

49 Business Ideas Haiti and the Diaspora Can Initiate to Make a Profit

Business Manifesto

By Daniella Bien-Aime

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49 Business Ideas Haiti and the Diaspora Can Initiate to Make a Profit

By Daniella Bien-Aime

This manifesto is another installment of a previously written article, where I proposed one of the ways Haitians in the diaspora and Haiti can help turn their country around, and now, as discussed here, even develop their own economic independence by focusing on building new businesses in their own community in the next decade and beyond. These businesses can be independent, or they can serve as a bridge to Haiti. (You can click here [Haiti: Do You Want to Disrupt the Aid Regime in the Country?](#) to read the earlier post).

Business as an Alternative to Solving the Challenges of Poverty.

The argument has been consistent amongst the experts, that in order to minimize poverty in the United States and overseas, education must play a key role in moving the dial in the war of poverty. However, in these same communities where people are surviving, business creation and innovation is paramount to economic freedom. Though some businesses do exist, the owners tend to replace a typical 9-5 job with limited opportunity to scale.

There are mixed views as to what is affecting the inability to scale, but my inkling is that the lack of access to and understanding of how technology and innovation can foster success works against economic development.

Technology is good news for the disconnected and disfranchised because of how it will enable access; the time to start a business and learn to grow is now.

The change in climate on how we are connecting indicates there is light at the end of the tunnel. The gatekeepers at the helms of corporations guarding information and access to knowledge are slowly disappearing, while new doors are opening to what I refer to as the knowledge currency – meaning the ability to learn directly from those who are financially successful, socially connected, simply through the use of a technological device.

Coupled with personal, professional experience, if you have skills, determination, and a desire to create your own freedom, there is no reason to remain stagnant, allowing yourself to remain buried in a job where your soul is slowly dying because you know this is not where you should be, and you are afraid to take risk.

Make it a goal to manage the distractions that are preventing you to succeed.

Technology Will Create Opportunities for the Emerging Communities.

An example of how technology is flattening the hierarchy of the knowledge currency is explained in Peter Thiel's writing from a blog I follow. If it were not for technology, I would never have heard about Thiel, much less understood how he is trying to change his part of the world through his own vision. If you're not familiar with Thiel, you should Google him – he is known as a contrarian... someone who believes that the world has possibilities and works hard to make these possibilities happen.

In addition to being the co-founder of PayPal, he is also on a mission to keep the conversation of innovation through technology alive in the United States. He wrote an insightful piece about the need to accelerate technology entitled "[The End of the Future](#)." After reading Thiel's article, I realized that the Caribbean diaspora could do more as a group using innovation and technology as a vehicle for solutions, particularly in Haiti.

As different groups of the diaspora examine how to make innovation and technology work in business, it is likely that they will learn to prepare and to gain the knowledge to contribute to the acceleration of technology.

Thiel's own manifesto informs us of the available funding to invest in innovative ideas that are solving problems. Though, when it comes to some business minded Caribbean members in the community who make attempts to capitalize on their innovative ideas, preparation and readiness are found to be lacking. Hence the accessible money is concentrated in one area, which inhibits the number of innovative ideas available for funding, which in turn prohibits the net from widening.

After all, no practical individual can blame investors for not wanting to invest money in an organization with no plans and whose ideas lack focus.

The ideas are plentiful, but the capacity to produce and execute notable work is missing. I appreciate Seth Godin's thought when he said, "Everyone, every single person, has been a genius at least once. Everyone has winged it, invented, and created their way out of a jam at least once... If you can do it once, you can do it again." So creators and builders should focus on doing "remarkable" work, a term often used by Godin.

Dr. Dre's 3\$ billion Beats deal with Apple is a great example of someone who at first appears as a person who would not normally be invited to be part of any technology

and innovation conversation. He spent years in the background building a great product that people want; he can legitimately be part of that conversation.

One has legitimacy when one has a stake in equity, and that is the goal of becoming a creator, or inventor – it's not just about the money, but the opportunities you are able to create for yourself and those around you.

How The Diaspora Needs to Think About Business.

