

Kyazze on building systems where talent already exists

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BY EDGARR BATTE

Julius Kyazze has spent nearly two decades at the intersection of creativity and commerce. An entrepreneur whose work has shaped parts of East Africa's contemporary entertainment landscape, he superintends enterprises such as Swangz Avenue, Buzz Events and other affiliated ventures operating across media, talent management and live experiences.

He belongs to a generation of founders who built fast-moving creative businesses in markets where formal industry infrastructure was still catching up. Today, as chief executive officer of Live54+, Kyazze appears more concerned with structure and how to build systems that allow creative enterprises to scale beyond personality and instinct.

Kyazze does not romanticise entrepreneurship. He speaks about it in measured terms, almost clinically, more as a process of identifying constraints and designing around them.

For years, his name has been associated with founder-led ventures that moved quickly and thrived on instinct. But if there is a thread running through his career, it is structure.

"Most of the businesses that I've built or partnered in are founder-led," he says. "We know we can hustle our way into boardrooms. But you can't hustle your way around cross-border tax policies. You can't hustle your way around doing business in other countries."

That realisation accumulated over time through projects that scaled quickly and opportunities that stretched across borders. In his ear-



Swangz Avenue CEO Julius Kyazze. PHOTO/COURTESY

ly ventures, Kyazze relied on instinct, aware that the creative sector rewards speed and responsiveness. But as regional opportunities expanded, he began to see a recurring pattern.

"Demand was outpacing the existing infrastructure," he says.

The challenge was not talent but readiness. Teams needed compliance frameworks. Cross-border partnerships required legal clarity. Finance had to move across jurisdictions with fewer surprises. Managers wanted growth paths that went beyond a single market. What had once been manageable through improvisation began to expose limits.

Before chasing continental scale, he concluded, businesses needed to be structured to function across borders.

Trade agreements and regional frameworks might create opportunity, but they do not automatically solve operational gaps.

"The opportunity is there," he says, referring to Africa's expanding trade landscape, "but it's not the primary reason why we've decided to consolidate."

For him, consolidation was more about internal discipline.

One issue he returns to repeatedly is movement. African creatives, he argues, often find it easier to tour Europe than to build consistent circuits across African capitals. A hit song in Kampala may translate to shows in London, yet struggle to find structured pathways through Lagos, Accra or Dakar.

"It's easier for us to get our art and sell it to Europe," he observes, "but no one is

able to do that on the continent".

The problem, in his view, is not artistic quality but fragmentation. Markets operate in silos, collaboration is inconsistent and distribution systems are uneven. Without coordination, even strong creative output struggles to travel. Kyazze points to West Africa, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, as examples of more deliberate collaboration.

"They are very aggressive in everything they do," he says. "But also, their level of collaboration is very aggressive."

Music intersects with fashion, film and corporate brands. Artists routinely work across cities and countries, reinforcing shared visibility. By contrast, he suggests that parts of East Africa have sometimes been slower to build cross-industry alliances.

To manage both opportunity and risk, Kyazze has structured operations across multiple jurisdictions. Nairobi serves as a talent and operations hub, anchoring day-to-day execution. Mauritius offers legal and fiscal alignment with international accounting standards, facilitating multi-market transactions. Dubai functions as a global meeting point for partnerships beyond the continent. He describes the configuration not as expansion for its own sake, but as hedging against currency volatility, regulatory uncertainty and project variability.

He describes the holding company he leads as "building the pipes," while leaving the "water" which is the creative output, to the individual entities. Governance, taxation and compliance are centralised. Creative direction remains decentralised.

"The industry is bigger than that," he says, pushing back against the idea that it is limited to performers on stage. "When the creative sector wins, everyone wins," Kyazze says.

To unlock enterprise value, Kyazze outlines three conditions. First, creatives must educate themselves about ownership and business. Second, governments must enforce existing intellectual property laws. Third, infrastructure must exist to monetise and protect content. Without these, value leaks through exploitative contracts, piracy or inefficient systems.