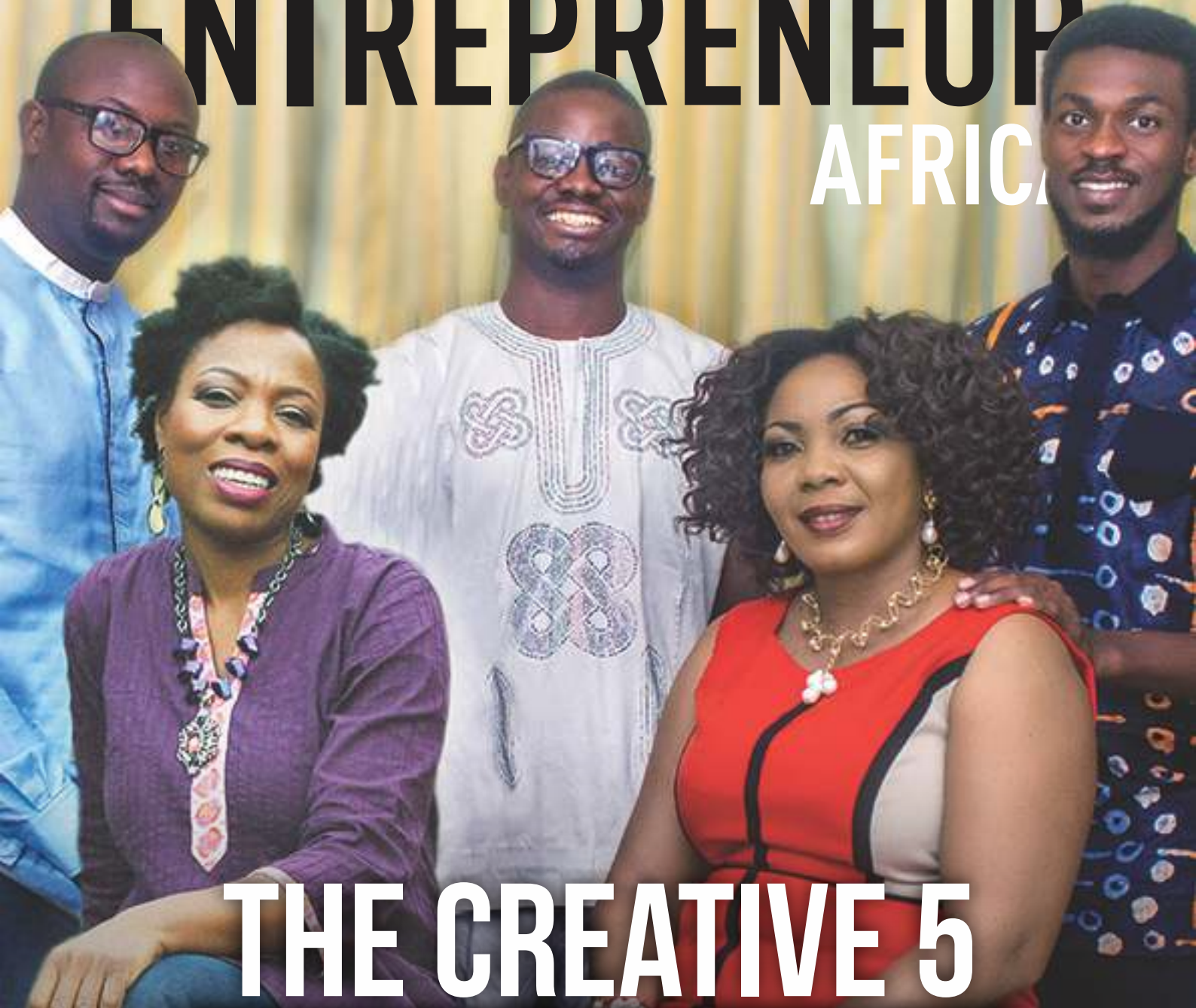


CREATIVE EDITION

APRIL 2018

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# THE ENTREPRENEUR AFRICA



## THE CREATIVE 5

HOW THEY BUILT BIG BUSINESSES OUT OF PASSION AND CREATIVE ARTS

TUNDE OWOLABI | ACHENYO IDACHABA | GBENGA ARTSMITH | BIMBO BALOGUN | ADEKUNLE OLAPADE



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# 2018 1ST HALF

## HOW WELL HAS YOUR BUSINESS PLAYED?

Did you make any resolutions earlier in January? Well, maybe you're one of the few who don't. But as an entrepreneur, I'm sure you set a 2018 target for your business. How well has that worked out? Pretty well is what I'd love to hear; but reality could be a rogue. Whatever be the case, every entrepreneur needs to engage in periodic reviews of their business(es). That's how you stay on track. That's how you measure progress; or otherwise.

So, although April/May doesn't exactly represent 1st half of the year, but June isn't that far down, either. So, we can as well start the reckoning right away. Let's start with the books. How improved are they now, compared to this same time last year? Are you making more profits yet? Or do the figures still look as sorry as they looked last year? Oh, wait, there's another possible outcome: it's the cycle of progress. You know the one where you say stuff like, "it's not as if we're not making money oo; it's

just that the money goes right back to where it came from". Well, cycle progress is no progress at all.

Then let's look at overall growth. This is different from mere rate of profitability. It's all encompassing. How bigger is your workforce now; how larger and more loyal is your clientele; how improved is your percentage share of your industry; how improved is your brand value within the corporate community? What's the answer you get? All in the positive, I hope. If not, then there's work to be done.

Oh, here's a really crucial one. How much has your online presence improved? When the name of your business or product is searched on Google, what amount of information shows up, and from how many sources? How visible are you across social media? How engaging are your pages? Oh, wait, your business is not even on social media? Ok, it's on Facebook, but not on

Instagram yet; LinkedIn doesn't really appeal to you, and Twitter is just too complicated? If this is you; please join me, let's have a good laugh at you. But I'm glad you'll be making this review now; and reviews are not just done purposelessly. It's done for clarity, as well as for improvement. So, people, let's improve!

This Creative Edition of The Entrepreneur Africa is dedicated to all of you who work hard daily to create beauty out of crudity across Africa. This is us saying, you're noticed, and you're appreciated. And to our ardent readers, as always you'll have a good time reading. Cheers.

**David Agu, Esq.**  
*Editor*

(I'll love to hear from you. Please send your comments and Contributions to: [editor@theentrepreneurafrika.com](mailto:editor@theentrepreneurafrika.com))

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# AFRICAN FREE TRADE AREA: CELEBRATING THE DAWN OF A \$3TRILLION MARKET WITH 1.2BILLION PEOPLE

By Strive Masiyiwa



**Every month, on this column, we bring you words of business wisdom from this proven, world-renowned business leader, Strive Masiyiwa. Strive is Zimbabwe's richest man and founder of Econet, Kwese Inc., e.t.c. He has been named among 50 greatest world Leaders ever. Enjoy!**

The release of Nelson Mandela from prison was one of those "Where were you on that day?" moments in history. If you were an African, and old enough to understand its full implication, you are probably able to give an account of yourself, even today. Me, I just watched on TV with total awe, and with my entire family we all cried like babies, hugging each other.

There are also other moments, equally important and profound in the progress of human history, which happen without people fully realizing their significance, sometimes for decades, or even centuries. For instance, two bicycle makers called the Wright Brothers tried for years to get their little winged vehicles to fly across fields and cow pastures. In the arc of history, the invention of those two pioneering engineers impacted the world far more than who was President of the United States at the time!

For those of us who care deeply about the development of the African continent and its capacity to create prosperity and jobs, especially for our young generations now and in the future, the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on 21 March was a really big deal.

It may not yet be drawing the attention of people going about their daily lives, but

believe you me, if it is executed properly, it will affect all of us.

We have begun (as Africans) to put in place the building blocks of what will become the world's biggest single market within 100 years. Today it is nearly \$3Tn and 1.2bn people. It will be over \$100Tn by the turn of the century, with over 4bn consumers.

You want respect? You will not have to ask for it!

Speaking to you as a serious African entrepreneur, a unique door has been opened. You will not have to struggle as some of us have over the decades, to develop huge companies that will expand quickly across our continent.

If the **AfCFTA** is executed as envisioned, what will be the benefits for you, your children and future generations for decades to come?

1. More and better job opportunities
2. More cross-border trade with less red tape (such as at customs and ports)
3. Better food security (through lower barriers to trade across the continent)
4. More efficient regional supply chains (promoting investment, growth, and creation of jobs)
5. Better prices and a wider variety of goods and services (from economies of

scale)

6. More independence (from aid and external borrowing), innovation, protection of intellectual property... the list goes on.

Prepare to see some really big African companies from every corner of the continent, including some of the smallest countries. And when you see them, say to your kids, "This is what our brothers and sisters launched that day... I was there!"

And then shall it be fulfilled that the "last have become first."

There is still a lot of work to be done, and many sacrifices, and we will have to make profound changes to the way we conduct our economic and political affairs. We will have to uproot corruption, tribalism, regionalism, and racism from the shores of our continent.

Don't be a "Monday morning midfielder," but learn to play the game itself! Countless generations before us paid the ultimate price yet prosperity was never within reach. Now is our time.

As one great African said: "Yes, we can!"

Let each of us not fail to do our own part. Of the 44 signatory countries, at least 22 must ratify in the next six months.

God bless you. God bless Africa!



# SALES MASTER CLASS:

## FIVE COMMITMENTS YOU NEED TO WIN THE DEAL

By Bunmi Jembola

Closure in sales is as much an art as it is a science. I say frequently to sales people, deals do not close on their own and deals close essentially because someone thought of closure right from the opening.

Many times, what determines whether a deal will close or not is how you opened the sale. If you open poorly you lose as much as 50% of the prospect for closure. If closure is a science it is important to understand the elemental building blocks for it. These building blocks are in form of commitments that must be earned driving from opening to closure. Without these commitments you will not sell.

