

THE CEO FILES

MARY-ANN
MUSANGI

FROM LEGACY
TO
LEADERSHIP

THE WOMAN REIMAGINING
WHAT
AFRICAN MANUFACTURING CAN
BECOME

MANAGING
DIRECTOR, HACO
INDUSTRIES



EDITOR'S NOTE

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There are some leadership stories that are about arriving at the top. And then there are stories about what happens when you get there. Mary-Ann Musangi's story belongs to the second category. Because inheriting responsibility is not the same as inheriting success.

In 2019, Mary-Ann took over the leadership of HACO Industries following the death of her father, the late businessman Chris Kirubi. But her relationship with the business did not begin on the day she became Managing Director. She had already been involved in the family businesses and had served on boards before his passing.

That distinction matters. Because leadership is not simply about succession. It is about stewardship. It is about taking something that existed before you and asking a difficult question:

Mary-Ann's leadership journey offers an interesting window into that tension. She belongs to a generation of African business leaders increasingly being asked to think beyond simply running companies. They are being asked to build competitive African brands. To manufacture locally. To create jobs. To develop talent. To integrate sustainability into business. To open markets beyond national borders. And to make African businesses capable of competing in an increasingly interconnected world.

Her story is therefore bigger than a family business. It is a story about transition. It is about a woman stepping into responsibility in a traditionally male-dominated industry and helping shape a new chapter for a longstanding Kenyan manufacturer.

WHAT MUST THIS BECOME NEXT?

That question sits at the heart of this edition of The CEO Files.

HACO is a company with history. But history can be both an asset and a responsibility. The brands carry memories. The organisation carries institutional knowledge. Employees carry years of experience. Customers carry expectations. And the market keeps changing. The leader therefore has to honour what came before without becoming trapped by it.

The CEO Files was created to look beyond the title. We want to understand the person behind the position. The experiences that shaped them. The decisions that changed them. The lessons they carry. And the legacy they are attempting to build.

In this edition, we explore the woman behind the title, the executive navigating manufacturing, the advocate for women in industry, the leader championing sustainability and the African businesswoman thinking beyond the factory floor.

This is not simply a story about HACO. It is a story about what leadership looks like when legacy meets transformation. And perhaps, most importantly, it is a story about a woman helping to shape the next chapter of African manufacturing.

AT A GLANCE

NAME:

MARY-ANN MUSANGI

POSITION:

Managing Director, HACO Industries

INDUSTRY:

Manufacturing / FMCG

EXPERIENCE:

More than 25 years across advertising, banking, hospitality and FMCG in African markets.

LEADERSHIP FOCUS:

Manufacturing, innovation, sustainability, regional growth and inclusive economic participation.

INDUSTRY ROLE:

Board member of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and Mhaiperson of its Women in Manufacturing programme.

RECOGNITION:

Woman Industrialist of the Year and multiple recognitions at the Kenya Association of Manufacturers Women in Manufacturing Awards.

LEADERSHIP SIGNATURE:

Purpose-led growth, local manufacturing, sustainability and people development.



THE WOMAN BEHIND THE TITLE

Before Mary-Ann Musangi became the Managing Director of HACO Industries, she was a professional navigating different worlds.

Advertising,
Banking,
Hospitality,
FMCG.

More than two decades across these sectors provided an unusually broad commercial education. And perhaps that is important because manufacturing is rarely confined to manufacturing.

A product may begin on a production line.
But before it reaches a consumer, there is research.
There is sourcing.
There is branding.
There is distribution.
There is sales.
There is marketing.
There is regulation.
There is customer experience.
There is strategy.

The modern manufacturing CEO therefore has to understand an ecosystem rather than a factory.

Mary-Ann's career has taken her across several parts of that ecosystem.

And that experience would become particularly valuable where she assumed responsibility for leading one of Kenya's established FMCG manufacturers.

