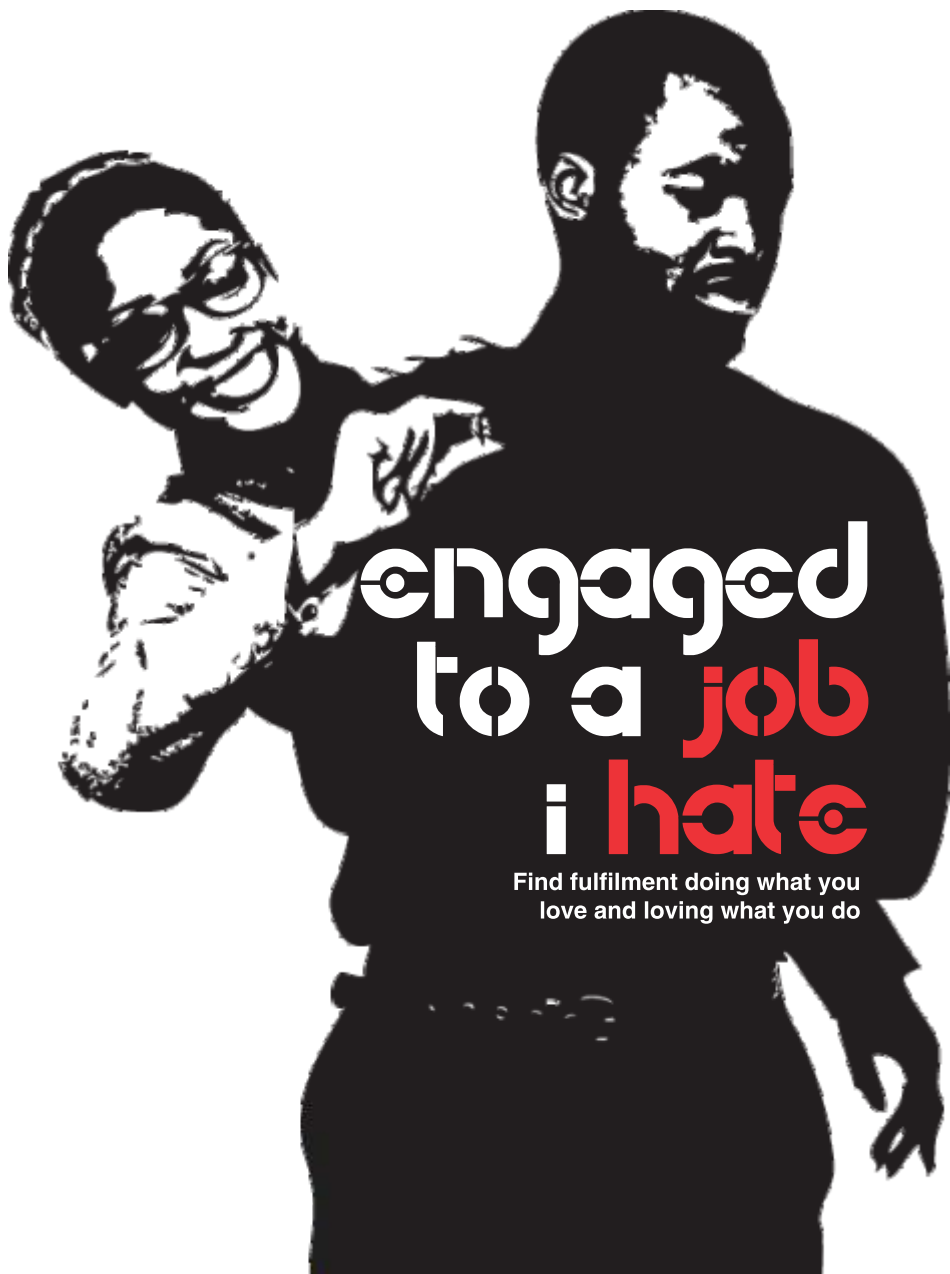


bankole williams



engaged
to a job
i hate

Find fulfilment doing what you
love and loving what you do

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dedication



To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Kehinde Williams; for all the love you have shown to me and for sticking with me through all my crazy decisions.

To my siblings, Ayo and Funmi; for always believing the best of me.

To FD; for being a great mentor and a role model.

To Steve Harris; for nudging me in the right direction.

To God and my saviour Jesus Christ; for the inspiration to write and leading me every step of the way.

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endorsements



THE BOOK MAKES A VERY GOOD READ. Principles for personal advancement are well spelt out built on the experiential knowledge of the writer.

Poju Oyemade (Covenant Christian Centre)

Great Book, easy and a must Read. I particularly like its simplicity, depth and the integration of real life stories with Practical Coaching, Neuroscience and Psychology. Bankole is indeed a great writer. I am PROUD our Paths Crossed.

Lanre Olusola (NCFE UK Life Coach)

This is a book young people should read to get a push to locate the cause that will be the course of their lives. Your time starts now!

Aruosa Osemwegie (GPHR, SPHR, HR Consultant)

ENDORSEMENTS

This book is extremely inspiring. It is a must read for young professionals, final year students and graduates seeking employment. Bankole successfully articulated real life experiences that every employee can relate with and proffered lasting solutions to employee apathy.

I particularly love his practical use of Psychology and its effect on the employee's Physiology. Simply remarkable! If you hate your job as an employee or you don't want to be victim of such, you are holding a curative and precautionary solution in your hands. Read it!

In one word, Phenomenal!

Dr. Charles Ononiwu (International Coordinator,
Youth With a Purpose)

This is a good book that would be of great value to various categories of students, particularly final year students seeking a career choice and fulfilment in the workplace. I hereby commend the book a must read to all and sundry.

Professor O.O Amund (Dean of Student Affairs,
University of Lagos)

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prologue

before you embark on this journey



This book is for everyone who currently hates or has ever hated their positions in life. Its primary targets are the people who feel they are stuck in a rut or caught in a dead end job with no hope of ever finding fulfilment.

It is for people who are afraid to take the big leap in life; the people in a place attached to jobs they had initially thought was going to be temporary but has slowly become permanent. It is for people who are engaged to jobs they hate and are clueless about how to find satisfaction from their jobs; the people on the path of frustration which appears to hold no promise of celebration.

A good percentage of our lives is spent on our jobs, trying to make a living. In Lagos, Nigeria where I live, workers head out as early as 5am and return home as late as 10pm. Married men return home to their wives very late at night, after a hard day's job trying to make "the paper." The questions are numerous; "Who does he really have an affair with, his wife or his job? Who is he really engaged or married to, based on how much of his time he commits to each?"

PROLOGUE

Engaged to a job I hate was borne out of my experience which I would like to share over the next ten chapters. This book is an encapsulation of my true life story and how through it, I have learnt to either 'Love what I do' or 'Do what I love'.

It is possible to live the life of your dreams. Oblige me as I take you into a world where fun and fulfilment kiss; a world that can guarantee so much bliss; a world that can become your world.

Word to Employers

The objective of this book is not to increase your staff turnover. Far from it! It is actually to help boost employee engagement. Employee engagement being a measure of the degree of positive emotional attachment employees have to their jobs, colleagues or organization which then profoundly influences their performance at work. An employee is an 'engaged employee' when he is fully involved with and enthusiastic about his work, and thus will act in a way that furthers his organization's interests.

This book will help boost employee enthusiasm and interest in the furtherance of organizational goals, getting them to 'love what they do'.

On the other hand, like a woman will have to leave her father's house to cleave to a man, some employees will eventually leave to cleave onto other jobs or their future.

