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Big Interview with entrepreneur Justin Etzin

"My work is not about getting close to any administration"

Nationality is not just a legal status. It comes with responsibilities: to respect our laws and institutions, to act transparently, and to contribute positively to the country, says Mr. Justin Etzin.

by D. Finesse

Mr. Justin Etzin is an entrepreneur who is focused mainly on tourism, healthcare, and insurance. He first came to Seychelles as a baby and grew up here. His father arrived in the island nation in 1971 and chose to make Seychelles their home. For Mr. Etzin, Seychelles is not just a destination, but a place where he was raised and built his life.

In this interview, we learn not only about the entrepreneur but also about his connection to Seychelles and how, in his own way, he is contributing.

For how long have you been in Seychelles?

My connection to Seychelles goes back more than 55 years through my family. My father first came here on the first jet plane to Seychelles in 1971, sitting next to the Founding President of Seychelles, Sir James Mancham. I arrived when I was only a few weeks old. I grew up in Seychelles, so it does not feel like a place I moved to; it feels like home.

What were your first impressions of Seychelles?

My earliest memories are of a place that is breathtakingly beautiful, but also very human and warm. As a child, I remember spending time on the beaches and hiking in the mountains with a local guide named Gerald, whom I recently reconnected with on Facebook. Of course, but more than that, I remember the kindness of Seychellois people, the way everyone knows each other, and the sense of community. That combination of natural beauty and genuine warmth is what still makes Seychelles special for me today. My father owned the Vista do Mar hotel, and I grew up in Glacis.

You are now a Seychellois, so how do you feel about being granted Seychelles nationality?

Being granted Seychellois nationality is one of the greatest honours of my life. It formalises what I have always felt, that I am Seychellois. For me, nationality is not just a legal status. It comes with responsibilities: to respect our laws and institutions, to act transparently, and to contribute positively to the country. Everything I am doing in healthcare and insurance, from Doctor 24/7, to Insurance and medical protection products, is part of that long-term commitment to Seychelles.

I know nationality is a sensitive subject for some people. The only way I can answer that is through my actions: investing for the long term, creating jobs, and building services that genuinely benefit Seychellois and take pressure off our public systems.

And this is why my family has always believed in giving something back to Seychelles. In 2008, after my father passed away, I donated USD25,000 on his behalf to the hospital, which funded the first laryngoscopic equipment for keyhole surgery and prevented many unnecessary major operations. Since then, I have continued to support the health sector by donating medical equipment or providing the funds needed for the hospital to purchase the most urgent items.

How will you describe your relationship with the previous government?

My approach with any government has always been the same, and that is to work professionally, respectfully, and in the interests of Seychelles. Under previous administrations, I focused on promoting Seychelles abroad, supporting tourism, and helping to bring in investment and projects that could strengthen sectors such as healthcare and hospitality. I have never seen my role as political; I have seen it as one of supporting national development and positively representing Seychelles.

Over the years, I have served Seychelles in many capacities, always unpaid, using my international network to open doors for the country. I helped organise the first United States finance forum for Seychelles, actively encouraged major airlines to fly to the islands, and carried out the type of work that a Consul General and Tourism Ambassador would normally do. All of this was unpaid and privately financed because I believed it was my responsibility to support my country. I even financed the Seychelles Embassy's presence in the UK for five years so the government could allocate its budget to areas of greater need.

My commitment to Seychelles comes from my father. He set up the first insurance company in Seychelles, the first duty-free operation, owned Kingsgate House, provided free school uniforms for children, and helped create the first blood bank. All of these were later nationalised, and our family received nothing in return. All the land we owned was nationalised, and the only land we were left with was eventually earmarked for a National Park. The previous government rightly agreed to exchange it for another piece of land in the area of equal size. I have never received any political favours, nor have I ever asked for any. On the contrary, Seychelles has benefited from my family's contribution and generosity for more than 55 years.

There was also a moment I had never spoken about publicly before. Thirteen Seychellois were stranded in the United States after missing their connection while travelling to go on a Caribbean cruise. They had no way home and no support. I personally paid for every one of their flights back to Seychelles out of my own pocket. I never received one dollar back from any individual or from the government. I did it quietly because helping Seychellois in need has always been more important to me than recognition.

What is your relationship with the current government?

My relationship with the current government under President Patrick Herminie is also professional and respectful. I am encouraged by the emphasis on improving public services, strengthening social protection, and addressing the cost of living. Those are priorities that matter deeply to Seychellois, and they align closely with what I am trying to do in healthcare, especially by taking pressure off the public health system and creating better safety nets for visitors and residents.

· *Justin Etzin*

Whenever my projects can support those national objectives, I am willing to cooperate in a transparent, formal way. I work with institutions, not politics, and I will always respect the role of the elected government of the day.

I have previously worked with Mr. Barry Faure in his role as Minister of Foreign Affairs and with Mr. Pierre Laporte as Minister of Finance. Both are incredibly professional and bring real expertise and discipline to their responsibilities. Whenever the government requires support, I am always willing to assist through my international contacts and my experience in tourism, healthcare, and investment. My approach is simple. I serve Seychelles' interests and fully cooperate with the institutions and professionals entrusted with leading the country.

Do you feel welcome in Seychelles?

Yes, I do feel very welcome in Seychelles. This is where I grew up, and this is where I feel at home.

My late father made significant contributions in the early years, including helping to bring television to the islands, being involved with Kingsgate House, developing early insurance and duty-free activities, and even funding school uniforms for Seychellois children at his own cost in the 1970s. That spirit of giving back is something I have tried to continue.

