

Do you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur?

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Starting and running a business is very much like riding a crazy rollercoaster at a funfair. Exciting, dangerous and it assaults the senses like nothing else. Do you sit and scream and close your eyes, or do you sit and enjoy the ride and anticipate the next loop, dip or climb?



Melkisedek-Shivute Ausiku is the founder of LEFA, Namibia.

When I started LEFA, the ride-hailing company right here in Namibia that works through a smartphone app, I was full of optimism. I still am, but it has been slightly tempered and it's been a crazy ride so far.

We all feel our struggles are unique and in some ways they are, however as an entrepreneur we all go through several similar stages. Once you've started the business, the various stages of this rollercoaster ride occur over and over again. Simply making payments that are due every month provides enough excitement and sometimes cold sweats.

Stage 1: The first stage of the concept is called "Uninformed Optimism". At this stage on a rollercoaster, just getting to the top of the rollercoaster, you experience feelings of an adrenalin rush, characterized by excitement and nervous energy. LEFA definitely made me experience this when it launched. Would the people embrace it? Would there be sponsors and would investors start showing an interest? We assumed they would and thought we would be an overnight success...well; *'an-over one month'* success, perhaps.

Stage 2: The second stage is called “Informed Pessimism”. As you ride over the top of the curve you now have a bit more information. Feelings of fear, nervousness, and frustration begin to set in. Perhaps you even want to get off of it. This too was a sensation I embraced almost unknowingly. Will it work, will people download the app, would drivers sign on... all things that kept me awake at night. Being a young entrepreneur suddenly seemed a lot more daunting.

Stage 3: The third stage is called “Crisis of Meaning”. You're past scared. You feel despair. It's as if you're standing on the edge of a cliff ready to jump, and you begin to think “Today the rollercoaster's going off the bottom of the track for the very first time.” LEFA was getting downloaded, but the expenses kept coming and discussions with drivers and potential investors took much longer.

At this point, you face a critical juncture. You can come off the bottom of the curve and crash and burn, which is when your business goes bankrupt or you get a stress burn-out. Or you can come around the corner because you're getting support at “crisis of meaning” and you can enter an upward swing called “informed optimism”.

LEFA started getting traction in the media. I was able to attend Vivatech Paris and FABlab Namibia became a big supporter and LEFA was invited on a Trade Mission by GRN to Portugal. Along with NBL as a sponsor and seeing some investors becoming interested, meant that LEFA and I were weathering the storm. We weren't on dry land yet, but the hellish conditions were behind us for now.

Stage 4: Informed Optimism. You're calm. You're informed. You might even say you are cautiously optimistic. This cautious optimism, is all it is. It's very fragile at best. But, it does seem as if LEFA has gone from being a rollercoaster ride with its hair on fire to a more manageable ride with bumps, but definitely no fire.

In Namibia we dream of a good paying job and alternatively we dream of making it big as an entrepreneur. There's something to be said for both sides. I have experienced both sides and despite the crazy moments, the uncertainty and the ever-looming moment of your hair being on fire, being an entrepreneur is definitely the way forward. Especially with a business like LEFA, where we are offering a great service which has proven success internationally and which keeps Namibia's roads safe.

I will choose entrepreneurship each and every time. Especially because I know there are people and businesses out there that want LEFA to thrive and succeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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