

Word in the grapevine; a new CEO is coming

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OFFICE DANDY

MAN - ABOUT - TOWN

If anyone ever doubted the increasing influence of soap operas on people, then they need to have been present in my office when I had what seemed like an hour of theatrical TV-like suspense from Peninah.

You will recall that she had made a thunderous announcement regarding senior management changes as she calmly perused the newspapers. I know not how Peninah gets her information but I have come to realise that it is almost always right on the money. So I leaned forward and asked Peninah, "tell me, what have you heard?"

This is when Peninah the actress emerged; she started rolling her eyes and attempting to say something and then covering her mouth in what she imagined was a 'bid' to stop the words from coming out.

All this while, she was wiggling in the chair and I must say I was worried that if she went on any longer the chair would break.

She then rolled her eyes again and went into a long monologue about how she is a Christian and does not like to spread confidential information so she needed to pause and pray for a moment about the 'temptation' of telling me.

Frankly at this point, the mountain man in me wanted to tell her to quit the theatrics and get on with it. However, something told me that this time Peninah had a big one to tell me. So I let her be and it paid off.

After a while (it seemed like an eternity), she came back to the story. I was hoping that she would go right to the point and spit it out, but our Peninah does not work that way. She started with giving all the background details — how she happened to be present in the boardroom meetings.

According to her some board members have taken a liking to the kind of tea and samosas she makes and so they demand her services and attention at all board meetings.

I think our board assumes that sweet, ample-framed Peninah is harmless in picking up any form of sensitive



information. If only they knew.

Back to the story as Peninah told me about the exact number of cups of tea and samosas that every board member consumed and exactly what they said to her as a compliment. I knew that the punch line was about to come in when Peninah moved her chair forward and leaned even closer to my desk.

I too had no choice but to respond

and lean forward. And then she whispered "We are getting a new young CEO on the 1st of July." That had me baffled for I assumed that the board would just rubberstamp the appointment of the financial director as the CEO.

According to Peninah, the board felt that they needed someone from outside who has fresh ideas and who is untainted by the culture of this organisation.

She was not sure about the new CEO's name, but she said that he is only 32 and was coming from South Africa.

Thirty-two? That is my age-mate and already a CEO? Peninah was not done with her gossip. She told me about how the board is considering retrenchment since business is not looking good and how much they tipped her for her good service. With that she trooped out of my office asking me to keep it to myself and to also know that she only shared such tales with me because I am a good man who contributed to her church fund-raiser.

Ease up

The bad thing about that kind of gossip is that one cannot openly analyse it with anyone. I would love to walk over to Symo and figure out what it means for us to have a 32-year-old CEO. I dare not to do so because Symo has the biggest mouth in town.

So I go back to my laptop and begin attacking the numerous e-mails in my inbox. As usual, the acting CEO has sent all manner of orders and needs them by end-of-day requests. I am tempted to tell him to ease up since he will not be the CEO any time soon.

Instead I plod hard at them and send them back to him as I head out of the office for the long weekend.

Team-building should help employees to master survival



RICKY'S MYTHS

RICHARD GITONGA



Over many years, companies have strived to engage their employees in an effort to enhance staff cohesion and teamwork through various creative ways.

About a decade ago, the most popular activities revolved around TGIFs (Thank God Its Friday). Company bosses and team leaders took their subordinates for booze and bitings after close of business on Fridays. The primary physical activity around TGIFs was simply lifting food and beverage to the mouth.

Towards the end of the last decade, TGIFs became less popular and another form of engagement in team building through physical activity took root.

Firms signed up with institutions like the Kilimanjaro Outward Bound School to give their staff a sense of reality in the outdoors and make them bond a lot more in seemingly precarious but not so dangerous environments.

The worst incident that could happen during these escapades was prob-

ably mild trauma as a result of a broken bone or two.

Enter the present highly competitive environment, where we have the alpha male and female boss on an aggressive career success streak.

Team building has shifted from being a somewhat afternoon high tea bonding affair to a nerve racking, exhilarating and relatively dangerous experience.

Team building activities that are becoming more popular include bungee jumping and white water rafting. Preferred destinations for enhancing staff cohesion include the turbulent waters of river Nile in Uganda and Tana in Kenya. The River Nile has a particularly infamous level 6 rapid referred to as the dead Dutchman.

Bungee jumping, which used to be available only at Victoria Falls between the national borders of Zimbabwe and Zambia, is now commercially available on a platform off River Tana. Team leaders who want their staff to turn into



Team building has shifted from being an afternoon high tea bonding affair to an adrenaline packed experience like mountain climbing. LIZMUTHONI

adrenaline junkies and reflect on their performance at the office a little more intensely are very fond of this.

Despite all this adrenaline driving, corporate gigs, it is surprising how little most employees who participate in this relatively dangerous activities know about the art of survival out in the wild. For instance, it may be of interest to them to learn that capsizing when white water rafting in a level 5 rapid can mean remaining submerged under water for up to eleven seconds!

Getting lost when climbing one of

our great mountain peaks can mean being alone in the wild for more than three days, without food, water or shelter. The closest most employees have come to any survival training is the quarterly fire drill that they experience at their office building.

As with any risky activity, consequences can be dire. In this respect, there is no better place to seek lessons on survival tactics than from our dear military folks. One well regarded national air-force has a much revered and admired training programme.

The programme is simply referred to as the "magic numbers of staying alive". The most important number is 98.6 — "whatever you do, should your body be exposed to extremes, always protect its temperature and maintain it at 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately 37 degrees Celsius)". An increase to 40 degrees plus can result in hyperthermia and a decrease of 1 to 2 degrees below normal body temperature can result in hypothermia.

Rule of 3s

The most compelling teaching in the programme is the Rule Of 3s which states that we need to be aware that a survival crisis is imminent if we are exposed to three seconds without spirit and hope; three minutes without air; three hours without shelter in extreme conditions; 3 days without water; 3 weeks without food; and three months without compassion or love.

In conclusion, the next rave that's working its way to our country is the Zorb Ball Ride, which has to do with a giant ball which you climb into and roll down a hill. Before your alpha male or female boss invites you out to the next employee engagement session, make sure you have done some reading on survival tactics and that your insurance premiums are paid up.