

Jakobus (Kobus) Cilliers

EDUCATION

PhD in Management Science, Strategy and Entrepreneurship (Current)

Esade Business School, Ramon Llull University, Barcelona, Spain.

Master of Research in Management Science, Strategy and Entrepreneurship (2024/25)

Esade Business School, Ramon Llull University, Barcelona, Spain.

- *Thesis: Routines Revisited in the Age of AI: Literature Review and Research Agenda. Supervised by Dimo Ringov*

Master of Business Administration (2021)

University of Cape Town, Graduate School of Business, Cape Town, South Africa.

- *Thesis: Does Syndication among Business Angels Lead to Higher Valuations in Future Rounds?*
- First Class GPA (>75%)

Bachelor of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering (2006-2011)

North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

- Undergraduate Thesis: *Investigating the viability of using continuous forming techniques for shaping mylar into various profiles for airfoil applications*

ACADEMIC SHORT COURSES

- Behavioral Science of Management, Yale School of Management, USA. (Mar 2022)
- Innovation & Sustainability, University of British Columbia (UBC), Sauder School of Business, Canada. (Jun 2022)
- MBA Exchange, Esade Business School, Spain. (Jan – Mar 2022)
 - Courses: Strategic Sales Management, Scaling Excellence, Leadership in a Globalized World, Blockchain & the Metaverse
- Political Economy of Doing Business in Africa, University of Cape Town (UCT), Graduate School of Business. (Jan 2021)
- Business Driven Action Learning, University of Pretoria, Gordon Institute of Business Science. (Dec 2017)

PROFILE

After more than a decade in industry I am shifting from applied to academic research in the pursuit of great impact. I have broad research interests in Strategy, Entrepreneurship, Scaling, and AI.

Prior to academia, I had a diverse career that spanned Management Consulting, Venture Capital, Entrepreneurship, Energy, and Oil & Gas. Functional roles included Strategy, Operations, Program Management, Business Development, Sales, Capital Efficiency, Procurement, Incubation, Venture Finance, People Development, Data Analytics, and Engineering.

I have well rounded soft skills and can engage effectively with stakeholders from the shop floor to the C-Suite. I enjoy bringing structure to ambiguity, solving complex challenges, and optimizing value creation opportunities through collaboration.

EXPERIENCE

South Africa Commercial Manager (2023 – 2024)

Trafigura/Puma Energy

Trafigura is a global commodity trading entity and Puma Energy is its downstream energy subsidiary.

Role details:

- Development, implementation and oversight of business development, customer acquisition, and sales processes
- Deal structuring balancing customer needs, with company objectives on sales volumes, sales margins, credit risk, investment, strategic value, and bottom line PnL impact
- Manage various multidisciplinary teams
- Develop long-term relationships with strategic accounts
- Establish and maintain industry network ensuring access to information and opportunities

Venture Capital Analyst / Entrepreneur-In-Residence (2022- 2023)

Savant Capital

Savant is an early-stage, hardware focused Venture Capital firm that provides incubation support to start-ups.

Role details:

Venture Fund

- Secure deal flow through identification of potential investment opportunities
- Cultivate and foster relationships with founders, ecosystem partners and partner investors
- Develop financial & valuation models to analyze investments
- Conduct technical, legal & financial due diligence on potential investments
- Support fundraising efforts with Limited Partners
- Negotiate Deal structure
- Project management of investments

Incubator

- De-risk pre-seed and seed stage ventures in preparation for funding
- Support ventures in commercializing products and services
- Manage funding pipeline and assist in securing investment

Entrepreneurship/Venture Build

- Co-founder of VC fund backed renewable energy company, focusing on <1MW renewable energy projects.

Strategist / Senior Advisor (2020 - 2021)

Eskom Strategy & Planning

Eskom is the state-owned national electricity provider in South Africa and generates >90% of the country's electricity. The Strategy and Planning department oversees all strategic and long-term planning activities at corporate and divisional levels.

Role details:

- Conduct detailed strategy review of organizational strategy, including effectiveness, relevance, applicability, and outcomes
- Formulate new mission, vision, strategy, strategic objectives, and strategy rollout plan
- Ensure alignment between organizational and divisional strategies and operational plans
- Developed new capital allocation methodology balancing competing priorities

Founding member of Management Consulting Unit (2017 - 2020)

Intrapreneurship Venture (Eskom)

Establish and grow a management consulting business unit, consulting internally to Eskom and externally to other state-owned and public entities.

Role details:

- Recruitment, training and development of consultants and support functions
- Process development and implementation
- Identify, negotiate and conclude new consulting engagements
- Cultivate executive level client relationships
- Manage strategic growth of venture into self-sustaining business unit
- Oversee consulting engagements
- Manage consulting teams

Select consulting projects include:

- Design and implement multiple operational turnaround programs at various business units
- Develop processes to establish spin off entities to pursue non-regulated revenue for regulated entity
- Conducted an organization redesign for subsidiary company
- Led a task team to manage a turnaround project following a client receiving qualified audit opinion
- Ad-hoc C-suite executive support

Management Consultant (2013 - 2017)

Top Consulting Group – A joint venture between McKinsey & Company and Eskom

A flagship leadership development program funded by Eskom and run by McKinsey & Company. The focus is on developing business, leadership and consulting skills while working within McKinsey & Company's teams on high priority projects.

Role details:

- Problem Solving & Analysis – Conduct research, data analysis, and modelling to diagnose business challenges and develop actionable solutions.
- Strategy Development – Formulate business strategies, optimize processes, and design organizational structures to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Project Management – Oversee and execute consulting engagements, ensuring project goals, timelines, and deliverables are met.
- Client Advisory & Relationship Management – Collaborate with clients at various levels, provide expert recommendations, and support implementation efforts.
- Change Management & Implementation – Facilitate organizational change, train stakeholders, and monitor the adoption of recommended solutions.

Select Projects:

- Developed a strategic, first to market response to the pending designation to enforce local manufacturing and procurement of a commodity for a subsidiary company of Eskom Holdings
- Led design phase and initial implementation of a 5-year corporate cost optimization program
- International benchmarking to develop and roll out best practice maintenance across Eskom's power station fleet. Included development of a handbook and training syllabus, facilitation of training workshops and upskilling of change agents
- Designed, set up, and implemented a Project Management Office (PMO) that managed all capital maintenance projects within the Generation fleet
- Oversaw procurement efficiency improvement drive aimed at cost and time improvements

Turbine Engineer (2012 - 2013) **Eskom Holdings, Tutuka Power Station**

Role details:

- Overall ownership of maintaining technical plant integrity (monitor operations, diagnose issues, and design solutions)
- Oversee plant modifications and engineering projects
- Technical advisory to support functions (Operations, Maintenance, Procurement, etc.)

OTHER ROLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- University of Cape Town, Graduate School of Business, Solution Space E-track mentor - 2022 (Venture Build program)
- Co-Chair of UCT GSB Consulting Club - 2021
- Vice-Chair of the UCT GSB Entrepreneurship Committee - 2021
- Eskom Innovation Award Winner - 2016
- Eskom Young Leadership Forum Mentor – 2014, 2015
- Six times South African National Gymnastics champion at various levels
- Chairman of North-West University Gymnastics Federation – 2009-2010

- Chairman of South Africa University Sports Men's Artistic Gymnastics Committee - 2007
- Twice senior champion at multinational Zone VI competition (now Africa Union Sports Council) – 2001, 2004
- Matric Academic Merits (Distinction average) – 2005