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MY VALLEYS

LESSONS I LEARNT TRANSITING FROM PAID EMPLOYMENT



Sam Obafemi

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Acknowledgment

I have been out of paid employment for 4 years in full now... and I am only grateful to God Who has proven Himself beyond description and comprehension. Glory to God the Ever Faithful.

I am grateful to every reader of my daily post ACTIVATE!!! This work is a reality because you always asked for more.

Thanks to my Wife, Funke and Daughters, Inumidun Sharon & Jesuferanmi Delight and Alvin, our Alsatian Dog, who just keep understanding my absence from home.

Thank you.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to 2 former University Classmates:

Innocent Chigozie Okwenna: whose singular, lone positive energy and voice propelled my decision not to look back on resigning from Paid Employment. Thanks Pal.

Irimiya Yabvo Labesa: who in these four (4) years of practising my business has asked me several times to pencil down my challenges and how I overcame them. You birthed this particular work 'Irim's' and you are appreciated. Nagode.

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Foreword

This will be written by ... #NameWithheld

Introduction

What Exactly Did Innocent Do?

I had not the faintest idea that even while in the University, my colleagues had pin pointed that I would become what I have turned out today: a Public Speaker, Life Coach and Motivator. It was not until I asked my friend Innocent Okwenna, when I was still unsure whether I really wanted to leave paid employment that he said “*Sammy, I have always known it would come to this. Since our university days, you have shown this trend and perhaps, now is that time to take the leap.*” With these words, Innocent would never know he set my spirit on fire. I had been freed from any vagueness or doubt. Today is the result.

How Barnabas House Was Born

After leaving Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in July 2003, I was posted to Lagos State to serve. I had just graduated with a B.tech (Hons) in Computer Science. My service year was quite eventful as it was my very first time of stepping into Lagos State (and South West for that matter) after spending all my 23 years on earth in the Northern part of Nigeria. I was posted to serve with Lagos City Computer College, Ikeja, after I had been rejected by Research Management Services (RMS) Ojodu. The rejection turned out to be God at work to my advantage.

In the course of my service year, I was finding clarity that counselling was almost like a magnet. Virtually every day, there was need to counsel someone or two. Here I was teaching an upward of 200 students weekly in different subjects and classes.. but my work transcended classwork. I was the buffer for many-a-problems. For the first time in my life, I began to encounter victims of rape, domestic abuse, marital dysfunction, et al. My path was set.

And so in December of 2003, I became quite overwhelmed with the volume of social work I had begun to do while in service to the point where I thought to myself “why don’t you ascribe a platform to these endeavours? Under what name should these efforts be run?” I recall vividly, it was about 9PM of 31st December of 2003. I sat up against the wall on my mattress laid on the floor in the second room of a 2-bedroom apartment in Prosperity Estate of Oke Afa axis.

I reasoned that the most feedback people have told me is that “I am an Encourager” and that “I encourage People” and so drawing from scriptural references in Acts 4:36 where Barnabas is defined to mean “Son of Encouragement”, I reckoned that I would love to undertake all my work

under the name BARNABAS HOUSE, where the HOUSE would connote a family value system or home setting. Now, the game was set.

How Barnabas House Became My Employer

Service year ran fast and it was done with. Everyone moved on and I tried to return to ATBU to attempt becoming a Graduate Assistant because of my love for lecturing but that did not work out. I immediately applied to Sweden for an MSc programme in Computer Systems, secured admission but did not secure the Visa to travel. I reckon that I was largely naïve with respect to travelling methods so I did not bother to find out what could have been done to remedy the situation. I returned to Lagos immediately to job hunt, against the wish of my Mother who felt I had things going better for me if I would stay back with the family in Ashaka Cement premises.

9 days after I arrived in Lagos, providence will have it that *Innocent Okwenna* lived just 2 streets away from my Uncle's house in Ago Palace Way, Okota. We bonded quickly and got encouraging each other. He was already working with a software development company, Eusomic Nigeria Limited. As God would have me ease up, Innocent secured a job with the then Gateway Bank (later became Intercontinental Bank) and he graciously recommended to his Boss that I replaced him as Programmer in Eusomic. A decision that would be dramatic months after.

