



A
Report of TBLF
2012
Career/Founder's
Day

Acknowledgement

The Management of The Bridge Leadership Foundation would like to thank the lead sponsors of the event, Northwest Petroleum and Diamond Bank as well as our Bronze Sponsor UNICEM for the financial support toward the successful hosting of the 2012 Career Day Event. .

We also extended our appreciation to all the speakers for ensuring an impactful Career Day event.

We acknowledge:

-  Mr Emmanuel Etim
-  Mrs. Grace Nanyonga
-  Ms Esther Agbarakwe
-  Ms. Titus and Tobais Igwe
-  Mr. Steve Harris
-  Mr. Nnaemeka Igwe
-  Mr. Idris Bello

Executive Summary

The Bridge Leadership Foundation hosted the 2nd Edition of her flagship programme, the Career Day. The Career day was aimed at inspiring and empowering young people in choosing the right career paths and making informed decisions. It was also aimed at providing a platform for young Nigerians and graduates who are; seeking to enter the job market, at the start of their career or aspiring to be entrepreneurs, to learn from accomplished entrepreneurs and professionals (home and abroad) that have made major achievements in different sectors in the society.

Following a successful first edition with the theme: *Leading the Change* held in July 2011 which featured Fela Durotoye, C.E.O, Visible Impact, Kunle Soriyan, President, T.O.S Company, Peter Bamkole, Director, Enterprise Development Centre- Pan African University, Thelma Ekiyor, ED, TY Danjuma Foundation and Cobhams Asuquo, Award winning Producer/Musician. The 2012 Edition with theme *“Talent, Leadership and Entrepreneurship”* featured successful young Africans under the age of 35 who have done tremendously well in their businesses and career.

Packed with three powerful sessions; the 2012 Career Day was facilitated by Emmanuel Etim- Directorate of Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission, Ethiopia and Nnaemeka Ikegwonu- Executive Director, The Smallholders Foundation, Nigeria who spoke under the session **“The Common Thread”** . The journeys of **“Personal Discovery**

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to **National Impact**” were shared by Idris Bello- Program Director at Wennovation Hub and President, Oxford University Africa Society and Esther Agbarakwe- Atlas Corps Fellow at Population Action International, USA while Grace Nanyonga – Founder, Granafish Supplies, Uganda, Tobias and Titus Igwe, Founders -SpeedMeals Kitchen and Steve Harris, C.E.O EdgeEcution, held participants spellbound with their compelling stories of “**Survival, Success and Significance**”.

INTRODUCTION

“The leadership that Nigeria desires is that which is yet to emerge; there are many big men today, but few leaders; so the onus is on young people to change that – With these words, the Founder of The Bridge Leadership Foundation, Sen. Liyel Imoke, declared open the 2012 Edition of the Career/Founder’s Day Event.

The Career Day which took place on July 11th 2012 at the Main Bowl of the Cultural Centre, Calabar had in attendance over 2,000 young persons comprising undergraduates, young professionals, business owners and graduates from across Cross River State.

BACKGROUND

Registration Process

The Registration announcement was widely circulated through e-mail linkserves, social networks, and via traditional media. The call received an overwhelming response with over 2000 registrations across the 10 registrations outlets in the Calabar, the capital of Cross River State.

Goals and Objectives

The underlined goal of the Career Day Event is to meet young people who are seeking to enter the job market, at the start of their career or aspiring to be entrepreneurs, to learn from accomplished entrepreneurs and professionals (home and abroad) that have made major achievements in different sectors in the society.

It sought to create a platform of interaction of young, achieved leaders with young persons in Cross River State in inspiring and empowering young people in choosing the right career paths and making informed decisions.

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PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The welcome remarks at the event was given by the Ag. Director of the Foundation, Mrs. Ini Onuk, she explained that “ *Our speaker line-up is informed by the need to show participants how young people within the locality of Cross River State, Nigeria and outside Nigeria but within Africa all share common challenges, stories and opportunities at success and contributions to national development. In order to defy the excuses that the successful members of the older generation may have had it easy or do not understand the complexities of today’s reality; we have some young people who are indigenes of the state or have lived and schooled here – in the same locality – and yet have taken charge of their lives.*”

The 2012 Career Day was divided into three (3) sessions; Speakers at the event engaged participants under three sub-themes. **The Common Thread**, facilitated by Emmanuel Etim- Directorate of Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission, Ethiopia and Nnaemeka Ikegwonu- Executive Director, The Smallholders Foundation, Nigeria. The journeys of **Personal Discovery to National Impact** were shared by Idris Bello- Program Director at Wenovation Hub and President, Oxford University Africa Society and Esther Agbarakwe- Atlas Corps Fellow at Population Action International, USA while Grace Nanyonga – Founder, Granafish Supplies, Uganda, Tobias and Titus Igwe, Founders -SpeedMeals Kitchen and Steve Harris, C.E.O EdgeEcution, held participants spellbound with their compelling stories of **Survival, Success and Significance**.

