ENTREPRENEURIAL EQ

Co-funded by the European Union



SUCCESS STORIES BOOKLET

2023-3-ES02-KA210-YOU-000176317

DISCLAIMER

AUTHORS

© **MAY 2024 –** INDEPCIE SCA, ASOCIACIJA IVAIGO, DRUSTVO BODI SVETLOBA, CARIBBEAN EDUCATION AND CULTURE FOUNDATION.

THIS PUBLICATION WAS CARRIED OUT WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION UNDER ERASMUS + PROJECT **"ENTREPRENEURIAL EQ" NO. 2023-3-ES02-KA210-YOU-000176317.**

ATTRIBUTION, SHARE IN THE SAME CONDITION



(CC BY-SA): YOU ARE FREE TO SHARE- COPY AND REDISTRIBUTE THE MATERIAL IN ANY MEDIUM OR FORMAT AND ADAPT – REMIX, TRANSFORM, AND BUILD UPON THE MATERIAL FOR ANY PURPOSE, EVEN COMMERCIALLY. THE LICENSOR CANNOT REVOKE THESE FREEDOMS AS LONG AS YOU FOLLOW THE LICENSE TERMS UNDER THE FOLLOWING TERMS:

ATTRIBUTION – YOU MUST GIVE APPROPRIATE CREDIT, PROVIDE A LINK TO THE LICENSE, AND INDICATE IF CHANGES WERE MADE. YOU MAY DO SO IN ANY REASONABLE MANNER, BUT NOT IN ANY WAY THAT SUGGEST THE LICENSOR ENDORSES YOU OR YOUR USE

SHAREALIKE - IF YOU REMIX, TRANSFORM OR BUILD UPON THE MATERIAL, YOU MUST DISTRIBUTE YOUR CONTRIBUTION UNDER THE SAME LICENSE AS THE ORIGINAL

NO ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS – YOU MAY NOT APPLY LEGAL TERMS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 MOTIVATION & OBJECTIVES

02 SUCCESS STORIES BOOKLET

03 MEET THE INTERVIEWEES

04 LITHUANIA

05 SLOVENIA

06 SPAIN

07 SINT MARTEEN

08 CONCLUSIONS



MOTIVATION & OBJECTIVES



THE MOTIVATION FOR THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EQ PROJECT STEMS FROM THE RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE.

By combining entrepreneurship education with the principles of emotional intelligence, the Entrepreneurial EQ project addresses the need to prepare young people for the challenges and opportunities of the business world.

It aims to empower them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and emotional competencies to navigate the entrepreneurial journey successfully.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide young people with the essential knowledge and practical skills necessary for entrepreneurship, including business planning, marketing, financial management, and leadership.

2. To integrate emotional intelligence principles into entrepreneurial education, enabling young people to understand and manage their emotions effectively, build positive relationships, and make informed decisions.

3. To foster creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills among young entrepreneurs through workshops, interactive activities, and entrepreneurial challenges.

4. To promote collaboration, networking, and knowledge sharing among young entrepreneurs, creating a supportive and inspiring entrepreneurial community.

5. To facilitate the development of personal attributes such as self-confidence, adaptability, resilience, and perseverance, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success.

SUCCESS STORIES BOOKLET

Welcome to the Entrepreneurial EQ Success Stories Booklet, a source of inspiration and practical guidance for aspiring entrepreneurs. Developed as part of the Erasmus+ project Entrepreneurial EQ, this booklet showcases the journeys of young entrepreneurs from Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Sint Maarten who have successfully turned their ideas into thriving businesses or impactful services.

The purpose of this booklet is to motivate and inspire readers by highlighting the crucial role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in navigating the challenges and opportunities of entrepreneurship. Through real-life examples, we aim to demonstrate how skills like self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and effective communication can empower individuals to overcome obstacles, build meaningful connections, and achieve their entrepreneurial goals.

Inside, you will find two interviews from each participating country, sharing the unique stories, lessons, and insights of eight diverse entrepreneurs. These stories provide not only inspiration but also practical strategies for leveraging emotional intelligence as a tool for entrepreneurial success.

Whether you are an aspiring entrepreneur, an educator, or simply curious about how Emotional Intelligence can make a difference in the entrepreneurial world, this booklet offers valuable perspectives and real-life examples to guide and inspire you on your own journey.

Let these stories ignite your entrepreneurial spirit and show you the power of Emotional Intelligence in creating a fulfilling and impactful path forward.



MEET THE INTERVIEWEES



ANDŽELIKA KOTRYNA BUIVYDAITĖ
Founder & CEO of VESTIMUS



ŠPELA KOCJANČIČ
Founder & CEO of Boner Broth



ROCIO BENEYTO
Co-Founder & CEO of Mannix & Co. and Co-Founder of Genuine



SHARLON CATHALINA
Group Bus & Taxi Services



JURGITA
Freelance babysitter



TJAŠA JARC
Founder & CEO of Džungla Plants



MANUEL GARCÍA
Co-Founder of Solid Estates S.L.