Ultimately, I left Eusomic after a short stint of a not-too-palatable an experience. I was fired due to professional conflicts. I was jobless for 5 months until July of 2006 when I got 2 instant offers at the same time: one to work with Tranter Limited (alias TITIS) and to lecture in ACCA classes at weekends with Synergy Professionals in Iponri. These were big breaks for me as it would define the rest of my professional and business experience. It was at Synergy that I met *Debo Adebayo* whom I will mention in Valley 3 chapter.

After working at TITIS a few months in their Client office (Total Downstream on VI), a friend of our Supervisor who worked with ValuCard Nigeria Plc (now Unified Payments Services Limited) had hinted our Supervisor of a vacancy in their organisation. My close friend Muyiwa Sanya-Isijola and I hurriedly applied for these openings. We were selected for interviews and ultimately, we resumed at VNP on April 3rd, 2007. I had no idea this would be my last paid employment experience. I worked with ValuCard for a total of 4 years and 3 months. It was a meritorious period of my life. I got married while with ValuCard. Had my first Daughter Sharon while there. Our second Baby was born just 2 days after my departure from ValuCard. I was Best Staff of the year 2010 and first Quarter 2011, which I retained as at resignation time. I will never forget how well I enjoyed my work with ValuCard. No wonder it paid off 4 years after my exit.

Why This Book?

January 2015, just after the New Year celebrations, I had a very strong urge to engage the Unified Payments Services Limited team on what I felt were my thoughts about increasing Team Productivity. I put together a brief proposal and sent a near emotional email to the CEO of UPSL, the cerebral *Mr Agada Apochi*. He was very gracious to me, not only agreeing I could come assist the company, but that I would start by engaging the EXCO of the Company. That was amazing.

So the sessions were done and completed .. I have never felt more honoured before. Out of ecstasy, I published a testimony on my social media channels about how I was invited by my former Employer to engage the topmost decision making body in a mini-retreat for 2 days. The resultant effect of this testimony was accolades alright .. but a significant outcome is this book.

My University Classmate, *Irimiya Yabvo Labesa*, who has not only once asked me about this subject matter before, pinged me on Blackberry Messenger to request that I chronicle my challenges and the difficulties I have dealt with and been dealt with in the 4 years of my solo sojourn. This request I obliged by starting a daily broadcast titled MY VALLEYS. It was targeted to be a 10-series post of my hard lessons but gratefully, it has become what is in your hands today.

I usher you into my world of pains, ups & downs and all what has turned out for good for me. Do have a wonderful time reading this book. Welcome to My Valleys.

God bless you.

Sam Obafemi

“Love can limit your growth & progress if you do not draw the line.”

Around the end of 2007, having fully settled into my new job at ValuCard, my tenacity for writing assumed a record high. I became a voracious reader of non-fictional works as well as music. That was when I became addictive to Asa, Fela, gice, and any music that was a symbol of raw creativity, talent & lyrics. I read books by Teju Cole, Helon Habila, John Maxwell, Myles Munroe & Wole Soyinka. I was very passionate about developing my non-IT competencies and I thought writing was my next love. My Supervisors at work who admired my writing competencies deeply encouraged me to ‘use my income to sponsor my vocational bills’ .. I was really motivated. I emailed Helon Habila at a point to seek his counsel on undertaking an MA in Creative Writing in Anglia University. I studied Chimamanda a lot more and watched Youtube videos of any speeches they made. I concluded I was cut out for professional writing. But I never made any consistent effort to pursue that dream.

On the other hand, my itinerary for public speaking was gaining mileage. My social media activities with respect to lessons I shared online and previous speaking engagements was adding to my demand list. At that time also, I was investing heavily in organising bi-monthly seminars called ‘Barnabas House Bi-Monthly Workshops’. These workshops were fully sponsored by me through my salary and I hosted niche facilitators in different subject areas. The turn up per event was very impressive. Apparently, my second professional life was assuming plenty of attention and morale. I became increasingly on demand in churches, social groups and small events. I had a second income, gradually.

