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Rags to Riches – The TV Interview

by Marion Umney

“Today in the studio I have Megan Chorley, founder of Rags to Riches, the biggest producer of upcycled clothing in the world.

“Megan, what’s the story? How did you happen upon this amazing concept?”

“It’s not amazing Pierre. It’s a very simple idea. We know the amount of waste from the clothing industry is obscene and that we are dumping it onto the third world. Some of it gets used directly. Any country with high levels of poverty is grateful for any clothing which is very cheap to buy, but giving the third world our cast-offs, I believe maintains the status quo and doesn’t help anyone out of poverty. What’s more, the donators see themselves as benefactors and the people buying soiled and torn t-shirts are supposed to be grateful. To my mind that does nothing to address the gross inequalities in the world.”

“You hold some strong views. So, your little venture will solve the “gross inequalities” in the world?”

“Of course not. Even my multi-million-pound business is a drop in the ocean, but it’s a start.”

“OK....how does it work? Tell us your secret”

There’s no secret. It’s obvious; buy something really cheaply, then use flair and skill which, contrary to popular opinion is no way in short supply in the third world, and turn it into something which people pay good money for.”

“I believe that’s called capitalism, but I’m surprised to hear you extolling its virtues when your philosophy sounds more Marxist to me.”

“My “philosophy” as you call it, is empowerment and the best way to experience empowerment in any system, especially a corrupt one, is to use it to your advantage”

“Hmm... tell me more. How did you get this venture going?”

“Easy. We simply added donated sewing machines to the fabric markets in Nairobi and took a group of talented young volunteer designers out there to teach women mainly, but now men too, how to create high fashion clothing from rags. We then marketed the garments in the West and payed them a fair percentage”

“And you seem to have created a clothing cult, with celebrity endorsement – very clever.”

“I think you’ll find it’s just good business practice. Make something unique and expensive and it becomes desirable. Add ethical and you’re home and dry. The wearer not only knows they are wearing something fabulous and unique, but that they are doing their bit for the planet.”

“Do I detect a note of cynicism? It’s also rumoured you have made very little from this company. Not rags to riches for you?”

“That depends how you define riches. I’m content with what I’m achieving and that’s enough”

“Well thank you Megan – on that note I’ll introduce my next guest”