

Youth**Action**Net®

CASE STUDY SERIES

Uwazi Technology Consulting:

*AMPLIFYING SOCIAL CHANGE
THROUGH TECHNOLOGY*

A partnership between:



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

School of Foreign Service
Global Human Development Program



Introduction

This is one of a series of case studies produced by students enrolled in the Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University through its partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Students enrolled in a course exploring the role of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs were paired with young leaders of social ventures identified through the IYF's YouthActionNet® program. The students were given the assignment of analyzing the venture's assets, successful methodologies, and opportunities for investment to increase impact. Through this experiential learning process, the student consultants gained hands-on experience and exposure to the needs of social enterprises. The ventures, too, benefited from student insights into their strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations for enhancing their impact and sustainability. The Georgetown practicum is part of YouthActionNet's larger efforts to partner with institutions of higher learning around the globe to integrate social change into the academic experience and career interests of students.

International Youth Foundation

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

www.iyfnet.org

YouthActionNet®

Since 2001, YouthActionNet, a program of the International Youth Foundation, has provided founders of social ventures, ages 18 to 29, with the training, networking, coaching, funding, and advocacy opportunities they need to strengthen and scale their impact. These young social entrepreneurs have pioneered innovative solutions to critical local and global challenges, resulting in increased civic engagement, improved health, education reform, economic opportunity, environmental protection, and more inclusive societies. Our work is carried out through a network of 23 national and regional youth leadership institutes that collectively support over 1,350 young social entrepreneurs globally.

www.youthactionnet.org

Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University

The Global Human Development Program of Georgetown University is home to one of the world's premier master's degree programs in international development. An innovative, academically rigorous skills-based graduate program, the Master of Global Human Development degree prepares the next generation of development professionals to work with public sector agencies, private businesses, and non-profit organizations that advance development. Through coursework, extracurricular activity, and practical fieldwork experiences, our graduates develop the insights, skills, and experiences necessary to become leaders in development and make a difference in our global community.

<https://ghd.georgetown.edu>

INTRODUCTION

Meet Sharon Adongo, Co-Founder of Uwazi Technology Consulting

During her sophomore year at Vassar College, Sharon took a required course in computer science and she enjoyed it so much that she switched to a major in Science, Technology and Society, and a minor in computer science. Applying knowledge gained from her coursework, Sharon interned with SamaHope, a non-profit in San Francisco that crowdfunds to provide access to surgical care. Through this experience, Sharon developed systems for efficient relations with donors and learned how philanthropic technology projects could be implemented to make a change. After graduation, she returned home to Kenya and worked in marketing for Unilever in Nairobi. Her passion for tech-philanthropy kept her looking for and thinking of ways to amplify the impact of non-profits in her community. When she met Dennis Onyango in 2014, they discussed their experience working for non-profits, the challenges they identified in their work, and their mutual enthusiasm about linking computer science with philanthropy. By the end of their conversation, they had decided to start a social enterprise together. Uwazi Technology Consulting was born soon after, with the goal of using technology to help non-profits manage data with transparency and efficiency, to increase capacities, and to unlock opportunities for growth. Dennis chose the name “Uwazi” for the venture, meaning “transparency” in Kiswahili.



Uwazi is using technology to revolutionize how social change organizations in East Africa do their work.



The Problem

NGOs and social enterprises need efficient data and program management in order to successfully identify opportunities, make informed business decisions, and maximize social impact. However, many organizations lack access to data management systems, which are often expensive, complicated, and time-consuming. Without the technology for streamlined data, organizations have difficulties identifying and seizing opportunities for growth. A lack of good data can hinder an organization's level of success. Accurate, organized, and timely data will help an organization grow and continue to deliver meaningful services with maximum use of available resources.

The Solution

Uwazi Technology Consulting develops affordable and customized technology and data solutions for social change organizations in East Africa. In order to design tailored technology solutions, Uwazi studies a client organization's mission and all factors affecting the delivery of programs. Specifically, Uwazi implements systems for efficient data management, which help organizations track the effect of programs and make scalable improvements based on informed decisions. As the leading Salesforce Cloud Alliance Partner in East Africa, a cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) product, Uwazi facilitates client access to the Salesforce platform for efficient management of tasks and relationships with clients.

Box 1: TechforTrade – An Uwazi Technology Consulting Client

Uwazi provides technology and data management support to TechForTrade, a UK charity working to bridge the gap between technology, international trade, and economic development.

Uwazi built TechforTrade's Open Book Trading (OBT) platform, serving a network of 2,000 small scale farmers in finding competitive prices for their commodities. OBT's online platform helps establish transparency and trust, and is increasing profits for smallholder farmers by over 10%.

For this project, Uwazi implemented several systems for accounting, collaboration management, sales management, supply chain management, and operations management. During Phase II of the project, Uwazi built an Android application to enable conducting operations offline, thus reaching off-the-grid farmers.

Going beyond the role of traditional Salesforce partners in the region, Uwazi works closely with clients to determine which technology strategies will help best streamline operations. This can take the shape of an online database, an android mobile application, integration of offline surveys, or definition and tracking of social impact metrics. Ultimately, Uwazi helps social impact organizations produce accurate, clear, and timely data for more successful collaborations with beneficiaries.