A NAME, A LEGACY, A RESPONSIBILITY

There is another dimension to Mary-Ann's story that makes it particularly compelling. She's the daughter of the late Kenyan businessman Chris Kirubi. Kirubi was a prominent figure in Kenyan business, with interests spanning manufacturing, media, real estate and technology. When he died in 2021, Mary-Ann was already deeply involved in the family businesses. She had been exposed to the business environment and had begun taking on greater responsibility before eventually becoming one of the leaders carrying the family enterprise forward.

That context changes the way we should understand her succession story. It was not simply:

FATHER DIES → DAUGHTER TAKES OVER.

It was more nuanced.

It was preparation.

Exposure.

Responsibility.

Transition.

And eventually, leadership.

That is important because family businesses often present a unique leadership challenge. The successor is not simply taking over a company. They are taking over expectations.



WHEN LEGACY MEETS EXPECTATION

Imagine sitting in the office once occupied by one of the most recognisable businessmen in Kenya. There is history in the room. There are relationships. There are employees who knew the previous leader. There are customers who associate the business with his personality. There are people who inevitably compare. And there is the silent question:

CAN YOU CARRY IT FORWARD?

Mary-Ann has spoken about the pressure of ensuring that the businesses continue to thrive and retain employment. That is a different definition of leadership. It is not simply:

HOW DO I SUCCEED?

It becomes:

HOW DO I ENSURE THAT THIS INSTITUTION CONTINUES TO CREATE VALUE?

That distinction is at the heart of succession.

THE HACO STORY

HACO Industries has a long history in Kenya's consumer-products market.

The company was founded by Chris Kirubi and, in its earlier years, held a manufacturing and distribution licence from Société BIC to produce and sell BIC-branded pens.

Over time, HACO diversified into personal-care, hair-care and cleaning products.

That evolution is significant.

Because businesses cannot remain frozen in the era in which they were created.

Markets change.

Consumer behaviour changes.

Technology changes.

Competition changes.

Trade agreements change.

Production economics change.

And leadership has to respond.

THE DECISION TO BUILD AFRICAN BRANDS

One of the defining strategic developments in HACO's recent story has been a greater focus on its own brands.

Following the end of its BIC licensing relationship, HACO's strategy increasingly centred on developing and strengthening its own product portfolio.

That is more than a product strategy.
It is a statement about ownership.

A licensed brand can provide scale and recognition.
But an owned brand provides something different:

- *Identity.*
- *Control.*
- *Long-term value.*
- *And the possibility of building intellectual property that remains with the business.*

For African manufacturers,
this question is increasingly important.

“Are we simply producing for someone else? Or can we build brands that originate here, grow here and compete globally?”

THE FACTORY AS A STATEMENT

Manufacturing is often discussed in terms of machines, factories and production volumes.

But there is a deeper story.

Every locally manufactured product represents a chain.



When manufacturing grows, the value chain grows with it.

That is why local manufacturing matters beyond the factory walls.

Every additional link in the value chain creates another opportunity for economic participation.

The factory therefore becomes more than a production site.

It becomes part of an ecosystem.

It becomes part of an ecosystem.

THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION

For many years, sustainability was treated as something companies discussed after the main business conversation.

Today, that is changing.

Consumers increasingly ask where products come from and how they are made.

Investors and partners increasingly examine environmental, social and governance issues.

Not merely a communications question.

The important shift is this:

“SUSTAINABILITY IS MOVING FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT INTO THE FACTORY.”

Energy costs matter.

Waste matters.

Packaging matters.

Water matters.

Supply chains matter.

For a manufacturer, sustainability is therefore becoming an operational question.

HACO has highlighted renewable energy, sustainable packaging, circular manufacturing and local sourcing as elements of its approach.

Mary-Ann's recognition in sustainability and ESG categories further places that conversation within her leadership profile.

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MANUFACTURING WITH PURPOSE

Mary-Ann's leadership philosophy connects commercial growth with wider economic participation.

