

THE CEO FILES

ISSUE 011

LEADERSHIP • ENTERPRISE • INNOVATION

5
Business
HACKS
for Startups

LEADERSHIP
LESSONS
For the long
run & more.

+

EMERGING
CEOs

TON *Ndunge* **NEE**

THE AFRICAN QUEST TO BUILD TECHNOLOGY THAT MATTERS

Published By Jujaya Media



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Beyond Success: The Responsibility of Building What Comes Next.

By Wycliffe Choreh, Founder of Jujaya Media,

Every generation of leaders inherits a world shaped by the decisions, innovations and sacrifices of those who came before it. Yet every generation is also presented with a question: what will we build that makes the world better than we found it? For Africa, this question carries particular significance. Across the continent, entrepreneurs are confronting challenges that have persisted for decades. Education remains inaccessible to many learners. Small businesses struggle to secure affordable and appropriate financing. Young people face a changing employment landscape. Institutions are under pressure to modernise, while governments and businesses are navigating a technological revolution that is transforming how societies function.

These challenges are not simply problems to be discussed at conferences. They are opportunities for leadership, innovation and enterprise. The most consequential entrepreneurs are often those who look at a familiar problem and refuse to accept that it must remain unsolved. They do not begin by asking how to create another company. They begin by asking what is broken, who is being left behind, and what would happen if a better solution existed.

This issue of The CEO Files explores that spirit through the entrepreneurial journey of **Tonee Ndungu**, a Kenyan technology entrepreneur whose work has connected education, financial inclusion and the growing conversation around artificial intelligence in Africa.

His journey offers an opportunity to examine a broader question: what does it mean to build technology for Africa rather than simply introduce technology into Africa? The distinction is important.

Technology can be impressive without being useful. An application can attract attention without changing behaviour. A business can raise capital without establishing a sustainable model. A product can be celebrated internationally while remaining inaccessible to the very people it was intended to serve.

Real innovation demands more.

It requires understanding the people behind the problem, designing around their realities, building systems that can survive beyond the founder, and creating value that is measurable rather than merely fashionable.

It also requires a willingness to keep learning. The entrepreneurial journey is rarely a straight line from idea to success. It involves experimentation, setbacks, partnerships, difficult decisions and the courage to change direction when the evidence demands it.

That is why we believe leadership stories deserve more than a photograph, a list of achievements and a few inspirational quotations.

They deserve context. They deserve interrogation. They deserve to explore the thinking behind the decisions, the challenges behind the milestones and the lessons that other leaders can take into their own businesses.

At The CEO Files, our purpose is to document leadership as it is practised, not merely as it is presented. We are interested in the people who build, the decisions that shape organisations, the ideas that move industries and the principles that remain valuable long after the headlines disappear.

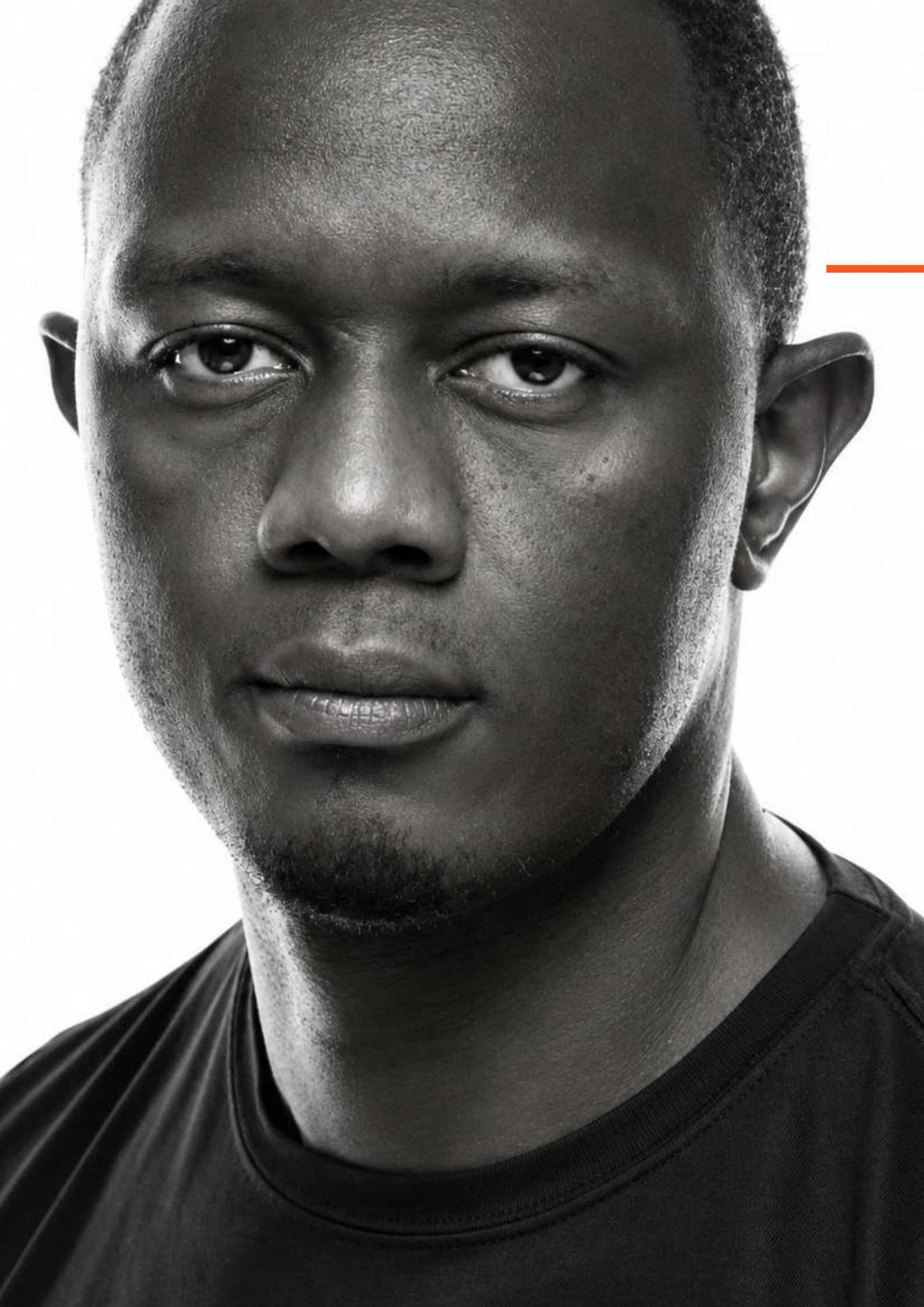
With Issue 011, we are also expanding the publication's editorial offering. Alongside our principal CEO profiles, readers will encounter practical business lessons, leadership reflections, emerging enterprise stories and insights for entrepreneurs building in an increasingly competitive environment.

