

Catching the Next Wave

The story of Gisele Eboma, owner of Surfing Queen™

A Journey of Creative Discipline

Born in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, **Gisele Eboma**'s entrepreneurial path is rooted in a lifelong dedication to the arts. A professional dancer and an actress in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, Gisele spent years mastering the discipline of performance. Parallel to her artistic career, she built a robust background in luxury retail, learning the high standards of customer experience that would later define her own brand.

But it was a vacation in Virginia Beach that changed her trajectory. Encouraged by an instructor to "catch her first wave," Gisele discovered a new passion. "I'm very adventurous," she recalls. "After a few tries, I finally caught it... and I realized I wanted to grow in this sport."

Bridging the Representation Gap

As Gisele dove into surf culture, she noticed a profound void. The industry's image was narrow, often excluding women of color. In 2012, as a professional seamstress, she established **Surfing Queen™**. To refine her vision, she earned a certificate from the **New York School of Design**, becoming the first African designer to create surf suits specifically targeting women surfers.

Her brand is dedicated to "Queens of all sizes," blending the action of surfing with vibrant African-themed elements. In 2024, her brand reached a pinnacle of the fashion world: debuting at **New York Fashion Week**.

The Ascendus Effect: A Financial Transformation

Despite her creative success, Gisele faced a significant barrier common to many growing entrepreneurs: a challenged credit score of 535 due to a weak payment history and outstanding obligations. Referred by **NYC Business Solutions**, she connected with our loan consultant **Neysa Cruceta** at Ascendus.

Gisele didn't just need capital; she needed a "corner coach" to help her rebuild her financial foundation. Through the **Get Ready Program**, she received intensive technical assistance focused on strengthening her creditworthiness. Together with Neysa, she developed a credit action plan to improve payment patterns and address derogatory accounts.



Empowered by this guidance, Gisele elected to pay her outstanding balance in full. Today, she is on track to graduate from the program early this March, having transformed her financial profile from "challenged" to "resilient."

Building with Strategy and Soul

With her newfound financial clarity and a \$500 line of credit, Gisele finalized the production of her latest swimsuit line. The impact was immediate. *"I already had sales in the first week!"* she shares. The investment allowed her to increase engagement on social media and reach new customers who had been waiting for inclusive, high-quality surfwear.

Looking ahead, Gisele's vision is global. She is committed to leveraging her expertise to support women in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** by establishing sewing studios. These studios will provide employment and foster entrepreneurship, empowering women to generate income and support their families through the same craft that changed Gisele's life.

The Impact of Her Journey

- **Business Impact:** Gisele transitioned from a creative concept to a New York Fashion Week brand. The funding helped finalize a unique line of swimsuit apparel, leading to immediate sales and increased brand recognition as a pioneer African surf-wear designer.
- **Household Impact:** Gisele's personal financial health underwent a total transformation. By addressing an outstanding debt in full and following a strict credit action plan, she raised her creditworthiness, moving toward long-term financial independence.
- **Community Impact:** Gisele is creating a bridge between New York fashion and economic development in the Congo. Her commitment to establishing sewing studios in Africa provides a scalable model for social impact and racial equity in manufacturing.



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