HACO has highlighted local sourcing, partnerships with farmers, universities and TVET institutions, and the development of skills pipelines for the manufacturing sector.

THE WOMAN IN MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing has historically been perceived as a male-dominated industry.

Yet Mary-Ann's leadership extends beyond her own executive role.

She has served on the Kenya Association of Manufacturers board and chaired its Women in Manufacturing programme.

The Women in Manufacturing conversation is not simply about placing more women in boardrooms.

It is about expanding the pipeline.

This approach reflects a broader question:

WHAT SHOULD AN AFRICAN
MANUFACTURING COMPANY CONTRIBUTE
BEYOND ITS PRODUCTS?

- **Jobs.**
- **Skills.**
- **Markets.**
- **Suppliers.**
- **Technology.**
- **Knowledge.**
- **Opportunity.**

*Manufacturing becomes powerful when its
impact travels beyond the factory gates.*

Mary-Ann has highlighted the need for women entrepreneurs and manufacturers to have access not only to finance but also to markets, mentorship, networks and supportive policies.

That is an important distinction.

**Women can be founders. Engineers.
Factory managers. Researchers.
Procurement specialists. Finance
directors. Technicians.
Entrepreneurs. CEOs. And
industrialists.**

Funding can start a business. But ecosystems help businesses survive.



OPENING THE DOOR FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Leadership becomes more meaningful when it creates space for people who come after you.

Mary-Ann's work around women in manufacturing has included efforts to encourage women entrepreneurs and manufacturers to engage with industry institutions and access networks, while also supporting mentorship initiatives.

This points to a larger leadership philosophy:

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE THE LAST WOMAN IN THE ROOM.

The goal is to make sure more women can enter the room.

And eventually, build their own rooms.

THE AFRICAN MARKET IS THE NEXT FRONTIER

The Kenyan market is important.

But for manufacturers, the ceiling of a business cannot always be defined by national borders.

Africa is a continent of diverse markets.

- ***Different languages.***
- ***Different regulations.***
- ***Different consumer behaviours.***
- ***Different currencies.***
- ***Different infrastructure.***

But also enormous potential.

CAN A PRODUCT MADE IN KENYA BECOME AN AFRICAN PRODUCT?

The African Continental Free Trade Area provides a framework for deeper continental trade.

For manufacturers, that raises a powerful possibility:

HACO has pursued regional expansion, including manufacturing operations in Ghana and cross-border distribution.

That is the kind of thinking required if African manufacturers are to move from serving individual markets to building regional businesses.

FROM KENYA TO AFRICA

At the Africa CEO Forum in 2026, Mary-Ann participated in discussions about Africa's industrial future.

Her message centred on the importance of local manufacturing, regional value chains, productivity, the cost of doing business, patient capital, sustainability and innovation.

The argument is straightforward.

Manufacturing is part of that equation.

Africa has consumers.

Africa has resources.

Africa has talent.

Africa has entrepreneurs.

Africa has markets.

But the continent needs stronger production capacity to turn those advantages into lasting economic value.

THE CAPITAL QUESTION

Manufacturing is expensive.

- *Factories require infrastructure.*
- *Equipment requires investment.*
- *Raw materials require working capital.*
- *Energy costs matter.*
- *Logistics matter.*
- *Expansion requires capital.*

And unlike some digital businesses, manufacturing cannot always scale simply by adding another server.

This makes patient capital particularly important.

Manufacturers often need to think in years rather than quarters.

A production line may take time to pay back.

A new market may take time to develop.

A new product may require years of brand-building.

That reality demands a different kind of leadership.

One capable of balancing ambition with patience.



THE COST OF MAKING THINGS



One of the most important conversations in African manufacturing is not simply:

CAN WE MANUFACTURE?

It is:

CAN WE MANUFACTURE COMPETITIVELY?