We want The CEO Files to be more than a record of who is leading. We want it to become a resource for those preparing to lead, those already building, and those responsible for making institutions stronger.

Because leadership is not only about the position one occupies. It is about the problems one chooses to solve, the people one empowers, the standards one establishes and the future one helps make possible.

WYCLIFFE CHOREH,

Media, PR & Communication Strategist.



MEETING THE MAN, **TONEE NDUNGU**

Name: **Tonee Ndungu**

Country: **Kenya**

Field: **Technology entrepreneurship, education technology, financial technology and artificial intelligence**

Known for: **Co-founding NAILAB, founding Kytabu, developing Tribbe and contributing to initiatives around inclusive artificial intelligence in Africa**

Leadership lens: **Building technology around human needs, access and African realities**

Tonee Ndungu is a Kenyan entrepreneur whose professional journey has taken him across several interconnected areas of innovation. His work has explored how technology can improve access to educational content, how digital tools can help people manage financial lives, and how Africa can participate more actively in shaping the future of artificial intelligence.

He first became widely associated with the entrepreneurial ecosystem through NAILAB, an incubation initiative that supported technology entrepreneurship. He later founded Kytabu, an education technology venture focused on making learning content more accessible,

and went on to develop work around social finance through Tribbe.

His more recent public work has also focused on artificial intelligence and the importance of ensuring that African people, institutions and priorities are represented in the development and deployment of emerging technologies.

Ndungu's journey is particularly relevant at a time when African businesses are being challenged to move beyond adopting external innovations and toward developing solutions that respond to the continent's own opportunities and constraints.



THE ENTREPRENEUR WHO KEEPS ASKING A DIFFERENT QUESTION.

There is a difference between being interested in technology and being interested in what technology can make possible.

The first may lead to fascination with devices, applications, platforms and the pace at which innovation evolves. The second begins somewhere more fundamental: with people, their needs, the limitations they encounter and the possibilities that emerge when those limitations are addressed.

For entrepreneurs, this distinction can determine the kind of businesses they build.

One may create a product because the market is excited about a new technology. Another may study a problem that has affected communities for years and ask whether a new technology can finally make a meaningful difference.

The latter approach requires more than technical ability. It requires empathy, commercial judgement, persistence and a willingness to examine systems that

others have learned to accept.

Tonee Ndungu's entrepreneurial journey offers a compelling lens through which to explore this approach.

Across education technology, entrepreneurship support, financial innovation and artificial intelligence, his work has reflected a recurring interest in the relationship between technology and opportunity. Rather than treating technology as an isolated achievement, the more important question is how it can be made useful in the lives of ordinary people. That question has particular weight in Africa, where the opportunity to build digital businesses exists alongside significant differences in income, infrastructure, access to capital, educational resources and institutional capacity. For a founder, the challenge is not simply to imagine a better future. It is to develop a practical route toward it.



THE EXPERIENCE BEHIND THE ENTREPRENEUR.

Entrepreneurial biographies often begin with qualifications, awards, investments or the launch of a company. Yet the experiences that influence how a person thinks may emerge long before the first business is registered.

Ndungu has spoken publicly about being dyslexic and about the challenges he experienced as a learner. His experience offers an important reminder that the systems designed to educate people do not always accommodate the different ways in which people process information.

Education is frequently discussed through the language of classrooms, examinations, textbooks, curricula and performance. Those structures are necessary, but the ultimate purpose of education is learning. If a learner cannot effectively access or understand the material being taught, the presence of the material alone does not guarantee meaningful learning.

This distinction can change how a problem is understood.

A person who has struggled to access information may develop a different sensitivity to the barriers others face. A limitation that appears personal can reveal a wider weakness in the system. The experience can become the starting point for a question that has commercial, social and educational implications.

For founders, there is a lesson here: lived experience can be a powerful source of insight, but it becomes valuable when it is translated into a solution that serves more than one person.

Personal experience is not automatically a business model. It is an entry point into understanding a problem.

The founder must still research the market, understand

the needs of different users, build an effective product, determine how it will be funded and establish whether it can operate sustainably.

The strongest entrepreneurial journeys connect these two worlds: an understanding of the problem and the discipline required to solve it.



**“
If a learner cannot effectively access
or understand the material being
taught, the present of the material
alone does not guarantee meaningful
learning.”**





THE NAILAB: CREATING ROOM FOR ENTREPRENEURS TO BUILD.

Before the current wave of artificial intelligence dominated business conversations, technology entrepreneurs were already working to demonstrate that African businesses could build digital solutions for African markets.

Yet a promising idea rarely becomes a successful company through enthusiasm alone.

Founders need access to expertise, networks, mentorship, capital, customers and the institutional support that helps an early-stage business move from experimentation toward commercial reality.

It was within this wider environment that Ndungu co-founded NAILAB with Bart Lacroix in 2009.

The incubation initiative became part of Kenya's growing technology entrepreneurship ecosystem, helping draw attention to the potential of startups and the importance of supporting people who wanted to turn ideas into businesses.

The significance of business incubation extends beyond providing an office or bringing entrepreneurs together. At its best, incubation reduces the distance between an idea and the resources needed to test it.

A founder may understand a problem but lack the experience to price a product. Another may develop a useful technology but struggle to find customers. A third may have a promising business but lack the networks necessary to secure investment or strategic partnerships.

An effective entrepreneurial ecosystem helps bridge these gaps.

