

# Efficient to Effective: Business Advice in Rwanda with a British eye

## Profile

A management consultant for 20 years and resident in Rwanda since 2006 and the founder of Efficient to Effective, Joanna has worked in both strategy and operational improvement in the private and public sectors. Joanna has hosted a number of foreign businesses interested in investing in Rwanda or in finding business partners.

Joanna has an extensive network within both the private sector ecosystem and the non-government organisations (NGOs) active in Kigali, which facilitates her ability to get things done and to make appropriate connections between people.

She is a native English speaker, fluent in French and German with conversational Kinyarwanda (good for breaking the ice!). Her approach is flexible and characterised by pragmatism and close engagement with clients. A full CV is included below together with recommendations from clients and partners.

## Supporting businesses and investment into Rwanda since 2013

Drawing on the background in Strategy and Operations, Joanna has provided technical assistance to a variety of organisations in Rwanda from social enterprises (e.g. Beelight), small businesses (e.g. Uzuri and Winnaz) non-government organisations (e.g. Girl Effect and Spark) and businesses seeking to invest in Rwanda (e.g. East Africa Investments and Frankly Green).

Highlights include:

### *Capacity building and investment matching:*

- **East Africa Investments.** Identify entrepreneurs in Rwanda with potential, analyse their business plan and accompany them post-investment to grow their business. That can be through capacity building focused on an individuals' skills (e.g. how to delegate, how to prioritise work) or on the organisational effectiveness (e.g. strategic planning, reporting, budgeting etc...). Matching entrepreneurs with businesses in Europe for potential partnerships.
- **Pre-investment support** and analysis with foreign businesses seeking to invest in Rwanda. Most recently with Block Solutions, a Finnish company investigating entering the Construction sector in Rwanda.
- **Uzuri** (shoe design and manufacturing company). Coaching two young entrepreneurs in a variety of techniques, as required. These included developing and delivering Personal Effectiveness training for a young team, Marketing Persona training to support a new strategy, workshops on developing an online sales channel.
- **Uplus** (a FinTech start up). Supporting the development of a financial forecast estimating numbers of customers and transactions in order to forecast revenue and profit. One to one coaching of the inexperienced Managing Director in managing stakeholders, disparate teams and thinking strategically.

- **Beelight**, a candle and beeswax social enterprise facing a strategic challenge as its founder will move to another country. I have worked with the shareholders to identify different strategic options and their operational consequences in order to prepare the business for this difficult transition.
- **Dove International Montessori School** Developing business plans, including detailed budgets. Analysis and advice resulted in a 40% price increase to ensure this business can achieve its strategic objectives and a drop in the number of debtors. Currently supporting the owner with Covid-19 emergency planning, including amending the business model.
- **Rwandan Adventures**. Owner and Managing Director of this social enterprise, developed plans yearly, managing a young team on every aspect of running a business day to day. Paying taxes, training employees, engaging with customers and working with unreliable suppliers. The biggest challenge was working with a local team and in challenging conditions to deliver a level of service expected by international, well-travelled clients.

#### *Networking and developing partnerships:*

- **European Business Association of Rwanda**: Chair of this new organisation. Mobilised a small group of volunteers and corporate/donor sponsors to grow a network of business owners to come together at hosted networking and learning events. Navigated the complexities of registering a new organisation in Rwanda, finally succeeding in January 2020, the EBCR will be supported by an EU grant.
- **Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Networking**: Founder and host of regular meetings for the burgeoning start-up and business ecosystem in Rwanda. Networking sessions are highly structured, ensuring each member is aware of what every organisation is working on. Facilitate deep dives on a different topic at each session and place a strong emphasis on avoiding 'talking shops' and agreeing action plans. A mapping of the ecosystem is updated as a practical output from each meeting.
- **Face the Gorillas**: Panel member on the "Dragons' Den" inspired competition at a major annual conference. Challenging entrepreneurs pitching on stage to defend their business models in order to win investment.

