

'Never underestimate your potential' - 80-yr-old law student

By [Shan Raddiffe](#)

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Johan Drotschie is proof you're never too old to learn new things. At the admirable age of 80, Drotschie has decided to pursue his law degree through the Stadio School of Law. Here, he chats to us about his experience, motivation and challenges.



Johan Drotschie

Married to his lovely wife Ans for 56 years, the father of three (and grandfather of five) joined the life insurance industry in 1960 and spent most of his career in the employee benefits division of Sanlam. Drotschie retired from his position of executive consultant on the level of a provincial manager in 1999.

He is no stranger to university life however. "I started doing my BCom degree at the age of 28 and majoring in Accounts, Economics and Business Administration," he says. "I was transferred to Natal as pensions manager and on my return to Johannesburg, registered for and achieved my Honours degree in Investment Management at the old RAU in 1982. I also sat for the pensions and life examinations of the Financial Planning Institute and served on the board of the FPOI for three years.

Having acquired a Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Trust Laws from the University of Pretoria in 2002, he started a business consulting with individuals on the investment of their discretionary funds. "My niche market was retirees," he continues. "I later sold the business but am still a director of the company. In 2000, I started serving as a trustee on the boards of pension and provident funds as well as a director on a board. I have since also been appointed as executive principal officer for some funds."



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❏ **At 80, most people are sitting back and enjoying retirement. What is it that made you decide one day that you wanted to earn your law degree?**

Johan Drotschie: To me, it depends on how you define retirement. I ran many retirement planning sessions for some companies and also advocated that retirement is simply another phase of your life that you embark on. What you do with your retirement is entirely in your hands. For some, it is sitting on the balcony having a cup of tea and if that is what you want to do – good luck to you. I simply believed that I cannot let years of experience and knowledge acquired go to waste. In my work as a trustee, I am continuously faced with the interpretation of laws and regulations controlling what we do. While I know the laws directly influencing the work of a board of trustees, I have also learned that more and more other laws are beginning to influence the activities. As a trustee, I regularly rub shoulders with LLB graduates. They inspire me with how they research, debate and decide. I decided that I must get on top of the laws and thought that the best way I could do that is to register as a law student.

🔗 **How do you think your maturity and experience have prepared you for tackling this endeavour?**

Drotschie: I think that my maturity and experience have prepared me to consider and establish what I have done by registering as a law student. So it was a well-calculated step that I took.

🔗 **Distance learning is not for everyone and it takes a lot of self-discipline to do it. What is it that motivates you?**

Drotschie: I do not have the time to attend classes as an extramural student and I must say that the universities near me did not appeal to me. I have decided that I want to study law and that in itself is enough motivation. Secondly, by nature, I am a disciplined person. It is going to be difficult and I am sure that I will be missing the personal contact with lecturers and fellow students that normal universities offer. However, the Stadio lecturers do arrange regular teams meetings where at least some contact is made and an appreciation of what is required is obtained.



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🔗 **I'm told you're a self-confessed "computer dummy" - how are you handling the technical side of distance learning?**

Drotschie: Yes, I have to confess to being a dummy, but fortunately, the staff of the IT department at Stadio have been a great help and I have no hesitation in approaching them personally when I get stuck.

🔗 **What are your plans for after you graduate?**

Drotschie: At the back of my mind is a desire to be admitted as an advocate.

🔗 **I believe anyone - young or old - could be inspired by your undertaking. What advice do you have for them?**

Drotschie: I am just an ordinary guy but I firmly believe that if one knows what one is letting oneself in for, and if one is committed to the goal that one has set for oneself, one can achieve it. Do not be afraid of tackling problems. Problems are often simply challenging and never underestimate your potential.

ABOUT SHAN RADCLIFFE

Shan Radcliffe is the editor of Bizcommunity HR, Education and Legal.

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