

BRANDING BOOTCAMP

SNAPSHOT: ACCELERATING PRIVATE SECTOR GROWTH THROUGH WORLD-CLASS MARKETERS

Overview

The Branding Bootcamp is a commercial and scalable approach to talent selection and development that launched in partnership with Freetown Business School and Nairobi-based The Branding.

The Bootcamp consists of an intensive training and selection programme for marketeers that aims to address the talent gap in the marketing industry in Sierra Leone. The Branding Bootcamp entails intensive training on marketing as well as general professional skills whilst putting trainees through a vetting process to identify top talent. Through skills tests and assessments, participants are evaluated throughout the programme and only the best talent will complete the full duration of the Bootcamp. If graduates are looking for employment in the marketing field, the programme will aid in obtaining placements at corporations, SMEs, or marketing firms in Sierra Leone.

Bootcamp vs “Normal Trainings”

Sierra Leone needs great marketeers quick. Experts in the branding and marketing process can help Sierra Leonean businesses launch new products and reach new customers more quickly. While there is great need for general trainings to raise the capabilities of all, a bootcamp-style programme, vs a normal training, delivers accelerated development for a select few of high-potential individuals. The individuals can then be embedded in organizations driving economic growth in Sierra Leone.

A bootcamp programme follows a competitive process where participants are continually assessed and evaluated, so only those with the passion, capability, and motivation to become great marketers finish the programme.

Why did we create a Branding Bootcamp in Sierra Leone?

Effective branding and marketing has been signalled as a limit to the growth of Sierra Leonean businesses at home

and abroad. The first step to creating a branding ecology where Sierra Leonean businesses benefit, is to create people who have the knowledge and the skills to build these businesses.

A LACK OF STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of an effective marketing process is absent on both the marketer side and the client side, which results in a process driven by sales tactics. The client can't guide the marketer and the marketer has no knowledge or authority to guide the client. Both are held back by the lack of knowledge as to how to structure their efforts. Additionally, the current marketing process lacks strategic consideration of which channels are actually effective in reaching target customers. It simply pushes messaging through channels; therefore the sales conversion is lower than it could be.

MIS-FITS ON MANY LEVELS

There is not always a good product/market fit (both local and imported products). Traditional (Western, ATL driven) marketing methods that are emulated locally rely on considerable investment in research and development and purchase of mass media advertising, which are financially unfeasible for the local SMEs with small budgets who need a quick return on their marketing dollars. There is a lack of strong local cases, and local experiences are not documented for learning and improvement. Developed market cases and practices don't apply one-on-one. And last but not least, visual merchandise, packaging and branding are mismatched to the needs of the Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) market and are extremely relevant in this type of market, as it is often the primary visual touchpoint.

CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS AFFECT PROFESSIONALISM

Culturally, younger people respect their elders, which results in introverted behaviour regarding interaction with people higher in the hierarchy (e.g. CEOs, business owner, parents etc.). Through economic limitations, it is very hard for people to make a living in only one profession. People are often forced to have many different roles and cannot build expertise in one area.

“BEING A MARKETER IS A HUSTLE, NOT A PROFESSION. AND WHEN IT IS NOT A PROFESSION, THERE IS LITTLE SPACE FOR PROFESSIONALISM.”

Clients often observe a lack of willingness or ability to present oneself professionally (timeliness, proper body language, structural communication), which does not instil much respect. And respect is crucial if one wants to be a professional. Finally, cultural sensitivity to hierarchy leads to the lack of desire by a marketer to challenge a client's thinking. Tactics like direct sales and creating Facebook content are easier to execute than to challenge a client to consider a different strategic course.

Curriculum:

The programme begins with each participant completing a Personal Growth Plan to self-assess where they stand on key areas of the Bootcamp curriculum, then stating which specific skills they would like to most focus on. As professional skills are noted by business owners to be weak among prospective candidates, particular attention is placed on soft skills.

The curriculum is designed to emphasise 50% Marketing and 50% Professionalism. On top of the marketing curriculum, the bootcamp strives to teach crucial soft skills such as thinking strategically, working in teams, developing a learning mindset and receiving feedback.

THE BOOTCAMP

We need our marketers to have a solid grip on a practical, effective ('lean') marketing process that optimises sales

conversion. To this end we developed the branding bootcamp: an intense two-week course to build basic branding skills with talented Sierra Leonean marketers of different ages, education levels and experiences. The bootcamp builds the basic understanding of the full branding process, which they can refer to at all times to assure better outcomes for clients. It builds confidence with marketing professionals and clients in a proper process, one that is in place to grow the customer base and make their energy, time and money worthwhile. This is a branding process that enables marketing professionals and clients to learn from their efforts, create best practices and grow the business over time. The bootcamp provides a learning programme, underpinned by practical, effective tools to support a replicable, cost-effective and impactful process. It is a catalyst to create and share cases that are relevant and replicable to the SL context.

THREE PILLARS

Through the bootcamp we create a foundation in the following three areas:



THE BOOTCAMP ASSESSMENT

To identify individuals with the passion, capability, and dedication to be great marketers, the programme follows a rigorous assessment and selection process, including early, mid-way, and final assessment points. This process both aids the development of participants and helps the programme to identify key talent for potential employers.

