

A Founder's Growth Journal

**A LinkedIn Series for Samson Balogun of Baselinks Business
Consult**

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I USED A SLOW LAPTOP TO BUILD A FAST-GROWING BRAND

October 29, 2009 is a day I'll never forget because of what it marks: the day my dreams first began to take form.

I had just turned 27, that age when you approach 30 and see people begin to lose their grip on their dreams.

I was sitting under a bridge in Accra with an old Dell laptop and a vision that remains as fresh today as it was then.

Buses honked and coughed exhaust into the chaos of Accra, but my mind was crystal clear. I knew exactly what I wanted to do: build brands and people through creativity, design, and ideas.

A few days ago, I bought a new laptop (the latest MacBook), and all the memories of that old one I held under that bridge in Accra came flooding back.

Those memories remind me of four key lessons:

1. START WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Building from scratch is hard. It means starting with imperfect tools in inconvenient situations. But I also knew that not building at all would make life even harder.

When you start from scratch, often you're the only one who understands what you're doing.

People won't believe in you until you become so invested in the vision that it radiates from you so clearly others can't help but see it.

Did I mention that the laptop I held under that bridge in Accra wasn't even mine?

A friend loaned it to me after seeing how committed I was to my dream of being a brand designer.

That's how investors and clients think too.

The vision might be attractive, but the character of the person behind it matters just as much. People don't just buy into ideas; they buy belief. They invest when they see that you're invested.

2. SHOWING UP WITH SOLUTIONS IS KEY

Let me be clear: you won't be paid simply because your tools are fancy. You'll be paid because your solutions are effective, no matter what tools you use to deliver them. The more effective the solution, the more you're worth.

Focus on results, on doing your best with what you have, and decide your worth based on the output.

I learned this when I first worked with a brand that paid me my worth.

I arrived at that first meeting with nothing but my old Dell. No fancy suit, no shiny gadgets. I wanted them badly, but I could not even afford them. In the end, it was just me, my ideas, and a genuine desire to understand my client.

I arrived so early that my host felt guilty for keeping me waiting, although that was not my intention.

During our conversation, I focused on answering her questions clearly and offering real solutions.

The specs of my laptop didn't matter. What mattered was that I could use it to do the work.

I didn't sell features. I sold solutions. And that's what my client bought. Since then, I have measured my worth against the effectiveness of the solutions I provide — and yes, I delivered those solutions on that same old Dell.

3. YOU NEED A SELLABLE VISION TO START BUILD

When I first dreamed of building a brand, I didn't think about raising money for a new laptop, especially since the Dell I had was borrowed. My first thought was to define a vision that would attract money.

That meant defining my brand:

What do I offer?

Where do I position myself?

Who do I want to serve?

Money buys structures: the tools, spaces, and systems that enable convenience. Vision is intention: the ideal foundation upon which structures are built.

And when my intentions became clear, clients recognized my focus, and I recognized the right clients. That's when the money came. That same money bought this new MacBook, which now reminds me of my old Dell.

4. TALENT COMES BEFORE TOOLS

Don't get me wrong: tools matter. They create smoother systems. But if you strip away all the shiny tools, can you still deliver?

I wouldn't own this new Mac if that old Dell hadn't taught me to adapt. I had to work fast, but never compromise quality. And I delivered, consistently.

That laptop taught me how to build even in discomfort. It shaped the way I now recognize that same resilience — the ability to build despite discomfort — in others.