

Meet the next generation of

# AFRICAN BUSINESS LEADERS

SEPTEMBER  
2022

# 01-03

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

# 04-08

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**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED  
BY MR. NIYI ONIFADE, CHAIRMAN  
ADVISORY BOARD HEIRS  
ACADEMY AT THE HEIRS  
HOLDINGS GRADUATE TRAINEE  
PROGRAMME GRADUATION  
CEREMONY**

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**TEF GRADUATE TRAINEE CORNER**

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REIMAGINING PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR A TRANSFORMED AFRICA

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CREDITS



Editor's

Note

— Chidinma Nwaukwa

I still very vividly remember my graduation ceremony in 2017. I remember feeling very excited to finally be graduating from the university alongside my closest friends, but I also remember being very anxious. I was anxious at the thought of entering an already saturated job market where most employers were looking to hire only people with experience.

Looking back to that period in my life, what was most important to me was finding the right opportunity to learn, trying new things and figuring out exactly what I was good at and my areas of interest.

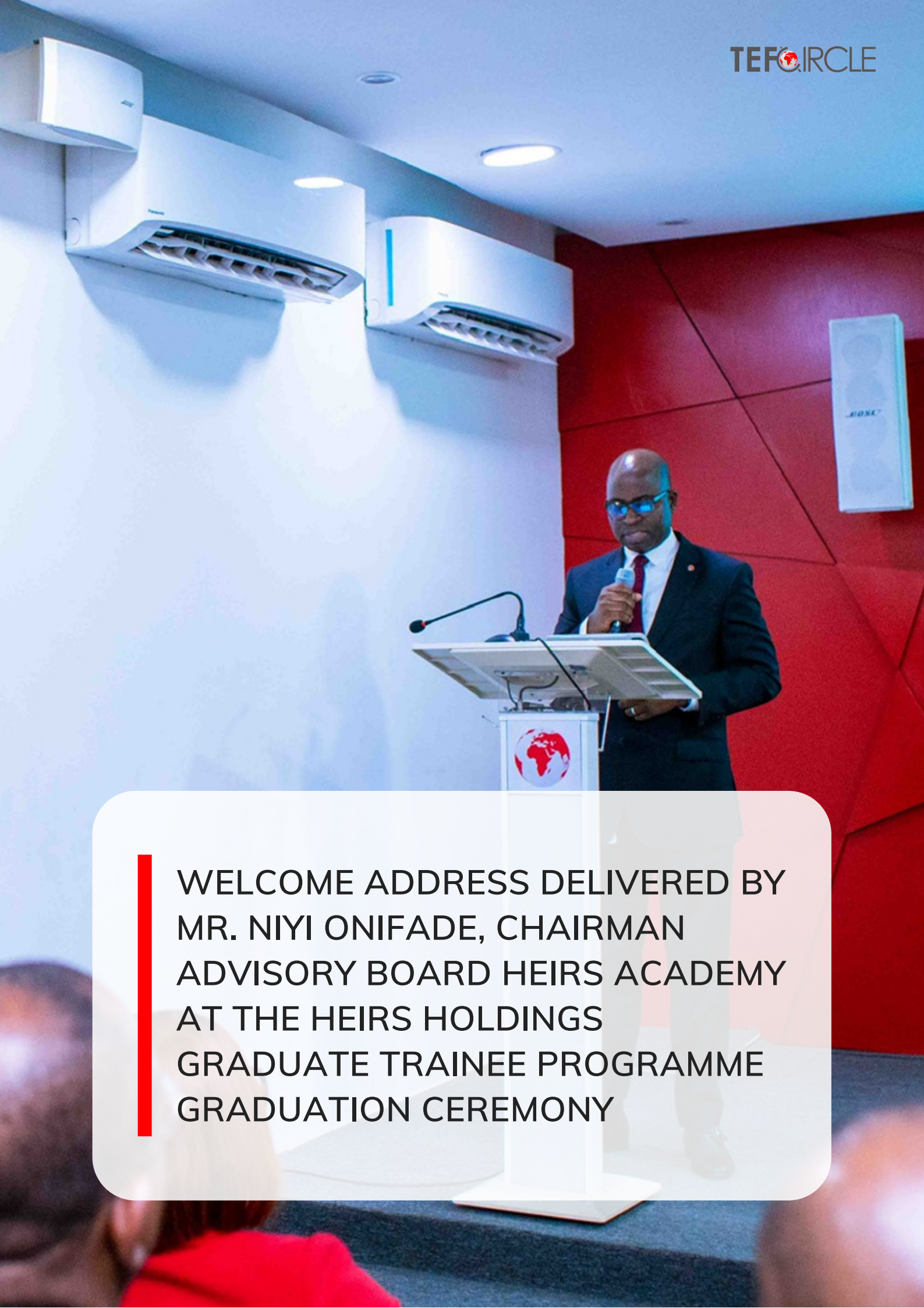
As Our Founder, Mr. Tony O. Elumelu highlighted in his closing remarks at the recent graduation ceremony of the pilot Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme, the role that his first ever manager played in his life was critical to the success that he has achieved today. Just by simply giving him the opportunity to work at his photocopier sales firm and providing him with the hands-on training, that not only gave him the tools to excel in the role, but it also taught him the valuable business principles that he lives by till date. Mr. Elumelu described the HH Graduation ceremony as a full circle moment for him.

This issue of TEF Circle is dedicated to all 54 graduates of the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme, who have remained committed to learning and growing their personal and professional lives within the last months.

In this issue, some of these young women and men let us into their experience with job hunting and finally getting their big break by securing a position in the HH Graduate Trainee Programme. They also share their learning from their functional rotation at the Tony Elumelu Foundation and how it will be relevant to them as they progress in their career.

I hope that this issue gives you cause to reflect on your career journey and take a mental note of all the individuals who have played a critical role in your journey.

Have a wonderful read!



WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY  
MR. NIYI ONIFADE, CHAIRMAN  
ADVISORY BOARD HEIRS ACADEMY  
AT THE HEIRS HOLDINGS  
GRADUATE TRAINEE PROGRAMME  
GRADUATION CEREMONY

The Group Chairman, dear colleagues, our dear graduates of today, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening.

I am most delighted to, on behalf of the Advisory Board of Heirs Academy, welcome you to the first ever graduation ceremony for our Graduate Trainee Programme.

It has taken us six (6) months to witness today, being the realization of the simple, yet impactful idea, to launch a world-class Academy for working professionals.

So, please permit me to first extend a hearty congratulations to all our 54 graduates, on behalf of the Advisory board of Heirs Academy.

You have walked the path and lived our dream, and we are glad to see this become a reality.