LOUDAHLIA BRILL
Digital Marketing SXM

ANDŽELIKA KOTRYNA BUIVYDAITĖ - LT

ANDŽELIKA KOTRYNA BUIVYDAITĖ, CEO AND FOUNDER OF VESTIMUS IS AN INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE INDIVIDUAL WHO IS NOT JUST AN ENTREPRENEUR BUT AN INSPIRATION FOR WOMEN PURSUING BUSINESS.
WITH A RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF HER VISION AND A FEARLESS APPROACH TO CHALLENGES, OUR GUEST HAS PROVED THAT WOMEN CAN ADVANCE INTO THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP FIELD, ENCOURAGING THEM TO PURSUE THEIR DREAMS. HER JOURNEY EMBODIES RESILIENCE, INNOVATION, AND THE UNWAVERING BELIEF IN THE POWER OF FEMALE IDEAS.
AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND VESTIMUS, ANDŽELIKA HAS TRANSFORMED OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES, EMPOWERING WOMEN TO TAKE ACTION. HER STORY IS A TESTAMENT TO THE NOTION THAT WITH DETERMINATION AND INGENUITY, YOUR IDEAS CAN BE TURNED INTO REALITY.

WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

The beauty of entrepreneurship lies in its multifaceted nature, enabling individuals to express their creativity and vision across various domains such as business strategy, innovation, and leadership. When embarking on the journey of founding a startup, one must embrace the responsibility of overseeing every aspect of the venture's growth, from marketing and product development to brand building and beyond. This holistic approach fosters a deep sense of ownership and empowerment, driving entrepreneurs to continually evolve and adapt to the dynamic landscape of business.

WHAT MADE YOU TRY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

My journey into entrepreneurship has been a lifelong pursuit, ignited by a childhood dream of building something of my own. While I didn't have a concrete idea initially, my determination led me to explore various opportunities over the years. It wasn't until recently that I found a concept that resonated with me, propelling me forward with newfound purpose. Despite the uncertainty, I embraced the challenge, driven by a relentless desire to learn, grow, and connect with others. Each step of the way, I've been motivated by the opportunity to become the best version of myself, pushing boundaries and embracing the journey of self-discovery.



HOW IS THE JOURNEY GOING?

My journey in entrepreneurship has been an exhilarating adventure filled with daily discoveries and growth. Not a single day goes by where I regret choosing this path. Each moment presents an opportunity to learn something new, to push boundaries, and to evolve in the direction of my dreams. For me, there's no concept of starting too early or too late on this journey; it's about embracing the desire to explore and challenge oneself. If even the slightest spark of interest ignites within someone to tread this path, I wholeheartedly encourage them to pursue it. In my experience, the entrepreneurship community has been incredibly supportive and uplifting. Whether venturing alone or with a group, I've found myself surrounded by like-minded individuals, all driven by a shared passion for innovation and growth

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN WORK



1

DO YOU IMPLEMENT EQ IN YOUR WORK?

Emotional intelligence has a significant importance on me as a person, and I implement it into my work by prioritising rationality over my emotions and maintaining a positive attitude. I strongly believe that all failures are new opportunities in disguise, leading me closer to success. This mindset empowers me to stay motivated even through the toughest challenges, pushing me forward towards my goals.

2

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART?

Navigating the slow growth process has been one of the most challenging aspects of my entrepreneurial journey. It's a facet often overlooked in discussions about entrepreneurship. At times, it's difficult not to compare yourself to others who seem to be achieving monumental successes—raising substantial funds or delivering captivating speeches at prestigious events. However, I've come to realize that such achievements didn't materialize overnight for them either. It required dedication, perseverance, and honing of skills over time. Embracing this understanding has been crucial for me, recognizing that every small step forward is as significant as the big milestones. Just like any other pursuit, I've learned that mastery in entrepreneurship requires approximately 10,000 hours of dedication and practice. This realization has reshaped my perspective, reminding me to focus on my own journey and celebrate each incremental progress along the way and never give up.

3

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER WOMEN WHO WANT TO GET INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

As a woman entrepreneur, my wish for others embarking on this journey is to embrace confidence, creativity, and unwavering resilience. The key to success lies in a commitment to continuous learning and growth. There are no mistakes in entrepreneurship, only lessons. Throughout the entrepreneurial journey, there will undoubtedly be individuals who attempt to undermine your efforts, but it's crucial to persevere. One invaluable piece of advice I've received from fellow women entrepreneurs is the importance of surrounding yourself with a supportive community. By connecting with other women in entrepreneurship, you gain access to invaluable support, guidance, and insights to navigate the challenges and celebrate the victories along the way.

