

## Icon Sports Marketing Ltd Launches Internship and Mentorship Program for Female Students Pursuing Degree Studies in Sports Marketing/Management - Grace Kiraguri, Managing Director

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### Introduction:

Without a shadow of a doubt, 2014 has been another challenging, but fruitful, year for Icon Sports Marketing. Managing major sports properties and expanding into new fields, the firm has been able to make an impact in the Kenyan sports management scene. And it's not always business but mentoring and nurturing a generation of sports business and marketing practitioners.

Such was the case earlier this year, when Esperanza Wamoni reached out to Icon Sports Marketing seeking for an internship position with us. Given that Icon Sports as a business had less assignments at the time, I was skeptical about bringing in an intern as the volume of work was minimal. But upon meeting with Esperanza, I realized there is a gap in the country for women pursuing sports management in getting placement as interns since there are relatively few Sports Business agencies.



It for this reason that I decided to, not only take her in for the period of her internship, but further commit to do this program annually to open space for women in sports who are pursuing sports degrees both locally and internationally. Icon Sports Marketing will offer an **Internship and Mentorship opportunity for one person per year (preference being female graduate) in Sports Marketing and Management.**

### Put it into Practice:

I believe in academic qualifications, but more importantly passing on some of the practical managerial lessons to my fellow women folk is uniquely satisfying. The sports sector is vast and with great potential, but it is still a male-dominated sector as far as top level decisions are concerned. However, this is great space and opportunity for women to excel in especially when it comes to event management which remains a forte for women – with attention to detail and alert to the expectations of sports events.

The internship program will not only be a mere requirement of the MBA program, but equally be a fulfilling mentorship experience for the women. It is for this reason that I would wish to mentor and show case the real meaning of sports marketing, with an aim of increasing the pool of confident, strong, driven women in the sports sector who can shape the future of Sports management and marketing in this country.

As an entrepreneur, I have had some really good outcomes coupled with some major challenges or failed instances but I draw strength from each outcome and that is what has kept me going. These lessons coupled with basic entrepreneur skills is what I would want to pass on to the young and upcoming generation. Resilience and perseverance are the true characteristics of an entrepreneur and I

have lived by Steve Jobs quote as my mantra- *"I'm convinced that about half of what separates successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance."*

Esperanza Wamoni is a graduate student at Real Madrid Graduate School, and she is definitely very smart, intelligent and a fast learner. We have exposed her to all facets as required by her MBA internship program from concept development, proposal writing, clients meetings, and actual sports event logistics etc. She has equally been exposed to idea and concept generation through rigorous brainstorming sessions in our offices. She watched as we juggled resources between projects, shifting these from one account to the other, to make ends meet. She has literally experienced life in the SME sector and now understands the saying "Entrepreneurship is not for the faint hearted".

I believe each of these instances impacted her positively, mentally and gave her the desire to one day build her own agency with the business tips that she has taken from Icon Sports at the end of her internship program. Esperanza reports to Icon Sports offices twice a week, and occasionally works over the weekend especially when there are actual sports events. This is to gain the much-needed experience in events planning and logistics. She has certainly learnt the hang of putting together the event briefs and reports which is very impressive.

#### **Why do I believe in the internship/ mentorship program?**

First I believe that God knows our plans and desires, He watches over us even when we least expect. In 2012, my struggles, accomplishments and successes in the sports sector did not go unnoticed as I was selected to attend an exchange program for women in sports. Coincidence, or God's way of watching over you?..... I prefer the latter. I was one of the recipients of the inaugural US State Department and ESPN-W exchange program dubbed "**The Global Sports Mentoring Program**".

The program recognizes and realizes the importance of empowering women through sports in different ways including; opening up spaces for women in sports, impacting positively the lives of women through sports and ultimately changing the lives of women in the communities in live in. This mentoring program is a cornerstone of the US State Department's broader vision of **Empowering Women and Girls through Sports Initiative**, which aims to increase the number of women and girls worldwide who are involved in sports.

As a beneficiary of the program, I gained strong insights in business, exposed to new networks but more importantly I felt equipped to give back to society. Upon returning I designed a program to offer mentorship to young girls in sports dubbed "**Step Up**", and I'm building on this mentorship by launching a parallel platform to mentor graduate women in sports to expand their breadth of enablement through Sports.

The business can accommodate one intern per year for an average of six months and I intend to do it continuously for the next couple of years. As one Thomas Paine said, *"The mind once enlightened cannot again become dark"*! What better way to give back to society!