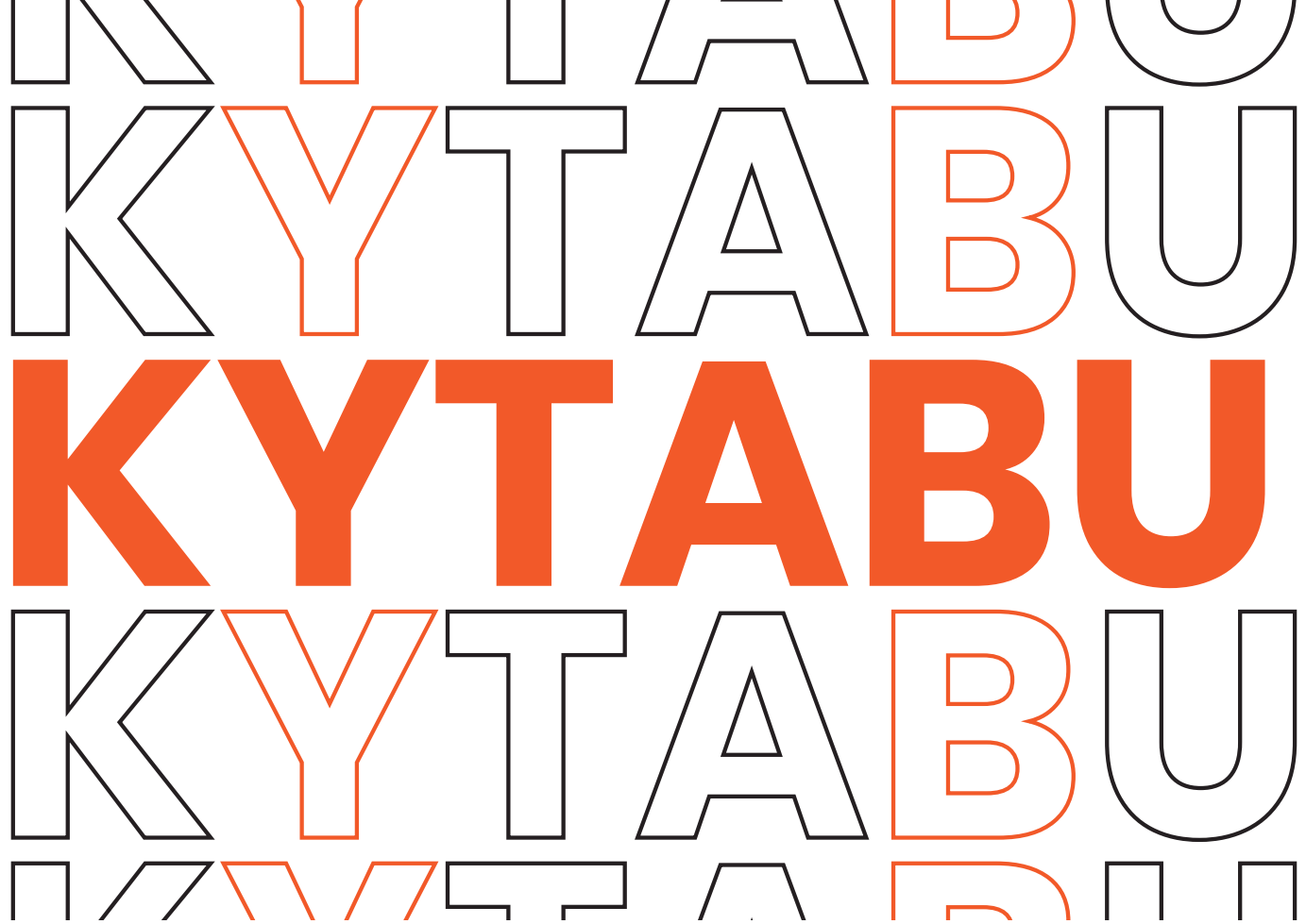
NAILAB's early experience also reflects a broader principle about building institutions: entrepreneurship cannot depend exclusively on the brilliance of individual founders. It requires an environment in which people can learn from one another, access opportunities and build businesses capable of creating economic value.

For Ndungu, the incubation experience formed an important part of a longer entrepreneurial journey. It exposed him to the practical realities of helping ideas move toward implementation and of creating structures through which other entrepreneurs could pursue their ambitions.

It also raises a question relevant to every business leader: are you building an enterprise that creates value only for itself, or are you also strengthening the environment in which other businesses can succeed?

The answer matters because markets grow when businesses do more than compete for existing demand. They can also help develop new capabilities, introduce new services, improve productivity and create opportunities that did not previously exist.

An entrepreneurial ecosystem becomes stronger when knowledge, capital, experience and opportunity circulate.



In 2012, Ndungu founded Kytabu, an education technology venture developed around improving access to educational content.

The underlying challenge was significant: educational materials can be expensive, and traditional methods of acquiring and distributing learning resources do not always match the realities of every student, teacher or household.

Digital technology offered a different possibility.

Instead of treating access to learning content solely as a matter of purchasing physical books, technology could create alternative ways to distribute and consume educational material.

Kytabu became associated with a model focused on affordable access to digital educational content, including textbooks and other learning resources. The broader importance of such a model lies in the question it asks about the economics of education.

How can learning resources reach more people? How can distribution costs be reduced? How can educational content become more responsive to the needs of learners and teachers? And how can digital access be designed for communities where devices, connectivity and household purchasing power may be constrained?

LOOKING AT EDUCATION THROUGH THE LENS OF ACCESS

These questions are not solved simply by converting a printed textbook into a digital file.

An effective education technology business must consider the whole experience: the learner, the teacher, the curriculum, the device, the cost of access, the availability of connectivity and the institution responsible for delivering education.

It must also consider the commercial model. Who pays for the service? Is the customer a parent, a school, a

government, a donor or another institution? How is content licensed? How does the platform remain financially viable while making learning more accessible?

These questions demonstrate why education technology is not merely a software challenge. It is a business-model challenge, an institutional challenge and a human-centred design challenge.

FROM PRODUCT INNOVATION TO SYSTEM INNOVATION

One of the most important lessons from Kytabu's area of work is that meaningful innovation may require changing how an entire service is delivered.

A business can create a useful product and still struggle if the surrounding system does not support its adoption.

A digital learning platform, for example, may depend on school procurement processes, teacher training, curriculum alignment, internet availability, device access and reliable technical support.

If any of these elements is missing, the user experience may suffer.

The founder therefore needs to think beyond the application itself. The product is one part of a larger service ecosystem.

This is a valuable lesson for African entrepreneurs developing solutions in education, healthcare, agriculture, financial services and public service delivery. The most important barriers are often distributed across the system, not concentrated in one product.

Successful innovation must understand that system.

The Business Lesson FROM KYTABU

Do not confuse digital access with actual adoption.

A service may be available online without being easy to use. A product may be affordable in theory but remain inaccessible to its intended customer. A technology may work well in a demonstration but fail in a real-world environment.

The founder's responsibility is to understand the full journey from awareness to use, from use to value, and from value to sustained adoption. That is where innovation becomes meaningful.



TRIBBE: RETHINKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MONEY & COMMUNITY.

Finance is often described through the language of banks, credit scores, collateral, interest rates, investment portfolios and formal financial institutions.

Yet many people's financial lives also operate through relationships.

Friends contribute toward shared goals. Families support relatives. Savings groups pool resources. Communities establish informal arrangements to manage expenses and meet financial needs.

