



#### Vital stats

**Player:** Chris Wilkins  
**Company:** DVT  
**Launched:** 1999  
**Contact:**  
 +27 (0)21 467 5400  
 dvt.co.za

#### TACTICS

## Business visionary

Persistence pays off for software company founder.

A CONCEPTUAL THINKER, Chris Wilkins founded software development company, DVT in 1999 because he was fed up with the arrogance and overpricing he saw in the market.

"People ask how we got the business going, expecting a grand tale, but in fact it was all very tactical. My partner and I financed it ourselves by maxing our bonds and making significant salary sacrifices for a number of years. That's what it's like in the beginning. You invest a little and you get a small return. Then you invest a little more, and the return increases slightly. And so it goes until one day you have a fair-sized business."

Today, DVT has a turnover of R150 million annually, with offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and India. Its range of medium and large clients has one thing in common – their demand for reliable and predictable delivery, an expectation that Wilkins' team has met more than a thousand times.

"We keep our staff happy so that they deliver to clients," he says. "It sounds like a cliché, but paying people well and recognising their achievements is key to business success." He also believes in seeing as many clients as possible every week, employing the best people in the industry, and having a good PR process in place to position the company as a thought leader in its space.

"We are well on our way to becoming one of the top three providers of application software and services in the country. Persistence and perseverance got us here. You have to believe that you can do what you say you can do."

– MONIQUE VERDUYN

#### TIPPING POINT

## Making a clean sweep

An entrepreneur gets her hands dirty building a business with more than R3 million turnover.

**F**ormer SABC3 continuity presenter Mpho Sono is too busy building a cleaning services company to be on TV anymore. She registered TmT Cleaning in 2000, while still working in the entertainment industry.

"I loved my television work, but you can't be young and pretty forever," Sono says. "I needed a new challenge and my dream was to build a legacy. I'd been inspired by many strong women around me who had gone the entrepreneurial route."

Three years ago she quit her job and threw herself full-time into building TmT, which provides contract cleaning services for commercial, industrial and retail companies. She started with one employee and a vacuum cleaner. Despite huge barriers to entry, today she employs 120 permanent staff and has an annual turnover of R3,8 million.

The company has built a reputation for itself and has a string of corporate clients on its books, including Eskom, Growthpoint Properties, Line Property and various other commercial clients.

Sono's success is an outstanding example of enterprise development at work. It was Eskom, which has long been involved in growing black women-owned companies, which gave TmT its first break by appointing the business as a supplier.

Subsequently, TmT signed up for Growthpoint's incubation programme, The Property Point, designed to help business owners develop their skills and ensure sustainability. The initiative provides entrepreneurs with mentorship, training and support to enable them to develop into fully independent companies. TmT tripled its turnover after joining the programme.

"It was an invaluable experience," says Sono. "I learnt all about compliance and occupational health and safety regulations. But I also got to grips with how to run and expand a business."

Her advice to aspiring entrepreneurs: "Don't be afraid to bang down doors when no-one will open them for you, and find the right partner to hold your hand and help you grow." – MONIQUE VERDUYN

#### Vital stats

**Player:** Mpho Sono  
**Company:** TmT Cleaning  
**Launched:** 2000  
**Contact:**  
 +27 (0)11 314 2888  
 tmtcleaning.co.za



Photo: Mike Turner

Photo: Mike Turner  
 Photo: Supplied