Months ago, you were selected out of thousands of fresh graduates like yourselves, to partake in the Heirs Academy Graduate Trainee programme; a hands-on training experience developed to equip you for the next stage of your career. The training has exposed you to extensive classroom learning, followed by the rounds you made from company to company - observing, learning, and picking up the skills you need for the workplace, and for the next stage of your career.

You have gone through all these stages, learning, executing, and developing yourselves in diverse business areas.

There is no doubt that the process and methodology of our programme has made an impact on you and has become a life changing experience that will propel you to the next level of your careers.



At Heirs Holdings, we are long term investors, with a mission to improve lives and transform Africa.

We believe that capacity building and investing in our young ones is the biggest form of investment we can make in Africa. The future of the continent is in the hands of the youths - all of you seated here, whose ideas, resilience, and hard work make things happen.

So, I charge you all, our graduates, to henceforth live our values of Excellence, Execution and Enterprise - the 3Es that you have learnt here.

I charge you all to become great brand ambassadors of Heirs Holdings Group, taking our message far and wide, to your homes and to your friends.

On behalf of the HH Academy Advisory Board, I would like to express our gratitude to the Group Chairman for his vision, leadership, and support. We are most grateful sir.

To all our Group CEOs and other leaders of our Group, we say a big thank you for your unflinching support throughout the period of the training programme.

We are also proud to present the graduates to you today. I can assure you that they are brilliant, vibrant, and very passionate young men and women. They will all contribute immensely to the growth of our respective businesses.

What gives me this confidence, you may ask?

In the last six months, our 54 graduates sitting in this room today went through classroom learning covering six (6) very important

curriculum areas comprising:

- i. Business Communications and Professional Etiquette
- ii. Sales and Business Development
- iii. Product Development, Design Thinking, and Innovation
- iv. Finance Essentials and Data Driven Decision Making
- v. Team Building and Emotional Intelligence
- vi. Risk Management, IT Security, Governance, and Compliance.

Our graduates also went through eighteen (18) weeks of Functional Job Rotation in various companies in our Group. These job rotations focused on different functional areas such as:

1. Strategy and Management;
2. Financial Management and Operations;
3. Financial Products;
4. Sales;
5. Digital Innovation; and
6. Marketing & Corporate Communications.

In those job rotations, the performance of the graduates was assessed based on defined KPIs for each functional area, and I can confirm that they all received excellent scores!

Additionally, ladies and gentlemen, four (4) different projects were assigned to our graduates today. These involved:

1. Book Review and Presentation - The Power of Vision.
2. Product Development for selected companies in the Group
3. Financial Research, Analysis, and Interpretation; and
4. The Capstone Project: Increasing Insurance awareness and penetration amongst millennials and GenZs in Nigeria.

They performed very well in these projects!

Our graduates have been baked properly, and they are already burning with the passion to contribute.

To you, our graduands, I want to quickly share a few nuggets that would help you to accelerate your professional career:

One, never stop learning because learning is life-long. The day you stop learning is the day you outlive your usefulness. Keep building, keep developing yourself to become better, and you will achieve great success.

Two, focus on delivering value. People pay for, and respect value. Always remember that!

Three, pay it forward. As you have learnt, share your knowledge with others too. That will make our world a better place.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to commend our HR team for the flawless execution of our Group Graduate Trainee programme. This is indeed a world-class demonstration of the excellence we have in-house. Well done, team!

Our graduates today, we are immensely proud of you. Go forth and shine the light. The entire Heirs Holdings Academy and the Heirs Holdings Group congratulate you all, and we all wish you the very best of success in your future endeavors.

Thank you.

# TEF GRADUATE TRAINEE CORNER

"Bright-eyed, hopeful, and expectant, these young people venture into the real world in search of their next big break."

At the end of each academic year, institutions across the world release young graduates into the labour market. Bright-eyed, hopeful, and expectant, these young people venture into the real world in search of their next big break.

In this issue of TEF Circle some members of the pioneer set of Heirs Academy share their experience with job hunting fresh out of the university. They highlight their journey to being part of the 54 people selected to participate in the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme amongst a pool of over 18,000 applicants. More importantly, they share some of the lessons learned from their functional rotation at the Tony Elumelu Foundation and its impact on their personal and professional careers.

## **HEIRS HOLDINGS GRADUATE TRAINEE: A DREAM COME TRUE!**

By Chinenye Akandu

My brother once told me that the search for a job in Nigeria is a job on its own. I never fully understood what he meant by that, until I completed my NYSC programme and embarked on the job-hunting journey.

I vividly recall how worried I was towards the end of my service year; I was concerned about what the future held for me in terms of finding a suitable job and being on a good career path. I remember asking myself several questions regarding the path I wanted to tow, and reaching out to a few people whom I believed could help me find a good job.



I was desperately willing to try out any sector and I didn't mind if it was different from my field of study - I studied Mass

communication and I have always loved broadcast media, but with the constant complaints from most Nigerians about how difficult it is to get a decent job in Nigeria, especially one in line with your field of study, it fueled my desperation to make do with any job that comes my way.

Reaching out to these people whom I believed would help make the job hunting easier made me realise that in life, all you have is YOU. I realized that some people were not willing to help, some others, especially some male folks made some unpleasant offers to me that I had to blatantly turn down. Surprisingly, all these acted as a push. Rather than being deterred, I was pushed to believing that I could do anything on my own without any external help.

As soon as I was awarded my NYSC certificate, I started putting out my CV out there, applying for any job opportunities that I could find online that had requirements that matched my skills and qualifications; secretary, customer care representative, front desk executive, internships, and so on. I did not want to languish at home doing nothing.

On the 23rd of December 2021, while returning to Lagos from Abia state where I served, a friend of mine sent me the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme flyer and asked me to apply for it. At first, I was skeptical because I felt the recruitment process may not be credible or based on merit, I also most probably had an iota of doubt in myself. Looking back now, I am really very grateful that I took the bold step to apply.

On the 25th of December, Christmas day, while others were enjoying the festive season, I was busy putting in my application for the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme. It was a tad lengthy application process. The application ended on the 29th

of December and about a week later, I wrote my first aptitude test for the graduate trainee programme. The test was in four parts: logical reasoning, quantitative aptitude, English proficiency, and analytical thinking. Luckily, I scaled through and I was more than happy when I received the congratulatory mail from the team informing me that I had progressed to the next stage scheduled for January 12th till 22nd of 2022. The second stage consisted of a Competency Based interview (CBI), Case study analysis and presentation, and a Group Exercise. A PowerPoint slide for the case study analysis was to be prepared and forwarded to the recruitment team before the scheduled date for the presentation. Unfortunately for me, when the case study for analysis was sent to me via email, it dropped in my spam folder and I wasn't able to see it in time until after the deadline. I felt really sad. I remember locking myself up in my room and crying myself to sleep. I couldn't come to terms with the fact that I had to drop out of the process because of that. I sent a series of emails to the HR team explaining what happened. The HR team was nice enough to do a rescheduling for me. I was overjoyed. I later did my second stage assessment on the 21st of January, 2022. It was like a miracle to me.