These systems can be powerful, but they may also face limitations around transparency, record-keeping, accountability, access to formal credit and the practical management of shared money.

Ndungu's work around Tribbe has explored this intersection between technology, money and social relationships.

The wider idea is that financial tools can be designed around the ways people actually organise their financial lives, rather than assuming that every user begins with the same formal financial infrastructure.

This is an important consideration in African markets, where mobile money has already changed how people send, receive and manage funds.

However, the next stage of financial innovation is not simply about moving existing transactions onto a phone. It is about helping users make better decisions, improve financial visibility, reduce friction and access services suited to their needs.

A useful financial product must be built around trust.

People need to understand how their information is used, how their money is handled, what fees apply and what happens when a transaction fails or a disagreement occurs.

Technology can simplify financial interactions, but it cannot remove the need for sound governance, privacy protections, consumer education and clear accountability.

For a founder, the opportunity is substantial. The responsibility is equally substantial.

The Human Side Of Fintech:

The strongest financial products begin with an understanding of behaviour. Why do people save in groups? Why do some customers avoid formal borrowing? What makes people trust one financial service and reject another? How do household responsibilities influence spending? What information would help a user make a better decision?

These questions matter because financial behaviour is not determined by mathematics alone. It is influenced by habits, social expectations, trust, income patterns and the realities of everyday life.

A product that ignores these factors may be technically sophisticated but commercially ineffective.

A product that understands them has a better chance of becoming part of the user's routine.

For entrepreneurs, the lesson is to investigate the decisions people make before designing the tools intended to change them.





ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AFRICA MUST PARTICIPATE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE.

Artificial intelligence is quickly becoming one of the most consequential areas of technological development.

It is influencing how people search for information, write, design, analyse data, build software, deliver customer service and make decisions. Businesses are exploring its potential to improve productivity, personalise services and create new products.

For African economies, the opportunity is considerable.

AI could support learning, help small businesses interpret information, improve agricultural planning, expand access to certain services and enable entrepreneurs to develop products that previously required much larger teams.

But the opportunity comes with important questions. Whose data is used to train these systems? Which languages are represented? What assumptions are embedded in the models? How do businesses protect confidential information? How can people challenge inaccurate outputs? And who benefits economically from the infrastructure being developed?

These are not abstract questions. They will influence whether AI becomes a tool for broad-based opportunity or reinforces existing inequalities.

Ndungu's recent public work has placed him within conversations about African participation in the development and governance of AI. His involvement in initiatives associated with the Africa AI Hub reflects a wider push to connect technology development with policy, institutions and the communities affected by it.

The central issue is not whether Africa should adopt artificial intelligence. It is how African societies can adopt, adapt and help shape it responsibly.

From Consuming Technology to Shaping It.

For many years, much of the discussion about African technology focused on adoption: how quickly people were using mobile phones, mobile money, digital services and global platforms.

Adoption remains important. But it is only one part of the picture.

A mature technology ecosystem also needs people who can develop products, build infrastructure, conduct research, create relevant datasets, establish standards and influence the rules under which technology operates.

Without these capabilities, a market may generate significant demand while leaving much of the value creation elsewhere.

For African entrepreneurs, this presents a strategic question: where can the continent build distinctive capabilities rather than simply compete to use the same tools as everyone else?

Potential areas include local-language technology, applications designed for low-connectivity environments, tools for small businesses, education solutions, agricultural intelligence, healthcare support and systems built around African consumer behaviour. None of these opportunities is guaranteed to succeed. Each requires investment, expertise, governance and a clear understanding of the market.

But they demonstrate that Africa's role in the AI economy need not be limited to consumption.



The Importance OF AFRICAN CONTEXT.

A technology that works in one market may not automatically work in another. Language, culture, infrastructure, regulation, income levels and institutional arrangements influence how people use products.

AI systems can also produce misleading or incomplete results when the information used to develop or evaluate them does not adequately represent the communities they serve. That is why context matters. African innovators should be asking not only how to use AI more efficiently, but also how to make it more relevant, reliable and accountable in African environments. For businesses, this means being clear about where AI genuinely improves a service and where human judgement remains essential.

For governments and institutions, it means investing in skills, infrastructure, research, data governance and responsible deployment. For educators, it means preparing learners to work with emerging technologies while strengthening the critical thinking that enables them to evaluate their outputs. And for founders, it means treating AI as a capability to be applied with purpose, rather than a label to attach to every product.

THE ENTREPRENEUR AS A SYSTEMS THINKER.

The common thread connecting education technology, financial innovation and AI is the need to think beyond isolated products.

A system consists of interconnected parts. A change in one area can influence the performance of another. In education, the platform is connected to teachers, learners, content providers, schools and parents.

In finance, the application is connected to trust, payment infrastructure, customer behaviour, regulation and financial literacy.

In artificial intelligence, the product is connected to data, computing infrastructure, language, governance, human oversight and economic incentives.

This way of thinking changes the founder's questions. Instead of asking only, "What can we build?" the founder asks, "What must be true for this solution to work?"

Instead of asking, "How do we launch?" the founder asks, "What will make people continue using this?"

Instead of asking, "How do we grow quickly?" the founder asks, "What capabilities must grow alongside the business?"

And instead of asking, "How do we attract attention?"

the founder asks, "What evidence will demonstrate that we are creating value?"

These are questions that distinguish product development from enterprise building.

A product may be launched by a small team. An enduring business requires processes, people, financial discipline, customer relationships, governance and the ability to adapt.

The founder must eventually move from doing everything personally to creating an organisation that can deliver consistently without depending on the founder's constant intervention.

That transition is one of the most demanding tests of leadership.



THE COMMERCIAL DISCIPLINE BEHIND A BIG IDEA.

Purpose can provide direction, but purpose alone does not sustain a business.

A venture may address a serious social challenge and still fail if it cannot establish a workable economic model.

Founders must therefore reconcile two responsibilities: delivering the intended benefit and creating an organisation capable of continuing to deliver it. This requires attention to unit economics, pricing, customer acquisition, retention, operating costs, cash flow and the timing of revenue.

A business serving low-income customers may need a different distribution model from one serving large institutions. A product sold to schools may require a different sales cycle from a subscription service sold directly to consumers. The founder must understand

these differences.

Partnerships can expand reach, but they do not automatically guarantee sustainable demand. Funding can create room to experiment, but it does not remove the need to demonstrate value. Public recognition can increase visibility, but it does not replace a reliable product or a sound business model. This is particularly important for businesses operating at the intersection of technology and social impact. The language of impact should be supported by evidence of outcomes, while the language of growth should be supported by evidence of commercial progress.