JURGITA - LT



AT 24, JURGITA FOUND HERSELF GRAPPLING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF UNEMPLOYMENT WHILE RAISING HER ONE-YEAR-OLD CHILD IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA. SHE FACED FINANCIAL INSTABILITY, FEELINGS OF UNCERTAINTY, AND THE PRESSURE TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN HER PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS. YET, JURGITA'S STORY IS ONE OF RESILIENCE, EMOTIONAL GROWTH, AND ULTIMATELY, SUCCESS. BY EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED THROUGH THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EQ PROJECT, SHE NOT ONLY DEVELOPED NEW SKILLS BUT ALSO TRANSFORMED HER LIFE AND CAREER TRAJECTORY.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FACE WHILE BEING UNEMPLOYED AND HOW DID IT AFFECT YOUR DAILY LIFE?

Being unemployed created a significant financial strain, which, in turn, affected my mood and motivation. The stress of uncertainty impacted my ability to remain positive, especially with the responsibility of caring for my child. I struggled to maintain a structured routine, but I also saw this period as an opportunity to reflect on my goals and learn new skills. Emotional intelligence played a huge role here, allowing me to manage stress and reframe my circumstances as a time for personal development rather than just a struggle.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS YOU STRUGGLED TO FIND A JOB OR TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS? DID YOU FACE ANY SPECIFIC BARRIERS OR LACK CERTAIN SKILLS?

One of the main reasons I struggled to find a job was because I was raising a small child. Employers often viewed this as a limitation, which made it harder for me to secure employment. In addition, I lacked experience in professional settings, and this affected my self-confidence. Emotional barriers like fear of failure and uncertainty about how to manage both career and motherhood were ever-present, which made me hesitant to take bolder steps towards entrepreneurship.

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THE SKILLS NEEDED TO FIND A JOB OR START A BUSINESS? WHICH SKILLS DID YOU FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE MOST?

While on maternity leave, I dedicated my free time to learning. I watched training sessions and online courses that helped me understand child development and improve my communication skills. The *Entrepreneurial EQ* project's emphasis on emotional intelligence helped me realize that empathy, patience, and communication were critical not only for childcare but also in business. I practiced managing my emotions, which allowed me to approach both parenting and professional challenges with greater resilience and clarity.



WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS DID YOU LEARN OR IMPROVE THAT HELPED YOU SECURE A JOB OR LAUNCH YOUR BUSINESS? HOW DID YOU APPLY THESE SKILLS IN REAL LIFE?

The Entrepreneurial EQ project taught me valuable skills that I applied to my work as a nanny:

1. **Childcare skills:** Ensuring the well-being and safety of children by understanding their developmental needs.
2. **Communication skills:** Effectively interacting with both children and their parents, building trust and rapport.
3. **Emotional intelligence**: Patience, empathy, and the ability to respond to a child's emotions have been essential in my daily tasks.

These skills helped me secure my position as a nanny, and I continuously use them to create a nurturing, supportive environment for the children I care for. They've also enhanced my ability to collaborate with parents, ensuring open, empathetic communication.

HOW DID EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR JOURNEY? WERE YOU ABLE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS, AS WELL AS EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS, TO IMPROVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS?

Emotional intelligence has been a central part of my journey. Learning how to manage my own emotions helped me handle the stress and challenges of unemployment and parenthood. Understanding the emotions and needs of the children I work with, and being able to communicate effectively with their parents, is essential to my success. Empathy, patience, and self-awareness have strengthened both my professional relationships with clients and my personal relationships at home.



NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND A JOB OR STARTED YOUR BUSINESS, HOW HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED? WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED, BOTH PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY?

My life has taken a positive turn. Professionally, I've grown more confident in my ability to handle responsibility and provide care. I'm now better at problem-solving, managing emotions, and communicating effectively. Personally, my work brings me joy because I can contribute to the development and happiness of the children in my care. I feel fulfilled, both as a mother and as a professional, which has improved my overall quality of life.

LOOKING BACK, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS UNEMPLOYED OR STRUGGLING TO START A BUSINESS? WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS THEY SHOULD WORK ON?

My advice would be:

1. Stay patient and don't give up when faced with difficulties.
2. Set clear goals for yourself, even if they seem small at first.
3. Recognize that progress may be slow, but consistency is key.
4. Cultivate a strong desire to succeed, and don't be afraid to seek out support when needed.

In terms of skills, I believe emotional intelligence—specifically patience, empathy, and social skills—are incredibly important. Practical skills can always be learned, but the ability to manage your emotions and understand others is crucial in building a successful career and business.

“I WON'T SAY THAT I GIVE UP EASILY, BECAUSE I KNOW HOW TO BE VERY PERSISTENT IN CERTAIN AREAS, SUCH AS RUNNING MY COMPANY. AND I ALSO KNOW WHEN TO RECOGNIZE AND ADMIT DEFEAT WHEN AT THE COST OF GAINING VICTORY, I WOULD LOSE MY PERSONALITY.”