After the assessments came the endless waiting, the fear of not knowing if I had passed the second stage or not. I got a couple of job offers in the process of waiting, but I turned them down because they weren't what I wanted.

A few weeks after the second stage assessment, I got an email from the recruitment team to follow a link where I was to upload some qualifying documents on the site. This was a silver lining for me - a glimmer of hope that instantly filled my heart with immeasurable joy. Three weeks after that, I received a congratulatory email from the team stating that I had been shortlisted to participate in the Graduate Trainee Programme.

That day, my joy was unfathomable, as I called my friends and family to share the good news with them.

The next step was a series of medical examinations, including the COVID-19, all requirements to participate in the programme, which kicked off on the 9th of March 2022. The Programme was facilitated by the HH group CEOs, Directors and so on, who all delivered insightful, informative and educative presentations to us, and it was nothing short of an amazing experience. It was all I imagined and more. I am privileged to have been granted this opportunity.

In the first week of the five months of job placement rotations across the group companies, I was lucky to be placed in the philanthropic arm of the group; the Tony Elumelu Foundation. It was a wonderful experience; I gave it my best and the growth is evident.

## **WELCOME TO TEF, CHIEMEZIE!**

By Chimezie Nwosu

Hey there,

If you're reading this, you should know that I successfully made it through the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme, and quite frankly, I feel really special.

18,000 applicants to the programme and only 54 got selected! I mean what are the odds. So before you continue reading my journey so far, please give your boy a nod of appreciation, I deserve it 😊. Nah, never mind, I'd prefer a thumbs up.

So anyway, back to the gist. Before starting my first week at HH, more specifically at the Tony Elumelu Foundation, I was quite



apprehensive as to how I would fit in with my colleagues, and how I would be able to build my knowledge on the different companies under HH. I honestly hoped that I wouldn't be relegated to following them around like sheep. Thankfully my colleagues were chill and the staff at HH made me feel extremely welcome, all of them giving me an insight into their roles.



My first day started with a Covid Test, after which I went straight to Balogun Market to buy 3 pairs of suits, as the dresscode in our offer letter clearly stated wearing blazers from Monday to Thursday was compulsory. See me see suit na, I had never worn a suit in my life, not even during my project defense in my final year at the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO). That was probably why Professor Ezeh, my

supervisor, graded my performance as a C but I still graduated with a 2:1, thank God.

The only other opportunity that I had to wear a suit when I was groomsman for my cousin Jerry's wedding, but as my God will have it, it rained heavily on the day of, so most of us had to remove our suit jackets. 😊.

This new journey officially started on Wednesday 10th March 2022. The HH group CEOs were invited to engage with us at the Dominic Theater (a meeting room/ theater at Heirs Place, which also served as our classroom during the 6 months of our training) Group Chairman and Oga Kpatakpata Mr. Tony O. Elumelu, CON also addressed us. Later that day, we had a cocktail event and a picture session with him.

day, we had a cocktail event and a picture session with him. Did I mention that I am amongst the first set of Graduate Trainees at HH? Yup, I am a pioneer inductee of the Heirs Holdings Academy. Another thumbs up here please!

The next day, classes started earnestly at 8:00 am sharp, so I left home by 6:00am. The HH office (Heirs Place) is situated in the heart of Ikoyi, so shuttling from my house in Lekki to the office took me around 40 minutes, with the little early morning traffic. By 6:42am I was seated in Dominic (had to make a good first impression) I thought I would maybe be the first, but omo, when I came I saw like 20 people already seated. I had to ask myself if they slept in the office the night before.

We all exchanged pleasantries and had a quick chat, mostly about how we were finding Lagos life, seeing as most of them were visiting Lagos for the first time.

I remember that by 8am, all 61 of us were seated and we had a really engaging session with the facilitator for the first course. After his session which lasted about 2 hours, we had our tea break. We were given tea or coffee depending on each individual's choice, with snacks. We returned for 2 more sessions and by 2:00 pm we dispersed for lunch - the menu was fried rice and two pieces of chicken.

After lunch, we returned for the final session. I usually feel sleepy after eating, but due to the engaging nature of the session, this wasn't the case at all! By 5:00pm, the class had ended and we went home. That was it for Day 1.

By the end of the week of training, I had a base level of understanding which allowed me to understand the finer details of the workings of HH quickly and clearly. I always try to stay fully

involved in an active way. I found that there was no such thing as a stupid question and I had an unlimited number of questions I could ask which the facilitator always gladly answered. It seemed that not only did I feel happier after asking questions, but our teachers felt happier too as they knew that I was fully engaging in what they were teaching me.

I was satisfied when I got posted to Tony Elumelu Foundation for my first job rotation. I've had previous stints working for a not-for-profit organisation, so this was an experience I really looked forward to. I got posted to the Marketing and Corporate Communications department and I was responsible for creating engaging social media content amongst other roles.

My supervisors have been warm and accommodating, they were happy to answer my many questions, considering that I'm actually not social media savvy, and content creation was actually new to me.

I was told to come up with several engaging posts for the Foundation's Facebook page, and with guidance from my team and some research, I found out it was actually fun.

Safe to say my experience as a graduate trainee at the Tony Elumelu Foundation was enthralling.

## WELL DONE AMAKA, “YOU GOT YOUR BIG BREAK!”

By Amaka Eluemuno



Never believe anything is impossible. Have an open mind. Find out what it takes to succeed. Chances are it will”

- Tony O. Elumelu, CON

Congratulations!!!, These were the words I heard after I told my family and a few friends I got accepted into the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme. My heart melted when I heard my brother say, “I am proud of you”, indeed it was a proud moment for me because I had been trying to find my footing career-wise.



For some time, I was worried about what career path to follow as I had a few things on my mind; whether to continue in the medical line as I studied pharmacology which was a great experience or to work outside of the non-medical line. The truth is I wanted more, I wanted a platform to learn, grow and exceed my limit and so I spoke to my brother, and he told me to

focus on applying for graduate trainee recruitments, ones where my discipline would not matter.

