

African Entrepreneurs – Successful and Responsible

Episode 07

Title: A photographer translates passion into success: the Kenyan photographer Charles Adede

Author: Eric Ponda

Editors: Katrin Ogunsade, Adrian Kriesch

Proof reading: Natalie Glanville-Wallis

Characters / Narrators

	Women	Men	Age	Language
Intro/Outro	x		Unimportant	
Narrator		x	Unimportant	
Charles Adede (clip)		x	37	English
Pilli Mwakio (clip)	x		25	English

Intro:

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our Learning by Ear series about successful and responsible young entrepreneurs in Africa who have made a mark in the business circles. In today's program we take a trip to the Kenyan capital city of Nairobi where we meet a young photographer who has given up his professional job as a lawyer to venture into photography.

1. SFX: (At the studio Shutter Speed Nairobi, steel gates open)

2. Narration:

Outside the main gate leading to the office, a signboard with the inscription "Legal Resource Foundation" still stands.

A reminder of what used to take place in these offices.

It's 7.30 Friday morning and customers have already started flocking in trying to secure a booking for their weekend activities.

But they neither need a lawyer nor a vacation trip. They want an appointment with a photographer. Seated comfortably in his office, situated in a middle class neighborhood in the city of Nairobi, Charles Adede's diary is already full.

3. SFX: conversation with customer on mobile phone

Narration

The ever smiling lawyer turned photographer, ushers me in with a Nikon D-90 camera in his hand, but not before he finishes with a customer over his ever- ringing cellphone.

We are at Shutter speed studios, a household name in the field of photography in Kenya, and Charles Adede is the Chief Executive and the man behind the camera work.

4. Charles Adede (Eng)

“When I was growing up there were two things I wanted to be. I wanted to be a lawyer or a journalist! I managed to be a lawyer; I got my legal training and worked as a lawyer. I worked for a couple of years in an insurance company as a house legal counsel for various insurance companies. ...But I also wanted to be a journalist or an artist actually...! And I never had a chance to pursue my artistic skills! I never went to college to paint and draw as I would have wished to. The next best alternative was photography. So as I was working I took interest in photography”.

5. Narration

Photography is an art and like any other form of art, perfection is not a compromise and one has to strictly subscribe to it. The power of a picture lies in its versatility. Photography is a very powerful medium of expression with a number of uses, as a picture speaks a thousand words! However, not many young people would even think of sacrificing their career to a seemingly lesser profession like photography as Charles did.

6. Charles Adede (Eng)

“First comes passion..., passion is a strange animal..!. So as I was working, I took passion in photography, and then the passion grew to a point where, when I was taking amateur photos, people would look at the photos and tell me... ‘Hey ..! You know you can make a living out of this. You are very good at what you do!. I got carried away....., I loved what I was doing....., my photos!, and I decided to start a small business on the side while I was still doing my legal work and also running a small business. But overtime it grew, and I got to a point where I had to make a choice because both law and photography are very involving! And I decided to give photography a chance, and see how far I could grow with it”.

7. Narration:

September 2006 was a turning point for Charles Adede, when he started shooting wedding ceremonies in the moonlight or at weekends in the neighborhood. But it was not smooth sailing he says!

8. Charles Adede (Eng)

“I started in with moonlighting doing a couple of shoots for my friends and also a couple of weddings, that’s how I started. I just used my own savings, I started with some money I had set aside, I was single, and lived fairly simply, so I could put aside some money which I invested in a small point-and- shoot camera, I remember it was a Fuji camera...!, Small camera.... but quite nice for its size!. I was also interested in video which we also do at Shutter speed”.

9. Narration:

With a small capital of around 2000 Euros, Charles could start his own studio. He bought equipment such as a computer, a still camera and a video recording camera. Today, Charles has turned his passion into a world class magnificent enterprise providing job opportunities to many youths despite not having gone through the formal photographic training.

10. Charles Adede (Eng)

“The business has grown, we are big now..!, (*laughs...*) we have a photo studio! ...and right now we have the capacity to shoot three events in any given day, which means we have three crews of four people each..., that’s a total of 12 people on the ground on any given day we have employed!. Then we have the studio downstairs... and we are quite busy!. Surely there has been some market growth. Sometimes if you have enough passion, then you do things which other people without passion can’t do! You can find someone who has training but they are not as driven to achieve the things you would like to achieve!”