I was speaking with a Haitian colleague about the idea of creating 10,000 businesses and how I thought it could be one of the ways to discover those emerging Haitian mavericks, similar to those who are changing the landscape of business in Silicon Valley and New York City. My colleague laughed and proceeded to inform me “We and Haiti were not ready for that challenge.” For 30 seconds, I was tempted to feel discouraged until I realized she was merely a detractor, and I quietly changed the conversation.

Mr. Thiel made a good argument in that if we, meaning the United States, do not focus on revitalizing the stagnation of technology and reinvigorate innovation and technology such as what was experienced when electricity, cars and bridges were invented and built, then we will continue to be at a standstill.

Although we've recently witnessed some significant technology, many of us often speculate how those technologies help solve problems like hunger, cancer, and better education for the masses.

While digital inventions have had a positive influence on society, others of us are asking, how can the economics of the poor and underprivileged improved, other than the bottom line of the inventors?

In order for technology and innovation to accelerate, there needs to be more diversity, and since innovation is boundless, various cultures can be a driving force for innovation.

Suffice it to say, electricity, e-mail, traffic lights, railroads, the Internet and even Hip-Hop all originated from a diverse group.

Be Cognizant That in Every First-World Country, There is a Third-World Society.

A professor once said to me that in “every first-world country, there is a third-world society,” and I’ve never forgotten that moment of enlightenment. This knowledge can work to the benefit of the United States.

If the various first-world communities decide to reach out to those considered third-world communities, minus the sense of exploitation from either side, then more innovative progress can be made where people on the bottom would benefit. Why not have the stakeholders within these first-world countries and neighborhoods focus on partnering with people who are considered the “third-world society”?

I have a friend who understands that when a community is healthy, it benefits everyone and talents are not wasted. He is currently collaborating with a community that most would consider third world in the United States. His collaboration is one of mutual respect and a genuine interest in seeing the community win.

He is determined to get out of his comfort zone and his Ivy League background, and is placing himself in that neighborhood where he is bringing the meaning of “community” and “neighbor” to help change a high crime rate community where human talent is bleeding out. He is working with that community by using his talent to help others tell stories, and is supporting their entrepreneurship aspirations.

The Same Opportunity Can Exist in Haiti and the Caribbean.

The number of educated Haitian diaspora in the United States has been growing, according to the study below, made by the Migration Policy Institute:

Tables of Characteristics of the Haitian diaspora in the United States, 2009-13

	Haitian Diaspora in the United States*	Total U.S. Population
Household Income		
Median household income	\$37,000	\$50,000
Average household size	2.9	2.5
Share of households with high incomes (\$90,000+)	14%	25%
Share of households with very high incomes (\$140,000+)	4%	10%
Employment		
Total population age 16 and older	708,000	239,386,000
Share in the labor force	63%	64%
... that was employed	87%	91%
... that was in a professional occupation	20%	31%
Educational Attainment **		
Total population age 25 and older	554,000	201,925,000
... with less than high school education	22%	13%
... with high school or some college education	56%	57%
... with a bachelor's degree	15%	20%
... with an advanced degree	7%	11%
Population Characteristics by Generation		
First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Population	915,000	73,140,000
First-generation immigrant population***	576,000	38,468,000
... that was working age (18-64)	80%	81%
... that entered the United States before 2000	61%	64%
... naturalized as U.S. citizens	50%	44%
Second-generation population****	339,000	34,672,000
... that was under age 18	58%	46%
... that was working age (18-64)	42%	43%
... with only one parent from Haiti	24%	

* defined as all first and second generation

** highest level reported

*** all individuals who report Haiti as their place of birth, excluding U.S. births abroad

**** all individuals who report having at least one parent born in Haiti

Note: Estimates are based on Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey pooled 2009-13 data.

To get the complete report of the Haitian diaspora study and other Diaspora groups, please go to the [Migration Policy Institute](#) website.

Haitians typically come to this country to focus on their education, to get a better job, and to take care of their families here and back home. For those who remain in Haiti, if they can afford an education, that is usually a priority.

Career Longevity No Longer Exists.

In the last decade in the United States, we have witnessed how the nature of work and career stability has changed, and that the various members of the diaspora have also suffered with the economic downturn in the last few years. Many within the diaspora have not come to terms with how much risk they're facing in waiting for the work environment to change.