ŠPELA KOCJANČIČ - SI

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU GET YOUR BUSINESS IDEA?

The idea of producing bone broth came about spontaneously due to my own needs, the needs of my surroundings and under the influence of my partner Marko Pavlinc, already a successful entrepreneur with lots of experience at that time. In the business world, they say that every young entrepreneur needs a "mentor" and that was him. He believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself, he believed in my product and with his business story he constantly proved to me that it can be done! I truly believe that this is what I needed and what every young entrepreneur needs.



WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR BUSINESS JOURNEY AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

My biggest challenge was understanding the concepts of the business world. What expressions such as taxes, a private entrepreneur meant, what to do when you are no longer a student, do I have to pay for insurance, how to do the management accounting, which I handed over to an accountant after a few years, and similar knowledge that is supposed to be part of general education, but I have never encountered it anywhere during my regular studies. I overcame them by getting a mentor at Gea College in Ljubljana, who guided me through the procedures for opening a company, market analysis, and the pure basics of entrepreneurship.



USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

1 2 3 4

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THE SKILLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN BUSINESS? WHICH SKILLS DID YOU FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE MOST?

I still focus the most on honest, genuine relationships with customers. This requires a lot of time, because I communicate intensively with each individual through social networks. I answer questions promptly, respond to their interests, I am patient, and based on this, I create content on an ongoing basis. It turned out that this is the way that in my case leads to direct sales of products. In doing so, I expose myself, my private life, and I am truly honest about it.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO STAY ON TRACK IN YOUR BUSINESS WHEN YOU FACE CHALLENGES?

When I face challenges, self-reflection and reviewing my achievements so far help me the most, which also motivates me to continue working. For this step, it is important to have a person by my side who reminds us of all this. We all know that it is impossible to think rosy in a moment of darkness. I manage stress with a lot of physical activity. Really a lot! I walk or run 6-12 kms every day. I go to the gym, scuba dive, take ice-cold showers, sleep 8-10 hours and I am relentlessly consistent in following my dietary guidelines, which I also introduce within my company. I try to maintain emotional balance by constantly expressing my emotions, resolving conflicts and communicating. When I need to cry, I cry.

CAN YOU TELL US AN EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE HELPED YOU MAKE A RIGHT BUSINESS DECISION IN A DIFFICULT MOMENT?

I went to some training on social media sales methods and quickly realized that none of these methods would gain me more sales. My target audience actually requires a lot of patience, understanding and phone calls. My clients are not just numbers, but they need to feel that I have noticed them, that I am grateful to them and that I respect them. This is the only way I get a client who trusts me and stays with me over the years. Due to the regular return of clients, we remain in a market that is slowly and steadily growing. I believe that this way of working requires a high level of emotional intelligence, which I need on a daily basis.

HOW DOES YOUR EMPATHY HELP YOU BUILD BETTER RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR TEAM, YOUR CLIENTS, YOUR PARTNERS?

Because of my ability to empathize, clients have stayed with me all these years over and this allows me to exist in the market. But I have to admit that I learned the decency of empathy and it is not part of my natural response to the emotions of others. Other areas such as self-confidence, the decency of recognizing and expressing emotions, cultivating positive emotions towards myself and others, extra version, sociability, good stress tolerance, adaptability, spontaneity and relaxation in communication, and good control over my own emotions are my good qualities that enable me to do quality work and gain the trust of clients.

TJAŠA JARC - SI



HOW DID YOUR CHILDHOOD AND OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I was lucky to have my father as a businessman, who allowed me to spend a lot of time with him as a child. I often accompanied him on his shopping trips where he was negotiating prices, which exposed me to the business world at an early age. On the other hand, I always felt that life was leading me to something greater, and I believed that this was my true life purpose.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU GET YOUR BUSINESS IDEA?

When I returned from abroad, I felt that the time had come to create something of my own. It all happened during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic corona, when I went to a garden center to buy a houseplant. During the visit, I became quite angry, because I couldn't believe that I couldn't simply order it online. At that time, I immediately felt that this was one of those rare opportunities - the market was already mature enough, but there was still no right provider.
When I got home, I called my friend Tilyen Mucik, who is a passionate plant lover and collector. Two months later, the online shop Džungla was set up and running.

