



## The 25 “craziest” companies in 2013 – “steal” their ideas.

### Article summary

To be successful in business, you do not necessarily have to be an inventor with a completely original idea. Some of the most successful companies in Uganda are “copy cats”. This article provides an over view of 25 companies whose ideas are so brilliant they are “crazy” BUT the ideas are not just “science fiction” they are actually working, successfully and so - these are ideas that can be copied.

### About the Writer

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### **Introduction to the concept**

To be successful in business, you do not necessarily have to be an inventor with a completely original idea.

In Uganda some of the most successful companies are just “copy cats”. For example:

- **MTN Uganda** is really a subsidiary of MTN South Africa. They are simply “copying” their parent company (largest telecom company in Africa).
- **Uganda Breweries** is a subsidiary of *Diageo* (makers of *Guinness* beer and world’s largest producer of spirits).
- **Hima Cement** is a subsidiary of *Lafarge* (largest cement manufacturer in world).

Of course use of the word “copying” is simplistic as many of these companies need to tailor the concept for local markets but that is certainly much easier than starting from scratch ....

To be successful therefore it is worth while paying attention to what other successful companies are doing and then “copy” their ideas. You can do this in two ways:

- Take their ideas and modify them or
- Directly work with them. Either as a subsidiary, as a franchise partner, an associate, affiliate or even have a simple Sales/Commission Structure.

### **Why are these companies Crazy?**

The companies listed here are based on a list from inc.com. I have analysed them to give you a summary. I then at the bottom provide the full article that you can read.

Why are these companies “crazy”? You ask? Well, the inc.com article uses the word “audacious” which really means bold, fearless, courageous etc.

I use the word “crazy” in a good way. Some of the most successful companies start from an idea everyone says is “crazy”. Imagine what some of these companies are doing:

- Creating Wireless Internet (WIFI) from a spray
- Producing a human kidney using a printer (a 3D one)
- A \$700m turnover company producing tomatoes in a company with 400 employees and no boss at all

Reading the above you indeed would agree that these seem “crazy” but these are the ideas that are already being tested and in many cases are being used. These ideas like say 3D printing will drive the world tomorrow.

In the summary below, I have however selected some of those whose ideas are closer to being implemented in Uganda rather than say 25 years.

**For some of these “crazy” companies, can the principles be applied in Uganda?**

Company name	The idea in summary	How can this be applied in Uganda?
<p><b>Azuri technologies</b>  <a href="http://www.azuri-technologies.com/">http://www.azuri-technologies.com/</a></p>	<p><b>Solar power:</b></p> <p><b>Many companies have tried to bring sustainable solar power to Africa. Azuri Technologies is one of the few to succeed.</b></p> <p>Azuri has earned a designation as a Nobel Sustainability Supported Clean Tech company. This year, it was named one of the World Economic Forum's Technology Pioneers.</p> <p>Azuri took a new approach, establishing the pay-as-you-go model. Rather than paying for the solar system up front, customers buy scratch cards costing \$1 to \$1.50 a week, depending on location, from local resellers.</p>	<p>The idea here is to basically become an East African partner (e.g distributor or franchisor) for this company which is currently operating in Zimbabwe.</p>