There are jobs that have been permanently lost, and the best way to create a career contingency plan is to use the downtime to start a business, even if it's part-time.

The option to create a business is probably less risky than the realities of job insecurities due to layoffs. Drew Hendricks quoted Mark Zuckerberg in one of his articles stating, "The biggest risk is not taking any risk ... in a world that's changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks."

Hendricks continues, "Without risk, there's no reward. If you don't make a leap every now and then, you won't be outstanding."

Culturally, Haitians are known as a resilient, ambitious and entrepreneurial group, and by and large, we have the doctors, lawyers, engineers, educators, and most recently, a rising group of political stars in the Haitian diaspora.

But it appears that when we cross over to foreign lands, the ambition remains but the entrepreneurial spirit dies, which is a contrast to what we're accustomed to in our homeland.

Many of us are quite happy to settle in a job we don't like because we want to pay the bills, so we convince ourselves that where we are is good enough and safe. As a result, we remain complacent, and never make it a point to be in an environment where we keep current of the newer skills that are vital to thrive in the future.

We make a conscious or sometimes unconscious decision to settle for several reasons. Fear plays a factor, and we operate under the assumption that it will be burdensome even before we begin.

Another factor is time. We tell ourselves that we don't have time, yet we feel the pressure to know every update about our friend's favorite cat on social media, or the

name of every character on reality television shows, and still we tell ourselves we don't have time.

Let this Manifesto Inspire You to Take the Next Step.

This manifesto is a plea to ask you to focus more on creating, and to take a leap of faith to start a business. As Godin shared from his book, "[Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us](#)," "We need you to lead us" in whatever your chosen field is to become the inventors and producers of ideas that can change a community.

The vision is for Forbes magazine to one day be able to highlight the 100 richest Haitians in the diaspora and Haiti. I know some of you reading this are probably laughing right now, but it can happen.

To be clear, the money is not the sole motivation, but if we had more than a handful of Haitians with the right economic resources, the diaspora would be further advanced, as well as Haiti.

Haiti needs you to also become one of its chief brand evangelists to restore the country's image through business and leadership.

The future will belong to those who can learn and assess challenges quickly and who have the insights to identify opportunities.

With Haiti's challenges, come many opportunities both in the country and in the diaspora. It is with that intent that I've compiled a list of 49 businesses to help spark some ideas. I am cognizant that some of these enterprises by now exist, but we need more fortunate ones that can scale.

The list below is by no means complete, nor is it organized by any industry in particular. As you read, you'll notice that some will demand more capital than others, and many are technology-driven. A few others are traditional businesses that have proven to be successful.

These ideas have no geographic boundaries. In fact, I would argue that the less-advanced economic countries have a tremendous opportunity to build and create businesses.

So, Let Us Begin!

1. Renewable Energy

According to a McKenzie Global Institute report, this business idea has potential. “Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro-electric, and ocean wave hold the promise of an endless source of power without stripping resources, contributing to climate change, or worrying about competition for fossil fuels.” Solar energy is already being used in Haiti’s Mirebalais University Hospital, founded by Partners-In-Health.

The medical facility is the largest solar-powered hospital in the Caribbean that produces more than 100 percent of its required energy during the day.

The questions we should be asking are: What else can be created with renewable energy? And how do I find the resources? Click here for the [Solar Electric Light Fund \(SELF\)](#) to learn more about the organization that Partners-In-Health worked with to engineer the solar portion of the hospital.

2. Construction

Haiti’s construction business will continue to grow for at least the next two decades and beyond because of the tremendous need for housing. Roads, bridges, material imports, cement production and transportation are all opportunities that exist for more niche businesses.

China has been effective in partnering with the Continent of Africa in helping to create some tangible economic solutions for the people of Africa. As noted by Max A. Joseph Jr. in his article, “[History Confuses When Told in Non-Sequential Order](#)” “All over Africa, the Chinese are building roads, railroads, bridges, seaports, dams and other structures that facilitate the economic growth, which more and more Africans are currently enjoying and the rest of the world is rushing to take advantage of.”

