

*or otherwise, business success comes out of good production design, production process, and marketing management. The way we do things here, can enable a firm to perform well as long as the underlying factors remain unchanged. Once they do, hitherto successful factor become fast track recipes for failures. So the lessons for our beleaguered entrepreneurs.*

*The economic crisis was not only disruptive, but it most important of all, it was fundamental. This means that some of the old drivers of firm success were made irrelevant (the printed batik were mainly bought by tourists, who no longer come in droves as they used to). Changing customer base calls for revisiting product design, production process, marketing (pricing, sales promotion, distribution, positioning, packaging and so on). Producers can also take the products to the tourists by undertaking market research and intelligence. Perhaps ways of financing their operations should also be revisited in accordance with new product designs, production processing, and marketing. And many more. Ironically, things aren't as hopeless as they seem, at least if lessons are to be learned, however hard that may be. It is high time the we fly together and fall together mentality was changed. Non-differentiation of merchandise, at times of low demand, is certain way to fall together.*

*of that was the burgeoning 'army' of desperate, restive ranks of the unemployed(open and under employed), which is currently reckoned to reach be around 10 and 40 million, respectively.*

*If the term economic crisis has lost some of its selling touch, to some who saw it as an avenue to some additional income through holding seminars where the honorable speakers promised fast track quick fixes; writing and publishing textbooks and 'groundbreaking' papers on the causes, course, and solutions to the malaise. Politicking and rhetoric, which capitalized on what to them was the monstrosity of mismanagement follies and foibles, which sent the economy to the precipitous edge. And of course they didn't forget to articulate the state-of-the-art antidotes, even proposals on effective early warning systems, once the reins are entrusted to them. Such expositions were characterized by deep and well thought out analyses, as there was a lot of hindsight to bank on, and obviously appealing to those who had lost their all.*

*To our almost forgotten fellows in the printed-batik business, and as I found out some few days ago, in the foot ware, hand bags, and related leather products, the economic crisis has never ended. I am sure if asked, many would say, things have never been worse. Imagine entering a lane where a series of stalls offering not so dissimilar merchandize, in design as well as in display, giving unbelievably overgenerous discounts averaging between 40 and 50 percent, but what meets them are wary passersby, having no intention at all, to buy. You can only wonder where they should go from there. Some have even shed some chunks of their time tested and most likely tried pride, as they attempt to persuade reluctant would be customers, by taking them into the niceties, durability, name of it, of what they sell. And this is no mean feat, if you have ever had the bold attempt to go against your stars and pay a visit to the same stalls prior to the crisis wrecked havoc. Apparently, the economic crisis was so potent a force that left not only businesses, some businessmen changed men and women, not all of them of course as old habit die hard; but also the way they do business. Perhaps, there is no truer saying to depict the transformational impact of the crisis of some firms and their businesses, than the one that goes... when the going tough, the tough get going.*

*Considering the magnitude and protraction of the persisting bleak outlook, facing such SMEs, one is bound to ask, what can this section of our society, and a large section it is, do to revive their enterprises? For sure, they seem to have tried all that is within their capacity, from changing marketing approaches to those who visit their market stalls, discounting heavily their merchandise. They have also either done away altogether with, all but a few of the comfort living such as resorting to forces of nature to air condition their premises, reducing the cost on using air conditioners, shed most of their workforce leaving just skeleton staff to hang around the stalls as morning becomes afternoon, and the latter merges into twilight and eventually pitch-black night, calling it yet another boring-no-sales day for them. Their days are forlorn, worrisome, and yet burden some. It is impossible to imagine how such firms meet their obligations such as corporate tax, rent, wages even for a smaller workforce, materials to re-stock their stocks, of course hoping against hope that some new products, might entice reluctant buyers to come in.*

*Helpless though the conditions facing some of these SMEs may seem, one can see some light at the end of the tunnel,, if only if, an overhaul is done in the way they do their businesses. This is easier said than done, considering the fact that many SMEs have been run on father-to-son basis for many generations, making many to believe success in business lies in their very blood. Hardly do they know that intentional*

## ***To some the crisis has never abated, let alone ended! Muyanja Ssenyonga***

*As the new year beckons, there are lingering thoughts that stubbornly show no signs of the brains of many of us, any dint of solace. The worrisome outlook becomes the more justifiable considering the fact that the issues that underlie the thoughts simmering in the recesses of minds of many, concern the fate of sources of livelihood for millions of people is at stake. This is despite a motley of painstaking, and sometimes bold efforts to redress them. It is almost two years ago that I found myself heading for the batik center of Yogyakarta city, the print batik center to be exact. Not that my pursuits tend to orient that way, rather some friend offered the opportunity, which with hindsight I can now succinctly regard as golden, to pay a visit to the Yogyakarta Kraton, with the focus of interest being the batik making center. Not being new to Yogyakarta, sorry for the slip of the keyboard, it is now spelled as Jogjakarta; I had feeling that there aren't many key problems affecting producers that I hadn't known about. If not from the popular press, the electronic media often never misses key issues, especially if such problems affect a significant section of society, from which it is often said, it owes its origin, if not sustenance. Of course one shouldn't forget the equally variety of presentations by academics, interest group enthusiasts, NGOs, politicians, who with relent conduct expositions on most outstanding problems, they conceive as affecting the society.*

*Did I miss something? To my knowledge, and I stand to be corrected, the focus given to small and medium scale enterprises, by both government and private sector, can only be secondary to such issues that determine the very existence of the nation and economy, as national security. If not because of the important contribution SMEs make to the regional and national economy, the role played by the sector in providing livelihood to millions of micro-enterprise operators, workers, distributors, even rent-seekers, is by all account second to none. More than 90 percent of enterprises fall into the SME sector. The significant contribution made by an assortment of SMEs spread all manner of economic activities, to regional and national economies, translates into even vital roles such enterprises play in public finance. SMEs provide vital chunks to regional and national government revenue through taxes and local rates. Other factors underlying the importance of SMEs encompass sources of rural development as SMEs unlike large enterprises are widespread in upcountry regions, where they provide sometimes, the only off-farm economic activities available for millions of landless unemployed restive rural labor, as well as for peasants farmers eking a living from small plots of over cultivated land.*

*Back to printed-batik business.*

*It is some more than 7 years since the debilitating economic crisis mangled and battered hitherto buoyant myriad of economic activity, sending millions to join the ranks of burgeoning unemployed as thousands of firms succumbed to its ferocity. To a layman, a category many of us belong, 7 years is a very long time. It should seem even longer, for sure, to those who have faced the ferocious forces of a deep local currency depreciation, equity and assets decimating inflation, and lower orders for their products, all of which set the center stage for an economic quagmire, which indeed was what ensued. And that wasn't all, for firms had to bear the wrath of the equally convulsing, if not more so, counter crisis measures taken by the monetary authority and government, ranging from stringent liquidity control, enterprise restructuring, adherence to more demanding prudential practices such as costly risk management practices, which left not a few of them, with leaner organizational structures, management, and fewer employees. The corollary*