

**PROVISION OF BUSINESS INFORMATION SOLUTIONS TO
MSME's USING ICTs -
THE UGANDA BUSINESS INFORMATION NETWORK (UBIN)
MODEL**



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Background

- UBIN - UNIDO Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Tourism Trade and Industry (MTTI) in 1999 .
- Component of the UNIDO Uganda Integrated Programme (UNIDO-UIP) .
- Setup to be the national backbone and focal point of business info solutions in Uganda.
- Public/ Private Sector partnership
- Facilitate private sector driven development whilst ensuring cooperation among all players in the market.

3. UGANDA BUSINESS INFORMATION NETWORK LIMITED (UBIN)

- UBIN is a private limited liability company operating as a profit making institution.
- Objectives: Access to markets, industrial and technology info; processes; Develop the National Info Infrastructure; ICT Capacity building & Internet-based business solutions
- UBIN has a staff of 10 in 3 divisions; Info Solutions and Consultancy, Capacity Building and Training & Enterprise Internet Solutions

The Information Solutions and Consultancy Division

- UBIN's major goal – To become the leading source of ICT knowledge based business solutions provider for SMEs
- Information Sources:
 - Uganda Manufacturing Association
 - Uganda National Bureau of Standards
 - Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry Doc. Centre
 - Uganda Export Promotion Board
 - Uganda Bureau of Statistics
 - Uganda Investment Authority
 - Uganda Coffee Development Authority
 - Uganda Revenue Authority
 - Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
 - Others (subscription to based web portals, etc)

The Capacity Building and Training Division

- Provide/ improve the skills and broaden the skills capacity of SMEs'
- **Approach**
 - Assess Client skill needs thru TNA.
 - Deliver highly efficient and quality educational programs
 - Build standards for flexible and effective capacity building
 - Develop training plans that align with the client's organization goals
- **UBIN specialised Training programmes;** ICT for Managers; Secretaries; Accountants/Finance Managers; Artists and Graphics Designers; Bankers; Farmers; and Architects and Engineers.

The Enterprise Internet Solutions Division

- Develops advanced Internet solutions that help the SMEs to achieve business objectives & increase market outreach.
- Enables SMEs to provide services and products over the Internet
- One of the pioneers in Internet consulting, website development and e-Business solutions in Uganda.

UBIN OPERATIONS

- Selling information to SMEs - very difficult undertaking.
- For sustainability, UBIN had developed related income generating business sources.
 - Capacity building and skills development & Enterprise Internet based solutions.
 - Provide SMEs with the capacity & the tools to use it.

Today's Business Environment

- UBIN EIS - develops turnkey solutions in three main ICT areas:
 - Internet-based solutions/ products & services.
 - Intranet/Extranet solutions
 - Data warehousing Solutions and applications.

The UBIN Portal

- UBIN web portal (www.ubin.co.ug/Portal) provides affordable SMEs web presence and online access to Market, Technology and Industrial Info.
- UBIN website (www.ubin.co.ug) provides info about UBIN and its operations.
- The Portal is further used to generate income for UBIN by selling space to SMEs

Provision of Business Information

- **Business Information Solutions Network Uganda (BISnet- Uganda)**
 - BISnet is a collaborative effort between UBIN and the primary business info providers in Uganda
 - Operates as a VPN & runs on Network Management Info System (NETMIS). This software links UBIN it to its network partners who form nodes.
 - The key areas that the network covers **Market; Technology; & Industrial Info**

Cont'd

- The Objectives of building NETMIS include, among others;
 - To provide wider and easier access to info resources to SMEs
 - To produce information solutions that are tailored to the development needs of SMEs
 - To provide a uniform platform for knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Current Stakeholders of the Network

- BISnet currently comprises of following organisations:
 - Uganda Investment Authority
 - Uganda National Bureau of Standards
 - Uganda Manufacturers Association
 - Uganda Bureau of Statistics
 - Uganda Small Scale Industries Association
 - Uganda Export Promotion Board
 - Ministry of Tourism Trade and Industry
 - Uganda Integrated Programme
 - Uganda Coffee Development Authority

Benefits of the Network to the Business Community

- Businesses to obtain timely info critical to their business operations
- The network provides multi-faceted info services.
- Increased use of demand-driven info services to provide income on a sustainable basis.
- Provision of Info services on commercial basis will improve on the quality and appropriateness of Info disseminated to the public.

Uniqueness of UBIN's Services

- Value-Added Information Solutions
- Multi-faceted/ Integrated Solutions
- Pro-active Solutions based approach
- Commercial Sustainability
- Use of ICT-Based platforms to impact a wider audience

SUCCESS STORIES AND CHALLENGES

- Products developed by the Info and Consultancy Division
- Products developed by the Training Division
 - Computerized Accounting System
 - Effective Computer Aided Presentation Skills Workshop
 - Other Training Packages
- Products developed by the EIS Division

LESSONS LEARNED

- Demand for business, technology, industry and market info by SMEs exists
- SMEs constrained by resources to pay for the info
- Government and development partners to support provision of business info to SMEs thru ICTs
- High level of ICT ignorance among SMEs
- Developed economies achieved economic prosperity due to economic benefits accruing from SMEs
- Takes a long time for an info solutions provider company to acquire a level of self-sufficiency based only on providing & selling info solutions
- Info services company depends a lot on networking with existing info sources

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- UBIN Phase II – going rural
- UBIN designing capacity building course modules
- Network Management Info System (NETMIS)
- The UBIN Portal
- Business Process Outsourcing