The strongest ventures do not treat these responsibilities as enemies. They look for ways to align them.

What African Founders Can Learn FROM NDUNGU'S JOURNEY

Ndungu's entrepreneurial experience raises several lessons for founders across the continent.

Lesson one: Let the problem lead

The most exciting technology is not necessarily the most valuable technology. Begin with the challenge, understand the people affected and establish whether a meaningful market exists. Then decide which tools can help solve the problem.

Lesson two: Build for real conditions

A product should be designed for the environment in which it will be used, not only the environment in which it was developed. Consider connectivity, cost, language, user skills, trust and the practical realities of everyday life.

Lesson three: Treat partnerships as strategic capabilities

Complex challenges rarely belong to one organisation alone. Partnerships can connect businesses with expertise, distribution, customers, capital and institutional access. But partnerships must have clear objectives, defined responsibilities and measurable value.

Lesson four: Make technology serve human beings

Technology is a means, not the ultimate objective. The real question is whether it improves the experience, expands opportunity, reduces friction or enables people to make better decisions.

Lesson five: Keep learning

Markets change. Technologies evolve. Customer expectations shift. The assumptions that supported an early business model may not remain valid indefinitely.

Leaders need the humility to test their ideas and the courage to change direction when necessary.

Lesson six: Think about the system

A product cannot always solve a problem on its own. Understand the institutions, behaviours, infrastructure and incentives that influence the success of the solution.

Lesson seven: Make the business sustainable

A valuable idea deserves a business model capable of supporting it.

Understand your customers, monitor cash flow, establish realistic pricing and build the operational discipline needed for long-term growth.

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO BUILDERS WHO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE.

The technology conversation can become preoccupied with speed: who launched first, who raised the most capital, which model is most powerful and which product is attracting the most attention.

But the lasting impact of innovation will be determined by a different set of questions.

Did the technology improve a real experience? Did it reach the people who needed it? Did it create value that could be sustained? Did it earn trust? Did it strengthen local capabilities? Did it solve a problem better than the alternatives?

These questions are less glamorous than a product launch, but they are more important to the long-term health of a business.

The entrepreneur who understands people has an advantage because businesses ultimately operate through human decisions. Customers choose whether to trust a brand, use a service, recommend a product or pay for a solution.

Technology can create new possibilities. Leadership determines how those possibilities are organised and delivered.

For Africa, the challenge is not a shortage of problems that need solving. It is ensuring that the people with the ideas, capabilities and determination to solve them have the conditions required to build lasting enterprises.

That means strengthening education, investment, research, entrepreneurship support, governance and the commercial networks through which ideas become useful products.

It also means encouraging founders to think beyond the immediate launch and consider what their businesses can contribute over a decade or more.

Tonee Ndungu's journey, viewed through the lens of education, finance and artificial intelligence, invites precisely that kind of reflection.

The question is not whether every founder should build the next Kytabu, Tribbe or AI initiative.

The question is whether more founders will develop the discipline to identify meaningful problems, understand the people affected, build relevant solutions and create organisations capable of delivering value over time.

Because Africa's next chapter will not be shaped by technology alone.

It will be shaped by the people who understand what the technology is for.



1. Solve the problem before selling the solution.

A product is only as useful as the problem it addresses. Leaders should invest time in understanding customers before committing significant resources to development or expansion.

2. Build systems, not permanent dependence on yourself.

A founder's energy can launch a business, but strong processes, capable teams and clear accountability are what make it scalable.

3. Design around the customer's reality.

Do not assume that the way your organisation works is the way customers live. Study the obstacles they face and make the experience as accessible as possible.

4. Treat innovation as a continuous process.

A successful launch is the beginning of a learning cycle. Customer feedback, market changes and operational evidence should inform the next version of the business.

5. Build partnerships with purpose.

Partnerships should improve capability, access, distribution or outcomes. A long list of partners is less valuable than a few relationships that deliver meaningful results.

6. Balance ambition with commercial discipline.

A bold mission needs a workable financial model. Monitor cash flow, pricing, costs and customer retention with the same seriousness given to product development.

7. Think about the legacy of the institution.

Leadership is not only what happens during your tenure. It is also what remains when you leave: the people developed, systems strengthened, standards established and opportunities created.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR LEADERS BUILDING
BEYOND THE PRESENT.

THE JUJAYA PERSPECTIVE

AFRICA DOES NOT JUST NEED MORE INNOVATION.
IT NEEDS *MORE RELEVANT* INNOVATION.

At Jujaya Media, we believe that meaningful progress begins with understanding. The same principle applies to technology, business strategy, public communication and corporate reputation. Before an organisation can communicate its value effectively, it must understand what that value is, who benefits from it and why it matters.

A company may have a sophisticated product but struggle to explain its relevance. A founder may have an ambitious vision but fail to translate it into a compelling business narrative. An institution may be doing important work without giving its stakeholders a clear understanding of its impact. These are not merely communication problems. They are often problems of clarity.

The story of innovation in Africa should therefore go beyond the celebration of new products and the personalities behind them. It should examine the challenges being addressed, the business models being tested, the people being served and the long-term value being created.

For business leaders, this is a reminder that reputation should be built on substance.

The most effective corporate narratives are not manufactured to make an organisation appear important. They emerge from a clear understanding of what the organisation does, why it matters and what evidence supports its claims.

This is why we continue to advocate for credibility before visibility.

Visibility can introduce a business to an audience. Credibility gives that audience a reason to listen, believe and engage.

In an increasingly crowded marketplace, the organisations that communicate well will not necessarily be those that speak the loudest. They will be those that understand their purpose, demonstrate their value and tell their stories with consistency.

Our view is simple: Africa's innovation story deserves to be told with greater depth, stronger context and a sharper understanding of the people building the future.

Stories for better communication.

Jujaya Media - We do not chase attention. We build influence that endures.

The Leadership Reflection.

Purpose is important, but it must be translated into action.

Customers may be attracted to a company's vision, but they remain because the business delivers a valuable experience. Employees may connect with a mission, but they also need clear direction, good management and an environment in which they can do meaningful work.

For leaders, purpose should guide decisions rather than remain a statement on a website.

It should influence which opportunities the business pursues, how customers are treated, what standards are maintained and how difficult choices are made.

The challenge is to make the purpose visible through the organisation's behaviour.