We will be doing ourselves a great disservice if we insist on keeping them especially when it's time for them to move on and perhaps 'do what they love'.

It is a must read for every employee, employer and anyone who aspires to be either.

Love what you do or do what you love!

Who should read this book?

- Employers
- Employees
- Business owners and Entrepreneurs
- Final year students and graduates seeking jobs

And finally, anyone aspiring to be any of the above.

PROLOGUE

ENGAGEMENT RINGS

This book is divided into 4 rings:

Ring One: Personal Discovery	(Chapter 1- 4)
Ring Two: Engagement	(Chapter 5- 6)
Ring Three: Disengagement	(Chapter 7- 8)
Ring Four: Married for Life	(Chapter 9- 10)

These four parts often make up the career path of employees who are currently *engaged to jobs they hate* and aspire to get that dream job or hope to become CEOs someday.

Ring One: Personal Discovery

This comes at different points in one's career journey. Some discover what they are really passionate about whilst in school and remain on that path while others (the majority actually) hop on the next best offer that comes their way as graduates. Sometimes, this phase even shows up whilst one is engaged to a certain job; helping them discover some things about themselves that they had been previously oblivious of. The first four chapters of this book are dedicated to my personal discovery experience; how at an early age, I identified what I was really passionate about. I took time to explain this to help people (especially students) relate with my personal experience and draw out life lessons for themselves.

Ring Two: Engagement

In chapters 5 and 6, we will deal with core employee engagement issues; touching on limiting beliefs that hinder employees from giving their best on the job and how to deal with these issues. By the way, did you know that *80% of deaths caused by heart attacks happen between 8am and 9am on Mondays?* Interesting piece of information you may say.

However, in these chapters, we'll take a closer look at the factors responsible for this. Unknown to most employees, they are running subconscious programs which can hinder their growth and cause them to make wrong career choices. We will explain the principles behind loving what you do as well as employee engagement in chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Ring Three: Disengagement

At a certain point in one's career, you feel the need to leave your current job. Not only is this decision considered a huge risk, there are uncertainties about what hopes the future job or endeavour holds. As I share my experience with you and certain decisions I had to make along the way, it would help answer a few questions that cloud the minds of employees in this phase; questions like, "When is the best time to leave?" or even, "When is it *not* the best time to disengage?"

PROLOGUE

Ring Four: Married for life

Imagine that on your wedding day, you put the ring on the bride's finger and then suddenly realize that you just wedded the wrong bride. You do not want to get to the top of your career ladder before discovering that you had been climbing the wrong wall. I share a lot of interesting experiences in the last couple of chapters and let's just say it's too much to summarize, so you may have to read it!

chapter one

the beginning



A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step
-Lao Tzu

My name is Bankole Omolola Ekenedilichukwu James Williams. This is actually the first time I am spelling out all five names on paper as I personally wonder why I was given the name Omolola (shortened to Lola), which has a feminine ring to it, James which I found out means supplanter (no offense to people who bear this name) and Ekenedilichukwu which happens to be the name of a popular Eastern transport service company in Nigeria. My personal preference is my first name, Bankole, so for the purpose of this read, let's stick with Bankole Williams.

I am the third child of three and I am a native of Edo state. Surprised? (I can tell that your eyebrows have probably hit your hairline). Well, let me shock you further. My mum is Igbo from Asaba, Delta state in Nigeria (now your eyebrows must have shifted your hairline).

I come from a place in Edo state called Otuo in Owan East

THE BEGINNING

Local Government Area where Yoruba happens to be the second language. In fact, it's been said that the indigenes of that land migrated from Ondo state. My dad spent a good part of his life in Oshogbo whilst my mum grew up in Abakaliki and Lagos state.

Growing up, I always heard my parents communicate with either Yoruba or English language, neither of which is my native language. Apparently, my parents were ever so concerned about our spoken English and felt teaching us a native language would affect our ability to learn and understand the English language. I wish my parents knew that children can actually learn five languages without one affecting the other.

So, back to my name; because of the strong affiliation with Yoruba-land and my parents' Yoruba speaking background, they must have felt slightly compelled to give their kids Yoruba names.

I grew up in an area called Amuwo-odofin (very close to Festac town) in Lagos. I recall writing my address and including 'via Festac town' at the end as I felt that Festac Town was a more popular part of town. I believed that its presence in my address could make it appear popular (which never quite happened) or at least water down the effect of a weighty Yoruba name like *Amuwo-odofin* (which I think it did, but I'll let you be the judge of that).

As a kid, growing up was pretty interesting. My parents were very apprehensive of the external influence of the

neighbourhood kids but all our minds could accommodate at the time was fun, fun and more fun.

My dad was a building engineer while my mum was a civil servant. They both left home in the mornings, leaving behind strict instructions to remain indoors. However as soon as the rear of my dad's car was out of sight, we threw caution and their instructions to the wind. We went out to play with the neighbourhood kids, howbeit very conscious of the timing of our parents' return.

I recall knowing the sound of not just the horn of my dad's car but also the sound of the engine and the minute my kiddy senses picked it, I took to my heels. On getting to the house, I would take an unassuming position in the living room with my books, forgetting that my stained clothes would give me away.

I grew up believing that my dad was a genius and that he had hidden cameras and spies around the house (I actually did walk around suspecting people who I felt could be his spies). My dad always knew every time I flouted his rules; every time I played outside or whenever I put on the television regardless of his directives not to watch TV but read my books. I would always sit down, awed at my dad's 'genius', puzzled because I wondered how he always discovered. Unknown to me, all he needed to do was look at my clothes or simply feel the temperature of the television.

After a number of lashes, I was forced to apply wisdom. I

THE BEGINNING

reduced a lot of my interactions with the 'external world' and became more introspective and slightly introverted. I began to take my academics seriously with the aim of making my parents proud.

My folks particularly focused their attention on me because of my position as the last child. They gave all they had to send me to the best schools which I honestly do appreciate. Sending children to the best schools creates certain expectations of the kids but it also means more responsibilities for the parents, as my parents could barely afford it at that time. I attended Nazareth Nursery and Primary school, a Roman Catholic school for the middle and upper echelon kids. My classmates had huge boxes of toys, I had pockets full of dreams; I dreamt of owning my own transformer robots, lego games and convertible sport cars. The other kids had stacks of comics, I had three that I cherished; Asterix and Obelix, Tin Tin and Archie (which I carefully selected from my friend's stack). The other kids travelled for summer, I travelled in the rainy season to my 'villa' (hometown in Nigeria).

All of these subconsciously affected my self-perception and also increased my yearning for more even as a kid. Whilst this is definitely not to downplay my parents' effort at giving me sound education, it has helped me understand that quality education also comes with bigger responsibilities for parents. The objective should be to groom well rounded children and not for them to be strong in one area and weak in other areas.

These experiences framed me, carving out my personality, the 'cool, calm and collected one', with an ever burning desire and hunger to achieve more!

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- The secret of getting ahead is getting started
- Your background is no excuse to leave your back on the ground
- Our pasts may have influenced who we are but we are responsible for who we become
- The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance
- Dream big, start small, and grow fast! – Fela Durotoye

chapter two

HIGH SCHOOL MEMOIRS



There is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets in the future - Graham Greene

In 1992, Federal Government College Ijanikin, Lagos was arguably one of the best secondary schools to send a child to. There weren't so many private schools, the few that existed were expensive and offered what I refer to as 'pseudo reality'.

