

My name is Sophie Yates-Lu, I'm the Senior Programme Manager at Campaign Bootcamp.

Campaign Bootcamp is a national campaigning training organisation. Our vision is a world in which people impacted by injustice have the tools and skills they need to end it, and our mission is to support people to run effective campaigns to challenge and end that injustice.

Diversity is central to a lot of the work that Bootcamp does. Too many people working in the campaigning sector have little to no direct experience of the issues that they are wishing to challenge. Bootcamp was founded to disrupt and change that, but the focus of our work is also supporting grassroots campaigners.

We're not saying that it's the job of oppressed people to make the world a better place, but at Bootcamp we believe that people with direct experiences of the various issues that we need to change in the world are best placed to fight for that change and say the thing that they need to see change in the world.

Because of the focus that we have on providing training to groups who are impacted by various types of oppression, our recruitment and outreach strategy has to be incredibly diverse and inclusive, and reach a broad audience. Before each Bootcamp training – Bootcamp is a six day residential that takes you through all the basics of how to campaign – before they take place, we do an intense two month outreach period. For everyone in the organisation, it's tools down, really focus on reaching not just a broad amount of people, but we specifically look for different types of applicants, different types of backgrounds.

We use a model of scholarships, storytelling, and community-led communications to do this. I'm going to talk a little bit about the scholarships, because they're key to what we do, and key to getting a diverse amount of people on our trainings. We offer scholarships which directly reference diverse audiences. Just to pick two examples, for each of our trainings we promote full scholarships. So that's everything – the training, the food, the accommodation, the travel to the venue – for disabled campaigners and campaigners who are refugees and asylum seekers. To ensure that we're not training already privileged people, we've developed a three-pronged approach to this recruitment and outreach:-

- **We start by offering scholarships** to people who would not otherwise be able to attend the training, or might not see the training as being something which is necessarily for them. We have the target of offering scholarships to 80% of everyone who goes through our training.
- **We use effective storytelling** to encourage diverse audiences to apply. We put scholarships out there along with stories of people who have come on those scholarships, and then people see themselves in those profiles, and

then think “a scholarship is quite a scary thing”, but seeing those stories of people with diverse backgrounds makes them think “that’s for me”.

- To get those stories, **we speak directly to the communities**, the people who have come through our programme, that we wish to recruit amongst. We work with small NGOS and community groups across the country and encourage them to promote the scholarships to their friends, service users, allies.

It’s working quite well. **Last year, three quarters of our graduates were women. Half our graduates came from BAME backgrounds. A third identified as LGBT+. A third told us that they were disabled. Two thirds of our graduates were not based in London, and 40% identified as working class.** It shows that our approach is working.

I’ve told you how we do it, hopefully you can use some of that info to inform the work that you’re doing. But I’ve also got three tips that I think will apply to all of the work that everyone does here.

1. Don’t let your strategy be led by easy-to-reach audiences.

If you really value diversity, your communications and outreach should start with those marginalised communities. There’s no point in starting with the people who are easy to reach.

Speak directly to the communities that you wish to engage with, and make sure that you value their advice with payment.

2. Don’t shy away from reflecting on, and confronting, mistakes.

I was actually a Bootcamp graduate before I worked for Bootcamp. I went on it a couple of years ago, I was a campaigner before I started working there. One of the biggest learnings I took away from it was how to be in a room where you are having an uncomfortable conversation, where you are being challenged about certain aspects of your own privilege, things that you didn’t know about other marginalised communities. It was tough. Six days of being challenged, being called out, it’s a tough thing to go through. I think in the sector, not enough people are being put in those uncomfortable situations and therefore they don’t know how to react to it. It’s a really valuable thing to be in those situations. What I would say is lean into it. Focus on listening rather than being defensive. It can be a very natural reaction to be defensive if you are challenged on something. But if someone from a marginalised background or community is bringing a criticism to you, I would say just listen. Try not to feel challenged on a personal level. You’ve got everything to learn and you’ve got to assume that if they’ve got an identity that you don’t, that they are right and there’s some value in that.

If you’re trying to do diversity well, especially if you have an un-diverse workforce, you will naturally make mistakes. So just make sure that you listen and you grow and you reflect on them.

3. **Accessibility is non-negotiable**

Making any piece of work, whether it's a strategy, an event, a training, truly accessible is really difficult. I think that accessibility – much like diversity – is a journey. I don't think there's an endpoint. There's also something more you could do to make it more accessible.

I would think beyond visible accessibility. There are so many types of things that people could be afforded which would make their access to training, their access to different campaigns, easier. It's worth thinking about who you work with and, if you can, talking directly to them and asking "what do you need to make this more accessible to you?" Because often, you won't be able to see that disability, or people will feel afraid to come to you with it. So it's worth asking about that.

It does take as well. I would recommend valuing it in terms of time and budget. Just because it takes time, it shouldn't be an afterthought or a nice-to-have. If you really value diversity you will put that time aside.

They're my three tips. I hope they're useful to you.

I can't end without saying that we have applications open for our first Bootcamp of the year. ([deadline 12 February 2019](#)) Bootcamp is hugely useful for people who are working in the sector, so please do speak to me if you or any of your colleagues would like to apply. We also have all the scholarships for grassroots campaigners, so please do let people know about it. Our first camp is in April 2019, and we have two more in Spring and Summer.

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