

## Managing events as potentials of profit-making and empowerment in the fast moving world: suggested strategic approach for African scenario

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### Abstract

Events management is on the rise. With ceremonies here and there, event managers are required to ensure things go well. The profit and job potentials in this social segment are huge, being that it is a story of entrepreneurial development with human face and potentials of profits making/ empowerment in the speedy world of human civilization. This breed of social entrepreneurs who are not just consumed by the motive to make profit but the passion to provide innovative solutions needed in almost any kind of business-entertainment, finance, government, retail, fashion, sport, music, among others, so their day to day job can be filled with a huge range of exciting challenges and unique situations. The research discovered that, there is a need for improvement in the strategies and instinctive approaches used to manage tricks as the winning formula for emerging event businesses. As such, creative thinking strategy and strong leadership approach will be remarkable improvement, if and only if, forward looking managers do not use 20<sup>th</sup> century methods to manage 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. This research believes that, an event manager is a respected advisor, content expert and commentator on issues of entrepreneurship, education and governance. Also, the research suggested that an event manager must have to be a creative problem solver highly skilled in attracting and sustaining returns on investment in business ventures and a strong communicator with ability to present messages and influences diverse audiences.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Event, Management, Profit-making, Strategy

### 1. Introduction

In the late 1980s, I could remember arguing with fellow school mates about the computer, most of us had not seen one physically except in movies. “*Duk Kano babu computer, sai dai ko a gidan gwamna*” (there is no computer in the whole of Kano, may be in the government house), said one of us. To a Kano kid at the time, computer was basically imaginary; it is associated with all sorts of myths. One day, while passing by *Kantin Kwari* market, I overheard one *Mai wa’azin kan turmi* (Street preacher) talking to an assembly of youths, and he mentioned something that left me perplexed. He talked about a computer used in catching fish. People listened to him attentively, yet you could see clearly that he was describing a device he had himself never seen (Jameel, 2013) [8].

But this has changed; we now live in a world where technology is as accessible as drinking water. In a 2001 lecture delivered by Professor Ali Mazrui at the Bayero University, Kano, he mentioned that there were more computers in some universities in the developed world than in some African countries. Today, the validity of such a verdict is unlikely. Today, almost everyone is affected by the ever-evolving digital revolution that has gripped the world. But kids are clearly the most affected as they grow up in the age of smart phones, laptops, ipads and iphones (Jameel, 2013) [8]. In recent years, innovations like branchless banking, mobile banking and mobile money have meant that banking services could be provided to the poor at cheaper cost, so access to financial services was becoming reality for the poor (Niennow, 2015) cited in (Shin, 2015) [11].

The humble invitation disguise the damning analysis of modern life that a broad sweep of human activities- from a blind worship of technology to an addiction to fossil fuels and mindless consumerism-has brought the planet to the ‘breaking

point’. A case in point, for example, are the China’s young ‘*fuerdai*’-which translates as ‘rich second generation’. Shanghai Daily (2013) cited in Leadership Weekend (2015) [12] reported on rumours, of a fuerdai sex and drug party in Sanya, Hainan province. Official investigated a yacht show bash there after hearing reports of a model selling sex at the party for \$95,386. The china crackdowns on Ferrari-driving, money-burning ‘*fuerdai*’ lifestyle is getting out of control. And after and after a massive public backlash against the fuerdai, the Chinese president, Xi Jinping demanded that they be taught the value of money - so 70 of the billionaires’ children were sent to a ‘social responsibility’ retreat where the fine for turning up late was \$158.

Nobody is suggesting a return to the ‘stone age’, but we need to slow down and look at reality in a different way to preserve our rich heritage. Available evidence, for example, showed that most event businesses took off as an off-shoot of strong-willed and ambitious social entrepreneurs, who impact the society with their knowledge and experience tapped from the products of modern technology. In particular, leading social enterprises in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa must be there to strengthen African rich culture and heritage for the growing generation and the rest of the world see and emulate, but not at the dictate of corrupt cultures either in the name of pageant or whatever. Hence, the cult of human power and blind adaptation of technology has been a Faustian bargain, offering a wealth of benefits, but at the risk of losing our souls. We need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that the problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies and individuals.

The role of a leading social enterprise is to strengthen others through shared vision, insights and perspectives to look at the world in a different way (Proudly Nigeria, 2015) [16]. Events’

management has assumed a new dimension. Unlike before, weddings, birthdays, political gatherings, funerals, conferences and anniversaries, among others, are now handled by experts. People often talk about how some events were so professionally handled that they become the talk of the town. Such flawless, exciting parties are normally handled by those who have been trained and garnered experience (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015) [7].

