

## FEBRUARY INTERVIEW - ALEXANDER THOMSON PAYAN



After working at the largest telecommunications distribution company in the world, Brightstar, Inc., Alexander started his own distribution company, Electrix, in Luanda and built upon that initial \$180,000 investment a portfolio of companies working across several different sectors – oil and gas, telecommunications, hotels, technology, real estate, and more. All of these companies are held under the umbrella of TGI. Alexander manages TGI and its holdings on a day-to-day basis while also seeking opportunities across the globe that will enhance the breadth of services that TGI can offer its clients as well as investments that provide uniquely attractive returns for TGI and its investors. Today, Alexander is the

Honorary Consul of Colombia to Angola, serves as Vice President of Global Shapers (<https://www.globalshapers.org/>), is a member of the Young Presidents' Organization, and is a Board Member of the US-Angolan Chamber of Commerce. He is also the founder of the NGO 100% FOR LOVE (<https://100forlove.org/>). Alex has a BA from Babson College. He speaks English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Mandarin.



**It was 1975. The Portuguese left the African Colony and a bloody civil war erupted with the aim to take possession of the oil wells. According to the data collected by the African Union (UA) and by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCSE), today Angola is the Country in the South Of Africa that has had more foreign direct investments from 2000 to 2016. This happened also thanks to you. With an idea and a little budget you moved to Miami and now you are the Leader of multimillionaire companies with TGI Group. Why did you choose Angola?**

Angola is the perfect storm for business. After 45 years of war (15 independence and 30 civil), finally ending in 2002, Angola got left in the 60's. Today they are Africa's #1 producer of Oil, they are the worlds #5th largest diamond producer, and have 20% of all sub Saharan Africa's fresh water and arable land. So what you have is a country that needs everything, they have the money to pay for it, and nobody provide. We were able to go into an industry mobile phone Distribution, which globally averages 2% margin business and when we started we were the cheapest in the market and charging 80% gross margin. That sounds crazy, but most people don't know that for the last 10 years, Luanda has been rank the most expensive city in the world, so everything is expensive, from the rent of a standard 2 bedroom apartment averaging \$15,000usd, to a hamburgers selling for \$80. So in order to be able to cover high costs of operations, one needed to make good margin; but that was also an obvious sigh that there was much room for improvement and so much opportunity in the market.



**Forbes Magazine presented your business activities in September 2012 and Bloomberg News did the same in February 2014. You are a symbol of success, probably on your way you found people who believed in you but first of all you trusted yourself. What kind of advice could you give to those young who have an idea but don't have enough money to develop and realize it?**



Firstly money is fake. Never say you can't do anything because of money. I started my life with -\$80,000 worth of student loans. If your idea is good enough, don't be greedy and share enough of the company until someone says yes. Don't worry about giving up a big piece of the company, especially if you are young, the purpose is to do things and build your reputation and experience. Once start building a track record and reputation, you will have people offering you financing better and better terms. And once again, money is fake. It is only a problem if you say it is. What we have to do is stop worrying about money. Stop doing business with our main goal being money. Our businesses main goal has to be to add to society. To bring something good, add something to our world. Not how much money you can make. One you have a business that

is adding to the world, people will see and feel that your intentions are to help everyone, and naturally everyone will want to help you. Vibrations are everything.

**The new proposed law about the legal regime of foreign citizens in Angola, approved by the Parliamentary Commissions and that now has to be checked by the Parliament, plans a wider openness to tourism. You are also the owner of the Thomson Art House, a hotel which is a real jewel and respects the art and culture of Angola. In your opinion what could be done to make Angola a tourist destination?**



Yes! We believe a lot in the country, it's beautiful it has to offer so much. So we have also opened Thomson Beach - Nayuka, a beautiful resort on the island of mussulo. The country is already doing a lot but they can further drop visa requirements to allow

people to enter the country with greater facility. I think we just need more people to come enjoy the amazing surfing, kite surfing. Deserts, islands, beaches, animals, wallerfalls, and more.

**You brought your social engagement in Angola. Would you like to tell us something about the ONG 100%ForLove that you founded?**



It was during the last US elections that I found out through the Clinton Foundation scandal, that many charities or NGO's have numbers as low as 10% of donated capital actually getting to the those in need. For this reason, we created a charity called 100% for LOVE, in which 100% of all received donations go directly to our causes, today feeding children in hospitals, orphanages, and villages. TGI, our holding company cover all

overhead; providing the NGO with all personnel, office space, logistics, delivery, products and services needed on the ground, so that all external donations can go 100% to the cause. We hope that technology will cause governments and foundations to be transparent and honest. This belief, combined with our inconformity when hearing of charities who's overhead eat up 90% of donations, led us to thinking: why don't we apply technology to show transparency and give people more trust in giving to charities? Our purpose is to get 100% of donations to beneficiaries.

Therefore, 100% for LOVE does the following:

- All donations are publicly posted when received.
- Invoices of goods purchased are shared with our donors, reflecting their donation amount
- Photo/video footage of distribution to the beneficiaries will be posted on social media.

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Interviewer **Edmondo Papanice**

Translator Miss **Luana Convertino**

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