Session One: The Common Thread

The aim of this session was to clarify the linkages between Talent, Leadership & Entrepreneurship and the role they each play in developing a “*Transformational Leader*”. Speakers at this session connected the dots between the three concepts, stressing how they complement each other as well as sharing how this has transformed their personal lives, careers and prospects as well as practical examples of opportunities for other young people to achieve same.

Speaking at the session was Emmanuel Etim, The Directorate of Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission. He narrated the story of his humble beginnings as a Child Ambassador of Cross River State at the age of 17. Despite his father’s Position in the Nigerian Navy, he was registered to study in Estate Secondary School (A low end public Secondary School) but he motivated himself to make his time in the school, one with a difference.

He also shared the challenges he had at the African Union based on his age; but his performance and track record enabled him to surmount those challenges.

Highlights of Emmanuel Etim’s Speech:



“When it comes to a recruitment exercise, no one will hire you because you are young; you can only be recruited based on what you can deliver” – Emmanuel Etim

“Who would have thought that a young boy who attended Estate Secondary School in Calabar some years back will be the one seating on most of the African Union and United Nations board meetings and that same boy is the man standing before you today” – Emmanuel Etim

“A transformational leader has to surmount the challenge of age” - Emmanuel Etim

This was followed by a presentation by Nnaemeka Ikegwonu, Executive Director of the SmallHolder’s Foundation; he began by narrating how much he wanted to become a journalist but twice he failed the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) cut off mark , so he eventually picked up the offer to study History at the Imo State University.

His passion for journalism never ended but got reignited when he volunteered for an organization that was providing HIV/AIDs and Agricultural Extension Services to farmers; this inspired him to beginning the Smallholders Foundation after his NYSC.

As at 2011, the station transmits to over 250,000 farmers in Imo State broadcasting for 10 hours daily providing farmers with information of the environment, farming methods and management information systems and has successfully trained over 45,000 young people in schools.

“I had always wanted to be journalist, but twice JAMB failed me, I eventually studied History but my passion for Journalism never ceased; it got reignited when I volunteered with a local Agriculture Extension NGO this inspired me to set up Small Farmers Radio; today, I am not just a journalist but one making a difference” – Nnaemeka Ikegwonu

“Agriculture is the one sector in Nigeria with the largest potential of employment for young people, all you need to do is add a little innovation and technology” - Nnaemeka Ikegwonu

“When we visit communities for intervention, I usually encourage young people to get into poultry, it is very profitable and the turnover period is short” - Nnaemeka Ikegwonu

Session Two: Personal Discovery to National Impact

This session was aimed at enabling participants derive inspiration from the Speaker’s narration of their ability to transform their talent, through the journey of personal discovery and the impact of this transformation at national and global levels. Speakers at this session shared personal stories as well as, challenges, successes and experiences stressing the importance of knowing

one's self and understanding the tools needed to transform raw talent, passion, basic skills into action and taking it a step further.

The first speaker at this session was Idris Bello, Program Director at Wennovation Hub and President, Oxford University Africa Society. Idris Bello shared his story of taking a risk and leaving his job at Procter and Gamble and deciding to go for his Masters Study in the USA. He won a scholarship but was denied his visa on first application; he applied back Six (6) months after and was granted that, without knowing his scholarship was withdrawn since he didn't get his first visa application. Getting to the U.S and knowing this, he refused to quit but decided to mow lawns and doing casual jobs to sponsor himself through his education.

"If your dream does not scare you, then it's not big enough, discard it and try another. Many people do not know what they want. Whether it's a job, or a career, or a business- the rules are the same"- Idris Bello

"It is very important to distinguish between failing and being a failure; what you do when you fail distinguishes between the two" - Idris Bello

"In life, it is better for you to be prepared and not have an opportunity than for you to be unprepared and an opportunity shows up at your door" - Idris Bello

Esther Agbarakwe was next in line, presenting on Personal Discovery to National Impact shared with attendees how her personal passion and curiosity to know more about the dried up spring a few kilometers away from her house. This inspired her to ask questions and learn more about the environment. This experience in her life in her words "defined my career"

She also explained the way Mentoring has also assisted her grow in her Career; encouraging young person's to have mentors in the various fields of their businesses and careers.

"My passion for the environment was ignited when I realized the spring on my road had dried up; this prompted me to begin to ask questions and learn more about the environment; this passion has blossomed into my Career"- Esther Agbarakwe

"In response to the low involvement and awareness of young people in the Climate Change and the Awareness of the Environment ; I was motivated to set up the Nigerian Youth Climate Change Coalition" - Esther Agbarakwe

Session Three: Survival, Success and Significance

Participants were held spellbound by the speakers in Session three (3). This session was aimed at engaging participants with the “Grass to Grace” stories of young people who have come from backgrounds considered “impoverished” but who refused to remain at the bottom; transforming their quest for survival to a success story, achieving significant feats in the various fields of endeavour. The stories went beyond successes, to talk about the needs each speaker or business is attending to; beyond the success to the significance and impact of such businesses and careers to their communities.

The first speaker was Grace Nanyonga, Founder, Granafish Supplies, Uganda. She began by showing graphic images of her when she was a child in her rural community, the pictures showed the poverty she was exposed to as a child, the situation her family was thrown into when her father died and how her siblings and her began production of cement blocks which they used in building their family house.