## **Review of Related Literature and Relevant Concept**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of a research is to gather ideas from other intellects through their text-books, write-ups in magazines, newspapers, journals and other related media to compare, contrast and authenticate the result of the research study under discussion. It is a well-known fact that no man is an island or can be the house of all knowledge since knowledge is akin to a bush which comprises uncountable trees, no man can possess all. All these axioms point us to the fact that reviewing of literature is indispensable in any given research. With the afore stated in mind, this research work will delve into people works on relevant concept, climb some salient points that will help in reaching new strategies and approaches which will pave leeway to resourceful conclusion (Sabo, 2010) [9].

### **Concept of Social Entrepreneurship and event Management**

Entrepreneurship, for the purpose of this article, is the process of recognizing internal and/or external opportunities and assembling the resources to seize those opportunities (Schumpeter, 1961) [10]. Entrepreneurship is one of the most complex, yet least studied of the social sciences...perhaps because in practice it is an amalgamation of multiple sciences, including management, marketing and finance. The process of being entrepreneurial involves being creative, innovative and approaching current problems in new ways (Schumpeter, 1961) [10].

The U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy dedicated a chapter in its 2007 annual report to the President of the United States on the issue of Social Entrepreneurship. The chapter entitled: *Social Entrepreneurship and Government: A New Breed of Entrepreneurs Developing Solutions to Social Problems* demonstrated via numerous case studies the importance of social entrepreneurship in solving societal problems. The author states that just as government support of private markets and entrepreneurship has fueled growth in the U.S. economy, so too can government's support of social entrepreneurship accelerate the solving of social problems (Sabo, 2010) [9].

While the idea of entrepreneurs using their wealth to benefit society (e.g. John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie *et al.*) is not new, the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship has not been studied by scholars until relatively recently. The first (and leading) dedicated journal on the subject, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, was founded in 2003. Martin and Osberg (2007) [13] put forth a leading definition of social entrepreneurship suggesting it is a three phase process whereby an entrepreneur(s) identifies an unjust situation where a segment of society is harmed; uses his/her creativity, courage and determination to change the state of the situation; and creates a better ecosystem that benefits the affected group and society as a whole.

Social entrepreneurship may also be seen as simply combining commercial enterprises with social impacts (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2008) [1]. According to Pozen (2008) [15] a social entrepreneur is a pragmatic visionary who achieves large scale, systemic and sustainable social change through unwavering belief, driving passion, and dogged determination. The power of social entrepreneurship to alleviate social problems has been generally accepted by policy makers and political leaders as an important mechanism in addressing needs for societal change. Social entrepreneurship is founded on the principles of private initiative, entrepreneurship and self-employment, underpinned by the values of democracy, equality and solidarity, the co-operative movement can help pave the way to a more just and inclusive economic order (Annan, 2010) [3]. Some event management companies have the trappings of royalty and take care of event from the conception period to delivery. In this business your efficiency is the perfect way to get an introduction to the industry and give you a head start in beginning a career. Event management is a fast-paced, varied, and highly employable field. Even in times of economic recession, events remain invaluable to companies as a sure way to build brand reputation, drive consumer confidence and give people experiences to remember (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015) [7].

### **Event Management as a Profit-making Venture**

Event managers are needed in almost any kind of business ranging from government functions to entertainment, fashion, sport, naming/wedding ceremonies, end of year parties/Walimah (thanksgivings), among others, so their day to day job are felt by the generality of our society. Oftentimes people never get to see them because they work behind the scene, coordinating and ensuring that nothing is missed out, not even the minutest of details. Iroegbu-Chikezie (2015) [7] posited the event management professionals also give advice to the celebrants, especially on matching budgets with invitees, on whether the numbers should be increased or reduced. An event manager can be paid between ₦1 million and ₦10 million and more depending on the events and personalities involved.

To buttress the above, the Managing Director of Pink and Blossom, Mrs. Nkechi Iheanacho, an industrial Chemistry graduate, said she has always loved to organize things and started when her elder sister was about to get married. "My business actually took-off as an off-shoot of my sister's wedding. I do not only take care of the catering of the traditional wedding but also the decorations and ancillary services including the white wedding. After the wedding people started making inquiries about the organizer of the event, it took quite a while to convince some of them that handled it. Those who believed encouraged me with jobs such as birthdays for their kids and spouses and end-of-year parties" (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015:34-35) [7].

