



REJECTED FLIGHT ATTENDANT GETS THE ULTIMATE REVENGE

News / Personalities



TALK about an inspiration. Sibongile Sambo dreamt of being a flight attendant, but she failed to meet the minimum height requirement and was turned away by South African Airways.

Instead of accepting defeat, she started her own company, even selling her car and using her mother's pension in order to set it up.

But it's all been worth it, as she's now laughing all the way to the bank.

Sambo officially started SRS Aviation in 2004, and it's the first aviation company in Africa set up by a woman. She started off brokering contracts for aviation services, and by later that year had scored a lucrative cargo transport contract with the South African Government.

Later, her focus turned to private aviation services, and now the company offers VIP charter flights, tourist charters and helicopter services with the Johannesburg-based crew flying around the world including to the US and Germany.

Ms Sambo says it was tough at the beginning, but the rewards have been totally worth it.

"Getting to learn the language, you know alpha, bravo, oscar, it was a challenge but we managed

to get over it,” Ms Sambo told BizNisAfrica.

“What I’m proud of about our company is that we have managed to penetrate the male dominated industry. On average we do 10 charters per annum, and that varies, it could be a tourist charter for \$1000 or could be a head of state travelling on a VIP aircraft to the US, which could be about \$200,000.”

The company also provides private jet owners with maintenance, sales and fleet management services.

While SRS Aviation’s exact earnings aren’t published, a company source told Forbes in 2013 that annual revenue was “several million dollars”.



Now she’s flying high.

There are currently three fulltime staff members and a partnership with the well-established company MCC Aviation, which gives her access to aircraft and technical support.

In the past decade, Ms Sambo has scored numerous awards including for the Black Woman in Business Awards (2006), Impumelelo Top Female Entrepreneur of the Year and a finalist at the Cosmopolitan Movers of the Year 2007. She was also named a Leader of Tomorrow by Fortune Magazine.

These days, she also mentors children and business people in Africa, and is a member of the think-tank World Entrepreneurship Forum.

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