She narrated she was usually mocked “Chicken girl” in school, because this was her parents business where she was helping out after school hours.; this made her become very popular within her community. She attended a seminar organized by Youth Alive, there she was given a bursary to study how to make smoke fish.

“I started small but today, I have met Michelle Obama, Walmart is a mentoring organization to Grana Fish Supplies, ladies and gentlemen how I got there, hard work and diligence, tenacity took me there” – Grace Nanyonga

“When life happens to you; don’t just move yourself to a corner and cry only; so jut pick up yourself where you are and you will get there.” - Grace Nanyonga

“I was called Chicken girl in school and that made me popular; so when I started my business, that popularity helped in marketing my business” - Grace Nanyonga

Following Grace Nanyonga’s presentation was that of Titus and Tobias Igwe, the “Igwe Twins”. Titus began by sharing the story of his family background; born from in a family of nine (9) siblings with the parents not having a sustainable means of income to take care of them, they had to share them amongst their relatives as house helps. He was in charge of cooking at the house where he lived; something in his words he *“never liked doing”*

They relocated to Lagos in search for greener pastures and began to sell recharge cards, a business they recorded a turnover of N200,000.00 in eight (8) months. Their dreams of furthering their education became heightened when they came out in flying colours in their GCE; they enrolled for JAMB and were offered admission into University; during that same period tragedy struck; their father died. They had to use all the savings for their education for the burial after which they relocated to Lagos.

In pursuit of their education goals, they applied to a catering programme just to make ends meet, after which they founded SpeedMeals Limited; providing timely food delivery services to millions of Lagosians.

“Do not tell me what happened to you; what matters is your response to that; so take responsibility for your life”-
Tobias Igwe

“We were inspired to set up Speedmeals; because we didn’t have a good office space nor service outlet to have clients come in for their meals; so we decided to deliver the food to them at their locations ” – Titus Igwe

Steve Harris was the last speaker for the day, but he has an amazing comeback story. He began by sharing his experience of being a two time college dropout and how life was almost at the end for him, but he visited different companies and organizations offering them his services as a volunteer; he eventually got an office assistance job in a consulting firm where he took the chance to step in to lead a training of bankers when the firm ran short of its consultants.

This was his turning point and today, he is not just a two time college dropout but a corporate sell out without a B.Sc Degree though currently studying Management at an M.Sc level in the University of Wales.

“It is not what you have that limits you; it is what you have but don’t know how to use that limits you”- Steve Harris

“You may be in the wrong position, but make sure you are in the right location” – Steve Harris

“If you have gone through experiences in life; maybe you failed your exams, or dropped out of school; What is your excuse? Take that failure as an opportunity to transform your life” – Steve Harris

Other highlights of the Career Day included a Q&A interactive session where participants asked speakers a variety of questions on their personal journeys and decisions. Also, an elevator pitch contest was organized where randomly selected participants vied for an opportunity to go home with the Official Biography of Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacton. The first 100 participants won

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prizes from the Foundation whilst the first participant to arrive, Ms. Iquo Nya was rewarded with a three-month paid internship with the foundation.

KEY LESSONS

Despite the challenges some key lessons emerged from the 2012 Career Day.

- That young people in Cross River State were inspired by the event with most of them have requested that the career day be held quarterly and biannually
- That the contents of the Career Day was very relevant and in tune with the needs of the participants
- That the choice and selection of speakers for the Career Day contributed to the successful delivery of the event
- That the peer-to-peer approach adopted by the foundation was very convincing to the attendees, getting them to evaluate their lives.

Evaluation Feedback

The 2012 Career Day has been evaluated by the participants and the resource persons as a major success and a much needed medium for advancing the skills of young people in Cross River State and Nigeria.

It is described as “inspirational” “challenging” and “life-changing” experience. The feedbacks could not emphasize this enough. Key success factors include: the high quality of speakers, the peer-to-peer approach which was very effective in convincing attendees, the personal and professional stories shared by the speakers which was very effective in driving home the lesson of quitting the blame game. Participants report leaving the event feeling energized, challenged, equipped, supported and hopeful.

Testimonials from the 2012 Career Day

- “Before I attended the Career Day, I was wondering why TBLF asked us to pay N1,000 for this programme, but mid –way into the event, I am happy with my decision to attend the event, because what I learnt cannot be bought even with my school fees in Unical” - Idara Edidaha

- “This was an eye-opener and passion igniter as the questions were answered during the summary. I suggest this event be held at least once in every 3 to 4 months”- Oduduabasi Asuquo
- “All the speakers were inspiring, motivational and have unique backgrounds that make them deserve to be listened to, excellent content and delivery; kudos to The Bridge Leadership Foundation” –Deuteronomy Ofem
- “The 2012 Career Day has created a lot of impact in my life when I had lost hope of making it in life; I have been encouraged, and I have decided to take on life” - Lawrence Ayene
- “At 27,I thought I had it all with my B.Sc Degree; the 2012 Career Day has made me realize, I haven’t started yet in life!” -Regan Archibong

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...2012 Career Day in Pictures





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