Inspire Africa magazine's plans for Africa

By Walter Wafula

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Last year, Ugandan entrepreneur Nelson Tugume, started Project Inspire Africa, a business reality TV show designed to promote entrepreneurship on the continent. He also unveiled *Inspire Africa* magazine to champion the same cause under Inspire Media Publications. Gerald Muhangi, head of publications and editor in chief *Inspire Africa* magazine speaks about the future of the magazine, entrepreneurship in Africa and the magazine environment.

Gerald Muhangi

Tell us about Inspire Africa magazine?

Gerald Muhangi: The magazine is an entrepreneurship based magazine which disseminates both business and management information. The purpose of the magazine is to promote a culture of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education in Africa starting with the East African Community.

The magazine content includes: leadership, reviews, analysis, inspiration, motivation, tactics, insight, sales, marketing, startup guides, technology, business news, money and finance and also lifestyle. It also contains a special feature that reviews every season of Inspire Africa TV reality show.

What inspired you to start this magazine?

Muhangi: In 2009 the World Bank published a dossier that held Uganda to have the highest business mortality rate in the whole world with 90:100 ratio of business mortality. The bank held that Uganda had the highest number of businesses started each year as compared to any other nation of the world, but that those businesses died almost as soon as they were started.

Three years since that report was published, the situation has not changed an inch. And this is not a Ugandan problem, it's an African problem. So, we decided to start a campaign that would fight this challenge, one of them was starting an entrepreneurship magazine that would educate millions of people and help to start up thousands of enterprises.

The first issue was designed to support Project Inspire Africa. Is the next issue built around the same project?

Muhangi: The subsequent issues will primarily be entrepreneurship based. *Inspire Africa* is the only magazine where a reader will read from page one to the last, and then go straight to start up an enterprise. By the 12th Issue, we shall be rating the top 100 enterprises in Africa starting with Uganda. However, this magazine will also feature Project Inspire Africa activities where applicable

Why have you decided to make it a quarterly magazine?

Muhangi: Many publications make a mistake to rapidly expand a publication. We believe in taking baby steps, so we take

our time to collect quality content for our readers to put out the best product in the market. However, we shall gradually evolve to a monthly magazine.

What information gap do you hope to address by going beyond content around Project Inspire Africa?

Muhangi: You will realise that in East Africa, most of the publications are into politics, lifestyle, sports and tabloid journalism. The few magazines which claim to be business oriented produce complex content which is hard to understand by the local man on the ground. More so, these business publications are expensive and cannot be afforded. *Inspire Africa* agazine now addresses all the questions of a start-up and existing enterprise with the basics of business success. This is all provided at the lowest cost, approximately (Ugx5 000).

Who are you targeting?

Muhangi: We are targeting mainly the B and C1 class, aged between 18-40 years old, precisely we are looking at that individual, who already has a small or medium business and is looking for knowledge on how to take the business to the next level.

We are also looking at that corporate in an office but who is zealous to start a business. We are targeting these types of personalities because we believe this is the best group that can transform the economy through entrepreneurship.

It has become very difficult to keep magazines afloat in Uganda due to the competition in the market place and rise of social media. How do you hope to keep Inspire Africa afloat?

Muhangi: *Inspire Africa* comes with a new strategy in the publication industry, while many magazines come to the industry to make money, IA magazine comes to give knowledge, and value to Ugandans, at the lowest cost possible.

The value you get from the reading our magazine is not provided by any publication in Uganda. We have also signed strategic partnerships with several companies in East Africa to support this cause. You will also realise that its only a fool who will neglect social media, we have it in mind that social media is a big platform that is why we have a presence on Facebook, and Twitter, providing partial content, but which will eventually drive our readers to the magazine its self.

Gathering relevant content for readers and recruiting the right writers is a major challenge for many publications in Uganda. How are you going about this problem?

Muhangi: We have signed partnerships with several professional writers in East Africa much as we have not yet achieved what we need, we are heading towards it. We have also employed a group of young but zealous journalists in all countries of East Africa, who are doing a great Job. The beauty is that anyone who works is us is supported individually to another level of career and personal growth.

Do you have any plans to make this an online publication?

Muhangi: We are in the final stages of having our website up and running, this will cater for the ever growing internet users in the world. So keep your fingers crossed for the first ever online publication in the region.

What are your other plans for the East Africa region?

Muhangi: We have big plans for East Africa but we prefer to plan for the whole of Africa, We are working day and night to have *Inspire Africa* a big brand in Africa. We are in talks with prospective partners from South Africa and West Africa, to have franchises of the magazine in those regions. As for East Africa, we shall leverage from the home ground advantage to have presence in the region. Our magazine is already selling like hot cake in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda, we are looking to extend it to Tanzania in the subsequent Issues.

What role is the magazine playing in Season II of Project Inspire Africa?

Muhangi: Considering the magazine is pushing the same cause with the Project Inspire Africa, *Inspire Africa* magazine, is the official publication for the project. The magazine will mainly help in the publicity of the project but it will also be the carrier of applications forms for Project Inspire Africa Season II.

Is there anything you would like to add?

Muhangi: I would like to thank our ever increasing readership from all parts of East Africa and urge anyone out there who is seeking value from publications, to get a copy of the magazine.

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.

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