

No obstacle was going to deter me from completing my CTA

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Karabo is from Taung, a small town in the North West province of South Africa. The first time she ventured beyond the town's borders was to study in Cape Town - a thousand kilometers away. During her first months in the Mother City, Karabo missed having her family close by, but she didn't let the distance get her down.



Life in Cape Town

"I liked the Cape Town experience because it made me grow up so fast. I had no family or friends there, I didn't know anyone there, so I became independent. I told myself that I was in Cape Town to study and that was it," she says.

In fact, a large part of Karabo's focus and determination to succeed was the reality she had left back at home: As the firstborn, she carried the responsibility to do well so that she could get a decent job and help her younger siblings and set them up for future success. With this in mind, Karabo completed her undergraduate degree successfully.

When it was time for her to do her CTA the following year, Karabo could not afford to further her studies. Eventually, she landed a

receptionist role at an accounting firm, and though she was grateful for the opportunity, answering the switchboard and filing papers was not what she imagined for herself. But a few months later, an opportunity arose within the company and she was offered the position of bookkeeper, enabling her to gain experience that was more relevant to her studies.

Moving forward

This is how Karabo began her articles in 2009. With the benefit of a better salary, she was able to register for studies with a distance-learning institution, but the challenges of working and studying and transitioning from in-contact to distance learning were significant for Karabo. She battled to balance the long hours that both work and studies required, but she signed off her articles at the end of 2011 nonetheless and relocated to Johannesburg to be with her new husband.

The move was good for Karabo professionally, as she gained valuable experience as an accountant in demanding corporate settings, but her desire to bag her CTA lingered. The timing didn't seem right though, having welcomed her first child in 2012 and her second in 2015. But 2020 was the year: the time was right for Karabo to finally pursue her CTA, even if it was a little over a decade since she began her articles.

Chasing the CTA

A new colleague suggested that Karabo consider Milpark's CA Connect programme because of the quality of lecturers and the support the school provides, the latter of which was especially important for Karabo as a mom of two. Karabo registered for the mid-year Bridging CTA to help her get back into studies after the long break and immediately after the six-months course was done, she got stuck into her CTA. Finally.

"I went for it and enjoyed it. I enjoyed the fact that if you don't know, you are able to ask and get an answer [from the lecturers]. The recorded lecturers were so helpful because I knew that if I missed a class I could always go back and listen; that really helped me," she recalls.

Staying the course

Unfortunately, Karabo didn't pass all her CTA exams in one sitting, a requirement to obtain the qualification. She was offered the opportunity to rewrite the two modules she had failed and convert her course to an honours degree in Accounting – but it wasn't what she wanted. "My dream was to get the qualification and finish the [CA] journey that I had started... No challenge or bump was going to deter me from what I started, so I decided to do it all again."

Karabo registered for the CTA again in January 2022, but again didn't pass all her exams. She was offered the honours option once more, as she now fulfilled its requirement, but she again declined, opting to take the risk of writing her supp.

It was worth it, as Karabo passed and has now officially graduated with her long-desired CTA qualification. She describes the achievement as a burden that's been lifted off her shoulders and graduation day as the final stamp confirming that she's free to move forward.

"I had the choice to let go but at the back of my mind something said 'you've started, now finish. Even it takes three years, finish what you started'."

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