- *The cost of electricity.*
- *The cost of financing.*
- *Taxes.*
- *Logistics.*
- *Raw materials.*
- *Regulation.*
- *Infrastructure.*
- *Market access.*

All of these influence competitiveness.

Mary-Ann has argued that African manufacturers need deliberate policies that lower the cost of doing business, improve productivity and foster industrial growth.

That is a conversation that extends beyond one company.

It is a conversation about the future of African industry.

THE WOMAN EXECUTIVE

Mary-Ann's recognition at the Kenya Association of Manufacturers Women in Manufacturing Awards represents another chapter in her leadership story. Her awards have included recognition as Woman Industrialist of the Year and Woman Executive of the Year, alongside recognition in sustainability and lifetime-achievement categories.

The significance of these recognitionS extends beyond the trophies. They reflect a growing conversation around what modern industrial leadership should represent.

Performance.
Innovation.
Sustainability.
People.
Impact.

But recognition is only one part of leadership. The bigger test is what happens after the ceremony.

- *The strategy continues.*
- *The factory continues.*
- *Employees continue.*
- *Customers continue.*
- *Markets continue to change.*

Leadership therefore remains a daily responsibility.

THE LEADERSHIP OF TRANSFORMATION

Transformation is often misunderstood.
People think transformation means changing everything. Sometimes it means understanding what must remain.
And what must change.

For a legacy business, this becomes particularly important.

You preserve the values that created trust.
You change the systems that no longer work.
You protect the brand.
You innovate the product.
You strengthen the organisation.
You modernise the operation.
You develop new leaders.

Transformation is therefore not destruction.

It is evolution.

THE BUSINESS OF BUILDING BRANDS

Manufacturing and branding are often discussed separately.
They should not be.

A product may be manufactured beautifully. But if nobody knows it exists, the factory cannot create sufficient commercial value.
A brand may be beautifully marketed.
But if the product is inconsistent, the brand eventually loses trust.

The strongest FMCG companies understand the relationship.

**PRODUCT + QUALITY + BRAND +
DISTRIBUTION + TRUST = MARKET POWER**

This is where Mary-Ann's cross-sector experience becomes particularly relevant. Her background spans advertising and FMCG, among other sectors.

She therefore operates at the intersection between what companies make and what consumers choose.



PEOPLE ARE THE REAL FACTORY

***Machines produce products.
People build companies.***

A manufacturing organisation requires engineers.

- *Engineers.*
- *Operators.*
- *Managers.*
- *Sales teams.*
- *Finance professionals.*
- *Marketers.*
- *Technicians.*
- *Supply-chain specialists.*
- *Researchers.*
- *And leaders.*

HACO's sustainability approach has emphasised the importance of people and skills development, including partnerships with educational institutions.

That is important because the future of African manufacturing will depend not only on capital. It will depend on capability.



THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN MANUFACTURERS

There is a generation of young Africans growing up in a world where entrepreneurship is increasingly visible. But entrepreneurship is not the only path. Industry needs young people who want to build things.

- *Who understand engineering.*
- *Who understand technology.*
- *Who understand chemistry.*
- *Who understand supply chains.*
- *Who understand data.*
- *Who understand design.*
- *Who understand markets.*

Manufacturing needs an entire ecosystem of talent.

That means leaders like Mary-Ann have a role beyond managing today's company. They can help make manufacturing attractive to tomorrow's workforce.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS



01

LEGACY IS A RESPONSIBILITY, NOT A TITLE

Taking over an established organisation does not automatically guarantee its future. Leadership means earning the right to shape the next chapter.

02

EXPERIENCE ACROSS INDUSTRIES MATTERS

Advertising teaches communication.
Banking teaches financial discipline.
Hospitality teaches commercial experience.
FMCG teaches markets and execution.
Different industries can provide different forms of leadership capital.

03

MANUFACTURING IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN MACHINES

A factory is an ecosystem.
Suppliers.
Employees.
Consumers.
Distributors.
Communities.
Technology.
Capital.
The CEO must understand the whole chain.