The duration of Uwazi projects typically lasts between one and three months, in a process of discovery period, program building, feedback, and implementation. Uwazi takes the following steps with new clients:

- **Ideate:** Uwazi conducts an initial meeting to discuss the client organization's mission and priorities, and generates new ideas for technology systems to meet technical and operational needs.
- **Design and Develop:** Uwazi designs a solution or solutions, and meets with the client organization's leaders and staff members to conduct an in-depth exploration of day-to-day operational needs, and ensuring that new systems are adapted to the right scale and mission.
- **Deliver:** Once proposals are approved, the client organization receives 60 days of support from Uwazi to implement the solutions. In cases where needs are greater than originally articulated, Uwazi extends the support period as appropriate to deliver the project. Uwazi engages with the client to document the process and learn from best practices.

Operational Model

Uwazi Technology Consulting was registered as a limited company based in Nairobi, Kenya in December 2014. In addition to the co-founders, Uwazi's team includes four developers, one business analyst, and one accountant.

The company develops technology and data solutions using the Salesforce platform to help NGOs, public sector, and private sector clients strengthen the impact of programs and services through smart data use. Uwazi's work focuses on the Salesforce platform because it allows for building custom databases and setting up systems to streamline, manage, monitor, and store data on the cloud, which reduces operating costs. The company established its partnership with Salesforce in March of 2015.



Uwazi generates revenue through charging competitive fees for technology consulting services and support. They also profit from software licenses, depending on the client's business model. With a flexible pricing system, Uwazi is able to serve organizations that do not have the resources to access technology management services otherwise. Uwazi's services also appeal to larger local organizations, which previously had to work with technology management service providers abroad, in the U.S. and in Europe.

For the first six months of operation in 2015, the venture relied on personal contacts and business referrals for client identification. By the end of last year, Uwazi expanded to become a steady business, with clients in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi. The venture has served numerous clients including Save the Elephants, International Livestock Research Institute, Open Capital Advisors, AfricAid, and Hivos East Africa. Uwazi is currently in a growth stage, and plans to scale up and further expand a client base in East Africa.

In September of 2016, Uwazi began a partnership with the Segal Family Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to improving the wellbeing of sub-Saharan Africans and has partnerships and contacts with many organizations across the region. This partnership opened doors for Uwazi to gain clients and seize valuable new collaboration opportunities.

KEY ASSETS AND SUCCESSFUL METHODOLOGIES

Despite competition from tech companies offering customer relationship management solutions in the East Africa region, Uwazi remains unique by providing quality products tailored to client needs at an affordable cost, building the capacity of client organizations, and leveraging the partnership with Salesforce to expand.

Quality Products Tailored for Client Needs

Uwazi delivers technology innovations after tailoring solutions to the specific needs of client organizations. The goal is to help organizations reach maximum operating. Whether the client organization needs to cut wasteful spending, use insightful data to implement new activities, or perform monitoring and evaluation functions to scale impact, Uwazi's qualified team provides data consulting for personalized solutions. Uwazi's services help organizations integrate the appropriate technology systems to manage and analyze data and reach the client's goals.

To deliver these services, Uwazi relies on a team of expert developers and consultants who have extensive experience working with data in the context of international development practice. The company is open to hiring new talent, but requires staff members to obtain Salesforce certification early on to maintain a quality standard across the team. The delivery of Uwazi's technology consulting services varies according to client needs. From technology development to data consulting and service support, Uwazi has a flexible operational model and the venture's pricing model allows accessibility to services for organizations across sectors and with different financial capacities.



Sustainable Capacity Development

Going a step further than other data management start-ups, Uwazi helps individuals and organizations to build capacity with an eye on sustainability. The venture runs a unique apprentice program that educates and trains young people to use CRM software. Successful students then get the opportunity to apply their skills by working as apprentices embedded in Uwazi's client organizations, offering support

over a longer period to the client while enhancing the work experience of the students. Uwazi also runs Salesforce training for client organizations interested in increasing in-house tech capacities.

Expanded Reach through Partnership

A strong partnership with Salesforce is integral to Uwazi's success in reaching a wide range of clients across East Africa and providing quality technology services. Sharon and Dennis were both aware of the superiority of the Salesforce software and services, so within the first three months of the venture's operation, they worked from the start to apply for and solidify this partnership. There are five ways this partnership increases Uwazi's credibility and attractiveness to clients:

- **Recognition of Expertise:** The Salesforce partnership signifies trust in the quality of Uwazi's services and ability to be a leader in providing cloud services in the East Africa region.
- **Affordability:** Making use of established, high-quality software saves Uwazi time and resources in creating systems from scratch, accelerating the venture's capacity to provide affordable services for clients, especially NGOs and small social enterprises.
- **Perks and Client Discounts:** The partnership has opened the door for Uwazi to negotiate for donated licenses and significant discounts. Many of Uwazi's clients have budget limits that stop them from investing in technical capability, however, these discounts allow the company to reach and provide more organizations with access to valuable technology solutions.
- **Opportunities for Visibility:** Uwazi seizes opportunities to increase visibility by setting up speaking engagements and plugging into conferences and events organized by Salesforce and other tech spaces, allowing the venture to obtain more clients.
- **Room for Innovation and Improvement:** As part of the Salesforce network, Uwazi is constantly exposed to new ideas and innovative ways to improve services, and has access to training opportunities that help the team stay informed on new solutions for clients.

