

Jamaican Entrepreneurship

by *Glen Laman*

2014

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240 p

ISBN: 978-9769569317

Review DOI [10.1108/PRR-03-2018-048](https://doi.org/10.1108/PRR-03-2018-048)

This is a review of Dr Glen Laman's book, *Jamaican Entrepreneurship* published in 2014 in Kingston, Jamaica by Minna Press. This exciting publication of 240 pages explores the characteristics, traits and ideas underlying the success of accomplished Jamaican entrepreneurs. It is indeed a noteworthy contribution as documentation of Jamaican entrepreneurs, in this format, did not exist before.

Dr Laman completed much of the research for this book as part of his doctoral work. It is interesting to note that he first encountered the entrepreneurial world as a young boy when his father operated "Claudette's Ice Cream Parlour and Restaurant" in Kingston, Jamaica's capital. As a teenager, he worked in his brothers' whole foods store, Fruit-O-Rama and bakery supply business on weekends and vacations. He recalls traveling around the island, calling on bakeries and trying to collect on outstanding invoices. Despite an exciting career in the corporate world, he responded to the call of entrepreneurship and opened a restaurant in a shopping mall. He later started a business which imported frozen coconut water, natural juices and other products from Jamaica for distribution to businesses in the USA. The book becomes interesting to read when the author has such an entrepreneurial background.

Jamaican Entrepreneurship is a study of 15 entrepreneurs who have succeeded despite operating in an environment of political and economic instability in a country full of bureaucratic and legal hurdles to do business. The book emphasizes that entrepreneurs can contribute to economic development to create jobs and foreign exchange. Furthermore, the book implements that Jamaica, as a small island developing nation, should foster policies which encourage indigenous businesses rather than relying on large multinational companies to develop economy. The author advocates teaching entrepreneurship to foster skills and knowledge needed to start and sustain businesses. In addition to anecdotal information about fifteen successful entrepreneurs, the author analyzes their characteristics and traits. The author suggests that early life experiences, risk taking ability, creating opportunity, perseverance, hard work and working at a young age are some of the factors which contribute to successful entrepreneurs.



Although entrepreneurship is a hot subject to study (thanks to modern age entrepreneurs like Mark Zuckerberg to stimulate interest of younger people) and many popular books are written on the subject, this book stands out as it sheds light on a relatively less reflected area – entrepreneurship in a small, less developed, island economy of Jamaica. The book is a great source to understand, how entrepreneurs made it big in the absence of sound national business policies, large market, raw materials, investment capital and any promise of success.

Introductory chapters clearly summarize the problems and limitations faced by Jamaica being a small island developing states economy. At the same time, the book builds national pride by mentioning many achievements of Jamaicans in and outside of the country. Our international image is that Jamaica is a land of high crime rate; this book has great potential of improving brand Jamaica overseas as it highlights our qualities of being hardworking, ambitious and successful people with a “can do” attitude. This book portrays that Jamaica is not just a beautiful island but we are people with innovative ideas.

The book is informative, well researched and well written; before you know, you would have finished reading it. The book is relevant not just for entrepreneurs but for anyone who wants to be successful in their field. This book inspires you to become the best you can. It is a great reference book for anyone interested in entrepreneurship in Jamaica.

The book starts with basic knowledge on the subject which is easy to understand even for the people who are reading their first book on entrepreneurship. Comprehensive literature review provides you with a good foundation. As a matter of fact, it is a great first book to read on entrepreneurship for people interested in having a glimpse of an entrepreneur’s life. The reader is never left alone and the book builds up gradually.

The book shares interesting perspective about historic and socio-political climate of Jamaica and its linkage with entrepreneurship. Only after reviewing the basic nature of entrepreneurial activity and the social and business context of Jamaica, the writer shares the real world experience of 15 Jamaican entrepreneurs who defied the odds and made themselves successful. The profiles include their life history and how they became successful, in an interesting and engaging way. The writer explains, with clarity, what these entrepreneurs had to go through. These are stories of hard work and determination which make the reader view things differently. The profiles are written so well that they take you to the time when these great entrepreneurs were going through their share of difficulties. As I was immersed in reading this book, it reminded me of what Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said years ago – “The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.”

I find the book analytical, carefully researched, entertaining, inspiring and motivating. This book encourages its readers to rise above their situation and succeed as it promotes entrepreneurial spirit and clearly suggests what it takes to be successful in business. The inspiration you get is to never give up! The writer manages to keep the reader interested and stimulate entrepreneurial outlook. The book is well-organized and clearly written. The style and content of the book is suitable for wider audience. The reader can be students, business people or anyone who is interested in understanding the recipe of success in business or life in general. Examination of 15 successful entrepreneurs not only suggests that all of them had their daunting challenges to overcome but also shows us what they did, how they did it and why they did it.

However, this is not an advanced book on the topic. Still, it is a good read as it highlights the importance of self believe, the passion to never give up, an eye to see an opportunity where others see problems, a personality which never gets discouraged, an attitude to take obstacles as stepping stones to success, importance of focus, clarity of purpose, creativity,

innovativeness, risk taking, proactiveness together with many stories verifying that anything is attainable with hard work.

The book also makes one hopeful that if Jamaican entrepreneurs could direct their energies and efforts internally – Jamaica can experience a big economic boost. The relevant policymakers should also read this book, as they will become more aware of the problems budding entrepreneurs face and suggest policies to ease their difficulties.

This book is a shortcut to maximize your learning about Jamaican entrepreneurs in a limited time and makes you appreciate that success is possible by many different routes. The entrepreneurs faced many difficulties, most of them lacked college education and basic resources but they made their way when there was no way, by giving their all.

The book also opens many avenues for future research for scholars in entrepreneurship and provides us with some tips on entrepreneurship education. The author shared many useful sources which promote entrepreneurial activity in young adults and children from an early age. If you are looking for a book on what makes a successful entrepreneur, do not look any further. This is a wonderful book for anyone interested in entrepreneurship.

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