

Finally, signs show I am headed for a better job

A prospective employer has indicated I will be given a 50 per cent salary raise

MAN ABOUT TOWN

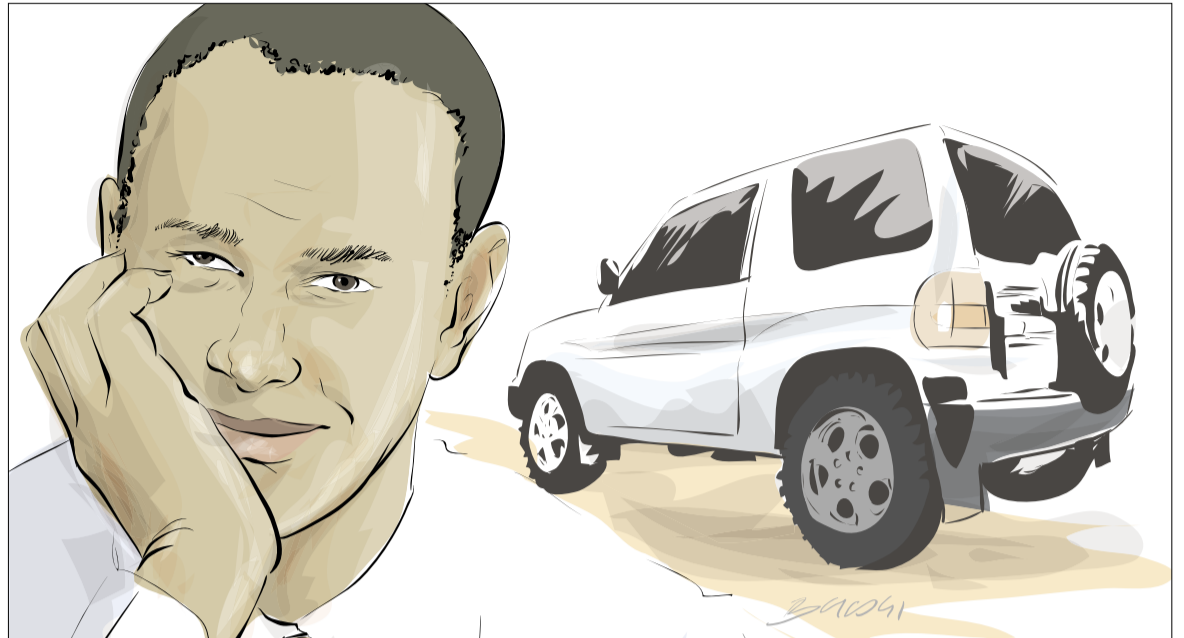
This cold weather is making me look at the Mombasa move through different eyes — it may not be bad at all. To begin with, the power supply in my neighbourhood is very erratic. One moment the lights are on, the next they are off. Just the other day, I missed most of the Michael Jackson memorial service because of the lights. Now I may be a villager, but Michael meant a lot to me and I was very annoyed when the lights went off.

There are many times when I have contemplated not taking a morning shower after waking up to find that the power is off again. I did mention my potential move to Mombasa to my mother and she really threw a fit. In her thinking, Mombasa is the home of sinful pleasures and sinful women — and not a good place for her son. She gave me a whole list of young men and women who have literally in her eyes ‘been swallowed’ by the Coast and have never returned.

In the office front, the HR guys are behaving as if my opinion counts for nothing — they have assumed that I

must go to Mombasa. They are doing all they can to make the offer seem very exciting and tantalising. They have told me that they will provide me with relocation allowance and will even let me stay in some serviced apartment till I find somewhere to live. There is a part of me that is looking forward to being away from the intrigues and pressures of the head office, but there is another that is terrified of Mombasa.

Speaking of decisions, my job search has taken a rather interesting turn in the last few days. I had forgotten all about it after getting the announcement regarding Mombasa. Just yesterday, I received a call from one of the firms that had interviewed me. They are inviting me for a discussion regarding working with them. In an attempt to show how important I was, I asked them about the ball park salary figure we were talking about. Sounding very important, I told them that I would not like to engage in “negotiations without direction.” When they mentioned the amount, I almost fainted. The figure is exactly 1.5 times what I earn. I really must meet them. The problem for me now is how to scheme and come up with ‘meeting’ outside the office.