<p><b>Square</b></p> <p><a href="https://squareup.com/register#anyone-can-accept">https://squareup.com/register#anyone-can-accept</a></p>	<p><b>Credit/Debit card payments:</b></p> <p><b>A simple device that turns a phone into a credit card processor.</b></p> <p>Square introduced the Card Reader, a 1-inch-square white dongle that plugs into a headset jack and, voilà, turns any iPhone, iPad, or Android phone or tablet into a credit card processor.</p> <p>Today, more than three million merchants are using the Card Reader to process \$12 billion a year in transactions. The reader, which is free to order on the Square site, connects to Square Register, a souped-up point-of-sale app that replaces the traditional cash register, allowing customers to pay with cash or swipe a credit or debit card and sign on the screen with a finger.</p>	<p>Use of credit or debit cards to pay for bills is really low and yet this is the most popular means of payment in Uganda.</p> <p>A business that can easily and quickly start accepting credit cards will significantly increase its sales.</p> <p><i>Potential challenges?</i></p> <p>Linking to your Ugandan bank account as its an American company.</p>
<p><b>Coursera</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.coursera.org/">https://www.coursera.org/</a></p>	<p><b>Online courses:</b></p> <p><b>With its free online courses, Coursera is bringing the world's top universities to the farthest corners of the world.</b></p>	<p>Partnering with Ugandan universities and other education institutes to get their material onto the Coursera platform and then making a % of the revenue from the certificates.</p> <p>Alternatively, setting up “education internet cafes” where those without internet access can come and learn online from your high speed internet which can support videos.</p> <p><b>Potential challenges</b></p>

		<p>The cost of infrastructure such as internet and rent for premises.</p> <p>This can be negotiated with the universities and also with internet companies if you show the social impact. You can even get grants.</p>
<p><b>La Colombe Torrefaction</b>  <a href="http://www.lacolombe.com/">http://www.lacolombe.com/</a></p>	<p><b>Innovative marketing:</b></p> <p><b>A smart marketing move of “show and tell” for their coffee product</b></p> <p>"Coffee guys are always trying to shrink the space between themselves and the customer experience... trying to get people closer to where their food comes from," says Carmichael.</p> <p>This show-and-tell philosophy seems to have paid off: Last year, La Colombe's sales topped \$35 million.</p>	<p>Providing more information to your customers about your products (for example in the food industry) or services to show how you are acting ethically or changing the world builds customer loyalty and makes them come back to you.</p> <p>Being a coffee producing country, this could be a good idea to explore further to kick start the coffee drinking culture which is not common in Uganda.</p> <p><b>Potential challenges?</b></p> <p>How to cheaply share the stories with customers. Either online but potentially through bulk SMS.</p>
<p><b>Silent circle</b>  <a href="https://silentcircle.com/">https://silentcircle.com/</a></p>	<p><b>Secure IT networks:</b></p> <p><b>Building a hack proof network</b></p> <p>The company's "end-to-end" encryption system means that every time, say, you make a call using Silent Circle, your device generates an encryption key that randomly jumbles your data.</p>	<p>Cyber-crime is one of the most critical areas in today's digital world.</p> <p>For companies or even government that is keen to have their data secure then this is the solution.</p> <p>The idea here is to basically become an East African partner (e.g distributor or franchisor) for this</p>

	<p>It is unjumbled at the other end, even if the recipient does not use Silent Circle. As an added bonus, you can send texts or files that will self-destruct after a pre-determined period of time.</p>	<p>company.</p>
<p><b>Menlo innovations</b>  <a href="http://www.menloinnovations.com/">http://www.menloinnovations.com/</a></p>	<p><b>Innovative working practices:</b></p> <p><b>Employees work on projects with partners that change every week.</b></p> <p>"We borrowed the idea of switching from the airline industry..... The National Transportation Safety Bureau realized many years ago that if a pilot and co pilot work together a lot it breeds a complacency that produces danger. "</p>	<p>For companies that do any kind of work whether it is factories or IT projects, this concept can work.</p> <p>It enhances team work but most importantly enables productivity to ultimately increase.</p> <p><b>Potential challenges</b>  Re – thinking how your IT and other processes can be re-organised such that it can be accessed centrally rather than sitting on a person’s desk top for example.</p>

**Read the full story**

The full story including the full list of the 25 companies are here:

<http://www.inc.com/audacious-companies>

Reading the full articles will certainly get your creative juices flowing on other ways on how these concepts can be applied to Uganda.

**Next steps**

If you need some help in refining your ideas to determine how they can work for business, in Uganda as a thought leadership firm, we are happy to help.

**Contact Dickson Wasake** to discuss how we can help.

[www.inachee.com](http://www.inachee.com)