04

BUILD YOUR OWN ASSETS

Licensing can create opportunities.
But owned brands can create long-term strategic value.
African businesses need to think about what they own, not simply what they distribute.

05

SUSTAINABILITY MUST ENTER OPERATIONS

Sustainability becomes meaningful when it affects how a product is sourced, manufactured, packaged and distributed.
It cannot remain only a communication message.

06

WOMEN NEED ECOSYSTEMS, NOT JUST ENCOURAGEMENT

- Mentorship.
- Capital.
- Networks.
- Market access.
- Skills.
- Policy support.
- Visibility.

All of these matter.
Creating opportunities for women in manufacturing requires more than telling women to be confident.

07

LOCAL MANUFACTURING CAN CREATE GLOBAL AMBITION

Made in Kenya does not have to mean sold only in Kenya.
The opportunity is to build products capable of competing across Africa and beyond.

08

LEADERSHIP IS ALSO ABOUT PEOPLE

A CEO may sign the strategy.
But people execute it.
The quality of an organisation is ultimately reflected in the people who carry its mission every day.

09

DON'T CONFUSE HISTORY WITH DESTINY

A company can honour its history without being imprisoned by it.
Legacy should provide a foundation.
Not a ceiling.

10

PURPOSE AND PERFORMANCE CAN COEXIST

Business does not have to choose between growth and impact.
The challenge is building models where commercial performance and positive economic impact reinforce one another.

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THE JUJAYA PERSPECTIVE

THE NEXT AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WILL NEED WOMEN AT THE TABLE

Africa cannot talk seriously about industrialisation while leaving large sections of its talent pool outside the room.

Women must participate across the entire manufacturing ecosystem.

- Not just in marketing.
- Not just in administration.
- Not just in HR.

- But in engineering.
- Procurement.
- Production.
- Research.
- Technology.
- Finance.
- Operations.
- Executive leadership.
- Ownership.
- And boardrooms.

Mary-Ann Musang's story is significant because it places a woman at the centre of that conversation.

- Not simply as a symbol.
- But as an operator.
- A decision-maker.
- A manufacturer.
- A boardroom leader.



THE FACTORY OF THE FUTURE

The African factory of tomorrow will not look exactly like the factory of yesterday.

It will be more automated.

More data-driven.

More sustainable.

More connected.

More regional.

More customer-focused.

And potentially more inclusive.

The question is not whether Africa can manufacture.

It already does.

The bigger question is whether African manufacturers can build enough scale, technology, capital and talent to compete globally.

That is the bigger industrial challenge.

FROM MADE IN KENYA TO MADE FOR AFRICA

For years, "Made in Kenya" has been used as a symbol of local production.

The next opportunity may be bigger.

MADE IN KENYA.
BUILT FOR AFRICA.
READY FOR THE WORLD.

That requires more than patriotism.

It requires quality.

- Quality.
- Consistency.
- Competitive pricing.
- Strong brands.
- Reliable supply chains.
- Innovation.
- And distribution.

It requires African manufacturers to think beyond borders.

THE VALUE OF LOCAL SOURCING

There is another story inside manufacturing that deserves attention.
Who supplies the factory?

If a manufacturer buys raw materials locally,
the economic impact spreads.

*A farmer earns.
A small business grows.
A transporter gets work.
A processor develops.
A community benefits.
A manufacturer gets a reliable supply chain.*

*This creates what can become a powerful
economic multiplier.*

THE WOMAN AND THE BOARDROOM

Leadership at the top can sometimes appear lonely.
The CEO has to make decisions.

*Some will be popular.
Some will not.
Some will work.
Some will require correction.*

The measure of leadership cannot therefore
be perfection.
It is the ability to make decisions, learn, adapt
and keep the organisation moving.

