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SME MASTERCLASS INFOGRAPHIC

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BUILDING RESILIENT ENTERPRISES

Implementing partners:



The Three Pillars

A practical guide for SME owners — especially women and youth entrepreneurs — on how to grow a business, build useful networks, and make the business sustainable for the long term.



PILLAR 01 SCALE

The process of growing a business's revenue and impact without increasing costs, effort, or resources at the same rate.

Revenue

Increase sales, attract more customers, improve pricing, and create additional income streams.

Systems

Develop efficient processes, technology, and structures that allow smooth and consistent growth.

Markets

Expand into new customer segments, geographical locations, or sales channels.



PILLAR 02 NETWORK

The intentional process of building and maintaining relationships that create opportunities, support, knowledge, and business growth.

Peers

Fellow entrepreneurs who share experiences, provide support, exchange ideas, and offer referrals.

Mentors

Experienced individuals who provide guidance, strategic advice, and help avoid costly mistakes.

Markets

Customers, partners, suppliers, and industry stakeholders who open collaborations and market access.



PILLAR 03 SUSTAIN

The ability of a business to remain profitable, resilient, and relevant over the long term while creating value for stakeholders.

Finance

Maintain healthy cash flow, profitability, financial reserves, and diversified revenue streams.

Operations

Build strong systems, documented processes, capable teams, and efficient workflows.

Community

Create positive social impact by supporting employees, customers, suppliers, and the wider community.

Scaling Your Business

Scaling means growing output and impact **without increasing costs and effort at the same rate**. A business is truly scaling when it becomes more efficient while growing — selling more, making more profit, and building systems that allow growth. Growth without cash, profit, or systems is not scaling and eventually kills the business.

THE 4 AREAS TO SCALE

REVENUE GROWTH

- Increase sales
- Increase customers
- Add income streams

1

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

- Improve systems
- Improve processes
- Use automation

2

MARKET EXPANSION

- Enter new locations
- Reach new customer groups
- Use new sales channels

3

TEAM & CAPACITY

- Build a stronger team
- Improve infrastructure
- Increase organizational capacity

4

Practical Scaling Strategies

Six proven approaches for SMEs to grow efficiently, reduce dependence on a single person, and build lasting competitive advantage.

P

PACKAGE YOUR SERVICES

Instead of offering completely customised services every time, create standard packages, pricing tiers, and repeatable processes. Consider digital products. Stop exchanging only time for money.

- Standard packages
- Pricing tiers
- Repeatable processes
- Digital products/services

GC

ACCESS GROWTH CAPITAL

Understand different funding sources and use them strategically to accelerate growth.

- Grants
- Loans
- Equity investment
- Blended finance

N

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Businesses should make decisions based on data to scale more effectively. Track key metrics consistently.

- Revenue
- Costs
- Profit margins
- Cash flow

T

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a major growth enabler — use it across every function of the business.

- Accounting systems
- Marketing tools
- Customer management systems
- Mobile money & e-commerce

H

HIRE & DELEGATE

One person cannot scale a business indefinitely. Invest in people, focus on their strengths, and build teams that can operate independently.

- Invest in people
- Focus on strengths
- Build teams
- Delegate responsibilities

CR

CUSTOMER RETENTION

It costs 5× more to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing one. Keeping customers is often more profitable than chasing new ones.

- Loyalty programs
- Referral systems
- Excellent customer service

Networking

Your network is your net worth. Build relationships before you need them, invest consistently, and think long-term. Networking is not optional — you cannot grow a business in isolation.

THREE NETWORKS EVERY ENTREPRENEUR NEEDS

Peer Networks

Other entrepreneurs who can:

- Share experiences
- Refer clients
- Provide support

Mentor Networks

Experienced professionals who:

- Offer guidance
- Help avoid mistakes
- Provide strategic advice

Customer Networks

Satisfied customers who:

- Recommend your business
- Introduce opportunities
- Become brand advocates

BEST PRACTICES — DOs

- Attend industry events consistently
- Listen more than you speak
- Follow up within 48 hours
- Provide value first
- Join online communities
- Connect people with each other

MISTAKES TO AVOID — DON'Ts

- Networking only when desperate
- Forgetting people after meeting them
- Constantly pitching yourself
- Ignoring existing relationships
- Failing to follow through
- Dismissing informal networks

How to Network Effectively

Research People First

Before approaching someone, learn their organization, priorities, and needs.

Then Position Yourself

Ask: "What problem can I solve for them?" — not "What can they do for me?" Successful networking is highly targeted and intentional.

Why SMEs Struggle with Networking

Many SMEs expect immediate results — but relationship-building takes time. You must:

- Invest in people
- Stay connected
- Follow up consistently
- Be genuinely useful

You will not go far without building working relationships.

KEY PRINCIPLE Build relationships before you need them. Don't only network when desperate.

Sustainability

A sustainable business can continue operating and growing over the long term — financially, operationally, and socially. Growth alone is not enough if the business cannot survive future challenges.

01 Financial Sustainability

- **Diversify Revenue** — Avoid relying on a single income source.
- **Healthy Cash Flow** — Cash shortages can kill profitable businesses.
- **Emergency Fund** — Maintain reserves covering 3–6 months of operations.
- **Reinvest Profits** — Use profits strategically to strengthen growth.

02 Operational Sustainability

- **Document Systems** — Write down every process.
- **Reduce Key-Person Risk** — Avoid depending entirely on one person.
- **Digital Transformation** — Use technology to improve resilience.
- **Strong Supply Chains** — Ensure continuity even during disruptions.

03 Social Sustainability

- Create meaningful employment
- Support communities
- Source responsibly
- Measure social impact

Long-term success is usually linked with positive community impact.

THE KEY QUESTION

Can Your Business Survive Without You?

What happens if you get sick? If you travel? If you stop working for a month? Will the business continue?

If not, you don't yet have a sustainable business.

SOLUTION

Build the systems that allow the business to run independently:

- Systems and documented processes
- Capable teams
- Clear delegation structures

Reduce dependence on any one person — including the founder.

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