

Kenya's Onesha connects creatives with opportunities

Kenyan startup Onesha is an online marketplace offering businesses access to a pool of vetted, skilled and trusted creative professionals at an affordable cost, and already has more than 700 professionals serving over 30 clients each month.



Kenyan startup Onesha.

Launched in 2015, [Onesha](#) was built to connect the best creatives in Africa with opportunity on a global level, primarily in the fields of graphic and web design, social media and digital marketing, and content production.

"Our initial target market is SMEs in Kenya in need of agency level services, which most businesses cannot afford. Big corporates are the ones that can afford to hire big agencies to handle all their creative work, but most SMEs cannot afford these rates," said Bernard Nyagaka, Onesha's head of business strategy.

"To ensure we give businesses professionals who can deliver work on time, good quality and at an affordable rate, Onesha has a rigorous vetting process for any professional that seeks to join our network."

The startup has seen strong uptake from creative professionals and businesses alike, all in spite of having been bootstrapped since launch. It has just secured funding, however, having [taken part in the recent Pangea Accelerator](#).

"We have been changing things since 2015 to find out which business model works best for us and how to scale that model. We strongly believe in the lean startup methodology, testing out different things to see what works and scales in the long-term," Nyagaka said.

Onesha now seems to have found its niche, with hundreds of creatives listed, and it now processes a growing number of jobs per month. It takes commission on payments made through its platform, and also offers fixed rates for businesses in need of customised services.

It currently only operates in Kenya, with most customers Nairobi-based, but Nyagaka said it was looking at expansion.

“We are ramping up our marketing plans to reach businesses in Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret, because we believe those towns have businesses in need of expertise that Nairobi businesses have access to,” he said.

“By the end of next year we should be available in Nigeria, and by 2020 we should be in at least three more markets in Africa. In terms of businesses we serve, we are seeking to bring on-board international clients from the United States (US) and Europe by end of 2019 once we automate all our processes.”

Access to capital has been a key challenge, he said, though that should be alleviated by the recent fundraising.

“The cost of doing business in Kenya is still high given the high inflation rates. This means that for one to set up a fully running business in Nairobi, you need to have put together some good money - enough to sustain your burn rate as you acquire customers,” Nyagaka said. “Most young people who want to start businesses don’t even have this initial capital, which is the main reason why 60% of them give up to look for jobs.”

He said the government is active in trying to fix these problems, but said more can be done in terms of building an ecosystem to reduce the rate at which businesses fail.

“This can be achieved by setting up more innovation centres around urban centres and equipping them with experts who can mentor the entrepreneurs coming to look for help,” Nyagaka said.

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