I took his advice and started applying aggressively for different graduate trainee recruitments whether I qualified or not, I mean what's the harm in trying when you've got nothing to lose, I got call backs from a few organisations inviting me to take aptitude tests, for some I moved on to the next stage, and for others I got the “We regret to inform you” email and we all know that is part of what you get while job hunting, you win some, you lose some.

At some point, I informed my brother and mom that I was discontinuing because of the constant heartbreaks I was getting from these organisations and that I was going to manage the job I was doing at the time, at least it was better than nothing.

Towards the end of last year, I picked myself up and continued applying. This was when I stumbled on the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee programme. If I am being completely honest; I had not heard of Heirs Holdings before that moment, but I went ahead to apply. I thought 'Why not? If I get it, great, if not; we move!!'

When, after some time, I found out I had missed the invitation email for the aptitude test, it was like a punch in the gut. I felt I had lost an opportunity without even the chance to prove myself and was set on moving on. So, imagine my surprise when I checked my email the next day to see another invitation. The joy that rushed through me!!! I remember that day in my office, immediately I saw the mail and didn't think twice about it. I rushed to my desk to take the test which lasted for 35 mins.

Fast forward to 3 days when I got the success mail. I was nervous at first because I had moved on to the Virtual Assessment Centre which I had no experience in, but I didn't let that weigh me down, so I worked on the case study, put together my presentation and submitted it at the appropriate time. A week later I had my Competency-based interview, presentation, and group presentation. Honestly, I was nervous at first because as much as I researched and prepared, I didn't know what to expect, I had to give myself a pep talk to pull myself together and gather the courage and confidence to participate in the assessment.

The silence was loud and deafening after the second stage of

the assessment, I refreshed my email every single day waiting for a response. The anxiety of not knowing whether I moved on to the next stage crept in and I got worried but I was advised to take my mind off it and so I did, a few weeks later I got an email to upload my documents, for me that was a good sign at the time, I had this inner peace that it was all going to work out and I just had to be patient, a few more weeks later I got a congratulatory email and an invitation to go for my pre-employment medical screening and COVID-19 test. I remember telling myself "Well done Amaka, you did it, you got your big break".

We were sent "joining instructions" which included a welcome message and the Heirs Academy rules and regulations on punctuality, dress code, the use of mobile phones, participation, respect for others, honest feedback, functional rotations and examinations. I remember when we came for the COVID test we were told to resume at the venue by 7:45am, and for someone coming from the mainland, like I do, that meant waking up latest by 4am in the morning at that moment I said to myself this new chapter won't be easy but this is what I signed up for and I was ready to face whatsoever challenge or obstacle that comes my way.

The programme launch kicked off on the 9th of March 2022, where we were addressed by CEOs from the different investee companies, the Chairman himself, Mr. Tony O. Elumelu graced us with his presence, addressed us with encouraging words, the launch came to an end with a cocktail event where we had to mingle with the different CEOs and staff of the organisation.

We had exciting classroom sessions, where CEOs, the group CEO and Directors from the different subsidiaries have come to deliver educative, inspiring, and insightful presentations and lectures. We

even had a session where some Directors came to share their HH story. These stories personally inspired and encouraged me to push myself harder and not shy away from any difficult task.

I had my first functional rotation with the Marketing & Corporate Communications division of the philanthropic arm of the group – The Tony Elumelu Foundation, it was an amazing start and I can tell you that I learned a whole lot.

One thing I have learned at HH is the importance of always telling our stories as this will encourage others to work harder and not get discouraged about achieving their goals and objectives.

## **HOW I GOT INTO THE HEIRS HOLDINGS GRADUATE TRAINEE PROGRAMME**

By Nurudeen Odetayo

Every weekday for 3 weeks, I made my way to the top floor of the Heirs Place building. This floor, a glass and tile open plan office space, is where the Tony Elumelu Foundation team carries out their daily activities. A team I had the opportunity to be part of courtesy of being part of the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainees assigned to the Tony Elumelu Foundation for my first job rotation. At the Foundation, I worked with the Marketing and Corporate Communications team, but before I go any further into my experience so far, allow me to take you back to how and where it all started.

Around December last year, my brother sent me a link to apply to the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme. I did a bit of research about Heirs Holdings and I knew this was the place for me. I knew I would have the opportunity to meet top CEOs and even Mr Tony Elumelu in person! Omo! I hurriedly applied then, Bam! I got a date for the first assessment test which was cognitive. I've failed quite a number of cognitive tests in the past, but

because I was determined to get into Heirs Holdings I put in more serious, conscious work this time and boom! I got an email that I passed. Shortly after, I was invited to the next assessment stage which was quite rigorous.



The second assessment stage was in three phases; first, a competency-based interview, then a case study question was given to us which we were supposed to answer and present on a PowerPoint and a group discussion with other applicants. And after about 4 hours of moving from one meeting room to another, the second assessment stage finally came to an end.

A few weeks went by and I hadn't gotten any feedback. It felt, to my dismay, like another opportunity had gone by, and in my head, I was analysing where I must have gone wrong during the assessment stage. To make matters worse, I heard some people were already getting congratulatory emails asking them to go for medicals and the resumption date was fixed. I was heartbroken but I didn't give up, mostly thanks to my brother who kept



encouraging me.

So on the 5th of March 2022, I got a call from an unknown person introducing himself as an HR personnel from Heirs Holdings and congratulating me for making it into the Heirs Holdings graduate trainee programme. He asked me if I was available to resume on Wednesday 9th March 2022. You can imagine what my response was, lol!

On Wednesday, the journey started with a formal opening of the graduate trainee programme. Mr Tony Elumelu and other top CEOs were in attendance, followed by a cocktail party to round it off. Posing beside TOE for a picture was my highlight of the event.

The next day we were back in class for two and half weeks of an intensive orientation session, facilitated by top CEOs and staff of Heirs Holdings who gave us insightful information about the Heirs Holdings culture. This orientation session also involved bonding with other graduate trainees at tea break in the morning and at lunchtime held in the Heirs Place garden, which were my favourite moments.

Working within the Marketing and Corporate Communication department at the Tony Elumelu Foundation was tasking yet engaging and fun filled. I learnt new things including how to use Canva, creating engaging content on social media, and also learnt about external relations and partnership.

What I like most about the Marketing and Corporate Communications team is the accommodating nature of every member of the team, it's a big family at the Tony Elumelu Foundation MCC. My experience was superb.

Even though it was a whole new experience for me, I loved it so much that I didn't want my functional rotation at the Foundation to end so soon.

## **IT WAS 2 LONG MONTHS OF WAITING, BUT I FINALLY GOT INTO THE COVETED HH ACADEMY**

By Opeyemi Ayodeji

"Yayy! I was accepted into into Heirs Holdings as a Graduate Trainee. I'm going to work in Tony Elumelu's organisation, and I'll probably see him physically. I'll be chilling with the big boys." these thoughts and more running through my mind at the beginning of my tenure as an HH Graduate Trainee.

