

## LIVING HER DREAM IN ESTABLISHING A TRULY NAMIBIAN BEAUTY BRAND

A nail technician is a beauty specialist responsible for the grooming and appearance of a client's finger- and toenails - providing manicures, pedicures, nail shaping, cuticle grooming, synthetic nail treatments and applying nail polish. Meet **Antonia Shinana**, whose skill as a Nail Technician has seen her making waves in the local beauty industry. What started out as a part-time and self-taught hobby to supplement her income has now turned into a successful fulltime business venture for this go-getter, as one of the best all-round beauticians in the country. This is her story.

### CHILDHOOD MODEL

Born at Oshikuku in Omusati, Antonia Shinana, or Toni, as she is affectionately known, grew up in the capital, only to later move to Tsumeb in Oshikoto; where she completed high school.

Toni grew up loving modeling and fashion. "I guess it comes from playing with my dolls, but it's just always been part of me, since childhood: this fascination with makeup, beauty and fashion and playing model, imagining myself on catwalks wearing the latest designer clothes", she reminisces.

Although Toni's friends found her career aspirations entertaining, her teachers did not. Much to their chagrin and ire, this talented and gifted young girl only had one wish: to become a Beauty Therapist. "Most teachers were consistent in their response. That I would be wasting my time and energy to pursue something that in their view was not worth the effort. I guess because they thought the industry was too small back then, that my career prospects would be limited, and that I would end up with a qualification of no value", she adds.

### CAREER CHOICE

Succumbing to the pressure, Toni enrolled for a degree course in Psychology at the University of Namibia. Although still modeling part-time, she soon started second-guessing her career choice and eventually ended up changing her degree course for one in Environmental Health Studies. "Before I could complete this course, the self-doubt kicked in again. It's difficult to describe, but it was like a feeling of not being one with my choice of career, which kept on creeping up on me", Toni explains. After much introspection, Toni opted out and instead enrolled for a diploma course in Project Management in Cape Town. The change of scenery did her a world of good, and the Afropolitan feel of the South Africa Mother City's fashion scene, helped her to feel right



“

It just snowballed and I was kept very busy after hours and over weekends. Soon, I was making more from these part-time jobs, than from my day job.

**Antonia Shinana**

Nail Technician

at home. “Cape Town also helped in reshaping my appreciation of the beauty industry to a whole new level. I observed the latest trends and was introduced to new products and saw the potential of taking these experiences home with me”, she recalls.

## FIRST JOB

After completing her Project Management qualification, Toni returned to Namibia, landing her first job at mobile telecommunications giant, MTC. She soon joined advertising agency, Leo Burnett, and her friendly and customer-oriented demeanour made her excel in her role as an account executive, liaising with the agency’s corporate clients. “The Leo Burnett colleagues were my type of people - creative, artistic and full of energy and ideas. Because, I had to interact with a wide array of corporate clients, looking good and acting professional were key requirements under my job description. Not that I had a problem with it”, she shares laughingly.

First jobs seldom pay well and struggling to cope with expenses, Toni, in an effort to supplement her income, started to market her makeup and nail services to friends and family. “It all happened so fast. My clients were very happy with my services and helped in spreading the word. It just snowballed and I was kept very busy after hours and over weekends. Soon, I was making more from these part-time jobs, than from my actual salary”, she recalls.

## THE RISK TAKER

Considering the success of her part-time venture, Toni soon started to weigh up her options. Thoughts of tendering her resignation and focus full-time on make-up and nails kept on creeping up on her. However, in as much as she was tempted to jump ship, Toni also knew that she still had a lot to learn about the trade. “I decided to first get professional training. “I knew how to do nails at the time, but didn’t know much about the latest technology and methods, including acrylic and the synergy gel applications. I started my search and ended up with a renowned training institution in South Africa. I emailed them an application for part-time training, was accepted and the ball got rolling”, she shares.

As for further training in makeup services, as a key component of her service offering, Toni reached out to Nigeria, known for its vibrant and pulsating beauty scene. “I knew that some of the world’s best make-up artists hail from Nigeria. I went online and looked for some of my favourite make-up artists and mailed them. I was so fortunate when Nigerian makeup artist and stylist, Bibyonce responded and agreed that I came to Lagos to train with her. I would never forget my two-week Nigerian excursion”, Toni notes. Always the risk-taker, Antonia resigned her job at the advertising agency and took a leap of faith to work for herself.

## EARLY ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY

Although the new career choice brought more inner peace, Antonia appreciated that she had to work very hard if she wanted to make a mark in the lucrative beauty sector, where competition is tough. Her Nigerian escapade and Bibyonce’s mentoring gave her the confidence to take the first baby steps to what today is her own business, ‘The Nail Bar’.

