

Q & A

ON THE ROAD TO
SUCCESS

Entrepreneur Lumko Mphande

Lumko Mphande, creator of Bumka Scooter Rentals, recently won a top entrepreneurship prize from Three Ships Whisky, including R100 000 for his business and an all-expenses-paid mentorship with Vusi Thembekwayo, one of South Africa's most successful entrepreneurs. Eugene Yiga spoke to him to find out more.

What inspired you to start your business?

I've always lived and loved business, loved reading about entrepreneurship, and loved watching shows about self-employment. I love the idea of being called a boss.

Where did the idea for Bumka Scooter Rentals come from?

When I bought my first bike, it was purely to save money as the salary I was earning at the time wasn't enough for me to afford a car and the fuel I'd need each month. While riding the bike, I saw guys who were using similar motorbikes to mine for deliveries. However, their bikes weren't in good condition. At that moment I realised that if their bikes broke down, they would need a better bike to use. I could be the guy providing that service.

What does your business do?

We rent out motorbikes, with or without a driver depending on what the business needs. Currently we're renting out bikes to Debonairs and Order In (directly to drivers).

What challenges did you face when you first started the business?

It wasn't growing at the pace I was hoping it would and it didn't have a continuous income stream from the rentals. (We had month-to-month contracts and not fixed for a certain period as I now have in place.) I overcame this by advertising to business owners to secure contracts, as I'm about to do with two shops I'm in negotiations with now.

What else have you found challenging?

Like any other business, I want this one to be mainstream, but it will take time to get the 'big boys' like McDonald's and KFC to rent my bikes. Then again, we entrepreneurs turn challenges into opportunities. That's why we do what we do.

What lessons have you learnt?

Being your own boss means you have to work on your business every day and make your own path when one is closed. At times, I need to make unpopular decisions to get the company ahead and let go of people who do not add value to the business.

How do you feel about winning the award from Three Ships?

It's nice [to have] the attention, but I won't let it go to my head as I know that the

real work begins now. I can't wait for the mentorship with Vusi to start. I will take in as much as I can because I know his every word makes a difference. He is the reason I entered the competition in the first place.

What are your goals for your business?

My immediate goal is to get to 200 bikes. [Lumko currently has five.] I want to take this delivery service to my home town, Kwandebele, because my people need it. I want to have offices nationwide. I want to see Bumka Scooter Rentals doing deliveries with bikes and tuk-tuks for companies such as Shoprite Group, Edgars, McDonald's, KFC and others in South Africa. Lastly, I want to empower women and see them riding motorbikes to provide for their families.

What message of inspiration would you like to give to other entrepreneurs?

Giving up is not an option! Out of all the fights you've fought, the one called entrepreneurship is worth sticking out.