Nigeria's unemployment rate has been on the increase for over a decade now, a well known fact amongst every citizen of the country. Before I completed my undergraduate studies, I was already thinking of organisations I could work in, what my career path would be like and praying for a miracle job, lol. The fear of unemployment is the beginning of wisdom.

I discovered that Graduate Trainee Programmes were my best chance for getting into a good company and building my career since I had little or no experience. The COVID-19 pandemic had delayed my NYSC and career by a whole year, but I finally got the opportunity to serve my country, and it was a great experience. A month before the end of my NYSC posting, I had drafted my CV and was able to highlight the little work experiences I had gotten. For example, I had volunteered with an NGO while in secondary school, where I successfully executed two projects.

I knew about Tony Elumelu Foundation but not Heirs Holdings, but when I saw the advert for the graduate trainee programme, I applied because I figured it was a good company. Fortunately, I

was invited to take an online aptitude test, which I passed and shortly after, was assigned another assessment which required me to create a PowerPoint presentation. Boy, was I nervous! I had never created a PowerPoint presentation myself. With the size of my class in the University (over 200 students), all projects involving PowerPoint presentations were done in groups, so it made sense to just



assign the creation of the PowerPoint to those who had learned it professionally or were just good at it, leaving the data gathering and actual presentation to me.

Well, I was not going to be defeated, so I went to YouTube and quickly learnt how to do a PowerPoint presentation.

The Assessment consisted of 3 stages; the PowerPoint presentation, group exercise and competency-based interview, all of which were done virtually. I had really prepared for the assessment and at the end of my PowerPoint presentation, I was commended by my interviewers. During my competency-based interview, I could also tell that my answers were well received, so it was an exciting experience overall.

The first mail sent by Heirs Holdings stated that the entire recruitment process would last for four to five weeks. When I got the mail for the assessment, barely two weeks after writing the test and with the positive feedback I got, I was looking forward to a favourable reply.

Unfortunately, it took longer than that to get any feedback. Although I had been quite confident, the delay in getting a response affected this confidence, then I found out that a friend

who also did the assessment had been sent a mail to upload some documents. I felt bad, which is normal but I was in the final stages of the recruitment process of several other companies so that was some form of consolation. Almost two weeks later, I received an email from Heirs Holdings to upload some documents and I was ecstatic. Again, I found out that this same friend had been sent a congratulatory mail and an offer letter to resume the next Monday, another disappointment. I mean, if I had not passed the assessment, I would not have been told to upload my documents. What could have been the problem? Where did I fall short? So many questions running through my head with no one to answer them but as an optimistic person, I just concluded that it probably just was not meant to be.

I was wrong, it was meant to be. I got a call from Heirs Holdings congratulating me on successfully getting into the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee programme. I was asked to go for my medicals that same day or the next day and then resume the following week. Imagine my reaction, dazed would be the right word to use. I was so surprised that I replied saying “Congratulations to you too” after I was congratulated, lol. From this point onwards, everything was fast-paced and the rest as they say was history.

Just kidding, there's no way I'm skipping the juicy parts. The inaugural ceremony was attended by very knowledgeable and successful people. Guess what, Tony Elumelu himself addressed us and said that he was looking forward to producing CEOs from the graduate trainee programme within 5-10 years. Yes, in 5-10 years I'm definitely becoming a CEO. The event ended with a cocktail party; it was truly memorable.

For the classroom training, different subsidiaries of Heirs Holdings came to enlighten us about their companies, what they do, their growth and challenges, their vision and people and many more

vital information. This session opened my eyes to the possibilities in the group. We had a panel interview with young professionals in the group and it was so encouraging. I was and am still motivated by their various stories and successes.

The core values of Heirs Holdings: Enterprise, Execution and Excellence were and are still being imbibed in us. Every facilitator had infused the core values into their presentation. It's amazing how in tune everyone is with the vision of improving lives and transforming Africa, you could tell that they truly believe in the philosophy of Africapitalism.

I'm really excited to have worked with the Partnerships and Policy department of the Tony Elumelu Foundation because everyone on the team was so helpful.

One great thing about this training and Heirs Holdings was the food. I mean, who doesn't like good food? The quality of meals is amazing, breakfast choices were amazing. Did I mention that there were also spontaneous gifts given out by the facilitators, either generally or to winners of some exercises? A good example would be when Somachi, the TEF Director Partnerships and Communications ordered Krispy Kreme doughnuts when a good number of the class admitted to not having heard about the brand. Exciting, right?

At Heirs Holdings we work hard and play harder. As you can guess, I'm definitely looking forward to "playing harder".

## **MY JOURNEY TO HEIRS HOLDINGS AS A GRADUATE TRAINEE**

By Tobenna Etumnu

It still seemed so surreal reading the mail that I had been selected after I had come to terms with probably not making the cut as I

had waited so long to get a response. If anything, it reinforced my belief that with commitment and discipline, you can achieve anything. Tony Elumelu once said," The future we all want for ourselves is one of our own makings". I was going to work hard to craft the future I wanted and not hold back.

I finished my NYSC in March 2020, about two weeks before the effects of the pandemic were being felt around the world and before the nationwide lockdown began. I did not envisage it would be that tough to get something definite to do as I was just fresh from service, but companies were being very careful about recruitment owing to uncertainties arising from the pandemic.



Towards the end of the year, I got a good offer. I worked there for about a year, but I was eager to try something new. Considering my finance and accounting background, I had a vague idea of what I wanted to do and the career I needed to advance myself. I wanted more than I was getting at the time. I felt like I was just scratching the surface and I needed that big break, so I put in applications to organizations looking for roles that would suit me and I applied to the Heirs Holdings Graduate Trainee Programme amongst others. I knew the company was owned by Tony Elumelu but that was all the information I had about the organisation. I mean, the thought of working in a company owned by a world-renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist is always going to be a good opportunity... scratch that, a great opportunity. I did some extra research on what the company was really into and how I could possibly fit it and contribute, in the grand scheme of things, to the growth and success of the organisation. Yes! you read that right. I was already looking forward to working and contributing, having just applied. I had spoken to a few friends

and believed that with all things being equal, Heirs Holdings was where I wanted to be. I believed it would afford me the opportunity to touch different career bases and develop myself and advance my career and I was quite confident I could get into the programme.