I have very vivid memories of my first day at 'Ijanikin' (as my school was popularly called). I had just watched my parents drive off, leaving me in a new world, all by myself. As I trotted to my hostel in my slightly oversized Cortina, my back bent backwards almost giving way to the gravitational pull of my huge backpack, I heard a loud voice from one of the hostels calling out, "Oduduwa boy!" Pretty naive about what that meant, I however knew that my red checkered house wear was that of Oduduwa house. Unsure as to whether I was the one being referred to, I continued walking and then I heard the deep baritone voice shout again, "Short oduduwa boy!"

With that adjective - short - because of what I lacked in height (back then), I knew it had to be me. I had heard all

HIGH SCHOOL MEMOIRS

sorts of scary stories about what senior students did to junior students for not 'heeding their call' and I sure did not want to become a victim. So I ran in the direction of the window, where the senior student called out from.

“What is your name?” he asked as I stood before him.

“Bankole,” I answered, panting slightly.

“Go over there and call me Bola,” he said with an intimidating tone, pointing in the opposite direction to a block on the other side of the road.

I looked at him in absolute bewilderment, wondering to myself how on earth I was supposed to identify this Bola in what looked like a huge hostel.

“Hurry!” he yelled in a deep voice that resonated in my auditory canals instantly, causing me to run in the opposite direction.

I ran over the drainage, across the road, over the next drainage and then across the slabs (which unknown to me was what demarcated the male hostel from the female hostel) in the direction of the female hostels. Oblivious of the eyes glaring at me in utter amazement, I was soon stopped in my strides by one of the girls outside the hostel.

“What in heaven's name are you doing here?” she roared.

“Going to call Bola,” I answered, wondering to myself why more and more females were coming towards me.

“Who sent you?” she asked, as she probably sensed from my innocent look that I was pretty ignorant of what I had just done.

I pointed in the direction of the window of the hostel from where “Mr. Baritone” had issued the order I was carrying out. That was when I heard what sounded like a hostel full of boys laughing at me, the inexperienced juvenile they had just made a fool of.

Suddenly the scales hit the ground as I realized that I was the only male in that location. In what seemed like less than a micro second I was off the 'restricted area', covering my face in shame as I fled.

TWO SALIENT EVENTS

During my first year of Senior Secondary school, my school had this Head boy named Charles. He was a charismatic young man who commanded the respect of his juniors, his peers and even teachers. He wasn't only the Head boy; he was the president of the Chapel fellowship, exuding exemplary leadership in almost everything he did. He was good-looking, smart and quite athletic. He was the guy the girls wanted to be with and the guy the guys wished they could be like. He had an elegant carriage which in today's parlance could be termed 'swag'. However, what struck me the most about him was not just his suave demeanor but his excellent communication skills. Charles was articulate and could woo anyone with his words.

HIGH SCHOOL MEMOIRS

I recall one Speech and Prize Giving Day where as the head boy, he was required to give a speech. I do not recollect the words he used but I remember the effect he had as we all (students, teachers and parents) stood there, charmed by his persona and charged by his words. The hall was electrified by his vocalizations and it earned him a standing ovation and a resounding applause. I still have clear mental pictures of that day, I even remember a parent pulling his son's ear and saying to him, "When would you make me proud like this?"

I left that event really inspired but I also felt within me that I could do what Charles had just done. I craved being able to communicate the way Charles did and definitely loved the spell-binding effect that his captivating speech had on the hearers. I left the hall with a desire to be a Public Speaker; to stand before millions of people and impact their lives positively with my words.

Now with the benefit of hindsight, I realize that on that day a seed was sown, a seed called DESIRE!

"Desire is a seed of greatness in the object of the desire."

The question you have to ask yourself is; *"What challenges me when it is properly done urging me to believe that I can do same?"*

Many times, we come across people who are currently living our dreams, people whose present status is a glimpse of our desired future. Never be intimidated by their current success. Rather, be inspired and challenged by them.

The second striking story contrasts sharply with the previous one; not ending in ovation and applause but mockery and jeers.

In my final year in Senior Secondary school, for some reason, my mates grew unimaginable wings. They became bold, audacious and quite unruly. I guess it was that stage where juvenile delinquency is usually at its peak, plus, they felt they were on top of the food chain. I had classmates that would skip classes, jump the school fence, 'jack' (slang meaning to break open) boxes and talk rudely to teachers without considering the consequences of their actions. The teachers who appeared uncertain of themselves and seemed unassertive were often the victims of these young miscreants.

Our Economics teacher, Mr. A (you wouldn't expect me to mention his name, would you?); was a soft spoken, rather laid back teacher whose classes were always interjected with side comments and unnecessary prattle from the usual suspects (the back benchers). However, he would teach as though he was oblivious of all that was going on in class. On this particular day, after his class, Mr. A decided to engage us in pep talk; a failed attempt at inspiring his students. He sounded too soft spoken, as though he didn't believe in what he said let alone be able to convince us to take his advice.

I once heard that Communication is made up of these integral parts;

Words - which make up 7%

HIGH SCHOOL MEMOIRS

Tone of Voice - which makes up 38%

Body Language - which makes up 55%

His body language was very questionable; he seemed rather nervous and jittery. His tone of voice; rather low, he sounded uncertain about his words. His words, oh his words!

Mr. A in the middle of his 'charge' made a grammatical blunder using the word '*startment*' (which never existed, does not exist and will never exist in the English language) instead of the word, "start" or "beginning."

The moment he said, "When the *startment* is good..." the entire class erupted in laughter.

Unsure of the cause of the ruckus, he tried to get everybody to be quiet as a classmate, Dolapo, raised his hand to ask a question.

"Quiet class, quiet! Let Dolapo ask his question," he said with his soft-spoken voice, motioning to Dolapo to proceed with his question.

"Excuse me sir, when the *startment* is good, does it mean the *finishment* will also be good?" asked Dolapo, with the most mischievous look he could depict.

At this point the class literally exploded in outbursts of laughter.

Mr. A, still clueless, attempted to calm everyone down, saying, “Stop laughing class, that is a very good question.”

No he didn't! Well...yes he did! True story.

This experience, though a sharp contrast with the first is one I also never forgot because I really felt bad about the teacher's poor communication skills. It impacted me in a different way because I saw what I did not want to become and I was displeased at his pitiable communication ability.

In life, I have observed that we tend to be more critical about the things we are passionate about, especially when it is poorly done.

A couple of questions you need to ask yourself therefore;
“*What upsets me the most when it is poorly done?*”
“*What am I most critical about?*”

These are the keys to discovering what you are created to do, the unique problem you are ‘wired’ to solve.

Michael Collins Enebeli Ajereh (popularly known as Don Jazzy) back in school, would listen to drummers on assembly ground and pick out flaws that the rest of us didn't notice. He would then collect the sticks from the drummers and beat the drums, making the most enthralling sounds we had ever heard. It always upset him when the drums were poorly played, little wonder he is one of the biggest music producers in Nigeria today.

HIGH SCHOOL MEMOIRS

IK Osakioduwa (Host of Big Brother Africa) back in the University of Lagos used to complain about the performance of on-air personalities - radio and TV presenters - and the poor quality of Nigerian adverts (Gosh! You need to watch some of the old adverts; you'll be amazed at how far we have come). It is definitely not a coincidence that he is a notable personality on radio/TV and has produced some of the best radio jingles in Nigeria.

“You are created to add to what you like and be a solution to what you dislike.”

