

Case studies show passion fuels success in direct selling

It is passion that drives the country's best salespeople says Ernest Du Toit, chairman of the Direct Selling Association (DSA), who has seen thousands of entrepreneurs go from poverty to success. Each of them has one thing in common: a deeply passionate drive that is motivated by something bigger than money.

Rising from poverty to wealth

Take Jessica Grib, who was born blind, and with only 30 percent hearing but who has earned her place in direct sales as one of the country's most motivated (and motivating) wellness and cosmetic salespeople.

"I wanted to prove something. All those people who imagined I was incapable of doing anything because I could not see. I would show them. I have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and it was going to come out. I was determined to be independent, make my own way in the world and rely on nobody for anything."

Today, she runs a health studio from her home in Roodepoort; sells a range of skincare products to hundreds of people in her community; and has recruited more than a dozen agents into her direct selling business.



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Pukie Hlatshwayo, a former schoolteacher, wanted to be her own boss and write her own paycheck. She was recruited into direct selling 23 years ago. She knew her teacher's salary was insufficient to allow her three children to follow their dreams and obtain the university degrees they wanted to study. "I wanted them to be who they wanted to be. I did not want a lack of money to get in the way."

Her rise through industry ranks was meteoric. She was the first black woman to join the company she sells for. She was quickly appointed group manager; then area manager and today she is a regional manager. As important, to her, her children have all graduated and are building careers that fulfil them and make them happy.

“Happy, fulfilled children is the most a mother can ask for. Now I look forward to helping other people build their careers in direct sales. People think I am in the selling industry. Actually, I am a builder. I work to build careers, futures, hopes and dreams. There’s still much to do.”

Thulebona Mbhele was born into a family that struggled to make ends meet. His dad raised chickens and supplemented the family’s income by street-selling fruit and vegetables. Ten years ago, Thulebona was living in a shack that doubled during the day as a barbershop. Today, he is one of the top three financial services direct sales people in South Africa. He lives in a suburban home worth millions and takes his family (three boys and their mom) overseas every year.

“You have to put your dream first. I do not do this for me; I do it for my children and for others in my community who need the motivation and an example to follow. You have a heart for people and understand what they are feeling. This makes you a great salesperson. There’s no other way.”

Taking charge of the future

The direct selling business model puts entrepreneurs completely in charge of their future, giving them the tools, the means and the support to create their own success.

The key to the success of the direct selling business model is that it provides entrepreneurial business opportunities to anyone, with hardly any risk. The individual companies over time have demonstrated the efficacy, reliability and desirability of their products, marketing, distribution and rewards. All that remains is for the individual who joins a direct selling company to be trained in all aspects of management and leadership and then to introduce the opportunity to their networks.

It is a multi-billion Rand industry that has created business opportunities for more than 1.1 million South Africans. Last year, direct sales shot up 13.1% to R10.93bn. It is one of only a handful of industries that is adding entrepreneurial business opportunities (and adding them apace) where most others are culling jobs.

“The opportunities are tangible, rewarding and limitless... both for individuals and for the larger national economy,” concludes du Toit.

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