

Making it in Africa

Dorothy Ghettuba is the CEO of Spielworks Media, a TV, film, and digital media production company based in Kenya. She talks about her journey so far in this feature from *How We Made in Africa*.



Dorothy Ghettuba, CEO, Spielworks Media.

1. Tell us about one of the toughest situations you've found yourself in as a business owner.

Almost losing my company in 2014. At the time, I had a contract with a client, who accounted for a huge percentage of my revenue, and when the client cancelled that contract halfway, my company imploded and nearly came undone. It was a sobering moment and we as a team had to endure a difficult and arduous journey to get back on our feet.

How we overcame the challenge was by me acknowledging and taking responsibility for the situation we were in. Next, we figured out a strategy on how to get out of the predicament we were in and then we executed that strategy.

What we decided to do was not to waste a crisis and took this opportunity to learn as much as we could so that we [could] do and be better.

2. Which business achievement are you most proud of?

Bringing my company back on its feet again. It took time, it was humbling in every sense of the word, and it taught us many valuable lessons.

3. Describe your greatest weakness as an entrepreneur.

I am a big dreamer, a big picture person – a visionary, if you will. I can see the endgame clearly and know that if I can dream it, then it can be achieved.

My weakness is impatience. Wanting to go from zero to 100 at once. This, of course, can be (and has been) detrimental. So, what I have learned to do is to pace myself.

[I] remind myself actively that Rome was not built in a day and [entrepreneurship](#) (at least my business) is a

long game.

Being acutely aware that this is my weakness, I have tried and continue to create a culture of dissent in my company, more so with my COO, Ndanu Kilonzo. I encourage her to disagree without fear and dissent with me whenever she feels I am getting ahead of myself. To rein me in when she feels I am being impatient.

On my part, I have learned to listen. My COO is a brilliant and remarkably process-oriented person who pays attention to detail. I often marvel at how her mind works.

So what I do now is share a vision I have in mind and she maps the journey and, together with the team, we walk it.

4. Which popular entrepreneurial advice do you disagree with?

“Fake it till you make it”. Not only is this piece of advice useless, it is dangerous for you as a person and for your business.

I am not saying that one should not be confident in their skills, talents and abilities – they should. What I am saying is stretching the truth can and will be injurious to you in the long run.

On a personal level, it is disingenuous and it can also be remarkably stressful to keep up appearances.

On a business level, it can strain your organisation financially. What I would encourage entrepreneurs to do instead is to focus on building confidence.

5. Is there anything you wish you knew about entrepreneurship before you got started?

Yes, there are many things I wish I knew. But hindsight is 20-20 [vision] now, isn't it?

6. Name a business opportunity you would still like to pursue.

That's a broad question and many ideas come to mind. I will, however, narrow it down to my particular (creative) industry – “talent management”. That is a relatively, if not completely, untapped area in my industry.