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Start Local. Sell Global.

Lessons from Building a Business from Cameroon



A personal journey and practical guide
for Cameroonians and Africans building online

IDEAS › OPPORTUNITIES › A BIGGER TOMORROW

Introduction

Where you start

I was born in Limbe and grew up in Tiko, Cameroon. My journey into business started with curiosity, computer skills and a desire to make money.

At the beginning, my reasons were simple. I wanted to buy nice things. I wanted independence. I had studied computer science at the Advanced Level, and I felt there was more I could do with that knowledge.

When I entered the Catholic University Institute of Buea in 2012, those ambitions followed me into university. I tried different ways to earn money, explored business ideas and worked on applications. Several did not succeed. I was learning, but I was also struggling to balance my ambitions with the responsibilities of being a student.

Attendance mattered at university. I missed classes, found it difficult to communicate confidently with lecturers and eventually stopped attending. Looking back, having ideas and technical knowledge did not mean I already knew how to manage my time, commitments or relationships.

During secondary school, my father told me, “Your father cannot be someone taking scholarships and you are dull.” He had earned scholarships for both undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom. His words remain the most valuable advice I have received, a source of strength through difficult times and a lasting motivation as I build Futura Group.

My father played a major role in bringing me back. I carry his names, and I have always seen myself as a younger representation of him. I wanted to make him happy. I paid my fees, returned to university and completed my BSc in Software Engineering, in the Information Technology department, in 2020. Finishing was a good decision.

That same year, I started Futura Enterprise. The original ambition centred on real estate. I began a building project in Limbe, but construction required substantial capital. Eventually, I paused the project to focus on developing the company. It was a setback that forced me to reconsider where to put my resources.

After graduating, I took courses in digital marketing, web design, e-commerce services and artificial intelligence. I began to understand more clearly how my

skills could serve customers internationally. Through PINSEO, I found clients through word of mouth and friends overseas.

My first international customer was a classmate in Switzerland with an online medical-equipment business. That opportunity taught me about search engine optimization, but it also taught me about working for someone else. Attending meetings and responding to a client's expectations were responsibilities I needed to take seriously while pursuing my own plans.

Building from Cameroon brought practical challenges. Electricity interruptions affected our ability to work, so I bought a standby generator. I received international payments through MTN Mobile Money. These are parts of the daily work behind a business that a visitor to a website may never see.

In 2026, Futura Enterprise became Futura Group. The name reflects a business whose activities have broadened beyond the original real-estate ambition. It does not mean the learning has ended or that every idea has worked.

I am writing for Cameroonians and Africans who have skills, ideas and ambition but are still working out how to turn them into a business. My circumstances are personal, and your route will be different. What we can examine together are the decisions: what to learn, what to offer, whom to serve, how to keep a promise and when to change direction.

The fire to build has stayed with me. Over time, I have had to learn how to give that ambition a more useful shape. This book is about that work.

CHAPTER 1

Growing up in Tiko and thinking beyond borders

Starting with what I knew

Before I had a company, I had an interest in computers. My background in computer science at the Advanced Level gave me confidence to explore. When I arrived at university, I felt there were possibilities outside the school system that I should investigate.

There is an energy in discovering that you can make something work for yourself. You begin to ask what else you could learn or build. For me, that energy also came with impatience. I wanted money and the freedom it could give me, and I did not always give my existing responsibilities the attention they deserved.

I share that because beginnings are often tidier in a business biography than they were in real life. I did not arrive at university with the complete plan for Futura Group. I was trying things, learning about earning and forming ideas about the kind of future I wanted.

Your starting point might be a skill you learned in school, a task you do for relatives, work experience or something you have taught yourself. The useful question is whether that ability can solve a problem for someone else. A skill becomes part of a business when a customer understands what it helps them do and is willing to pay for the result or the work.

Find a problem you can reach

A beginner can spend months deciding what business to start because every possibility seems interesting. Narrow the choice by considering the people you can actually speak to. A customer group you can reach gives you a way to learn whether your idea makes sense.

For example, someone who can organize product information might speak to small retailers whose catalogues are incomplete. A person with design skills might speak to business owners whose service documents are difficult to read.

These are possible starting points to investigate, not proof that either market will buy from you.

Ask the owner what happens now. Who does the task? How often? What becomes difficult when it is delayed or done poorly? Listen for a concrete consequence. A problem that sounds important to you may be a low priority to the person who would have to pay.

Avoid building a whole business around a conversation in which a friend simply says your idea is good. Ask for a next step that requires effort: a short meeting with the decision-maker, permission to prepare a sample, or a discussion of an actual project. The response will tell you more than encouragement alone.

Define a first offer

Your first offer should be small enough to explain and deliver. A useful sentence is: "I help this kind of customer complete this task, and the work includes these specific deliverables."

Here is an illustrative example: "I help small clothing retailers organize their online product catalogues. I will review and format 20 product entries using the information and images they supply." The customer can see the quantity and the work. You can estimate the time. You can also explain what is excluded, such as photography, advertising or managing orders.

Compare this with a broad promise to grow somebody's whole business. A beginner may not have enough control over the customer's prices, stock, service and sales process to make that promise responsibly. Choose work you can show and check.

When you lack experience, create a clearly labelled demonstration using your own or permitted materials. Explain that it is a sample. A sample can show your judgment without inventing a client history. Start with quality that a real customer can examine.

Grow from a clear beginning

Thinking internationally does not require ignoring the people near you. Local conversations can help you understand problems and practise communication. Friends overseas may connect you to another market. What matters is the quality of the offer and your ability to serve the person who accepts it.

Keep the first version manageable. One customer group and one offer will give you more useful feedback than a long list of services you are still learning. You can expand after you understand what customers ask for, what delivery costs and what you can repeat reliably.

Put the chapter to work

Write down three things you can already do. For each, name a person or type of business that could benefit. Choose one combination and arrange a conversation about the task they currently struggle with.

Finish this sentence in plain language: "My first offer helps ____ complete ____ and includes ____." If the sentence needs a paragraph of explanation, reduce the scope. Keep the larger ambition in your notebook while you test the smaller offer.