**1. Commitment for Time** - If someone will not talk to you; you cannot sell to them. When an organization is willing to schedule 30mins for a management level meeting it is a good buying signal. Don't go

there and fluff. A simple question like this is very important in gaining time commitments from C-level prospects: If you give me just 5minutes of your time I can show you how our solution will help you etch up sales by a 20% margin in 3 months. If you need a bit of the time of busy people your value proposition has to be clear and strong.

**2. Commitment for Change** - If you are selling value I figure you'd be selling some "plan of progress". But if people are content with where they are and are intent on remaining there an amazing plan of progress will not move them however well you sell it. If you are selling novel solutions it is important to ask questions about the prospect. Ask whether they are open to new stuffs. It is better to have a very honest conversation with an inside champion-someone who tells you what works within

the organization.

**3. Commitment to build and gain consensus** - If 5 persons need to agree for a company to make a purchase if one of them disagrees the sale is truncated. You want to avoid that upfront. Often I ask "Sir, who else should be part of our discussions in order to have a productive engagement". You don't want to be misunderstood as saying "You don't have the power to make a decision"; though. When a company convenes a meeting of decision makers to hear you it is a good sign. But you better be very ready.

**4. Commitment to collaborate** - For people who sell B2B you know almost every solution must be customized and domesticated. You will need to work with the client to understand what specific tweaks will help your client to get





“...If you give me just 5 minutes of your time can show you how our solution will help you etch up sales by a 20% margin in 3 months. If you need a bit of the time of busy people your value proposition has to be clear and strong...”

exceptional value from your product.

**5. Commitment to invest** - Very early in the sale cycle I ask insiders if the company has money. If they don't and are struggling to survive except that solution is their only life line they won't buy. It's much easier to sell through when an organization has a budget for the problem you solve say a budget on technological innovation. You don't go to the CEO asking if they are willing to pay right? But you can ask a senior manager whom you have befriended in the process of selling.

Whatever you sell, it is important for the buyer to be committed to the sale in some way and time, consensus, collaboration, money and willingness to change are signposts to that commitment.

*Bunmi Jembola is Nigeria's leading sales coach, trainer and consultant. He has over a decade experience in B2B and B2C sales that spans four industries including I.T, Banking, FMCG and Consulting. In those years he earned over N12Billion in aggregate sales value. He is the CEO of Sales Ruby Ltd which is at the fore-front of deploying technological solutions to organizations for sales enablement. He is also CEO of Venture Starter Ltd. He is the Convener of Founders Conference and Africa Startup Festival. Bunmi hosts a quarterly Sales Master Class for entrepreneurs and senior sales executives.*

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# THE CREATIVE

HOW THEY BUILT BIG BUSINESSES OUT OF CREATIVITY AND PASSION

# FIVE



# TUNDE OWOLABI

**A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARTIST, CREATING BEAUTY  
AND BIG BUSINESS OUT OF ASO-OKE**

By Maureen Isaiah and Drusilla I.B.O

Just like the oracle is the mouthpiece of the gods, Ethnik by Tunde Alabi has become an intermediary between the old and the new, translating the ancient art of aso-oke into modern manifestations of urban chic that is both relatable to the elderly and coveted by the young. Each piece is intricately interwoven with our culture and heritage and tells the Yoruba story in a captivating new way. In this interview with *The Entrepreneur Africa*, Tunde shares with us his passion for the woven fabric, the unique challenges he has faced in the business, as well as the inspiring victories.

**Ethnik is a unique name; just like your product. What inspired it?**

Ethnik was coined from the word ETHNIC, (ETHNICITY) which means: belonging to a social group that shares a distinctive common culture, language or religion. Being a Yoruba man, I have tapped into my culture and also worked with other Nigerian cultures to create my unique products.

**Tell us about Tunde Owolabi, the man behind the Ethnik brand.**

Tunde Owolabi is a multidisciplinary artist. I graduated as a graphic designer, after which I took keen interest in photography. I later took a professional course in photography and photo retouching from the London College of fashion. While in England, I

worked as a designer at the research studios London under Neville Brody, working on accounts such as nickelodeon, Somerset House, Sofitel etc. On returning to Nigeria, I worked with Insight Communications, as an art director, working on brands such as Pepsi, Heineken and Mainstreet Bank, to mention a few.

I left advertising in 2012 and have since become a full time studio artist, photographer and designer. I did an extensive research on the fabric, *aso oke* and had an exhibition of arts and photography in 2014 about the fabric. This later led to the creation of the brand Ethnik, borne out of the passion to see the culture and art of weaving being sustained and made available to everyone.

**Are all your products hand-made? If not, what are the various production processes involved?**

My products are 80% handmade, this is because we use machines to sew and skive where necessary but the bulk of the production is handmade and that we are proud of.

**Looking back at your entrepreneurial journey, were there moments you nearly gave up? Please share some of these moments with us.**

I have never thought of giving up. I only get tired, especially when I can't access raw materials, not getting good enough commitment from artisans, etc. Otherwise they are challenges that come with the terrain and I am ready to face it head on.

**Unique bags and foot wears, these are your signature products. What is the big deal about them?**

They are not what you see every day. Aside the fact that they are made with *aso oke*; there is a story to our pieces as they are inspired by our cultures; our stories; who we are. Our products stand out from others because we take our time to craft them beautifully to meet the demand of today's fashionista, young and old.

**We are aware you have a large base of clientele, how were you able to build it?**

We were able to build our clientele and followers with quality products and brand positioning. It is important to build a brand that endears with the people and delivers on its promise. We try to meet their demands, however tight the schedule may be and we thrive on excellent customer service, which for us is KEY.

**How well do you think the "Buy Naija" slogan has worked out in relation to your business?**

To an extent, the awareness created around "BUY NAIJA" has opened up a better marketing opportunity, but I think the fact that Nigerians have stepped their games up in the manufacturing sector, despite all the constraints is impressive and has helped sell the buy naija slogan effortlessly. There have been a lot of converts who used to prefer foreign products to what is made here. Now the quality is way up and Nigerians are proud to associate with made in Nigeria products. More needs to be done, though, and we won't stop.

**What would you be most likely caught doing at your leisure time?**

Read a book; hangout with great friends; eat good food; spend time with family; and travel.







**“There have been a lot of converts who used to prefer foreign products to what is made here. Now the quality is way up and Nigerians are proud to associate with made in Nigeria products. More needs to be done, though, and we won’t stop.”**





WHEN STORIES OF  
BEADS ARE TOLD,  
**BIMBO  
BALOGUN**  
BELONGS TO THE  
HALL OF FAME

By Maureen Isaiah

**What can you do with N400? Start a jewelry business worth millions, travel the world to sell and showcase your product and get featured by the BBC while you're at it. Sounds unbelievable right? Well, that's exactly what Bimbo Balogun has done and in this Interview with The Entrepreneur Africa the graduate of petroleum marketing from the Delta state university gives us all the details of how she achieved this feat. Enjoy!**

**Was Bimbeads a passion or you went in for the money?**

All my life I wanted to work with an oil company. My dad worked in NNPC, so I just liked the corporate oil and gas setting, but at that time, Nigeria had turned to something else, jobs weren't available.

While waiting on the job, I tried my hands on so many things which I just did to make keep myself busy and to make some money, but they all fizzled out because I had no passion for them.

One day, I saw an advert on T.V. and the lady was adorned from head to toe with beads and I was ok, this is more creative than just sitting down and selling something. I met my husband and told him about the advert, and that I need money for training and all that. My husband was like "Again?" That word again, meant so much to me, it was like piercing a blunt knife into my heart. So, I told him not to give me the money for the business, he should just encourage me, although he later gave me the money for the training. I got trained for three weeks.

When I started, I didn't know I was starting. I just got beads, made it, and sold it to my neighbor who was also my friend, but I gave her the impression that I was already a professional. So I sold it to her for 5000

naira, so you can imagine buying the materials for 400 naira and making a gain of 4600 naira. Then my pastor at that time bought a piece from me for about 30,000 naira. So, it was a sort of encouragement to me, and that is how I delved into bead making.

**What are your challenges in this business? What problems do you face?**

One major challenge is my staff. When I have staff, I have to train them to my standard. I teach them about bead making, how to attend to guests, talk to people on phone, you know about life generally. So they are with me for a while and then they leave because they feel like they are equipped. It is not a bad thing, but it affects me in a way.

The other aspect is the availability of my materials. I use unique materials in order to make unique designs, so most times, I leave the shores of the country to get good materials and you know with the rise and fall of dollars, it poses a problem to me.

Another challenge is, people say "buy naija, make naija", but some of our high profile celebrities do not patronize Nigeria products. They believe that they can get quality products when they buy abroad. The truth is I know what effigy and others sells, there are nowhere compared to what

we produce over here.

**The Nigerian creative industry, how lucrative will you say it is, judging from your own experience?**

You don't tag a work of art according to the cost of materials; you are selling your brainwork. So when people say, Bimbo why are you selling this thing for such amount, probably 10,000 naira when others are selling it for 1000 naira, I tell them my brain is different.

**Do you have a target market? If yes, how do you get them?**

When I go for exhibitions, I don't have a target, it's for everybody. I have things that go for 300, 500 or 1000 naira, but in the store, I have pieces for stylish people, for those who want to stand out, and those who want something unique.

**What are the various products that come under Bimbeads?**

I have my corporate casual, I have the Ugonma which is the basically not my design. For instance, a client might see something she likes on instagram and tell me to make it for her, I do it but I add my personal touch to it. My Abike premium are designs I am not likely to have two of it, not that I don't want to, but I can't even make it again, because I do not work with rules. I have the high profile, which are my



**“...I was once featured in a TV program that was shown all over Nigeria where I showed people how to make jewelry and I received calls from all over Nigeria and even Africa from people who wanted to be trained in the act of bead making. I was also one of the first people to own a website on jewels, so I was ranking very high on Google and that was how BBC got to know about me...”**

18-carat gold, my gold field and my sterling silver. They are usually simple, but classy.