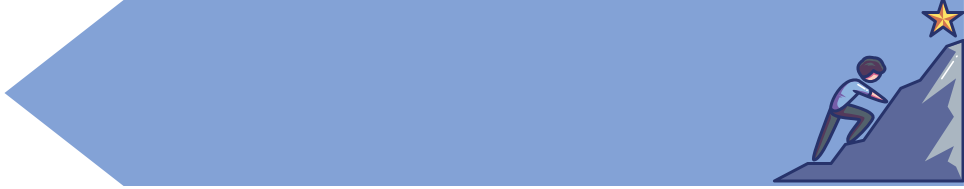
WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR BUSINESS JOURNEY AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The biggest challenge at the beginning was definitely finding a right supplier, but Tilyen was somehow lucky. We kept the same supplier Tilyen had found at the beginning and worked with him for the entire four years. The second big challenge was space. At first, we had a warehouse inside my office , but then we gradually expanded the scope of our business and managed to rent larger spaces.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU DEVELOP THE SKILLS FOR YOUR SUCCESS IN BUSINESS? WHICH SKILLS DID YOU FOCUS ON IMPROVING THE MOST?

I have always invested a lot in personal development, so I often delved into psychology and spirituality. I believe that this has significantly helped me – and still helps me – in working with my team and in setting up and running a business. Experience also played an important role, as I previously worked in a startup ecosystem abroad. But what I am most focused on is maintaining a clear focus, goals and purpose. I try to connect everything meaningfully and put it into a coherent whole.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO STAY ON TRACK IN YOUR BUSINESS WHEN YOU FACE CHALLENGES? WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE TO MANAGE STRESS AND MAINTAIN EMOTIONAL BALANCE?

I embarked on this journey because I have always felt that my mission is to build a company that is healthy – both financially and in terms of organizational culture. We invest a lot in a good work-life balance, interpersonal relationships and sustainability. Everything we do, we do it with love. We are aware that this is a marathon, not a sprint, so we try to maintain balance and not exceed our limits. An important part of success is also working with a business psychologist. Together we focus on identifying patterns and internal beliefs that are often the main source of stress. In this way, we can run the company calmly, thoughtfully and meaningfully.

CAN YOU TELL US AN EXAMPLE WHEN YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE HELPED YOU MAKE A RIGHT BUSINESS DECISION IN A DIFFICULT MOMENT?

I believe that emotional intelligence is key when selecting new employees. It is important to recognize the character and values of an individual at the initial stage, as these qualities are later strongly reflected in working with clients. The more we understand clients, the more effectively we can communicate with them, which in turn strengthens their trust in us. The same applies to working with a team, where each individual faces different experiences and assumptions. Without developed emotional intelligence, solving challenges and building good relationships would be much more difficult.

PERSISTENCE AND FAILURE

HAVE YOU FACED FAILURE IN YOUR BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO TURN A FAILURE INTO A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY?

Of course, there are failures, but I believe that emotional intelligence and intuition help us recognize problems early enough to solve them before they become too big. One of the key lessons I hold dear is that even bigger failure is to persist with something you know isn't working. That's why it's important to constantly test and observe the results, and if something doesn't work, we have to quickly move on to another solution. Instead of the term failures, we prefer to use the term tests. So we test things. And if they don't work, we change them.

HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR GROWTH MINDSET AND THUS PROGRESS IN BUSINESS?

I invest a lot in personal development because I believe that any business can only grow as much as we grow. I do this in various ways - from reading books, meditating, to talking to experienced people, working with psychologists and mentors, etc.

WHAT PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL QUALITIES DOES A PERSON NEED TO SUCCEED IN THE BUSINESS WORLD?

I see myself in the business world very differently. Everyone has their own path and follows different things, but the things that I believe have helped me a lot are mainly empathy, a sense of personal worth, a desire to constantly learn, humility and being down to earth.

"START WITHOUT WAITING FOR EVERYTHING TO BE PERFECT. JUST START, TEST, AND THEN IMPROVE. GO BEYOND YOUR OWN BELIEFS IN YOUR HEAD AND DARE TO STEP OUTSIDE YOUR OWN FRAMES THAT LIMIT YOU. FOLLOW YOURSELF AND WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN, REGARDLESS OF WHAT OTHERS TELL YOU. DARE TO BE YOURSELF!"

ROCIO BENEYTO - ES



WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN STARTING YOUR BUSINESS, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

One of my biggest challenges was lack of experience and initial capital. I didn't have a large budget to start, nor a background in the sector. To overcome these obstacles, I sought funding through family who believed in my vision. I also took advantage of free resources online and workshops for entrepreneurs in my community to learn about finance, marketing, and business management.

WHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP?WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR, AND HOW DID YOU IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS IDEA?

From a young age, I always had the desire to create something of my own, inspired by people around me who had their own businesses and showed a strong sense of independence and creativity. The inspiration for my business came when I noticed an unmet need in the market. I realized there was a high demand for women entrepreneurs to access certain measures or aid under the same conditions as male entrepreneurs, but few businesses offered a practical or innovative solution. I conducted basic market research, spoke with potential clients, and confirmed that the opportunity was real. That's how my business idea was born, driven by a mix of curiosity and a passion for solving problems.

HOW HAS YOUR UPBRINGING OR BACKGROUND INFLUENCED YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY?

