

## **Joel Mwale**

{ My own words: Joel Mwale is the man behind a water purifying system that allows people to buy the water for around half of its normal price. This natural commodity is priceless and the fact that in some areas within our great continent people do not have access to it is an unbelievable shame but we will work towards changing this for everybody. }

### **"Joel Mwale**

Like many children in Africa from poor backgrounds, he dropped out of school because his parents could not afford tuition.

The idea for his first business was inspired by two events from his childhood. At age 14 he had suffered dysentery (infection of the intestines) from drinking dirty water in his village outside the western Kenyan town of Kitale. As a student his school had visited a Coca-Cola bottling plant where he saw how the company made its bottled water.

"I knew if there was any business I could easily go into, it was in water," recalls Mwale.

So at 16 he started SkyDrop Enterprises, a producer and bottler of low-cost purified drinking water. Initially he boiled water, packed it in polythene bags and sold it to truck drivers in Kitale.

Mwale's big break came one day when an employee of a Kenyan mobile operator who was visiting Kitale asked locals where he could buy drinking water. They directed him to Mwale.

Although he appeared to suffer "culture shock seeing people drinking water from polythene bags", Mwale says the man "bought two packets" so as not to appear rude. But he became curious and went to Mwale's home to see the water 'production plant'.

"Three months later he contacted us and introduced us to our first investors." Mwale subsequently acquired a purifying machine and started bottling water.

Following the success of SkyDrop, he was named finalist at the Anzisha Prize walking away with \$30,000 and an admission to the African Leadership Academy in South Africa.

In 2013, he sold his 60% shareholding in SkyDrop to a group of Israeli investors for over \$500,000. By that time SkyDrop was generating annual revenues of \$515,000, with 74 employees.

### **New venture**

Mwale's new venture, Gigavia, is a platform that seeks to change the way students learn by combining education, mentorship and social

media. The online platform allows them to interact with each other as well as their teachers.

“The reality is universities spend millions of dollars to maintain e-portals that students don’t even use because they are neither efficient nor user-friendly. We know students spend more time on social media, and that’s why we are combining social media with education and mentorship,” he explains.

Gigavia enables universities to offer online exams, while teachers can share learning materials with students and track their performance. Students are able to access video tutorials and books customised to their courses, as well as share notes and class calendars.

Gigavia has so far signed up 10 universities in the US, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, and Mauritius. The firm’s planned revenue model is to eventually charge universities \$1 for every student that uses the platform.

Mwale says the portal will help universities reduce costs of hiring IT staff and maintaining portals that students hardly use. The business, which started in 2013, recently attracted around \$1m from an investor and there are big ambitions of working with universities across the globe.”

Source: How We Made It In Africa

Link:

<https://www.howwemadeitinafrica.com/after-selling-company-for-us500k-joel-mwale-now-wants-to-change-the-way-we-learn/46304/>