11. SFX, Charles giving instructions, background music, click of a camera.

12. Narration

Now Shutter speed studios is a beehive of activity. Some customers collect their photos, or wedding videos, while others make their bookings. Inside a well-lit and furnished studio we meet Pilli Mwakio, a university student getting ready for a photo session. Charles Adede is the man behind the camera.

13. Pilli Mwakio (Eng)

“I have been coming here every time I need to take a photo. You know, it’s a nice studio, the environment is conducive, and here you are actually dealing with professionals. Look at the state of art picture frames, they are nice aren’t they? Pictures are good memories, and I should be able to put down my memories the best way I can.”

14. Narration:

Like young university student Pilli, many other customers are convinced of the high standard of Shutter speed photo-studio. They helped Charles Adede to achieve his success. The lack of support was an especially big hurdle for him at the beginning. And not only the financial aspect but also the business environment. Something that’s scaring young entrepreneurs in many African countries, he says. Charles almost had to shut down the business he loved doing.

15. Charles Adede (Eng)

“There was a time we nearly went under because we just didn’t have the capital and yet this is a very intensive capital business. So I had to sell some company shares to share holders and that is how we tried to raise some capital to buy equipment and employ more people...! For small businesses you don’t have institutions that train you.... for instance, how to manage a business! So most people end up having to run businesses in a *Jua kali* fashion, meaning by trial and error! If we had more institutions training people we could say yes... we are giving you a certain skill but we are also trying to enable you to go out there and run a business. Then, you would possibly find more people opening up and maintaining successful businesses as opposed to just waiting for somebody to employ them!

16. Narration:

Charles never ran his business in the *jua kali* way, a Kiswahili phrase commonly used referring to the way of doing things without proper structure or guidelines. He always had a plan. And now he is a happy man. After a long struggle the market has just opened up for him and he is not about to complain, he says!

17. Charles Adede (Eng)

People are clamoring for good quality work and good services. I feel most service providers are probably not offering Kenyans what they really want...! Kenyans are looking for good services and are willing to pay for it, but you also have to be willing to put in what it takes as an entrepreneur, to make sure you are giving out those services!

18. Narration:

As a contracted lawyer and now managing his own business, Charles says discipline is the most challenging aspect for young entrepreneurs, especially in the Sub-Saharan region. Running a private business requires commitment and planning ahead all the time for one to succeed. Most young entrepreneurs have their priorities misplaced, he says, and hence the genesis of the ever increasing number of job seekers in the market in many African countries.

19. Charles Adede (Eng)

“Most young people tend to use resources that are not theirs for fun...*(laughs)* ...!.Don't take client's money and go and buy your friends beer!, ,,,,let's say a client has deposited some 500 Euros because of a job you should be doing tomorrow, and that job has its expenses, and you are using that money, already buying beer. When it comes to executing the job you will not have the money to do the job! So you have to be much more disciplined, very mature and disciplined when running a business. That's what I would advise any young person.”

20. Narration

Charles Adede stands as a good example whose passion has contributed to the social responsibility of changing people's lives through employment. From a humble beginning, Charles Adede is now like a ray of hope, with big plans for the youth. That is to create a major photography training institution, especially for many jobless youths.

21. Charles Adede (Eng)

If you find some guy in the jobless corners and you give him 5.000 Kenyan Shilling, (which is about 50 Euros), and you have not told him what to do with that money, he will buy himself a pair of trousers. Or he will probably go and drink and the next day he will be at the same place. What we need to do is give these youths an ability to create businesses even if they are community based businesses.

Outro:

Thank you, Charles Adede, for the insights into your photo-studio in Nairobi. And that's all for today's Learning by Ear program about young African entrepreneurs. Our reporter was Eric Ponda. Thank you for listening to us. If you would like to find out more about this topic, or listen to other Learning by Ear programs or to this broadcast again, please visit our website at www.dw.de/lbe. And don't forget to tune in again for our next episode. Goodbye.