My life experience has been key to my journey as an entrepreneur. I come from a family where perseverance and hard work were highly valued. My parents instilled in me a strong work ethic and the importance of facing challenges with resilience. I also grew up in a community that valued entrepreneurship, where many people worked for themselves, showing me that creating your own business was possible. Additionally, having faced economic hardships taught me to be creative with resources, a skill that has been vital for managing and growing my business.

IN WHAT WAYS HAS EMPATHY HELPED YOU BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR TEAM, CLIENTS, OR PARTNERS?

Empathy has been crucial in building trust and strong relationships, especially with my clients . By actively listening to them and trying to understand their perspectives, I can address their concerns more effectively and show them that they're genuinely valued. For instance, when clients express specific needs or frustrations, I take the time to reassure them and adapt our approach where possible.

WHAT ARE THREE KEY PIECES OF ADVICE YOU'D GIVE TO SOMEONE JUST STARTING THEIR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY?

1 START WITH A CLEAR VISION, BUT STAY FLEXIBLE

Knowing your mission and goals is crucial, but be prepared to adapt as you learn from the market and your customers. Some of the best opportunities come from unexpected shifts, so keeping an open mind can be just as important as having a solid plan.

2 BUILD A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK

Surround yourself with mentors, advisors, and like-minded peers. Entrepreneurship can be lonely and challenging, so having people you trust to offer guidance, encouragement, and honest feedback can make a huge difference.

3 PRIORITIZE LEARNING OVER IMMEDIATE SUCCESS

In the early stages, focus on learning rather than achieving quick wins. Mistakes are part of the journey, and each one will teach you something valuable. Being open to learning will help you grow faster and avoid pitfalls down the road.

HOW CAN YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS DEVELOP THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO IMPROVE THEIR LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS ACUMEN?

1 PRACTICE SELF-REFLECTION

Taking time to reflect on your reactions, decisions, and overall mindset helps you understand your strengths and areas for improvement. Keeping a journal can be helpful for tracking your emotional responses and learning from experiences.

2 SEEK FEEDBACK ACTIVELY

One of the best ways to grow is to ask for honest feedback from your team, mentors, and even customers. Listen carefully and stay open, even if it's uncomfortable at times. This helps you understand how others perceive your actions and decisions.

3 INVEST IN MINDFULNESS OR EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE TRAINING

Techniques like mindfulness meditation, breathing exercises, or even professional coaching can increase your emotional awareness and help you manage stress. Developing these habits will enhance your ability to stay calm and make sound decisions under pressure, which is invaluable in business leadership.

MANUEL GARCÍA - SP

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR, AND HOW DID YOU IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS IDEA?

What inspired me is that I have always wanted to have my own company and work solely for myself. I was also curious about the challenges we could face as young people starting a business and all the processes involved. It has always excited me, especially the idea of growth, marketing, and dealing with the problems that it may bring. I studied Business Administration and Management, so I always thought that it was an attractive idea for me.

COULD YOU SHARE AN OCCASION WHEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN A DIFFICULT BUSINESS DECISION?

Whenever we have to talk to a client about an investment or property management, emotional intelligence is key. The way you explain things, ensuring they understand the work you do as a professional and how they should be satisfied with the management while supporting your opinion, is very important. Knowing how to talk to people and helping them see your point of view as the right one is something very significant and requires work, and the way you say things is crucial.



WHAT STRATEGIES DO YOU USE TO STAY RESILIENT DURING TOUGH TIMES? HOW DO YOU MANAGE STRESS AND MAINTAIN YOUR EMOTIONAL BALANCE?

I always try to remember that the beginning is tough, but I focus on the small moments that make me happy in the business, which are when we see that we are moving little by little in the direction we want. This motivates me and helps me keep going. To manage stress, it's best to have an environment that allows you to disconnect for a while and recharge, friends or family who help you forget about work for a moment so that you can come back stronger.

HOW HAS EMPATHY HELPED YOU BUILD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR TEAM, CLIENTS, OR PARTNERS?

Empathy and trying to understand the client's needs are key when working in this investment market. It is very important to understand the investor's needs and put yourself in their shoes to convey what you consider to be a good investment and what you believe can help them achieve better outcomes.

"BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR IDEA AND GO ALL OUT WITHOUT FEAR. THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN IS THAT YOU DISCOVER A BETTER WAY TO DO WHAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS WANTED WITH YOUR BUSINESS, BUT AT LEAST YOU HAVE IT, AND YOU CAN GO ALL OUT WITH YOUR IDEA."



CAN YOU PROVIDE AN EXAMPLE OF A TIME WHEN SELF-AWARENESS HELPED YOU MAKE A CRUCIAL BUSINESS DECISION?

Knowing oneself is very important, and controlling your emotions in your business is crucial as well. Sometimes, when you're angry, it's better to know yourself and realize you need a moment to relax before making a decision. For example, it helps me a lot to go work out and then come back and decide whether an investment is good or not.

