



BUSINESS

Business Profile: Roy Jay

BY: CYNTHIA BROWN

A new electronic-age gadget is cropping up in area stores. Now when you use your credit card or personal check to pay for your purchases, the clerk can run the card's magnetic strip through this gadget and the cash register automatically prints the number on your check or the credit slip. The cashier no longer has to plow through a zillion numbers in those bad check/stolen credit card binders or write the numbers long hand.

The concept for this device came from local entrepreneur Roy Jay. One day while putting in time in line with some fellow businessmen, Jay realized "We need a machine that can read credit card magnetic strips, print the number and check to see whether or not it was stolen." He talked the idea over with his colleagues and they contracted with Western Electric to develop the design, and it's now a reality.

As owner of nine small businesses, Jay is an expert at turning his ideas into realities. His first venture, when he was 20 years old, earned him \$100,000. He learned to write advertising copy and helped a Nebraska man sell simplified car jacks by mail order. He took that money and invested in real estate development, then became a radio announcer and station manager at KQIV-FM (now KMJK), and a concert promoter. One day when a printer didn't follow through

with an order, Jay decided to start a printing business himself. Over the years he diversified and now runs Trade-Mark Corporation which operates Trade-Mark Sales, Trade-Mark Communications, Trade-Mark Tax Services, Trade-Mark Barter Banking, Oregon Business Network, Oregon Convention and Visitors Network, Law-One, Inc., Encyclo-Media Advertising and Data Check, all geared to serving small business, and all highly computerized. "This is the age of electronics," stated Jay. "We're so diversified, we could never do all this manually."

The biggest challenge for him and other minority business men is "getting into the mainstream of business in this state and not settling for just the 10% minority set-asides. All my businesses deal with mainstream business enterprises. None of my businesses hinge on my being a minority," he said.

Jay has a positive vision for Portland. "I see Portland and Oregon as one of the last frontiers in the northwest. Prices are still low and the competitive climate is not as fierce as places like Atlanta." And he has advice for minority business owners: "Get out and work 15 hours a day, dress like a professional, spend money on your clients, take them to lunch--other business sales people do it all the time. Know everything about your business: costs, tax laws, etc. Know your banker on a first name basis; get a good CPA. Offer a good deal at an honest

price. And follow through is very important. Remember to avoid the Rule of 100. Make one customer mad and they'll tell turn around and tell at least 100 other people about their bad experience. Do good and word will spread more slowly,

legis; some things you can't learn in college, especially if the teacher has never been there or it's been so long since he was. I can do bad by myself; I don't need anyone to teach me that," he added.



Photo courtesy of the Oregonian

but it will be positive."

He also emphasizes practical experience. "You don't need 9 years in col-

Jay feels the climate for minority business is changing for the better and the key is networking. "Doors are open-

ing because people are starting to network. Ten to 15 years ago, our network wasn't together, but we're in a more positive mode now. The Old Boy system is being broken down. African Americans need to work together and pool resources. There are lots of places to get guidance for free," he stated. "The Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs is a good starting place."

Although generally optimistic about the future, he is concerned about a recession. "Eventually we'll have a recession in 1991. It's destined. Clients and customers are getting ready." But Jay sees opportunity even during a recession. "When things go one way we'll shift to another. Some of my enterprises thrive on it--especially the barter business. Who know what a recession is? Sixty per cent of it is psychological," he said.

Jay feels the best opportunities are those that target other business, not those that are consumer oriented. "The biggest businesses, like the phone companies and credit card companies never complain about losing money. All their business is self-perpetuated. For instance cellular phones and cable television, they initially sell you something and then you pay them some kind of fee every month for their service," he said. "My forte is service-oriented. That's the only kind I see as being profitable." And his newest venture is just that kind of operation.