To put it in perspective, the article further argues that, “not one institution of higher learning was ever created on the continent throughout the colonization period. And, few roads, schools and industries were built.” For those of you with connections in China, start building relationships there to attract them to come to Haiti.

The point here is that China is working smartly in Africa. China’s government is not funding NGOs that often recreate poverty, but China’s partnership focuses on creating tangible economic value for the African people, which in turn will yield dividends in the future for trade.

An economically independent and socially integrated society creates more opportunities and benefits everyone.

3. **Startup Spaces for Rent**

As Haiti and the diaspora continue to make the connection to the opportunities that exist to start new businesses, this sector of startup spaces for rent has room to develop. To read how this concept is growing in New York City, click [The 5 Coolest Coworking Spaces in New York City](#) article to learn about this business model.

4. **Blogging**

Are you knowledgeable about a particular topic? Are you presently making money for someone else because of your expertise in a certain field, with no incentive to you? There is no harm with staying in a job that you are happy with or that provides you with the challenge you need, but you need to start thinking about creating your economic value. As adults, we understand the struggle and the need to be responsible to paying our bills. However, to rely on one job and one form of income to live is unwise.

Why not start a blog where you have control over your creativity?

A blog can be a great opportunity to showcase your professional identity. In your time off, you can build your personal brand and experience through blogging. [StudioPress](#), [Copyblogger](#) and [Prologger](#) are great resources that I would recommend to begin.

5. **App Developer**

I predict that there will be a need for future app developers, particularly in Haiti. How about starting a coding school? Or better yet, build different apps that can help connect your communities. Take your inspiration from Kimberly Bryant, founder of [Black Girls Code](#). Her organization's mission is to provide computer coding to young girls from underrepresented communities in programming languages.

6. **Business Coach**

Some of us are either running or have run successful companies for ourselves and other people. One way to help others advance is through coaching while you're making money. With the advance of technology such as Google+ and Skype, the process can be done more efficiently and cost-effective.

7. Mobile Internet

The need to focus on creating inexpensive mobile devices and Internet connectivity will continue to grow. McKinsey's report stated, "In the United States, an estimated 30 percent of Web browsing and 40 percent of social media use are done on mobile devices; by 2015, wireless Web use is expected to exceed wired use." Again, this market has the potential to grow in Haiti and in the diaspora.

8. Cloud Technology

"With Cloud technology, any computer application or service can be delivered over a network or the Internet, with minimal or no local software or processing power required." Africa has been gaining traction with this business service. See [Gijima Cloud Computing Services](#) company that is making a name for itself in South Africa.

9. Haiti's Own Version of Amazon

As far as we know, there is no Amazon that serves Haiti, yet a group of business thinkers are already implementing this business concept in Brazil, not to mention Alibaba's inspiring story and recent IPO. The cost for international shipping and the language barriers should be the motivating factors in creating a version of this business outside the U.S. This could be a huge opportunity for the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

10. The Next Haitian Version of Beauty Products Empire

One company that is gaining attention in the press is [Kreyol Essence](#). The company is using a well-known Haitian product to build an eco-friendly beauty products company, and as the founder is emotionally and socially connected to the country, success is inevitable.

11. Cafes

Haiti is known for its coffee, so why not come up with a concept like Starbucks and use the country's coffee to create a brand while providing jobs?

12. Haiti's Own Craigslist

If you check the international listing for Craigslist as of this writing, Haiti was not included on the Craigslist's worldwide list. This could be a great business idea to

connect people from various provinces and facilitate the process of exchanging, buying, and selling.

13. Transportation

From taxis to private limousine companies, the diaspora and Haiti need more of those businesses in the community.

14. Real Estate

One of the economic drivers in the U.S. and the advanced economies of the world is real estate. Most of us would agree that every house that's sold, at least in the U.S., has the potential to employ dozens of people. You can start small and build from there.

15. Art

Haiti is known for its rich art throughout most of the world. There are some amazing and talented Haitian artists, both in Haiti and abroad. What kind of experiences do you have in the arts? Better yet, partner and serve as mentor to some of the artists in Haiti so they can scale. As they scale, you will surely scale.