This Week's FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

Every organisation creates an impression through the way it conducts business. Customers form opinions not only from what a company promises, but also from the value it delivers, the standards it maintains and the choices it makes when expectations are tested. Over time, these experiences shape a reputation far more enduring than any carefully crafted corporate narrative.

For executives, this presents a critical question of alignment: does the organisation the market experiences reflect the one its leadership intends to build? The answer may reveal more about the strength of its purpose than any mission statement ever could.

If your customers could judge your purpose only by the way your business operates, what would they conclude?

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

Of the Week

THE POWER OF PURPOSE

“People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it.”

~ Simon Sinek

CLARITY BEFORE

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The Business Behind the Story

In a world where organisations are competing for public attention, the ability to communicate clearly has become a strategic business asset.

Companies launch products, enter new markets, appoint executives, respond to emerging challenges and seek to strengthen relationships with customers, investors, employees, regulators and the communities around them.

Yet communication is not simply the act of distributing information.

An organisation can publish regularly and still fail to communicate its value. It can appear in the media without establishing credibility. It can invest in digital platforms without developing a consistent corporate narrative. It can have a strong business strategy but struggle to make its significance understood by the people whose support it needs.

Jujaya Media approaches communication from a strategic perspective.

Founded by Wycliffe Choreh, the firm positions itself as a strategic PR and corporate communications advisory partner, helping organisations clarify their narratives, strengthen their reputations and communicate with greater purpose. Its philosophy is built around an important distinction: visibility is not the same as influence.

Visibility creates awareness. Influence requires credibility, relevance, trust and a sustained relationship with the audience.

What Does Jujaya Media Do?

Jujaya Media's capabilities span several connected areas of communication and reputation building.

Strategic public relations: Helping organisations define their communication priorities, identify relevant audiences and develop a structured approach to public engagement.

Corporate communications: Supporting businesses and institutions in communicating their direction, achievements, priorities and organisational identity.

Media relations: Developing relevant stories, strengthening relationships with media professionals and helping organisations engage with the media more strategically.

Corporate storytelling: Translating complex business activities, leadership journeys and institutional work into clear, credible narratives.

Reputation management: Helping organisations understand how they are perceived and communicate consistently with the stakeholders whose trust matters.

OF THE WEEK



ORE VISIBILITY.

CREDIBILITY BEFORE PUBLICITY.

Digital communication: Strengthening website content, corporate messaging and digital platforms so that the organisation's online presence reflects its value and strategic direction.

Leadership profiling and thought leadership: Helping executives communicate their expertise, perspectives and leadership contributions in ways that build professional credibility.

The appropriate mix of capabilities depends on each client's objectives, sector, stakeholders and operating environment.

Why Strategic Communication Matters

For a growing business, communication can support market entry, customer confidence, partnership development and brand differentiation.

For a large corporation, it can help explain strategy, strengthen stakeholder relationships and maintain consistency across multiple audiences.

For a public institution, it can improve the clarity of public information, help explain programmes and support accountability.

For a founder or executive, it can help establish a distinct leadership narrative based on experience, expertise and demonstrated value.

In each case, the starting point should be the same: understand the objective before deciding which communication tools to use.

A press release is not a strategy. A social media post is not a reputation programme. A media appearance is not automatically a business outcome.

The tools matter, but their effectiveness depends on the clarity of the purpose behind them.

** Editorial Disclosure: Jujaya Media publishes
THE CEO FILES.*

*This section is a publisher's business spotlight,
included as part of the publication's new
recurring editorial format.*

Connect with Jujaya Media

The Jujaya Media PHILOSOPHY

Jujaya Media's positioning can be captured in three principles:

1. Clarity before visibility.

An organisation should understand what it wants to communicate before investing in amplifying the message.

2. Credibility before publicity.

Communication should be grounded in substance, evidence and a consistent organisational identity.

3. Influence that endures.

The goal is not merely to create a moment of attention, but to build the trust and understanding that support long-term relationships.

These principles are particularly relevant in markets where organisations face pressure to be constantly visible. Strategic communication helps leaders distinguish between attention that is merely temporary and communication that contributes to lasting business value.

The Business Lesson

Every organisation has a story, but not every organisation has clarified it.

Leaders should be able to explain what their organisation does, whom it serves, why it matters and what makes its contribution distinctive. That clarity should be reflected across the organisation's website, leadership communication, media engagement, customer experience and stakeholder relationships.

When these elements work together, communication becomes more than publicity.

It becomes part of how the organisation establishes its position in the market.

FIVE BUSINESS HACKS FOR STARTUPS

PRACTICAL MOVES THAT CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR BUSINESS WITHOUT EXHAUSTING YOUR RESOURCES.

Starting a business is demanding. Founders must manage customers, cash flow, product development, sales, operations and the constant uncertainty that comes with building something new.

The answer is not always to work longer hours or spend more money. Often, progress comes from making better decisions about where limited resources should go. Here are five practical approaches that startups can apply.

Hack 1: Talk to Customers Before Investing Heavily In A product.

Many founders become attached to their ideas before confirming that customers share their enthusiasm. The result can be a product that is technically impressive but commercially weak. Before making a large investment, speak to potential customers. Ask how they currently solve the problem, what frustrates them, what alternatives they have tried and what they would consider paying for. Do not ask only whether they like your idea. People may praise an idea without ever purchasing it. Look for evidence of demand: existing spending, repeated complaints, time lost, workarounds and willingness to test a proposed solution.

Try This Instead:

Interview ten potential customers in your target market. Identify the three problems that appear most frequently & investigate which one customers have the strongest reason to solve.

Why It Works:

It reduces the risk of building a product around assumptions rather than real demand.

Hack 2: Sell The Outcome, Not Just The Product.

Customers rarely purchase a product simply because its features are impressive. They purchase because they expect it to help them achieve something.

A business software company is not merely selling a dashboard. It may be selling better visibility, fewer administrative errors and faster decisions.

A communications firm is not merely selling media coverage. It may be helping a client clarify its position, strengthen stakeholder confidence and communicate its value.

A training company is not merely selling a workshop. It is selling a capability the customer wants to develop. The way you describe your product influences whether potential customers understand its relevance.

Try This Instead:

Complete the sentence, “We help [specific customer] achieve [specific outcome] by [how product or service works].”

Why It Works:

Clear outcome-based messaging makes it easier for customers to understand why offer matters.

Hack 3: Build A Feedback Loop, Not Just A Customer List.

Acquiring a customer is important. Understanding why that customer stays, leaves, complains or recommends your business is equally important. A customer list tells you who has purchased. A feedback loop helps you understand the experience behind the purchase. Make it easy for customers to raise concerns. Review recurring complaints. Track the questions people ask before buying. Pay attention to why prospective customers decline an offer. Not every suggestion should be implemented, but patterns in customer feedback can reveal weaknesses in the product, pricing, communication or delivery process.