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- If you can visualise it, you can actualise it
- Dream big dreams, it doesn't cost a thing
- There is a real place where you cannot be replaced, find it!
- Problems are merely opportunities for us to proffer solutions, solutions that will put money in our pockets
- The starting point of all achievement is desire - Napoleon Hill

chapter three

UNILAG: THE LAND OF DREAMS



“You see things; and say, 'why?' But I dream of things that never were; and I say 'why not?'”
- George Bernard Shaw

The temperature must have been at least 37 degrees centigrade that Monday afternoon as I sat at the Trafalgar Square, near the Senate building of the University of Lagos. The Trafalgar square was a prominent spot in Unilag; it was the place where you would often find three sets of people.

- *Jambites*: The guys in their first year who were still trying to get a grip of all the happenings on campus. These were the greenhorns yet to acclimatise with their new environment. They were the ones you would often see walking on pavements and road curbs (edge where a raised pavement, sidewalk, footpath or road median meets an unraised street or roadway) trying to keep their balance as they navigated their way to nowhere in particular. They were the ones that always had that “clueless” look and always loved walking. In fact, they covered the most distance because their lecture halls and hostel

accommodations were usually far apart.

- *Loafers*: These were the guys who really had nothing doing. In fact, they never had a plan for their day but their day always had plans for them. They had a diary which they filled at the end of the day but their agenda was a book with blank pages. They were the ones you could call “*anywhere belle face*” meaning they were tossed to and fro by any wind of activity that came their way. And if the wind didn't come their way, you know where to find them - at Trafalgar square.
- *Aspiring Jambites*: Now this was my category and as the name implies we were the ones aspiring to be like those climbing the curbs; plain and simple!

This particular afternoon, I was sweating profusely, not just because of the unbearable temperature, but also because the moment I had been waiting for was fast approaching; the moment when the final admission list would be pasted at the Information Centre of the University of Lagos.

Gaining admission to Unilag was definitely the aspiration of every High School graduate. It was like the national ethos of the United States, the American dream;

Where freedom includes a promise of the possibility of prosperity and success. Where life should be better, richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of

social class or circumstances of birth.

That was what my Unilag dream looked like; a place of freedom (away from my folks), a land of promise (where dreams meet opportunities).

As I waited for the list to be released, my mind wandered briefly. I remembered sitting under a tree along 3rd Avenue, Festac town in the cool of the evening, talking with my best friends, OC Ukeje and Eric OJ about this Unilag dream. We shared lofty ideas, fantasized about all the fun things we would do. We gazed into the stars as we shared snippets of our soon to be future, painting pictures of a brighter tomorrow.

I was jolted out of my reverie by an approaching silhouette that looked like that of my friend OC. As the shape moved closer, I noticed that he was wearing an oversized T-shirt on an oversized pair of jeans. He looked lost in those clothes, but oversize was in vogue back then. It was the era of baggy jeans, baggy T-shirts and Timberland boots and if you had none of these, you weren't cool. As he approached me, I soon recognized his unique "bounce." It was OC Ukeje.

"What's cracking bro?" he asked (trying to speak the *Jambite* lingua).

"I am really tired," I replied as I wiped off what seemed like a litre of salt water off my brow with my already soaked handkerchief.

“I'm tired too bro; I've been here since 8am and the list is still not out,” he said with a huge sigh.

“So what do you think we should do?” he asked

“Let's go see Deji at the guesthouse,” I replied.

Deji was an old friend from Festac town and we met at the tutorials I attended for the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME). He was an energetic young man, always full of life and had a crazy sense of humour. Deji was already a *Jambite* because he had gained admission with his first UME result. However, I had to write the examination a second time and was still aspiring to 'climb the curbs.' He had bumped into me earlier in the day on his way to a meeting at the guesthouse.

At this point, anything to take us away from waiting anxiously for the list was a great idea so we headed towards the guesthouse.

On getting to the reception, we asked the receptionist, “Please where is The Rock Foundation Mission's meeting holding?”

“Committee Room B, take the stairs by the side of the building, it's just at the second landing,” she replied warmly.

We took the stairs and as we got to the second floor, we

stood at the entrance of a room that had over 100 set of eyes gaping at us.

“Oops!” We both said in tandem, as we quickly hastened to go back downstairs.

“Hello guys!” a voice hollered from behind us, “Would you like to come in?”

We turned around to see this good-looking gentleman who later introduced himself as Chuks, beckoning on us to come in.

“We are not yet students of Unilag,” OC replied in our defence.

“That's not a challenge, you can still come in,” Chuks said with a really pleasant smile on his face.

OC and I looked at each other as though to read each other's minds. I knew my friend very well, he had been bought over. Persuaded by Chuks, we walked into the meeting of The Rock Foundation Mission aka TRF.

TRF was one of the subjects of our 'under the tree' conversation in Festac town. The music team (Rock Solid) had just released what could arguably be termed the ‘first Nigerian contemporary gospel hip-hop album’. It was a remarkable piece of work, produced by students of University of Lagos. The songs were all over the air waves and we honestly felt they could go global with the album.

The guys who worked on the album included Toyin Shokefun, now TY Bello; Lara Bajomo, now Lara George; Emem Ema, Kike Balogun now Kike Mudiaga; Dapo Torimiro, Gbolahan Odukoya and Moyosore Ojo just to mention a few names. TRF definitely had a lot of talented people.

At the end of the meeting, we were asked to pick up workers' forms and by the next week we had been recruited into Rock Solid. This was a dream come true! “You mean my fantasies (remember the conversations under the tree) could actually become real?” I ended up playing a very pivotal role in the group as the only rapper the group had. We wrote new songs and performed them on various platforms. I really had a blast in Rock Solid; I was living my dreams.

“You can only feature in a future you have pictured.”

Often times, I hear people say, “It's not worth dreaming, it will never come to pass,” and I ask, “What if it does?”

I am reminded of the video of a female musician, Susan Boyle, a 47 year-old woman who attempted the *Britain's Got Talent* auditions with judges like Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden and Piers Morgan. The video has over 300million views and counting on YouTube. When she walked up the stage, people scoffed and laughed at her, wondering what an old country lady was doing at the auditions. She said she had dreamt of performing on a stage since she was 12 years old but no one ever gave her the opportunity.

She sang 'I Dreamed a Dream' from *Les Misérables* and from the first line of the song, the auditorium erupted with praises and applause. 35 years of preparation, one moment of expression. It was the biggest wake up call for everyone who sat in the audience.

Boyle's first album, *I Dreamed a Dream*, was released on 23 November 2009 and became Amazon's best-selling album in pre-sales. According to Billboard, "The arrival of *I Dreamed a Dream* ... marks the best opening week for a female artist's debut album since Sound Scan began tracking sales in 1991. In only six weeks of sales, it became the biggest selling album in the world for 2009, selling 9 million copies." In September 2010, Boyle was officially recognized by Guinness World Records as having had the fastest selling debut album by a female artist in the UK, the most successful first week sales of a debut album in the UK, and was also awarded the record for being the oldest person to reach number one with a debut album in the UK.

Imagine if she had said, "It's not worth dreaming, it would never come to pass."

RHYTHMICALLY APPLIED POETRY

I started out in *Rock Solid* as one of the tenor singers but soon carved out my unique niche owing to my interest in rap music. I had a few friends who were also very passionate about rap music back then. We would often

meet up at Bamboo box, a place close to the Science Faculty (which happened to be my faculty by the way).

Bamboo box as the name implies was a wooden structure made of bamboo which not only served as an eatery but as a leisure spot for boys (and maybe girls who could pass for boys). The girls who came there had to have some guts to withstand the intimidating look on the faces of the guys there.

