



grow



# Window Art

For the love of the start-up.  
Divan's passion for turning  
ideas into reality.



**Divan Smit is a high-energy entrepreneur who runs two successful businesses – Window Art and Vaper’s Corner.** He has a knack for spotting business opportunities, coupled with a drive to turn those opportunities into start-ups that quickly become healthy, established businesses. He shares with us where his journey in entrepreneurship began, and how he turned his ideas into assets of value.

## The early days of business grooming

**Divan was drawn to the business world from a young age.** His first job during school holidays was assisting in a tobacco shop. He went on to buy shares in the business and once he matriculated, he completed courses in business, marketing and financial management, which he says helped him greatly in the running of the shop.

“I saw that what I learned during my studies was useful to the bottom line – I saw the end results in my pocket – so it was a good incentive for me to continue studying. I then sold my shares at the tobacco shop and my brother and I went into business together and opened a power tool centre in KwaZulu-Natal. We had the store for about two years, but repeated incidents of internal theft unfortunately forced us to sell the business,” he says. Not the type to give up, the brothers returned to Pretoria and looked for their next venture.



## The gap in the market that lead to Window Art



“One of my dad’s friends wanted sandblasting on his windows”, he said. “So, we did some online research and found that overseas you can get vinyl frostings that look like sandblasting, and we realised that it would be the perfect solution. We then did a once-off installation, learning how to install the vinyl frostings from internet research. **We saw a gap in the market, as nobody in South Africa had this type of product.**”

The team started Window Art in January 2008 and hasn’t looked back. While they now have ten successful years under their belt, it wasn’t an easy journey. They were in their mid-twenties and struggled with clients’ perceptions that they were too young. The vinyl window treatments were also an unknown solution, and cash flow was a challenge that had to be carefully managed.

**What sets Window Art apart from competitors is that they offer custom vinyl designs. Divan says it’s easy to offer a plain vinyl covering, or a standard pattern, but they’re able to get really creative in their designs, offering anything from nature scenes to business logos.** They import the raw materials and process them at their offices, and can produce fully customised designs for their clients.

Despite the bespoke design process, their turnaround times are quick. Divan and his team developed their own unique system called Frikkie, that manages every step of the process. A member of the team will visit the client, measure up the specific window, produce a quotation on the spot, and can take payment immediately. Once payment has been received, the order is placed into the system and the designers are able to start working on the custom design straight away. A number of designs are sent to the client for approval and once approved, the unique artwork is typically installed within four to ten days.

While most of their work is bespoke, Window Art also offers a range of standard designs. The company’s target market is mid to upper-level income, particularly due to the high level of customisation, however there are many affordable options available in their standard ranges.

With regards to daily operations, Divan is responsible for managing the Johannesburg branch, while his brother Ruan, runs the Cape Town branch. Their sister Rochelle, is the General Manager of the Gauteng region.



## Finding balance and structure amid success

Divan started working with Grow Business Coaching over 3 years ago, and despite his obsession with developing efficient business systems, there were other systems he needed help with, "I was a bit of a cowboy before, acting on impulse and not following the correct procedures. **My coach taught me how to manage people, how to manage processes in the business, drive efficiencies, and make what we do measurable. My coach has helped me to make the right, informed choices at the right times, and because of that the business has become more structured and streamlined.**"

Reflecting on his experience with coaching, Divan said, "Sometimes you think to yourself, 'Do I really need this coaching session?', especially when you're very busy; but you quickly realise that you do because you're going to get the insights that you need. My coach always has correct answers; he's like my shrink for business. He knows my business and where I'm at, and he plants seeds in my mind about what I need to do. He gives me guidance in terms of whether I need to put more systems in place or bring on additional people, and he helps me to find balance between the two businesses."

Sharing more about how he has found better work-life balance, he says, "Through coaching, I learnt to balance work with my family life, because I can be a workaholic, and it's really important to have that quality time. I now schedule everything – even socials – and family weekends where it's just our family and we don't see anyone else, so that I make sure I can get that balance right."

He's also found his coach's guidance in terms of scheduling very helpful and explains, "He taught me to schedule specific time - a couple of hours a day - two or three times a week where I focus on one specific business, even when exciting things are happening in another business, so that each business gets equal time."

Finding the right coach is as important as finding the right coaching company because their individual styles need to compliment your own – you need to be able to work comfortably with them.


Divan's coach continues to nudge him in the right direction, rather than instructing him to do something, which Divan says is a good thing because he doesn't take well to being told what to do.

It's clear that the combination of Divan's bright ideas, relentless ambition and the guidance of the right, experienced business coach to walk along him in the journey, will help Divan run his businesses well into the future.



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When things don't  
seem clear, it's time  
to **find focus.**

When you're at the top. Everyone's looking to you for the answers. You're the leader, thinker, decision maker, mentor, planner and doer. Sustained growth and scaling up weighs on your shoulders. Yet, so many questions ruminate in your head.

When you are feeling stuck or overwhelmed yet committed to a sea change, you need a thinking partner to help you see the wood for the trees. An impartial sounding board with years in the seat and war stories to share. Don't lose sight of the bigger picture, and don't do it alone.

**Grow. Helping businesses find clarity and the confidence to lead with it.**



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