WHAT IS A SIGNIFICANT FAILURE YOU'VE EXPERIENCED, AND HOW DID YOU TURN IT INTO A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY?

There was a time when I had to do extra work for an investor that was not my responsibility but rather that of their legal team, not mine as an intermediary. I learned to set limits and not always try to be the person who offers the most help when closing an investment.

HOW DO YOU CULTIVATE A GROWTH MINDSET TO LEARN FROM SETBACKS AND CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD?

The small improvements are what help you keep growing with a positive mindset. You need to focus on those improvements in the direction you want to be able to be happy with yourself and not let setbacks bring you down.

HOW CAN YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS DEVELOP THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO IMPROVE THEIR LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS ACUMEN?

I have read some books to enhance these traits. It's important to stay up to date and understand that it is continuous work, and emotional intelligence is key for communication with both your colleagues and clients and investors.

WHAT PERSONAL QUALITIES OR EMOTIONAL TRAITS DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS?

Being able to connect with people and having good communication skills, reaching people, and being able to create a strong network, as well as having the hunger for growth and learning. With these two things, you will definitely do well as long as you always keep your priorities clear.

SHARLON CHATALINA - SXM



HOW DID YOU SECURE THE INITIAL FUNDING FOR YOUR BUSINESS, AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS LOOKING FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

I started with savings and a small loan to buy my first mini-bus. My advice: have a solid business plan and build good relationships with local financial institutions or investors who believe in your vision.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START YOUR BUSINESS, AND HOW DID YOU IDENTIFY THIS SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITY?

Being unemployed created a significant financial strain, which, in turn, affected my mood and motivation. The stress of uncertainty impacted my ability to remain positive, especially with the responsibility of caring for my child. I struggled to maintain a structured routine, but I also saw this period as an opportunity to reflect on my goals and learn new skills. Emotional intelligence played a huge role here, allowing me to manage stress and reframe my circumstances as a time for personal development rather than just a struggle.

WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS OR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION, AND HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY?

I'm inspired by other small business owners on the island who turned local needs into thriving businesses. Their stories showed me the value of hard work and understanding customer demands.

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO KEEP GOING, EVEN ON CHALLENGING DAYS?

Seeing satisfied customers enjoying their trips or getting to their destinations safely keeps me going. It's also fulfilling to know my business contributes to the island's tourism and economy.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE REINVESTING IN YOUR BUSINESS WHILE ENSURING PERSONAL FINANCIAL STABILITY?

I prioritize setting aside a percentage of my income for business needs, like upgrading my fleet or insurance. At the same time, I budget for personal savings to maintain a stable life outside of work.

WHAT FINANCIAL LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED SINCE STARTING YOUR BUSINESS?

I learned to always budget for maintenance and unexpected expenses. Vehicles need constant care, and it's better to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to repairs.

CHALLENGES AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

CAN YOU SHARE A TIME WHEN A SIGNIFICANT SETBACK OCCURRED, AND HOW YOU NAVIGATED THROUGH IT?

During hurricane season, business slowed down due to fewer tourists. I diversified by offering contracts to local companies for staff transportation, which helped stabilize my income during slower periods.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE CRITICISM OR NEGATIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS?

I listen carefully to complaints, whether it's about timing, service, or pricing, and address them immediately. I see criticism as an opportunity to improve.

EI AND PERSONAL GROWTH

HOW HAS BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR HELPED YOU GROW PERSONALLY, AND WHAT EMOTIONAL SKILLS HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL FOR YOUR SUCCESS?

Actually, I never realized I was using emotional intelligence. What is that, haha? But now I am aware of using it, I can say it's taught me patience, especially when dealing with traffic or difficult clients. Communication and problem-solving have also been key in creating a positive customer experience.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE STRESS AND MAINTAIN A WORK-LIFE BALANCE AS A YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR?

I set clear working hours and take time to relax with family or explore the island. It's important to recharge, especially in a demanding job like transportation.

SUCESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BIGGEST SUCCESS SO FAR, AND WHAT MADE IT SO SIGNIFICANT?

My biggest success was securing a contract with a major resort to transport their staff daily. It gave my business steady income and boosted my reputation.

HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS BEYOND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE?

Success for me is when clients refer my service to others or when I see repeat customers. Building trust and relationships is as valuable as making a profit.

MARKETING AND BRANDING

WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS AND ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS?

Networking with hotels, tour operators, and local businesses has been key. In the future I will also use social media to share testimonials, photos of my clean and reliable vehicles, and promotions for tourists.

HOW DO YOU STAY AHEAD OF TRENDS AND ENSURE YOUR BRAND REMAINS RELEVANT IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET?

I keep my vehicles modern, offer flexible services, and introduce features like Wi-Fi or bottled water for tourists. Staying professional and providing a personalized touch sets me apart.



