

**Episode 16: Shirlene Nafula – Crystal River Products Ltd., Kenya**



At just 21, Shirlene decided to start a business that manufactures beauty and cleaning products the day after her UK student visa application was denied. Four years later, Crystal River Products makes six bio-based products that meet the Kenya Bureau of Standards quality requirements. From mixing chemicals on her mother's dining table, Shirlene's company now rents its own workshop and Shirlene hopes to construct a factory within the next year. The company enjoys nation-wide distribution and receives sales inquiries from neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania. Crystal Products employs a staff of 19.

**What you'll hear in this episode:**

- How Shirlene picked herself up when her UK student visa application was denied and she had to put her further education dreams on hold.
- Shirlene's initial funding - chemicals, plastics and labels bought by her mother and US\$ 100 from her grandmother.
- Certifying products with the Kenya Bureau of Standards at a subsidized fee.
- Finding a US\$ 45,000 investor and mentor on KCB Lion's Den and what that means for Crystal Products.
- Developing a new staffing model that suits the nature of the business.
- Shirlene's work as Convener, Youth in Business at the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry.
- The value of networking: source of 60% of the company's business; information sharing, mental & moral support.
- **Challenges:** Starting a business without a business background; having to separate herself from her friends in order to focus on the business.
- **Shirlene's short term dream:** To construct a permanent factory home within the next year and multiply their current 2,000 litres a month production capacity by 5.
- **Shirlene's long term dream:** To build a global brand.
- **Lesson Learned:** Patience pays.
- **Words of Inspiration:** Start small. Think big. Enjoy the process!

**Useful Resources**

Chandaria Group of Companies  
<https://www.chandaria.com/>  
KCB Lion's Den:  
<https://vc4a.com/kcb-lions-den/>  
Kenya Bureau of Standards  
<https://www.kebs.org/>  
Kenya National Chamber of  
Commerce & Industry  
<http://kenyachamber.ke/>

**Crystal River Products**

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<https://www.facebook.com/shirlene.nafula>  
[https://www.facebook.com/platinum5creations/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/platinum5creations/?ref=br_rs)  
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<https://www.instagram.com/crystalriverproducts/>  
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Website: [www.cryver.com](http://www.cryver.com)

**We would love to hear from you**

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