16. Agriculture

According to our last prime minister, agriculture was noted as one of his key priorities in helping the country develop. The idea of organic food has always been part of the Haitian culture.

Why not focus on developing methods that will help farmers succeed while transforming the agriculture sector of Haiti? Another agribusiness that has been booming in the U.S. is farmers' markets.

It appears in the last few years that almost every town is attempting to bring people fresh produce and vegetables. In the diaspora, the idea of the farmer's market has yet to take root. They are the consumers, not the producers. Some entrepreneurs in Greece are reaping some of the benefits of agriculture startups. You can read the "[Specialty Food and Agriculture Startups are Ripening in Greece](#)," article to learn about some of these startups in Greece.

17. Website Designers

According to Copyblogger CEO, Brian Clark, many small businesses have yet to have a presence on the Internet. There is a potential in the diaspora, but particularly in Haiti, especially for those who speak and write French and Kreyol fluently to build websites for businesses.

18. Miniature Golfing

These businesses are widely popular, and the best part is you don't need a large plot of land to get started. You could combine it with a café, and if you happen to live in a tropical place, this can be a 12-month booming business.

19. Social Media Consulting

For many, social media is still a phenomenon; I predict that will change with education and training. In the smaller countries, the idea of social media is still at the entry level. As more and more people gain mobile and Internet access, there could be a huge market to serve as social media consultants.

20. Floral Designer and Florist

No matter what kind of economy we're in, there will always be a need and cause for celebration. If this is combined with education, there is a possibility to create niches. Why not build a floral design school for those who want to learn the craft, or build a botanical garden?

21. Academic Tutoring Service

Another area is one where there is always a need for quality and affordable academic services. If you are an effective teacher, you could start a tutoring service, or you can get the training you need in order to create a quality service.

22. Perfume Oil Producers

The plant that is used to produce some of the world's most expensive perfumes grows in Haiti, yet Haiti does not have a reputable perfume brand. Isn't it time to change that?

For those who live in the diaspora, with a background in the industry to become a producer?

23. 3D Printers

Even in the U.S., the idea of 3D printing is just now gaining traction. There are opportunities to either become a seller or creator. The [Maker Bot](#) website can provide you with more information to start.

According to McKenzie, “Prices (for both printers and materials) are declining rapidly— bringing 3D printing to a point where it could see rapid adoption by consumers and even for more manufacturing uses.”

24. Portable Solar Chargers

Most of us like things that are convenient, and a portable charger provides just that. One can create a business as a wholesaler or a retailer. Here’s [Goal Zero](#) as another resource to read about.

25. Bench Park Solar Electricity

Solar electricity could be big in the Caribbean. This innovative method of giving anyone access to something that is needed is already taking place in Boston. You can think of other innovative ideas beyond a bench park for using solar electricity.

26. Convenience Stores

Most neighborhoods are in need of a convenience store. This could be your next opportunity.

27. High-speed Wireless Data Connection Companies

The need to connect at high speed will only improve as the technology continues to evolve and more opportunities exist. Look at this high-speed wireless data connection company in Kuwait. The founders of [Wireless Mobile Data Co.](#) are providing a need for the citizens of their country.

28. Restaurants

I read this quote from a journalist in Haiti: “Small businesses are limited in St. Marc, with fewer amounts of small clothiers, taxis, and convenience stores than expected; even restaurants, bars, and cafes are not readily available.” Do we need to say more in terms of the opportunities that exist in Haiti?

29. Energy Storage

This sector will involve policy, education and training, but is completely durable depending on where you live. Given Haiti’s need to rebuild in every sector, this could be a promising idea. California’s Energy Storage Alliance is a good resource to gain more information.

30. Movie Theatres

No matter what community one is from, we all need to go somewhere to unwind for a few hours. If you find yourself having to drive far to go see a movie, maybe there is a need for one in your community. It could be combined with a restaurant.

As for Haiti, even prior to the earthquake, movie theatres were scarce. Now is the time to create more profitable entertainment businesses.

31. Accountant

Every business needs a great accountant, and if you speak multiple languages, this could be a thriving business for you.

