



Thursday July 24, 2008

[Discussion Board](#) | [Archive](#) | [Advertising](#) | [About Us](#) | [Staff](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[THE NEW VISION](#) | [BUKEDDE](#) | [ORUMURI](#) | [RUPINY](#) | [ETOP](#) | [SUNDAY VISION](#) | [BUKEDDE KU SSANDE](#)

You are here: [Home](#) » [Daily](#) » [Business](#) » [Group to reward best entrepreneurs](#)

**NEWS SERVICE**

Welcome, Guest  
[Log in](#) or [Register](#)

[Need Help? Click here!](#)

**DAILY**

[FRONT PAGE](#)

[NATIONAL](#)

[EDITORIAL](#)

[LOCAL NORTH](#)

[LOCAL EAST](#)

[LOCAL CENTRAL](#)

[COLUMNISTS](#)

[LETTERS](#)

[RASTOON](#)

[FEATURES](#)

[SPORT](#)

[KAMPALA](#)

[BUSINESS](#)

[INTERVIEW](#)

[MUSEVENI'S](#)

[ADDRESS](#)

[NEWS ANALYSIS](#)

[OPINION](#)

**WEEKLY**

[WOMAN](#)

**Group to reward best entrepreneurs**

Wednesday, 23rd July, 2008

[E-mail article](#) [Print article](#)



**Kacou and Hashim Wasswa, his senior consultant speaking to The New Vision about this year's OTF awards in Kigali**

**MARKET MOVER**

Legatum, Social Equity Venture Fund and OTF Group have invited submissions from entrepreneurs from 11 African countries including Uganda to participate in the 2008 Legatum Pioneers of Prosperity Awards. **Eric Kacou**, the OTF managing director, told **Paul Busharizi and Sylvia Juuko** about the awards

QUESTION: Why launch this award in Africa?

ANSWER: OTF Group is a strategy and competitiveness consulting firm. We help nations in developing countries put in place programmes that will help them improve competitiveness.

The programmes are at the firm level and at the national level. We selected Africa because from the work that we do, (we have done work in Rwanda, Nigeria, Uganda and other nations), we find that the need for a change in paradigm towards business and development is most needed.

As an African, I have an issue regarding Africa being the monopoly of bad news in the international media. It is not true that Africa is all about war, disease and poverty and somebody has to invest in telling that story.

We believe that this can be done through a demonstration effect. You take businesses that have been successful and create an opportunity for people to



[www.japantradecar.com](http://www.japantradecar.com)

**CURRENT BUSINESS STORIES**

- ▶ Roofings Sudan exports to fetch sh16b this year
- ▶ Uganda power losses highest in
- ▶ Daytime load-shedding set to reduce
- ▶ SACCOs interest rates set at 13%
- ▶ Rwanda seeks 3rd telecom operator
- ▶ Foreign firms dominate construction contracts
- ▶ AfDB provides sh156b
- ▶ Judicial officers to be trained

HEALTH AND BEAUTY
EDUCATION
ENVIRONMENT
FARMING
WEEKEND
HAVE YOU HEARD
CRAZY WORLD
CAUGHT IN THE ACT
BOOKS AND ART
SCIENCE AND TECH
SPECIAL REPORT
CHILDREN'S VISION
PEOPLE, PLACES
FOOD GUIDE
RELATIONSHIPS
VISION STYLE
INTIMATE
ENTERTAINMENT
SOCIETY
HOMES
SHOWBUZZ
LOCAL LEADER
ESSENCE
NOTICE BOARD
PARLIAMENT WEEKLY
WELLBEING
VISION TEENS
UGANDANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE
JAZZ PEACE

learn about those businesses and that is the most potent argument other than just branding.

There needs to be a change in development discussions towards business as a key to development and we believe that if you look at developing areas in the world, it has to happen in Africa.

Our businesspeople have to think about their role a bit differently, that they are not in business to make quick buck, but make a significant profit but while making a difference for the key stakeholders involved i.e. customers, suppliers, workers and the community.

The mind set change has to happen at government level.

That's why we ensure that through this whole programme, we involve them and some of them like President Paul Kagame talks about it and pushes it and implements it.

Further the mindset of our development partners needs to change because the model they prefer is get a large amount of capital to finance social programmes through government or projects. But let's face it, \$400b worth of aid is spent on the continent but very little to show for it. But Bill Gates starts a company in the garage and it's now worth \$400b. We have to allocate some of that capital into the private sector.

QUESTION: But for the leaders, money will solve their problems.

ANSWER: To be fair, some of them are starting to get, but even when it happens, the top leadership gets it but the rank and file civil service that entrepreneurs deal with may not get it.

We need to make sure that mindset towards business as development goes above and beyond upper echelons of government and permeate civil service.

When we talk about support to the private sector, some of our civil service will ask whether we should help the rich get richer?

That's not what we are saying. We call the competition, pioneers of prosperity because we don't believe that every single business does the kind of business that can transform the continent.