Guys spent time there every day, arguing about only three subjects; Politics, Soccer and Showbiz. You would often see two guys arguing passionately about their different clubs with fiery emotions flying around, you would think their school fees were being paid by the clubs they supported.

Bamboo box also serviced the *loafers* and of course the *rappers* - boys with their demo CDs, hoping that one day, they would become Nigeria's Jay-Z. They had people come in to do freestyle raps with beat boxes, making street music daily. In retrospect, it actually was a grooming ground for some of the rap artists we have today. The likes of T-Rex, Tito, and Rooftop MCs all went through this phase. It was a place to showcase your talent and hone your skills.

While at TRF, I joined a rap group made up of three guys and one girl. It was called G-Force (now popularly known as Rooftop MCs) and we were one of the biggest rap groups on campus. We had shows all around school and were invited to different schools to showcase our talent. I

remember receiving hand written application letters from people who craved to be a part of the group.

One day after rehearsals, the two guys called me aside to tell me about their resolve to drop out of school and focus on their passion. I was alarmed by their decision and tried talking them out of it. They sounded very convinced about their decision to leave school and I soon discovered that my attempt to persuade them against this decision was futile. They were both studying courses they had absolutely no interest in and felt like school was a distraction to their desired careers.

I saw an unusual fire in the eyes of these young men, something they couldn't see in mine. I tried to imagine what my parents would say if I told them I was leaving school but the mere thought of their reaction sent shivers down my spine. Though these guys considered what their parents would say, it was definitely not a deterrent to the pursuit of their dream, so they dropped out of school. As the group continued, it began to demand more of my time and attention. I couldn't commit totally to the group as I was still focused on getting a degree and had taken up certain responsibilities in TRF. Soon enough, the inevitable happened. Aisha (the lady in the group) and I had to leave the group for these two passionate guys to pursue their music career. It was apparent that both of us were not willing to sacrifice as much as these guys were willing to give up in pursuit of careers in rap music. Aisha had a huge flair for baking and at some point in her life she too had to

quit her job to face her passion for baking beautiful cakes. She has since become a huge force to reckon with in her industry. She is currently called the *Cake Architect* and recently opened her cake centre in the Lagos metropolis. I guess it's safe to conclude that she found what was 'worth it' for her.

Whilst I am not an advocate of dropping out of school, I believe the end would always justify the means and eventually vindicate the individuals involved. A wise man once said, "Evidence terminates arguments." I believe results would always substantiate decisions. These two individuals currently make up one of the biggest rap groups in Nigeria and their results now give substance to their decision.

Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers and Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft both dropped out of school because of their love for computers. I wonder what their parents felt when they made that decision. Well, I wonder how they feel now. Their results validate their decisions. Ironically, Stanford invited Steve Jobs to address Stanford graduates. That could never have happened if he had no results.

My friends' decision to leave school was a huge reality check for me. I began to ask myself if rap music was really 'worth it' for me. I was definitely not going to stake my education for a career in rap music so I decided to hang my boots, or in this case, my mic. However, later in life, I found what was 'worth it' for me and worth taking the risk for. We will get to that soon.

Some drop out of school, others drop out of their current careers. These decisions are hinged on whether the individuals involved believe the risk is commensurate with the gains. Everyone has got to discover for themselves specifically what is worth living for and live for it.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- You should not always make some other person's decision a premise for your own decisions; especially when you both have different destinations
- Someone else's opinion of you does not have to be your reality
- Historical events of yesterday are being read today but historical events of tomorrow are being written today by people with great imagination
- Private preparation precedes public celebration
- It is better to be ready for opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be ready for it - Les Brown

chapter four

CONNECTING THE DOTS



Vision is the picture of a destination that compels you to embark on a journey and stay on it regardless of how rough the road is and how long it takes you to get there
- Fela Durotoye

It was a week to my final semester examinations at the University of Lagos and I had resolved to get my best grades in school that semester. I was determined to give my best and put all the effort I could muster into ensuring that I finished with a Second Class upper grade.

My class had a lot of brilliant students; the guys popularly called *efikos*. These guys were in school strictly for the good grades (precisely a First Class) and absolutely nothing else. You could only find them in two places; they were either in class or in their hostels. They operated like a pendulum; going *to* class *from* the hostel or coming *from* class *to* the hostel; a predictable linear lifestyle. You always knew where to find them. Some of these guys were pretty extreme with their outlook to life as every tick of the clock meant something to them. They believed every conversation should either take them a step closer to their dream of a First Class or it was literally a waste of time. The guys and

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girls in my class that fell into this category acted pretty much the same way. They cared less about the direction the different strands of hair on their head faced. They wore geeky glasses not as a fashion statement (amazing how fashion has evolved) but as a statement of fact; they were geeks. Finally, they had this look on their faces with wrinkles on their foreheads as though they had to contain the various contemplations in their heads otherwise it would detonate.

Whilst I am an advocate of aiming for good grades I also think that being within the four walls of a University presents you with incredible opportunities that certain people miss out on. It is an opportunity to network and develop great interpersonal relationship skills. We live in a world with a system that is premised not just on competence but relationships and in my practice as a Human Resource personnel, I have seen access granted and denied on the basis of good or bad relationships.

The closer we were to the examinations the more people switched into the 'efiko' mode. Students spent sleepless nights reading trying to make up for lost time. The sale of coffee hit a climax, the library was the new hang out spot (no longer Trafalgar Square and Bamboo box), fellowships recorded the largest turnouts and the 'efikos' seemed to garner more friends.

A week before exams, TRF invited a gentleman to speak on secrets for academic excellence (sorry, his name is withheld for now but not to worry, a whole chapter is dedicated to

him). Typical of the season, the auditorium was packed with students from different faculties. As this young man was invited to the podium, the auditorium erupted with applause, in anticipation of the wise words that would proceed from his lips to help shoot their grades up.

As he walked forward, I couldn't help but notice the confidence he exuded because he walked like he was much taller than he actually was. He looked really sharp in his dressing, dapper from head to toe.

From the minute he opened his mouth I knew we were going to have a remarkable time. His words were mind-blowing; the kind of words that made people leave their seats and hit their heads with their hands as though it helped the retention of what they heard. Some people screamed because of the profundity of the things he said, while others sunk in their seats in awe of such an embodiment of wisdom. I sat down there, not only blessed by these inspiring words but like someone who just had an epiphany; I had just seen a picture of my future. This guy was living my dreams, talking and making huge impact on people's lives. I had gotten several opportunities to speak but none in this capacity and not with this kind of effect. I had also heard several speakers before then, but no one left something resonating within me like this one speaker.

At the end of the session, a large crowd ushered him to his car, some wanting his personal contacts, others his autograph. However, I had gotten what I needed for the moment; I knew who I wanted to become because I had

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seen someone whose present work was a glimpse of my future. I also knew that someday our paths would cross and he would possibly be my mentor. It is amazing how people can go through the same experience but come out with different results.

That insightful experience made me ponder on a lot of things. Here I was a final year student of biochemistry; a course I did not plan to study or intend to practice. Many students in Nigeria find themselves in similar situations and end up bitter and frustrated instead of understanding that what you have today can be a means to tomorrow's end.

In the words of my good friend, Steve Harris, “It is not what you don't have that limits you, it is what you have but don't know how to use.”

Our educational system is not structured to help people realize their areas of strength, let alone encourage them to pursue this path. Most parents insist on the courses their children should study, schools have not yet perfected the art of helping students discover their strengths while Universities offer admission for courses other than the applicant's choice. Consequently, we lack an enabling environment for self discovery and personal fulfilment.