Uwazi Technology Consulting SWOT Analysis

INTERNAL	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High quality technology solutions, tailored for client needs• Experienced, trained, and Salesforce-certified team• Strong client base and well-founded reputation, especially in the NGO world• Accessible projects• Strong partnerships providing access to larger networks, benefits, and opportunities for continued innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to expand client reach in the private sector• Lack of coherent price structure• Need to strengthen marketing strategy• Lack of strong company culture
EXTERNAL	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International funding• Diversification of services• Unpaid student internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased competition from other tech companies• Limits to revenue generation when most clients are NGOs

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Having built a foundation and established itself as a business in the past year, Uwazi is now in a growth stage and has great potential for scaling up. The biggest opportunity lies in gaining more clients within the private sector, where more profit can be generated for improved services. In order to remain competitive, Uwazi will also need to study competitor prices and develop a coherent pricing strategy for different services, while remaining affordable to small organizations. Finally, Uwazi must intentionally develop a company culture at this stage, to reaffirm the common vision among team members and keep them invested in reaching company goals.

Target the Private Sector in Marketing Strategy

The focus on affordability and accessibility has helped establish Uwazi's name and build trust among a wide range of clients, however, a client base dominated by non-profits and small social enterprises does not generate sufficient revenue to continue growing and expanding Uwazi's services. One way forward could include marketing to the private sector, which will require more than networking. Businesses must be able to see the types of technology services Uwazi offers. An important initial step is highlighting services offered in a more visible way on the company's website. Uwazi should also consider establishing an email newsletter, a Facebook page, and a stronger social media presence. With increased marketing, the company will be able to position itself as the go-to for technology consulting in the region for all types of organizations. Uwazi should also conduct market research early on in order to identify technology services that are of most value to businesses, and determine whether Uwazi's current offerings meet these needs or whether they need to expand their

offerings to be more attractive for the private sector. The company may want to invest in an outside marketing consultant, at least temporarily, if no one on the team has the appropriate expertise.

Uwazi should approach growth within the private sector cautiously to avoid drifting from the main mission of providing access to data management services for social impact organizations in the region.

Develop A Clear Pricing Structure

Uwazi offers a variety of services to clients, including technology development via the Salesforce platform, general data consulting, custom program development, service support, and developer training. Sometimes the company uses separate contracts for service support, especially when clients already have access to the CRM platform but need technical support. Naturally, Uwazi's service costs are different depending on the type of service. The company also has different pricing models for non-profits and start-ups than for larger businesses, as it aims to remain affordable while still generating profit. While the choice to keep prices flexible is reasonable and needed, Uwazi should build a consistent pricing model, even if only articulated internally. The lack of a coherent and consistent framework for costs of services is likely to hold the company back, especially at this important stage of growth and expansion. Uwazi should therefore group and set specific price ranges for each category of services, depending on the type and capabilities of client organizations. For greater impact, the company must conduct market research to identify competitor prices and take them into consideration when designing the new pricing framework.

Establish a Strong Company Culture

Uwazi was established through the efforts of two truly passionate co-founders, with a clear and mutual vision to increase the efficiency and influence of social impact organizations through better data management and analysis. The company quickly grew to include six more staff members in just the past six months, and is expected to grow larger. Uwazi's projects allow for remote working and minimal team interaction, so building a solid company culture and maintaining the same level of passion and investment in Uwazi's work that Sharon and Dennis have can be difficult. As the company continues to expand, reaches more clients across more countries, and hires more team members, building a team-oriented culture to keep the company strong is critical.

One concrete step is to organize all-staff meetings, even if virtually, in order to communicate efficiently, generate ideas together, and emphasize the shared vision of the company. Uwazi could also actively use online, cloud-based tools such as Slack to increase team collaboration. Team members could be encouraged to post in discussion threads and share updates or interesting findings and ideas that are relevant to the venture. In-person meetings should also be organized, at least a few times a year, so that team members can coordinate and collaborate on how to improve and expand the company, rather than just work for it. Organizing a small company retreat or a fun group activity on a yearly basis would also help to further build relationships and encourage teamwork among staff members.

CONCLUSION

In a short period of time, Uwazi has managed to build a strong foundation with solid partnerships and engaged clients. The high quality and accessibility of the company's technology services, coupled with the co-founders' commitment to improve business strategies and grow to reach a larger number of social impact clients, give this venture an edge and a promising opportunity for continued success and development.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SCIENCE LEAGUE

- [Uwazi Technology Consulting Website](#)
- Twitter: @UwaziConsulting
- [LinkedIn page](#)
- [Ayiba Magazine Interviews Sharon Adongo](#)

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