



backstory

Jonathan Shapiro
CEO: Lesco Manufacturing

What's your one top tip for doing a deal?
Make sure you completely understand the opposing party's needs. Then you need to identify the unique selling point that your competitors cannot offer and promote those ideas.

What was your first job?
My first job was at 19 at Lesco, packing shelves in the warehouse and assembling products on the assembly line.

How much was your first pay cheque, and how did you spend it?
R6,500. I saved it all.

What is the one thing you wish somebody had told you when you were starting out?
That running a business and achieving success is a marathon, not a sprint, and that slow and steady wins the race. Change doesn't happen overnight, so try to enjoy the process.

If you could fix only one thing in SA, what would it be?

I would try to fix the unemployment crisis, but more specifically, address the lack of diversity in our local employment initiatives.

What's the worst investment mistake you've made?

I once bought a property with a friend. Never again!

What's the best investment you've ever made? And how much of it was due to luck?
I would say investing in myself and in my future through saving. I believe less in luck and more in hard work and consistency, and instilling a savings culture supports this philosophy.

What is the hardest life lesson you've learnt?
It doesn't matter how much planning you do, you're not always in control, so don't take things for granted and do your best to live your life with no regrets.

What do you consider the most overrated virtue?

Alpha male dominance. There are far superior qualities to possess, like empathy, integrity and compassion.

What is something you would go back and tell your younger self that would impress them?

I think the fact that Lesco is a third-generation company and has achieved success based on a set of values that goes back generations. We usually find that these types of organisations fail either because they don't manage to sustain their familial values, or because they ride off the back of their initial legacy without putting in the work.

If you were President Cyril Ramaphosa, what would you change, or do, tomorrow?

I would appoint personnel whose skills and expertise are aligned with the skill sets required to run government departments successfully.