

# Why Marketers rise to the top is limited



Mwangi Wanjumbi

Occupation of top CEO positions by majority of marketers in Kenya may only be a pipe dream after all. This appears to have been a clear message by Idy Enang, the commercial director of Cadbury Nigeria Plc, upon delivering a great presentation on Personal Branding. Indeed the Nairobi version of 3rd Marketers Night could not have had a better deal for the day.

How can people with limited knowledge on finances be entrusted with huge business decisions as CEO's? Enang wondered. This observation was in response to my question on the floor on what could be limiting the rise to the top CEO positions for people of marketing background in Kenya. This is in complete contrast to fortune 500 companies whose majority CEO's are of marketing and sales setting. Ironically, Mr. Enang's observations easily matched with the debate on the "Marketers Figure Phobia" witnessed in the 2nd Nairobi's Marketer's Night, thereafter documented in the Marketing Africa magazine of August 2008.

It appears that the Personal Branding presentation could not have come at a better time. It is a time that the country is still recovering from post election violence; when the nation is reeling under heavy burdens of numerous social evils, a leading one being the corruption monster; when Kenyans have been led into believing that they are different only because of their ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, the marketer has an uphill task of changing people's perceptions about themselves as well as this country. Could this be an opportunity for marketers to actually be seen as true brand modeling champions? Perhaps yes, but for that to happen effectively, should they not in fact start with themselves?

It is an open secret that majority of marketers in our country are challenged in understanding the organization-wide picture. Their operations are more often than not limited to marketing operations and sales only. overviews of their organizations. Above all, they need to acquire and embrace financial literacy as Idy emphasized. Only then will they ascend to higher posi-

tions thus help in re-inventing the work force. The employee is in many situations threatened by serious social cultural evolutions. These evolutions have substantially and for that matter sadly put aside the brand components of character, which include social responsibility, care, respect to property, honesty and many others.

How else would one explain the influx of so much social irresponsibility in advertising? I am reminded of a pregnancy control advert which distracts me almost every morning when driving to work together with my family. I always quietly pity my spouse who struggles to switch off the competing FM stations that have been airing the annoying adverts. Her aim, I imagine, is to save our college bound teenage daughter from the embarrassing audio demonstrations of the need being met by the advert. I am not sure of the success rate of deviating attention from this advert which has seemingly been encouraging continued growth of immorality in this era of HIV and Aids. Notably, newspaper features have reported as much in the recent past.

The point is this; the development of strong personal brands in marketers would lead to socially acceptable advertisements in our print, electronics and audio media. Why? The personal brand character is of necessity reflected in the corporate brand. Apparently, the two can never be separated. The corporate body

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is in any case a (legal) person with roles and responsibilities just like the natural person. It seems that the marketer needs to play a bigger role in providing not only the usual corporate branding solutions but should also go further into helping in development of the employee as a brand too.

This could be a daunting challenge indeed. This is so because the concept of corporate products/services as brands or even super brands is well entrenched. That of employees as corporate brands appears wanting in many organizations. The corporate body as brand or culture as some may refer to it is reflected through the mission/vision, values and objectives. Ironically, those components of the corporate brand exist only on paper in most organizations, as I have gathered through my informal research during training programs this year. They are indeed rarely embraced or even considered to be of value by the larger workforce. As such, there is a lot to be done by marketers in re-branding or better still branding not only the self but also the organizational workforce.

Inevitably, it looks like marketers more than ever before now need to position themselves in playing a leading role towards not only the corporate products/services but also the employees as well. And this not only incorporates the organizational but also national re-branding. The process of course starts with re-branding of the self.

### Where does one start?

As Mr. Enang stated in his presentation, individuals need to follow inborn abilities or talents. In fact, these abilities can easily enable one to apply entrepreneurial skills in case of self employment. The converse of an entrepreneur is an intrapreneur and is applicable in the case of formal employment. Unfortunately, many people end up never discovering their talents which incidentally form the best basis of achieving one's full potential. Indeed, one could effortlessly become a super brand.

### When and how do you discover your talents?

Firstly, there should be no cause for worry if you have not done so as yet. It is in other words never too late. Sidney Sheldon the much acclaimed late Author of numeri-

ous books wrote his first one at age 58. He continued writing prolifically until age 88 only recently being stopped by death at 89 years. The first one in case of any doubts is "Range of Angels" whereas the last one is titled "Are you afraid of the Dark." Secondly, Ben Carson the American neurosurgeon and motivational writer, makes discovery of talents to look like a big joke.

You only need to understand through own efforts what you effortlessly do and enjoy that other people consider wastage of time and efforts. Your close relatives or intimate friends may have made this observation. But, maybe you just brushed it aside and continued pursuing other interests. In other cases, you may have acceded to their negative remarks and abandoned an inborn ability which all of us possess anyway. In fact, following your talents would lead you to continually doing what you choose to do in life on purpose as advocated by Spencer Johnson in his book titled, "the one minute sales person."

I discovered some inborn traits in myself that I was previously unaware of even up to a mature age. They are in fact almost unrelated to my earlier financial training background, which I had landed into. It is only then that I started effortlessly and purposefully writing and training not only as a way of life but also for a living. What about you?

You can actually discover your inborn abilities at any time in life. Only then will you acquire an opportunity to effortlessly re-brand yourself. Thereafter, it will just be a matter of reinforcing the brand through acquiring other skills like financial planning as you prepare your path towards the top in whatever you are doing.

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