

COMPASSION - A UNIQUE APPROACH TO BUSINESS SUCCESS

When Bosco Hallelujah slipped into an HIV-related coma two years ago, his wife feared for the worst: the loss of her husband, high medical bills, destitution for herself and her six children. What she didn't expect was that her husband's employer, a small cattle-horn processing company operating out of a slum community in Kampala, would take care of her family and pay for Bosco's hospital treatment.

Bosco spent two weeks in a coma before responding to treatment. Four months later, he was well enough to return to work. During the entire period, he continued to receive a salary.

"This care for a worker is rare in my country," says Bosco, an athletic-looking man with bright eyes, pausing whilst carrying a heavy load of horn tusks. "My boss visited me in the hospital and at home. He told me my job was there as soon as I got my strength back." Bosco, who started at Horn as a labourer is now a workshop supervisor, making sure orders are produced on time to a high standard.

"Why wouldn't we look after one of our men?" says Charles Ggalla, a jovial-looking man in his mid-fifties and the manager of Horn Products

Ltd. "Bosco is a loyal worker and highly skilled. "This is a family business and the people who work for us are family." Charles set up Horn Products Ltd in 2003, seeing a niche in the market to process cow horns from the Ankole cattle breed into buttons for the clothing industry as well as handicraft items. The company started with ten employees. It now has 30 full-time staff.

The company buys and collects raw cattle horns from abattoirs locally and also from neighbouring countries including South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania and DR Congo. The horns are brought back to the company's workshop in Kalerwe, Kampala and dried before being processed.

"Ankole farmers were not aware that the horn, which is a by-product after cattle have gone for slaughter, was a valuable resource," says Charles. "It can be carved and made into beautiful bowls, bangles, vases and jewellery and sold for export. Ugandans don't really appreciate the product yet, but we have growing demand overseas for the items we make."

Horn's manufacturing process leaves almost no waste. Chipped horn and offcuts, rich in keratin,



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are crushed into powder, packed and sold to farmers and fertiliser manufacturers. The bone inside the horn is detached, burnt to ash and then sold to manufacturers of animal feed.

Roeland Donckers is a co-founder of the East Africa-based investment company iungo capital, which provides small businesses with advice and financial support. iungo's main aim is to get businesses to a stage where they can create more jobs and income opportunities.

When iungo capital started supporting Horn Products in 2018, the company had little collateral and so wouldn't have qualified for the criteria banks would request for a loan. This didn't dissuade iungo; instead they saw the potential of what Horn could offer.

"One of the reasons we were attracted to Horn Products was because they use local products that once were discarded, so creating a market that previously didn't exist," Roeland says. "In the process they create employment as well as generating additional income for cattle-owning farmers in Uganda." There is a growing market for Horn's products globally. The company is also creating new employment in a country with a

young population and high figures of unemployment. Currently, half of Horn's workforce is between eighteen and thirty-five years old. "These are young, low skilled artisans who have full employment contracts, health insurance and who receive training on the job. This is unusual for a small company anywhere but especially in East Africa," says Roeland.

Small and medium enterprises like Horn Products create jobs four times more quickly than large firms. They also create revenue and add to a country's GDP six times faster. With iungo capital's working capital investment and non-financial support, Horn expects to double its top line, whilst generating a 30% increase in new jobs. It is also on track to acquire twice as much raw material in its value chain.

"We want to keep growing and have bigger markets internationally," says Charles Ggalla. "We have a good product and we're helping our country by employing people. Business is growing."



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