

"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.'— Muhammad Ali

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'Being a Black Business Owner and in Education—Is it Possible?

By Renee Watson

Why did I start my own business?

Honestly, I started my own business because I wanted my own money that I could save up and not have to rely on my parents, which I'm sure applies to a lot of you reading this. I also wanted more than one source of income in my life as well as something to fall back on if my first career choice didn't work out. So I thought it would be better to start sooner rather than later. There are a lot of things that I am good at, but there's part of a quote that I will always remember which is "jack of all trades, master of none" which basically means you can be good at a lot of things but not master any. So I stuck to one, which was baking. Baking allowed me to gain more skills that would benefit me throughout my whole life like communication when taking orders from customers, budgeting ingredients, and pricing so that I wasn't extortionate but I could make a profit. It's also built my confidence when I've had to put myself out there at times too. Having my own business gave me a sense of independence which I think has really helped me, especially in my school life and will most definitely help me in the future. Don't get me wrong, it hasn't always been easy. There have been times where I haven't had enough money to get equipment that I needed or wanted to make my business more efficient as I don't come from a family that has lots of disposable income. This is a factor that further deepened my motivation. There have also been so many times where I was worried that people wouldn't buy my stuff because of my age and the fact that other people might see me as inexperienced, especially as there are so many people doing baking who are older than me and genuinely have more experience than me. However, that doesn't mean you give up.

How do I balance my Education and business?

At first, I thought it was going to be hard and I might as well give up, but it gets easier, especially if it is something you enjoy doing. For me, baking helps me relax and relieves my stress. It's almost a therapeutic process for me which I think is the key to being able to balance work school and business life. Whenever I had exams coming up or just a stressful school day, I would bake something or watch baking videos and learn from them if I didn't have enough ingredients. However, you can't let your business come before your schoolwork because you need to be able to open doors for yourself in the future and have multiple opportunities. There have been times where I've had to reject an order due to it conflicting with school, but you've got to do what you've got to do to make it work.

The importance of the being a black business owner & how you can support:

Although I haven't personally experienced discrimination in terms of owning my business, doesn't mean we shouldn't highlight and acknowledge those who are. Just 5% of the UK's small businesses are ethnic minority-led and we need to increase this immediately. Even in America, black owned businesses only create 1 million jobs for only 4% of the working-age black population. In comparison, white owned businesses create 55.9 million jobs which can employ 44% of the working age white population. Me owning a business is my way of supporting the black community. My business, amongst many others, will help pave the way for new and upcoming black businesses and give them better odds of being and staying successful. There are lots of ways that you can support black businesses for **FREE**. You can share a post that they put up, like a post, save a post, tag a friend to promote them, leave a comment, shout them out and even reply to stories which all cost £0.00. Speaking from experience, and in the words of TESCO: every little helps. It means so much just to know that people are acknowledging my talent as well as the black business that is part of what keeps me motivated and what will help so many people.

Why should you start a business?

You should start a business because you're young. It's good to get the ball rolling from now because you get to develop so many skills which will benefit you throughout the rest of your school life, university and life in general (and because you get money too!). When you're doing something you like to do, it doesn't even seem like a job but also because you can make your own timetable and work when you want to, unlike a part time job in a shop. So it's flexible but that doesn't mean that you can slack off, you still have to keep on top of everything if you want to succeed in your business as well as school.

Advice and Steps to starting your own business.

1. Get to know yourself as an entrepreneur and get an idea of the sort of business owner you want to be.
2. Think about what you love to do to (like a hobby) then generate business ideas and what you want your business to revolve around. I used a hobby that I already liked to do which made the process much easier because I already knew a lot about it and had fun doing it.
3. Think about why you want to start your own business. Think of your motivations because if it doesn't contribute to your personal ambitions then it will be harder for you to remain resilient.
4. Research other businesses with a product similar to yours and use this to expand your knowledge about your product, how to promote yourself and most importantly, how you can be different and develop your unique selling point (USP).
5. Create a business plan. Creating a business plan will allow you to get all your thoughts, feelings, concerns, as well as your business objectives on paper. This will allow you to further understand and structure your business so that you are able to help other people understand what you are trying to achieve and how you will do it.
6. Get as much support as you can prior to launching your business. Whether it's from your family, your friends, family friends, teachers, ANYONE!! This will help you to form a small customer base when you start. Also, don't dismiss constructive criticism because that is what you need to help you improve and grow.
7. Make small achievable goals that you can meet to make sure your business is going and staying on the right path.
8. When you start selling DON'T start spending. You will get happy when you start earning a bit more money but that doesn't mean you should just waste it away on things that you **want** rather than what you **need**. I'm not saying that you shouldn't treat yourself because you should, but take most of the money that you earn and save it or invest it into your business by buying things that will improve your efficiency and improve the quality of your product. A lot of young people in this generation, especially in the young black community tend to be up to date with the latest trends and spend a large amount of their money on materialistic things such as phones, shoes, clothes etc., whether it's because they're making up for the things they couldn't get when they were younger, or because they just always want to look the best that they can which is understandable. However, we need to break this cycle and start being smart with our money. **Investing and saving rather than spending and wasting.** So many black people and black families stay on and under the poverty line because we're feeding into societal trends and expectations- trying to prove a point that doesn't need proving. Investing > spending.
9. Be confident! Be confident within yourself and within your product because that will show through your product- and urge people to come back for more.
10. Most importantly, HAVE FUN! One of the most important things is to enjoy what you do because that will constantly encourage you to do more and you will genuinely want to do more. It won't really feel like work if you are having fun whilst doing it.



THINK BIG. START SMALL, BEGIN NOW!

If you would like to make a cake order, or just see what I've been able to do and how I've progressed, then click this link:

https://www.instagram.com/nays_cakes/

BE SURE TO FOLLOW ME!

If you want to find out about more black businesses that you can buy from, and support, then click this link:

<https://www.ukblackowned.co.uk/>

If you would like support, or have any questions about starting your own business, please email [Miss Harrak](mailto:Miss.Harrak) who will put you in direct contact with me. I am more than willing to help you build, strive and offer you constructive advice.

Want to get involved in creating next week's BAME Newsletter?

Please email:

Nadia.harrak@oasisouthbank.org

Remember you don't have to be an amazing writer to get involved. You're always more than welcome to share ideas/thoughts/feeling and even design skills– all of which can be contributed to the weekly writings.