

The Accesserator Story

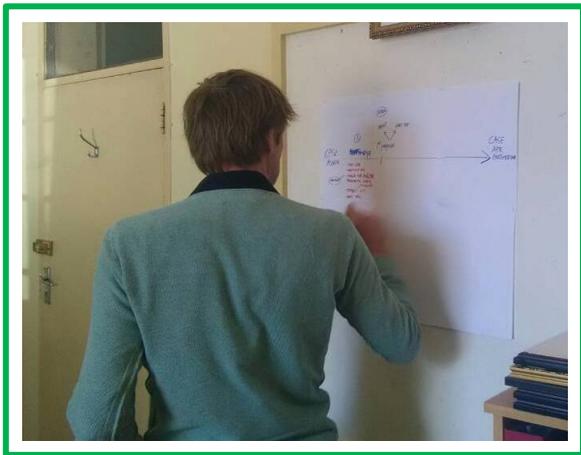
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Chapter 1: The Start

The story of Accesserator has two different origins that came together during one of the many after-hours conversations at an engineering company we worked for. Maarten's ideas and mission already began in 2009, where he and his wife lived and worked in Malawi for 7 months. During this time Maarten encountered entrepreneurial men and women throughout the country, but he also experienced the flaws of the existing foreign aid. His drive for change and the desire to support those energetic entrepreneurs became his mission to give entrepreneurs a positive outlook, and the whole country a perspective towards a brighter future. With this in mind he came back to The Netherlands and it took some time before the opportunity arose to translate this mission into action.

Till 2015 to be exact. As Robert came back from one of his trips for Nyenrode Business University in South Africa, where he did a project in supporting local SMEs with theoretical knowledge and a bit of finance. He saw that transferring business models and providing the right tools for SME entrepreneurs could make a huge difference towards sustainable businesses. Even more appealing was the receptive attitude to apply those advises. This opened his eyes and a mission to share what we have in terms of business literacy and finance with African entrepreneurs was born.



In the months after Robert came back, the two - later to be - founders of Accesserator sat down to bring both missions together and design a method to make it happen for the short- and long-term. What could go wrong, an experienced project manager with 7 months on the ground in Malawi and an educated business scholar fresh from the university together in their mission to change the lives of others? We sat down with a white board and start drawing the different options for a profitable and impactful business model. On the internet we found information about impact investments, legal advices for doing business in Africa and why existing foreign aid did not work.

A travellers' journey

We dreamt of visiting a beautiful place. One with beautiful landscapes, breath taking views and a lasting memory as reward. Many places in the world will accommodate dreams, we choose to go to Sossusvlei, Namibia with the highest sand dunes of Southern Africa.

The sand dunes of Namibia are most beautiful in early morning sunlight. So, we were told by several people and it's what we read in the Lonely Planet travel guide as well. You need motorized transportation to get there in time, some food, quite some water as it is a desert, warmer clothing for early morning, sunglasses, sun cream, hat, good shoes and a smile on your face.

Staying on a campsite close by, Sesriem, we got excited to go there. We looked at the map to define a route, easy, only one road leads there. As the area is inaccessible for cars and this only road has a gate that only opens early morning. We invested in buying tickets to enter and fuelled up our own 4WD car. "You have to go with the flow immediately after gate opens and stop at Dune 45 to walk up and see the sunrise", were further instructions. We have our tire pressure checked, and food and water are there. Just picking the right clothes for tomorrow is the only thing left to do....

Our believe grew every week that we found a huge opportunity and that the two of us had the right mind-set and knowledge. The more we discussed it together and the more we read online, we got supported in this idea. Even chats with some friends and family only gave us the idea that we definitely should do it. Our business model was perfect in theory. We take 40% shares in our investments (regardless of the investment by our partner), provide on-the-job support and regain our investment by paid out dividends and selling back our shares to our partner within a period of 5 years. Everybody is happy, the entrepreneur has its own sustainable company back and we get a positive return of investment. Let us put in some of our own money and fly to Malawi to explore this great opportunity.



Key Takeaways

- Every business needs to start with a mission. A mission comes forward from personal values and believes to solve a problem or fill in an opportunity. There is no right or wrong in one's mission. The problem or opportunity should be anchored in society. Off course 'making money' or 'having a business' is a valid reason to start, but the business itself has far better chances to sustain if based on a committed mission.
- Use your own money and other personal investments needed in this stage and follow your heart. Don't tie yourself to any financial and contractual obligations, as so much is still unknown and the journey just begins.

Example Serenity:

At the beginning of 2018 we invested in the start-up Serenity Acres. The mission was not very clear, but with a promising product that was encouraged by our network and sound financial forecast the company started well. Until the operations went south, unforeseen obstacles had to be overcome and pressure mounted from different stakeholders to deliver. Next thing, the owner abandoned his fragile mission in a blink of an eye and left the company.

Example Infinity:

Our investment Infinity Energy Solutions has a mission to stop deforestation in Malawi. The value proposition that is chosen to go along with this mission is to make briquettes from charcoal dust and organic waste. An appealing mission that makes you want to get out of bed early every morning, and a mission with the flexibility to change the business, but never the heart.