

Entrepreneur profile: Terron Dewar

Introduction

This entrepreneur profile is of Mr. Terron De-Shawn Dewar. Mr Dewar (although comfortable with being referred to by his first name, Terron) is an entrepreneur who owns and operates 876 DNA Test, along with other ventures, and is Head of Digital Marketing for Sagicor Financial. He is also a registered Justice of the Peace.

Background and history

Mr. Dewar grew up in Westmoreland, where he attended Mannings School, and lived alternatingly with his father and grandmother. He considers his grandmother the one who imbued him with proper principles and refers to her as a “principled Christian woman.” His father is a Rastafarian who used to sell craft items on the beach to tourists. About his father, Terron remarks “I grew up never seeing him work for anyone, only for himself.” He attributes his acquired business acumen to this period of his life.

As a child and young man, he and his brother would join his father during school breaks to assist him in selling craft items, usually conducting sales unassisted. He once told his children that by age ten, he already had over one million dollars in sales “under his belt.”

He attended the University of the West Indies with the help of his two uncles; one is a firefighter and the other a policeman.

His ‘firefighter uncle’ was also a significant inspiration to Terron. He was formerly a supermarket bag-packer who upskilled himself by gaining more CXC qualifications to become a fireman. This inspired Terron in his studies, leading him to acquire twenty-two CXC and CAPE subjects.

Terron then graduated from the UWI with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Government from the Faculty of Social Sciences. He also served on the Student's Guild in numerous capacities, including Guild President, a post he held twice.

Their businesses

Terron's first business was a Barbershop, Campus Cuts Barbershop, that he started with his late brother, Ojay Dewar

(<https://jamaica.loopnews.com/content/businessman-stays-cut-above-rest-memory-late-brother-627965>). He ran the administration of the shop while his brother cut clients' hair. He wrote a business proposal to Taylor Hall (an on-campus dormitory), requesting permission to open a barbershop, which the hall accepted, allowing them to operate their barbershop on hall grounds.

Terron's second business is a trucking company based in Ohio, USA, that he runs with his brother Sheldon, called Dewar Logistics.

Terron's third business is a consultancy, Dynamic Research and Marketing Consultancy. As a consultant, he specialises in research, marketing, and project management. Having studied international policy development and gained experience in research at the Master's level, he is positioned to offer advice on policy and structural issues, as well as research for government agencies. He describes his consultancy as a "project-based business" in which he will execute finite projects, hiring outside talent when necessary.

His latest, and most successful endeavour is 876 DNA Test (876dnatest.com). This organisation conducts paternity and relationship testing for Jamaicans locally and in the diaspora. They currently have 64 locations islandwide and are able to conduct DNA testing between local and overseas Jamaicans without either party needing to travel.

876 DNA Test partners with local private medical offices, through which they offer their services (the aforementioned "locations"). The company runs a B2B2C (Business to Business to Client)

business model in which they partner with doctors and medical offices to conduct tests and sell test kits, whereby the doctors are paid for performing the tests and receive a commission for selling the kits to their clients.

The company also runs a 24-hour call centre to address customer issues and handle customer care, such as informing potential customers of the nearest affiliated medical offices where they may obtain the company's services. Along with the 64 affiliated medical practices in Jamaica, 876 DNA Test also has affiliate medical offices in several American states and the UK, making this a truly international operation.

Motivation

As mentioned before, Terron would help his father sell craft items on the beach during his formative years. On those occasions their father would give them simple instructions regarding their earnings: if they made money, the first thing they should do was to buy lunch for themselves and then bring home the rest, as this revenue was used to cover bills. If, on the other hand, no money was made that day, then that would mean a six-mile walk back home. This situation presented an immediate consequence for failure to make sales. Terron refers to it as "hit or miss", which fueled another maxim that Terron adheres to: "Eat what you kill", an allusion to the necessity for success to be able to live well. This, he states, forces you to "bet on yourself" as only you are responsible for your success.

Terron's motto is "Prior planning and preparation prevents poor performance", the Six P's.

Terron remarked that, while growing up, he was exposed to what he calls "survival entrepreneurship", a state where people work for themselves but only just enough to survive.

Regardless, they can fend for themselves. Meanwhile, he has seen other people invest decades of their lives in companies and organisations only to be "separated from their jobs" for reasons determined by said organisations. These experiences have led Terron to determine that the best

way forward for him was to own his own business, and control his means of earning; to “kill what he eats”.

Beyond this, Terron has several dependents (his children, grandmother, and father) who rely on him. This further propels him to ensure that he can provide for them or, in the case of his grandmother and father, assist them in paying their bills.

With his numerous obligations, Terron recognises that he needs a “surplus of capital” which can only be obtained when one has ownership in a business.

Unfulfilled need

As a Justice of the Peace, Terron mediated several conflicts about paternity. These experiences led him to the realisation that many Jamaicans lack knowledge about paternity testing, including how and where to get it done.

He was also made aware of how expensive the existing options were. He then contacted local firms that supplied this service and realised that he could build a system that would be superior to the current offerings in terms of efficiency and pricing. He would offer the same service but with an improved business model.

The immediate issues he realised were

- Education: most Jamaicans were unaware of how DNA testing could be conducted.
- Awareness: they lacked knowledge about the available options or how to obtain the service.
- Cost: Existing options were prohibitively expensive.