One symbolic experience I had in 2010 that triggered my exit was the valedictory service of NCCF Akure (in Ondo State, South West Nigeria) where I was the main Speaker. I had travelled to Akure to honour the invitation of my younger Brother and Fiancee then (now my Wife); both of whom had facilitated my being invited. The event was scheduled to finish on Saturday evening but for some reasons, it did not. A conclusion was then scheduled for Sunday evening. The implication was that I would be returning to Lagos on a Monday morning... from Akure, a 4-hour road trip. The implication also was that I would arrive Lagos and head to Victoria Island to resume work LATE. Truth be told, I did not seem to care less.. the opportunity to explore this part of my life was so overwhelming, I was willing to take the risk.

I sent an SMS to my Supervisor who acknowledged and seemed to grant it. However, as soon as I walked into the office, my Supervisor called me to his desk and brusquely said "Sam, I won't say this twice... you had better chosen this job or this 'Barnabas thing.'"

That short, direct advice was all I needed to turn on the lamp. I mentally resigned from my job that instant.

My first valley as I contemplated my switch from Paid Employment to Self-Employment was MY FAMILY.

When I made up my mind to pull out from paid employment in October 2010, my Wife was the 1st person I hinted. Prior to this, I had contemplated resigning twice but she insisted "we were not ready for such a major decision" because, as she put it, "we don't have anything to live on yet". So on this 3rd attempt, I became more persuasive. I told her "I will resign in March 2011, give 3 months' notice so my resignation takes effect July 2011 & if you support me, I promise you a post-dated cheque of N1 million which you will draw out in 1 year".

That was my winning negotiation.

Next to discuss with was my Siblings who expressed "cautious support" .. they wouldn't be seen to discourage "Big Bro" but they felt "no one has done this in the family. How e go be?" Actually my younger Brothers suggested that I could run my passion in parallel with my Job for as long as possible. They cited examples like Ibukun Awosika, Redeemed Pastors and some other individuals who were rising in their career tracks while yet being known publicly for their enterprise. I was not very happy with these suggestions because I felt the risk of such approach would mean many things including:

1. **Division of Focus.** I am an ALL OUT Person and so trying such a model would have made me either be in or out of one or the other (Paid Employment or My Own Business). That did not find expression with my value system.
2. **Words** do a lot of **damage** to my mind and so I was shaken by the fact that the very men I grew all my life with did not see the core of the long term vision I had.

Maybe I felt I could run to them to help convince our Parents and my other 'antagonists' since they were my Lieutenants. Nonetheless, the moment it was obvious that they were not saying Yes nor were they saying No, I told myself they needed proof. And proof I was ready to procure by my results in a matter of time.

Next was my Dad who simply asked "What's your Wife's opinion?" I told him what she had said and how we came to a compromise. Daddy followed up this answer with a call to my Wife so as to validate that I did not coerce her with my passion to accept my plan. As soon as he confirmed she was consenting, he permitted me to go on. He prayed for me and laid his hands on me to make progress. I recall that late night in their sitting room in Lokoja, Kogi State (North Central Nigeria) when Daddy said words like "May God be your strength when the difficulties of your passion manifest. May God encourage you always. May you never regret this decision. May all you need to succeed in this business be made available for you. Amen" and many more words. That night, I felt like a commissioned Bishop.

Mum was a HARD NUT to crack. She wouldn't take it. My resignation from Paid Employment was coming barely 11 months after they had effectively retired from service and relocated to their home in Lokoja. This was meant to be a payback time for them; a time when our being raised should begin to benefit them in retirement. Mum felt "Why will you resign same period when we retired? That's unfair. Who will cater for who now?". Mum cried at my resistance and being resolute. She also took offence at Dad for being 'too soft' on this 'Boy called 'Batunde' (a short form of my middle name 'Babatunde' that they elected to call me since christening).