Mary-Ann's journey illustrates another
important point:

*A woman's leadership story does not have to
be defined solely by gender.*

*It can be defined by competence.
By experience.
By results.
By vision.
By the people she develops.
And by the institution she leaves behind.*

HACO has highlighted local and African sourcing
of natural ingredients and partnerships within
its supply chain.

The factory therefore becomes connected to
people far beyond its walls.



BEYOND THE FAMILY NAME

Perhaps one of the most interesting dimensions of Mary-Ann's journey is the transition from being known primarily in relation to a famous father to becoming recognised in her own right as a manufacturing leader.

That transition matters.

*Legacy can open a door.
But it cannot permanently walk
through it for you.*

Eventually, the leader has to build an identity of their own.

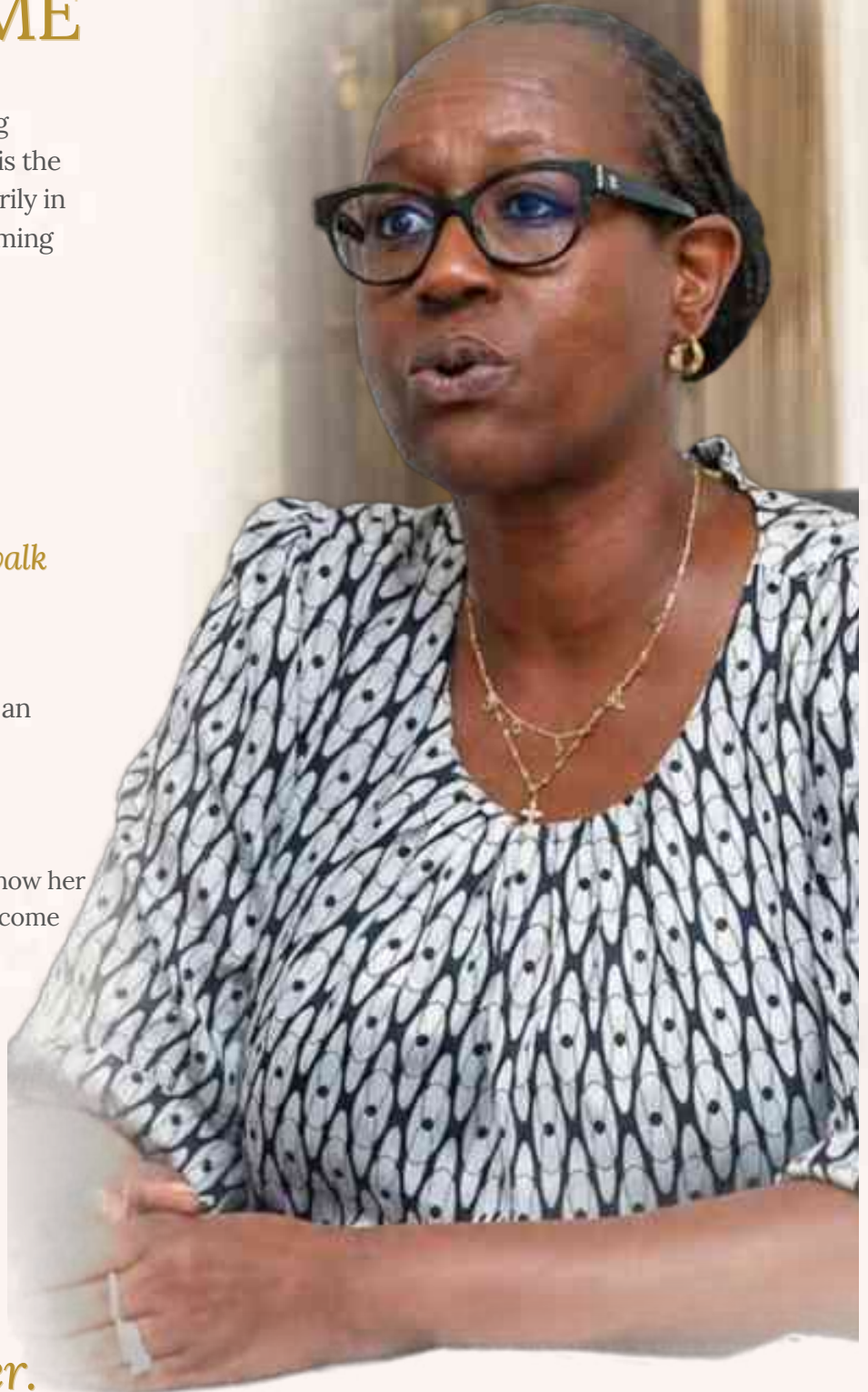
Mary-Ann's recognition within the manufacturing sector demonstrates how her leadership profile has increasingly become connected to the industry itself.

