

Unwanted transfer comes with much-needed perks

Allowances certainly help me to recover from disappointment of lost job prospects

MAN ABOUT TOWN

I am glad that I am off this week because it really is too cold. The power rationing has already begun and therefore hot showers are no longer an option. I was asked to take leave this week so that I can get ready to move to the Coast and take up my new appointment.

Let me be honest, I do not like this move one bit. I was mentally preparing to move to the other company that had the promise of a much fatter pay cheque. I had even prepared an Excel spreadsheet that listed how I would spend my new earnings. This was going to be my time—I would buy more Treasury bills, buy that plot I had been thinking about, get my mother a new cow and buy my father a new bicycle for movement in the village. After doing extensive research online, I had also prepared a sample resignation letter to hand in when the new offer came up.

Imagine the shock and sadness when I received a call saying that the company had decided to postpone filling the position due to tough economic

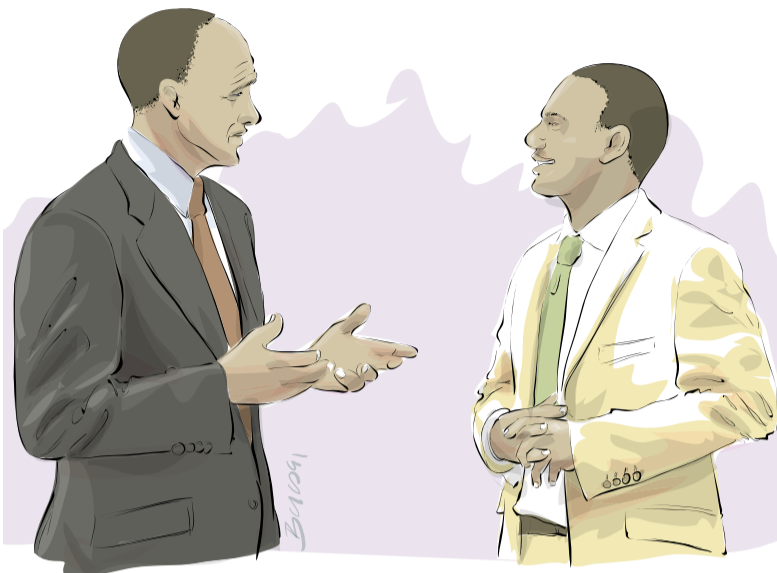
conditions. Did they know that my economic conditions were even tougher and that I needed them to change it quickly? I had not confided in anyone so I had to nurse my hurt in the only way I know how—with alcohol.

The next day I was summoned to the HR department for what was described as an urgent meeting. When I walked into the room, I found the overall HR boss seated with two of his managers.

Whenever such scenarios confront me, my mind goes into overdrive. Had they found out about my wanting to leave? Had they unearthed my involvement with the former CEO in doctoring the books so that he could buy his new car? Was I about to be fired?

The conversation started with a long pep talk from the HR boss. The guy rambled on and on about how human beings need to constantly change and evolve with time. The other HR managers kept nodding their heads in total agreement to everything their boss said.

After going on and on for eternity, the HR boss told me that the business “needed me in Mombasa like yesterday.” His two sidekicks gave a thunder-



The conversation started with a long pep talk from the HR boss. F BARASA

ous clap as if they had just awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Just by observing the HR boss's body language, I realised that the deal was done and dusted and that my opinion was not required.

He then produced tonnes of paperwork as he chimed about how the company would “help me make the transition.” As part of my transition, we shall put you up in a furnished flat for three months as you seek alterna-

tive accommodation.”

That had my attention since I have always thought that such benefits belong to expatriates.

He also told me that the company would give me “two weeks leave to pack and make the move” and better still they would give me additional allowances to cater for this sudden move. All I had to do was sign at the bottom of a bulky set of documents that were

handed to me.

Though I knew that there was little I could do at the moment, I still opted to flex a bit of muscle. So I asked if I could take the documents home and study them while consulting with my family about the impending move.

