

Homecoming Revolution appoints Bruce Mubayiwa as managing partner



By Ilse van den Berg

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Homecoming Revolution was established in South Africa in 2003 and is described as a proven one-stop platform for African skills repatriation. I chatted to company founder and CEO, Angel Jones and newly appointed managing partner, Bruce Mubayiwa to find out more about his new role as well as where the company is heading.

■ So Bruce, tell me a bit about your background and experience in the industry...

Bruce Mubayiwa: Well, my story is quite a long one, so I will try to keep it short. I am an accountant and auditor by training - that's what I did when I left school. I started out with spending a lot of time with figures and spreadsheets, but you know, over the years I have had a change of heart and I've started to move more towards people, having more outgoing roles. For instance, after my articles I went into internal audit, from there I went into risk and consulting, and then I actually moved into recruitment briefly before deciding that I really wanted to have a lot more to do with people - so then I made the move into marketing. When I made that move I had been keeping an eye on platforms like LinkedIn and other social media, and I think that's when I really became extremely excited about the world of marketing and digital marketing.



Bruce Mubayiwa

What's been happening over the past few months is, in working with social media and sharing insights on Africa, I have been totally fascinated by the kind of excitement that is generated by positive information on Africa and I think that is pretty much how my past and Angel's past converged - that passion for Africa which has seen me at this point moving to [Homecoming Revolution](#).

■ As a new member to the team and as a managing partner, what exactly would your role at Homecoming Revolution entail?

Mubayiwa: I would say the first thing would be helping to grow the digital footprint of the business on our various social media and digital platforms. So getting people across Africa and outside of Africa to know about Homecoming Revolution and what it's all about. The other thing would be to help increase the excitement about the

continent, its possibilities and what we are really capable of. When I look at what Angel has been doing since she started the business, I think she has taken things to another level... I mean the organisation used to be an NPO and it's now a profit making organisation. It used to be based on South Africa but has expanded to other countries. So I am hoping to add to growth in terms of what the business does.

Angel Jones: If I may add to that, what I am very excited about is that in one person, in Bruce, we have not just the passion for Africa which is a rare commodity, I mean it's not that people aren't passionate, but this aliveness that comes through in every of Bruce's engagements is just so infectious. It's also his clear strategic understanding of what's happening on the continent, his obvious branding acumen and being able to pick up on stories and spread them and really get plenty of broadcast appeal to what he's talking about. He's also had recruitment experience which is vital as well as being an official partner for the LinkedIn tools, and with a hunger an appetite to travel and engage - he's a real people's person... So in terms of being a managing partner with me, to really grow and build the brand throughout the UK and Europe as well as obviously on the continent and to drive every source of revenue stream that we are looking at - which is a lot of our international events and our niche dinners we have for our multi-national clients abroad, as well as a lot of our tailored content that we send out through our e-marketing activities. To find someone who's got that same sense of passion with the purpose... you know, when Bruce and I met we connected instantly and I have been looking for someone like him for a long time so it's an absolute delight to have found this all-in-one person.

🔴 ***Homecoming Revolution is quite a unique initiative and I think it's going to make big waves in Africa. Bruce, what makes you excited about joining the team?***

Mubayiwa: I think I see an alignment of vision and purpose. When I look at the potential of Africa and what Africa is capable of doing I'm really excited about Homecoming, because Homecoming is looking at the skills in Africa and saying "Wait, hang on, people have gone outside the continent... They have got the skills, they have got the experience, they have got the expertise. Why don't we encourage them to come back? Why don't we help them on that journey of coming back?"

It excites me that, not only can I run with my vision of getting people excited about Africa, but now I can actually play a role in helping them to come back to Africa. I think Homecoming Revolution in a way is actually aligned to my own purpose outside business and that excites me tremendously.

Jones: We're seeing businesses in Africa are looking to increase their job opportunities for the diaspora by 75% over the next three years, and we have seen it from all sides that the international organisations for migration has reported that even in the past six months there is this market increase, not just in first generation Africans, but second generation Africans all wanting to be part, to have a role back home.

What's very exciting about growing the business with Bruce, is that nearly most of our revenue will come from human resource budgets of multi-nationals who want the skills, but also we are offering showcase opportunities for the diaspora who might not be ready to come home in the form of investment opportunities back home as well as entrepreneurial opportunities. So it really is an opportunity to play a fundamental role in the social and economic prosperity of the continent - which is probably the most rewarding thing of all.

