

To succeed, don't be an island...

 By [James Maposa](#)

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Recently read that rapper Jay-Z's net worth has surpassed the US\$1bn mark. According to [Forbes](#), through being an astute businessman and growing his portfolio beyond music, Jay-Z's net worth now sits at US\$1bn. What a time to be alive!



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What was once considered a curse word in corporate boardrooms has become the springboard for wealth accumulation. Success of this nature speaks to one defining truth, belief in oneself. I admit that when reporting on successes of this nature we stay focused on the achievers and never balance our conversation out with the failures because truthfully speaking an aspiring hip-hop artist's potential success rate is very thin.

I do not have the stats off hand but, if we had to use the African continent for context, one explaining to his parents that he wants to be a musician, let alone a hip-hop artist could most certainly result in banishment, ex-communication, excessive ridicule and once you've come to your senses – a long and arduous reconciliatory path.

Belief comes from vision

But for now, I will follow in the path of those who speak about success and ignore failure. My departure point will be belief in oneself. Belief comes from vision and vision is inspired by a dream. Your dream should be espoused in some relatable reality.

Two things govern whether you'll achieve a said dream. Talent and resources. The ones we cannot stop harping about are abundantly talented but, have very limited resources. When they strike gold, these are the people we celebrate the most.

But talent, as Tiger Woods said, is *"99% perspiration and 1% inspiration."* Cliché, I know but very true. If you are good at something, for you to succeed you need to be incessantly obsessed with it, probing, and asking questions on how you can stand out, go further, do more and achieve even greater.

So obsessed with kicking the perfect free-kick was Andre Pirlo that he figured out what he needed to do while dressed formally. This didn't stop him from rushing onto a soccer field and knocking the ball around with his moccasins to prove his theory correct. Commitment trumps everything when it comes to achieving your goal.

Resources are important

Resources are important too. Admittedly some people are good at ideation but fall apart when it comes to execution. But if you have the resources, the dream can still be realised. I liken this to managing a professional football team. Winning a plethora of trophies is strongly correlated to the team's wage bill.

Sure, there are cases where Leicester City or DC Moteme Pembe will cause an upset or two but from a probability standpoint, those with the deeper pockets have a stronger chance of winning. This suggests that for your dream to be realised it goes beyond the talent. I see and experience that through the businesses I run.

Pound for pound we could compete with the best of them. Those who have given us a chance have always given us the nod of approval and in most cases award us follow-on work. This implies that we've got great talent forming up our teams. But the resource we sometimes lack is the network, that is, an individual who knows someone of influence who works for a client that we are aching to work with.

Without this person's endorsement, most decision makers would rather take the safer route and work with the tried and tested instead of start-ups or the smaller enterprises whose brands are still being built. It does go beyond the network. As mentioned earlier, I spoke of talent. Another resource that is critical but often overlooked is your counsel. Sure Jay-Z is now worth a US\$1bn but, he could not have done it alone. No man or business is an island.

Counsel is king

There's a team behind him that whispers in his ear from time to time-based on prevailing trends, the latest scoop, what they heard at the watering hole and many more information sources. Behind every astute business person is an army of advisors who are invested in this individual's success because when he or she wins, the entire squad wins.

An unfair thing to say but relevant nonetheless is that Gayle King although talented and amazing at what she does is in a much better place because of her association to Oprah Winfrey. I certainly do not want to be vilified but, being a part of a team, somebody is always good for the collective. So investing in counsel is critical for any business looking to grow beyond its wildest dreams.

Someone must've told Jay-Z that his portfolio shouldn't stop at music. Listening to these voices resulted in him 1) owning his masters 2) setting up Tidal 3) investing in Uber 4) D'usse and Armand de Brignac (alcoholic beverages) 5) Art, 6) real estate and 7) Artist and athlete management. Most claim to be self-made but, how possible is it for one person to have the chops to know all the sectors he's invested in so well and always win? Counsel is king.

Partnerships should be prioritised

In as much as diversifying your portfolio comes with an upside, it also has a couple of downsides. You don't want to spread yourself thin and lose it all because you've got your hands in a multitude of cookie jars. To avert such a catastrophe, entering into partnerships should be prioritised.

Kanye West is a rapper with an amazing fashion sense. However, when he released his shoe line, he did it in partnership with Nike and after that relationship fell apart (creative differences) he moved onto Adidas. Working with shoe authorities such as the aforementioned brands gave him the credibility he needed to break into the market and sell his shoe range at a premium.

In my opinion, some of the released shoes didn't look too great but hey they're Adidas or Nike. At least there's that comfort that barring the questionable design, the engineering of the shoe is on point. Partnerships help you get to where you want to go. Use them.

Belief in oneself

At the end of the day, it all comes back to belief in oneself. A friend who works in investment banking once told me that one of the things he and his colleagues look at when investing in any business is how much of their own money have they thrown into the business. In addition, they also assess the sacrifices made, that is, did the owners of the business leave full employ to start the business or were they doing it as a side hustle.

There is a lot of risk involved in investing in a start-up or fledgeling business so to give confidence in your investors and your customers prove to them beyond a reasonable doubt that you are your business' first client, fan, and proponent. That belief translates into your business' defining truth, a golden thread you can continue to leverage as you build and progress your brand.

ABOUT JAMES MAPOSA

Maposa is the founder and managing director of Birguid, a research and advisory company. Maposa has 15 years work experience, mostly spent in research and strategy consulting. Maposa is passionate about socio-economic development, business growth and continuity.

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