New allowances

They should know that there really is no family for me to consult and what I wanted to study was how much of my planned budget could be accommodated by the new allowances.

It is so amazing how HR guys are so nice when they need you to do something. The HR boss agreed. “Of course, take your time though we need you at the coast like yesterday,” he said. With that, I strode out of the office and went to match my allowances to the spreadsheet.

These are the days when I wish Lydia were still working here. I most definitely would have found a way of impressing her with my new portfolio. So I decided to call her anyway and tell her that I would like us to have a drink where we can chat about “recent interesting developments.”

She gleefully answered yes and so I must find a way of making my move sound more glamorous than it actually is.

We are creating the right conditions for extinction



RICKY'S MYTHS
RICHARD GITONGA



The study of evolution is indeed interesting as it describes scientifically how living things have adapted over the ages in order to survive within continuously changing circumstances. Those plants and animals that have kept pace and adapted to changing circumstances have managed to survive over centuries. Take the crocodile for example, which still looks like an animal character straight out of the “Jurassic Park” movie. Its ability to fight off or contain species eradicating viruses and other microorganisms has received the attention of renowned scientists.

The concept of evolution can be applied to companies as well. Companies like Webuye Paper Mills where unlikely to survive in perpetuity as their sole existence relied on the destruction of the environment and ecosystem around them. In principle, the board and senior management of the company should have anticipated these changes in their external environment well in advance in order to steer the company into a

totally different direction. They should probably have borrowed a leaf from the Nokia Company which transformed itself from a ground-wood pulp milling company to a leading global telecommunications technology company.

It is with this in mind that Kenyans are flabbergasted with the whole politicised issue regarding the protection of our environment from human encroachment and degradation. Despite the insurmountable evidence around us; drying rivers, failed rains, low water levels at hydro dams, our collective engagement is primarily focused on discussing individual trees rather than copting out of the situation and looking at the forest more holistically.

While the whole world is gearing and prepping for the future where carbon credits will be traded in the open market, we are moving swiftly in the opposite direction by engaging in activities that will invariably result in our inability to compete in the acquisition of carbon credits. Carbon credits are a



Kenya Forest Service workers use branches to extinguish a fire at Karura Forest. Kenya is suffering a drought this year that has parched the landscape. REUTERS

key component of international efforts to mitigate the growth in concentrations of greenhouse gasses. One carbon credit is equal to one tonne of carbon. The idea is to allow market mechanisms to drive industrial and commercial processes in the direction of low emissions or less carbon intensive approaches.

What does all this mean? By investing in the wanton destruction of our natural environment, we are essentially increasing the price that our children will pay for scarce commodities such as carbon credits in the future. If we think that we have

unfavourable balance of trade with the developed world currently, think about the consequences of having an unfavourable balance of carbon credit trade in the future. Since Carbon Reduction Credits consists of the collection and storage of Carbon from our atmosphere through reforestation, forestation, ocean and soil collection and storage efforts, it is seen as an effective way of reducing the Global Carbon Emissions crisis.

Our inability to have a clearer vision of the future and do the right things now will result eventually in a significant de-

cline in our already relatively weak global competitive positioning and only make it more expensive to deal with the rest of the world. On reflection, the nebulous assurances of future cooperation on this matter will only reduce investor confidence in the country and subsequently result invariably in capital flight. Aren't we creating the appropriate conditions for extinction?

Carbon credits

Fortunately, all is not lost in our current set of circumstances. Some progressive Kenyans from both the private and civic societies have refused to be caught up in this negative discourse by starting initiatives that will result in the accumulation of Carbon Credits in the future.

A recently constituted initiative involving some leading local corporations is a positive signal that there are still some Kenyan leaders out there whose need to leave a legacy. Their actions are a testimony to the fact that despite polarised views in the public domain on how future environmental security should be handled, they have opted to take positive actions. In conclusion, for those leaders lobbying for the compensation and protection of interests of settlers in the Mau, try and embrace a little strategic thinking.

Changing your mindset may well be the currency you require to survive the changing political landscape.