In my own case, I have focused on health by supporting the public health system through donations and by building services like Doctor 24/7 and our medical protection products that benefit Seychellois, while also supporting the tourism industry.

Of course, not everyone will agree with everything I do; that is normal. But daily, in my interactions with people across the islands, I feel very much part of the community.

How is business going for you in Seychelles?

Business in Seychelles, like everywhere, has ups and downs. But overall, I am very positive and investing even more. My main focus today is on healthcare linked to tourism, centred around three pillars: Doctor 24/7 - this is our 24-hour visiting doctor and nurse service. We are based on Eden Island, which puts us centrally and allows us to reach patients quickly. For only SCR 500, a fully qualified doctor and nurse can come to your home, office, or hotel room.

That local rate is heavily subsidised by me personally because I want Seychellois and GOP holders to have access to fast, private, high-quality care when they need it. We already cover Mahé and can reach all the islands in Seychelles. When needed, we arrange helicopter or plane transfers to the inner and outer islands so that guests in remote resorts are also protected.

We work with many of the country's leading hotels and resorts, ensuring that when a guest is unwell, a doctor can be with them quickly, on site, 24 hours a day.

Another is medical protection for visitors, in which we offer a medical protection product that Airlines, hotels, and tour operators recommend to their clients before they travel. When guests arrive with our protection in place, any unexpected illness or injury can be handled smoothly through Doctor 24/7. The guest knows exactly who to call, and the hotel knows that medical support and costs are taken care of. This gives guests peace of mind, reduces stress for hotels, and helps keep tourists away from already-busy public clinics and the hospital.

I also operate 1st Insurance Seychelles, which supports these medical protection solutions and other travel-related products. The whole idea is to create a joined-up system where visitors are properly protected, hotels and tour operators have a reliable partner, and Seychellois benefit from a stronger, less overloaded health system.

For me, business is going very well because it is focused on solving real problems: protecting people's health, supporting tourism, and easing the burden on our public services.

Can you tell us about your donations to help the Ministry of Health?

My commitment to healthcare in Seychelles is both personal and long-standing.

One of my first significant donations was shortly after my father passed away, when I donated funds to buy the first laryngoscopic equipment for the hospital. Seeing how much difference that one piece of equipment made really struck me.

Since then, I have continued to donate equipment and support to the Ministry of Health, from specialist machines to supplies when they were needed most. I do this because I believe Seychelles deserves a health system that matches the standard of our beautiful islands.

My family always taught me a simple rule. If you can help, you must. That principle guided my father throughout his life, and it is something I have carried forward. It is why I made my first major donation after he passed away and why I have continued to support the health sector ever since. When you can make a difference, you do not wait for recognition or permission. You simply do what is right for Seychelles.

So the donations, subsidies, and services all point in the same direction: supporting our health system and helping Seychellois receive better care.

There has been criticism around the donation you have made. What is your reaction to that?

I completely understand that when donations are made to public institutions, people will have questions. In a small country, and especially in a democracy, that kind of scrutiny is normal and healthy. From my side, I keep things very straightforward.

I respond to requests from the Ministry of Health or other relevant authorities, and the items are donated to the state, not to my companies or me. I do not ask for any special treatment, contracts, or favours in return.

If the authorities ever want to audit or review any donation, I fully support that. Transparency protects everyone.

At times, a small group of politically minded individuals on social media will try to twist any positive action into something negative. They assume that if someone gives or contributes, it must be because they want something in return. In reality, this reveals far more about them than it does about me. People who speak like that are usually the ones who have never donated anything or supported their community without expecting a reward. Anyone who has genuinely given back understands that not everything in life needs to be transactional and that helping Seychelles is a duty, not a strategy.

There have been allegations that you are trying to get close to the current administration. What do you think about that?

I am aware of some of the comments, and I respect people's right to express their opinions, however misguided. What I can say clearly is this: my work is not about getting close to any administration, it is about working with the institutions of Seychelles in a proper, transparent way.

As a Seychellois businessman investing in health and tourism, it is normal for me to meet with ministers or officials to discuss strengthening medical support for visitors, reducing pressure on public hospitals, and aligning private services like Doctor 24/7 and medical protection with national priorities.

Those conversations take place through formal channels, and ultimately, the government and regulators decide what is acceptable and what is not.

I will work constructively with any democratically elected government if it helps deliver real benefits for Seychelles. That has been my approach in the past, and it remains my approach today.

I am also in the process of developing a major Eco project in Seychelles called "Serenite Seychelles," a USD250 million health and longevity wellness resort. This will be one of the most advanced wellness destinations anywhere in the world and will place Seychelles on the global map for high-end wellness tourism. It will create a very large number of quality jobs for Seychellois across hospitality, health, fitness, nutrition, and specialist wellness services. It will bring new skills and training programs to the country and open career paths that do not currently exist in the region. The resort will also introduce world-class health and longevity treatments that Seychellois will be able to access at significantly reduced local rates, improving long-term health outcomes for the community.

The entire development will go through full public consultations, and I welcome every Seychellois to share their views. They will see clearly how carefully we will protect nature and how thoughtfully this resort is being planned. Serenite Seychelles will be owned by a Seychellois and built to benefit Seychelles for generations to come.

Beyond these, I am working on several other projects in Seychelles, all with the same philosophy: long-term investment, job creation, support for the tourism industry, and, above all, services that genuinely strengthen Seychelles and improve people's lives.