

MENTORpreneur Zambia

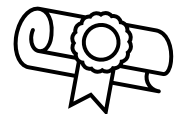
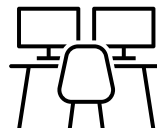
Interview with Mentee cohort 2022

1. Who are you and what is the story of your business?



My name is **Bertha Nenga** a Mentorpreneur Mentee. I am an experienced entrepreneur who still wants to accomplish a lot on her entrepreneurship journey.

I am a chairperson of Bernen Construction Zambia Limited an organisation that was legally registered in December 2021 and is women-led – the shareholding of the business comprises of four women and one man.



My Background – My Journey

I hold a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration from the University of Lusaka (UNILUS) and an advanced Diploma in Public Relations and Personnel Administration from Zambia Institute of Management. I have **15 years of Banking experience** covering **relationship management and customer service**. I worked for Barclays Bank for two years before moving to First National Bank Zambia (FNB), where I worked for 13 years. I left FNB in December 2021 to **pursue my journey as an entrepreneur full time**. Since I, as a sales-driven, motivated person, had to divide my attention between running my business and my very demanding job, I made the bold decision to resign from the bank so that I could **dedicate myself full-time to entrepreneurship**.

The Story Of My Business

May 2015 Start of Entrepreneurship Journey

Bernen Construction Zambia Limited was birthed from Bernen Genral Delaers and exists since 2015.

My entrepreneurship journey started in May 2015 when a former colleague from FNB left and joined an organisation called BIA Zambia, a firm based in Kitwe working with earth moving machines. He approached me and requested me to find a friend who had a registered business with the Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA) so that I could broker them for service contracts with the BIA.

I did not struggle to find someone and managed to convince one of my friends to register with them. This meant that the firm I brought on board would pay me a commission from the contracts BIA gave them. We started working and got a few orders that we did for 4 months continuously .

Few months later Registration of own Business

A few months later my friend from BIA asked me to register my own company so that I could supply to their firm as well. I did not hesitate to do so and quickly started the registration process. **Within two weeks Bernen General Dealers was born and is operating since then.**

December 2012 Company with Limited Liability

In December 2021 I decided to **upgrade my business from trading as a sole proprietorship to a company with limited liability** and to incorporate three women and one man as shareholders in the business.

Benefits Of The Evolution Of The Company



During my time trading as a sole proprietor I consistently dealt with only two companies. I felt very comfortable because I never wanted to be under a lot of pressure as I was a full-time employee of FNB, which limited my potential to grow big and be competitive. **After the formation of the limited company, we decided to focus on construction, commodity trading and supply.** This area of trade is **mainly dominated by men, so we challenged ourselves** to get into the industry and compete. **We are a resilient, strong and vibrant team and we all believe in perseverance.**

Our business is special because we have so far **managed to enter the mining industry, manufacturing industry and we are waiting to get into road construction** so that we can fairly compete in that space. We are trying to get supply contracts from manufacturing industries, and **so far we seem to be on the right track.** Our **vision** is to be the number one female led construction firm providing best products and customer service.

2. How is the relationship with your mentor unfolding?

My relationship with my mentor Mr James Chiyaba is going on well. I never knew the value and importance of having a mentor in both my personal and business life. My mentor has been providing guidance on how a business must run. Every month we prepare an action plan with objectives that we follow and that serve as a guide for my tasks. He's open, gives honest feedback and checks on me continuously. Our relationship has been built on trust, respect and flexibility. Whenever I need help I do not hesitate to contact him because he creates sufficient time to attend to me.

3. How did you and your business benefit from the MENTORpreneur Zambia Programme?

Bernen Construction Zambia Limited has benefited a lot from this mentorship program. I knew I was in the right place at the right time the first day the program was launched.



The business did not realise the importance of having SMART goals. The first meeting with my Mentor I was requested to submit SMART goals for the business, so we had a meeting with the shareholders, and we had to come up with clear objectives that the business should be guided by. I am delighted to report that we never thought about setting SMART goals at the beginning of the year, but since participating in this mentorship program I must acknowledge that the business is benefiting, and we are really grateful for giving us the support and guidance we were lacking.

Our business goals have been defined from the time I started this program, and I can see positive change regarding the operations of the business. This is very important to me, not only because I am benefiting but everyone in the business gets to benefit. I have so far been exposed to new and different perspectives, I have increased self-confidence, and I have developed strong

communication skills and learnt to self-reflect.

A popular African proverb that I love reads: "If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together." To me this is very important because I know that with this mentorship programme my business and I will go very far in our future endeavours.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I am very proud to be part of this program, I am never ashamed to talk about it every time I get the opportunity to share it with my friends. I hope this program will continue to shape new SMEs so that they can benefit and appreciate the importance of mentorship.

Alternative

The Story of my business



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