#### Recent Client References

**Lise Humura**, Owner, Dove Montessori International School, Kigali (Private primary school)

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*"Joanna has supported the school for the past two years. As a first-time business owner, I find her experience so valuable because she has all the tools and techniques of a management consultant, but she has also run a business in Rwanda. This means that she knows and understands every detail and challenge that I face, whether that's paying taxes or managing employees. She is very flexible in the way that she helps me: she gives me structure and reminds me of things I should be doing as a business owner, but she is not afraid to help out with anything the business needs if we don't have the skills or experience in-house."*

**Edward Kirenga**, Managing Director, Uplus (FinTech start Up)

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*"Uplus, a young startup, started working with Joanna to build our internal management operational structure and systems as we started setting up the business. Joanna was able to provide us with*



*frameworks that we used to record and measure our daily performance based on targets set for the month. This day to day management style for a startup meant that we could iterate on the go, and not wait for days to pass by before we addressed a problem. Our efficiency increased as a result of these strategies. In addition, Joanna was able to offer insight and commentary on problem solving techniques within our operations and relationships with stakeholders. Having her advice and vast experience on board is a huge benefit for Uplus and we look forward to continuing working with her as we build the company.”*

## Joanna Nicholas CV

**East Africa Investments (Rwanda)** *17 - Present*

- Identifying promising Rwandan entrepreneurs and small businesses, carrying out due diligence and guiding investment decisions.
- Portfolio businesses are coached and facilitated according to need: including strategy, business planning and team building.
- Identify discrete pieces of work within portfolio companies that are carried out by pro bono consultants from Europe. Full briefing, training and support provided to consultants pre-arrival, in-country and after the visit.

**Girl Effect (Rwanda)** *16 - 17*

- Leading a one-year change programme for an innovative global NGO, including an organisational re-structure. Facilitating the organisation through a shift from a traditional supply-side approach to using brand-led media interventions to create demand for a new normal for girls.

**Spark and Burundi Business Incubator (Rwanda/Burundi)** *14 - 16*

- Working with these partners to develop their strategic plans and setting up improved ways of working including tailored training for teams.

**Travelport (UK)** *10 - 14*

- Implementing a business investment framework to reduce time and money spent on developing new projects with a weak business case or no strategic relevance. Coached and supported the Product Management team to improve end to end effective project management by implementing tools and behaviours including Standard Operating Procedures

**Celerant Consulting (UK)** *08 - 09*

- For Telecom New Zealand, re-engineered and implemented a sales and operations planning process, delivering at least \$2m of savings in the first 6 months by modelling the true cost of marketing and product decisions. Developed and coached a client team of 10.
- Working in a challenging environment to complete a long-running but under-performing client project. Focus on behaviour change and revising management systems.

**Rwandan Government (via Adam Smith International, UK)** *08*

- Carried out functional reviews of key government ministries to assess public service reforms and the achievements of a decentralisation programme
- Covered operational and strategic aspects of Ministry work, identifying processes which needed re-engineering, management systems required and behaviours to be changed.

**Voluntary Service Overseas, (Rwanda)** *06 - 08*

- Volunteer, providing organisational capacity building at all levels, from basic administration to strategic planning. Developed and delivered training on project management, personal effectiveness, organisational culture, management styles and effective communication. Implemented basic management system (meetings & reports).

**Various blue-chip clients, (UK)** *04 - 06*

- For Scottish Water used six sigma methodology to re-engineer back office processes for a high profile and urgent problem in the New Customer Connections department.
- For Virgin Atlantic: analysed possible improvements to passenger flows and check-in processes during the redevelopment of Terminal 3 at Heathrow

**Strategy and Market Intelligence Consultant (UK)** *99 - 04*

- Commercial due diligence assignments for several leading private equity firms in a variety of industries and on strategic business projects
- Desk research, customer and competitor interviews, financial and market analysis



## Education and Skills

Bilingual French and English, business German, conversational Kinyarwanda  
M.A. in French and German from Oxford University (1999)