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Sharpening Our Saws

The seventh habit from Stephen R. Covey's classic book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" is SHARPEN THE SAW. So many of us go for long periods of time before we take time out to refuel. Our Business For Life team (pictured above) has been intentional about taking time out at least two times each year for a day and once a year for a weekend to "sharpen our saws" personally and professionally. During the month of March we took time away from our businesses to THINK about our businesses.

Our facilitator, Business For Life board member Steve G. Mbutia challenged us to not just get caught up in day to day business as usual, but rather to think about where we want to go and how we plan to get there. He used the question that Dan Sullivan made famous, and often referred to as "The Dan Sullivan Question": *"If we were having this discussion three years from now, and you were looking back over those three years, what has to have happened in your life, both personally and professionally, for you to feel happy with your progress?"* By each of us answering that question, and then putting together a detailed three-year plan complete with short term goals, each of us have paved a way to reach our potential.

All Business For Life Trainers are business owners and therefore are able to draw from their own experiences when they train. As they continue to grow both personally and professionally, Business For Life also grows in its effectiveness and impact.

(By Wendy Twycross, Business For Life, Project Director)

Recent Courses

In this first quarter of the year Business For Life ran 2 courses training a total of 45 people. Paul Kagiri and Evans Nanga facilitated a training on the outskirts of Nairobi in Kitengela in partnership with the Evangelical Covenant Church in California and in Kenya. Phelistus Waithera and Dennis Kurgat facilitated a course at the ELI training centre in the village of Ilula outside of Eldoret town in partnership with Groesbeck United Methodist Church in Cincinnati.

Kenyan youth and Congolese refugees participated in the Kitengela course, and recent high school graduates participated in the Ilula course. As you see in the comments below, all were appreciative of the opportunity and were empowered in many ways by the experience. The follow up activities for these new business owners has already begun.

Comments from Learners

"I have learnt that good record keeping and time management is key to the success of my business."
Leah NjeriNgunthi

"My ability of doing a thorough market research and promptly solving challenges in my business will enable my business to run successfully."
Carolyne Katunge Kimuyu

"Business For Life has been fantastic in opening my eyes; I am now able to not only employ myself, but employ others too."
Tito Sebagabo

"What I learned from this training is not only important in my business but also in my personal life."
Lewis Rumenge

"This training has challenged and provoked my deeper thinking, which I will use to my advantage in making my life better."
Alexis Rukumbuzi

"Thanks for giving me the opportunity to be part of trainees for BFL, as I use my skills out there, my community will grow economically."
Vivian Sawe

"I am grateful for the opportunity given; I felt it was timely and very relevant to day to day life. I am excited for the next chapter of my life with this 'tools' in my hands."
Sharon Kiptoo



Students in Kitengela (above) debating an issue with their team members



Caroline, Esther and Bilhah making samosas (above) and then off to sell them (below)



Follow up Mentoring



Francoise Nkurunziza is a 31 year old Congolese refugee living in the Nairobi area. He attended a Business For Life training in January this year and it has transformed his business and improved his life! Francoise sells vitenge (African fabric used to make clothing). He doesn't have a premise but rather sells to people on the streets. He used to sell on credit most of the time and rarely received full payment from his customers. The training helped him to see that selling on credit didn't get him more customers, but actually decreased his customer base as those who owe him money will avoid him rather than face him again. Minimizing selling on credit, keeping an accurate cash book, and implementing newly learned marketing skills has helped Francoise's business to grow!

Lucille Wambui is a 51 year old mother and grandmother living in the Nairobi area. She raises chickens and sells chicks and eggs. She has many satisfied customers and a high turnover. However, she was never able to determine the state of her business until she took the Business For Life training. She learned how to keep a cash book, how to work out her breakeven point and the importance of separating her personal expenses from her business expenses. Her business continues to thrive, but now, instead of paying her personal expenses with business revenue, she pays herself a salary and then knows exactly how much money she has to pay for her son's education and her personal bills. *(by Evans Nanga, Business For Life Facilitator)*



Leonard and Saitabau inherited a local restaurant that was on the verge of collapse. The previous owner was Lillian, their fellow learner who seemed to have lost interest in the business. During class feedback and comments, her business was the focal point at that time since it was obvious that the business had problems. Learners gave her lots of suggestions and areas to improve on but she was always defensive and irritated. Learners were clear to her by collectively saying that is

she is not going to improve, they will not eat in her restaurant. Instead of working on the areas needed, she closed the business after the training.

Leonard and Saitabau are the best examples when it comes to business in the Mara Rianta centre. People come to their restaurant to see them while drinking tea and eating sumptuous chapattis but the guys are making money. The restaurant that once belonged to another learner in a very competitive site is now thriving in the hands of its new owners. They are planning to expand the place and buy more tables and chairs. The business has four employees as of now.

How You Can Be Involved

Funding

Because the poor cannot afford to pay for this kind of training, we rely heavily on donor funding and community-based partnerships in order to operate this program.

Each Business For Life Training in Kenya requires approximately \$8000. This amount covers the costs for the training and follow-up of 20-25 learners. Courses outside of Kenya incur additional costs.

Courses thus far have been funded by a variety of organizations including US AID, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, The Mission Society, Compassion International Kenya, The 410 Bridge International, Samaritan's Purse, Hope Alive, Freely in Hope, SIM, Empower Africa, World Vision Rwanda, Comza, Servant Partners, Rehema House, and Sentinel Mara Camp, as well as a number of churches and individuals.

We are looking to expand our network of donors as the demand for the course grows. Donations in US dollars can be sent to Empowering Lives International, P.O. Box 67, Upland, CA 91785-0067 and demarcated for the Business For Life Training. To make a tax-deductible contribution on line using your credit card, visit www.empowerlives.org, click on DONATE, select Training and Development and find "Business For Life" in the drop down menu.

Since your gifts are tax-deductible all funds contributed to ELI are inherently under the control of the board of directors to improve and empower the lives of people living in poverty.

Community Development organizations working in Africa interested in exploring a partnership with us, may call us at +254 735 479152, or +254 721 179061 or email us at businessforlife@empowerlives.org.



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