

**Gizelle Venske**, 27, from Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng (now living in Lynwood, Pretoria) is a qualified Chartered Accountant, holds a BCom Accounting Sciences degree from the University of Pretoria and finished her 3-year audit articles at Deloitte this year. She was then seconded to do a three month stint as an auditor at Deloitte, Sydney, Australia. She has since started a new role as a Business Development Manager at a Global Indirect Tax firm.

Gizelle, who unsuccessfully entered Miss South Africa in 2022, previously won four pageant titles between 2013 and 2018. (Mnr & Mej Valia, 2013, Mnr & Mej Skole and Miss Diaz, both 2015 and National Miss Varsity Cup 2017/2018.)

She reapplied in 2025 because: "I believe in the potential of every South African and I have a dream to impact the future trajectory of our youth. Fulfilling different leadership roles, I realize how much I enjoy cultivating and championing other people. I love to 'pay it forward' and I believe my success as a leader in any area, is measured by the impact I have on other people's lives."

Gizelle believes that as she rises in her career it is her mission to reach out and uplift others by sharing her knowledge on financial literacy.

"I want to help secure spots in the job market, especially for those unable to obtain higher education. Miss South Africa is a powerful platform to multiply my impact – which is ultimately the purpose of the platform."

Women, she says, know that leading starts from behind, that they have to strive to live lives of significance – which is about serving other people.

To this end, Miss South Africa is a platform for female empowerment where true representation allows young people, regardless of race, body type or background, to see themselves reflected in leadership and beauty, igniting a sense of belonging.

Gizelle's father, Johann, is a school principle who she describes as a "true provider and protector who loves a Sunday braai and has shown me what it means to lead with humility".

Mother Anto is a teacher and "a force to be reckoned with; always ready to teach me valuable life lessons and hold me accountable". Her older brother Delmond, is a business owner.

Contributing to her community comes through her role as an auditor as Gizelle says she is in a unique position to ensure the upholding of ethical financial practices within the private and public sectors. On a personal level, she mentors peers on essential skills like budgeting, building a credit score, understanding interest, and using e-filing for tax returns.

"I've actively volunteered with several community-based initiatives. My contributions include:

- *LIV Village*: Upskilled management staff by training them on Excel.
- *Mercy House*: Collected clothing and supplies for the safe house and organized pampering sessions for the women who are victims of domestic violence.
- *Ubuntu Box*: Served as a guest speaker at their forum, teaching students the importance of self-branding and personal development.

- *Unibuddy*: Acted as a mentor on this international platform, adopted by the University of Pretoria, to engage with prospective students and guide them in their decision-making process regarding further education.

She wants to use her strengths to elevate others leaving a meaningful, inspiring legacy.

Gizelle says South Africans sense of humour and diversity is a uniting force, along with Springbok Rugby! "I get goosebumps when I stand in a stadium and see people of all races linking arms."

The Top 10 finalist says that living with purpose and knowing that I've reached my full potential is her definition of success.

Unemployment is the biggest challenge facing South African youth – with 62.4% between 15 and 24 having no jobs which not only limits their ability to build a stable future, but also hinders their contribution to our economy.

Her message to young women and girls is: "Don't let comparison steal your joy. Celebrate who you were created to be because you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Always remember, her win is not your loss, learn to champion her and when you succeed, reach back, take someone's hand and pull them up with you."

Gizelle believes it's important to foster unity while celebrating diversity and making inclusivity a top priority. "Practically I would be intentional about sharing my experiences with different cultures on my social media platforms to highlight our diversity and celebrate it proudly."

She wants to make it her mission to impact the future trajectory of our youth. "Your destiny for your life should not be limited by your current circumstances."

Especially for those who've matriculated but still don't have access to the job market, I want to play an active role to bridge the gap between education and employment.

In the face of adversity, South Africans have shown that our true strength lies in unity, while still celebrating our individuality. I advocate for a spirit of collaboration where we strive to compliment instead of compete. We are stronger together.

## Fact File: Gizelle

1. She says she remains the same even when nobody is watching.
2. She's played provincial hockey.
3. She danced for 12 years.
4. She loves celebrating birthdays.
5. She secretly drinks coffee out of a Powerade bottle.
6. She never lets friends leave the house without earrings and mascara.
7. In 2021 she had to repeat her Accounting Honors degree which was a huge disappointment. She went back, passed, learning that obstacles prepare you, not prevent you from your calling.
8. She likes that she knows where her identity is rooted, and is therefore confident in who she is.
9. If she could change one thing about herself, she'd have smaller feet. "Having a size 8. 5 is not fun."
10. Her role models are Rolene Strauss who "carries herself with such grace and authenticity" and Madison Prewett "for her faith and commitment to living with purpose."
11. In her spare time she runs, plays paddle and golf.

## SHORT-FIRE QUESTIONS

1. Reading: Lioness Arising by Lisa Bevere.
2. Listening to: Worship, Country and R&B music.
3. Favourite TV shows: all Talent shows.
4. Favourite meal: Sushi.
5. Guilty pleasure: Full body massage.
6. Ideas of perfect happiness: Relaxing on a beach, listening to the sound of the ocean under palm trees.
7. Greatest fear: Not fulfilling my purpose.
8. Greatest extravagance: Treating myself to a beauty treatment that makes me feel pampered and refreshed.

1. Happiest: Travelling overseas for the first time earlier this year. Experiencing new cultures.
2. Talent most wanted: To be a professional sprint athlete.
3. Most treasured possession: Jewellery pieces from my 93-year-old grandmother.
4. Most valued quality in friends: Sincerity.
5. Motto: A woman who follows the crowd is likely to go no further than the crowd, but a woman who follows her own footsteps is likely to find herself in places no one else has ever been.

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