Students get admission into *any school* to study *any course*, get *any job* and needless to say become *anybodies*. We forget that there is a need to, “*Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it,*” and not, “*Train up the*

child the way we think he should go... ”

I watched a video of Tiger Woods on YouTube on The Mike Douglas Show playing golf with his dad Earl Woods at age two (yes, age two; I watched it and you can check it out too). Earl had noticed that Tiger had a thing for using sticks every time a ball was thrown at him and trained him to become a golfer. Today, Tiger is still regarded as one of the greatest athletes of our time. Imagine if his dad had trained him to be a soccer player because of his personal preference for the sport!

Having painted the reality of what we are faced with in Nigeria, pending the time these factors change (and I crave to be a part of this change), you must take responsibility for your future. You may not have control over your past but the future should never take you by surprise. The truth is, we are the architects of our own destinies and we shouldn't allow the present challenges we face in our economy hinder us from navigating our way to success in life. Life on its own always presents us with opportunities for self discovery like it presented me with one that day. It is left for us to recognize it when it does as it often comes unannounced.

That day sparked off a fire within me that rekindled a dream I had nurtured since that encounter with Charles in Senior Secondary school, even though I was studying a course that had nothing to do with this dream. Yes, I was studying Biochemistry, but I was going to give it my all and trust God to connect the dots in the future (which he

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eventually did).

Days passed but the memories of that day lingered on in my mind. I wrote my examinations and I had my best result that semester graduating with a second class upper as planned. Then came the big questions; what career do I want to build for myself? Yes I had the desire to become a Public Speaker but what was I going to be speaking on? Is there even such a profession? Who makes money from speaking any way? One question led to the other and I honestly didn't have the answers. The only thing I was convinced about was that I had an inner nudge within me which made me believe that I could do what that man did that day. I knew the big picture, though I was clueless about what route to take.

I had a vision (a mental picture) of the future and I was compelled to embark on the journey regardless of the challenges that I would face and how much time it would take.

EMPLOYMENT OR DEPLOYMENT

I had just graduated from the University and by default, like most graduates, I had to start looking for a job.

In Nigeria and in most parts of Africa, we are trained to be employees and not employers. With little or no form of entrepreneurial skills taught in schools (vocational skills are very limited and not popular), most graduates are wired

to look for paid employment. In fact, the mentality we all have is, “Go to school and finish with good grades so you can get a good job.” We are not trained to be deployed; we are trained to be employed.

In contrast, Asians (the Indians, Chinese and Lebanese) are trained to be deployed to start their own businesses. Have you ever wondered how come they come into a country they may know little about, yet set up businesses that outlive them? It is a function of their orientation; they are trained to be business owners.

Their perspective to life is totally different from ours; they see problems as an opportunity to proffer solutions and make money from it. In fact, I once heard a Lebanese say, “Nigerians are walking on money and they are looking for it;” because of the kind of opportunities he saw in what Nigerians call problems. On the contrary, we see problems as opportunities for divine intervention. This is not to downplay the role of God in our lives but to emphasize our role as participants and not spectators of our lives.

Therefore as one trained to be employed, getting a job appeared to be the most sensible thing for me to do at that time.

In 2004, when I graduated, the banking sector was one of the fastest growing sectors in Nigeria. There was an aggressive drive for retail business and the sector needed new recruits to drive this initiative. My brother had seen an advertisement in the newspapers and helped forward my

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resume to the consultants that ran the advert on behalf of a bank.

I was shortlisted to write the test which I passed and whilst serving under the National Youth Service Corps, I was offered a job to work with one of the top five banks in Nigeria and I had to attend the bank's training school programme. My dream of becoming a speaker still existed; however, I wasn't sure how I could find expression for this in a bank.

I knew I loved to interact with people and I was not really cut out for core banking functions. From my experience at the training school and all the information I had gathered about the different departments in the bank, I was only keen on working in one department in the bank; the Human Resources department. I recall the day at the training school when the Head of Human Resources came around to intimate us on the existing vacancies in the bank. As she read out the list of vacancies, she mentioned the Human Resources department and immediately I asked, "Did you say Human Resources ma?" in a subtle attempt to indicate my interest in filling that vacancy.

"Yes there are two vacancies in Human Resources," she answered with a curious look.

I smiled, nodding my head in concurrence, hoping she had noticed that I had a keen interest in joining that department. I was eventually one of the two people posted to that department. The dots were beginning to connect;

things were beginning to make sense as I strongly felt that the experience as a Human Resource officer would take me steps closer to my dream. Or so I thought.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized in the lifetime of that opportunity
- Birds of a feather flock together. If an eagle meets another bird in top flight, it must be an eagle
- Small dreams cause you to sleep, a true vision will cost you your sleep
- Don't be intimidated by another person's success, be inspired by it
- You cannot connect the dots in your life looking forward, you can only connect them looking backward - Steve Jobs, CEO Apple Computers

chapter five

DO YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO?



There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something
- Henry Ford

This chapter is one of the most important parts of this book where I begin to address core issues relating to the loss of drive in the workplace. This primarily is because people have found themselves in jobs that they have absolutely no interest in, jobs other than what they originally dreamt of and the jobs have merely become a source of livelihood and nothing else. Several people working several hours just for the money without fulfilment or satisfaction.

From my experience in Human Resources, I have come across a lot of people in this category and feel a strong need to address this critical issue which they face.

The big question that comes to the minds of these young professionals is, “Is it possible to love what I currently do?”

And my big answer is, YES!

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Now I know you may assume that this is not possible but I guess that's why you are reading this book.

Life is a journey and we all have our desired destinations. Take the example of a mansion with the penthouse suite as the desired destination and the gate of the estate being the starting point. As you proceed into the palatial manor, you will climb flights of stairs, walk on corridors and pass through doors to gain access to the penthouse. The fact that you walk on the corridor doesn't make it your destination but the way you walk on the corridor can determine how and when you get to your desired destination. The way you handle today's business will determine if and when you will get into your tomorrow. The amount of passion and commitment you put into today's career journey (the walk on the corridor) could determine if you ever get to that dream job. If you love what you do, you will someday do what you love.

For a lot of readers, this is that juncture or pivotal point where certain significant decisions will be made. This is the tipping point in your entire career as we dive into your degree of positive or negative emotional attachment to your job, colleagues and organization (Employee Engagement).

LIFE COACHING

In November 2010, I did an NCFE UK Life Coaching Certification course which also incorporated workforce

psychology. Whilst undergoing this course, I discovered that human behaviour is premised on certain subconscious programs that we all run based on certain beliefs that we have formed over the years. These beliefs have a way of determining our responses to life's issues, our behaviour, our perception of work and they literally frame our world. These beliefs are restrictive beliefs, limiting us in our life experience. They are beliefs that are there (in our minds) but we may not be aware (conscious of them) because they are registered in our subconscious.

What really is a *Restrictive belief*? A Restrictive belief is a belief that you have come to accept as true without any real proof to substantiate it. They are given to us by authority figures in our lives or past experiences that have scarred us.

For example, you once got burnt by a hot stove and so the next time you are faced with a hot stove, you won't attempt to touch it because you *believe* that you will get burnt again. One experience has caused you to form a subliminal opinion that has become law.