"We've just started a group rate for 1-800 numbers for small businesses. Now

anyone can have a toll-for as low as \$15 a mon

Roy Jay believes any can rise above gang-nomic restrictions as the Columbia Villa roots. E stereo types of African need to change. "I under of the Nike/Push boycott question some of Nike's a concepts. All you ever sports. They perpetuate African American men stature must be athletes." "Does Bo know business in a business suit." A pounds, Jay doesn't fit th type 96 words per minut I was the guy sitting in typing class," he recall

Community service his success. "I spend 30 community service," h tive with the Miss Orego the Portland-Oregon a County Visitors' Assoc Scouts, the Multnomah Coordinating Council, a Youth Program to name

Roy Jay's business simple, "when you wor else, they tell you how worth. I decided long a two kinds of people in I who sign the front of the those who sign the back the front!"

whatever Happened to Minority Business; Part 2 Is Your Government 'User friendly?'

BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

If you had any doubts about last week's statement that early as twenty years ago there was growing "concern" about the future of "Minority Business", then be sure to read today's 'Perspective Column' when you finish this: "Rise and Fall of the Albina Corporation". This is a 'home grown' case in point.

I think it only fair that if, as promised, we are to examine the role of government in the development of minority owned enterprises, we should also take a look at the activities of those African American entrepreneurs who are succeeding without such support. Given, we are quite aware of the many who have not achieved any degree of success - after all, this was the reason for the strident clamor which brought so many of the related government agencies into existence. However, the point to be made here - the understanding so desperately needed - is, in light of a perceived poor track record of government intervention, what is the possibility for renewal of that independent 'self-help' mode which for 200 years sparked successful economic development and business enterprises within black communities (now seeming to have faded)?

Right here in the Portland Metropolitan statistical area there are a number of successful business enterprises operated by African Americans without any government assistance. Nor are they participating in any of the ancillary federal programs also frequently described as "designed to fail": Minority Set-Aside Contracts, Lease Guarantees, Etc. For these people, many of whom I know personally, securing start-up and operating capital was (and is) as difficult as it was for "Famous Amos", the 'chocolate chip cookie king' who appeared on nation-wide television years ago. He forthrightly described the discriminatory practices of the nation's banks. "While white businessmen of similar financial situation with similar track record were able to walk in the bank and secure a loan, I was repeatedly turned down - but the finance company gave me the needed amount in 15 minutes. For a VACATION IN HAWAII and at exorbitant interest!" Generally, these independent local firms fall into two categories: Those who have had bitter and frustrating experiences with government programs, and those who have never participated in one. In this latter group we find many who, having heard of the experiences of others, have simply steered away; and there are those who never for one moment considered (or believed in) the possibility of meaningful government assistance. I have recently re-interviewed several of the following entrepreneurs and, to a man (or woman), they are not

the least bit interested in any current publicity - for reasons that will be cited later. Interestingly, most reside in Beaverton, Hillsboro, Aloha, Gresham, Etc., nor are their businesses located in Northeast.

In a downtown office building we have an African American lumber broker who deals in truck load and railway car lots all over the Pacific Northwest. From a small but neat office equipped with two phones and a FAX machine, he uses a WATS line to consummate sales to furniture manufacturers and lumber yards, most owners of which he has never met. It is a business where relationships are based on integrity, trust and confidences exchanged by word of mouth. There are parallel relations with the banks who facilitate the six-figure transaction.

I cite this example because, though highly unusual, it does bring out a point I would often emphasize to my minority students in the business class at Portland State University. "You have to expand your horizons." A great part of the learning experience here is not confined to the classroom, it is about "contacts". I was concerned about an almost total minority orientation toward the Small Business Administration and related government programs as the 'ultimate' or only avenue to business proprietorship. While at the same time, White students in the class were sharing information and procuring expertise and resources from outside 'real-time' sources, including parents. It was a difficult task to persuade the African American Students to join the campus 'business clubs' or to associate with or visit the 'other' students operators.

The following example offers an entirely different perspective on an 'independent' minority enterprise. Here we have the case of an

African American Comptroller for a major downtown Portland retailer who, while holding down a full time job, launched a construction and property management firm - utilizing experience gained while working his way through college. Over the years, this business has expanded from management of personally - owned apartment complexes to building and managing them for others, including absentee out-of-state investors. Additionally, the firm has built several downtown and suburban structures for both the private and public sectors.

Several times this businessman hired African Americans who had attended my business classes; computer or management people. Next week I will cite several other of these self-starters before moving into a direct critique of the government agencies and those who have benefited (or suffered) from their method of operation. Again, be sure to read my related "Perspectives" column Page 2.

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