

Adventure fundi

What can a life-or-death mountaineering expedition teach you about leading a successful team or business?

How does the act of navigating through Africa's untamed landscapes relate to steering your way through the boardrooms of today's corporate jungles?

In *Overlanding Through The Boardroom*, by businessman and adventurer, Johan de Villiers, readers can explore the parallels between adventurous escapades and business leadership.

In a narrative that flits between crocodile-infested waters, treacherous treks in Nepal, scaling some of the world's highest mountains, and high-stakes corporate decision-making, De Villiers deftly explores key concepts like risk management, adaptability, and team dynamics.

With wit, wisdom, and an adventurer's heart, he goes beyond traditional business manuals and travelogues, offering groundbreaking perspectives on leadership and personal development.

But this is more than a gripping collection of stories and invaluable business strategies — it's a comprehensive guidebook for life enriched with De Villiers' audacious experiences.

Whether you're a thrill seeker, a solo entrepreneur or a seasoned executive in a large corporation, this book is an indispensable guide to mastering life's complexities through a lens of limitless possibilities.

Read an extract from the book here:

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

If there ever was a poster child for the saying 'adventure before dementia', I'd like to think it's me. If not, I'd like a recount.

After my six-month solo trip through Africa in my Defender 110 300Tdi in 1999, I had a special place in my heart for Defenders, particularly the older models. As much as my brain was telling me, "Go for a Land Cruiser, sensible human", my heart was saying, "Are you kidding? Once you go Defender, you never surrender!"

This is something only a Land Rover owner will understand — it's about loyalty until you die. It's a bit like having an old Golden Retriever that lies at your feet every night and does nothing but cost you a fortune in vet bills.

The only difference is that the Defender doesn't require you to pick up its poop. Although, in fairness, I've had to clean up its leaks more times than I'd like to admit.

Over the years, a succession of Land Rovers found their way into my garage. First was a Defender 90 2.8i with a BMW M52 engine, then a Discovery 2 Td5, and finally a Freelander 2, which unfortunately ended up submerged in a river.

Then, in 2015, destiny called: an ad on Gumtree showcased a white 2004 Defender 110 Td5 double cab with only 130 000 kilometres on the clock. I took it as a sign and flew to George to answer the call.

At the dealership, it was automotive love at first sight. You know when you go to a dog shelter, and one dog gives you 'the eyes'? That's how I felt

about this Defender. I bought her on the spot, skipping the test drive. I decided that the 450 kilometre journey back would be initiation enough.

I decided she wasn't going to be just another suburban poser. No, she was destined to become the ultimate overlanding war machine. Forget the standard Country Station Wagon oldies drive — I was going for Mad Max meets Bear Grylls. Given her formidable specifications and my ambitious vision, I affectionately named her "the Monster".

Working with Landy Guru and Alucab in Cape Town, we meticulously planned her transformation into a compact beast ready to dominate any trail. Every modification had a purpose, and we progressed as budget allowed.

Energy autonomy was a priority, and one thing you should never be stingy about is solar power. I installed two solar panels on the roof to ensure that even while stationary, the Monster could generate power on her own.

Watching campers scurry around a campsite, constantly repositioning their portable solar panels to chase the sun's rays every couple of hours, is a special kind of humour. It's almost a campsite spectator sport.

But for us, that kind of choreography was unnecessary. Thanks to our roof-mounted panels, we could enjoy extended stays in remote locations without having to worry about draining the batteries.

And that's important because, let's face it, cracking open a lukewarm beer midway through your journey — courtesy of an underpowered fridge — is about as enjoyable as a barefoot encounter with a rogue Lego brick.

Storage was another focus. I had load bars affixed to the wedge roof-top tent, allowing for the transportation of large, lightweight gear like a kayak or duffel bags.

The rear seating area doubled as further storage and a home for the fridge. With multi-level rear load storage boxes, a drawer system, and additional rack space, the Monster was designed to be both functional and efficient.

A total carrying capacity of 50 litres of water and 160 litres of diesel ensured we were well-prepared for long journeys.

Built with self-recovery in mind, the Monster was fitted with everything from a ten-ton Pro Warn winch on the front bulbar with a built-in industrial air compressor to a high lift jack with an extended base plate to an inflatable five-ton jack to get us out of the mud.

If the gadgets fail, I still have an old-fashioned spade as a backup — because you can't outsource survival to Siri.

When it came to technology, I didn't hold back. Between an array of apps, switches, Bluetooth controllers, and a long-range VHF radio, it was as if the Millennium Falcon had a baby with an Apple Store.

I also invested in a Garmin inReach Explorer (a handheld satellite communicator) so that I could bother my friends with location updates, update

my mom from the middle of nowhere that I was still in one piece, or send out an SOS alert — all without needing a cell phone signal.

While functionality was key, I didn't ignore aesthetics. The Monster had to be a head-turner. And what better than a screaming orange wrap to match my KTM dirt bikes? If I ever rolled her down a mountain, at least the rescue helicopter would have no trouble spotting us.