**What are the materials for your various products?**

My first and most important materials are my pearls. I love my pearls because they are timeless. As you know, pearls are gotten from oysters and so you can classify them under organic materials and they last from generation to generation. They do not go out of fashion and they come in various shapes and size.

We have the regular pearls, baroque pearls and so on. Baroque pearls are culture pearls. I also work with gem stones-precious stones and semi-precious stones.

**What more do you wish to achieve in this business? Any drawn plans?**

Yes, I would love to achieve so much more, because for me, I have not gotten to where I want to be. I don't want to let the cat out of the bag yet.

**Comparing when you started till now, can you state exactly what you started with?**

Yes, I earlier stated that I bought materials worth 400 naira to make my first bead which I sold for 5000 naira. So in essence, I started with 400 naira.

**How much is Bimbeads worth now?**

Bimbeads is worth millions of naira.

**When did your major break happen?**

My major break happened when I placed an advert on Wedding Planner magazine with 50,000 naira which was enough to buy a land then, but when I did it, I started getting calls from people; I could not believe it. I was also once featured in a TV program that was shown all over Nigeria where I showed people how to make jewelry and I received calls from all over Nigeria and even Africa from people who wanted to be trained in the act of bead making. I was also one of the first people to own a website on jewels, so I was ranking very high on Google and that was how BBC got to know about me. I got a call from them and I gave them a date and they came down to shoot a video about my business. Thankfully, at that same period, I

was having one of the biggest wedding exhibitions- wed expo, so BBC also captured me real life, when I was selling at the exhibition.

I wasn't actually prepared for my big break because; I was getting calls from people in the U.K, Australia, Germany and other countries. My website actually crashed because of the number of people that visited it. I didn't know how I would send the jewelry to them; I also didn't know how they will pay because I didn't have a PayPal account at that time.

**What were your downtimes like?**

First of all, I will like to say, where I am, I am very thankful but this is not where I should be. There are decisions I took that didn't turn out the way I thought it would and the money invested in them went down the drain but, I just quickly had to move on. It didn't stop me from making other decisions.

Also, in November 2017, I attended an exhibition in Germany, very large exhibition where you can get anything you want. I was excited because of the number of people trooping into the exhibition center, I was so sure I will sell everything I came there with but the reverse was the case. I later found out that the Germany people are conservative people and do not like bright colors which I had added to my bead collection. If not for our African people over there that bought some of the things, it would have been a complete disaster.

**What advice would you give those who are looking forward to going into your line of business but do not know where to start?**

There are two things I would point out: power of the mind and power of determination. There is a process, when you fall, you get up. What keeps me going is my power of determination. So I would advise that they increase their power of determination, they should keep going and on the way, they will definitely meet somebody good that will open the door to greater things. In conclusion, you have to just start and the right time to start is now!










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. Cover Story .



# FOR THE CULTURE... THAT'S HOW **ADEKUNLE OLAPADE** REGARDS THE BUSINESS OF ADIRE

By Drusilla I.B.O and Maureen Isaiah

For the culture...

Adekunle Olapade has a deep rooted love for culture, particularly Yoruba culture. Originally a writer, his detour into the path of colors and patterns began with a conversation he had with his friends about indigenous fabrics that sent him in search of a fabric that was truly Nigerian in form and origin. His quest took him down to Abeokuta the birthplace of Adire. Adiration is a vibrant expression of Adekunle's desire to not just preserve the Yoruba culture but also to promote the fabric that is proudly Nigerian. In this interview, he shares with us the pains and gains on his entrepreneurial journey so far.



**Who were you before AdireNation?**

**What is your personality really like?**

I used to be a writer and I had a lifestyle blog.

**What inspired your journey into Adire cloth making?**

My friends and I got talking randomly one afternoon and it had to do with the fact that Nigerians were not getting recognition for things that were produced in Nigeria. I think it was at a time when Ankara was really popular and I was like, Nigeria should have one fabric they are known for. So, I searched and I happened to find Adire. I took a trip to Abeokuta and when I got there, I realized that Adire actually originated from Abeokuta. I made more findings and I found out that there were so many stories of Nigerians that have actually contributed to the progress of Nigeria but were forgotten so that prompted me into taking Adire Nation into what it is today, using Adire to promote a lifestyle or a culture.

**How were you able to convince your co-founders to believe in your dream?**

It was actually a conversation. I think we were actually thinking along the same line but the idea of using Adire and fusing it into fashion was mine. It wasn't difficult convincing them. The challenge was can it be done? Is it possible? And it was - we made it happen.

**What problems have you encountered in the process of building this business from the scratch?**

My major problem would be personnel; people I work with. I was actually forced to learn how to make the Adire. Initially, my plan was, since there was already a growing market, I would just source for it locally with the hope to promote the sales and production of Adire because I saw in a newspaper clip that the Adire market was dying because it wasn't being patronized. The idea was that I would just look for a few sellers, patronize them and make

**"...I made more findings and I found out that there were so many stories of Nigerians that have actually contributed to the progress of Nigeria but were forgotten so that prompted me into taking Adire Nation into what it is today, using Adire to promote a lifestyle or a culture..."**

fashion houses, but then, going into the Adire business, I saw a lot of loopholes that was involved in it; the design flaws, the kind of fabric we use. Sometimes, most of my customers would ask me, "The Adire usually washes off, can you guarantee me that it wouldn't wash off?" I wouldn't be able to say yes because I couldn't guarantee it so I decided to make it by myself.

**Can you walk us through the process of Adire?**

Adire is basically tie and dye. All you have to do is tie, dye and then you design it. The idea is to get a piece of fabric, cloth or anything that is liquid absorbent. Not all materials can be used for Adire, it has to be 100 percent cotton so as to allow liquid to pass through it. Stuffs like silk, polyester,



nylon would not really work well, so we mostly use cotton. It depends on the folding and tying technique, knowing how to mix the chemicals, the right chemicals to use and your Adire is ready.

**Have you had any major success? Something like a big break that kept you going? You knew you were in the right direction because this happened?**

I wouldn't say big break but I know that there have been many ups. For example, some months ago we provided costumes for a stage play at Muson Centre during the Lagos Theatre Festival.

**What were your mistakes during your progression stages and what did you learn from them?**

Initially when I started I was like, you know what, this is a new business, and it would take a while before people actually get the idea behind the brand so I was a bit laid back. Few years down the line I realized that even though that worked, it wasn't the

best maneuver. The one thing you have to do is have a structure, have a goal, a plan, what is it exactly you want to do and you follow it through. So, I realized I needed to have a structure.

**What is the beauty of this business, why would you rather do it?**

I love culture and part of what I want to do is promote the Yoruba culture. Looking at little kids of today a lot of them have lost it in my opinion. A little kid will see an elderly person and will just wave and the parents won't even care, they say its old school, but I still think there are some parts of the culture that shouldn't be forgotten and that is what keeps me going, promoting the beautiful Yoruba culture.

**What is the next level for Adire Nation?**

The idea is to promote Yoruba culture. What I'm striving for is whenever you see the Adire, the first thing that comes into your mind is the Yoruba culture. Every of our pattern should be able to tell a story and every outfit you buy would remind you of some part of the Yoruba culture. That is the ultimate goal.

**What is the difference between Ankara and Adire?**

Ankara is printed, Adire is handmade and you can use any material to print Ankara but for Adire, it is mostly cotton.

**Is Adire a lucrative business for you?**

For now, I won't say we have made much money because we have not really kicked off but I believe it is a lucrative business. Right now, we are making money to continue reproducing and staying relevant in the industry. We have not made enough money to expand. I think it is a gradual process, a step by step thing.



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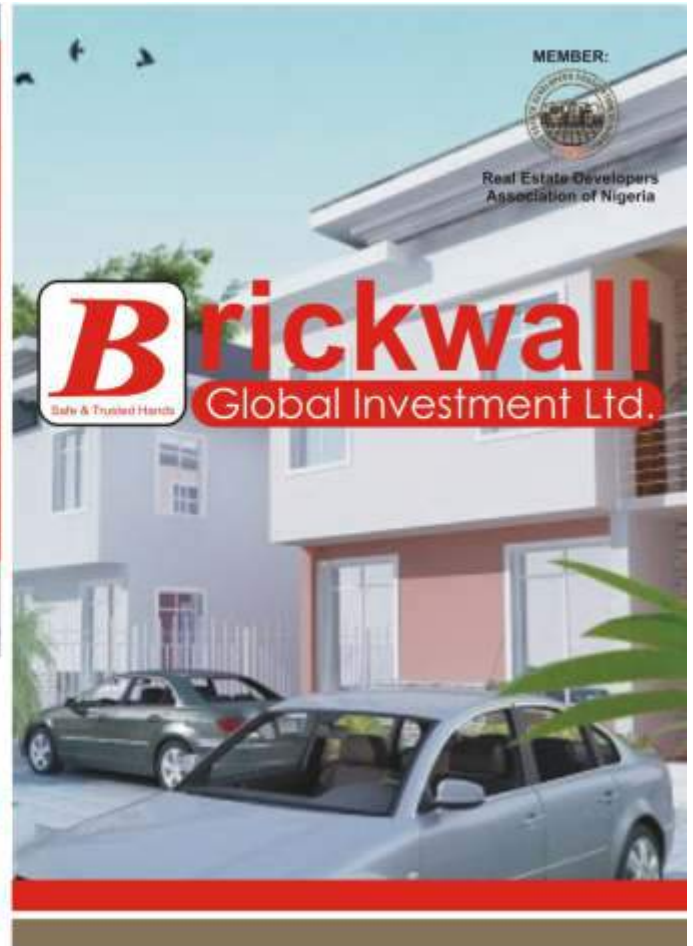
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**GBENGA**  
**IS A CREATIVE SPIRIT;**  
**AND HE'S BUILT A BIG BUSINESS**  
**OUT OF JEWELRY ART**

By Maureen Isaiah

**A list of the big names in Nigeria's jewelry industry would not be complete without Gbenga Ayo-Dada (Gbenga Artsmith). For the multi-talented Gbenga, jewelry-making was a calling that he had to answer. A look at his designs will reveal his unique creativity, and of course, his incredible talent has not gone unnoticed as he has worked on major projects such as the record-breaking Nigerian movie, The Wedding Party 1&2. In spite of his achievements, Gbenga says "There is still a lot to accomplish." Enjoy excerpts from the interview he had with The Entrepreneur Africa. Excerpt.**

**Tell us about Gbenga Artsmith?**

First of all, I am Gbenga Artsmith, a jewelry designer. I am generally a creative spirit. I express my creativity in different things. I do creative writing, I act when the opportunity arises, I also sing. Generally, I do a lot of things.

