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Innovation

Uganda: Musiimenta Started With Shs 200,000

BY RACHEAL NINSIIMA, 3 MAY 2012

Pamela Musiimenta could teach many a thing or two about investing with minimal capital.

After finishing a degree in International Business at Makerere University Business School in 2009, she used her Shs 200,000 savings and started a business, Pamela Collections: Embodiment of Elegant Jewellery.

"I started off by buying beads and stringsto make necklaces, earrings and bracelets, which I sold to some of my friends who were still in hostel," Musiimenta recalls.

Her products range from as low as Shs 3,000 for earrings to Shs 250,000 for a set of earrings, bracelet and necklace. Today, she is a proud owner of a business that has sustained her financially and enabled her to venture into other businesses. In addition to Pamela Collections, Musiimenta is a make-up artist, decorator and model. Musiimenta, who is still ascending the ladder to success, has adopted the right principle of involving family in her business.

For example, she buys her beads at an affordable price from China through her aunt, who regularly travels there. To further cut her costs of production, she operates the business from home and is called to deliver her products to different clients within and outside Kampala.

"Piece by piece, Pamela comes up with her finest and her love seems to grow more and more for her jewellery than the greed that usually comes with increased monetary gain," says Bless Agume, Musiimenta's business advisor.

Incidentally, it was not Musiimenta's dream to be a jeweller. She had wanted to be a fashion designer but she hardly had any knowledge of the industry.

"I used to draw sketches of what I wanted my attires to look like but after carrying out intensive research, I realised that fashion designing requires specialized knowledge and a lot of money, which I did not have at the time," she says.

Unfazed by inadequate funds, Musiimenta applied the skills she acquired from university, when she served as the exchange director of the Young Entrepreneurship project, to start her own business. She particularly learnt how to write business plans and also enrolled for a short course in business start-up and entrepreneurship. With a basic understanding of business, Musiimenta then started operating a jewellery shop at MM Plaza but later quit because the rent proved to be expensive to her.

She then set up shop at home, although she says this has limited the exposure of her new products to new clients. Besides working at home, Musiimenta is faced with the issue of short-notice customers.

"With these, I may work till 4am and some of my clients want a particular colour, which I may not have at that particular time, making me lose out," she says.

She does not dwell on the shortcomings of one business because she has others to attend to. Her work as a decorator and make-up artist can be traced back to school days at Universal Primary School in Rukungiri district. Musiimenta used to decorate the school main hall and draw appealing pictures of a party on the blackboard. Later when she joined Immaculate Heart Secondary School, Nakibaale for O-level, she did the girls' make-up for sosh (a prom-like event in secondary schools).

"In my work as a make-up artist, I have worked on the ladies who feature in adverts like Uganda Baati, Warid and Air Uganda partnership promotion, Centenary bank kids account and Orange's Unlimited Talk, among others," she says.

After work, Musiimenta loves to sing and was part of the school choir at Katikamu Seventh Day Adventist SS in Luwero at A-level. She also loves baking, taking photos and reading self-help books. In the future, she hopes to build a fashion empire that employs talented people with untapped potential because of limited opportunities.

For now, she is working on the official release of the Pamela Collections Fashion catalogue, showcasing her range of products on July 1.

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