

Business advice that should be life advice too

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CMS Africa is a conference with the intent to bring together likeminded people to talk about ideas, technology, business and open source softwares.



AFDA BCom students at CMS Summit in Cape Town

At the beginning of March I attended the CMS Africa Summit that arrived in Cape Town for the first time, creating an event around business and technology. My AFDA BCom tech class had been invited to go by my lecturer who had told us it would be a good opportunity to network and gain some more knowledge about open source technology. Before I arrived I was half expecting a hall full of computer nerds and old men in suites, but as I walked in I was pleasantly surprised to see a room full of students, hipsters and business woman talking to each other.

CMS Africa is a conference that has taken place in several African countries with the intent to bring together likeminded people to talk about ideas, technology, business and open source softwares. The event took place over two days with over

35 speakers and workshops. During these talks I was frantically taking down notes and absorbing everything the business and tech gurus were saying. After the two days I compiled all my notes and drew up a few points that I felt were the most important. I realised that the points I had written down kind of sounded like those corny life quotes you see on Facebook. I often have the impression that the business world is a complex place where only the best of the best make it, however after looking at the points I had written, I thought that maybe rules of business can be similar to the rules of life.

1. Open source systems

For those of you who aren't computer geeks, open source systems are platforms where the code and operating system is constantly updated, rewritten and openly distributed by anyone using the program. The main ones we looked at were Joomla and Wordpress. Open source is great because other users can add their own programs, systems and ideas for everyone to share and see. This makes these softwares basically a big collaboration and community of people making cool programs for one another.

So, make your life and relationships open source softwares. Be open to new ideas, change and collaboration.

2. Always adapt to modern technology

Modern technology can be pretty scary. There is so much going on its hard to stay relevant amongst it all. One of the speakers mentioned being technologically relevant and having to adapt to technology even if we don't like it. If we don't then we risk getting left behind and becoming irrelevant. Technology is the future and if any of us want to be successful we have to be flexible.

For your business life and your personal life, make technology a priority.

3. Branding

Oh yes, the 'B' word. We all know how important branding is in business. It can say a lot about the company and its values

which can help make a good first impression on customers and investors. This is also true about personal branding. How we dress, talk and listen says more than we think about ourselves. We present ourselves as a brand and who we influence in our daily lives could be just as significant.

Personal branding is just as imperative, if not more, than business branding.

4. Strategic partnerships

We've all heard the big business gurus talk about how partnerships can make or break your business. However finding someone to run a business with can be tricky. They need to have the same business values as you do and you need to know that they won't stab you in the back to take all your money. The reality is you can't do it alone.

This much can be said in our daily lives too. The different partners you have standing by you and helping you along the journey are just as important. Be picky with who you want as a partner in both business and your personal life.

5. Community-driven

Something that came up a lot throughout the conference was community. There is shift in businesses being concerned with consumerism and making money, in turn concerning themselves with community driven projects. A company with a cause is becoming much more incentivised than a business just trying to make money. Many corporations are creating businesses that promote sustainable resources, employ and teach new skills to underprivileged communities and their profits go to causes in need.

Now is the time to become community driven and make a difference in our personal lives too. How can we make an impact in our own communities?

6. Inclusive thinking

Another talk went into marketing and inclusive thinking within your marketing campaign. She told us about a situation where her marketing team had created an advert which had a reference to the Mexican wave. When it was done they launched the add and soon got a reply back from their South American branch stating that many Mexican people find the term 'Mexican Wave' offensive and somewhat racist. This kind of un-inclusive thinking within marketing can cause a lot of unwanted drama as well as bad publicity. Another example of this was Pepsi's advert with Kendal Jenner that spiked up huge negative backlash.

Moral of the story, always think about other people. Research and testing is so important to create a good impact. This can be true in our own lives too. With globalisation, mixing of ethnic groups and different nationalities we cannot live in a selfish world anymore.

7. Practical skills

For me, this was the most important point I took from the conference. The last speaker talked to us about having practical skills over theory. He mentioned employing someone who had just finished their masters and seemed like a great candidate. In the first week of showing him the ropes he asked the graduate if he knew how to do everything and was stunned when he replied, "Umm... We didn't do the practical side of this, I think you need to send me on a short course for this." I'm sure you could imagine his frustration. For the record, rather be practically inclined than theoretically inclined, it will get you much further.

So we can see that life and business correlates pretty well. How we approach business is how we should approach our personal lives too. CMS Africa helped me see where business and technology is going as well as providing us with a great opportunity to talk with some great minds about great ideas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ma Mainprize is an AFDA BCom student.

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