WHAT ARE THE COMPETENCIES OF A BRANDING BOSS?

The bootcamp is set up to assess and develop five types of competencies in participants, helping them to become

'branding bosses'. The entire assessment process is set up to test progress in these skills so that participants and staff have a consistent benchmark for their progress.

| PERSONAL COMPETENCIES (SOFT SKILLS)  | | | PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES (HARD SKILLS)  | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <u>Growth mindset</u> | <u>Interpersonal skills</u> | <u>Professionalism</u> | <u>Knowledge</u> (demonstrating knowledge of...) | <u>Skills</u> (ability to execute on...) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to absorb and apply course content Giving and receiving feedback (argumentation and communication styles) Proactive engagement (asking questions, making suggestions, contributing) Creativity (curiosity for the new) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empathy (understanding clients, customers, colleagues) Communication (listening, processing, interviewing, updating) Confidence (projecting comfort about yourself and the project) Solutions oriented (helping others with a positive attitude) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being proactive/service oriented Ability to present and convince (based on expertise and argumentation) Transparency (lead by integrity and openness) Care for materials and self | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the branding process Knowledge of channels and use in BoP markets Understanding the role of the customer How data can be used to test and improve conversion Knowledge of case studies to back up argumentation Knowledge of basic design rules | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting research (USP, product features, competition, users) Create a professional proposal for a client Creating a campaign across channels Design of basic branding materials Project management Analyse data |

Results & Reflections

The first run of the Branding Bootcamp took place in August 2017. Starting from 100 applications, 19 were awarded with distinction of "Branding Boss". The selection process included:

100 people applied - 80 people invited for interview - interviewees were given a case study and were asked to answer seven questions to demonstrate commitment towards programmes and assess branding hard skills - 38 people joined the programme. After one week 19 people were identified out of bootcamp were identified as 'branding bosses'. 19 remaining participants received further training and corporate placement support.

We have highlighted three of the "branding bosses" below. Freetown Business School is planning to run the programme bi-annually with the next one taking place in January 2018.

Branding Bootcamp Testimonial

Marvyn Dennis Dingle

Background: Accounting and Finance

Education: Bachelors in Social Science from Fourah Bay College

From: Kissy, Freetown

How were you connected to the Branding Bootcamp?: WhatsApp

What is your ideal next step professionally?: I believe the combination of my finance background merged with the Branding Bootcamp would make me a strong candidate for a position as a Marketing Manager for a Private Company in the trading sector of general commercial goods.

Top Skills gained from the bootcamp:

- The ability to logically and systematically develop a market strategy for any brand
- Having the knowledge to make marketing strategies that are of industry standard that match with current trends
- More knowledgeable about specific marketing models that can be used in Sierra Leone that can be effectively used in Sierra Leone
 - Specifically 'Below the Line' (BTL) channels to market specifically to BTL communities.

How do you think the Bootcamp will help you accomplish your professional goals?: I have made key relationships in the Sierra Leone Business Community. I believe this network will keep me in the know and will help me find more opportunities.



Branding Bootcamp Testimonial

Mabel Turay

Background:

Bachelors in Business Management and Philosophy – South Africa

IB Diploma – Ghana

IGCSC Diploma – Ghana

Wilberforce

Current Job: Associate Representative at IDT Labs

How were you connected to the Branding Bootcamp: My manager referred me to apply.

What is your ideal next profession?

I have a management background and would like to merge marketing and management into my work. Right now, I'm looking to work in an environment with many young entrepreneurs. I would like to take on a Human Resources role and then eventually start my own company.

What are the top skills you gained?

- The strategies behind leading a marketing programme
- Creatively express ideas for a larger strategy and the pitch them to a group
- Designing of branding material and proposals

I want to bring these skills back to my current job, IDT Labs. I want to re-vamp the marketing programme for IDT Labs by going through the exact process taught at the bootcamp. I am especially interested in working with my IDT team to work on defining and honing in on our audience.

How do you think the bootcamp will help your professional goals?

It will help me by providing a platform to work with other entrepreneurs to learn and collaborate. I believe this platform will help me find other opportunities like this.



Branding Bootcamp Testimonial

Mohammad Bah

Intern at Sierra Leone Brewery
Bachelors in History and Politics
Diploma in Peace and Conflict

How were you connected to the bootcamp?

The Freetown Business School Facebook Page

Next Step Professionally?

The Bootcamp has really inspired in wanting to become a Marketing Manager. I very much like the idea of becoming a Marketing Manager for a trading company.

Top skills you gained from the bootcamp?

- Specific BTL marketing strategies for Sierra Leone and how they apply throughout the branding process outlined in the bootcamp.
- Event planning tips are going to be quite helpful for me, because much of my work at Sierra Leone brewery is organising events.

How do you think the bootcamp will help you accomplish your goals?

This bootcamp has really set the foundation for the marketing strategies I need to push forward my career in marketing. I think I can bring more innovation to marketing strategies after this bootcamp. I plan to utilise Sierra Leone-specific BTL strategies to any project I am on.