**So you have featured in a film before?**

Yes, a T.V. series - Tinsel.

**What inspired you to go into jewelry making?**

I think I was launched into this because looking back; this is not what I wanted to do. It wasn't actually the path I chose. I just chose creativity and you know creativity is so deep. I tried my hands on different things, so I would say this chose me. I was already deep into it before I realized it. I saw continuity in this thing. I saw a future for myself in this thing. I saw something I could continue to do and even pass down to generations after me. I tried my hands on so many things, tie and dye, painting and so many other creative stuffs, but this was the one that had the strongest hold, that's why I am still here.

**Can you give us a breakdown of the journey so far? What were the challenges you encountered on your way to creating a unique brand?**

The journey has been smooth; it has been rocky, fun, frustrating and rewarding. There are lots of challenges and they vary from season to season. One season, it is the challenge of funding, the other season, it is the challenge of employees, and you know, different things.

The major challenge we have had is dealing with employees. You know, I work with young people. Now, you know the problem with millennials is that they love freedom over security. They don't want to plant, groom and grow with something that has potentials. They don't want to endure or persevere; they want it at the snap of their fingers. You give them privileges and they abuse it because they think this is not the kind of thing I want now. It's crazy you invest so much in someone, you put your trust in them and at the end the person just behaves like "Hey! I don't care about you, I care about myself alone and then there are so many things they miss out on. They rob themselves of so many blessings and they keep hopping from one thing to the other and they move around in circles, they never progress.

Another challenge is scarcity of materials to produce. You create a best seller and while it is in high demand, you go to the market

and they tell you it's no longer available but the clients would still want them. It makes one lose out of financial rewards because you cannot provide that particular product that is needed at that particular time. Also, our partners would promise to deliver on a particular date and they don't deliver, invariably, this affects work. It's really crazy; you're trying to do so many things, you're trying to keep tabs on the dispatch rider to make sure the delivery is done, at the same time you are trying to create, to make procurement and other things. Also attending to different clients at the same time is possible but very difficult to achieve because they want their response immediately, so it can be a heavy load to carry and deal with.

**What has been your biggest breakthrough since you ventured into this business?**

In 2016, I was chosen as the sole accessories designer to showcase at the maiden edition of GTB bank (Fashion Week). It was not a Nigerian event; it was an African event, so, it was a great honor to be selected. We were also chosen as the official accessories designer for The Wedding Party 1 & 2. Our pieces are featured in quite a number of major projects too.



**What were your greatest failures in this line of business and what did you learn from it?**

I think for me it has just been missing out on opportunities. Just because you didn't know so much, you weren't as enlightened, you didn't bring so much insight, and the opportunity passes you by. Then when you realize it will be too late. So I have learnt from that, I have learnt to be open minded, I have learnt to be more alert, to be more vigilant to things around me, to observe. I have also learnt not to look down on things because some of these opportunities that have passed me by was because I overlooked them, I didn't see potentials in them. Some avenues I didn't exploit them and some opportunities, good opportunities would have come out from them but I underestimated it.

**Where do you source your materials from, is it nationally or internationally?**

We source it both nationally and internationally. Some of our products are a mixture of ready made pieces and handcrafted. Like we would buy a necklace from UK or USA, and transform it, then we add our own input, our handcrafted touch to it. We source from different places; we source from Lagos, China, USA and the UK majorly.

**What are your ranges of products?**

We make almost any kind of jewelry. There are the casual pieces that are appropriate for launch dates, for office wear. We also have bridal pieces. The one I stated at first, casual pieces falls under our diffusion line, and then we have fine jewelry. The fine jewelry is made from precious metals, semi-precious stones and precious stones. There some people who would want custom orders and so we make it from the scratch with gold, silver, pearls and different things.

**You've worked with celebrities and important personalities. How do you connect with them, is it through**

**exhibitions or social media?**

Some of them came to us having heard about us. Some were through referral, probably someone who is close to them bought from us or has heard about us. Others hear of us on TV, newspapers, magazines pictures, blog pictures and then they come to us.

**We noticed you have quite a number of followers on instagram and your blog has a lot of contents. It seems like you promote your online business very well, so how do you achieve this?**

As you said, we have followers, and these followers also have their own network. We use them as our first point of contact, we

**particular topic?**

Well, I have an elder brother who lives with cerebral palsy who has done so well for himself. So, I just wanted to create awareness to encourage people that if those who are underprivileged can be successful in their chosen field, then I see no reason why those who are complete in the physical sense of the word cannot do better.

**What is the next level for Gbenga Artsmith?**

I believe we still have a lot of grounds to cover, a lot of people do not know about us yet. There is still a lot to accomplish, so we are taking steps to reach out to everyone.

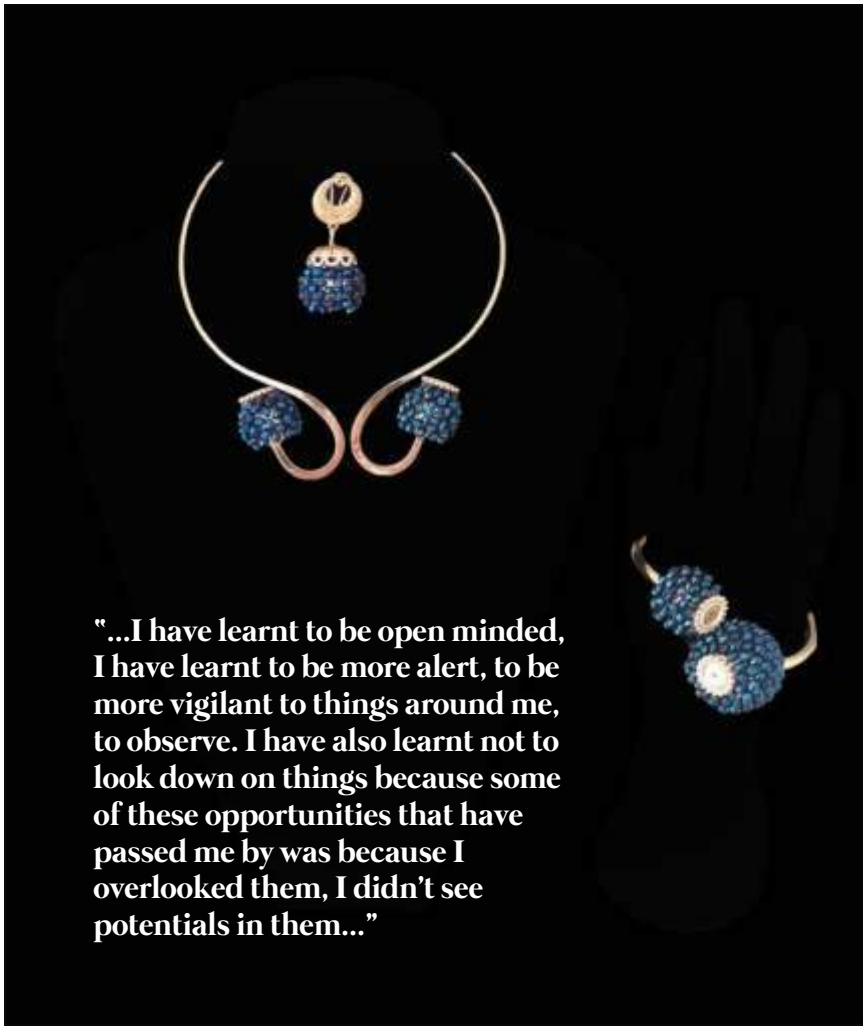
**What do you think should be the habit of someone who wants to be a successful entrepreneur?**

Well, I believe if you chose to be an entrepreneur, then you cannot be a lazy person. A lazy person cannot go far. You also have to be someone who is passionate about self-development because you have to keep up with trends, what may be in vogue today, might not be in the next three months. So you have to continuously keep up with trainings. You also have to be persistent because at times, you might meet some challenges that would make you feel like quitting but you have to keep on moving.

Moreover, you have to be someone who knows how to keep relationship because most of the projects I handled that got

me where I am today were through referrals, relationships I have been able to keep. So, if you are the type that burns bridges, then this job is not for you. You have to know how to maintain relationships, how to be tolerant and how to work with people.


Above all, you need to be focused and determined. You need to know that you don't just hit it big right away. You have to take little steps till you get to where you are meant to be.



**"...I have learnt to be open minded, I have learnt to be more alert, to be more vigilant to things around me, to observe. I have also learnt not to look down on things because some of these opportunities that have passed me by was because I overlooked them, I didn't see potentials in them..."**

market to them and then they also refer us to other people. We also use e-commerce sites and people get to hear about us through our e-commerce platforms like Jumia, shopify and the rest and then, they Google us and discover we have a website. There are different ways and avenues through which we use to promote our website.

