

From fish packer to Afrikaans rapper

Ruda Landman talks to Jack Parow about his journey to success

4 September 2014, Johannesburg – South African rapper Jack Parow is no stranger to change, especially when it comes to his career choices.

He started out in a fish factory where he worked as a packer, one of the reasons why seafood will never again pass his lips. This was followed by a job in the cemeteries division of the Cape Metropolitan Council, and a job as an apprentice mechanic.

He eventually decided to study multimedia design at City Varsity, which ultimately landed him a job as a graphic designer. Rap music, however, was always his big passion in life, and throughout these changes in his career plans, Jack continued to write lyrics and rap with friends from Mitchell's Plain in his spare time before he finally started performing in front of an audience.

He says rapping in Afrikaans never was a conscious, career-related decision – and neither was making a career out of music.

"I never, ever in my wildest dreams thought I would become a rapper one day and make music for a living. I just enjoyed doing it (rapping) a lot. That's probably how I got where I am – I never concentrated on making hits or music people will like. I just literally made music for myself that I enjoyed and liked doing."

Jack's unconventional career path formed the topic of a recent interview by journalist Ruda Landman, one of many conversations taking place on BrightRock's Change Exchange (www.changeexchange.co.za), a dynamic online platform that taps into the emotions behind consumers' biggest financial decisions. It is a space where people can learn from others going through the same "Change Moments", ask questions and share experiences.

Jack's discussion with Ruda was published on the Change Exchange earlier today (4 September 2014), and in it he shares valuable insights about a career in the music industry.

Says Ruda, "Jack was an absolute pleasure to interview: professional, down to earth, and direct. He has found a way of turning his hobby into a well-paying career, which is something we all aspire to – but like any career, it entails hard work and discipline, which you don't usually associate with Jack Parow the rapper!"

It seems the feeling is mutual – according to Jack: "It was kief meeting the legendary Ruda Landman when she's not knocking on my door for some *** that I caused."

This is the third of a series of change-focused interviews by Ruda, who herself is no stranger to change, having given up a secure, stable job in the media to pursue a career in freelancing. The series kicked off in May with an interview with Gareth Cliff, who left his job as a radio DJ to start his own "unradio" show, CliffCentral. Ruda also interviewed former Proteas skipper, Graeme Smith, who shared some of his experiences as a new husband, dad and of his new life outside the international cricket scene.

The Change Exchange focuses on four key Change Moments, which include "Starting a family", "Tying the knot", "Landing *that* job" and "Making a home". A diverse mix of contributors, known as Change Agents, have shared their experiences on the Change Exchange – to name a few: Sam Wilson, Maya Fisher-French, Alan Knott-Craig jr., Kagiso Msimango, Richard Mulholland, Stuart Taylor and Stacey Vee.

Suzanne Stevens, Executive Director at BrightRock explains that they have identified an opportunity to engage with consumers at a more personal, emotional level. Industry research shows that consumers' propensity to initiate an insurance purchase is far higher at these times. A 2012 study in the Journal of Risk and Insurance* found that new parents were 40% more likely to buy life insurance cover. It also showed an increase in self-initiated life insurance purchases when starting a new job.

"These significant life changes not only impact consumers' finances, but also their health, lifestyle and sense of identity. BrightRock has identified an opportunity to engage with consumers at a more personal, emotional level.

"Traditionally, the role life insurance plays at these times is limited to the financial aspects of the change, and the interaction between provider and consumer tends towards the factual and rational. But these are

moments that reshape the way we look at the world, and the way the world looks at us. The emerging field of behavioural economics has shown that people are far more driven by emotions and unconscious biases when making financial decisions than previously thought. BrightRock operates in this space, where emotions and money meet," says Stevens.

"As our product is designed to change with you as your financial interests shift at these major, life changing moments, we believe these moments are exactly the right time to be engaging with consumers in a way that addresses both the financial and emotional impacts. Our product addresses people's financial needs, and our aim with the Change Exchange is to also help people navigate some of the other aspects of these moments, regardless of whether they're a BrightRock client or not."

Since launching the Change Exchange in March 2014, close to 20 000 visitors have enjoyed over 27 000 sessions on the site. This engagement has also spilled over into the social media space, with over 6 300 conversations flowing out of the topics discussed on the Change Exchange. Says Stevens: "These are early indicators that the concept is sound and the quality of the content is good. But we are well aware that these are the very first 'baby steps' and we fully expect that the Change Exchange will mirror life, and will change over time as it grows!"

Many more change moment Ruda-interviews are in the pipeline - some with well-known personalities, and some with interesting people you may never have heard of. Next in the line-up is an interview with former Miss South Africa and television presenter Jo-Ann Strauss, who has been navigating marriage, a jet-setting career and a young family over the past few years.

Join the conversation at www.changeexchange.co.za

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