

Guided by personal logistics: Entrepreneur Vincent owns The UPS Store

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
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In 2007 Lindy Vincent decided red was not her color. Last year she decided brown suited her much better.

Vincent, a mother of three, was an established buyer with Target when following the birth of her third child, she decided Target was no longer the bull's-eye of her professional desires. As it turns out, Vincent was more of a domestic and international shipping type of woman, so following her entrepreneurial spirit, last year Vincent opened her The UPS Store located at 10504 France Ave. S. in Bloomington. For Vincent, deciding to leave cooperate America to become a small business owner was all about her personal logistics.

"I wanted more flexibility in my life," said Vincent, who holds an undergraduate degree from Stanford University and an MBA from the University of Michigan. "I had three kids and I needed better control of my schedule. So I left Target in 2007 and started a personal training business – Moxie Fitness, but I always knew I wanted a brick and mortar store."

In addition to a "brick and mortar" location, with her The UPS Store, Vincent has a full-service shipping, printing, copying, mailbox and more business. In becoming a The UPS Store owner, Vincent is somewhat of an anomaly. Of the 40 franchise owners in the state, Vincent is the only African-American female owner. There is just one other African-American The UPS Store franchisee in the state.

Vincent said though she had long wanted to be an entrepreneur, her sights were not necessarily set on the shipping industry.

"I knew I didn't want a retail goods store," said Vincent. "I wanted a business that was recession proof. Shoes are cute, but when the economy is down people aren't buying shoes. The UPS Store is a business that serves a need, not just a want. People need to ship ... people need printing. As a small business owner, I used The UPS Store all the time. I was always there for mailings and copies. I had a mailbox there. And coming from a marketing background, I wanted to have a business that had a strong brand."

The UPS Store has a strong brand indeed. The UPS Store was named a top retail brand by *The*

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Business Journals'

American Brand Excellence Awards and has been ranked No. 1 in the business services industry for 24 consecutive years by Entrepreneur Magazine's

Franchise 500

. And being affiliated with those distinctive brown trucks and brown uniforms certainly helps. Plus, in recent years there is a growing trend of people opting for mailing alternatives other than the United States Post Office.

"We do everything a post office does," said Vincent, who has three employees at her Bloomington location. "We get people all the time who say they're so happy we're here and they don't have to deal with the long lines at the post office."

According to Vincent – whose husband, Anton Vincent, also invested in the venture – her The UPS Store will begin operating in the black within the next three to six months when the majority of her revenues come in. According to the owner, fourth quarter sales – primarily winter holiday sales – account for between 60 to 70 percent of her yearly revenues.

Many businesses are not able to recoup their initial investments until up to five years of operation. Vincent's The UPS Store is just short of being a year old.

And as their motto says, big or small they ship it all.

"The largest thing we've shipped so far is a mountain lion," said Vincent, speaking of a stuffed mountain lion that was shipped by a taxidermist. "Big or small, we ship it all, so that includes a mountain lion."

No longer tied to Target red, brown seems to be a fitting color on Vincent. The UPS Store owner said she has no regrets in leaving the comforts of corporate America and striking out on her own.

"It was the best decision I ever made," said Vincent. "I love being my own boss. I love being an entrepreneur."