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Look Who's Making Money Now! Inventive Entrepreneurs Find Success

By LaToya Cross, Associate Editor

The economic downturn has carved room for a new wave of entrepreneurs and fearless innovators. Despite the financial chill of the economy, these everyday folks chose not to falter to fear, and instead followed their dreams and became bold creators.



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The GlamCan: Twanda Mobley

Take 32-year-old, Twanda Mobley, the creator of the sleek GlamCan. After being laid-off from a career in the banking industry in 2008, the idea that had been simmering in her mind since 2007 finally resonated and she knew that it was time to stop being a dreamer and to take her chances as a product developer.

"I actually think that it was God telling me that I really need to push forward on it because [the concept for the Glam Can] really started resonating into my whole mind," says Twanda. "I was thinking about it so much that I would even dream about it. So I decided that I was going to do whatever I needed to do to push forward on it to get it to market."

And she did just that. The **GlamCan** is a unique trash receptacle that can be used indoors and outdoors. It's convenient with secure closure and comes with a mounting bracket accessory that allows for usage any and everywhere.

The idea aroused the homeowner, because she was tired of picking up litter in her yard along with trash polluting the grounds of many Chicagoland neighborhoods. "It's horrible and it brings down the community and brings a sense of hopelessness," Twanda offers.

Twanda's nephew provided the visual that she wanted and then it was off to pitch the idea. She researched and found a successfully legit product development company that produced the prototype. From there, it was time for the manufacturing and design process. Once her product was complete, Twanda participated in various trade shows to gain recognition.

It took two-years of time, research, and dedication but the GlamCan is now accessible to consumers online as well as in a few hardware stores. You can also call Twanda directly to make your purchase.

She states with excitement, "It took two years to get it to market which was a blessing because for some people it takes 10 years. It's a phenomenal, new green product and something that the people will enjoy using."

For more info about the **GlamCan**, visit www.theglamcan.com.



Sex Scene Ice Cream: LaTrice and Ervin Smith Unique Specialty Packaging Service Inc.

Don't ride it off (no pun intended), until you know what it's about. Married couple LaTrice and Ervin Smith created just the right cool-down to fire up your committed relationship.

Targeted towards married couples and those in a committed relationships that may have lost the spice and excitement, **Sex Scene Ice Cream** is the only ice cream that comes with instructions: **Open. Imitate. Eat. Repeat.**

"My husband came up with the concept and I came up with the name," LaTrice shares. "Once you *open* the ice cream, you *imitate* the sex scene, eat the ice cream, and then you *repeat* it all over again!"

The seven-year long business venture was no walk in the park. After spending and wasting thousands of dollars, (all funds used for their product have come from savings, income, 401-k withdrawals and donations), and a misstep with a faulty agency that did not produce their end of the deal, the couple finally met with a financial advisor who told them to pitch their idea to a small ice cream company.

"It was a struggle because this is "not your ordinary dairy" and we knew that it wasn't. We knew that it wasn't going to run in [the local grocery store chains] right away," says LaTrice. "People were afraid of it and didn't want to take a chance and there aren't too many companies that do pints."

Luckily, a call to a small company in Tampa, FL. loved the idea. "I called so many ice cream companies and when I spoke with Old Meeting House, they were excited and didn't have a problem with the adult theme of the product. They said yes," LaTrice exclaims.

The couple still works their daily 9-5's but use the weekends to promote their product. "We're still getting started and

growing. We have an event every weekend. There's not one weekend where I'm not toting around my red and white pulley cooler with dry ice," she laughs.

And every first Saturday of the month, Unique Specialty Packaging Incorporated has an ice cream taster where they introduce new flavors.

Says LaTrice proudly, "We did something that's not out there. We put ice cream and sex together. And everything is focused on a movie. That's what the clapboard is all about. You go home and create. It's like an adult lover's playground."

Sex Scene Ice Cream's French Vanilla Kiss can be purchased at the Cat's Meow located on 51st and King Drive. In October, their second flavor, G-Marks the Spot will be available.

To learn more about the flavorful product, visit www.sexsceneicecream.com.



Virtual Styling: Joi Mitchell & Nicole Brown Space & Soundz Co.

Interior designing is about what you like and what you feel, it's personal. Virtual styling is about depersonalizing. The idea is to sell a visual of the space to a buyer.

A knack for creativity has always been a part of Joi Mitchell's *modus operandi* (M.O.). But even the most creative people become challenged when that creative energy festers with no answers or slightest clue as to what it is they should create!

Well, in an odd way that's just how Joi's latest venture, Space & Soundz came about. With a background in the music industry, the initial name came from a Chicago DJ, named Fathom. Space and Soundz was intended for Joi to help revamp Fathom's musical style and image. Instead, Fathom DJ saw Joi's passion for the name and told her to make it work to *her* advantage.

The idea sat dormant for a while. Until, "I was just sitting at home on my computer one day and said, 'Okay God, I know I'm creative but not *that* creative,'" Joi recalls. "What can I do that's new and out of the box?"

And then it came to her. Joi contacted her business partner, Nicole Brown, who also worked with her in the music industry and is currently a real estate agent, and introduced the idea of virtual home staging.

Virtual Styling is "using today's digital technology based on the market the home is in and the buyer, determining how the room should look aesthetically as if it were staged in real time," Joi explains.

Joi deals with the clients and works with her South African interior designer to create the virtual styles, while Nicole is out in the community pulling in clients and gaining business. "Everything is done online through images," shares Joi. "We find the furniture online or my designer can also create 3-D models of whatever ideas I have."

It's a trend that has been around for a while, but has yet to set into the urban market—the target consumers Joi and Nicole are now reaching.

We covered the 'Space;' now where does the 'Soundz' come in?

The company is in the process of re-launching their brand and adding a little something special that will set the appropriate mood for open houses. "We want to provide the real estate agent with a disk or Mp3 with music that creates the mood for people to want to stay in the house."

Creativity is an endless gift.

To experience the transformation, visit www.spaceandsoundz.com.

If you look back in history, some of the most successful businesses were created when the economy was in bad shape; troubled times spark creativity and encourage people to take risks.

"I believe that people coming out with their own products and services is what will eventually turn this economy around," says Twanda. "Small businesses are the heart of the economy and the downturn is pushing people towards entrepreneurship."

"All it takes in this business is persistence," offers LaTrice.

And while their businesses continue to grow and gain recognition, the one thing that must be realized is the fact that they all followed through with a concept and became entrepreneurs. Innovators are on the move!

Joi adds, "don't worry about what your competitors are doing. Just do whatever you're going to do and don't worry about everybody else. If it's a concept that has already been done, find a way to flip it. Small businesses can win."

You know, there comes a point in time where creative incentives within blossom and receive their airtime. That's just what these entrepreneurs have done.

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