

Building An Innovative Nigeria(2)

Asa Candler bought a kettle and the formula for a drink and simply improved on the idea. He produced the drink in large containers and put them in public locations. That was the beginning of Coca-Cola's explosive sales.

One of the cheapest routes to creating products and services is to look around at the things that are being done already and to improve on them. In fact, start-up entrepreneurs are usually advised not to try to start with an entirely new product. It could be a costly experiment. The truth is that there are loads of products and services being supplied already. People are used to receiving them; ride on their reputation. There is a difference between an inventor and an entrepreneur. It is not every inventor that is an entrepreneur. That is why there are many inventors who never make money from their inventions. It is when entrepreneurs come along, take the inventions and package them for business that those inventions begin to make money. So, the fact that you have invented a product or service does not mean you are going to make a lot of money from it. It is advisable that you look at the myriads of services and products that are being supplied now and just design something better.

There are a few entrepreneurs in Nigeria that I quite appreciate. One of them is the publisher of Success Digest magazine and Complete Sports Newspaper, Mr. Sunny Obazu-Ojeagbase. He is a sports journalist who suddenly realised that all the newspapers only have sports sections in them. But there were sports enthusiasts whom as soon as they bought a newspaper, first flipped to the back page to read articles on sports. Then he thought, "It looks like some of these people are probably keen on sports only. What if we provided a newspaper that specializes in sports? What if we did a magazine that is focused purely on sports?" He did it and it was a success.

Now it is your turn. Try this exercise.

Make a list of everything in your living room.

Go through the list

Try and write down how each item could be supplied in a better way.

This little exercise would help you develop your creativity. We have talked about the taxi business and there are loads of other businesses around here just like that. If you would like to start a bank, well, go ahead and do that. The new generation banks did that and beat first generation banks to it. The old banks used to give us tallies and keep us for hours, before the new banks came along offering 5 minutes banking services. That got everybody's attention. There are so many areas of business where mediocre services are being forced on us in this country. All you have to do is to offer better quality service.

There is such an enormous need in our formal education system. Of all the close to a million candidates who wrote the last University Matriculation Examination (JAMB), all Nigerian Universities put together cannot take more than a hundred and fifty thousand students, "Where should the remaining 850 thousand or more go?" Thank God for private universities. These needs are in all levels of formal education – Daycare, Nursery, Primary, Secondary and the Tertiary levels.

Secondly, there is also such an awesome need for informal education in Nigeria today. You see, a good chunk of what people study in school is useless for day to day living. What informal education does is to cut off all the flesh and go straight to the bones. That is what seminars, audio and video training cassettes, and books do. These information materials and seminars give people what they can apply immediately. We need that more than ever before. One of the reasons people like Bill Gates of Microsoft did not finish school was because most of the things he was being taught were somehow not of benefit to him. He already had his mind on being an entrepreneur, and he wanted things that were relevant to his dream. We need as many people as possible in Nigeria to teach the things that would be of immediate use to 150 million Nigerians. For example, entrepreunering, information technology and technical skills should be taught. Every Nigerian ought to think like a businessman. You need that serious orintation to succeed in life. On our part, Daystar Leadership Academy has lined up two special training programmes to help you in the months of February and March.

I believe that a season of insight and understanding would come on your life.

You Will Succeed!