Mum has always had Pastors in whose judgment she strongly believed. One of them was the seasoned Counsellor, a CAC Pastor, Reverend Matthew Akande. He was the very man who had encouraged my Mother when I was fired back then in 2006 in Lagos. He told her that it was a spiritual plus for me to have lost the job because the resultant growth from that dismissal was better than what I was getting from the employment. And so on this occasion of my intended resignation, Reverend Akande was Mum's run-to again. The gentle Reverend smiled and said 'Mummy, this decision is of God. God supports his resignation. Please leave him to go and prosper.' That was the reprieve that got Mum and I related cordially again. And for me, it was not a determinant whether I was going ahead or not... fortunately, it was a relief definitely that she could say 'Best Wishes my Son. God be with you.'

Reminiscent now, I reckon that I plunged into full time practice more out of CONVICTION than HOME SUPPORT. I had several bouts of fear within the 3 months of notice that I had served my Employer. Realities were becoming clearer as the moments passed quickly. My Wife, being heavy with our second child, was another physical evidence of my fears. But every day, I was reliant on the positive energy I procured from the books I was reading; the internal peace I was convinced I had and by the very firm faith that this was exactly what God wanted me to achieve.

I was sure it was not going to be a flash in the pan. I was also associative with the kind of limited resources we would have before it ever made sense but deep down, I could not explain how positive I felt. It was a done deal.

Now, lest I forget, my Wife did not draw the N1 million cheque after 1 year because of other valleys we will share in other chapters... but praise God today, she has access to the benefits of her cheque.

My immediate take with respect to the role my Family played in all these is that there is a place where people will love you TO YOUR PERIL. You must be discerning to draw the line between progressive, constructive love; limiting love & restrictive love. Let love not stop you from flying.

It is important to

1. KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU SEE
2. PATIENTLY COMMUNICATE WHAT YOU SEE
3. STAND BY WHAT YOU SEE &
4. KEEP WORKING BY GOD'S LEADING TO CARRY EVERYBODY ALONG

You are NOT alone. Life is in your support. Go ahead.

m a k t u b!!!

Valley Two	My Professional Relationships
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	Unforgettable Heroes These 4 Years
	Epilogue

The Author



Popularly called 'Coach Sam', Samuel Obafemi has carved a niche for himself in the Strategy & Operations industry, especially for SMEs.

With 11 years' overall experience developed via working in several industries: Manufacturing, Oil and Gas, ICT, and Payment Card infrastructure, Samuel has a huge repertoire of resources that forms the bedrock of solutions. Samuel Obafemi holds several certifications for several areas of expertise. He is a CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA), Oracle Certified Associate (OCA), Oracle Certified Professional (OCP), and CompTIA Certified Security Expert (S+)

After practising as a Mind & Emotion Therapist with niches in Stress Management, Emotional Intelligence, Anger Mastery and Peak Performance Coaching for about 5 years, **he re-invented his market niche into core Strategy & Operations Advising with focus on Business Processes, Culture & Business Model Development.** He has consulted (and provided training) extensively for corporate organizations (including, but not limited to, MTN Nigeria, USAID/GECHAAN Taraba, Fate Foundation, LEAP Africa, POISE Nigeria Ltd, Ben Idahosa University Benin City, Global Knowledge Group, Vet World Limited, Foursquare Gospel Churches, Redeemed Christian Churches, FETS Mobile Banking Ltd, HATLAB Ice Cream Delite Ltd, Pison Properties and Access Solutions Ltd, etc.), individuals and groups on Business Process Engineering and Strategy. Principally, Samuel develops content for capacity building, training and development, life coaching and business systems enhancement. He is also a YouWIN Monitor and Consultant to YouWIN SMEs in the North-Central Region.

Sam is the Publisher of *ACTIVATE!!!* (A Virtual Daily Post on Mind Power, posted via Blackberry and All Social Media platforms: Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn)). He also hosts a QUARTERLY THINK TANK Meeting titled 'Breakfast with samOBAFEMI' and a MONTHLY meeting titled #TheBizClinic, a teaching of Business Rudiments for Business Owners.