Try This Instead:

After a purchase or completed service, ask three questions:

- 1. What did well?*
- 2. What could we do better?*
- 3. What almost stopped you from choosing us?*

Review the answers monthly and identify one improvement to implement?

Why It Works:

It turns customer experience into a source of business intelligence.

Hack 4: Use Partnership To Extend Your Reach.

Startups often try to build every capability internally. This can consume time and capital that the business needs elsewhere. Strategic partnerships can provide access to customers, expertise, distribution, technology or networks that would otherwise takes years to develop. For example, a small training business could partner with an industry association. A technology startup could collaborate with an established distributor. A specialist consultancy could work with a complementary firm to serve clients whose needs overlap. The key is to make the partnership commercially meaningful. A partnership should have a defined purpose, clear responsibilities & an agreed understanding of how value will be created.

Try This Instead:

Identify 5 organizations that already serve the customers you want to reach but do not directly compete with your business. Develop 1 specific proposal for how working together could benefit both parties.

Why It Works:

The right partnership can reduce the cost of reaching customers & help a startup access capabilities faster.

Hack 5: Use AI To Improve Productivity. Keep Human Judgement.

Artificial intelligence tools can help small businesses brainstorm, summarise documents, organise research, draft routine communications, analyse structured information and develop first versions of internal materials. For a small team, these capabilities can free up time for customer relationships, strategic thinking and execution. But AI-generated work still requires oversight. Outputs may be inaccurate, incomplete, generic or unsuitable for the intended audience. Confidential client information also needs careful handling. The objective should not be to automate everything. It should be to use technology where it improves speed or quality without weakening trust.

Try This Instead:

Choose 1 repetitive task that consumes time every week. Test whether an AI tool can assist with the first draft or initial analysis. Compare results against normal process & measure time saved, quality of output & amount of editing required.

Why It Works:

It creates a controlled way to improve productivity without assuming that every task should be automated.



THE BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

A STRATEGIC GUIDE TO BUILDING A BUSINESS CUSTOMERS
CHOOSE FOR MORE THAN THE *LOWEST QUOTATION*.

Stop Competing On PRICE ALONE

Price is one of the easiest things for a customer to compare. A buyer can place two quotations side by side and immediately, they will identify the cheaper option. That simplicity makes price a powerful competitive tool, particularly when products appear similar and customers have limited information about the differences between the two providers.

A business that competes primarily on price, however, weakens its own position gradually. Lower prices may attract customers, yet they can also reduce margins, limit the resources available for service delivery and create expectations that are difficult to sustain over time. If competitors lower their prices, the business may find itself trapped in a cycle of discounting.

The solution is not to ignore the price. Customers care about affordability and every business needs a pricing strategy that reflects its market.

The solution is to make the value of the offer clearer.

Play 1: Identify What Makes Your Offer Different.

A business needs a reason to be chosen beyond the fact that it is available. That reason might be the specialist expertise, reliability, speed, convenience, customer support, product quality, local knowledge, a better experience or the ability to solve a particular problem more effectively.

However, a difference matters only when customers care about it. A company may be proud of its internal process, but if that process does not improve the customer's experience, it may not create a meaningful competitive advantage.

Ask Yourself These Questions:

- *What do customers consistently appreciate about our work?*
- *What problems do we solve particularly well?*
- *What do we understand about our customers that competitors may overlook?*
- *What evidence can we use to demonstrate our advantage?*

Your answers should help shape your positioning.

Play 2: Make The Cost Of A Poor Decision Visible.

Customers sometimes focus on the cheapest option because the consequences of choosing badly are not immediately obvious. A low-cost service may require extensive work. An unreliable supplier may delay a project. An unsuitable software product may create operational problems. A poorly planned marketing campaign may consume money without generating useful results.

Businesses can improve their sales conversations by helping customers understand the total cost of the decision. This should be done honestly, without exaggeration or fear-based selling. Explain the risk, the trade-offs and the practical differences between the available options.

The goal is to help the customer make an informed decision, not to pressure them into purchasing the most expensive package.

Play 3: Package Your Services Around Customer Needs.

Whenever every customer receives the same offer, the business may struggle to serve different budgets and priorities effectively. Packaging can make the choices easier.

For example, a service provider could offer:

- *Essential* - The core deliverables required to solve the immediate problem.
- *Growth* - A broader package for customers who need additional support and implementation.
- *Strategic* - A more comprehensive engagement involving planning, specialist advice and ongoing review.

Each package should have clear deliverables, boundaries and pricing logic.

Play 4: Build Trust Before The Quotation Arrives.

A quotation is often the point at which the customer compares price. But the decision may have been influenced much earlier.

The customer may already have formed an impression based on the quality of your website, the clarity of your proposal, your responsiveness, the way you explain your work and the evidence you provide.

A business that communicates poorly throughout the sales process may struggle to justify a premium price at the end.

Trust is built through consistency.

Respond when you say you will. Explain what is included. Be honest about limitations. Demonstrate your expertise. Provide relevant evidence of your work. Avoid promising outcomes you cannot control.

These practices make it easier for customers to understand the value they are being asked to pay for.

Play 5: Know when not to pursue the customer.

Not every potential customer is right for your business.

Some buyers will always prioritise the lowest price. Others may expect a level of work that is inconsistent with their budget. Some may require capabilities your organisation does not possess.

Trying to satisfy every prospect can weaken your positioning and consume resources that would be better invested elsewhere.

A clear business strategy identifies the customers the organisation serves best, the problems it solves and the value it is equipped to deliver.

That clarity makes it easier to qualify opportunities and avoid engagements that are unlikely to be sustainable.

The Business Playbook VERDICT

Do not ask only, “How can we become cheaper?” Ask, “How can we become more valuable to the customers we are best equipped to serve?”

Price will always matter. But a strong business gives customers a clear reason to consider quality, reliability, expertise and outcomes alongside the quotation.

That is how a company begins to compete on value rather than entering a race to the bottom.

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Our Digital Options

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THAT BUILD
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BRANDS THAT
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*Your story
well told.*

EMER

THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP.

A new generation of African business leaders is emerging in sectors ranging from technology and finance to manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, logistics and the creative economy.

Some are building companies from the ground up. Others are taking responsibility for established businesses, expanding family enterprises or introducing new operating models within existing organisations.

