

GOOD CHOCOLATE FOR EVERYONE

Jeremy Wickremer, London



Chocolates that help other people (Source: Jeremy Wickremer)

Ubuntu is a Zulu word meaning humanity to others. For Jeremy Wickremer, it describes not only his work in international development but also more interestingly sharing good chocolate. He combines his passions for good natural food and helping people by selling his handmade chocolates to raise awareness of various youth development projects around the world. Jeremy tells us more:

What's your background? How did you become an activist?

After studying Psychology at Sussex University, I went to Spain, partly to enjoy myself and partly to work out what to do with the rest of my life. It took over a year before the creative energy in Barcelona inspired me to set up Ideal Media, which produces design and communications related to social and environmental issues, and now works with some of the world's leading charities and companies. To start up the organisation, I received a loan from the Prince's Trust, and later a grant from UnLtd.

You're involved with a few different things, from corporate responsibility to the United Nations to chocolate making. How did you get to this point?

I'm pretty spontaneous, which means I end up trying a lot of new things. Sometimes things work out, sometimes not. Working in corporate responsibility has come naturally, as it's such a growing trend at the moment and really key to solving big social and environmental issues.

Good food is a big passion, and last year I started experimenting with chocolate in my kitchen and out came Ubuntu Chocolate. I'm now supplying the chocolates to a local restaurant and also organisers of third sector events.

Tell us a bit about your social enterprises: Ideal Media, Peace Media and Ubuntu Chocolate.

Ideal Media works across a range of issues including corporate responsibility and international development. We specialise in communications related to social and environmental issues, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We also work in partnership with the UN-mandated

UPEACE Centre for Executive and Professional Education holding workshops on corporate responsibility and integrating sustainable strategies into companies.

Peace Media is a new media initiative started by four leaders – Rotimi from Nigeria, Eugene from Cameroon, and Sara and myself from the UK. We met at the Global Youth Summit in 2006 which brought together youth leaders from around the world who are working towards the UN's MDGs. We're supported by the UN Office for Sport for Development and Peace bringing assistance to youth from all round the world working on MDG-related projects. We share information and leverage support for grass roots work helping to build capacity. We also help to facilitate business involvement in the MDGs.

Ubuntu Chocolate makes high cocoa content chocolates with natural ingredients, and recipes include cardamom, coconut, marzipan, cinnamon and lime chilli.

What does "sustainable development" and "community sustainability" mean to you?

There's loads of definitions out there, and for me the one about meeting our present needs while preserving our planet for future generations makes the most sense. We've got in a bit of a sticky situation because our behaviour isn't really sustainable, and we need to redefine what we mean by development – if we take it to mean material wealth, then we might be in freefall.

Do you practice what you preach in your own personal life?

I try. I tend to live with just what I need, which is just good sense really. It's hard to follow your ideals exactly and still have to fit with the systems that are in place. For example, it would be great to just own energy-efficient products and use renewable energy, but how can everyone do this when we only have a 2% renewable energy supply in the UK?

Most efforts I make to live a more environmentally friendly life seem to end up making my life better. This week I've started cycling around London instead of getting the bus. I'm saving money, getting fit and discovering that there's a massive shopping centre and the Renoir cinema 10 minutes from my house I never knew existed. I've tried to completely eliminate ironing from my life – it's a waste of time and energy and very, very boring.

I'm eating more natural food which I'm sure must be helping. One thing I haven't done is rush to convert to the new fluorescent bulbs – this doesn't seem like the right solution. We should be cutting down on using lights and these bulbs contain mercury which is not good if everyone decides to get one. I'm hoping LED lights will provide a better solution.

What else? I've turned off the heating in my room. It's not always welcome, but does remind me to get away from my computer and do some physical exercise when it starts getting a bit too cold.

What's in the future for you and what is your vision for Britain?

I'm keen to continue working with companies to integrate sustainability and, in particular, work with HR departments to bring these issues into consideration at a personal level. Also, to work with food would be great, so I'm concocting some new chocolate recipes and have a new food related project called Ideal Food.

I think Britain is already leading the way in a lot of thinking around sustainability, and it's amazing that cultural diversity brings so many ways of thinking and living. At the moment, it looks like we're in need of new ways of living. It would be great to see how this cultural diversity brings solutions to how we must adapt to a globalised world and shrinking natural resources. As long as we embrace this and search for new answers, it looks like we have a very promising future.

Facts and Information

- Ideal Media, Peace Media and Ubuntu Chocolate are social enterprises. Social enterprises are companies that trade in goods or services for a social purpose. They need to meet not only financial performance targets, but also social and/or environmental performance targets also.
- Whereas conventional businesses distribute their profit among shareholders, in social enterprises the surplus goes towards one or more social aims which the business has - for example fair trade, vocational training for disabled people, or environmental issues. (*Source: Wikipedia*)

Further Resources

- For more information about Jeremy's social enterprises, check out their respective websites:

Ubuntu Chocolate - www.ubuntuchocolate.com

Ideal Media - www.idealmedia.org.uk

Peace Media - www.peacemedia.eu

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