Those pioneers do four things right. They are outstanding in their innovations towards customers, they tend grow, launch new products, compete well locally, regionally and internationally. The second criteria is about the owners i.e. when you look at the list of billionaires, there are only two Africans. So it's important that our business makes profit because they can get capital to re-invest, so owners have to benefit through profit. Third are the workers, when you compare the continent or developing countries with developed countries, there is a difference in productivity.

The average person, makes a lot less, so those businesses that we call pioneers of prosperity need to pay high and rising salaries because if you are going to have an innovative product, you need trained staff.

And if you want to keep them, pay them well, and create opportunities to really grow, so these companies must care about workers.

Finally the future. How many businesses on the continent get a permit for something, dig holes and extract whatever they have to do and take off?

We want to make sure they respect the environment; you respect the community and find ways to be a good citizen in those communities.

Businesses that fulfil those criteria deserve to be called pioneers of prosperity. It is the story we are trying to tell.

We know there are hundreds of them on the continent and we believe those people have to be identified, rewarded and promoted.

QUESTION: What is the criterion? The businesses do not have to be owned by indigenous Africans?

- ▶ Oil-rich areas to get road network
- ▶ Finance to assess data centre
- ▶ AfDB to fund health programme
- ▶ Ben Kiwanuka Street gets first flyover
- ▶ In Brief



<b>SERVICES</b>
TENDERS
NOTICES
SUPPLEMENTS
KEY DOCUMENTS
FOR SALE
<b>JOBS NEW</b>
ADVERTORIAL
<b>VISION RIGHTS ISSUE</b>
NEW VISION RIGHTS ISSUE B
NEW VISION RIGHTS ISSUE A

ANSWER: Not necessarily. We don't believe that excellence should be African. If we made that a criteria then we would be having a notion that Africa can't compete anywhere.

Looking at last year's winners, only one wasn't an indigenous. While we say capitalisation is up to \$25m, it's not only about size. Take the current issue of global warming, which is a global phenomenon.

If you are doing something that harms the environment, the US is making decisions that will affect our children because weather patterns are changing, which is linked to what other people are doing. You have to respect environment and community.

QUESTION: Do you have a progress report about last year's winners like Triple A Growers?

ANSWER: This is a horticultural firm from Nairobi, Kenya that sells packed ready-to-eat vegetables such as broccoli and sells them to UK supermarkets like Tesco and Marks and Spencer.

They have 4,500 employees, and it's a great business started by three Kenyans seven years ago and has got to this point this fast.

They control about 60% of the market share of broccoli in the UK. They decided not to compete against the big guns in the mass vegetables or fruits, but chose specialised vegetables that are difficult to grow and did well there, got high prices and secure the market and the customers love them.

Because of the post-election crisis in Kenya, they decided that half of the prize money that totalled \$100,000 would be used to invest to ensure they provide transportation for their staff.

They also invested in a water irrigation system in one of the farms where they don't have water throughout the year.

These are leaders we respect, and they became finalists after we carried out due diligence, talked to customers and workers and most are impressive companies. We promote them as case studies and role models. We produced a 50-minute documentary that covers the competition with a profile of the companies.

We are giving them a platform to be recognised because the documentary will be featured on international and African media. The companies are also using them for their own promotions.

We are also working with them when we have speaking opportunities so that people hear about them and their values and experience. We want to bring finalists in an alumni network.

Think about the economic forum where people meet twice a year and most of the decisions happen from convening of leaders that are bright, have a track record. They can have ideas to discuss within the network.

QUESTION: Governments have socialist, communist thinking and to them what seems like easing business is like giving concessions?

ANSWER: This is why we are making those videos because they can see that it can happen. Every single thing media writes shapes the mindset on the continent. And for us the real fight is not about finding six people to reward but that development debate.

We want to change that thinking. We do conferences to talk about this thing and it gets nasty. But if we want to change things, we have to have the honesty amongst ourselves to question the beliefs that don't work.

If we have communist-socialist thinking, it has to change. It takes a while but if you have read "The Tipping Point" by Michael Gladwell, it's about how ideas get adopted. You keep pressing until you reach a tipping point. All of a sudden, it's like everybody knew about it.



QUESTION: Another problem in Africa is politicians are not involved in a serious way in business?

ANSWER: We have to begin somewhere. We believe you can change the world. In places where we have been involved, we can point to things that happened and you can see movement. As a firm, we have this distinction; we put our heads together to find a solution and it's not for us to say we have the answer but it's an approach where we work in processes, make decisions and identify quick wins. It's not easy. There is a feeling that if the environment is not good, things won't happen. But we are saying let's make the environment better and lift everything up.

QUESTION: Where will the winners be awarded from this year?

ANSWER: The award ceremony will be held in Kigali in November.

The deadline for phase one is August. Ugandan businesspeople can visit our website of [www.pioneersofprosperity.org](http://www.pioneersofprosperity.org) and fill out a short form.

If you make it till the end, you win anywhere from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

If you work out the few minutes it takes to fill the form, the return is not bad. The idea of being a businessperson is the willingness to compete and be the best.