



Entrepreneur Adam Camenzuli (centre) is bringing solar power units to villages in Tanzania.

## The company as good citizen

A more socially-aware global marketplace has companies racing to invest in better practices

**A**dam Camenzuli has travelled a long way from the Schulich School of Business campus in Toronto, where he graduated with an International BBA degree in 2010, but he credits the lessons he learned as an undergraduate for driving his efforts to bring low-cost power to a segment of Africa that has long been underserved.

“Before I went to Schulich, I didn’t really know what social enterprise was,” says Camenzuli, 27, describing the business model behind his Tanzania-based startup, Karibu Solar Power. The company, which he founded in 2013 with his brother Brian, is poised to introduce solar energy kits to the country’s 10 million households that remain off the grid. Camenzuli believes there is profit to be made in such a large and underserved market. At the same time, the company is guided by strict adherence to ethical and environmental values.

“For us, our feedback loop is: If we make money, we do good, and if we do good, we make money,” says Camenzuli, speaking via Skype.

Camenzuli typifies the modern entrepreneur emerging from business schools such as Schulich where classroom discussions increasingly focus on business as a means for generating positive change as well as profit.

Since the global economic meltdown of 2008, many of the world’s biggest brands, from Wal-Mart to Starbucks, have been grappling with issues of environmental stewardship, human rights and fair trade, as investors and consumers refuse to tolerate ethical and environmental abuses.

Companies like Patagonia and Unilever, widely considered to be leaders in the move towards corporate social responsibility (CSR), are taking that mission even farther by embedding those practices into all levels of the business – from the decision makers in the C-suite through the supply chain to its lowest paid workers and the communities where they live.

“If you talked with (Unilever CEO) Paul Polman, I think he would agree that there is increasing recognition in the business community of an obligation to address wider social concerns,” says Dirk Matten, professor of strategy and Hewlett-Packard Chair in

Corporate Social Responsibility at Schulich.

Of course, there is also profit potential in serving the billions of customers around the world who are at the base of the pyramid. Traditionally, most companies have all but ignored emerging markets, says Geoffrey Kistruck, associate professor and Ron Binns Chair in Entrepreneurship at Schulich. If they did make an investment, it was in the form of a donation – money no one expected to recoup other than through a few positive media hits and perhaps a boost to corporate morale.

That attitude has changed. Emerging markets now account for 57 per cent of Unilever’s global business, according to the company. Other companies have followed suit with more targeted programs.

“Where companies used to go only where there is the most money, spending hundreds of millions fighting over 1-per-cent market share, they now realize they can spend a fraction of that money by moving into these new markets ... and do it in a way that the money actually comes back to them,” says Prof. Kistruck, founder of the Social Impact Research Lab at Schulich.

Andrew Crane, a business ethics professor and director of Schulich’s Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business, said the conversation around CSR has been rumbling for at least two decades. The changes have partly come as a result of external pressure – investors, consumers and social advocates who want everything from greater corporate transparency and better consumer protection to reduced carbon emissions and enhanced global labour practices.

But Prof. Crane also believes most company leaders and their globalized workforces genuinely want to make a positive difference. “The question is always about how to do that and how to reconcile that with the other expectations they have in terms of creating shareholder value and making a profit,” he says.

Critical to the company’s success is visionary leadership. “This is not something that is done by a separate CSR team. This is done by the CEOs,” says Bruce Simpson, a senior director with consultancy McKinsey and Company and a contributor to Re-imagining Capitalism, to be published in 2016 by Schulich in partnership with McKinsey.

For Camenzuli, his journey has been challenging in many ways. Now, with the official licenses needed signed and stamped, his company is ready to introduce its solar kits into the broader Tanzanian market in the coming weeks.

“For us, what we like to do is see our product being used by people,” says Camenzuli. “If that happens, we have literally changed their lives for the better. There is absolutely nothing else that matters.”

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