**So you recently produced a documentary on Cerebral Palsy as part of the initiative for your 2018 collection, why did you choose that**



WASTE TO BEAUTIES:  
HERE'S HOW  
**ACHENYO  
IDACHABA**  
IS CREATING  
MASTERPIECES  
OUT OF WASTE

By Yinka Adebisi



**Achenyo Idachaba runs an award-winning business, converting agro-waste materials into beautiful handcrafted products. But this wasn't always the case. In this interview with The Entrepreneur Africa, she shares how she made the leap from working in Corporate America to working with waste materials, empowering women and youth in the process, while helping to solve ecological problems.**  
**Excerpt.**

**Before MitiMeth, what is the story of Achenyo Idachaba?**

Before MitiMeth, I had worked in Corporate America in the Oil and Gas industry. Deciding I needed a change of focus, I took a leap of faith by resigning from my job and relocating to Nigeria. I started doing research and consulting in waste recovery and utilization, specifically focusing on climate change mitigation opportunities.



**How did Mitimeth start, and what has the journey been like so far?**

I tell folks that MitiMeth is a tangible expression of the message I was preaching on waste recovery and utilization. Because I was already in this mindset, happening upon the infestation water hyacinth in the Lagoon, was an opportunity just waiting to be seen by the right person at the right time. I saw the beneficial use of water hyacinth as an avenue to empower communities who would otherwise suffer loss of economic livelihoods due to infestation of water hyacinth in the waterways. The journey has been quite interesting and rewarding. Taking MitiMeth from ground zero to where we have found ourselves today has been nothing but a faith walk, jog and sprint.

**Could you give us a rundown of what Mitimeth is all about, as a creative business?**

MitiMeth is a for-profit social enterprise in the Creative Economy. MitiMeth creates handcrafted products from natural fibres considered environmental menaces or waste. MitiMeth upcycles recovered natural fibres and non-timber resources through harvesting and crafting activities. MitiMeth designs and manufactures home accent furniture, stationery, baskets, kitchen and dining-ware from these recovered resources. In addition, MitiMeth facilitates Craft Innovation Workshops in rural communities empowering women and youth to generate income earning opportunities utilizing locally available resources.

**In recent years, the slogan, "Buy Naija", has become popular. How has**

**that socio-economic campaign helped your business?**

It has helped the Nigerian people to look inward which has been great for our business. We receive inquiries on both products and training services and in most cases those who inquire do end up making purchases. When you consider the fact that our products are discretionary items i.e. not food and not shelter, the reception and focus we have received has been great.

**What are the various raw materials used in your productions that makes your brand unique?**

We use invasive aquatic weeds (e.g. water hyacinth, typha grass), and agricultural waste forms (banana bark, coconut shells and bamboo culms). What makes the products unique is the previously unimaginable use to which we have put these waste forms. The story behind the products makes the MitiMeth brand unique.

**What range of products is made by Mitimeth?**

MitiMeth designs and manufactures home accent furniture, stationery, baskets, kitchen and dining-ware from these recovered resources.

**Recently, you entered into partnership with the Lagos State Waterways, tell us more about that?**

We recently partnered with LASWA to conduct a water hyacinth crafts workshop in Badagry. We train 50+ women and youth. As you know, LASWA's mandate is to provide safe and navigable waterways in Lagos State. The infestation of Water hyacinth makes the waterways

**“We use invasive aquatic weeds (e.g. water hyacinth, typha grass), and agricultural waste forms (banana bark, coconut shells and bamboo culms). What makes the products unique is the previously unimaginable use to which we have put these waste forms. The story behind the products makes the MitiMeth brand unique.”**



unsafe to navigate because the weeds damage the outboard engines of boats. In light of this, LASWA wanted to empower community members in Badagry to transform the menace in their environment into beneficial use.

**When and what would you say was your big break in this business?**

I have had several big breaks in this Business and hope to have several more. These BIG breaks have come in the form of: Technical assistance from WiMBIZ, UI-CEI, CBI; Financial assistance from winning business plan competitions i.e. Standard Chartered Bank, YouWIN, Cartier Women's Initiative Awards, Tony Elumelu Foundation; Media exposure from local and global online and print media and the opportunity to present the MitiMeth story on both local and international platforms, and customers through word of mouth, and social media.

**How international is Mitimeth currently?**

Our market is primarily domestic for now but our goal is to reach markets beyond

the boundaries of Nigeria. Not just in terms of products but also providing training to communities who are currently negatively affected by the infestation of water hyacinth.

**From your own experience, how lucrative is this kind of business?**

It is best to answer this question with statistics. The Global Artisan economy is a \$32 billion dollar economy and the developing world accounts for 65% of this economy according to a report produced by The Aspen Institute. With a youth poverty incidence rate in Nigeria of 80%, innovative business models supporting the Artisan sector becomes an imperative. At MitiMeth, we are working towards establishing an Artisan Economy by transforming Water Hyacinth, a natural renewable resource, and agro-waste forms into an economic advantage through the empowerment of communities and the production of handcrafted accessories.

**Some people claim that hand-made home-made products are often unreasonably expensive, how true is this?**

'Unreasonably expensive' is a relative phrase in my opinion. If a person claims that a handmade product that another person has spent time and effort laboring over to create is unreasonably expensive, then perhaps the product is not meant for them. We will not make any apologies for placing a premium on handmade products. Handmade is not machine made!

**What is the future target for Mitimeth? Any plans for expansion?**

We look forward to establishing several more Artisan clusters across Nigeria producing handmade accessories using locally sourced waste materials. And to become Nigeria's number one choice in eco-friendly handcrafted products and a key exporter in the non-oil sector.

**How do you unwind outside of work?**

It might seem strange but because I enjoy what I am doing, I don't necessarily have to think of doing something different to unwind. I enjoy travelling and learning about people and places. My work at MitiMeth affords me the opportunity to do so within and outside Nigeria.



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# STOP SPIRITUALIZING RISK IN BUSINESS

By Uche Ahubelem

**This column features inspiring nuggets from Uche Ahubelem. Mr Ahubelem is the Founder/GMD of Brickwall Group, and one of the biggest real estate developers in Africa. Read his piece for this month below, and be inspired.**

Although the Bible says whatsoever you lay your hands on shall prosper, this doesn't mean you should lay your hands on fire. Of course it will prosper, if you did, but you won't like the result because when it prospers, the flame goes up and your hands get burnt.

Calculate the risk of the business you are about to go into before investing a penny. Make your research and be strategic.



· Featured Interview ·

FROM HER KITCHEN  
WITH N20,000, SEE HOW  
**TOYIN  
ONIGBANJO**  
BUILT MULTI-MILLION NAIRA  
AUGUST SECRETS IN 2 YEARS

By Yinka Adebisi

**A former journalist turned nutritionist, she now bridges the gap between locally made baby food and foreign ones for Nigerian families. You could feel her enthusiasm as she talks about her passion. Toyin Onigbanjo is the founder of August Secrets, a range of local baby cereals which helps Nigerian mothers to feed their babies with healthier meals which are naturally made rather than being processed. One would wonder why she chose this path, especially as she has a Bachelor's degree in English and Literature, and a Master's degree in Public and International affairs, courses that are totally different from what she is doing now. Find out below how she built August Secrets from a 20 thousand naira startup to a multimillion naira industry leading brand in few years. Excerpt.**

***How did you get into this business?***

I travelled out of the country to have my first son. On getting back to Nigeria, he didn't take any of the foods we bought. When he didn't take them, I tried different flavours and even bought from the Nigeria stores here maybe he would take them, but he didn't take any of them. That forced me to ask that: does it mean we do not have any African food that a child can eat except the ones from abroad? On-going to the clinics, different recipes was shared by the matron, and from that I started developing my own recipes by relating with the nutritionist.

I started asking questions like how we can make food that the African child can eat that will be 100% from Africa and also nutritious, coupled with the fact that foods that are close to the earth are twice more nutritious than foods that have stayed long on the shelf of a shop. So those were the two major motivations for me to start and the journey to entrepreneurship started when people began to make orders for these recipes.

***What year was this?***

I had my son 2014, and then it took me about a year plus to figure everything out

but it started fully in July 2016 from my kitchen.

***Between 2016, starting a new kitchen to 2018 and you have this big outfit; how did you get here?***

It's been an interesting journey. The first reason I would say is God, because all the things we've been able to do within 18 months are things that ideally in Nigeria should take 5 to 10 years. The next thing was determination because I got to realize that there is a need. I'd be at work and people would be calling to ask about recipes I showed them in Church. Our first customer was a woman, a top director in a very big company here in Nigeria and it was the time when I started sharing those recipes that she asked about it and she has been our customer since then.

***Are any of these products imported, or they are strictly Made-in-Nigeria by you?***

No single ingredient we use is imported. Every single ingredient is made in Nigeria. We have farmers, food processors, and suppliers that we patronize. Even the printing and plastics, which is the whole packaging is produced here in Nigeria. Even the equipment for processing are

made here by trained engineers from the Institute of Research (FIRO).

***So what differentiates August Secrets baby food from others, especially the foreign ones that are usually used by parents?***

The first thing that stands *August Secrets* out is the creativity from the recipes. Our foods contain about five to six ingredients which are all natural. We have foods that contain potatoes, brown rice and they are completely 100%, no flavours, supplement, fillers or preservatives, all just natural.

***What else is August Secrets into aside making baby food?***

First thing is, we advocate for food nutrition. We go out to rural communities to advocate especially for those who are unable to afford and access it. We go out to train them and tell them that they don't have to go out to look for foreign foods, they can from their husbands farm, make good and nutritious food that their children can eat. We also create recipes, for individuals and nutrition organizations who want to use their products to educate people about good nutrition. We have a recipe book that is been sold.