Having graduated from the prestigious Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, (formerly Federal University of Technology) Bauchi with a B.Tech (Hons) in Computer Science, Samuel proceeded to acquire professional qualifications in Human Systems. He is the **FIRST** Nigerian Certified Anger Mastery Coach and Therapist from Century Anger Management Institute (USA), and a Certified Peak Performance, Business and Life Coach (NCFE, UK). Sam is a Certified **NLP I** Practitioner.

Samuel is a versatile Teacher, Public Speaker, Writer and Business Advisor. He is the Author of Four (4) Books titled 'Vision Clarified!!!', 'Where are the Goals I Set?', 'SALT LAKE THERAPY: Healing Yourself through Emotional Immunity', and '5 Distinct Steps to Measure Results on Your Efforts'. His Audio CDs titled "4 Pillars of a Strategy" and "Emotional Intelligence" are in very high demand across over 10 Nigerian cities including Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, and Jos.

Sam is a serial businessman who sits on the Board of 'O c t o p u s M a n d a t e ' a Community Development Initiative targeted at providing multi-dimensional support and problem solving solutions to NGO's and Non-Profit Organizations in Nigeria and across the Globe. He also sits on the board of Assa's Box, a Kids' Party Planning Company operating from Abuja and VMLearn, an e-learning system company.

Coach samOBAFEMI is the Recipient of the Nigerian Youth Merit Awards in the EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP Category 2013.

He works for Barnabas House Group (www.bhousegroup.com); a Life Coaching, Training and Business Modelling company.

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The Book

This book is a 10-chapter work that chronicles the journey of the Author from being in Paid Employment until he became settled in Self Employment. It is triggered by a testimony that only after 4 years, his last employer hosted him to assist the topmost decision making body to make strategic thinking decisions for peak performance.

This book is many things in one: a testimony, an autobiography, a challenge and a report of progress made within 4 years from being an Employee.

The Author hopes that this book will serve as a tool to positively influence how people undertake decisions that can affect their entire lives.

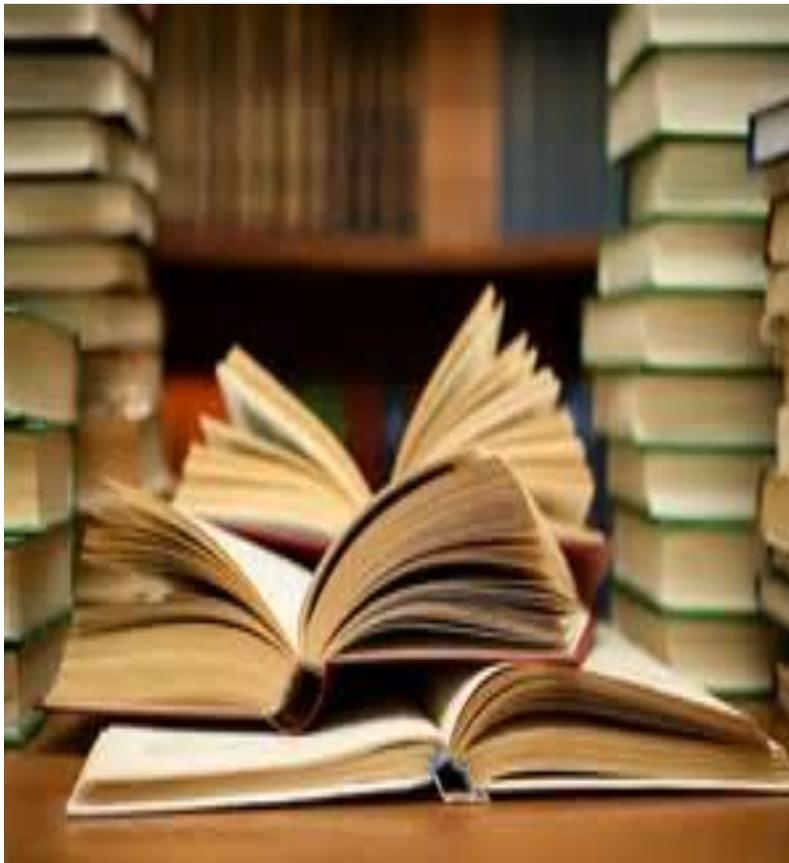
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