The recruitment process was quite rigorous. There were three phases to the recruitment: the online cognitive test, a case study hack, and the assessment centre. The assessment centre also included three phases: a PowerPoint presentation of the case study, a group exercise, and the competency-based interview. I slowly but steadily moved through each phase and completed the whole process. Passing each phase only strengthened my faith that I was doing something good.

Now, all I had to do was play the waiting game. Days turned to weeks and weeks into a month. My anxiety had gotten the better of me. I asked around and realized some applicants had gotten an email to upload their documents. This came as a shock to me as I was really hoping to get in. I got so anxious that I put a call through to one of the numbers that reached out during the recruitment process, and I was told the process was over. I was crushed. I confided in my mum, and she asked me to believe, "Maybe, they're reaching out to people in batches, keep up the hope. If they don't eventually get back to you, I believe in you, and you'd definitely get your big break" she said. To be honest, I accepted what seemed like my reality and moved on. I got accepted by another organization from one of the applications I had sent out and started there. It was also an opportunity other people would kill for, but I mostly felt like I was settling as this was supposed to be like a last resort or a second option. Well, what do they say? "When life gives you Lemons, you make Lemonade".

On the 4th of March, I got a call from HR personnel telling me I

had been accepted into the programme and was asked if I'd be available to resume the following week. I was shocked and didn't know what to say.

Doubt began to creep in, "Tobe, are you sure this is what you want?", "Do you think this is worth it?", "Why don't you just stay where you are? You are beginning to get comfortable". I quickly snapped back to reality and asked I be given some time to give an answer. I quickly made a few calls to my parents, friends, and a few senior experienced individuals I had access to. I didn't get the kind of answers I was looking for. Ultimately, the decision rested on my shoulders. I wondered why I was having second thoughts because this was what I had wanted right from the start. I cussed at myself for having doubts and put in a call back to HR to give the affirmative on the offer. Not long after, I received a mail and had my medicals done. I love oranges, life was giving me oranges and best believe I was going to make the best orange juice possible.

The programme kicked off fully on the 9th of March to coincide with the launch of the Heirs Academy and we were the pioneer set. Out of 18,000 candidates who applied to the programme, only 61 of us were able to get in. Talk about feeling special. The real work had just begun. The Chairman, Tony Elumelu was at the launch event and spoke to us. He reiterated how he wanted to make CEOs of us in the next 5-10 years. "Well, this is going to be one heck of a fun ride", I thought. The launch ended with a cocktail event where we got to mingle and speak with the group CEOs and staff of the investee companies. I'm sure you're wondering if I had the opportunity to speak with "you know who", well I couldn't.

It's only natural that so many people would also want to have an opportunity with such a successful person. Well, not to worry, I'd



have many more chances for that, I'm not going anywhere anytime soon. The next three weeks following this were full of classroom sessions where CEOs, Directors and staff from the group and investee companies came to speak to us and deliver exciting and insightful presentations on the general Heirs Holdings culture as well as their experiences while working. Lol, I now live and breathe the 3E's (Excellence, Execution and Enterprise) that guide the operation and workings of the group. Being able to meet other Graduate Trainees from diverse backgrounds, bond with them and continue to build my network was one of my favourite things about this classroom period. The highlight of it was getting Peter Ashade, the CEO of United Capital and Somachi Chris-Asoluka, the Director of Partnerships & Communications for Tony Elumelu Foundation to take me on as mentees. Talk about progress.

I had my first functional job rotation with the Marketing and Corporate Communications division of the Tony Elumelu Foundation. It was an amazing experience as I got to work directly with Somachi Chris-Asoluka.

Unfamiliar territory? Yes, nevertheless I was most excited to work across the group and pick up on all the skills I need to develop my all-round abilities.


## **DECISIONS, DREAMS, DETERMINATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF A GRADUATE TRAINEE**

By Omotayo Bisuga

I recall seeing the call for application to the Heirs Holding Graduate Trainee Programme and absent mindedly applying because I was job hunting. I was not particular about joining the group because I had another organization in mind, and I was working assiduously towards that. The recruitment process was quite intensive as I had to do a PowerPoint presentation which I

did not like. I applied because as a job hunter, 'the more the merrier'. In the end, I did not get feedback and the HR had initially stated that the recruitment process will take six weeks. So, I took my L and moved on. But at about 8:28am on Wednesday 16th of February I got a mail from the Human Resources Director informing me that I had been accepted into the program. After consulting with my mentors, I rejected the offer at the company I had carefully pursued for 4 months and joined Heirs Holdings.

Prior to joining, I had always known Heirs Holdings, Tony Elumelu, and his philanthropic works around the world but nothing prepared me for the change in thinking I had on the 9th of March during the induction ceremony. I saw TOE physically for the first time and he sold the concept of Africapitalism to me, and I bought fully into it. I also met with other investee companies CEOs and during the classroom sessions I had in the three weeks that followed I learnt about the 3Es which have now become my personal values. I hardly celebrate success or milestones because there are frontiers to conquer and you must not waste time celebrating past successes, but that changed when I heard from human resources that we were picked from a pool of 18,000 candidates, I was pleased from within because I was used to downplaying my successes and feats.



We had various CEOs come into the classroom to tell us their success stories and how they achieved so much despite their youthful age. It reinforced my beliefs that I too can succeed in whatever endeavour I set my heart and mind to do. This aligns with my favourite quote attributed to the Former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan of blessed memories. He said "You are never too young to lead, never

doubt your capacity to triumph where others have failed".

I had my fourth functional rotation at the Tony Elumelu Foundation with the Marketing and Corporate Communications team. At first, I really wasn't looking forward to working at TEF because I knew I had no prior experience with Public Relations, I was intimidated by the excellent job I have seen them do and the testimonies of other graduate trainees who had been there previously.

My fellow Graduate Trainees and I were tasked with the responsibility of targeting distinct audiences across various social media platforms with varying intents. I was tasked with developing content to educate and engage African entrepreneurs on Facebook.

When I started the rotation, I was helpless and I felt the frustration of the woman in the popular video, *Help me Help me, TEF MCC dey carry me go where I know no*".

But 3 weeks down the line, I was glad I did my Marketing and Corporate Communications rotation here because I improved my writing skills, design skills and research skills. This is due to the support I had from my fellow Graduates Trainees and the wonderful colleagues in the unit. They were always on hand to provide clarifications and support on whatever issues I had. They made the work fun. I am also glad to have worked with the Director of Partnerships and Communications, Somachi Chris-Asoluka. She made me see content creation and public relations from a distinct perspective.

Content creation is not always an easy task, especially for people who are not adept at crafting ideas that will interest a particular set of people. My most exciting periods are when I get quality

engagements on the content I created.

The skills and knowledge I gathered at the Tony Elumelu Foundation will be of immense use and importance to me everywhere I find myself.