The initial iteration of the business was strictly online. During this time, Terron fielded customer calls himself. However, during this early period, he used real-time feedback to steadily improve the business model.

A significant portion of feedback centred on Jamaicans' preference to have the sample collected by a trained professional instead of using a home testing kit. This led to the "Doctor Affiliate Program" in which the service would be offered through multiple existing medical offices and practices.

Procurement of resources

While Terron is not averse to outside funding, he is a firm believer in bootstrapping. None of his companies began with outside investment. All of them were funded with his own capital and his salary as Head of Digital Marketing for Sagikor. This is one of the reasons Terron maintains full-time employment. His regular salary is used to supplement the operational costs of his businesses.

An additional reason for maintaining his employment status is that it presents learning opportunities. By working for a larger entity he benefits from the experiences gained solving problems for them.

Concerning sourcing talent/staff, Terron's methodology is to start each endeavour by himself, develop the best practices and procedures for the business, and then designate the roles required so that other individuals may be hired to fill those roles.

To fill staff roles, Terron turns to the internet, hiring expert freelancers online from all around the world to carry out the specific tasks.

Challenges faced and overcome

There is only one company in Jamaica that conducts DNA tests, CariGen. Terron had initially approached CariGen for his company to be a "CariGen Collection Site", however, his proposal was rejected by them. This forced him to seek other means of carrying out the required DNA

testing. Initially, he intended to build his own laboratory. He researched what equipment he needed, and the staff required to operate the lab. However, he also became aware that his lab would have to be certified. This presented another major hurdle.

While researching accreditation he received inspiration via an unlikely source, the American daytime talk show, “Maury” (<https://mauryshow.com/>).

The Maury show deals with personal stories around a variety of issues, but it is mostly known for episodes which tackle paternity. Each episode concludes with an advertisement for a company that conducts paternity tests, DNA Dignostics Center (DNACenter.com). This was the solution he needed. An added benefit is that the company is headquartered in Ohio, the same state his trucking company is registered in. Terron confidently claims that 876 DNA Test is now “the best DNA testing service in Jamaica”, offering the trifecta of faster service, cheaper rates, and higher accreditation than their local competition.

Initially, 876 DNA Test was supposed to be a B2C business, selling DNA testing kits directly to consumers. However, this initial business model was not ideal for the market, for reasons stated before. Constant customer feedback was crucial in modifying the model to something more bespoke for the local market.

In his initial attempts to grow the business, he found that many individuals offered help and funding but, in exchange, demanded unreasonable portions of equity in the business. For example, some individuals he approached in his networking efforts would offer to make simple introductions in exchange for significant equity in his business. This included both strangers and friends. This forced Terron to find his own way into the industry, at great personal cost (he preferred not to disclose these personal sacrifices).

Another interesting challenge Terron faced was, ironically, the speed of growth of his business. As the business grew, the initial systems he put in place were quickly overwhelmed and imploded on themselves. This required Terron to quickly and repeatedly innovate to re-engineer his systems to handle the growing demands on his company.

Financial performance

876 DNA Test has been in operation for 24 months as of the writing of this profile and has been profitable from its inception. So far, the company currently earns approximately five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in revenue each month. As a lean operation, 876 DNA Test requires relatively low levels of initial capital and has relatively low production and operation costs, resulting in a 35% profit margin.

Customer perception

The customer perception of 876 DNA Test is, according to Terron, “Great!” This is illustrated in the number and quality of customer reviews on the company’s Google Business profile where they have a five-star rating from sixty-six (66) reviews. This is “a rare feat”, according to Terron, as most individuals who use DNA testing services prefer to keep their usage of such services private.

Current standing in the industry and future outlook

Terron claims that many of the figures and infographics that have made the rounds on social media, regarding paternity in Jamaica, were sourced from his company. Unfortunately, it is difficult to confirm this, given the nature of social media, but all other indicators hint that this claim may be valid.

It is Terron’s goal for 876 DNA Test to be the authority and thought leader on paternity testing in Jamaica, using data and leveraging research. It appears that the company is well on its way to fulfilling that goal. With the data accumulated through the company’s operations, they can better understand what is happening locally regarding the issues around paternity, while also being

able to leverage this understanding to assist government, NGOs, and other relevant parties in the preparation of relevant policies and initiatives.

One of 876 DNA Test's guiding principles is that DNA testing should not be as expensive as it is in Jamaica. As such the company is dedicated to finding every efficiency, without cutting corners, to lower the price of testing and passing on the savings to the consumer.

While Terron does not currently have an exit strategy laid out for 876 DNA Test, he maintains precise figures for the company to make a compelling argument for maximum return when and should he decide to sell or list the company. However, there is no immediate or medium-term plan to sell the business as he believes that there is much more growth to be done.

Mr. Dewar projects that 876 DNA Test will command 70% of the market in the next 3 years, and has plans to grow the company into a regional entity.

Personal opinion

I am immensely impressed by Mr. Dewar. He is a great example of a serial entrepreneur. He implements ideas when he sees viable opportunities, displaying insight and a propensity for action. Putting myself in his shoes, I would like to say that I would also be as steady as he was in guiding his company to fruition despite the considerable obstructions in his path, but you don't know what you can bear until you face it. Hopefully, I have what it takes. Regardless, I consider his example to be genuinely inspiring.