



GEW-USA 2013

*IXGEN celebrates Global Entrepreneurship Week
November 18 -24, 2013*

Youth Empowerment Workshop

'Your Story Matters'

"People invest in other people, not in inanimate objects. So your story matters."

IXGEN's 'Big Idea' for GEW 2013 was a youth empowerment workshop that focused on creating a Brand through story telling. The objective of the workshop was to how to link life stories to entrepreneurship. The theme of the workshop was: "Tell Your Story, Build Your Business." Everyone has a story, whether it's good, bad, or ugly, and those stories have, and will continue to shape our lives.

The event was held at the auditorium of the Decatur Library on Saturday November 23, 2013, from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The event was moderated and facilitated by Farah Akbar a young entrepreneur and writer (moderator), and Kimberly Oberhue, Kat Altine and Stephen Zehnder (facilitators).

Emmenette Mason, Founder and CEO of IXGEN, in her welcome remarks explained what Global entrepreneurship Week (GEW) was about. GEW is a worldwide movement of entrepreneurial individuals and organizations: inspiring, connecting and equipping entrepreneurs while showcasing the support that is available to them all year round. Global Entrepreneurship Week celebrates the innovators and job creators who take the challenge of launching startups that turn ideas into reality, drive economic growth, and change lives for the better.

She also said: "This workshop will be used as a tool for encouraging youth especially to begin telling their stories; and the story does not always have to be spotless. It could be the good, the bad and the ugly – yet it produces substantial influence on the person's personality and character, notwithstanding the character of your genes."

A short video on GEW was shown with a message by the president of GEW USA, Jonathan Ortman. He gave an overview of GEW and said: "There's a way that we now think that entrepreneurs might be the force for change in their countries for things beyond just economic change, that they can actually make the world a better place"

"The field of entrepreneurship is no longer something of narrow commercial significance; it's something of more cultural consequence. It's something that represents the possibility of human endeavor, for the benefit of all..... The world needs more entrepreneurs – it's a question of inspiring more people to recognize that it's more important to the future of their societies than they previously realized."

The audience comprised of Middle School, High School, and a few College Students, some of them already operating businesses, as well as a number of adults – actually parents of some of the youth, who felt that they too could benefit from the workshop.

The event was sponsored by various organizations and businesses that provided much appreciated financial and in-kind support, and several partners who served as facilitators, moderators, or volunteers, or helped to promote the event in their media outreach.

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The workshop was conducted in three sessions:

Session 1: 'It's All About Story-Telling'

The warm up session created an exciting atmosphere where you can learn about the basic elements of a story, and how to determine what aspects are important. Learn about entrepreneurs from the scriptures and how their uniqueness ties into their purpose.

Stephen shared the story of Moses being called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and brought out that discovering what we've been made for is the key to being successful at life, enjoying the good times, enduring the hard times, and recognizing meaning in all circumstances.

Kimberly spoke on the basic elements of a good story, elaborating on why we need to know our story, why we need to tell it, and how to tell it to create the greatest impression.

Session 2: What is your Story?

We listened to the stories of three youth entrepreneurs who at very early ages started their own businesses with the help of family. Their stories, according to Kim O! carried a similar thread, which we are all familiar with: The Hero's Journey — striving for success while overcoming difficulties and frustrations. Another similarity they had was that they understood themselves and their skills, a much needed ingredient for entrepreneurial success, and had a lot of support from their families.



Bruce Phifer a 15 year old in high school, has a business selling toys and other items of clothing and jewelry, on eBay. It all started in 2005 when his mom had a yard sale and was about to sell one of his toys which he did not want to sell. However, when he was offered a dollar for the toy, he gave it a second thought, and that his career shipping toys across the world through his shop [God's Personal Property](#) on eBay, and by January, his company's total sales will have earned \$200,000. He has done so well that he invested \$1000 in his sister's jewelry business.

Bruce said that "financial independence should come at an early age."



Trent Williams, CEO of [Jewelry Funds](#), started his business just a year ago at the age of 12, with a very laudable objective of helping his mother pay for his tuition at [Woodward Academy](#). He is very shy but knows how to do good business, always looking to satisfying his clients' needs. As an Atlanta vendor of jewelry, Trent retails very classy jewelry mainly for women. When customers don't see what they're looking for, he tries to find it, and then let that customer know when he has what they want.