In between all rotations, I had to write tests, work in teams, and do group presentations. This has helped me a great deal to be a team player, entertaining other people's ideas but not necessarily accepting them. I have also met colleagues who have in no small way influenced me indirectly and shaped my thought process. Every day as I get up to prepare for work, I go with the intent of transforming a life. I am delighted because I know my input is valued and appreciated. This is what motivates me.

## LIFETIME LESSONS

By Osuvwe Eduvie

I am not even sure that I understood why but I always knew that I wanted to start my career with a training programme. I applied for the Heirs Holdings Graduate Training Programme at home in Kaduna State even though I didn't think I was interested in moving to Lagos. The selection process was somewhat different from what I was used to but trust Heirs Holdings to always excellently stand out, the assessments were actually exciting! I had to prepare a PowerPoint presentation slide on a case study which I did in hours because I could not assess the initial link sent to me until I was sent another. I experienced connectivity issues during the group assessments which hardly ever happens and I actually went offline twice!

Surprisingly, one Friday afternoon I received a call congratulating me on my progress thus far and confirming my availability for a medical examination the next day for the Heirs Holdings training

programme in Lagos! I expressed my concerns about the location and the Human Resource personnel, Onyinye patiently explained to me the most exciting training programme I had ever heard about; an opportunity to train and learn at 6 different companies across different sectors of the economy in the period of 6 months. Of course, I accepted!

The actual programme started on the 9th of March with a launch ceremony of the Heirs Academy. Talk about first impressions, the ceremony was perfect. We had our Chairman, Tony Elumelu, one of the richest black men in the world, address us and many other important personalities and CEOs present. I started to truly recognize how much of a big deal this was; out of 18,000 applications, only 61 were selected to pioneer Heirs Academy and I was one of them.

The training started right after with an induction programme on the group and the group companies with great emphasis on the group's core values; Excellence, Enterprise and Execution. We had classroom sessions on effective communication, sales, customer experience, team bonding, emotional intelligence, digital innovation as well as finance.



Four of us were selected to join the Marketing and Corporate Communication team of the Tony Elumelu Foundation. I was very anxious not because I had heard a lot about the team, which I had, but because I was truly excited about this particular rotation; I have always been intrigued about working at a Foundation and this was finally the chance for me to engage with social media which in truth, I thought would be a walk in the park.

We were shown our desks and after what seemed like forever, we

finally had our first official meeting, that was when I met Chidinma and Nelson, the amazing TEF's Communication Executives. We started with introductions and then talked about how much the four of us knew about social media. No surprise that I had been singled out to go research and look through the Tony Elumelu Foundation social media pages because of how little I knew about social media. It started to feel like a run already.

We had training sessions about the Tony Elumelu Foundation and the role of Marketing and Corporate Communication (MCC) in an organization. I learned that the MCC team handles all forms of communication for the organisation, branding, promotions, press releases, official speeches and manages public perception of the brand. I was charged with managing the organization's official Twitter page where I would create content for the page and respond to messages and comments.

Working at the Tony Elumelu Foundation was in fact my most tasking and engaging functional rotation, even though I have said this after all the other functional rotations. I feel like I've gathered knowledge from all the other companies just to work here. That goes to show how excellently the program has been structured, somewhat like building blocks being assembled to create an all-round professional.

Marketing and Corporate Communication at TEF is not just about creating content, it is also about designing, researching, data analysis and working in teams. Yes, I did and learnt all that including taking minutes of meetings, data collation, customer service and client relations.

My experience so far has been a range of emotions, wealth of learnings and a lot more than I could have ever imagined. One of the best things about working at the Tony Elumelu Foundation is

the work culture and the team; the team is very result oriented and yet so approachable and always willing to help. They literally walk with you through it all ensuring that you deliver the very best possible. They sincerely care for your welfare, and it was regular for a colleague to offer snacks or a joke to cheer you up and keep you pumped as you work. I cannot skip the beautiful moment on my birthday when my line manager Somachi Chris-Asoluka, Director, Partnerships & Communications got me cake right after rejecting my designs!

A wise man once told me "It doesn't matter if you read the whole book, it only really matters that you learnt something from the part of it that you've read". Actually, that was Dami, the amazing design lead that would delay my posts for hours just to ensure that my Canva designs were perfect. Three weeks is such a short time to experience an entire organisation, especially one such as TEF but the lessons learned here would last a lifetime.

## **I'M FINALLY OPENING AN INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT, THANKS TO TEF MCC!**

By Todimu Asiwaju

Phew! Where, and how, do I even start this? It's been an incredible three weeks, that's for sure. Okay, so let me say this: I'm quite social media-averse. My LinkedIn account is the only one I run (if we're calling LinkedIn social media lol). I also consider myself as without 'a single creative bone in my body.' So, you can imagine how much I had been dreading my Marketing and Corporate Communication (MCC) functional rotation. My worst fears, I thought, were realized when I found out I had been posted to the Tony Elumelu Foundation, possibly the most demanding of the lot. Boy, was I wrong!

My rotation started on June 27 with an introduction to everyone at the Foundation. We then had short training sessions on themes

such as creating engaging content for social media, design and video editing skills etc. The next day, we were allotted the social media platforms we'd handle. I got Instagram. Over the next three weeks that followed, I learned, worked and everything in between. It was intense, yet fun and rewarding. For me, it was pleasant being involved in strategy meetings, content creation and other important activities because of what it meant. That what I did mattered.

Now that I've got that out of the way...I'd like to talk about my two key learnings. But before that, let me state that TEF and its people work incredibly hard to create the impact that they do. Trust me, it really isn't easy, so kudos to the #TEFSquad.

Okay, so learning #1: the worth of storytelling. I'm not sure you know a lot about me but you can probably guess how much value I ascribed to this concept (like, "baba just do your work and go.") It's very clear to me now though, that telling your story is vital. As TOE once said, "if you don't tell your story, the world will tell it for you, with its own nuances and biases." By sharing what we do at the Tony Elumelu Foundation, we build genuine, strong connections and relationships with our entrepreneurs, mentors and partners. People see the value in/of what we do. In this day and age, it is important to put whatever it is you do out there. Document it. Because if you don't, someone else will and best believe they'll do so from their point of view, which may or may not be factual.



On to the next point: social media is a full-time job. The first thing is to ensure you create content that's tailored to your audience



and the platform. The second, which is especially important to an organization like TEF, is making sure your content is ideal. I call it the 'controversy check.'

When you cater to a pan-African audience, the need to consider sensitivities is heightened. Here's how I personalised it: "the right question is 'could someone find it offensive,' not 'should someone find it offensive.'" If there is even the slightest chance that a piece of content can be misconstrued, shelve it.

