

The Revamping of True Branding

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By *Lindsay Keener*

HAMPTON, VIRGINIA - Brand757, the student-run public relations company operating through the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications, has a problem. How does a company sell itself when it only has the promise of the future?

With no recent portfolio to show clients, Brand757 is re-organizing and selling itself on the skills of current student staff including writing, photography, video, social media management and lots of creativity.

A large portion of the rebranding will include forming teams and attracting new clients to build that much-needed portfolio.

Ironically, the top client of Brand757 is Brand757 because it needs an overhaul, said Michael Watkins, executive director (pictured above right). The second client is Scripps Comm Week in April. Events will include a Scripps Ball fundraiser. Brand757 will be responsible for programming and marketing.



Next semester, the agency plans to do pro bono work for some clients to add to the portfolio.

Most of the 20-some members are new, attracted by the idea of getting experience working at a student-run agency.

"Public relations has always been of great interest to me. Knowing that I'll get real world experience while I'm in college is amazing," said Taylor Harris, a third year strategic communications major from St. Louis, Missouri.

Brand757 has applied to be an official organization of Hampton University. That way students in other majors can join.

"The goal is to really open up Brand757 to other majors so that the club itself can tap into other resources," said Professor Reynolds, the agency's academic advisor.

Brand757 made its debut in 2015 with a public announcement on the Scripps website, but then lost momentum. Watkins said the problem was the small number of members.

The original announcement promised "full account teams, providing large and small businesses a full range of PR and brand services, such as media relations, collateral development, publicity, communications planning, social

media, graphic design, web design, and event planning."

Today, students are taking Brand757 back to its roots.

"There's so much we have to work on as an organization," Watkins said. "We were on hiatus. Because of that we have to recreate who we are. We can't reach clients if we aren't established on campus."

After solidifying the agency as an official campus organization, executives are hoping Hampton University students across campus will see its value.

"Students who are majoring in other fields can grow their resumes and knowledge base," Reynolds said.

Brand757 members hope the new structure and expanded membership will help the company get new clients.

"Those would include IT companies, the Scripps Howard website and running WHOV's social platform," Reynolds said.

Those who join Brand757 must be willing to work their way up.

"The organization is structured around positions," Reynolds said. "Freshman and sophomores are in a shadow period, learning the ropes so they can reach the higher positions by the end of their academic career."

Then, Reynolds said, they must be willing to pass their wisdom along. The goal, Reynolds said, is for students to teach the incoming members to ensure the organization has longevity.

"You are creating your legacy within this organization and how it is going to be known across this campus," Reynolds said.

Brand757 is on its way to becoming a stable organization in the Hampton Roads community. With solutions in place, agency members are confident they will make up for lost time. They are sold on Brand757.