



Lynn Worsely: Empowering, Upcycling and Creating

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It's just possible that you have never heard of a kliketyklikbox™. And while you're not alone if this does happen to be the case, Lynn Worsley would dearly love to rectify that.

In the early days, before the kliketyklikbox™ was available for sale and was nothing but a prototype sitting on Worsley's dining room table, a colleague of hers asked her what it was and what she planned to do with it. She could have replied that it was a used 2-litre soda bottle that she had cut and glued and made into a cleverly-shaped box. Instead she told him, "I plan to sell it all over the world and build an eco-friendly business that will help lift up South African women and their communities." Her colleague was sold. With his initial investment (which has since been paid back with interest), her mission began.



Worsely's vision was to create a business that would empower South African women by providing employment and business training, as well as support the environment by repurposing discarded soda bottles. She sought to employ women who had been without work for more than two years, and teach them the skills not only to create the kliketyklikbox™ itself, but also train them in necessary management and sales skills.

After using the initial capital investment to open a small workspace, she hired eight women, and in March 2009 her company, [All Women Recycling](#), was launched. Their sole product was, and remains, the kliketyklikbox™, which comes in a multitude of styles. She began marketing it and building the brand at local South African outdoor markets. It was tough initially, and they were only paid for the work that sold.



Then came their first big order for 500 units of the eco-friendly boxes, which seemed daunting to Worsely at the time. But they filled it, and they now make an average of 350 boxes a day and think nothing of orders as large 10,000 units. They supply boxes to more than 30 retail outlets, and about 98% of the gift boxes are exported to other countries, including Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. They can do special orders for companies or anyone wanting large number of boxes, which can be branded with a company's logo and used for corporate events. "Initially I was working five days a week making boxes, and spending Saturdays and Sundays at local markets meeting potential clients and building our brand. That strategy worked, and we grew." In addition to the boxes they supply to others, they've also opened their own shop, where Worsley continues to do shifts in order to get feedback from customers.

Born in a cotton town in England, Worsley moved with her parents to South Africa when she was 16. During her 20's and 30's she enjoyed a successful career in acting, dancing, and directing, as well as hosting a popular radio show. She married a fellow Brit in South Africa, had three kids, adopted a fourth, and later, after a divorce, found herself searching for a way to support herself and her children. She decided to take the plunge and become an entrepreneur, starting a company to sell baby products. While this endeavor was not ultimately successful, she asserts that she's learned from all her past experience. "I believe my acting training has been an amazing platform for me to spring from. Not only am I not afraid to talk to people about our work, I actually love it. It's like going on stage again. As for the baby products company, I don't see it as a failure because I learned a lot from it about running a business. It was like a training ground for All Women Recycling."



Worsley, 62, credits her personal determination, persistence, and belief in herself, as well as her willingness to ask for help, as factors in her success. “After the divorce, I was desperate – divorce does that – and I had to take control of my life. But I also wanted to help other women who had not had the benefits of an education or opportunities as I had.” She cites the personal growth of the women she’s employed as one of the things of which she is proudest. “The best thing is the way these ladies have grown, how they think, and their attitude toward the job. There is a pride in what they do and they own it. They can speak their minds and voice opinions. This was not the case 5 years ago.”

As for other woman who may be considering their own social enterprise, Worsley has this bit of advice: “Be creative, be unafraid, and take that step off the mountain. I assure you it’s worth it.”

Tips from Lynn Worsley

- There are numerous mentoring hubs here in South Africa. Always ask for help, and align yourself to a growing but established company that can guide you along.
- Join workshops. [CCDI](#) (Cape Craft and Design Institute), [Spark](#), [Seed](#), and [Fetola](#) are all amazingly good mentors.
- Be out there. A lot. If you talk about your company and your products and believe in them, everyone else will too.