Their stories matter because the future of African enterprise will depend not only on the companies that already dominate their industries, but also on the leaders building the next generation of institutions.

This column will spotlight emerging CEOs whose work demonstrates a combination of entrepreneurial initiative, organisational responsibility, innovation and the potential to create meaningful economic value.

The objective is not simply to celebrate youth. It is to examine leadership in practice.

GOING

YOUNG CEO **OF THE WEEK**



What We Will Be Looking For:

Business building: Has the leader helped establish, develop or significantly strengthen an enterprise?

Innovation: Has the business introduced a useful product, service, operating model or approach to a market challenge?

Leadership: Is there evidence of responsible decision-making, team development and the ability to execute a clear strategy?

Impact: Is the enterprise creating meaningful value for customers, employees, suppliers or the wider economy?

Potential: Does the leader demonstrate the ability to grow the business and contribute to the development of the sector?

The CEO Files is committed to recognising credible leadership and giving emerging business leaders a platform grounded in substance.

The Questions BEHIND EVERY PROFILE

Each feature will explore the leader's journey, the problem the business was established to solve, the commercial realities of building the enterprise, the challenges encountered and the lessons other entrepreneurs can learn.

We will also examine what makes the business distinctive, where its next opportunities may lie and what *leadership capabilities will be required for its next stage of growth.*

Nomination & Selection

We invite readers, founders, investors, business associations and industry professionals to recommend emerging CEOs whose work deserves closer attention.

Nominations should include the leader's name, company, sector, a brief description of the business and evidence of the leader's contribution.

The individual profile for this edition will be selected and verified by the editorial team before publication. We will not assign a CEO title or publish unverified achievements simply to fill the column.



THE LEADERSHIP DESK.



FIVE QUESTIONS EVERY CEO SHOULD ASK
THIS MONTH.

Leadership requires the ability to move between the immediate needs of the organisation and the long-term direction of the business. Daily operations can consume a leader's attention. Meetings, customer issues, financial decisions and staff responsibilities often leave little time for reflection. Yet a business can remain busy without making sufficient progress.

These five questions can help executives examine whether their organisations are moving in the right direction.

1. Are We Solving The Right Problem?

Have customer needs changed? Are we investing resources in the challenges that matter most? Is there evidence that our current priorities remain relevant?

2. Do Our People Understand The Strategy?

Can employees explain the organisation's priorities and how their work contributes to them? A strategy that exists only in management presentations is unlikely to guide everyday decisions consistently.

3. Are We Measuring Outcomes Or Activity?

The number of meetings held, posts published or proposals submitted may reveal activity. But what do these activities achieve? Look for evidence of customer value, revenue quality, service improvement, retention and operational performance.

4. What Are We Learning From Our Mistakes?

Problems are inevitable. Repeated problems without learning are more concerning. Leaders should create ways to identify the causes of failure, address them and prevent avoidable recurrence.

5. What Must Change For Us To Grow Sustainably?

Growth may require new systems, stronger management, better cash-flow planning, more capable teams or a clearer market position. The challenge is to identify what the next stage requires before the current approach becomes a constraint.

A Final LEADERSHIP THOUGHT

The purpose of reflection is not to create more meetings. It is to improve the quality of decisions.

A leader who asks better questions can help an organisation identify problems earlier, allocate resources more effectively and build a stronger foundation for growth.



SocialInsight

- Audience Intelligence – Uncover the motivations behind online conversations.
- Reputation & Narrative Management – Monitor perceptions and shape compelling brand stories.
- Actionable Insights – Turn public feedback into smarter decisions and reduced customer churn.



THE ENTREPRENEUR'S NOTEBOOK

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STARTING A
BUSINESS & BUILDING AN INSTITUTION.

Starting a business is an act of initiative. Building an institution is an exercise in sustained leadership. In the early stages, founders often rely on personal energy, close customer relationships and the ability to make decisions quickly. These qualities can help a young business survive.

But as the organisation grows, the same habits may become limitations.

If every decision requires the founder's approval, progress slows. If customer relationships exist only in the founder's phone, the organisation becomes vulnerable. If financial information is not properly documented, management decisions become less reliable. If responsibilities are unclear, employees struggle to take ownership. The business may have more customers and higher revenue, yet remain dependent on the same small group of people.

Institution building requires a different approach.

Document the way the business works.

Important processes should not exist only in someone's memory. Document how customers are served, how payments are handled, how work is reviewed and how problems are escalated.

Documentation improves consistency and makes it easier to train new employees.

Develop leaders, not just employees.

A growing business needs people who can make decisions within clearly defined responsibilities.

Founders should invest in developing judgement, accountability and the ability to solve problems without constant supervision.

Protect the financial foundation.

Revenue is important, but cash flow determines whether the organisation can meet its obligations.

Understand payment cycles, operating costs, outstanding invoices, tax responsibilities and the cash required to deliver future work.

Build a reputation that survives individual relationships.

Customer trust should be supported by reliable systems and consistent service, not only by the personal charm or availability of the founder.

Prepare the business for a future beyond you.

A mature institution can continue to create value even when its founder is not present in every conversation or decision.

This is not about removing the founder from the business prematurely. It is about creating the conditions for the organisation to become stronger, more resilient and more valuable over time.

The Notebook TAKEAWAY!

A founder starts the engine. An institution builds the systems, people and standards that keep it running.

The Closing REFLECTION.

The Future Is Built by Those Who Take Responsibility.

The leaders who shape the future are not necessarily those who predict every change correctly. They are those who remain willing to learn, take responsibility and act when opportunities emerge.

Technology will continue to evolve. Markets will become more competitive. Customer expectations will shift. New businesses will challenge established institutions, while existing companies will need to reconsider how they create and communicate value.

In that environment, leadership cannot be reduced to a title.

It requires the ability to understand people, make decisions under uncertainty, manage resources responsibly and build organisations that can adapt without losing sight of their purpose.

Tonee Ndungu's entrepreneurial journey provides a lens through which to consider these responsibilities. His work across education technology, finance and AI illustrates the importance of asking how innovation can respond to the needs and circumstances of the people it is intended to serve.

The wider lesson applies to every sector.

Whether a leader is building a technology startup, managing a manufacturing company, directing a financial institution, running a family enterprise or leading a public organisation, the fundamental questions remain relevant.

What problem are we solving? Who benefits from our work? How do we know we are creating value? What must we change to remain useful? And what will remain stronger because we were here?

At **The CEO Files**, we believe these are the questions worth exploring.

Because the future of business is not built through ambition alone. It is built through the daily decisions that turn ambition into something useful, credible and enduring.



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