I took particular interest in workforce psychology and came across an interesting piece of information which I shared with you in my introduction; *“80% of deaths caused by heart attacks occur between 8am and 9am on Monday mornings.”*

In fact, I found out that the palpitations start from Sunday night (I can imagine you nodding in agreement right now). Subconsciously, your body starts reacting (running a default program) as soon as it recognizes the weekend is

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over and work is about to begin. All of a sudden, a bad (negative) feeling comes upon you and affects the way your body functions. Your body temperature begins to rise and you start to feel uneasy and restless. Your body appears not to function optimally and over time, it is trained not to like what you do. How can you possibly go to work and give your best in this strung-out state?

Beliefs can be so strong that they can affect your body physiology. From my study as a life coach, I came across an article by Bernie Siegel, a Professor at Yale where he explained his discovery of how powerful beliefs can be in his study of schizophrenic patients. He mentioned that the potency of the schizophrenic patients' belief that they had become a different person sent an unquestionable command to their nervous system which caused significant changes in their biochemistry and body metabolism. Their bodies literally transformed before the researchers in the twinkle of an eye. The colour of their eyes changed as their personalities changed. Physical markings on their bodies disappeared and reappeared; even diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure would come and go according to which personality they believed they were truly manifesting.

Limiting beliefs can be so disempowering that it causes the employee to run a default program which takes effect without the individual's permission. Little wonder the physiology of employees change on Sunday evenings.

Have you ever felt bad (like the employee described above)

and wondered why you were feeling bad? Have you ever heard a song play in your head and wondered who granted it access into your mind?

Well, I have an explanation and a perfect solution to this state of employee apathy.

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

From my experience in psychology, I believe the subconscious mind is better explained than defined (like you must have noticed I like using real life experiences to drive home certain points).

Whilst attending my Life Coaching class, a friend of mine tried to describe the subconscious mind to me. He described it as a sponge that soaks in information and experiences without sieving it. He told me about a time when his wife had to undergo an operation; she had been given anesthetics which basically relegates the conscious mind to the back seat, leaving the subconscious mind very active. Whilst the operation was going on, the doctor sang praise songs with soft music at the background. As soon as the operation was over and the effect of the anesthetics had worn out, my friend's wife not only knew that the doctor sang songs, but she knew the exact songs he sang! Her subconscious mind picked them without her will or permission; it soaked in all the information without any restrictions.

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Another example often used to explain the subconscious mind is the process of driving a car. When you are learning to drive, you apply full concentration on the gear, the clutch and other parts of the car. You concentrate fully on the process of driving; you look at every pothole, every bump, and every obstacle in your way. But as you get better, the act goes into your subconscious mind and you tend to drive without making a conscious effort to drive. You automatically avoid obstacles, you change gears when required while you could be doing several other things at the same time like talking to your friend sitting beside you or listening to music.

As you practise driving repeatedly, you make decisions automatically and begin to drive naturally. Driving decisions and actions go out of the conscious mind to the subconscious mind.

After you reach your destination, if you ask yourself which potholes or bumps you crossed on the way, you may not be able to remember as you did not even notice when you actually slowed down and possibly changed gear to cross the bump. You did all that without being conscious of it. The subconscious mind is the seat of restrictive beliefs and in the life of an employee, the place where he houses a number of paralyzing beliefs. These include beliefs such as:

“I hate what I do and I cannot love it.”

“I hate Mondays.”

“Thank God it's Friday!” (I know you like this one)

Well, the love for Fridays invariably means the dislike for other weekdays and even though you consciously don't think so, your subconscious mind does. It is the reason why you are cheerful on Fridays but muzzy on Monday mornings. I look at the status updates on my BlackBerry phone on Fridays and Mondays and it's so obvious a lot of people are engaged to jobs they hate.

A lot of employees are running default programs which obviously would affect their output on the job and the earlier they become aware and do something about it, the better for them and their organizations. These restrictive beliefs have led to lethargy and the absence of morale, causing people to make spontaneous career hampering decisions (such as redeployments and disengagement).

Whilst I am not saying you should remain in your current career for life, I am saying, “whilst you are there, decide to love it and give it your best.”

Like a relationship, the decision to disengage from a job should be premised on the right reasons, thought through thoroughly and an exit plan must be mapped out. We will address this extensively in subsequent chapters.

So back to where you are presently, “How do I overcome this *restrictive belief* and begin to love what I do?”

The first step is to identify these limiting beliefs that relate

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to your job, like the ones identified earlier. I believe that the things in our subconscious mind are hidden in some remote corner under some self-imposed cover which we prefer to keep under cover (since most of these are recordings of unpleasant experiences).

The difficult part is to discover these things hidden in our subconscious mind. Once discovered, it may be easy to remove them. You need to become conscious of negative thoughts and feelings associated with your job.

Secondly, we need to introduce doubt to those beliefs. You need to begin to ask yourself the reasons why you hate your job and begin to question these reasons. If you question anything enough, you will eventually doubt it. For example, if you look closely, you will find out that Mondays aren't so bad after all because you really had no logical reason for hating them anyway. This is the way to inject doubt to your belief.

Next, you need to develop positive reaffirming beliefs and consciously make them your contemplations. Beliefs are like platforms; they require support. The more support you give to the belief, the more solid the belief becomes. These supports are the references we have as a result of the various events in our lives. The more references you have to affirm a belief the more solid it becomes. The more references you have for loving your job the more you will love it. Introduce positive beliefs and find references (events in your life) to support these beliefs.

Consciously make them your contemplations, understanding that you are a product of your predominant thoughts.

Finally, go for it! Decide that you will love your job. Love, other than being a feeling is a choice and a decision. You can choose to love what you presently do and give it all you've got. You can decide to throw in your passion. I have discovered that human beings can give more than they are giving and do more than they are currently doing. There is innate energy that resides within everyone, untapped potential we are yet to uncover. We just need the right motivation to unlock it.

Have you ever been chased by a dog before? (I bet everybody has). I'm sure you were motivated to do something you never thought you could do (jump over a fence or run faster than Usain Bolt) just to avert what you considered impending danger. How come you could do what you had initially considered impossible? You just needed the right motivation.

A few times during training, we carry out various interesting exercises. In one of the exercises, we ask people to describe someone they just met in the class in front of the whole class. People come out one after the other to describe a fellow participant who they just met; some taking the exercise seriously, others lackadaisically. At the end of the exercise the participants vote for the person who was best at describing his/her team mate and usually one person wins by a landslide. After which, we reach for

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the cheque book to write a cheque in favour of the winner and suddenly, 'pandemonium' breaks loose in the class.

“You didn't tell us there was a prize attached!” the entire class would scream.

“Well, did I have to tell you there was a prize attached for you to give your best?”

At this point, the whole class is silent as they realize that they missed out on an opportunity to carry out the exercise wholeheartedly.

Did we have to announce that there was a prize attached for them to give their best? The answer is NO. However, we choose what we give our best to based on what we consider a good motivation or incentive. For the class, invariably they were saying that with money as a motivation they could have done better.

With the right motivation you can do more than you are doing, you can give more than you are giving to your current job.

In need of the right motivation? Let me help you with one.

“You are not working for any employer or organization, you are working for yourself.”

How dare you spend 12 hours of your life daily, working on a job with no personal gains or development for you other

than money?

You must be worth much more than the salary you earn. You give value to the organization but you are oblivious of the fact that you are developing yourself.

In the words of my friend, Damilola Oluwatoyinbo, *“The real reward for what you do as an employee is not what you get from it but who you become through it.”*

Sadly, a lot of employees are more focused on what they get out of the organization and not who they become. Forgetting that who you become will determine the value you command in the market place, and the value you command determines how much your employer is willing to pay to retain you or how much the competition is willing to pay to get you.

