

Talking about the fax of life with salesman Jacques Duyver



FUNNY MONEY

JOHN VLISMAS & RONNIE APTEKER

It's not every day you meet a photocopier salesman who has created a billion-rand-a-year business. He is meticulous, unconventional and baffles to put his thoughts into words.

As we enter his world, we understand that Jacques Duyver has two major strengths: vision and an appreciation for good people. He is thorough and casual throughout our meeting; he constantly reminds us of his inability to formulate witty answers.

We ask him where the success began: what are the ingredients? The answer is in keeping with Jacques' way - simple: a desk, a chair and a telephone. He doesn't see the need to complicate things.

He doesn't get up at 6am, he doesn't always get his way, and 90 percent of his best work happens in his long, long morning shower.

He got his first job by responding to an advert in the Sunday Times. Then, in 1993, he organised a franchise for a leading photocopier product. In 1998, he landed the sole import rights for Konica in Southern Africa. Today, Itec employs 1 000 people.

What do you do every day?

Wake up late. Seriously, I have a pretty structured day which my personal assistant sorts out. But I actually don't like structure. I take a long time to shower each morning - I come up with my best ideas in the shower.

How do you measure success?

To me, a guy who is happy and content with his lot in life is a successful guy.

Were you at the right place at the right time?

The harder you work, the more opportunities you stumble onto. Luck does play an important role.

Is laughter the best medicine?

Some people laugh to cover things up. There are many funny guys out there with a lot of problems.

What is your view on crime in our land?

It's the single biggest thing undermining this beautiful country and its people.

It really upsets me and makes me angry how the policing of our land is so mismanaged. I wish more top business leaders would challenge this mismanagement.

Is R1 million a lot of money?

Money is not the be-all and end-all of everything; it is what you do with money that counts.

Is global warming starting to irritate you?

Yes it does, but it seems, unfortunately, that the people that are the most educated on this subject are also the biggest contributors to this problem.

What's the secret to getting a woman into bed?

You want a one-liner? This is a whole debate.

Is this different from closing a sale?

No, not much. I am a salesman at heart - there is an art to it.

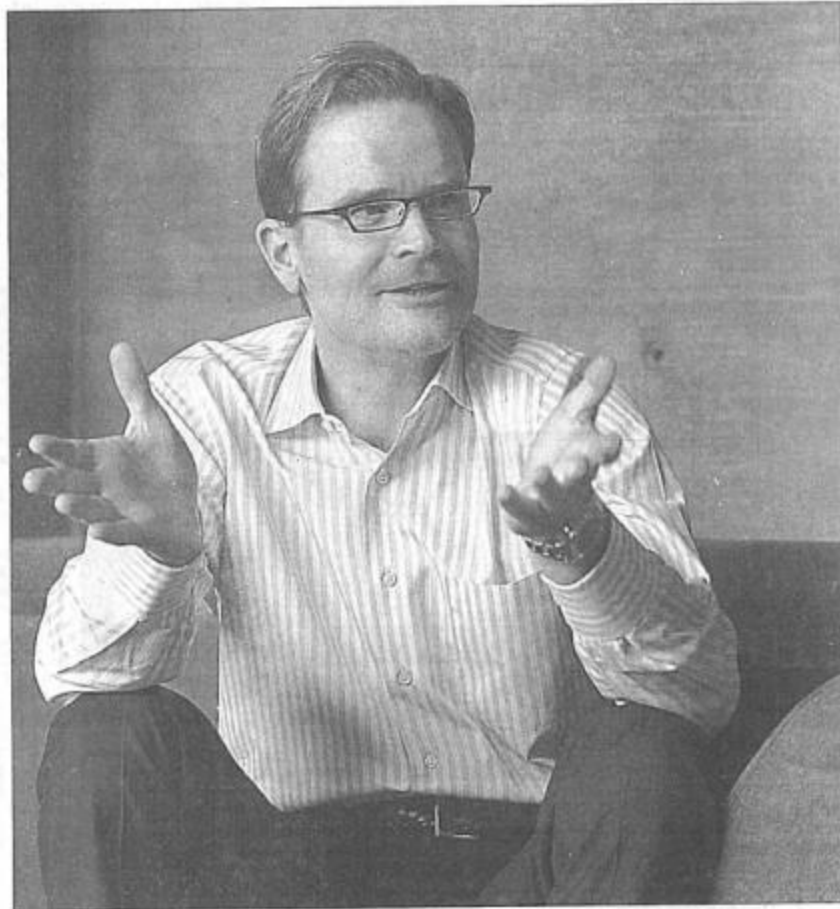
Are you a social footskater?

Last night I was doing pretty well.

Are you a member of the mile-high club?

I think that's a '70s illusion.

Today air travel is not glamorous, the air hostesses aren't that gorgeous, and there is no free love any more.



COPIERCAT Itec chief executive Jacques Duyver says good people make the good business plans ... and he admits to 'improving' on the brainwaves of others

PHOTO: JOHN WOODROOF

Also, I think the toilets were bigger back then. These days, it seems like a hardcore job.

Do you think we are ready for a R1 000 note?

We should be getting rid of all cash

- with our crime rate, it should all be electronic.

What is selling all about?

I try to put myself in our clients' shoes. Listening is key, and this is something most sales people don't do. If you only have the gift of the gab, then you will be the worst sales person.

Is marketing a function of cash?

Definitely not. You need cash, but guerrilla marketing is something anyone can do. You don't need an expensive advertising agency to build a brand.

Is it hard to find good people?

If you have a good attitude, you will find that there are more good people around you than meets the eye. Good people attract other good people.

Which is better: good people or good business plans?

Good people are everything. Good people make good business plans.

What about good luck?

If you only have luck but you don't work at it, then nothing will happen.

Are you an enemy of the tree?

I try to be a green person.

Can we make money with our machines?

You can, but you will get locked up.

Jet or laser?

Business - laser. Personal - jet.

What is office automation all about, exactly?

The new expression is "document solutions".

These days it is about storing and manipulating digital images.

Is Itec a product distribution company or a service company?

Both, including a finance company. We import, distribute, service and finance.

Why did the photocopy sales-

man cross the road?

We are a certain kind of breed, and we are always in your face. And we are far too curious - we want to know what is across the road.

Who was it that bought the first fax machine?

The government. And we had to supply them with "scramblers"; wonder why?

Is e-mail killing the fax machine?

Definitely. We sell a product today called "fax to mail".

How many customers do you have?

I believe we have about 18 000 customers. This is what they tell me when we are at a board meeting.

They also tell me to shut up.

Are you a copycat?

Yah, I am very good at taking ideas and improving on them.

What does it mean to be an entrepreneur?

An entrepreneur is a person who is passionate about a vision and can get other people passionate enough to follow this vision.

What is your view on black economic empowerment (BEE)?

Taken in the right context, I think it is a very good thing.

But BEE on a shareholding, individual basis has caused many dilemmas. We need more broad-based shareholding.

Next week we talk with Dr Kgosi Letlape from PPS

John Vlismas is a stand-up comedian and very good in bed. The thing he most admires in a woman is himself. Read his satirical news at www.kungfune.com

Ronnie Apteke is the chairperson of the Footskating Association of Southern Africa. Check out www.footskating.com