Overall, it was an awesome time. I learned and had fun. I appreciate Nelson (Boss), Chidinma (Principal), Josh (G.O.A.T.) and of course, Damilare. Everyone was super helpful.

Bonus nuggets with regards to copywriting and captions (thanks, Nelson):

1. "If it doesn't seem right, it probably isn't."
2. "When all else fails, keep it short."

PS: I just might open an Instagram account now.

## **MY EXPERIENCE AS A TONY ELUMELU FOUNDATION GRADUATE TRAINEE**

By Iwowari Christopher

I found myself applying to Heirs Holdings for the Graduate Trainee programme on the last day. I had seen the advert on LinkedIn and then a friend sent it to me as well. I woke up by 3am one morning, early January and decided to check my mail. Boom, I saw an email asking that I take an online aptitude test. I went ahead and took the test, then I got another mail for an assessment centre. At this point, It dawned on me that I had made it to one of the critical stages in the recruitment process and I have to put in my best. The rest is history as I made it to the

programme and even emerged as valedictorian of my set.

The programme started with a launch event on the 9th of March 2022. The journey was both interesting and impactful. I particularly liked the structure of the program. The Academy is a six-month structured programme consisting of essential business lectures and rotational job shadowing to the six different investee companies within the HH Group. As they say, the journey of a thousand miles starts with a step. Indeed every step that I have taken in this journey has taken me farther than even a million miles.

Speaking of the structure of the programme. That brings me to my time at the Tony Elumelu Foundation. How did I find my way to the Foundation? The third classroom stream has been concluded and we were to head out for the fourth functional rotation. I can still remember having mixed feelings when my name was announced as one of the people posted to the Marketing and Communications arm of the Foundation. One would ask, why the mixed feelings? I was excited because I had heard of the Foundation before I even made it into the programme and I wanted to find out exactly how such an organisation is run, the structure and day to day activities. However I was scared of the work ahead as I had never done anything like content creation besides posting on my personal social media handles.

With feelings of excitement and uncertainty, I and my other colleagues resumed. We were welcomed warmly and told what was expected of us. Our main task was to come up with a number of contents a day, these contents if seen to be exciting and good enough will be approved and upon approval be posted to the social media handles each of us were assigned to. My task was to come up with different social media content to engage African entrepreneurs in the Linked-In space. In order to



carry out this job role effectively, I was introduced to another fascinating aspect, which is graphic design.

In my time at the Foundation, I gained new knowledge and experiences. Tony Elumelu Foundation gave me the opportunity to create content and handle a corporate social media page for the very first time. I learnt how to effectively design and create content

using Canva. Although I started learning how to use Canva just a few days before I started my rotation with TEF, this had to be perfect which meant I had to get it right. I learnt a lot especially about business and self-development.

This has been a perfect definition of taking up challenging roles and it has transformed and redirected my focus in the entrepreneurial space. How did I conquer this? I would say my quest and drive for new knowledge kept me going, and along the line I gradually got better at it. It wasn't all rosy as I got "No" sometimes but that made me understand what exactly I needed to do. One of the things that motivated me was the engagement from people. You know that feeling you get when you make a post, and you get likes and comments from your audience. It assures you that you are doing something great, and it spurs you to even want to do better. Also, the compliments and feedback you get from your boss when you create an amazing content, It made me feel like I am part of something. In other to create quality contents, I had to do a lot of research, and this added a lot to me. In all, it was an interesting ride as the few weeks increased both the intellectual and professional aspect of my individuality. It has actively increased my creativity as a person. I

had the opportunity of working with great people who were ready to correct me and show me the right thing to do. I would miss the team.

Like they say, learning never ends. I am one who is open to learning. As I move forward in my career, I am still looking forward to learning more and adding to my knowledge.



# #TEFATUNGA

Watch this space!

## Reimagining Partnerships For A Transformed Africa

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Earlier this year, Mr. Tony O. Elumelu, founder of The Tony Elumelu Foundation - Africa's leading champion of entrepreneurship – toured 5 cities in the United States of America, to advocate for Africa's investment potential, and a reimagined US-Africa relationship which divests from Africa's dependence on aid and emphasises receiving support that encourages economic empowerment, inclusion and development.

On the 16th of September, Mr. Elumelu, once again visits the USA, to advocate for African entrepreneurs, accompanied by Mrs. Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu and Mrs. Somachi Chris-Asoluka, CEO and Director of Partnerships & Communications of The Tony Elumelu Foundation.

The trio will attend the 77th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 77) in New York, as well as convene top players of the global entrepreneurship ecosystem, in sideline events, to facilitate dialogue that address the urgency of investing in Africa for jobs creation, economic opportunities, poverty eradication, gender inequality, climate responsibility and partnerships to democratize hope that will spur Africa's transformation.

On the 20th of September, the TEF delegate will co-host a roundtable session with Google.org to evaluate the impact of TEF's existing partnership with Google for women's economic empowerment across Africa, and to discuss the catalytic role of investment in female African entrepreneurs for Africa's transformation. This roundtable will set in motion the apex Foundation's visit to New York – to commemorate four strategic partnerships.

To support youth entrepreneurship in Africa, the Tony Elumelu Foundation is partnering with the US African Development Foundation, UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), IKEA and Generation United (Gen U).

The Foundation is entering a first-of-its kind partnership with IKEA and Generation United (Gen U) to support green entrepreneurs from Kenya. This partnership will be announced at the GEN U Global Leadership Council on the 22nd of September.

The Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) is partnering with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to identify and empower the most promising and vulnerable young African entrepreneurs, including in the last mile of frontier markets. Through this partnership, both parties will create virtual/ physical platforms to mobilize resources for African entrepreneurs, such as specialized assistance, resources, capital, networks, and access to markets.

The Foundation will also partner with the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) to support additional entrepreneurs over a period of 5 years.

The symbolic impact of these partnerships is important, as not only do they serve as a catalyst for a sustained, substantive relationship between Africa and the U.S., but they also provide African entrepreneurs with dignified support, based on mutual opportunity and benefit, that promotes and prioritises self-reliance, independence and sustainable development.

As our founder, Mr. Elumelu says, “Africa needs partners that believe in the potential of its private sector to champion economic development.” This is the underpinning of his economic philosophy of Africapitalism, and this is the only way to create an Africa that we are proud of.

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*Transformation is a  
marathon. Have milestones to  
be sure things are  
accomplished along the way.*

- Tony O. Elumelu, CON



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**TEF Circle is the Tony Elumelu Foundation's monthly publication sharing updates on our alumni, our TEF Network and the global economy.**

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