

# Cold sweat down my back as I search for a new shirt

After spending sleepless nights preparing my papers, I applied for a job and was invited for an interview for which I didn't have the right clothing

## OFFICE DANDY

MAN - ABOUT - TOWN

I am a nervous wreck; I have an interview to attend. I am trying to manage my emotions so that I do not get too optimistic or too cocky about what and how my life will change if I get this job.

To be honest, I dare not ask for anyone's advice or opinion. I am scared that if I do so, there are some who will dissuade me and others who may burst my balloon by telling me about the company and job that I applied for. How did I get to this point?

My life and finances have been in perpetual economic meltdown. I believe that the global crisis started in my house and not in America. What I earn cannot sustain the lifestyle that I believe I deserve.

So I decided to step up my job search. I literally combed and double-combed every newspaper ad — in fact I have been purchasing my own papers instead of waiting for the office paper.

About a month ago, I stumbled upon a job ad that was really up my alley and said I must apply. There is a part of me that had its misgivings. To begin with

the job is in a company that is ten times the size of where I work and I also hear there is so much politics in that company that it would be hard to get even a hearing.

After spending sleepless nights reconstructing and deconstructing my papers, I made a jab at the job. You can imagine my utter surprise when I got a call inviting me for an interview.

I have spent most of today morning searching through Google on tips of how to dress and act for an interview. My male pride will not allow me to seek help though I am very tempted to call Lydia and find out what she recommends.

Finally, I stumble upon a Website that advises that a man should wear either a really white shirt or a blue shirt. To be honest, my shirts are average and cannot dazzle anyone. You see, I discovered some establishment in downtown that excels in revamping second hand suits and shirts.

In fact, these guys are so good that they put together whole ensembles. My trusted clothes seller gives me whatever combination he deems fit. Since these garments are second hand, they lack the lustre and shine of newness. Same applies to my ties, my shoes and every-



thing else about me.

It is now afternoon and I have left the office claiming that I am off to a 'meeting with a supplier.' I am busy searching for the perfect shirt and tie

to wear to the interview. I have decided to visit the shops that I have heard my posh workmates quote.

My entrance into most of these shops was a learning experience on how looks

and first impressions are all that matter at the end of the day. Most of the shop attendants took one look at my second hand suits as they turned away to continue their *sheng* conversations.

After being ignored in three shops, I realised that I would have to steel my nerve if I wanted to get a suitable shirt-plus if I kept chickening out I would end up wasting too much time. In the fourth shop, I approached a less hostile lady shop assistant and asked for assistant.

### More flashy

To ease my introduction, I flashed my business card; you see my business card title makes me sound more flashy and interesting than I truly am.

That helped for she went out of the way to ask me questions about the texture, colour, cut of shirt that I was looking for. I just blurted the truth and told her I wanted a shirt to impress.

Finally I did get the shirt and paid a whopping five thousand bob. In line with my business card persona, I behaved as if I spend that kind of insane money every day.

I gave her my debit card in the full knowledge that after the swipe I would only have Sh107.45 in my account.

Right now, I dare not think of this balance; I must focus on completing the look and act for my interview. As I walked out of the shop, I kept thinking "which of my second hand pairs of shoes can impress sufficiently?"

# Do your managers count their toes or do they dream all day?



RICKY'S MYTHS  
RICHARD GITONGA



A couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine and I were walking downtown to look for a shop that sells fixtures and fittings. Having a slim budget, we opted to visit the shops that are located in a rougher section of the city hoping to get a good deal.

After some enquiries, we were directed to a shop owned by an old man who had been in business in the same location for the past thirty years. After some initial pleasantries and small talk, we got down to business and eventually walked out of the shop with a lot more items than we had actually budgeted for.

The interesting fact about this shopkeeper is that he had never seen the four walls of a classroom in his entire life. Legend has it that he started of his shop with the most rudimentary accounting system known to man which involved reconciling his daily sales by counting his fingers and toes.

Despite this basic system, he had

thrived and expanded his investment portfolio to include prime real estate in the city and its environs.

During the entire time that we haggled with him, it was clear that he had an intimate understanding of his business margins.

On the other side of the world in Washington DC, I met a lady who apparently had been laid off from a job as a result of the much touted credit crunch. Being made redundant at her fairly mature age had got her thinking about her options; thus she decided to try out her luck in setting up a business.

Our conversation over dinner was quite animated as she shared her big idea which revolved around something to do with marketing services online to the "Facebook" community.

As the evening wore on and the excitement died down, one of the colleagues around the table asked her what gross margin she intended to make in her business. Her response to the ques-



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tion was, "What is a gross margin?"

We were all somewhat dumbstruck. My colleague had to dumb down his question so that she could understand it. Unfortunately, the question of what gross margin she was intending to make was clearly not her top priority as her focus was on driving revenue.

As some business gurus are apt to say, her business was likely to fail even before it got off the runway. What was the issue here? The illiterate shopkeeper did not necessarily know what "gross margin" meant in accounting terms but

clearly understood what he needed to sell his goods at to make a healthy bottom line and expand his business.

On the other hand, our highly educated friend did not seem to have a clue of what needed to be done to make money out of her big idea. One mindset was that of an entrepreneur, while the other was that of an employee.

Looking into our corporate business environment today, the latter scenario projects the issue we have amongst most managers.

Many wake up in the morning and

go to work every day without necessarily having a clue on how their organizations actually make money.

They simply slave at their work desks all day trying to stay as close as possible to their job descriptions and leave at the end of the day without having any idea how much money their company makes in a day, a month, or in a year. Needless to say, it is this kind of ignorance of financial numbers that makes a large percentage of redundant or retired corporate employees fail in their first attempt to set up enterprises.

Excusably, corporate politics and silos usually confine employees to their restricted work tasks for the sake of career survival, making them ignorant of how the rest of the organization actually works.

For example, most marketing and finance people do not necessarily get along since most of their objectives are somewhat polarized. It is therefore not surprising to meet many marketers who do not actually know the profitability of the products they sell. They are more likely to be focused on conducting consumer promotions.

Word of advice, it should be mandatory for all managers to attend a course on "finance for non-finance managers." This will definitely drive up organization productivity.