**“...I started asking questions like how we can make food that the African child can eat that will be 100% from Africa and also nutritious, coupled with the fact that foods that are close to the earth are twice more nutritious than foods that have stayed long on the shelf of a shop. So those were the two major motivations for me to start and the journey to entrepreneurship started when people began to make orders for these recipes.”**

**How much did you start august secrets with?**

I started the company with my personal savings and the first business effort I made was to buy a paint rubber of guinea corn and that was about N500 including other ingredients amounting to about N1000. That was what we used to process for the first customer.

**So what's your initial capital?**

My initial capital proper was about N20,000 for the ingredients which was the first major business deal.

**What is your yearly revenue?**

We're not up to two years yet and really speaking, in terms of financials, between July and December 2016 was really a testing period, and then January 2017 was actually the real time our footing became strong. Our revenue now runs in millions.

**Overall what's your target in the next five years? Where is august secrets going?**

We want to increase the access to nutritious foods. In five years we want to have probably been able to set up our

factory where everything will be done right there. The second is to actually have a distribution goal to ensure the food goes down to every corner of Nigeria first and then to Africa.

**How much has august secret contributed to reducing unemployment in Nigeria? What's your staff strength?**

Our staff strength in-house is 7 and outside, all together we're about 15. We have digital marketers, accountants, lawyers, production staff, in-house staff admin. We also have the farmers, suppliers, 24 distributors who resell the products which are indirect employment.

**How well does august secret embrace the new digital economy? How much of your sales are done online?**

85% of our sales are done online because yes we really embrace the digital world. We have a website where people can have access us and we basically sell through all the online platforms where you can get **August Secrets**. The rest is words of mouth and then distribution.



# NOTICED HOW UNEFFECTIVE YOUR MEETINGS ARE? HERE ARE FEW TIPS TO HAVING MORE PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS.

By Maradesa Remi

**Meetings are a necessary evil if you're a startup founder, manager of an existing business or involved with sales. This is true when attempting to book a meeting with your team or a prospect. Who hasn't struggled to stay awake through a three-hour meeting, or left a department-wide pow-wow wondering what the point was?**

It's amazing how many bad meetings we have to suffer through at work: Each month, people spend about 31 hours in unproductive meetings. Here are few tips to note if you want to make your meetings more productive.

#### **Keep meetings to 15 minutes.**

One of the main grips with meeting is length. We don't have the attention spans to go much longer than 15-minutes or so. In fact, that's why every TED Talk is no more than 18-minutes long. Longer meetings with so much talk will make people distracted and not focused anymore. Keeping the meeting short and simple with strict instruction helps staff to be more productive.

#### **State the objective of the meeting.**

How many times have you gone to a meeting with only a vague agenda and sat through a discussion with no end in sight? Can't count? That's because the most effective meetings are the ones where the objectives are clear or well defined from the onset. A simple statement of what you hope to achieve can save an average of 17 minutes off your meeting. For example, for a basic agenda, shared in advance with any relevant documents, keeps everyone on track.

#### **Eliminate unnecessary meetings.**

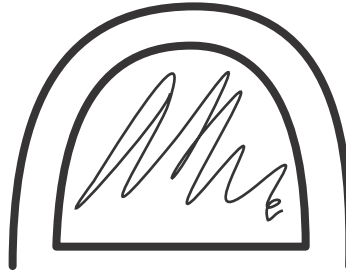
It's been said that half of meetings are a waste of time and that's why people skip them. But, you can ensure that your

meetings are productive and worthy of attending by:

- Being prepared. As mentioned earlier, share any relevant information with attendees before the meeting.
- Avoiding large group meetings.
- Taking the participants daily rhythms into account.
- Eliminating distractions by asking your team to turn-off their smartphone distractions.
- Paying attention and allowing others to share their thoughts.







## CHOOSING THE PERFECT WORK BAG THAT ADDS THE EXTRA SPICE TO YOUR OUTFIT.

By Yinka Adebisi

To some people, bags are the most important thing in your dressing, while some are not even bothered about bags. Whatever the case may be, bags are fashionable and they add a nice and lovely touch to your outfit. So, how do you find the perfect ones for work without spending all of your hard-earned paycheck? As usual, you'll find our suggestions below useful.

### Think Big.

Your ideal pocketbook is likely larger than you'd expect and it's good for impromptu travelling. If you're able to travel light, on days you need to throw in extra essentials, you don't want to look like your bag's busting at the seams. Find a style that can store your daily must-haves, but isn't so large that it becomes heavy.



### For The Right Season.

Raining season, take bags that won't easily be damaged under the rain.



### Don't Neglect Your Personal Style.

Buy an item that suits you rather than what's "in" that season—the latter won't stand the test of time and may not coordinate with your office outfits. Whether you prefer attention-grabbing buckles or simple, refined bags, go with what matches your personality. If you're not quite sure what you like, head to a designer discount store to test out a variety of different styles that may work with your look and your budget.

### Opt For A Neutral Colour.

Chances are you won't be switching out your bag often throughout the week. So pick a solid, neutral hue, like black, tan, burgundy or brown, to complement whatever's in your closet—and so you never have to worry about clashing colours. Sound boring? It doesn't have to be. "Add a charm, small scarf or accent colour to let people know you're stylish and professional"



### Look For A Zipper.

Every bag should have a top zipper. Besides the security it ensures, Verdi says it tells people that you care about organization and you like things to run smoothly—good traits in a work colleague. Since there are gaps between snaps, a zipper really is the best way to guarantee your belongings don't spill out during your commute. But do check that you can open and close the zipper with ease.



### Check Out The Interior Lining.

Peek—and feel—inside because linings can add unnecessary weight to a bag. Considering how much time your pocketbook stays on your shoulder, heft is a quality to avoid. Try an option with lightweight nylon. Also consider choosing a bag with a lightly coloured interior, recommends Alexander. The contrast it creates with the mostly dark items in your bag can make things that get buried simpler to spot.



Source: [www.women'sday.com](http://www.women'sday.com)





# THE ESSIENS

BUILDING A FAMILY, BUSINESSES,  
AND BIG TECH REPUTATION

By David Agu

**A tech-power couple, Ayo and Ifeanyichukwu Essien's sole mission is to empower Nigerians digitally, creating as many tech-savvy citizens as possible, along the way. As they sat side by side, responding to the questions below, you could feel the compulsive effect of the chemistry between them.**

**Ayo and Ify are young, in love, and passionate entrepreneurs. They run individual businesses that are more connected than different. While Ify, with a B.Sc in Business Education, runs Tech Savvy Teacher's Academy, Ayo, an Electrical/Electronics Engineer, is the founder of Weledge, both tech ventures. In this interview with The Entrepreneur Africa, they both talk about their challenges and successes in building a business empire, and hopes for the future. Excerpt.**

**What led to the birth of both of your companies, Weledge and Tech Savvy Teacher's Academy?**

IFY – I developed the passion for education in my second year in the university. My real encounter was during my teaching practice when I got to know that teaching was more than a profession. It was more like a calling to me because I was like a parent to the children I taught. They confided in me and saw me as a mentor and a role. I desired to do more.

During my professional course as a teacher, I loved the experience and I found out that there was more to education than I had been made to see.

**Before you decided to go into this business, have you ever been into any other business? And how were you able to understand the part of owning an actual business?**

IFY - I remember when I had to resign from my previous job and I got so many comments like "Why do you want to resign? Do you know how much you're earning? How are you going to fend for yourself after now?" And really I was

earning a lot, even more than my mates. The only person that was by my side was my fiancé.

The journey wasn't rosy. It was during home tutoring that a lot of parents knew me. A lady, Remi, once asked me what will happen to the children if I were sick today. She advised me to create something that can work even without me personally doing it and I knew at that moment that technology was the only thing that can make that possible, so that was how technology came in.

I started researching on software that teachers could use in the class room to make teaching fun, exciting and not what children are scared of. After I did my research, I knew this was it and that I had to monetize my knowledge.

AYO - While on campus, we studied a lot of courses relating to programming, software, hardware and that was where I picked the interest in software. Towards the end of my studies, I went for a seminar and this question "What happens after school?" came up. The speech was on

having a purpose, discovering who you are and what you're supposed to do got to me. That formed my journey in entrepreneurship because I started seeing myself as a solution. I picked up a skill and I also had a coach who showed me one or two things.

I couldn't go for my youth service because I had an issue with some results and at that time, the school went on strike. During the periods when I was at home, it occurred to me that I have a skill and that was how I decided to turn my skill into knowledge. I reached out to a friend and told him to help design a company logo which he did. I changed my Blackberry display picture and acknowledged myself as a website developer and through that; I got my first gig from a friend of mine, Ikechukwu. He informed me that his company needed a website and even though he had gotten a person already, he was going to put in my name instead because I was his very good friend. He told me to quickly design a company logo and by the next day, I had designed a one pager for the website. He told his boss how he saw a better person



and then showed him the work I had done earlier and that was how they gave me the job and paid N150,000. That was in 2014 before I went for NYSC. That was how it started and right from there in Warri, I felt that more people needed to know about these things and one of my core passions is to teach people things.

I believe that one of the best ways to overcome unemployment is when a mass number of Nigerians, young people who are really skilled in skills that they can use to earn money. I started a group in Delta state called '**Achiever's Connect**', primarily to train people on skills. We started organizing school outreaches and workshop and I did

my first software design class in Warri, Delta state. Several news platforms covered it and that really attracted a lot of people and in that same way, it attracted a lot of clients to me. It was then I really understood that when you teach people, you express yourself as an expert, then jobs come to you. People trust you enough that if you teach in this field you can as well handle the job in that field. My pastor in Chris Embassy at the time also gave me two website jobs before I eventually went for service. I served in Benue state and then I continued my skills there.

