

Honesty and integrity: starting a business in Durham



Samuel Jenkins, owner of Samuel and Sons Barber Shop (photo by Brian Shurney).



Joe Bushfan, owner of Joe's Commissary (photo by Brian Shurney).



Miguel Collado, owner of Los Primos Supermarket (photo by Brian Shurney).

The owners of Joe's Commissary, Samuel and Sons Barber Shop and Los Primos share wisdom on business success in Durham.

by Brian Shurney
The Durham VOICE

Starting a business can be a daunting task full of risks and uncertainties, but there are plenty of entrepreneurs who have found success in Durham.

Three business owners — Joe Bushfan, Miguel Collado and Samuel Jenkins — shared their tips and secrets for running a business.

Joe is the owner of Joe's Commissary, a commercial kitchen on Angier Avenue. He's been doing business in Durham for 12 years.

Samuel Jenkins is a barber and the owner of Samuel and Sons Barber Shop a few doors down from Joe's. He's been in the business for over 20 years.

Miguel Collado owns Los Primos Supermarket on Alston Avenue. He's been working in Durham and building up Los Primos since 2002.

With over 45 years of Durham business experience between them, these three business owners know the secrets of success. Here is what they have to say to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Manage your money wisely

All of the business owners stress that you have to be smart with your money. Joe and Samuel both say hiring people to manage your money is essential.

"You have to have an accountant," Joe says, "I don't care who you are. They are the heartbeat of a business."

For Samuel, an accountant alone is not enough.

"There are three essential parts to running a business," he says. "You have to have a banker, you must have an accountant and you need an attorney. Most businesses won't be successful without those components."

According to Samuel, having people to help manage your money is a worthwhile investment. It costs to hire bankers and accountants, but the financial security is worth it.

"My house's 2018 taxes are already paid off," he says. "On months I make good

money, I put it in the bank. You know what will slow you down? 'I want a Maserati' or 'I want a mansion with a pool.'"

Even though Miguel doesn't mention keeping an accountant, he still knows that he has to be careful with money.

"Money is our number one enemy," he says. "It's the most delicate part of sustaining a business. Money isn't ours, it evolves and rotates between hands."

Visualize your success

"There has to be a want. There has to be something that pulls you," Miguel says.

Miguel and Samuel say that visualizing the future of your business and organizing around that vision will help you succeed. For Samuel, this means writing his plans down on paper.

"If it's in your head and it's not visual, it's not a plan," he says. "It's just a thought. You need a plan."

Samuel says that you should also have a greater vision of what you want from your business.

"Some people start their business because they say they want to make money," he says. "But how long do you want to make money? Are you ever going to retire? The business needs to close at some point, so you need a plan that has an endpoint."

Pick your client base and serve them

You may have heard the phrase "the customer is always right," but Samuel says that it's a bit more complex than that for many Durham businesses.

"Think about what kind of clients you want," he says. "All money ain't good money, and if you try to be broad and flexible, you might end up with nothing."

According to Samuel, the people you attract into your store can change the rest of your client base. If a potential customer walks into your store and sees people they don't like, they may not come back.

Once you know who your customers are, Miguel says you need to get to know them so you can give them a better experience at your store.

“You have to ask questions to see what your customers want,” he says. “I’m Dominican, so I know Dominicans love plantains, but I had to learn what kind of food African-American people like so I could serve them too.”

Joe has an inclusive view on customer satisfaction. He says what’s most important is getting people to walk into your store.

“People eat with their feet,” he says. “They are your highest priority. I don’t like to treat people like numbers — I want to know them by name.”

Take initiative

Samuel says you will have to do a lot of work on your own when starting a business, so it takes more than just a passive interest.

“You have to do things the average person won’t do,” he says. “You have to get up early and work hard.”

Miguel says running a successful busi-

ness requires some studying as well.

“The most important thing is to gain knowledge of what you want to conquer,” he says. “You don’t have to know it all, but you have to know some.”

Miguel and the others say that the best way to learn is by observing people who already have skill. By making use of your resources, you can spend your energy building your business.

“Learn from people with experience,” Miguel says. “You can learn by yourself, but it is very tiring.”

According to Joe, you will become a leader over time.

“You’ll find that you’re always reinventing yourself,” he says. “You’ll have to learn to improvise, because every day there’s something different that happens.”

Samuel says it’s best to trust yourself before anyone else.

“You must always remember to be present in your business,” he says. “You

can’t be on vacation. I’ve let other people run my business before — I’ve lost every time.”

Starting your business

Joe, Miguel and Samuel agree that starting and running a business takes a lot of work, but you will be well-prepared if you learn from the successful people around you.

Samuel is tough when it comes to business, and he sees that honesty and integrity are of the highest importance.

“Business is about doing the right thing for the right reasons,” he says. “You won’t be successful unless you know that.”

Joe says that integrity is always important, but most of all, you need to be driven.

“Learn from people who will help you accelerate,” he says. “Every minute is important. Once you make a decision about what you want to do, don’t let anything stop you.”