32. Banks

The mobile banking industry has made some gains in poorer countries within the last few years. With limited choices such as Money Gram or Uni Transfer offers, there is plenty of opportunity in the banking business.

Zafen is doing some interesting work in this financial sector. I think it would be beneficial to do more on banking education. Two options that I would like for Haiti to think about are Bitcoin and PayPal.

If someone has a bank account in Haiti, that individual would benefit from the option of transferring money via PayPal. Most Haitians in the U.S. are already familiar with the PayPal brand. If a family member has a bank account in Haiti, the individual can

facilitate the process. Digicel has four million Haitian customers via mobile accounts; think of what else can be offered to help these customers manage their money.

33. Private Social Network

The private social network startups in Africa are also gaining attention. In addition to providing the community an opportunity to be part of a social network, the idea can spur buying and selling. It also can report crimes as some of the existing startups are reporting.

34. Executive Search Firms

Executive search firms will be needed for the next decade as job growth slowly emerges both in the diaspora and in Haiti. One recommendation that can make an Executive Search firm thrive is to include a training component in their facilities to address the softer skill gaps that employers need.

35. Advanced Water Purification

More businesses need to focus on solving this problem worldwide. McKenzie report supports this idea, "The water purification business could benefit millions of people facing water shortages, but approaches with substantially better economics than currently known approaches may not be operating at scale by 2025." Decide to become an early adopter.

36. On-Demand Wireless Service Providers

With the success of companies such as Netflix, the demand for wireless service providers will increase.

37. Create a Small Business Customer Support Service

Customer service is something that most organizations are challenged with, whether in the advanced economies or the poorer ones. Building customer support services can meet the demand for better customer service.

38. How About Companies Like BRCK?

The BRCK Company is in Africa, and its mission is to help people in rural communities connect to the Internet and gain access to the global economy. The company has created a portable hotspot and battery extender product that would work well in the rural areas. Here is the company's link [BRCK](#) if you want to know more information.

39. Plumber

This is a given, considering all the construction that will be done in Haiti over the next several decades. There are needs not only for more training, but also for small businesses to be created.

40. The Internet of Things

Here's what the McKinsey report had to say about the Internet of Things:

From monitoring the flow of products through a factory to measuring the moisture in a field of crops to tracking the flow of water through utility pipes, the Internet of Things allows businesses and public-sector organizations to manage assets, optimize performance, and create new business models. With remote monitoring, the Internet of Things also has great potential to improve the health of patients with chronic illnesses and attack a major cause of rising health-care costs."

The book on [Designing the Internet of Things](#), should start you on the right path.

41. Electricians

This business recommendation is mostly for Haiti -- yes, in a country that does not have electricity, I am proposing that there will eventually be more of a need. Think about all the hotels that are already there and already in need of electricians.

42. Candle Maker

If you start a candle-making company, there is an opportunity to be both the creator while including a wholesale component. Check out this [Busy Bee Candles](#) Company in the United Kingdom.

43. Event Planning & Catering Services

There is always a need for more good restaurants; the likelihood of starting quality catering services with great customer service will win you customers.

44. Chocolate and Candy Maker

If you love chocolate and candy, why not start a company where you make the products and sell them? Better yet, you can even build a factory.

45. Computer Training

There are many people who have been out of the workforce here in the U.S. who need quality, affordable computer training. As for Haiti, that is a huge need that can lead to some opportunities.

46. Disaster Planning and Prevention Services

After being in New York during the 9/11 tragedy and Hurricane Sandy, and having been in Haiti after the earthquake, I don't read about too many businesses in this sector.

47. Landscaper

If you own a home or a business that is in need of a landscaper, you know the value of a good one.

48. Tire Service Company

Similarly to Mavis, this could be a thriving business because of the wear and tear of the product.

49. Money Management Service

The need to understand and educate on small business budgeting, saving and investing will always exist in cyclical economies.

Are you ready to take a leap of faith to start your own business? What other ideas would you add to the list? *Share them with me in the comments section of the Bien-Aime Post.*

I hope you've found these business ideas helpful! If you found the eBook useful, share it with your network and consider signing up at www.bienaimepost.com for future blog updates.