are constantly figuring out how to use their creativity and the resources at their disposal best, and to make plans to adapt to whatever adversity comes their way.

Not only did they adapt quickly to their new reality in 2020, but they also actively sought out opportunities amid chaos in this competitive industry. They have just taken over managing the stunningly beautiful Signal Gun restaurant, situated on the Hoogelegen farm high up in the Durbanville hills.

Rikus impressed me with his wise and clearly articulated attitude to leadership, showcased by this comment *“Don’t ask staff, just do it yourself. Grab a broom, start sweeping, and people will follow”*

Finally, he shared a valuable insight that no sale in the world will outperform a saving. The practical implication is that leaders should be careful not to focus exclusively on growing their way out of trouble.

I expect Rikus and his teams to go from strength to strength in the years to come. I wish for them continued opportunity, growth, and success, and look forward to seeing it unfold.

Our work continues...

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