

African Entrepreneurs – Successful and Responsible

Episode: 3

**Titel: A New Vision for Consulting – Sydney Tumelo Mokheti’s
Black Apple Consulting in South Africa**

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Characters (Clips) / Narrators

	Women	Men	Age	Language
Intro/Outro		x	Unimportant	
Narrator	x		Unimportant	
Sydney Tumelo Mokheti (clip)		x	27	English (high voice)
Thabo Radebe (clip)		x	27	English

Intro:

Welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series about young entrepreneurs in Africa, who are making a difference in the economy and society of their countries. Today we are travelling to South Africa's economic hub, the city of Johannesburg, where you are going to meet Sydney Tumelo Mokheti. He is the founder and the Chief Executive Officer, of Black Apple Consulting, a business support agency offering ICT- information and communications technology- services.

1. Sound: School

2. Narrator:

Schools are our best customers at the moment, Sydney Tumelo Mokheti says as he walks through the corridors of a secondary school in Johannesburg, greeting teachers as well as the cleaning lady on his way. Everyone seems to like the slim 27-year-old with his outgoing nature, dressed in jeans and a striped button-up shirt. With a smile, he briefly shares a flashback of his own time at school.

3. Sydney:

“At the age of 6, I already knew that I would be an entrepreneur. I have always been passionate about it. I went through school selling sweets at break time. So I have always known that I was to be an entrepreneur”.

4. Narrator:

The young businessman puts his head through the school secretary's open door.

5. Sound: conversation with secretary

6. Narrator:

After a warm welcome, kisses on the cheek and a bit of small-talk Sydney wants to know if everything is going well with the new administrative software that his company has installed a few weeks ago. The response is positive. The only thing everyone still has to do is to start using their email addresses, the secretary sighs. Sydney nods and says his goodbyes.

7. Sound: Street

8. Narrator:

Half an hour later Sydney Mokheti is walking back to his office in Roodepoort, a suburb in the west of Johannesburg, surrounded by former gold mines. The area looks a bit run down, not like the centre of new business ideas that Black Apple Consulting stands for. Street vendors sell their goods in front of the entrance to the office block which is shared by a bank, a traditional healer and an internet café just to name a few.

9. Sound: Black Apple office

10. Narrator:

Sydney enters his office: It's a hub of creative activity, a dozen young men and women sitting in front of laptops, some are exchanging ideas. Sydney is the boss of the company, or as business people say the CEO, the Chief Executive Officer. And that is my team, Sydney says, with pride. They are setting up web pages for businesses, developing their brand, which is in short what the company stands for, like its name, slogan and symbol. But that's only a part of the companies' activities.

11. Sydney:

"And then we have the IT side of it, which is one of my passions. Building PCs, making technology more accessible and making it impactful, that is what defines the division. So that is what Black Apple is about".

12. Narrator:

Sydney Mokheti sits down on the couch at the entrance door, the only piece of furniture that stands out in the sparse and functional design of the office. This business is a dream come true, says the 27-year old as he starts to tell his story. He was born and raised in Bloemfontein, a much smaller city than Johannesburg. No-one there dreamed of starting their own company, he recalls.

13. Sydney:

"I guess the challenge I had growing up is: Who nurtures that talent, who supports that talent? Because trying to make money is seen as a mischievous process which allows you to access new things that will destroy you. It is foreign to us to become a businessman and create a multinational company. So that is a challenge I faced".

14. Narrator:

But the young man pursued his goals. He excelled at school, especially at accounting, which means book-keeping and maths. He finished as one of the top performing students and got a scholarship at CIDA City Campus in Johannesburg, a privately funded university that supports students who normally couldn't afford university education. Here they can study for virtually free.

15. Sound: Black Apple office

16. Narrator:

It was at university that Sydney met Thabo Radebe, a friend of the same age, who shares his vision and passion. The two young men team up after finishing their degrees in IT, Marketing and Business Administration and start their company Black Apple Consulting. They are totally different in character: Sydney is more talkative and outgoing, a people's person, who loves to interact at meetings and presentations. Thabo is a lot quieter and characterizes himself as more grounded.

17. Thabo:

“I think I’d advise other people, when you start a business with a friend, to make sure you complement each other, because at some point you are going to compete. For example Sydney is the CEO and I have no problem with it, because I was the one who said ok, because you talk too much, because wherever you go, people like you, handle that part. I handle the office, I handle the day to day running, I make sure everyone is here on time, people are doing this and that, you know. I think it is a good relationship in that case because now everyone understands their position. But if we were in a situation, where we both wanted to be CEO, because the company belongs to both of us, that is where things would go wrong”.