She added that: "I didn't look for start-up capital because my initial clients paid up-front, so I can say that I started with zero capital. My drive and love for putting things together kept me going. At the initial stage, I had no steady staff. I only used ad hoc staff but now as a full-fledged event management company I have at least 15 permanent staff. I engage ad hoc staff if I get several jobs at the same time or a very big job because sometimes I have as much as 30 people working on a project". And she added again that: "I have never had any problem

paying my staff, from nothing we have grown to picking up jobs of over a million naira and our balance sheet is good. When we get jobs that require for instance a marquee we outsource some of the engineering, electrical, plumbing jobs and concentrate on our core competence which is food and decoration” (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015:35)<sup>[7]</sup>”.

### **Event Management as an Empowerment Clinic**

Event management involves all cadres of professionals with varied educational backgrounds such as engineers, caterers, artisans and lawyers, among others depending on the event (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>. For instance, Toyosi Akerele, who was born and raised in Nigeria, holds a Bachelors’ degree in Civil Law from the University of Jos, a certificate in youth inclusive Financial Services from University of New Hampshire, Durham, USA, a certificate in media enterprise from the school of media communication, Pan African University and executive masters’ certificate in project management from the project management college, UK (Proudly Nigeria, 2015a)<sup>[16]</sup>. She is now a leading social entrepreneur in Nigeria.

The worthy alumna of the United States Government’s Prestigious International Visitor leadership programmes for emerging Leaders has being described by Michele Obama as one of her personal inspirations in a televised address for the Young African Women Leaders Forum, of which Toyosi remains the only Nigerian member to have attended till date. She is the founding executive director of *Rise Networks*, a leading social enterprise in Nigeria. She conceptualized and designed effective programmes to deepen the links and learning opportunities for young people in knowledge acquisition, enterprise and nation building. The Rise National Youth Forum, the flagship project of Rise Networks has attracted hundreds of thousands of young people in over 20 Nigerian States in the last five years (Proudly Nigeria, 2015)<sup>[16]</sup>.

An instinctive entrepreneur and consummate young professional, Toyosi’s leadership skills were recognized early in 2007 when she was selected as one of the 101 Young African leaders by the African Business Leaders Forum of the Business Magazine. Toyosi has been actively involved in national and international projects and processes on the need to provide a platform for youth inclusion in policy formulation and implementation (Proudly Nigeria, 2015)<sup>[16]</sup>.

An accomplished writer, author and public speaker, Toyosi’s thought leadership is evident in her first book, *Strate-Tricks (Strategies and Tricks, the Winning Formula for Emerging Businesses)* and other writings and interviews published in a wide variety of journals, newspapers and magazines, including *the Nation, the Guardian, Punch and This Day* (Proudly Nigeria, 2015)<sup>[16]</sup>.

She has spoken and delivered papers at numerous venues including the Nigerian Economic Summit, Wimbiz 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Forum, Youth Africamp organized annually by Open Society Institute of East Africa and the United Nations Media Workshop on Africa Governance Report. Her media commentary and interviews include appearances on *Channels Television, Nigerian Television Authority, Africa Independent Television and South Africa Broadcasting Corporation* (Proudly Nigeria, 2015)<sup>[16]</sup>.

### **Suggested Management Strategy for African Social Entrepreneurs in Event Industry**

In the past, business success was all about size: The large eat the small. Today, business success is all about speed: The fast eat the slow. Rapid change—or rather, swift global transformation—is already happening, which means we need to move faster. There are rapid advances in information technology, science, corporate governance, transportation, agriculture, inventions, manufacturing and many more. We have been experiencing the jet age, a period of social and economic change brought by speed, fastness in transcontinental, intercontinental and global connectivity in knowledge, wisdom, learning, travels and human relation followed by the dynamisms of the current information age.

The event industry is all about exceeding the expectations of all parties involved in the events, and design is one of the key ways to impress. Event managers need to be real outside-the-box thinkers who have a dynamic approach to problem-solving. Design is essential to an event’s success, whether you have the creative spark that can give event guests a memorable experience, or the perfectionist’s streak that crafts brand awareness right down to the colour of name badges (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>. Creativity is defined as the ability to process information in such a way that the result is new, original and meaningful (Hagets, 1982) cited in (Ayinla, 2010)<sup>[2]</sup>. Creativity involves new ideas and capability of the entrepreneur to do something in a new way that nobody has taught of. It may involve developing new production, new marketing techniques/territories, and new techniques of doing things to improve efficiency. With all these and many more the entrepreneur will have edge over his competitors (Ayinla, 2010)<sup>[2]</sup>. There are four forms of creative ideas as proffered by Ayinla (2010)<sup>[2]</sup>, namely, innovation, synthesis, extension, and duplication.

