



“BlackBerry has completely changed my life. I couldn’t cope if I didn’t have it.”

Deirdre King is a self-described career entrepreneur. Nine years ago she started a PR and marketing agency called Purple Apricot out of the boot of her car. In 2006 she founded Essential Brands to market a line of mineral cosmetics called DV8 (expressions) that she developed. Then in 2008 a chance encounter with a well-known South African actor led her to start a talent management agency, called Exclusive Celebrity Management, that today handles the careers of more than a dozen of the country’s top actors.

The Challenge

King describes her life as “totally crazy.” All three companies are 100% owned and run by King. “I’m very hands-on in all three of the businesses.” Email plays a huge role in managing them, and today King has multiple email addresses to ensure communications with each one. Unsurprisingly, managing so many accounts and 700 messages per day had become a job in and of itself.

The Solution

It was during one of her frequent trips to London three years ago that King discovered what would become the answer to her problems. One of her friends could see that she was struggling to keep on top of all her email. “One day he said to me ‘Deirdre, why don’t you just get a BlackBerry smartphone?’” When he showed her how he used his for mobile email, she was sold.

“My old mobile phone was due for renewal, so when I got back to South Africa I decided to try a BlackBerry smartphone,” says King. She had always used the same brand of mobile, so she was worried she might have trouble adapting to a new interface and menu structure. “After just three days of having my BlackBerry, I realised how it had changed my life,” says King. She uses her BlackBerry® smartphone with BlackBerry® Internet Service for mobile email and synchronises it with her PC for contacts, calendar and tasks.

Benefits

Manages multiple email accounts on a single BlackBerry smartphone

No longer carries a laptop

Enables her to run three businesses

Helped to restore work-life balance

Secure and reliable access to email and mobile communications

The Benefits

"BlackBerry has completely changed my life. I couldn't cope if I didn't have it," says King, who no longer carries a PC with her when she travels. Everything she needs to run her three businesses on a daily basis is on her BlackBerry smartphone. "I use it for everything: email, messaging, diary, the internet, Facebook, the camera, and I'd be lost without the GPS," says King. "I love the interface; there's nothing I would change about my BlackBerry."

King realised just how indispensable her BlackBerry solution had become last December, when she broke her BlackBerry smartphone. While waiting for a replacement, the mobile carrier loaned King a non-BlackBerry smartphone, which she describes as "the most hideous phone I've ever used." She tried several other non-BlackBerry models, but none offered the same comfort and ease of use as her BlackBerry smartphone. "My stress level shot through the roof," says King. When she was able to switch back to her regular smartphone, King comments, "My life went back to normal again."

"Even though I keep adding new companies to my portfolio, my original clients aren't actually feeling the effects of my multi-tasking." King cites a recent example, when she spent a week in Cape Town for a trade show. "I was working exclusively during that period on my cosmetics business, but neither of my other two businesses even felt the impact, because I was still getting my emails. In fact most of my clients weren't even aware that I wasn't in Johannesburg."

The BlackBerry solution also makes sure she's never out of the loop with her three offices. "I've got a very good team of staff that knows how to get along with business when I'm not there. And because we're in constant contact through the BlackBerry, they feel that I am around," says King.

King attributes the BlackBerry solution with improving her work-life balance and shortening her work hours. "Before I had a BlackBerry I would often stay late at work if I was waiting for an important email," says King. "It was easier than dragging the laptop home." Now she doesn't have to. "The BlackBerry has absolutely helped me reclaim personal time because I can leave the office earlier and do other things during the day without ever being out of touch with my emails."

But King's newfound balance may be short-lived. She confesses that she's got her eyes on a possible new fourth venture. "I wouldn't actually consider taking it on without a BlackBerry smartphone," says King, who adds: "If I do start a fourth business, I'll bring on someone to take over some of my current responsibilities. And I'll definitely give that person a BlackBerry."

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Deirdré King
Entrepreneur