Since we have just started our financial year, I keep getting all manner of requests that I must deal with. Therefore, the process of playing truant has become harder by the day. I really need to come up with a plan of going to see these guys with the job offer. I am very tempted to say that I am ill and need to see a doctor so that I do not arouse suspicion. I have also created a spreadsheet to compute just what I would do if I earned the promised salary. I surely would replace the Beast and buy a brand new 4WD. This time, I

would not buy a second-hand, I would walk into the showroom and pick out a new one. I most definitely would move out of my neighbourhood and into an apartment that has generator facilities.

And I would instal pay-TV channel in my house and even save some money to go on exotic holiday. It would also feel so nice to tell my current employer to take a hike since they have been treating me so badly in the past. Now, how do I pull my truant move? Fate is smiling upon me before long. Peninah walks into the office.

She tells me that all the big boys are going away tomorrow for a brainstorming session. She informs me that she will be taking the day off to attend her cousin's funeral. Here comes the golden chance to change my life — tomorrow I negotiate a new improved way of life. So, instead of working on my business plan for the Mombasa office, I go on Google. I want to learn all the tips of how to negotiate for the right salary. I cannot help whistling as I do the search so my life is looking very good at last.

We have to improve systems to compete in a global arena



RICKY'S MYTHS
RICHARD GITONGA



This past weekend was indeed unique as it provided Kenyans at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) to gain some insights into our collective business culture and values. For those more psychologically reflective, it was a classical opportunity to observe and muse at our convergent thinking in practice. For some reason, about four international flights landed within minutes of each other and approximately one thousand travellers had to be herded through the airway bridges, immigration and customs sections.

For local travellers, the experience was nothing new. However, for foreign tourists and business travellers, it was an experience to behold.

After wading their way through the hawk-eyed customs officials, the next ordeal they were to experience was nothing they had anticipated. After identifying their chauffeurs through the myriad of placard waving crowd at the arrivals section, and finally entering designated vehicles, they had no

clue that it would take the average time it takes to get to the city centre, which is about 30 to 45 minutes, to get to the toll gates at the main exit of the airport. It took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to drive from the arrivals parking to the exit toll gates which are a mere two kilometres.

What was the reason for this unusual traffic pile up within the JKIA grounds? It appeared there was a problem at the toll stations, where the fees went up more than 100 per cent.

What would ideally have cost most motorists approximately Sh40 ended up costing them between Sh90 and Sh100 at the toll gate. What was indeed amazing is that the administrators at the toll station could clearly see that they were the cause of the traffic pile up due to their slow transactions.

However, they stubbornly insisted on charging the full amount despite incessant complaints from irate drivers and their equally irritated passengers.

Having been a victim of this un-



A recent incident at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport left me and many visitors disappointed when four international flights landed within minutes. LIZ MUTHONI

fortunate set of circumstances, I impatiently waited for my turn to reach the toll station and exercise my rights by giving a piece of my mind. As soon as I reached the cashier's pigeon hole, she gave me a customer service trained smile and apologised for the delay. For obvious reasons, I was in no mood to smile back and instead told her I was disappointed by barraging her with my two cents worth of what I thought of the system. She ignored me, scanned my ticket and casually requested me

to pay Sh100.

A quick peek through the review mirror and a glimpse of the face of the driver following me prompted me to make the payment hurriedly and proceed.

After some thought, I could not help myself but reflect on our collective inability to sort out seemingly simple mundane problems in order to move on to the next level of our development process.

For foreign tourists and business-

men who were landing in Nairobi for the first time, it was a grand welcome to our inefficient systems and greed combined. Would it not have been prudent for the airport authorities to make a judgment call and give motorists a free pass that evening, bearing in mind that they were the main reason for the congestion? Nope, not a chance! Money had to be collected. Their motto must have been something of the tone of “*acha waka, kama ni mbaya ni mbaya*” (don't bother, we are in the thick of things).

Education system

Our convergent thinking culture will eventually be our undoing. Our education system has wired us to collectively solve problems by arriving at one single answer to any challenge at hand. That is why the airport authorities have established one toll station at the airport exit because this is the simplest solution to achieving their revenue objectives.

If they had embraced divergent thinking, which identifies various pathways to solve similar problems, they most probably would have installed several payment points to arrive at the same revenue objectives.

Needless to say, due to our convergent thinking culture and austere attitude towards progress and change, I can guarantee you this problem will still be there one year after this article is published.