



FIRST PERSON

Hands-on Training and Internship Deliver Job and Fill Workforce Gap



Ms. Siya Ny at her desk in Phnom Penh.



Siya shows U.S. Ambassador William Heidt (center) the CamboSearch online directory she helped build while CEO Darren Jensen (right) watches.

[Photo Credit: Development Innovations]

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Sitting beside a large table with ten other young people, 21-year-old Ms. Siya Ny has both her ears plugged into her computer as she flips across windows on her Macbook screen. The main window of interest is a black screen with the language of computer code being entered. Siya is one of a growing number of female web developers in Cambodia and is currently working for a Cambodia-based technology company, [Rotati Consulting](#). This time last year, Siya was just a student studying web development in a two-year course at vocational school [Passerelles Numeriques Cambodia](#) (PNC), dreaming of working for an international company with good a salary. But now Siya has a new ambition: running her own tech company in the next 10 years.

Siya's turning point came after she joined the DevBootstrap program, run by Web and Mobile consultancy firm Rotati Consulting, which was held at [Development Innovations'](#) space in Phnom Penh. DevBootstrap is a four week intensive software developer training program designed to help developers gain solid, real world experience in developing applications for real clients. "From the course, I learned a new language for web development called Ruby and a new framework called Rails. Ruby on Rails is very popular in other countries and there is no way I could have learned it myself without having joined DevBootstrap," Siya explained.

After receiving her training at DevBootstrap, Siya was offered an internship at Rotati. And after the internship, she was offered a full time job as a web developer where she develops websites for clients in other countries and Cambodia. One of Siya's projects was developing and maintaining [CamboSearch](#), a web directory funded by Development Innovations that helps civil society organizations in Cambodia to find the right technology partners based on the companies' size and portfolio.

"Siya was hired because I could see that she was a promising student at the time. I also have good experience and a relationship with her school, Passerelles Numeriques. This school tends to produce outstanding candidates for the industry," said Darren Jensen, CEO of Rotati.

In the kingdom, where 68% of the population of 14 million is under 30, the post-secondary curriculum is often missing the demand from the market. This is especially evident in the tech sector, where things change rapidly. While IT-related graduates fresh out of school are struggling to find decent jobs, tech companies are having a hard time recruiting new staff who are equipped with the needed skills and knowledge. "Finding a developer with big data experience is nearly impossible. While there *are* experienced developers, the best are generally not available for hire since they are fully booked as freelancers via online marketplaces or starting their own business," Darren explained, adding, "The model that Rotati uses that works best is to train our developers, free of charge, via the training program DevBootstrap. We then hire the top students in that program as interns for three months. Once they complete the three months they become junior developers and after about three years they become senior developers."

With a huge smile, and her eyes focused on her screen, Siya explained the steps she needs to take in order to reach her life goals, "First, I am going to work up to be an IT manager while pursuing a local degree. Then I am also going to apply for a scholarship abroad to pursue further education. After that I am going to start my own company."