

1. When did you start your business?

- *What year did you start your business?*

I open my first location in January of 2013.

- *Did someone own the business before you? If so, who and do you know why they chose to sell?*

Yes, my dad actually had a screen printing company. That's how I got started. And like I said I went out on my own in January of 2013.

2. Where is your business located?

- *Is your business only in Memphis?*

I actually have two locations. One is at 3541 Riverdale, which is in Southeast Memphis. And then I also have another location at 3436 Park Avenue, which is located kind of between the University of Memphis in Orange Mound.

- *Has it always been in Memphis?*
- *How important is the location of your business? Why?*

Location is very important. It's an important because we noticed a big difference when I opened in January of 2013, I was around the corner on Winchester Rd. So we move to the Riverdale location 2 years ago and we almost immediately noticed a difference in walk in traffic and visibility because we are by the expressway, 385. And so it's amazing, and Winchester Rd is walking distance from where we're located now, but it's amazing being on a street that leads to 385 expressway, what that does few business.

3. Why did you start your business?

- *Is it a family business?*

I actually got into it, as I said, because my father had a screen printing company and that kind of prompted me to do it when I was in college.

- *Has this business always been a dream of yours? Explain, please.*

No, I wanted to be a doctor. I have a biology degree. And I taught school for about 7 years, after I graduated. So business has always been important to me. My great granddad had a corner store. And so I grew up just watching business since that time I can remember. But, like I said, I was going to be a doctor.

4. How did you start your business?

- *Did you have to get a loan? If so, was a complicated? Or If not, why not?*

I am one of those business owners, I believes in slow growth. I don't always do the, "build it and they will come." {A reference from the "Field of Dreams" movie}. I believe in having a market, having a clientele for your business and using a calculated risk to say OK I'm going to take a chance. And so that's kind of what I did when I was in the school system. For 7 years I was a science

teacher, and I it was building that my clientele during that time. And so I said I was going to retire at 30. I was able to walk away from the education in 2005. And that is using the slow growth principle – having a clientele already built up before you just open a location or before you try to go ahead and try to do something.

I believe in having cash flowing as much as you can or paying for it. I believe in straight just paying for it as much as you can. Out of your own pockets. Whatever purchase you are trying to do, I think that you at least need to have somewhere around 40 to 50% of whatever it is and if that if you have to borrow the rest of it, I'm comfortable with that. When I opened my first location, I made sure I had at least a years, even though I had clientele I wasn't really worried about it, but I made sure that I had at least a year's worth money set aside for expenses whether it be MLGW, rent, all of those things because you never know what can happen. You can have a car wreck or whatever, so you need to have money set aside. I did at least a year of money set aside. I would definitely say at least six months.

- *Did you get any help from your family? If so, in what way?*

No. It was being able to already have their clientele and using existing funds to be able to secure buildings or the location that I have - on Park Ave. actually bought that building. I lease out, it's a five base strip mall, and I lease out 3 of the spaces to other tenants.

- *Is it necessary to go to college to run your type of business? Why or why not?*

It's not necessary, but it does help. And the reason why I say that is because at the time I didn't really realize, even just being a teacher or being an educator, I didn't realize how that would impact my business. Because if you're serving schools, and you're dealing with principals, and educators every day, then it helps when you can speak their language. And so college gives you the ability to move within circles. One conversation piece that people have is: "Where did you go to school?" That's very important for people who went to school. So, it's connection because that's what you're ultimately looking for. There's nothing wrong with not going to college. But college does give you some intangibles other than just the academic piece. It gives you some intangibles and gives you connections to a lot of the decision makers that you will probably be dealing with if you own a business.

- *How difficult is it to run your business? Explain, please.*

It's difficult, but if you love it is not as bad. It does take time. If you're not passionate about it, if you really don't enjoy it, it can wear you down. But if you really like it and there are a lot of other parts to my business: whether it's talking to people, the creative side, the production side, there's a lot of different areas that we put together to come up with the finished product. So, I like most of those things, so it's really not work. In particular, last night I probably got home a close to 10:00pm. That would have been frustrating for most people, but I kind of liked it.

