

From being a clerk to a top 10 finalist in *The Insurance Apprentice* 2023

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Looking back at her time on the reality TV show and competition, *The Insurance Apprentice* (TIA) 2023, Deirdré Blair-Henneberry laughs and says, “It was an absolute blast! I was so out of my comfort zone, but you know, you don’t grow if you’re in your comfort zone!” She was among 143 entrants who started the competition and in the final ten who competed for a Milpark Education bursary – which Deirdré won.



Deirdré Blair-Henneberry

“I’m just such a big advocate for Milpark. I tell everyone to study with them. Even my husband is studying through Milpark now,” says Deirdré who is currently doing her Postgraduate Diploma in Risk Management (PGDip) and hopes to follow it with a Master’s in Business Administration (MBA).

Deirdré is open about how it took her years to get to this point in her life, where she is a team manager at Santam Insurance and responsible for training and developing other employees, amongst other responsibilities. She has had so many junior jobs along the way. She started as a receptionist at a wellness spa, then worked at a hotel before joining an insurance company as a clerk, once even walking from floor to floor handing out her CV to strangers hoping to find a better position.

It paid off, and she found a position at Santam Insurance. While working here, she learned about the study opportunities and managed to do a higher certificate in short-term insurance and then a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) degree at Milpark. She followed this with short courses and qualifications and was awarded the IIG Class of 2023 - IIG Peer & Future Leader Award as well as was selected for the Santam Future Leaders Programme. Then came The Insurance Apprentice Competition 2023 and her bursary win, enabling her to do the PGDip.

Deirdré doesn’t take any of this for granted, though. “I didn’t have the best upbringing,” she says. “I vowed that whatever happened in my life, I would always give my best so that I can give my children what I never had. That is why I pushed myself and kept going, no matter what. I literally had nothing and today I’m proud of myself and what I have achieved.”

Her advice to young people is to keep going no matter what and to never stop dreaming. “I also think the insurance industry was the right one to get into because there are so many opportunities if you go out and look for them.”

She has only good things to say about Milpark. “I am their biggest cheerleader,” she says. “If anyone asks me, I always say Milpark is the best; the support is amazing and the lecturers are so good. They are really invested in you as a person, not just a student.”

It is also important to her that Milpark understands the insurance industry and can help her in her career. “I think they stay abreast in terms of changes, that tells me there is a continuous move forward to reinvent themselves.”

For those struggling to keep going with their studies, she says it is important to understand that everybody fails sometimes and that what matters is not that you failed, but how quickly you get up. “The sky is the limit,” she adds. “You are not what your circumstances were, you are more than that. What you make of the opportunities that come your way will determine what you become.”

I’m thrilled to announce that Milpark will be sponsoring another participant in the 10th season of *The Insurance Apprentice*

2024. Be sure to stay tuned and watch all the episodes live to discover who will be the lucky recipient of the 2024 Milpark bursary. Follow *The Insurance Apprentice* and Milpark Education on all social media platforms to stay up to date.

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