18. Narrator:

The two young graduates built their company from scratch. We started in the flat that we shared at the time, Thabo recalls sitting next to Sydney in their small boardroom.

19. Thabo:

“We did try to get funding, but we didn’t get anything from institutions like the government institutions, or even from banks. You know you won’t get anything from banks because there are a lot of restrictions etc... And we realized that the most important thing was support. Especially support from friends, support from families. And we got together and we gave each other that support. That was the easiest thing, because when he had 250, I had 250, and with 500 bucks we could do something, you know. And that is how we started the business”.

20. Narrator:

Today the two friends employ 12 people. Sometimes it can make you feel a bit dizzy thinking about the growing responsibility, Sydney Mokheti concedes.

21. Sydney:

“Look, there is pressure and it can get hectic. I am not going to lie to you. Any decision you make will affect your client, any decision you make will affect your staff and there’s a payroll, there’s overhead to be paid. So it means you have to somehow think differently now. So that eventually the pressure is taken off Thabo and me, being in charge of marketing, operations, IT-technicians, salespeople, because at the beginning we had to take on all those responsibilities.. But now as the company grows, you eventually relinquish some of the responsibilities you had and give them to other people. You now have to somehow shape up or brush up your management or leadership style to accommodate the growth of the company”.

22. Sound: Black Apple office

23. Narrator:

The business has grown, but their philosophy hasn’t changed. They are determined to uplift others: They run workshops for young people to give them a possibility to network with professionals, they revamp and donate computers to schools in poor areas and they help young people to start-up their own businesses, says Thabo Radebe.

24. Thabo:

“If someone comes in with an idea and they don’t have funding for example, they can’t access funding and if we see it as a good idea, we will take out money and invest in that business and obviously get our card from it. We want to break or destroy the restrictions that are there in terms of funding, because people have beautiful ideas, million dollar ideas, but they can’t put them through because of simple things like not having internet or being able to make a phone call or even having a PC”.

25. Narrator:

Sydney smiles at his friend’s words. They have come a long way together, grown and changed with their business.

26. Sydney:

“I dream of business ideas and it’s never happened to me before. I always dreamed of having fun with my friends, driving away into the sunset. But now, because the business is growing considerably, I feel the weight of my responsibilities, and now I dream of ideas and I wake up in the middle of the night and try to write them down before I forget them. And when you present your ideas, you realize that they are multi-million Rand ideas that you actually dreamt of and it is quite exciting to get the response from your team that this is actually it”.

27. Narrator:

In this early process Thabo was the most difficult to convince. He tested Sydney’s ideas, to see if they would really be worth millions of South African Rands.

28. Thabo:

“Ya, let’s be logical, let’s break it down, will it work, and then I get excited too, if it works. But he’ll then understand if it won’t work, because that is when he comes back to reality. He’s no longer dreaming (laughs) we’re now scrutinizing the idea, fully”.

29. Narrator:

It’s refreshing to speak to these two business-partners, who don’t take themselves too seriously, but are running a highly professional and innovative company. They are certainly happy to give advice to young people who want to follow in their footsteps as entrepreneurs.

30. Thabo:

“Especially young black people, I’d encourage them to really support each other. Because I think that is the only way that we as young people can make it, if 5, 6, 7, 8 of us can come together and support each other. If we can do that I think we can go far, because it is going to be and still is very difficult for us to access funding or to be players in the business world”.

31. Narrator:

Sydney nods. He also firmly believes that team players get further in the long run.

32. Sydney:

“I remember at CIDA at one time we had a theory that it takes a child to raise a village. It takes sharing the wealth of information with your village, to make it a better village. So it is about sharing information as a people. It is about the eagerness to know, the eagerness to ask how, why, the big questions. It is always important for you to learn. You absorb from an environment, you learn through experiences, through interacting, you learn at school from what is delivered to you as curricula and you relate. You make sure that everything relates to what you are trying to do or trying to achieve ultimately”.

Outro:

Sydney Tumelo Mokheti, thank you for sharing your fresh business vision with all of us. We hope you enjoyed listening to today’s Learning by Ear program about young entrepreneurs in Africa. Our reporter was Leonie March. If you would like to find out more, listen to this broadcast again or the other Learning by Ear programs, please visit our website at www.de.de/lbe.

Thank you for listening and don’t forget to tune in again for our next episode. Goodbye.