LOUDAHLIA BRILL - SXM

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START YOUR BUSINESS, AND HOW DID YOU IDENTIFY THIS SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITY?

I've always had a passion for technology and creativity, and digital marketing felt like the perfect combination of both. Living on St. Maarten, I noticed that many businesses struggled to create an online presence, which is crucial in today's world. That gap inspired me to step in and help local businesses thrive digitally.

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO KEEP GOING, EVEN ON CHALLENGING DAYS?

Knowing that I'm helping local businesses succeed keeps me motivated. Also, seeing measurable results, like a client doubling their sales after a campaign, reminds me that my work has a tangible impact.

WHAT FINANCIAL LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED SINCE STARTING YOUR BUSINESS?

Budgeting is everything. I learned to track every expense, even small ones, and ensure I have a buffer for unexpected costs. Also, pricing my services correctly was crucial to avoid undervaluing my work.

WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS OR SOURCES OF INSPIRATION, AND HOW HAVE THEY INFLUENCED YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY?

My main inspiration has been Gary Vaynerchuk. His insights on leveraging social media and building brands from scratch resonated with me. Locally, I admire business owners who've turned small ventures into community staples—they've taught me the importance of consistency and adaptability.

HOW DID YOU SECURE THE INITIAL FUNDING FOR YOUR BUSINESS, AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS LOOKING FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

I started with savings and with help of my lovely mother. Since digital marketing has minimal startup costs, I focused on investing in essential tools and building a professional website. My advice: start small, reinvest profits, and prioritize what brings the most value to your business.



CAN YOU SHARE A TIME WHEN A SIGNIFICANT SETBACK OCCURRED, AND HOW YOU NAVIGATED THROUGH IT?

During the pandemic, many clients reduced their budgets, which impacted my revenue. I adapted by offering flexible pricing and focusing on industries that were thriving, like e-commerce and delivery services.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE CRITICISM OR NEGATIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS?

I see criticism as an opportunity to improve. I listen carefully, apologize if needed, and make the necessary changes. It's all part of growing as a business and staying client-focused.

WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS AND ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS?

Networking has been crucial, I attend local events, partner with other entrepreneurs, and use my own social media platforms to showcase success stories.

HOW DO YOU STAY AHEAD OF TRENDS AND ENSURE YOUR BRAND REMAINS RELEVANT IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET?

I continuously learn by following industry blogs, taking online courses, and experimenting with new tools. I also keep an eye on what's trending locally and globally to adapt my services accordingly.



WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR BUSINESS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, AND WHAT STEPS ARE YOU TAKING TO ACHIEVE THAT VISION?

I envision expanding beyond St. Maarten, offering services across the Caribbean. To achieve this, I'm building a solid portfolio and exploring collaborations with regional partners.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS LOOKING TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?

Start with what you're passionate about, but make sure there's a demand for it. Be consistent, learn from failures, and don't be afraid to ask for help or network. Most importantly, believe in your vision and stay persistent. I give back to community also by organizing free Entrepreneur Events. This is to promote entrepreneurship amongst youth and to motivate or encourage them to do business.

HOW HAS BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR HELPED YOU GROW PERSONALLY, AND WHAT EMOTIONAL SKILLS HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL FOR YOUR SUCCESS?

Entrepreneurship has taught me patience, resilience, and how to handle uncertainty. Emotional intelligence, especially understanding clients' needs and emotions, has been crucial for building trust and relationships.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BIGGEST SUCCESS SO FAR, AND WHAT MADE IT SO SIGNIFICANT?

My biggest success was helping a local restaurant increase their online orders by 50% in three months through targeted social media ads. It was significant because it showed how much of a difference digital marketing could make for businesses on the island.

HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS BEYOND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE?

Success for me is about client satisfaction and seeing businesses grow because of my services. Positive feedback and long-term client relationships mean more than just numbers.



CONCLUSIONS

SUCCESS STORIES OF YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ARE POWERFUL SOURCES OF INSPIRATION AND MOTIVATION. THEY SHOWCASE THE DETERMINATION, CREATIVITY, AND RESILIENCE NEEDED TO TURN IDEAS INTO THRIVING BUSINESSES. BY SHARING THESE JOURNEYS, WE NOT ONLY CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS BUT ALSO PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHTS FOR ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS. THESE STORIES HIGHLIGHT THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY YOUNG INNOVATORS, ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO PURSUE THEIR DREAMS WITH CONFIDENCE. A COLLECTION OF SUCH STORIES SERVES AS A TESTAMENT TO WHAT IS POSSIBLE, FOSTERING A CULTURE OF AMBITION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT BENEFITS INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES ALIKE.



ENTREPRENEURIAL EQ

Co-funded by the European Union



SUCCESS STORIES BOOKLET

2023-3-ES02-KA210-YOU-000176317