**Ify is a tech teacher by both profession and passion and you Ayo, a web expert**

**by skill and passion. Would it be safe to say that the love for tech brought you together? Or was it just coincidence?**

**AYO** - I think it was based on shared common interest aside from our career path because at that time, I was already involved in web but our conversation then wasn't really about work per say. It was more about friendship, our faith and just family, but eventually, when we moved to Lagos together, we decided that we would both go full time into tech because of the love we had for it. I later found out she was keen into tech and that strengthened our bond at the later part of our friendship, before we courted and then married.

**When did you start the academy?**

**IFY** - I hosted my first training course 'Tech Master Savvy Class', February 4th, 2017 and it still holds till now. After then, I got a lot of good comment from people telling me to create a Facebook community so that the students who came for training won't just go. After the Master Class in February, I created the 'Savvy Teacher Facebook Community' which has grown so well till now.

**How does Tech Teacher Savvy Academy operate?**

**IFY** - We run training. We run quarterly trainings four times a year where teachers converge at a venue and we train them. It's very practical and we ensure they come with their systems.

**Do you get to work with schools on that?**

**IFY** - Yes! We also hold in-house trainings for schools. If schools want our services, we come to the school and train. We also have the online platforms where the teachers can go online and learn.

**How do you make your money?**

**IFY** - Our Tech Masters classes are monetized, so they pay to access. We also

**"...I started a group in Delta state called 'Achiever's Connect', primarily to train people on skills. We started organizing school outreaches and workshop... Several news platforms covered it and that really attracted a lot of people and in that same way, it attracted a lot of clients to me.."**





get it good from our in-house trainings as well as the online platforms which is the 'Tech Teacher Savvy Academy'.

**Would you say it has paid better than the big salary you were earning?**

IFY - Oh yes! When I resigned, I kept saying it will be fine and somewhere along the line people would know that I made the right decision. With all humility, I can say I have actually interviewed some of my colleagues and they got to work for me.

**Tell us what WebEdge looks like today?**

AYO - Today, WebEdge is a digital communication company. We help brands and SMEs to promote their businesses online. That would involve couple of services which we offer: web development, online promotions as well as digital marketing and mobile app development. We also have the training section of WebEdge where we have online

mobile app which we built for SMEs to be able to access digital marketing courses that can help them in their business activities. We found out that some companies who can't hire us but because we want their businesses to do better online, we created a mobile app with which they can access my courses on digital marketing.

**What are the strategies that you have employed to grow in this business**

AYO - I have concentrated more on Digital marketing. Having tested it with my own brand in 2017 which was a success, I decided to do it for other companies.

**From all indications both of your businesses are interconnected. Why not come together to form a conglomerate?**

AYO - We're both involved in each other's business. I'm the COO in her business.

IFY - I'm for the teachers, while he's for the business people. Yes tech, but not to the same people. He is actually my co-host for my next master class lecture.

**What's the plan for the next five years?**

AYO - I'm really passionate about training, so I'm looking towards a very strong physical training centre. The plan is to have a physical structure then also have digital products that are doing extremely well across Africa and beyond. An example is the online solution I'm working on for the real estate industry as well as digital products that will eventually get to launch out. What I'm trying to do with WEBEDGE is that, I want to structure it in such a way that we would have our own digital products.

**Over the years, we've all complained about the education system in the country. In the next five years, what do you think you can do about that?**

IFY - Through the 'Tech Savvy Teacher Academy' I hope to teach teachers to be more tech savvy and make them content creators. My niche especially is video creation, that's why I train teachers to create their own videos and not just going on YouTube to download one. Create your own that your students can see and relate with. I'm also looking to work on my digital apps for children, created by Nigerian teachers. They create these apps that African Children can relate with in our own style. Where the languages will be taught, where math and English will be taught in our own style.

**One of the disadvantages of the digital economy is that it will cut jobs.**

**Despite the fact that you are online, how do you feel about this?**

AYO - Personally, I don't think that the digital economy will reduce jobs. As long as you have digital skills, you would be relevant and get jobs. When I say digital skill, I mean content development, visual designs and lots more. The beauty about digital skill is that you don't necessary need to work for someone. I have guys that work as freelancers. These things are not difficult to learn, you just need to put yourself to the process of learning and once you've gotten one, keep developing yourself on that.

IFY - I always tell my teachers that if don't know how to use these skills, your job will be at risk because the kids we have in this generational are technology natives. They are naturally technology inclined. I tell them to do better as teachers and step up. There are more emphasis on being tech savvy as a teacher.



. Featured Interview .



# ARE YOU THINKING OF BUYING A FRANCHISE TO START THAT BUSINESS? READ HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

By Yinka Adebisi

**Starting a new business and successfully breaking into the market can be really frustrating especially in this very competitive era. From planning your marketing strategies to creating engaging campaigns, and more, building up a strong acceptance and recognition can get extremely expensive. The scariest part is starting and failing few months or years after.**

Let's consider the option of franchise because buying a franchise, saves you the trouble of building a brand and acquiring customers. It eliminates excessive marketing costs and places you right in a revenue model that works.

Yes they say everything that has an advantage also has a disadvantage because while franchising may have its advantages, it also has its flaws, but some of the best franchise opportunities can have your new business up, running, and highly profitable within the first year.

However, there are things you need to know before buying a franchise

- **Buy a franchise in an industry you understand**

Never buy a franchise simply because you want to buy one. Never buy a franchise

because it is always in the media and seem popular. Buy a franchise in an industry you understand. The principle of business remains the same regardless of country, industry, economic situation, etc. This is the first step to succeeding when the business begins. When you understand the industry, you'll be able to handle challenges as they come, you will have the boldness to be creative and innovative.

So it is advisable you purchase a franchise in an industry you understand its modus operandi.

- **Buy a business franchise you are passionate about**

Passion is very important to the process of starting a business. In fact, I believe that nothing beats passion. So go for a franchise in a business that you are passionate about.

With passion, you will have the boldness to be creative, innovative and face your business problems squarely.

- **Buy a franchise whose products have huge market demand**

Before you think of franchise, do your own local market research and don't just rely on the research analysis or feasibility report of the franchisor or selling company.

The fact that a franchise is popular in another state or country does not guarantee that it will be successful in your own region. Also, the fact that a franchise is very affordable does not make it a good one. Do your homework to know how patronage fair in the area where you want to set up shop would be, do your thorough research of the company selling as well.

## HERE ARE FEW HIGHLY PROFITABLE FRANCHISE BUSINESS AND IDEAS TO BUY IN NIGERIA.

### Franchise in Food Business

When people tend to be hungry, you'll always be on the lookout for quick meal options but at the same time, people are always careful where they eat. They only trust few eateries, except the new ones who have been highly recommended. So franchises in the food industry is a really great idea. You can start with:

- **Pizza Franchise:** Pizza spots are really popular worldwide. In Nigeria for instance, the most dominant pizza

revenues on a daily basis. But of the few top franchises, KFC and Chicken Republic are top players. With the high patronage KFC outlets around Nigeria, these big restaurant is a smart business move for anyone with sufficient funds to do.

### Movie Franchises

Cinemas are getting extremely popular in many parts of Nigeria thanks to Silverbird Cinemas who started the trend for cinemas in Nigeria. Another cinema that always gets a truck load of people is the Film House, Genesis and Ozone Cinema. On the weekends and holidays, the cinema is always almost operating at full capacity, because of the excessive number of movie lovers trooping in.

reliable textiles companies in the country, only Nobel Carpets & Rugs, who have proven themselves over time. You too can own a company like that but you have to come into the market and breakthrough. Not to say, you can as well look up the various textile brands who are as well good before making a decision on which brand name to trade under.

### Transportation Franchise

The most popular mode of transportation in Africa is by road. When most people travel inter-state, they use road based transportation companies to facilitate their journey, especially during festive periods while the remaining few in the country travel by air. Of these available transportation companies in Nigeria, the



brand is "Dominos" and "Debonaires", and wherever they setup shop, people flood it like they're sharing free money. Buying a pizza franchise is one way to ensure you maximise your profit potential from the onset of your business. You can approach the management of any to take advantage of their franchise opportunities. If you get accepted in their franchise program, find a good environment that has a lot of people, is located close to large residential areas, then setup shop!

- **Restaurant Franchise:** The Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Chicken Republic brands are really large in Nigeria, so are several others. Few of these fast-food restaurants turn in high

The prospect of movie franchises in Nigeria is huge, based on the traffic potential each already existing branch shows. With the right funds, buying movie franchises or taking advantage of similar franchise opportunities in the entertainment industry is a great way to start up a profitable business majorly focused on the younger generation.

### Textile Franchise

The interior of almost every home in Nigeria is always decorated with either tiles, carpets, or rugs. The widespread use and demand for these textile products have made their sales not only grow sporadically, but has also driven their prices down. There are not too many popular and

most popular road transport company is ABC Transport, Chisco Transport and so on. They ply the interstate route more than any other brand. Most of these companies offer transport franchise opportunities. What this means is if you apply for a transportation franchise from one of them and get approved, you can buy some buses, rebrand them to the transport company's name, and have it added to their fleet. With the number of people that flood the bus parks on a daily basis to get to one state or the other, you'd be earning substantial sums in a short time.

Lastly, remember to always meet up the standard of the selling company, in fact the aim is to surpass them. Never go down.