“Although I was doing well, my business model was one that was very much based on making house calls, moving on from one appointment to the other. The money was good, but the traveling and diary management became taxing. I wanted more, and the international nail bar concept starting making more sense to me - a nail salon which pairs high quality products with knowledgeable technicians rendering quality services including nail services, spa pedicures and gel manicures”, Toni says.



Toni soon opted for a station in a local salon. Attempts to secure funding from local financial institutions to roll out her business concept did not yield results. “Getting responses from potential funders that your idea is not viable and that my collateral was not sufficient proved very discouraging. But, looking back, I’m happy today that I was able to keep my eyes on the prize”, she recalls.



and feet treatments, it has become a distinctive spot for your next manicure and pedicure. “It’s a dream come true. This is my baby. Competition is tough and the local industry is growing at a fast pace. But, I’m confident that this is only going to get bigger and better”, she shares.

Asked how she coped with the demands of managing a thriving business, Toni highlights the importance of business management training in her venture’s success. “Getting professional training helped me. When you do something you’ve learned on your own; you don’t really have the confidence that you could otherwise have acquired from professional training. It really boosted my confidence because there were times when I wasn’t sure what to do. In this cutthroat industry, you need to be confident in what you do”, Toni explains.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Successful nail technicians are able to build up loyal support through rendering personalised service. Weekends are especially busy considering that most social events take place then. Toni takes it all in her stride. She appreciates that solid customer service skills are essential, and the satisfaction of her clients is her number one priority.

“We want our clients rejuvenated in all ways possible. It is a place where they come and offload. Some are strangers and have never met you, but you’ll be surprised at the stories they share. The biggest part of my job is listening to them and help lift their burdened hearts. Its more than just doing nails”, she explains. “My business philosophy is simple, really. A happy client is one that will call again. I cannot afford to slip up in terms of quality service. I need to be prepared. And I need to always do my best”, she adds.

## SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Toni also appreciates the importance of marketing, in growing her clientele. Her experience as an advertising agency account executive and the contacts she has built up over the years, have allowed her to take her brand, ‘Toni Did It’ to her target market.

“I’m quite tech-savvy and make use of digital platforms and social media to attract corporate clients, as my main target market. You need to appeal to them in a manner that speaks corporate, order and excellence”, she explains. “Everything matters, from the type and quality of the picture to the language and time I post the advertisement. For example, I don’t post the advert in the mornings when they’re busy and occupied. I do so in late afternoon when they are laid back and relaxed. I do most of my advertising digitally”, Toni explains. “Digital and social media have helped me a lot. It’s no longer expensive to advertise, and its very

targeted and focused, considering that at least 90% of my target audience is on social media. So you know it’s going to reach everyone, especially when coupled with a sponsored advertisement that pops up on the timelines of people that don’t even follow you. It’s not like back in the days when you had to geographically position your advert for it to be seen. Now it can be viewed and seen at the same time by someone here in Windhoek, or up north in Ongwediva”, she adds.

## FRANCHISING DREAMS

Away from the demands of her busy business schedule and full appointment book, Antonia spends quality time with friends and family. She is very close to her youngest brother, Panduleni, who likes her cooking, and whom she often teases about having to feed him and change his diapers, when he was a baby. The future looks bright for Antonia and the ‘Toni Did It’ brand. Given her zest and fortitude, the journey continues for this driven young woman so determined to take her business venture to greater heights. “For starters, I need to finish up my place of business in terms of layout and upgrades, before venturing into my next goal of franchising it to the rest of the country. I believe it is becoming a good local brand. And although I don’t want to take on more than I can handle, I am still getting more employees on board. I believe in my business”, she notes.

“Furthermore, I want to get into the training space and introduce other young girls to the potential of the beauty industry. I had to go outside of the country to access good, quality training, and still, there are not enough credible institutions where young Namibians who want to enter this thriving sector, can enroll. It’s been quite a journey, especially in terms of overcoming the financing challenges, but the journey continues. I’m not stopping. Not anytime, soon”, she concludes.

Antonia Shinana – a passionate, tenacious and unpretentious entrepreneur. Her focus and single-mindedness teach us that tenacity is not about avoiding being overwhelmed, but being indomitable in the face of those overwhelming odds. Her story teaches to stay true to our passion and dreams. She is living her dream. She is living her passion!

**My business philosophy is simple, really. A happy client is one that will call again. I cannot afford to slip up in terms of quality service. I need to be prepared and always do my best** ”



**Scan here**  
to watch my  
episode online