

Lessons from Boomtown's Bayeza Graduate Internship Programme

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Boomtown's Bayeza Graduate Internship Programme strives to not only to equip graduates with suitable work experience but to foster a passion for the industry, and grow talent in the Eastern Cape and share this with South Africa. We asked Karabo Mamabolo, who was selected to participate in the programme to share his journey.



Karabo Mamabolo

Please give us a brief potted history – where you grew up and what school you went to, where and what you studied for during your tertiary study phase?

I grew up in Soweto, outside of Johannesburg, and went to Glenvista High before studying BA Strategic Corporate Communication at the University of Johannesburg.

When did you join the Bayeza Graduate Internship Programme and are you signing up with Boomtown fulltime, and in what capacity?

I joined Bayeza in February 2021 and officially started my first day as a junior strategist at Boomtown on 1 February this year.

Within advertising what is your passion; outside of advertising, what is your passion?

Within the industry my passion is strategising. I really have a thing about it, coming up with strategies for brands. I see myself in the future as a brand architect; I want to build brands and modify them so that they appeal to the right type of audience and get them to operate to their fullest potential. Outside of advertising, my passion is music, I make music, I'm a sound engineer,

producer, writer and a recording artist.

Briefly describe the milestones of your Bayeza journey.

To be honest, for the first three months, it was very nerve-wracking. Having to liaise with clients for the very first time, having to present to internal teams as well as to clients – well, that was very scary. But, I had to do it over and over again, and after a while began to feel comfortable in my skin. Getting to the place where I could just take the floor and just do great when it comes to presenting, for me that was one of the greatest things. I think the more presenting that I did, the more courage I built within, and eventually I got to a point where I naturally just do it.

So, I'd say it was around the six month mark when I started getting a lot of compliments on my work here at Boomtown, compliments from the HR department and compliments from management. It was great that they started noticing my performance, it became a great thing for me. I found my confidence then and started finding my feet then and started performing much better.

Can you mention one misconception about the advertising industry you had before you joined Bayeza and how it came about that you learnt it was a misconception?

Um, so the misconception that I had was that working in an agency was going to be 'narrow' and 'repetitive'. This was based on that, at varsity they'd give you this structure or framework that you needed to follow, so I took that to believe that there is just one way of doing things.

But when I began at Boomtown, I realised that every strategist has their own approach, every agency has its own

approach, every sector has its own approach. Not only that, you often need to shape-shift the strategy depending on the brief.

Any perceptions about the industry proved true by your experience at Boomtown?

In all honesty I didn't have any perceptions because I hadn't job shadowed before or even knew anyone who worked in the industry, all I knew was the ads that I saw. Maybe the perception was that I thought that people just sit down and then they decide okay this is our ad this is what we going to do but there are far more components to it, from research to all the way down to creative design work. Working for Boomtown made me realise that there is more to it that just what I thought it was.

What do you regard as your greatest achievement while on the programme, of what are you most proud?

My greatest achievement is literally being able to just prove myself, prove that I am actually a valuable employee, prove that I can contribute to a company and make a difference. I had applied to Boomtown before, and hadn't made it. When I did, and then eventually proved that I am valuable and that I deserve to stay was actually a great thing for me.

If you could give your 'younger self' one piece of advice before embarking on the Bayeza programme, what would it be?

For me, the one piece of advice I would give myself is to allow yourself to learn and don't put too much pressure on yourself. The programme is really there to help you learn. To allow you to make mistakes and learn from them.

Boomtown CEO, Glen Meier, explains a little more about the Bayeza Graduate Internship Programme

Meaning 'they are coming' in isiXhosa, Bayeza is an integral part of the agency's business transformation strategy and its commitment to the creative industry. The word 'Bayeza' can also be interpreted as 'from the Bay to ZA' and so, from Nelson Mandela Bay to the rest of South Africa, the Bayeza Programme seeks to produce graduates to go out into South Africa, and the world, and make an impact.

Unlike some graduate internships, which mostly regard interns as junior staff who simply shadow other employees without being given any real responsibility, we act with intentionality and make sure to place our interns on real client work with the guidance of their mentors and senior staff.

The overall team is also expected to contribute to the intern's growth, a true reflection of "it takes a village" is present in our approach there. Because we've been doing this for years, it has become an ingrained part of our business and culture of learning and imparting knowledge.

The expectation is also that the interns take ownership for their growth and learning. We encourage them to get involved and put up their hand when they have an idea or a view on things. This encourages them to be brave and trust that they have something of value to add.

They and the mentors are also expected to continuously reference their development plans to ensure that they are reaching their learning milestones and growing. The intention and expectation are that after 12 months they should be employable with us or anywhere else in the industry.

Boomtown cannot stress enough the significance in giving young talented people the opportunity to make something great of themselves. The ripple effect is immense. Not only do these young people grow to also add value to their communities, the growth for the industry is considerable, particularly in changing the face of the industry to become more representative.

Once the internship ends, the intention is always to retain up to 100% of the interns, depending on their success and capacity within the agency to hire permanently. Over the years, our interns have either stayed with the agency post the internship, or gone on to explore great opportunities within the industry.

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