- i. Innovation:** innovation refers to creativity. It involves ability of an entrepreneur to develop new products, new technology, new distribution outlets, new suppliers, etc., and taking advantage of new opportunities which other people has not noticed.
- ii. Synthesis:** this means scanning for information from many sources, analyzing and selecting relevant parts and finally integrating them into useful pattern. Such information can be obtained from consumers, suppliers, salesman, and publication of journals, magazines and newspaper.
- iii. Extension:** this involves expansion of current boundaries of the enterprise by taking the ideas that worked in one area and using them in another area. Multinationals have developed opportunities for themselves in many countries of the world by extending basic ideas used in one country in another country. The social entrepreneur should be able to adapt basic ideas to suit the socio-economic environment of a new area.
- iv. Duplication:** duplication has to do with *copying the ideas of another person*. The social entrepreneur keeps himself abreast of the happenings in the environment. He collects information and adapt them to his own need and use. Japanese entrepreneurs did this after the World War II through the process of what is called Reverse Engineering. Some Nigerian banks are now practicing this to have an edge over competitors. The social entrepreneur takes advantage of weakness and shortcomings of other firms,

having studied and found out their weaknesses in the areas of production, marketing, finance, etc., examples are what happened with Tell Magazine and News watch. Innovation is more complex and difficult but more rewarding than synthesis, extension and duplication.

Therefore, strategic innovation and thinking with the 'strategic plan' have to be a corner stone strategy for an event enterprise to survive the turbulent business climate, as it's obvious that, managing at the speed of change has affected everything even wild animals. And so...Every morning in Africa's game reserves, as a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or stand the risk of being killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will stand the risk of starving to death. It doesn't matter whether we are the lion or a gazelle... with the aggressive wind of change; we better start running faster than the rate of change or be consumed.

### **Suggested Management Approach for African Social Entrepreneurs in Event Industry**

An event management team needs strong leadership to be at its best-negotiations between the clients, suppliers, company or venue staff requires flexibility, quick thinking, buckets of initiative and exceptional decision making. A particular ability to spot good compromises and know what is essential to the success of the event marks out an excellent event team leader. It takes a good event manager and leader to take on the challenge of directing a complicated event whilst managing the expectations of several different stakeholders (Iroegbu-Chikezie, 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>.

Apparently, when teams or organizations first encounter a problem that they need to solve it in order to grow, they have to find out how to get the right information on the problem, how to come up with solution options and how to implement the selected solution. Action teams can perform this task because they are well-structured groups meant to address management problems. If you truly want positive change in your team or organization, then adopt the action-action team concept. The team will normally meet for four to six weeks, concentrating on just a single problem. Meetings should be held once a week and limited to one hour. At the end of each meeting, if needed, assignments are given to team members to complete before the next meeting. This keeps everyone actively involved in solving the problem (Ilesanmi, 2015)<sup>[6]</sup>. The action team normally consists of four to six people, and each member should have some stake in the assigned problem, but it can be peripheral. Hence, team members should come from a variety of levels, not just from management. During team activities, all team members should be considered to be on the same level, rather than on their level in the organization outside the team. In an action team, each member is equal-there is no rank in the team.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The development of social entrepreneurship courses targeted to narrowly defined segments interested in equally narrow social issues should be studied ethnographically, since this research would benefit governmental leaders; social entrepreneurs, professors, researchers and academic administrators by providing insight into the effectiveness of focused, trans-disciplinary education. The proposed qualitative

methodology will allow for deep practical insights as ethnography is an excellent research tool when there is limited empirical support (Genzuk, 1999; Gummesson, 2003)<sup>[4,5]</sup>. The findings will make significant theoretical and practical contributions in the field, and serve as a basis for hypothesis development for future statistical research.

### **4. Conclusion**

The uniqueness of every society is the collection of diverse ideas and conceptual frames that are further developed into concrete plans and works. Businesses do not exist out of natural orders; on the contrary they are the creations of men referred to as entrepreneurs. These distinct fellows are capable of harnessing other resources to actualize an organization's or society's goals for existence (Moses, 2010)<sup>[14]</sup>. Although not every human can effectively coordinate other resources (i.e. be an entrepreneur); every human is however, gifted differently from the other. Hence, the onus of identifying this gift for optimal utilization is the sole responsibility of the individual. These gifts in themselves can do nothing except thoroughly harnessed for development goals.

Given the above scenario, entrepreneur's potential; add value to life in terms of ensuring security, self-actualization, achievement, etc. and above all stimulate development from the prowess of a visionary event manager in a corporate organization; these to some extent support economic development in term of profit-making and growth in term of empowerment. Thus, this must be made the policy goal of many governments across the world today including that of African countries to encourage and develop a culture of entrepreneurial thinking amongst its citizens, thereby enhancing national security and development.

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