

Natalie Killassy

Stitch Wise



“ I saw an opportunity to save miners' lives by creating special safety equipment. ”

COUNTRY	South Africa
INDUSTRY	Industrials
EMPLOYEES	73
YEAR SELECTED	2004
WEBSITE	www.stitchwise.co.za

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

In 1997, together with her husband, Natalie launched a sewing company in the Western Deep Levels mine in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The company produces leading-edge safety equipment (e.g., patented “backfill bags” that support roofs of rock in deep underground mines) and protective clothing for mining and other hazardous industries. Stitch Wise sets the industry standard in geo textiles and is protecting today’s mining workers from the very accidents that crippled its employees in the past. In 2000, Natalie negotiated a contract with AngloGold Ashanti, one of the largest mines in the world, to supply all of their backfill bags. The result: rock fall fatalities were drastically reduced. The company customizes its products for the specific needs of its clients and offers on-site consulting and training to ensure maximum safety conditions. With over half the workforce made up of paraplegic former miners, her socially conscious business restores dignity to those whose lives have been forever changed by on-the-job accidents. Natalie was a 2009 Veuve Clicquot “Business Woman of the Year.”

ENDEAVOR AND STITCH WISE

With Endeavor's help, Natalie put into place effective growth strategies and increased her bargaining power with leading mining firms; she continues to gain advice on how to take her innovative safety solutions to scale while maintaining the special character of her enterprise. In addition to being counseled by a range of mentors and attending various workshops and town hall meetings, Natalie has benefited from the Global eMBA program, Entrepreneur Summit, and Immersion Tours.

In 2009, Natalie was honored as Entrepreneur of the Year at Endeavor's annual Gala in New York City, and she frequently donates her time to the organization including by serving on local selection panels.