# WANT TO START THAT BUSINESS WITH A PARTNER?

**THINK SEVEN TIMES BEFORE YOU DO**

**By Yinka Adebisi**

**Having a partner to start or run a business with can really help grow that business because like the saying goes, two heads are better than one. However you need to be extra careful when choosing the right business partner to go on that journey if you don't want to fail woefully. We want to share with you vital tips to note before jumping on that person.**

- Obviously, only go into business with those you trust. This is especially true with your business partner(s) and is by far the most important way to protect yourself when entering a partnership.
- Do you and your partner share the same personal values? It should be obvious that you and your business partner both intend to follow the law in your business dealings, but not every decision you face will be ethically black and white. Your personal values will naturally drive your business decision making, so values alignment is critical to your relationship with your business partner. Consider completing a values exercise together to identify what's most important to you and determine whether your standards and priorities are well matched.
- What will this potential business partner bring to the table that you couldn't achieve on your own? A healthy business partnership requires a level of respect that comes only from the understanding that you're both bringing critical talents and resources to the table. How do your prospective business partner's talents complement your own? How does partnering together make your business venture more successful than if you were to go it alone? Particularly if you are considering going into business with a good friend or family member, evaluate these matters as objectively as possible.
- Creating the partnership agreement and setting up the proper entity/structure for the partnership are the two most important steps in the partnership process. Understanding the mechanics of how your business will be managed is the key to designing your partnership agreement and documenting the terms. While the list of items to consider in a solid partnership agreement is indefinable—every partnership is different.
- Read and understand your partnership documents before you sign them. A good attorney can help you identify possible issues and present solutions, but ultimately you and your business partner(s) need to take ownership of the agreement and share a thorough understanding of how it will govern your business.
- Consider getting separate counsel if using the same attorney as your partner(s) is presenting concerns.
- Duties and responsibilities of each partner. There should be a description of each partner's responsibilities and duties so each partner knows what to expect from the other. Know what role each of you would play. You need to outline a job description for yourself within the company. What will be your areas of responsibility? The more specific you are with this definition, the easier it is to measure success and avoid letting key responsibilities slip through the cracks. Furthermore, there should be predetermined consequences for partners not completing their duties.



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# WORKPLACE BULLYING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT, AND HOW TO MAKE IT STOP

By Ojeh Godwin



**Bullying is repeated behaviour that could reasonably be considered to be humiliating, intimidating, threatening or demeaning. It can be direct or indirect, and inflicted by one person or groups.**

Just like we have bullying in schools and home, the workforce is a major place where bullying mostly goes on without notice or intervention. Workplace bullying is more than simply an interpersonal conflict - It can be a systemic problem that arises in the context of a poor workplace culture. It is best dealt with by taking steps to prevent workplace bullying long before it undermines individuals' well-being or workplace relationships, or becomes a risk to health and safety. All members of a workplace, including managers, play a role in preventing and managing bullying at work.

- You need to promote a positive workplace culture. Identify and model the behaviours that you need in your team. This will help you to create a work culture based on respect, where bullying is not tolerated. Your leadership sets the tone for how employees are expected to treat each other. Make clear in your handbook and by your

own actions what type of behaviour is permitted and what behaviours are expressly prohibited. Provide clear directions for reporting allegations and prohibit retaliation against those who do complain.

- Look out for targets of bullying behaviour. Certain types of co-workers tend to be targets for workplace bullies - those who are very skilled at their jobs, favourites of management, those well-liked in the company and those not particularly aggressive. Take note of those who seems to have positive relationships and who doesn't seem to interact with a group.
- Carefully investigate complaints promptly. Respectfully attend to employee concerns about incivility and disrespectful verbal aggression whenever it occurs. Don't ignore direct complaints or rumours of bullying in your workplace. Take immediate action because the longer the bullying is

permitted to occur, the greater the damage to the victim and potential liability to your company.

- Provide training to both supervisors and employees. Your policies will mean little if supervisors don't understand them and how to enforce them. Supervisors need to know how to identify bullying, fairly investigate claims, maintain privacy and appropriately discipline the offenders. Provide ongoing training on respectful workplace interactions. Having employees acknowledge a policy during orientation isn't enough. Employees need to know specific behaviours that are acceptable or unacceptable and be trained in how to handle incivility and bullying when it occurs.
- Call bullying what it is. Using euphemisms such as incivility, disrespect, personality conflicts, difficult people, management style, trivializes bullying and is a grave disservice to those being bullied. Call bullying what it is! Not calling bullying "bullying," in order to avoid offending the sensibilities of those who made the bullying possible, adds to the injury done to bullied individuals whose jobs, careers, and health have been threatened as the result. If bullying does occur, it is important to recognise this behaviour and act on it early. This will help to maintain a culture where bullying is not tolerated. Your agency should have a policy to help you to address any bullying that occurs.
- Focus on job performance and avoid negative comments unrelated to the job or the task at hand. Comments such as "any dummy could do this job" can be viewed as bullying. Train your managers and supervisors on appropriate ways to provide constructive criticism to workers without resorting to name-calling or using negative personal comments. Responsibility for the cause of bullying and the cure lays on the shoulders of senior management. Employers put people in positions that could cause harm, and they can provide safety by changing the culture which may have permitted bullying to take hold.

***However, note that a single incident generally does not constitute bullying. Bullying behaviour is not always intentional and some people may not realise that their behaviour is perceived as bullying behaviour that is harmful to others. Whatever the case may be, bullying should be carefully stopped and here are few ways to go about it.***



# NEED MORE PATRONAGE? HERE'S HOW TO CREATE A UNIQUE BRAND THAT DOES JUST THAT

By Ojeh Godwin

**Some of the most successful businesses in the world have made their mark by articulating their unique capabilities. So, have you ever wondered how to get customers to choose you over your competitors? Differentiation allows you to provide superior value to customers at an affordable price, creating a win-win scenario that can boost the overall profitability and viability of your business. However, not all differentiation strategies are equally effective, and some methods may be more important to invest in than others in order to stand out from the competition.**

If so, here's a critical insight: to get customers to buy from you rather than your competitors, you'll need to differentiate your business in their minds.

### **1. Understand Customer Needs.**

To effectively differentiate your business, you'll first need to understand what drives your target customers to buy – in other words, their driving needs. Why? There's no point trying to differentiate around needs that your customers don't actually have. Advertising copy that doesn't hit on your customers' core, driving needs simply won't work. If your target market is hard on cash and after a low cost product, yet you focus on your environmentally friendly qualities, you're way off the mark.

### **2. Narrow Your Target Market.**

By specializing in a specific customer niche, you can focus on the skills or services that uniquely benefit that customer. Being the best to provide a solution to their unique situation enables you to maximize revenue and build stronger customer relationships.

### **3. Create Offers That Are Too Hard To Ignore.**

Be creative with your service packages and add so much value that it's hard to say no. If you offer training, give people access to a free module or a money back guarantee. If you have a membership site, offer a free trial for a month to try it out. But remember not to make a claim you cannot fulfil.

### **4. Focus On Good Customer Service.**

Good customer service can never be over-emphasized. Aim to create the best experience for your customers. From your initial proposal through final delivery of your product or service, be sure your customers are treated as if they were the only one you have.

### **5. Make It Easy To Do Business With You.**

Work on your business model to make it easy as possible to work with you. Provide access to you via text or email 24×7.

Simplify your contract or instead, use an engagement letter. Do whatever it takes to make working with you easy and convenient.

### **6. If You Have No Differentiator, Invent One.**

Once you know what drives your customers to buy, you'll need to make a strategic decision about which key customer needs you want to differentiate around, such that it will make you stand out in their minds. At the end of the day, customers want their needs met and if you can meet one or more of those needs better than others, you can effectively differentiate your business (and charge more as a result). But be careful here. Don't make the mistake that many businesses make. Differentiation doesn't merely mean being unique or different. It that means that your business can meet one or more of the driving needs of your target customers better than the competition.



# YOU CAN MAKE YOUR SMALL BUSINESS RUN WITHOUT YOU

READ THIS

By Ojeh Godwin



**Most times we're tempted to go on vacations, holidays, or just take a break but the fear of leaving your business running without you debunks the idea. However, sometime you just have to take that bold step. Go and take a vacation. Enjoy a week off from work. Don't worry about your business, it can run without you. The only reason this is not happening yet is you feel too necessary. Don't you want to go on a vacation, at ease that your business is running fine, or even great, without you?**

The best way to make this happen is empowering your employees. Encourage them to make an impact and motivate them to greatness. With your team well motivated and empowered, you can start delegating and training the right people.

A business that is not dependent on its owner is the ultimate asset to own. It gives you complete control over your time. You can choose the projects you get involved in and the vacations you take. When it comes

to getting out, a business independent of its owner is worth a lot more than an owner-dependent company.

Let's find out ways to make your business run without you.

- **Teach Your Team How to Fish**

As the popular quote, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach that man how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime."

You hired your team for a reason. Unless

you hired the wrong people, you shouldn't be hovering too much or answering questions. Let each team member do his or her specific role. Teach them what to do then let them take over.

When you're always there to the rescue, your employees will feel less motivated and empowered. Trust their decisions, but set the bar high. And if they fail, it's when you see which team members are stepping in and taking action.

- **Get Them To Walk In Your Shoes**

By forcing your employees to walk in your shoes, you get them thinking about their question as you would. This builds the habit of starting to think like an owner. Pretty soon, employees are able to solve their own problems.

- **Write an Instruction Manual For Your Business**

Finally, you can make sure your company comes with instructions included. Write an employee manual. These are a set of rules employees can follow for repetitive tasks in your company. This will ensure employees have a rulebook they can follow when you're not around, and, when an employee leaves, you can quickly swap them out with a replacement to take on duties of the job.

You-proofing your business has enormous benefits. It will allow you to create a company and have a life. Your business will be free to scale up because it is no longer dependent on you, its bottleneck. Best of all, it will be worth a lot more to a buyer whenever you are ready to sell.

- **Let Mistakes Happen**

When you empower your team, mistakes and problems are expected. These challenges should be embraced instead of looking at them as a disaster. Failure only becomes failure if you let it stop you. Create a work culture where mistakes don't define a person, but make sure your employees are accountable for them. Sometimes you have to fail to make it work.



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