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The Young Sole Proprietor



BY / BECCA BROADDUS


WHEN

Jonathan Cole-McKay boards an airplane, he isn't just eager to be going somewhere. He's excited to meet people.

On a recent flight to Florida with the MBA program, Jonathan Cole-McKay sat next to a businessman who owns a company that does construction for retail companies. On his flight to Zambia with the MBA Program's Africa Global Initiative in June, he met a big-game hunter. On another flight, he met a commercial real estate attorney. "I meet a lot of people on flights," he said. "Networking is a priority in my life. If I sit down somewhere, and I don't know you, I'm going to figure out a way to start a conversation with you." Cole-McKay isn't your average MBA candidate. In fact, it's difficult to call him 'average' in any respect. Driven by faith,

he's pursuing a general MBA and a master's of Information Systems full-time. For his BBA, he triple-majored in Entrepreneurship, Spanish and Distribution Management & Technology. Plus, Cole-McKay has two entrepreneurial ventures, the first, ShoePurgatory, is a website that runs financing for specialty, niche-market sneakers. What started as a hobby collecting Air Jordans in high school turned into a business after a few classes at the Hankamer School of Business. He started it his sophomore year. The second venture, Chaser Strips, is a product-based company. Although the product, flavored dissolving strips that alleviate harsh aftertastes, was the creation of two of Cole-McKay's fellow Baylor graduates, Cole-McKay joined the company soon after. Cole-McKay, a former Boy Scout who proudly sold the most popcorn of his troop three years in a row, will become the chief executive officer of Chaser Strips as his full-time job after graduation. He comes by the entrepreneurial spirit and ambition naturally. His Jamaican-born grandparents and mother are entrepreneurs too. "Entrepreneurship has been bred in my family, in a way," Cole-McKay said. "My grandma owns a lot of restaurants, bars and things like that in Jamaica. After my mom went to college in Oklahoma, she ended up opening up a Jamaican restaurant—Oklahoma City's first. She and my dad owned some smaller businesses like that. Seeing the amount of

work and effort they put into their businesses and seeing how my grandparents grew something from nothing, it gave me the drive to want to do the same thing." Like his family, Cole-McKay prides himself on breaking stereotypes and breaking boundaries. "I love doing things outside the norm," he said. "As a black student, there are expectations of me being confined to certain norms. I don't like being confined to anything. I'm always willing to try anything one time. Life is being open to new experiences, and I want to be able to say I at least tried it." Being open to new experiences goes beyond work and school for him. Cole-McKay went bungee jumping in China, learned to snowboard in Argentina and ran with the bulls in Spain.

"There's a lot of bad in the world, but there's also a lot of good in the world," he said. "It's up to you to find the good in the world and enjoy it. I'm a strong believer of praying for something and then going out to work for what I just prayed for, because faith without action is irrelevant." 



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