

Duma Travel ...

the art of pursuing dreams

From an early age, Themba Mthombeni, CEO of Duma Travel, a corporate travel company, dreamed of travelling the world and achieving great things.

"I've always been a hard worker," he says. "I knew that someday I would start my own business. I wasn't sure of the industry, but I love travel so much I guess it's inevitable that I have turned my passion into a livelihood."

Mthombeni grew up in a small village in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, received a university scholarship and at varsity held various odd jobs, all the time saving his money for his travels. Mthombeni has a BCom from Wits and Honours and Masters in Business Leadership from UNISA. It was while working for a prestigious mining company that he decided to take the plunge and go on his own. The company wanted him to



Themba Mthombeni

relocate to Namibia, but he wasn't keen to go. Mthombeni saw it as an opportunity to change careers.

Although he admits that he knew nothing about corporate travel at the time, he decided to start a travel business. "It wasn't easy. I faced huge challenges," he says. "My then boss feared for me the most. It bothered him that I was leaving a secure job to venture into an industry I knew little about. He said that I was a bungee jumper – risking too much for my love affair with travel."

With the money he had saved, Mthombeni bought a travel franchise where he received basic travel agency training. He sold the franchise in less than a year, and started Duma Travel in 2002 with only one employee. Eight years later, the company has grown immensely – employing 85 people in seven offices around the country.

"I was advised to start small and steadily work my way up. I did the opposite," he says. "My strategy was to aggressively pursue the larger corporate companies and establish Duma Travel as one of the top five corporate travelling companies in South Africa by 2015. That has always been my vision and my team embraces that dream as well."

He believes that success lies in not being afraid to take risks. "Be courageous and focus on the end result," he says. It's okay to bungee jump at least once in your life. **S**

Is it better to start a business earlier or later in life?

According to Themba Mthombeni:

- Starting a business later in life could be advantageous if you have planned it well by saving start-up capital.
- As you grow older you will have more business knowledge, a higher stress threshold and perhaps experience in the type of industry you would like to operate in.
- On the other hand, if you wait too long, you might have accumulated more responsibilities, which can make running your own business more challenging and stressful. •