

Dawn Dickson Official Bio (2021)

Channeling a lifelong entrepreneurial spirit, boundary-pushing fearlessness, and innate understanding of the nexus of technology, commerce, and culture, Dawn Dickson-Akpoghene consistently catalyzes the companies and brands under her purview. At the helm of multiple cash flow positive businesses, the Ohio-born entrepreneur, inventor, businesswoman, angel investor, and speaker has made history and emerged as a consumer thought leader in her own right. As the C.E.O. and Founder of PopCom, she pioneers the connection between e-commerce and vending machines, continuing a legacy of innovation and invention.

“The common thread throughout my career is the belief in using technology to create generational wealth and empower my community,” she explains. “Whether I’m using technology to help people discover events, raise money, or sell products, I’m leveraging the power of technology. Technology is more inclusive now, but I’ve never been intimidated by being the only woman or black person in a room. I was always driven to be exceptional and to set an example for those that proceed me, to keep the bar very high.”

She started to raise the bar as a child in Columbus, OH. The daughter of entrepreneurs, she moved from one hustle to the next, selling candy, old toys, and lemonade throughout grade school. She valued the experience, and it ultimately informed her path. “The culture of my neighborhood and family was, *‘If you want money, go out there and make it’*,” she explains. “That was always me. I wanted my own money, so I found a way to make it.”

This tenacity has defined her career. After achieving a B.A. in Journalism from The Ohio State University and studying technology at DeVry University, she launched a successful online platform called TheUrbanStarr.com to highlight local entertainment and events in Central Ohio at the turn-of-the-century—the site was ahead of its time, even streaming music and videos online before YouTube. Following years of running a successful tech start up and consulting, she launched Flat Out of Heels in 2011, to sell rollable ballet style flats as the ultimate solution to stiletto sore feet. She distributed these stylish flats online, wholesale to retailers, and in vending machines in high traffic locations. As the company grew so did the need for data, she founded PopCom in 2017 to provide future-facing software solutions for vending machines and self-service retail through revolutionary technological integration and consumer data collection—arriving in locations nationwide in 2021.

Along the way, she made history as *“the first female founder globally to over \$1 million from equity crowdfunding under the Reg CF the JOBS Act.”* A second fully subscribed equity crowdfunding campaign and Reg A+ campaign followed, yielding over \$6 million from 8,000 investors. In March 2020, she testified before a Congressional Committee on Small Business in a hearing *“Building Blocks of Change: The Benefits of Blockchain Technology for Small Businesses”* to advocate for blockchain technology. She invented the PopShop Digital pop-up shop, which employs facial recognition and machine learning technology in order to procure customer data and insights. It received a highly coveted design patent from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in 2020.

Media and culture consistently recognize her as a visionary. *Forbes* touted her on its *“Next 1000: Small-Scale Super Achievers”* list in 2021, *INC Magazine* named her among its *“Top 100 Female Founders,”* and *Black Enterprise* dedicated a cover to her. She has also graced the pages of *Entrepreneur*, *Fortune*, *Fast Company*, *Venture Beat*, *Huffington Post*, and *Essence Magazine* in addition to appearing

on *The Breakfast Club*, the CNBC/Yahoo! series *The Biz Fix* with Marcus Lemonis, and MSNBC's *Your Biz Elevator Pitch*. She received the 2021 Black Women Talk Tech 'Tech Trailblazer Award', 2021 Culture Shifter Award recipient, 2021 Black Women in Media Awards in the area of 'Digital and Tech'; 2020 OBWS Entrepreneur of the Year award, graduate of the 2019 Nasdaq Milestone Maker program and her photo was featured in the center of Times Square, and was recognized as one of the "*Heroes in the Movement*" by the National Urban League Young Professionals. She also hosts the BARS! Podcast on Apple Music and Spotify, dispensing wisdom over a hip-hop soundtrack. She is also a highly sought after and accomplished public speaker sharing the stage with some of the nation's top business leaders.

In the end, Dawn most importantly shines light through every venture.

"My job title is C.E.O., but I'm a lightworker, first and foremost," she says. "Everything I do is aligned with that. With all of my different ventures, I want to encourage, empower, and inspire everyone I work with. I want to be a walking example of what hard work, tenacity, and not taking the popular path can be. I'm here to be a beacon of light and help raise the vibration of the planet by being a living example of the good we can be. I'm a wife. I'm a mother. I'm an inventor. I'm a C.E.O. There's so many communities and roles that could define me, but '*lightworker*' embodies who I am as a spirit and soul."