🔴 ***I am sure for people living abroad, having made a success elsewhere, it would be quite a big decision to move back home. What would your advice be to Africans who are still in the diaspora?***

Mubayiwa: Well, firstly, before you make that big step of actually coming home, find out what's happening at home, so stay in touch. It would be a big step for someone who's been away for the past ten years that haven't been keeping in touch with developments back home and they decide they want to come back, it could be too much too soon. But, you know, if you take bite sized chunks every day or on a regular basis, at least you are staying in touch with people on the ground and you know what's going on. Also, being able to get an idea of where things are, where things are going, but more importantly, how you can contribute when you return to your home country.

So, you might realise that maybe there's an issue or shortage of jobs in your country and that would be an opportunity for you to get back to your country and be more active in the entrepreneurial space. So if someone is abroad and they want to start looking at coming back, they need to be in touch, they need to network, just basically have their finger on the pulse with regards to what is going on in the country - they will be able to then make a much more informed decision when the time comes to actually move back home.

Jones: I think that's exactly what Homecoming Revolution does, you know... It offers all the emotional reasons of why you should come back, it showcases case studies of people who have come back, and then as well all the jobs, career, property, schools, all the relocations services. So the idea of being armed with information is really what the Homecoming Revolution platform does on many levels. Also, having our international expos has also got local networking events once the diaspora returns home so the idea that Bruce was saying of networking as well is something that this one stop platform can provide.

One other big message we say to people is that you have got to have made that decision from a deep-rooted, emotional decision to return - yes you must arm yourself with information, but you are only coming home because you have managed to arm-wrestle with the corporates that has this top, you know, dollar package and that's the only reason you are returning home. We think that that might not be the only reason you should... You need to make it from a real dedicated place because it's hard once you have settled in, it's not plain sailing... it's a trade-off to return home.

🔴 ***It was quite a big decision for you Angel? I remember you telling me a while ago that it was quite an emotional***

decision for you...

Jones: Yes, and that's why the heart of our platform is all about showcasing the inspirational stories of people who have returned from an emotive place - which is the good bits and the bad bits. The whole fundamental success of our brand is the branding factor which is marketing which is why Bruce's skills in terms of communication, reaching out, spreading messages, finding the right way to get them to market, is why he is such a fundamental part of our team.

■ ***What are the main reasons people cite for a) returning to Africa/South Africa, and b) not wishing to return?***

Jones: It's actually fascinating how consistent it is and while the bulk of our research is done in South Africa, we've just done a qualitative study of why the Africans - East Africans and West Africans - return and they are the same reasons for coming back. The number one reason for returning is friends and family, number two is the sense of belonging, and where it starts to differ slightly, number three for East and West Africa is career. For South Africa number three and four respectively is lifestyle and then career.

This is why it's so important to showcase stories of those who have returned home saying "I've returned home because I wanted my kids to have their grannies and grandpa's close by, I want to relate to my parents as an adult instead of just a child, I want my kids to ride their bikes in the same places I did..." You know, it's a very deep-rooted sense of purpose and the reason for many people returning home is either when they get married or when they start having kids...

The number one reason for people *not* wanting to return would be lack of knowledge, which is why it's such a fundamental role that we will be playing. They kind of fear the unknown - anything you don't know you fear... obviously they also worry about a lot of infrastructure issues, so there's lack of consistent electricity, the quality of the roads, there's also maybe the worry that they're not going to integrate as well back home. A lot of the human resource strategies that happen for these candidates abroad is mainly based on meritocracy whereas once people have returned home, you need to often fit into a system which is more loyalty based. There are big adjustments to be made which is why you need a very clear picture of what the challenges will be and be equipped with the tools to be able to manage your way through that.

■ ***Where do you think the governments and media fall short in in attracting people to return home? Are there too many negative stories?***

Mubayiwa: When I think about the media, I look at coverage - the way Africa is portrayed by Africa - and I think the narrative is starting to change but I think more can be done. I think we need to be more positive about Africa and I think that is so important because there are so many exciting things happening on the continent, and while there are still challenges I think more attention should be brought to our achievements and our milestones... Those are far more empowering than always highlighting the problem or putting the problems before the good news.

One of the things that I dream of in Africa is that when I open the newspaper in a few years' time, I want to see on the front pages the positive news about Africa, and then I want to find the scandals and the bad things somewhere in the middle pages or at the back. I do think the media can play such a powerful role in doing that. With regards to government, maybe there is scope for better partnerships with the private sector and with media in terms of how a country can be positioned. So I'm looking at Homecoming Revolution working with government and at our events, we could maybe have people from government coming to give insights on government policy around investments or things that will be of interest to someone who is coming back.