But aesthetic appeal isn't just about eye-popping colours — it's also in the details. I didn't want her to look like a hastily assembled farmer's job. Every vulnerable corner and surface was reinforced and protected.

Silver aluminium inserts were added to the gauges and indicator stalk. Even the VHF radio in the roof console boasts brushed aluminium inserts.

My aim was precision and elegance, even in the rugged world of overlanding.

Three years of dedication went into crafting the Monster. With more bells and whistles than a futuristic spaceship, she is arguably the best equipped Land Rover in South Africa.

And while the project might have made a noticeable dent in my finances, the experiences she's offered have been priceless. Together, we've traversed over 100 000 kilometres across 14 African countries. It's been a journey of a lifetime, and it's only just begun.

My experience with the Monster serves as a kind of personal innovation journey. It's about challenging the status quo, pushing boundaries, and redefining what a vehicle — or even an experience — can be.

Much like businesses that stand at the crossroads of tradition and transformation, I had to decide whether to stick with what was familiar or to venture into the unknown. I chose to embrace a radical vision, transforming a standard vehicle into something revolutionary.

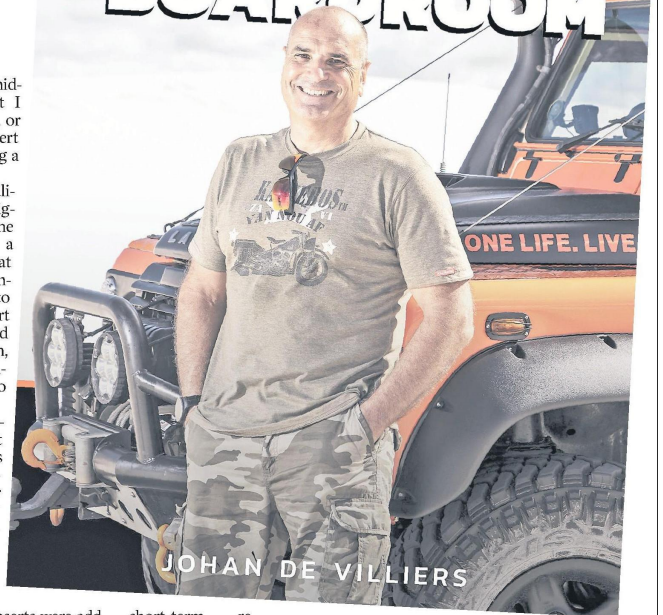
This concept of redefining norms raises intriguing questions. Should we settle for what is comfortable and proven, or should we risk the unknown for the chance to redefine our boundaries and, perhaps, our very understanding of what is possible?

In his groundbreaking 1997 book *The Innovator's Dilemma*, Harvard Business School professor and businessman Clayton Christensen explores the paradox that businesses face when they continue to focus solely on existing products and markets while overlooking new disruptive technologies.

Christensen presents a dilemma: should businesses stick with proven, existing technologies that offer

USING ADVENTURE PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS IN BUSINESS

OVERLANDING THROUGH THE BOARDROOM



short-term returns, or should they invest in disruptive technologies that could redefine their industry over the long term?

According to Christensen, innovations can be broadly categorised into two types: sustaining (or incremental) innovations and disruptive innovations.

Sustaining innovations involve incremental improvements to existing products, aiming to meet the needs of a business's most demanding customers without creating new markets.

Disruptive innovations, conversely, give rise to entirely new markets and value networks, often undermining established systems. While these innovations initially tend to underperform in mainstream markets, they improve over time and may eventually replace existing market leaders.

Since the publication of Christensen's book, the concept of innovation has evolved to include four distinct types: incremental innovation, architectural innovation, radical innovation, and disruptive innovation.

The categorisation of each type is based on two key factors: the novelty of the technology (or innovation) in question and the degree to which the innovation disrupts or transforms the marketplace.

• *Overlanding Through The Boardroom* by Johan de Villiers is published by Rockhopper Books.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johan de Villiers is the leader of First Technology Western Cape and is known for his unorthodox leadership style that blends razor-sharp business acumen with a relentless thirst for adventure.

Whether navigating through the dense African jungle, piloting helicopters, scaling some of the world's highest mountains or leading high-stakes boardroom meetings, he lives by his mantra: "Have more fun, take more risks, and be more substantial in somebody's life."

The formula for his success lies in his balanced approach to life and leadership. He combines intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and discipline with raw imagination and an adventurous spirit.

De Villiers is a seasoned risk-taker yet never dismisses the importance of meticulous planning and preparation. Committed to excellence, he consistently drives himself and those around him towards higher achievement through discipline, teamwork, and a relentless focus on personal growth.

A futurist at heart, De Villiers is deeply committed to harnessing technology for societal good. He's keenly attuned to the seismic shifts brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution — and its enormous implications for all of us — and believes that our collective future hinges on our ability to use technology responsibly.