His mom is his biggest cheer leader as she says, "Trent is the Smartest Child in the World!"



Takeshia Rynes is the Founder and CEO of 'Change Generation'

She had this to tell about her story:

“Everybody gave up on me. I attended three different high schools, yet graduated on time.” For the most part I always believed in myself. Born in the south side of Chicago, and raised by my two grandparents, every day I woke up and thought - how can I get to the next level? You are your own number 1 fan, and I always thought I was going to be successful. Find out your skills what you really good at. You may have to go through other skills to find out what you’re really good at.”

“My experiences motivated me to be the best I can be. So, be your best self. Just keep going everything will work out. The two best days in your life are the day you were born, and the day you found out why. 2013 was my best year because I found out the reason why I’m here. You don’t just look back and use your life experiences as excuses for why you did not make it. Your failures are what will turn into successes if you keep striving.”

“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. I always thought to myself that I was going to be successful, and after having gone through all that I had, I bought my first Cadillac at age 21, and my first house, the biggest any of my family ever had, at age 23.” Without my experiences, I would not have been motivated to become a better person.”

Takeisha was the rotten fruit that no one wanted to touch, and avoided her, but today at age 26 she is a successful entrepreneur on a mission to help other young people who have no sense of direction. Her organization Change Generation provides services to all young adults aged between 18 and 21 to live a better life. Mission to change the lives of our youth one generation at a time. She brings youth into the program, providing shelter and food, teaching them life and social skills for a self sufficient life.

Session 3: Branding from Your Story

Coach Kat showed how a story can be developed into your brand, using her own story as a life coach, as well as the ‘Origami Owls’ business as illustrations. Participants were separated into interactive groups and learned how to create a business, and share its story, brand, and product or service.

The following illustration was used to show how one’s story plays an important role in the journey of life.



Your Story Matters!

Your story defines who you are – your character, your brand, and what you are capable of doing. We should all begin to tell our stories and make a change, or create new things from them. This concept is engaged by most successful people. Whether in business or not, we all have stories to tell.

PHOTOS OF THE EVENT



Section of participants



Group Session



Group of participants



Potential entrepreneurs



Young Entrepreneur with his wares



Facilitators



Story Tellers



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Some Nuggets from the workshop

- “GEW is an idea that is bigger than all of the communities that make it up, and it represents something that we can all aspire to, which is to be a part of 1 global community of people ferreting out better ways of doing things and improving the lives of our citizens.”
- “Life is about taking a risk. If you don’t take a risk you can never know where you can go. It’s like a game.”
- “Find out your skills what you really good at. You may have to go through other skills to find out what you’re really good at.”
- “Each person’s story is unique and we can learn from good and bad times – from those experiences and our talents, our Brands can be developed. From that, your role in the marketplace (product/service) emerges, and we can organize that into something that produces successful - benefitting all.”
- “One of the fastest growing segments of our population is young people between the ages of 15 and 30 - they are becoming millionaires because of the ideas and strong businesses they have.”
- “Price is part of your brand. Price determines who can buy your product. Your dollar communicates your value.”
- You can be an entrepreneur whether you have your own business or you work in a company. It’s a skill set that you can learn.”
- “Failure is a great teaching tool.” “It’s a huge amount of failure that has driven me into understanding more about my own entrepreneurial skills.”

Conclusion

The event was very inspiring and educative. The nuggets of information that came out of the stories and discussions helped participants to understand what their stories meant, and how they can be used to develop character and even be creative. The group sessions allowed participants to share their individual stories and discover their potential to develop businesses from their hobbies and what they loved doing.

Some of the youth already had great business ideas that they shared with their groups. Each group made a short presentation, and by sharing with the audience they learned about possible business structures,

how they can develop great marketing strategies, and determine who they were going to sell to, and price their products or services accordingly.

Participants learned that there are huge advantages in telling your story, whether it is via a blog, a tweet, on Facebook, or face to face. Whether it's in writing, song, poetry, or dance; It can be the story of your family (a group of people), your business, the story of your product (what you have created), or the story of your life. In the end, people want to hear stories about other people—just like them. People love to listen to stories.

Overall, it was not only inspiring and interesting workshop, but it was also a fun event and everyone had a great time.