



## Change your attitude to work and money

By Mwangi Wanjumbi

IN HIS BOOK, *Rich Dad; Poor Dad*, Robert Kiyosaki writes that poor and middle class people work for money whereas the rich ones make money work for them. Inevitably, everybody would want to belong to the rich class, hence the need to change our mentality about work and money.

Consequently, I have formulated this "bad joke" of "punishing" my trainees during management skills training through a thought-provoking exercise. The exercise is meant to get the real reasons why trainees promptly and consistently report to work every day, week, month, year and throughout their entire working life. It becomes a punishment because I always insist that monetary reasons be excluded from the five desired answers from

each participant. I administer this exercise in all programs irrespective of whether the trainees are junior or senior management staff.

In this regard, results from one recent exercise conducted on a mixture of senior managers aged between 30 and 55 years were very revealing. Most of the trainees, especially the older ones, started showing signs of stress when they realized that they were barred from talking about wealth or any other monetary factors. They were also not at ease being outsmarted by the younger members of the management team. All the same, they had to give out answers as expected in this challenging learning process.

What was most intriguing is that

only three percent of the responses were attributable to utilisation of existing talents and inborn abilities yet it is the best driver of performance. In fact, many writers including Kiyosaki say that pursuance of wealth requires that people first develop their inborn abilities so that they can get initial investments.

Meanwhile, 13 percent of the responses indicated that people go to work to so that they can get opportunities to socialize. Another 11 percent said they go to work so that they can learn new ideas and experiences, while a similar percentage report to work just to obey God and the employer. A combined proportion of 30 percent of the responses however indicated



that they work in order to contribute towards nation building, pursuing career progression as well as applying existing knowledge and skills. Other excuses for working included the desire to be occupied as opposed to staying idle at home.

### Insight

This exercise may look awkward at the beginning but it helps to understand peoples' attitudes towards work. The findings since I started conducting the exercise two years ago point to the need to change our mindset about money and work. Of course money is important in our lives. Unfortunately, however, our objectives and attitudes about money and work are most of the times not properly aligned. Until we all develop the right attitudes towards money and work, we will continue destroying our environment and other national resources in the name of quick monetary benefit.

Another conclusion I have reached in my training programs to enhance the work ethic and other values is singing the entire Kenyan national anthem at the beginning or end of the day. I ask people to sing the anthem once in Kiswahili and once in English so that everybody can understand its content clearly. Why do this?

According to *123independenceday.com*, the national song is a form of special prayers seeking blessings from God on Kenya as well as protection from foreign enemies. Emphasis is laid on unity, peace, justice and liberty not only within the country but also with the neighboring countries. This national prayer further emphasizes that with due hard work and honest perseverance, the nation can realise great success.

Before coming to terms with these realities, I had recently been engaging in an intellectual exchange with eleven fellow consultants and was surprised at the little regard we all had for our national anthem. We realised that most of us could neither recite the entire national anthem with ease nor had any idea of where to get a copy of the same. Later, some of us



download the national anthem from the Internet but others just ignored.

Evidently, casual consideration or disregard of the values advocated in our national anthem could be

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the cause of the challenges that our nation is continually going through. In a united country, the national anthem is the thread that binds one citizen with the other, especially when the values espoused are embraced and practiced as a way of life by everybody.

Which is why I have formed a habit of reminding my trainee

delegates of the national anthem and urging them to embrace its values. Incidentally, this strategy is working. One company recently asked me to supply a soft copy of the national anthem, intimating that they would adopt the national prayer as part of the weekly early morning meetings to foster unity.

Meanwhile, the delegates who underwent the exercise of forgetting money as an objective compassionately indicated that they will not only re-align their attitudes about work and money but also prioritize their objectives towards achieving success in life. They were able to rightly put money where it belongs. Money is, in fact, an end result and never a means to an end. It is never a motivating factor either.

A change of attitude towards work and money among citizens would yield a different country. Unfortunately, employers and employees share the same mindsets about the workplace, which continues to undermine individual productivity and national values. ■

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