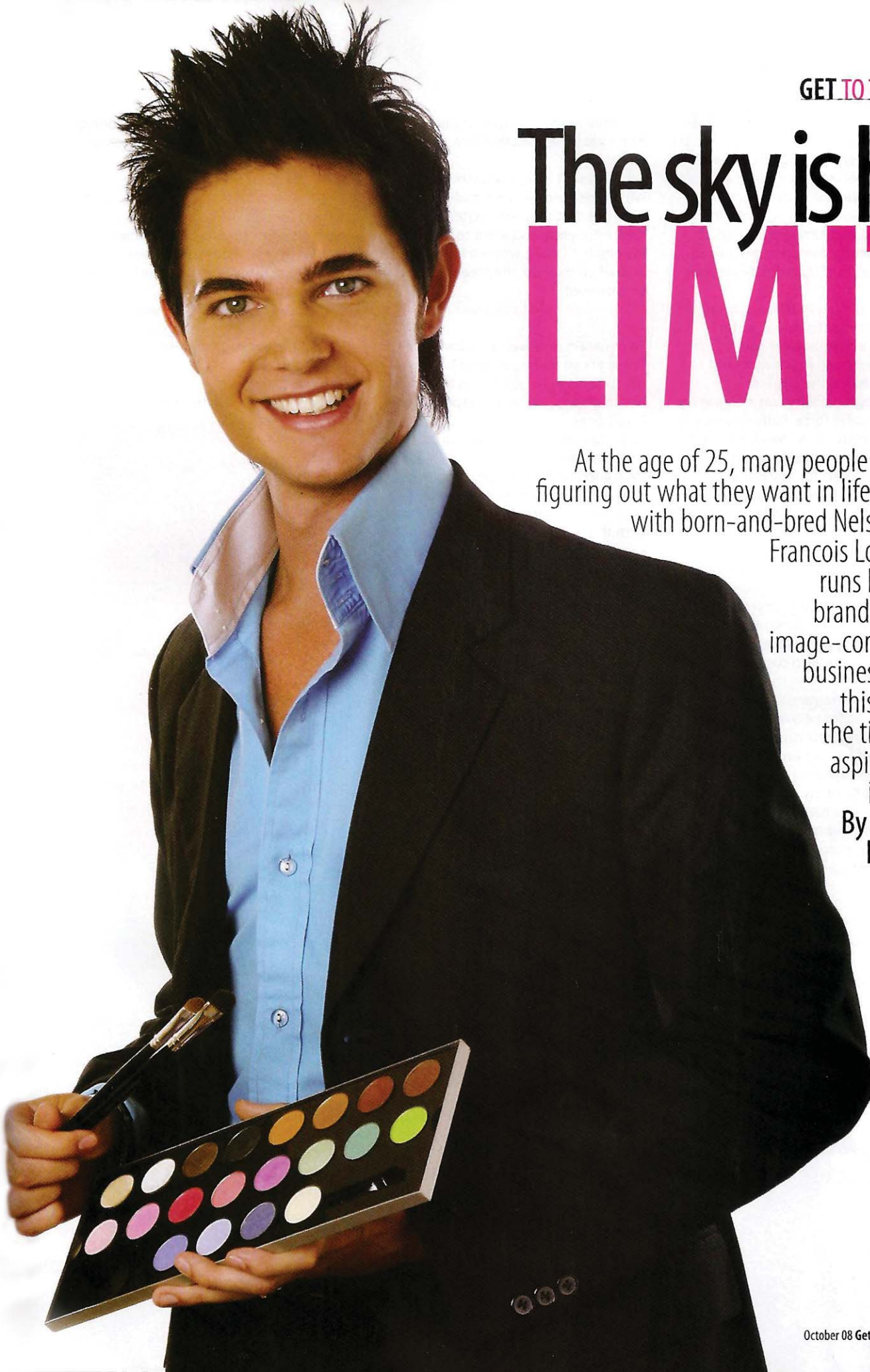


GET TO THE TOP

# The sky is his LIMIT

At the age of 25, many people are still figuring out what they want in life. Not so with born-and-bred Nelspruiter, Francois Louw. He runs his own branding and image-consulting business - and this is only the tip of his aspirational iceberg.  
By Marise le Roux





## GET TO THE TOP

### How did your success come about?

After finishing school at Hoërskool Bergvlam, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I completed a few business courses at Damelin and worked part-time for my dad at his construction company, but I soon realised the building industry was not for me.

I was offered a job in Johannesburg as the national sales manager for a cosmetic and image consulting company. I moved to Sandton and absolutely loved the city life! My main responsibility was training the company's sales force, hairdressers and make-up artists. In my free time, I did presentations for charity organisations to do fund-raisers for any cause. After five years I decided to get out of my comfort zone and make the move to start my own business.

### What do you do on a daily basis?

I run my own international branding, design and manufacturing company, Independent Branding (Pty) Ltd. We operate from offices in Sandton and work according to new trends - not only in packaging, but also cosmetology and graphic design.

My team and I frequently travel the globe looking for new ideas and trends. We are professional, driven and experienced professionals with a unique approach to branding.

The other side of my business is image consulting - I sometimes spend up to four days with one person to revamp his or her entire image.

I also present countrywide make-up workshops for Avroy Shlain Cosmetics.

### What is the best part of your job?

My work has a lot of exciting factors to it. For instance, coming to the end of a project and having completed

an entire range for international brands. And I get to see South Africa and the world.

I also present image workshops, of which the delegates are mainly women. I can see that they are excited about their femininity and want to look good. My aim is to make women look better and when they do, they feel better - and empowered.

### What is the hardest thing about your job?

To maintain my levels of achievement. There are so many people who expect me to achieve huge success and I do not like to disappoint them - especially my loved ones.

### What are your future plans and aspirations?

I will keep on building my empire over the next four years, as well as my life with my soulmate. After that I will start with the next big project. Unfortunately I can't share my plans yet, but believe me, they are something to look forward to!

### What are your hobbies and interests?

I don't really have any hobbies. I guess my work is my hobby because I enjoy it so much. My interest will always be fashion and new trends and definitely to travel the world and build on my experiences. One of my favourite

pastimes is to go to the Vaal River, doing all kinds of water sports. I am quite the pro on a water ski.

### What do you miss most about the Lowveld and how often do you visit?

I'm very fond of the Lowveld, so I make an effort to visit several times a year. What I miss most is the constant warm tropical weather and the friendly people.

### If you were to sum up yourself in three words, what would they be?

Passionate, enthusiastic and self-motivated!

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## Francois' tips for surviving in a cut-throat industry

- Always be honest about your intentions
- Always treat your staff members with respect and appreciate their opinions and input. Remember, the way you treat them is the way they will treat your business
- Treat people the way you would like to be treated
- Never give up. It takes at least five no's to get a yes
- Believe in yourself and in what you do. Then you might change lives and make other people aspire to be like you!