The story has therefore evolved.

From daughter.

To executive.

To industrial leader.



THE BIGGER QUESTION

What does it mean to lead an African company in 2026?

It means navigating a world where local businesses compete with global brands. Where consumers have more choices.

Where technology changes quickly.

Where sustainability is increasingly commercial.

Where talent is mobile.

Where markets are regional.

Where capital is expensive.

And where businesses are expected to create impact alongside profit.

There are no simple answers.

But leaders like Mary-Ann Musangi are operating directly inside those questions.

THE LEGACY QUESTION

Every CEO eventually confronts a version of the same question:

WHAT WILL REMAIN AFTER ME?

It may be the products.

The people.

The brands.

The systems.

The jobs.

The ideas.

The institutions.

The leaders developed along the way.

For Mary-Ann, that question has an additional dimension because she stepped into an organisation carrying a family history.

The opportunity now is to add another chapter.

Not simply to preserve what existed.

But to help determine what comes next.



THE FINAL WORD

There is something powerful about watching a company evolve across generations. The first generation builds. The next generation inherits.

But the strongest successors do something more. They reinterpret. They question. They modernise. They expand. They build again.

Mary-Ann Musangi's leadership journey is therefore not simply about taking over HACO Industries. It is about what she has chosen to do with the responsibility.

She has brought experience from multiple industries into manufacturing. She has championed local production. She has advocated for women in industry. She has placed sustainability within the business conversation. She has participated in conversations about Africa's industrial future. And she has helped position HACO within a broader regional manufacturing story.

But perhaps the most compelling part of her story is that manufacturing itself becomes a metaphor for leadership.

Raw materials are transformed. Ideas are tested. Systems are built. Products are created. Quality is examined. Waste is reduced. And something useful emerges.

Leadership is much the same.

Experience becomes wisdom. Pressure becomes resilience. Responsibility becomes purpose. And opportunity becomes impact.

Mary-Ann Musangi stands at an interesting intersection of all these things.

A daughter carrying a legacy. A CEO shaping a company. A woman helping open doors in manufacturing. An African business leader thinking about regional markets. And an industrialist operating at a time when the continent is asking a fundamental question:

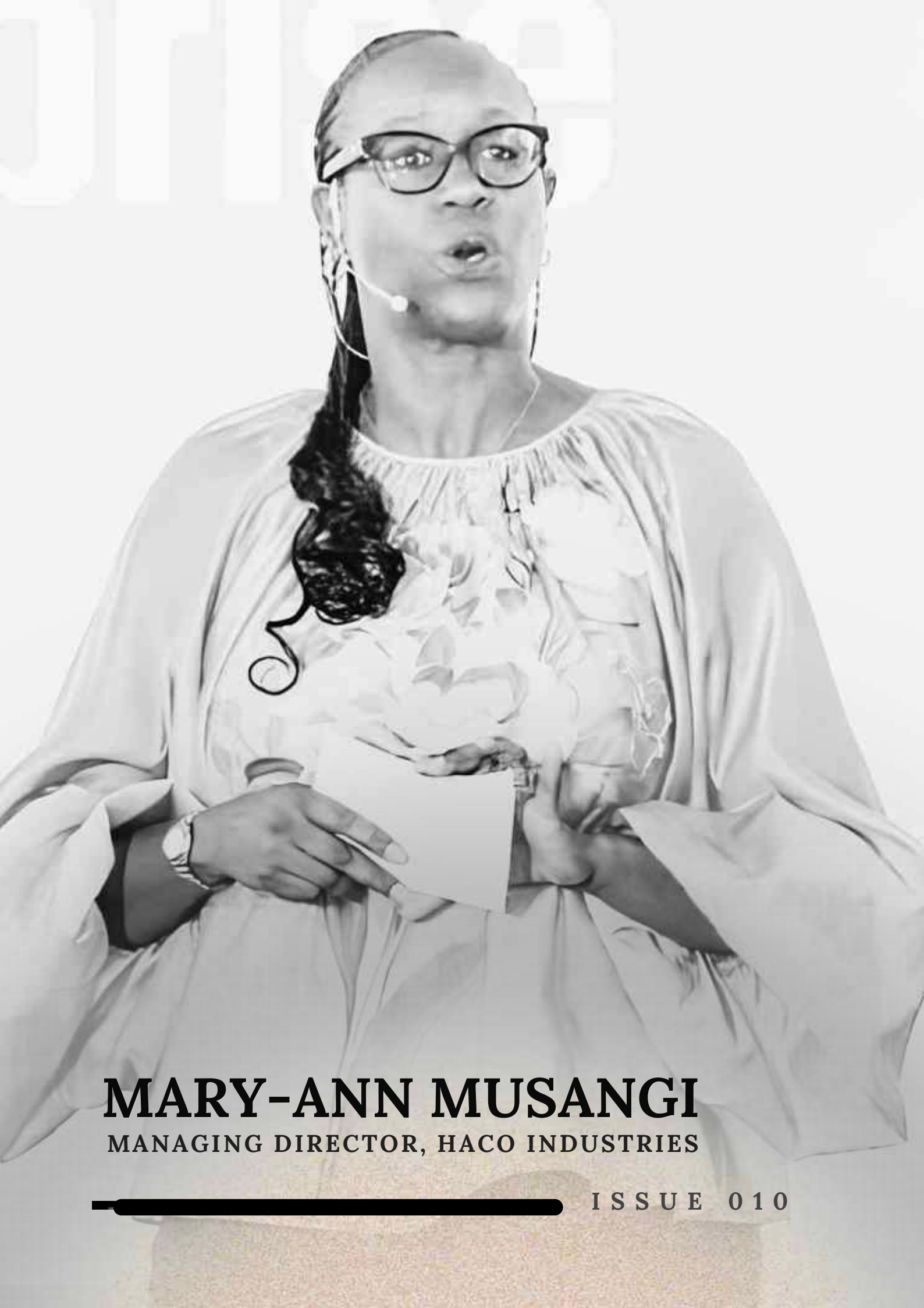
CAN AFRICA BUILD MORE OF WHAT AFRICA CONSUMES?

The answer will not come from one company. Or one CEO. It will come from thousands of manufacturers, entrepreneurs, workers, investors, policymakers and consumers. But every institution that chooses to manufacture locally, innovate deliberately, develop people and think beyond borders contributes to that future.

That is why Mary-Ann's story matters. Not simply because of the title she holds. But because of the larger conversation her leadership represents.

FROM LEGACY TO LEADERSHIP.
FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR TO THE AFRICAN MARKET.
FROM LOCAL MANUFACTURING TO REGIONAL AMBITION.
FROM BUSINESS SUCCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT.

*This is the story of Mary-Ann Musangi.
And this is The CEO Files — Issue 010.*



MARY-ANN MUSANGI

MANAGING DIRECTOR, HACO INDUSTRIES

ISSUE 010