Jones: To add to those two points, I think that as we all know, 'Africa Rising' is a great theme for everyone and I think what can tend to happen - you know, you've got the naysayers, the poverty pawns [sic], the corruption people and that's all they talk about, and then you've got the super positive ones that only see maybe a propaganda voice. The thing is though - and I love the way that Bruce said, on the front page you've got the good news, and in the middle you've got the scandals - we will always have good and bad stuff and I think a balanced view is what we're after and that's why Homecoming is not some propaganda voice - we tell the very real stories of real people and the reality of what's happening. I think media can be approached from a far more balanced point of view and showcasing real stories.

When it comes to government, a great vision of ours would be to try and establish some best practice models that we could then see being rolled out in a collaborative approach between East, West and Southern African public sectors. For

example, granting work visas to foreign spouses would be incredible; the idea of cutting some of the red tape as a fast track relocation process, easing up on some of the red tape for returning entrepreneurs, the idea of being able to grant Health and Education returnees - even for a three month working holiday - a market competitive salary compared to what they are earning abroad. There are many programmes that we've been gradually working with the International Organisation for Immigration on in terms of recommendations to really help bring this major wave of repatriation back to the continent. I think to acknowledge it's not only physical repatriation there are also clever ways of virtual repatriation of skills, time and funds.

■ ***If you had just one thing to say to a person you want to encourage to return home, and just one opportunity to do so, what would you say?***

Mubayiwa: I would say that I cannot remember a time in my life when there was so much excitement about Africa. When I look at so many things in Africa it is so encouraging, whether it's the growth of the industries in Africa, whether it's the boom in telecoms, you know, there is just so much happening in Africa. I think you can even see it with the attention the continent is getting from the developed economies... My question would be, if you can get so much attention from other economies and other countries, why can't we get it from our own people? Why can't Africa give Africa more time?

Jones: Well, for me one homecomer summed it up in their quote and they said: "I wasn't moving back, I was moving forward."

All about collaboration

Bruce and Angel will be doing will be very pioneering work. They describe Homecoming Revolution as a completely unique platform in the sense that it's the emotional and functional benefits all on a one-stop platform. The organisation is all about collaboration - it's collaborating and joining all the existing diaspora networks, all the MBA and Ivy League alumni, all of the World Banks and IOMs.

The company has a very audacious big vision that it'll see this wave of repatriation in the next ten years. It has a business plan of opening up ten new country offices in the next six years so will have a presence in ten sub-Saharan African countries as well as a presence in the UK, the USA and Europe.

"We think that with the opportunities on the continent, now with the talent that Bruce brings to the table, would be an opportunity of technology and media to spread messages very quickly to big communities. We really do believe that we can play a major role in creating economical and societal impact for Africa," concludes Jones.

Homecoming Revolution London Expo 2014

Homecoming Revolution will be hosting its London Expo on 15 and 16 March 2014 at the Olympia Conference Centre which will be its major sub-Saharan Africa launch. In one place it will have Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa represented, showcasing all the career opportunities, entrepreneurial opportunities, property, schools for children and relocation services - from moving to immigration advice. There will be top speakers, including Aliko Satchu which is one of the forefathers of the Kenyan stock exchange who moved back home to Kenya, Yusuf Abramjee from LeadSA and Isaac Fokuo, head of African Leadership Network to name but a few; as well as workshops on what it means to relocate home and workshops on finding your perfect career.

The event will also see the launch of the book by Francis Williams from Reconnect Africa on 'I want to work in Africa'. The London Expo will be bringing 2000 delegates through the doors over a two-day period and the delegates will also have the opportunity to bring their spouse and their kids along as it's a holistic decision to move back.

There will be many major exhibitors including the likes of Barclays Africa, KPMG, ThoughtWorks, Bain, Group 5 and The Foschini Group.

There will be a specific recruitment hub featuring all the different recruiters, executive search firms, as well as entrepreneurship and investment hubs.

For more:

- Website: www.homecomingrevolution.com
- Twitter: Bruce ([@brucemubayiwa](https://twitter.com/brucemubayiwa)), Angel ([angel1jones](https://twitter.com/angel1jones)) and ([@HomecomingRev](https://twitter.com/HomecomingRev))
- Facebook: [Homecoming Revolution South Africa](https://www.facebook.com/HomecomingRevolutionSouthAfrica)
- Bizcommunity: [EXCLUSIVE: MorrisJones' Homecoming Revolution heads into Africa](https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/1360-1/1360-1)

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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