

Minority Business Week

QUEEN OF SHEBA: THE ETHIOPIAN AMERICAN JOB

BY LEE PERLMAN

Alem Gebrehewot is trying to live the Ethiopian version of the American Dream in northeast Portland.

Five years ago he opened the Queen of Sheba as a small market at 2413 NE Martin Luther King Boulevard. A year later he changed the place into a restaurant. He has since doubled the size of the establishment by expanding into the storefront next door.

Meanwhile he is converting a former church at 311 N. Ivy into an Ethiopian Center, a place for ethnic celebrations and classes in the cooking of traditional foods.

He is doing all this as his first-ever venture as owner or manager of a business, with no public or private assistance, introducing a new kind of dining into a once-depressed part of town where enterprises with much deeper pockets still fear to come.

The Queen of Sheba is building up a clientele by the oldest method known - word of mouth. Gebrehewot says he draws customers from throughout Oregon and Washington. There is a ready-made clientele close by. There are about 1,000 Ethiopians in Oregon, most of them live in Portland, and the highest concentration is in inner north and northeast. The Eliot neighborhood, where Queen of Sheba is located, boasts two other Ethiopian-run establishments, the San Rafael Cafe at 415 NE. San Rafael St., and the Rendezvous Cafe at 816 N. Russell St.

For neighborhood natives, Queen of Sheba's food and dining style is a new experience. Two



Alem Gebrehewot, owner of Queen of Sheba restaurant in NE. Portland.

women seeking chicken and rice were told it isn't served there ("Rice isn't an authentic Ethiopian food," Gebrehewot says) and were put off by way the food is eaten. Featured are spicy beef, chicken or lamb served with a spongy bread. As is true throughout North Africa, the bread and fingers of the right hand are used in place of silverware.

"Most people who come know what to expect," Gebrehewot says.

He came to this country 15 years ago as a refugee from political strife at home. He studied food services technology in New York and continued his studies at Oregon State before coming to Portland. He worked various jobs in the food industry before deciding to set up on his own.

What financing or help did he receive from public or private sources? "None whatsoever," he says; he came up with the funding

he needed by working a second job. Aside from getting the money, he didn't have much trouble starting up, although he says, "Doing anything for the first time is a problem." Most difficulties had to do with the area. "The neighborhood was depressed, not much was happening, and not many people were coming here," he says. That situation has gradually improved. "The biggest problem is parking," he says.

The restaurant is open from NOON to 10 PM, Tuesday through Saturday. For sale to go are imported beers and wines, publications, spices, music tapes and authentic dresses.

Gebrehewot would not call himself a success, if your standard is Bill Gates. "It's difficult to run a business, but I'm surviving," he says. "The global economy is kind of scary. I'm just hopeful things don't get any worse."

Global Marketing: Preparedness Is Critical For Success

BY DIANE MCCLELLAND

Are you looking for new customers? Do you want to locate new avenues to distribute your products and services? If you answer yes to these questions, you may want to consider expanding your business by developing a specific global marketing plan for your company!

You may be saying to yourself, "That sounds good, but where do I go from here? How do I get started? Who can help me? Is my company ready for global expansion? What is the difference between marketing domestically and internationally?"

These are all-important questions to consider before embarking on your export plan. However in approaching the next steps in developing an export marketing plan for your company, you should first examine the current structure and foundation of your business. Can you manage the current cash flow of your business? Do you have a strong management team? Do you have a quality control system in place for your products? Have you chosen a team of advisors for your business that can help you launch your company internationally? Are you currently working with a banker, accountant, lawyer or management consultant that has knowledge of international business? What is the best way to ship my products? How do I get paid? These are only a few of the questions that need to be answered.

The good news is this could be the best avenue for your company and there are many resources available to you!

Let's examine a few other important items.



Diane McClelland of the McClelland Company

Expanding your business internationally requires a team of advisors who will help you determine the readiness of your business to go global and the ramifications to your bottom line! Often times, businesses may error in one of two ways: either by underestimating the company's ability to explore exporting as avenue for increasing Counter-cyclical sales; or ignoring the complexities of global expansion. Neither case is advisable!

Companies who have built strong management teams, solid cash-flows and equity, and have developed an excellent product, may be missing an important opportunity to increase sales to a new niche of customers by ignoring the chance to expand globally. Conversely, some companies make the mistake of thinking that selling products abroad is the same as selling products in their own region, state or country and approach their international venture utilizing the same techniques. This can be very disastrous!

Here is an example. In the early seventies, a major Fortune 500 company began to launch one of their new products and chose to use the same slogans in their advertising promotions in Europe. The results were disappointing to say the least for the American company. The slogan used in the American press was well received and understood! However, when it was translated into the European country's language, it was conveyed as insulting and discourteous! This move created damage to the international sales of their product! It was disastrous! The results would have been different if the company had researched the language and cultural differences and had adapted the necessary changes to be more sensitive to the citizens in that country they were trying to reach! This is only one example of what can happen in business, if the proper steps are not taken in understanding of the differences in the buying criteria for potential customers in the foreign countries.

Some of the primary points to consider when exploring the possible global expansion of your company is the following areas:

- * Company resources - Personnel, capital, materials, equipment, management.
- * Political environment - Governmental structure, stability, policies toward foreign firms.
- * Market entry conditions - Tariffs, quotas, other non-tariff barriers, legal environment.
- * Marketing environment - Avail

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