5. **What advice would you give my 11th grade students looking to be entrepreneurs?**

- *Is college necessary to be a successful entrepreneur? Explain, please.*

Always, I think education always helps. And so what college does is it polishes you to be able to move within different circles. A lot of the people that you would deal with all our college educated. So when they make certain comments, talk about certain things, you want to be able to connect with them on that level. That's one of the things that college helps you with.

Of course, depending on what it is that you want to do, college may be necessary for you to be able to ... it may be required because you may have to have that degree to be able to do that. But in my particular situation, like I said, I have a biology degree, it's not crucial that I have that degree. In fact, I own a business and I've never taken a business class. In fact, I've never stepped inside of the business building. But college has helped me tremendously to be able to talk to educators about what they're going through, about what their needs are, and all of that. So, college is definitely a plus.

- *Is good credit necessary to be a successful entrepreneur? Explain, please.*

Regardless of whether you want to own a business or not, credit is important. And so, what you want to do is minimize your risk. Whenever I go to the bank (to take out a loan), and I've been to the bank a few times, you want to make them an offer that they can't refuse. And so you make it hard for them to tell you no (if you have good credit).

When I was in college, and this is a lesson that's a guy told me: his parents, and particularly his mom, had a business. And it just like in high school or college, you sit around and have conversations with people, and we were talking about business. He gave me some advice and I really didn't realize how that advice would impact the rest of my life. He said that if ever get (save) \$10,000, it would change how you feel about money. At the time I think I was probably a freshman or maybe a sophomore in college, and by the time I graduated at my first 10,000 dollars. Because I actually started printing shirts when I was in college. I'll opened my first location, as I stated, and 2013. But I was actually pretty sure it's under my father at that particular time. But, back to the \$10,000. What that does is, it's a very important for people to understand the significance of that. The significance of it is, if you can deny yourself: the iPhone, the shoes, the whatever it is that you want to spend your money on, if you can deny yourself enough to save \$10,000, you would have mastered the ability to control yourself. And it doesn't matter what the gadget is, what the latest and greatest item is that they put out there, you will be able to go into a store and control yourself. And that is the biggest thing that you need as an entrepreneur. *You need to be able to control yourself.* Control your spending. No matter how much money you make, there is still something else for you to buy. I went to a print show recently; they have machines that cost \$200,000. You can just go buy one, but you may not have the clientele for it. So there's always something that you can buy. And if you think about your life at 17 or 18 years old, maybe 16; think about something that you use had to have when were 10 years old- and now you don't care anything about it. So there is something right now that you just got to have, some shoes, a belt or whatever; and I guarantee you, at 22 you're not going to care anything about it. What you will care about is that money that you have in that account. Because money doesn't rot. So rather than by all those products, focus on saving your money for something that is really going to make you happy. Not something that's

just temporary, because those, like I said, that item that you had to have it 10 years old, that doesn't do anything for you now, spend all your money on something that its 16 years old are 17 years old 18 years old you think is going to make you happy temporary. That item that you thought you had to have at 10 years old, that doesn't do anything for you, you spend all your money is 16 years old 17 years old that you think is that make you happy, it's not. It's not helping you with your purpose. It's not helping you with your passion. Spend your energy and your money on that. Weather than spending all day on Instagram, making and Instagram account and market yourself if you're interested in business. And that's my advice.

- *Should they focus on what they love to do or what services are needed? Explain, please.*

Both. Both. If you're in Memphis and you love to ski, or you love marine biology, whatever the case may be, there's no market for that. You have to balance which you love to do and where you are, if there is a market for which you love to do, you want to look at that. Think about things that you like to do. Think about things that you've naturally like to do. If you naturally like talking to people, or if you naturally like doing photos, or whatever it is that you just naturally gravitate towards, then look at things that allow you to be able to do that. And then you won't consider it work. So that's kind of what you want to do. And then, at the figure that out, you figure out ways to make money at it. How to market that and what's the need for that. And you may have to twist a little bit, for example I like talking to people. So it doesn't matter if I'm talking to them about tee shirts, or something else. I enjoy talking to people. So it would be hard for me to do a job, where I'd just sat behind a desk all day without any interaction with people. Pick something that allows you to do what you naturally like to do. And