

Endless wait for outcome of my job interview

After a nerve-wracking interview, yours truly seeks diversion to endure long wait for the call announcing his appointment

OFFICE DANDY

MAN - ABOUT - TOWN

I am really looking forward to this long weekend. To begin with, I do not have to go to work and also because I will have money.

Easter was bad for me because it was in the middle of the month and I did not have the finances necessary to have a good time. This time I can enjoy myself. Secondly, I have hardly done any work because I have been waiting for the call—that is yet to come.

My interview was interesting and bizarre at the same time. When I got to the interview place, I realised that we were only four people who had been shortlisted. This did wonders for my ego because it showed that I do have something after all. But what happened after that I had not planned for.

I imagined that all I would need to do is to get in, flash the right buzz words and then move on. But alas! That was not to be. Firstly, they made me do all manner of questions (some seemed like trick questions

for half an hour). My mind could not simply deal with the twists and turns of the questions. Then I was hauled into a panel where four guys sat like army generals with menacing faces. I had rehearsed the possible answers if they asked me—what are my career goals (I would talk about how I want to rise to the higher echelons of the organisation by delivering value. What are my weakness (my obsession with detail and where do I see myself in five years (as a CEO of course!)

All my planning and rehearsing went out of the window. The first question of the day from a bespectacled serious looking lady was: “Describe yourself in two sentences.” I did feel the sweat start forming and foaming from my armpits. I crafted something which sounded rather silly only to be confronted by another question, “Tell us about a situation where you led a team to a joint objective”.

How do I tell them that usually I work alone and even when I am in the team, I am not the leader?

Thank the stars for good old *Harvard Business Review*, for I paused and came up with some fake situation

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about leading a cost cutting team. I saw three members nod their heads. There were many questions about salary expectations and I tried to sound modest though I need the money so bad that I could easily be declared a third world nation.

The verbal interview seemed to take forever and thank goodness I was wearing a jacket for I believe that my newly acquired shirt was drenched in sweat. After the interview, I just went to a nearby bar and ordered a cold beer to calm my sweaty hot body. I had got the doctor to give me a day off after claiming that I was suffering body meltdown

and general body fatigue.

I had better get this job because I cannot endure any more of such interviews. The interview panellists had informed me that they would get back to me within a week. I did not want to ask if they meant one calendar week or one working week.

But today is the fifth day of the working week. My phone has been set on maximum ring tone volume but it is yet to ring. What does this mean? Does this mean that I did not make it?

There is a part of me that wants to make a call to the HR department and find out if I got the job but I am

told that is a desperate move so all I can do is wait and wait and then wait some more. I am looking forward to this weekend because it means that I know that I can postpone the waiting for a bit longer.

Lydia has invited me for a housewarming party on Saturday and I am a bit excited and also stunned. This girl started working the other day and now she has managed to move into a new flat in an upmarket neighbourhood.

I have been working for three years and I am still living in a one-bed roomed flat nowhere near the leafy suburbs. I had better get this job.

Companies should think beyond current economic crisis



RICKY'S MYTHS
RICHARD GITONGA



We are now in the era of downsizing, restructuring, re-engineering and cost cutting. Every CEO has a good excuse in the name of the global credit crunch to cut down costs as a result of the theatrics of Wall Street.

More efficient

A leading brewer has axed 200 jobs. A leading Telco is axing another 500 jobs. A progressive local bank is proposing to its shareholders the intent to amalgamate its subsidiaries and operations to make it more efficient. The view from the street is that the expected outcome of all this corporate restructuring is simply loss of jobs and insecurity amongst staff left in the respective organisations.

The interesting thing is that in most of the cases, it is not absolutely clear how the customer will benefit after all these corporate acrobatics. Will we receive better service? Will goods and services be delivered to us

at a discount? Will we have more convenient accessibility to their services? Will this re-engineering lead to greater innovations and award winning patents? Highly doubtful!

It is said that leadership involves remembering past mistakes, an analysis of today's achievements, and a well grounded imagination in visualising the problems of the future. In essence, the CEOs and their leadership teams driving these re-engineering initiatives need to think strategically and think beyond the crisis in order to steer their companies into the unpredictable and often times perilous future.

Notwithstanding this leadership credo, it is interesting to note that some of these companies are currently deficient of modern systems and processes to efficiently drive their business in their current format.

The bank in question has an unmatched reputation for the longest queues in the country and for some unexplained reason their core bank-



A textile factory in China. In the era of downsizing and restructuring, it is not clear how these measures will lead to increased customer satisfaction and enhanced shareholder value. REUTERS

ing systems have a knack for collapsing minutes before the banking hall is shut to customers. On the other hand, the telco in question has still not figured out how to enhance service delivery to customers through a communications channel that it has long held a monopoly on.

In this regard, despite the perceptually good intentions of all these re-engineering initiatives, it is not clear how they will lead to increased customer satisfaction and enhanced shareholder value.

One wonders therefore whether it is a game of chance? As Calvin Coolidge

said, “those who trust to chance must abide by the results of chance. They have no legitimate complaint against anyone but themselves”.

The irony in all this happenstance is that the beneficiaries in the short term are most likely to be executives sitting in c-suite offices who expect to get inflated bonuses from whatever “savings” are accrued from these restructuring initiatives.

The sure losers are most likely to be the shareholders who are not necessarily informed that when the economy picks up and the markets become bullish, new staff will be hired at a higher

premium which will result in higher human resource costs in the longer term. But who is going to be around in the longer term? It is a high likelihood that none of the executives who endorsed the restructuring initiative will be there.

Long retired

They would have long retired living on their passive income investments and enjoying the African sunset somewhere in our expansive country. The losers who are most likely to be the shareholders, will be counting their losses and letting it out on the executives who will be in charge of “restructuring” the organisations back to profitability. A vicious circle it definitely is. It is a continuous situation in which one problem leads to another and the new problem makes the first problem worse.

In this regard, hopefully the shareholders will look beyond free samosas and T-shirts and see through all these potential melodramatics.

Although common sense is perhaps the most equally divided and surely the most underemployed talent in the world, let us hope that it will prevail at this juncture. CEOs, please note that a bungled corporate restructuring can turn a good idea into disaster.