Working as an employee gives you experience you can leverage on, which can become your convertible currency for the future or for your dream job. Every challenge, every obstacle, every hurdle faced today is necessary exercise for the challenges, obstacles and hurdles of tomorrow.

Did you know that, *“A job description is the least expectation of an employer from an employee?”* For a lot of people it is the 'most' and anything beyond their job description they would not be caught dead doing. These people do what they are required to do and nothing more; they are driven by what they get out of the job and not who they become through it. This by any standard is the lowest level of

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motivation.

Let this be your new motivation: see yourself as the CEO of your own desk, take responsibility and ownership of your job. You have got only one life to live and all you have got is today, so make this day count. Let whatever you do be done heartily not to impress any man but to outdo your previous effort and please your God. *Instead of counting your days in an organization, make your days count!*

Throw in some life, energy, love and passion. Make every moment count, remember, you can give more than you are giving and you can do more than you are currently doing. Work is either fun or drudgery; it depends on your attitude. I like fun and so should you.

Break free from every limiting belief; take charge of your life.

Decide today to love what you do and very soon, you will be ushered into the 'penthouse suite'.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Never make permanent career decisions because of a temporary situation
- We work to become and not to acquire
- No one can live beyond the limits of their beliefs
- Do not be deceived by your disguise, there is more to you than meets the eye
- Repetition enhances retention
- Instead of counting your days make your days count

chapter six

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



It's not the number of hours you put into your work that counts, it's the work you put in the hours
- Sam Ewing

According to Scarlett surveys, “Employee engagement is a measure of the degree of positive or negative emotional attachment to their jobs, colleagues or organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. An employee is an ‘engaged employee’ when he is fully involved in, enthusiastic about his work, and thus will act in a way that furthers the organization's interests.”

A research by Linkage received significant attention in the business community because of the correlation between employee engagement and desirable business outcomes such as retention of talent, customer service, individual performance, team performance, business unit productivity and even enterprise level financial performance.

Employee engagement is a modernized version of job satisfaction, Schmidt's influential definition of engagement was, “an employee's involvement with,

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commitment to, and satisfaction with work.” It integrates the classic construct of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Going by this definition, it is safe to conclude that it is possible to be engaged (employed) to a job yet be disengaged (lack job satisfaction and organizational commitment) without formally disengaging (resigning) from that organization. This is the case with a lot of employees working in different organizations today; they are engaged to jobs yet *disengaged* from those jobs.

As a trainer and employee engagement expert, my organization was called to assist one of the key players in the building and construction industry in Nigeria. A retreat was organized for 50 members of staff and the MD explained the issues the company had with respect to staff commitment to us. He mentioned that the staff turnover was relatively high and employee performance had seriously dwindled.

At the retreat, we shared experiences and secrets that boosted the morale (group emotional commitment) and employee engagement (individual emotional commitment) of every staff in attendance. They left there believing they could take on Goliath. In fact, they decided to increase the initial targets that they had set as an organization.

A few months later, we had another meeting with the MD of the corporation. He told us of the huge success stories the company was recording and how they had exceeded the

target they had set for themselves before the end of the year. He also mentioned that the staff turnover had reduced and that the performance of each staff had taken a significant leap. He was really excited about the results and grateful to us for the intervention.

The huge question is, “What happened to the employees that caused them to start delivering previously unprecedented results?” The answer to this question can be captured in one simple phrase, *Change of perspective*, or what some people refer to as *Paradigm shift*.

We were able to make the employees see possibilities in what previously looked impossible. We were able to help them identify things they loved about their jobs, shift the focus from the problems to the opportunities in what looked like problems. In fact, a number of them went ahead to articulate what the job meant to them and their families.

Perspective is so vital that it made a company that appeared to be heading for the rocks, change cardinals en route for the top. The same staff (now fully engaged) could deliver incredible results!

I am reminded of a story I once heard Les Brown share which clearly defines the power of perspective. Les used to work as a presenter on radio and had fans of his radio show call in every day. One day, one of his frequent callers called in on the show and she didn't sound as upbeat as she normally would. Les noticed this and decided to ask what was wrong with her. The lady said she had just gone

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through a severe heart break and was contemplating suicide. Les tried to talk her out of it all to no avail. He then remembered an old friend of his who had been bedridden for a while and decided to take the suicide bound lady to visit her in the hospital. As they got to the lady's room, Les asked her how she was doing and her response to the question was astonishing.

She said, "I am better than good, better than most and in fact better than that." The suicide bound lady hearing those words from a paralytic lady was shocked and immediately, the thoughts of committing suicide vanished from her mind.

She wondered how come that regardless of the situation this old lady found herself in, her *perspective* of herself was that she was, "better than good, better than most and in fact better than that."

These were two women with fairly similar situations but totally different resolves, what was the difference? How come the thoughts of suicide disappeared from the first lady's mind? She had an unconscious change of perspective, a subliminal mental shift. She could see a reason to live because now she viewed the glass as half full and not half empty.

I got a job with a bank and I couldn't help but notice how two people going through similar situations had different levels of engagement to their jobs. One guy would compile all the complaints he had, waiting for an opportunity to gossip with another disgruntled staff like him, while

another guy consistently kept a positive attitude towards the job. One guy would always look for what the organization could do for him while the other guy was constantly about what he could do to move the organization forward. Two bankers, same bosses, similar experiences, yet with different outcomes. What made the difference? Perspective!

I couldn't help but notice how much people complained about their jobs yet they would resume at their desks every single day. Complaining only amplifies the problem and impedes one's progress in an organization. It is synonymous with opening up a wound and keeping the wound fresh. Complaining takes the life away from any positive attachment to one's job and has the capacity to wean employee engagement.

It's like some employees have selective amnesia; forgetting that through the job they got their first car, moved into their own apartment, possibly met their spouses and have been able to take responsibility for their bills. All they see is the half empty part of the glass and hence they complain.

As an employee engagement expert, I have discovered that the most engaged staff are the ones most interested in the future of the organization and they have also identified how the future of the organization connects with their future. I have observed that most employees don't even have a career plan let alone identifying how it fits into the organization's plan. They have never asked themselves critical career questions like:

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- 1. What is the highest level I would love to attain on my current career ladder?*
- 2. How long would it take me to get to this level?*
- 3. What do I need to do to ensure that I get there within the shortest possible time?*

Answering these three questions will help paint a good mental picture of one's future in an organization, giving you the required drive to achieve a preset goal.

Whilst facilitating training for a certain bank, one of the participants walked up to the facilitator to say that a lot of the things we had shared were so true. He went ahead to tell us how himself and a certain Deputy Managing Director of a bank were friends and classmates in school. One day, his friend woke him up in the middle of the night and said, “King, do you know that one day I am going to open a bank?”

King obviously in shock at what he considered a stupid reason to be woken up from his slumber looked at this friend and asked, “Is that why you woke me up from my precious sleep?”

“Yes, the thoughts of it couldn't make me sleep,” his friend replied.

A dream can be so real and compelling that it would cost you your sleep or it can be so inconsequential that it would cause you to sleep.

A few years later, King and his friend got a job on the same day in the bank. However, their career growths were very different.

Whilst King's friend ascended to the top of his career ladder within the shortest possible time because he had a mental picture of where he was headed, King had barely gotten to the management level in the banking industry. King's friend made intentional progress in the banking industry whilst King's progress was incidental. His friend had answered the three questions long before he got the job and it facilitated his movement to the top.

Businesses are set up to run as going concerns and your objective is to leave it better than you met it. Work to leave a legacy in your current organization; imprints that will be remembered long after you are gone.

Harley Davidson, a top range motorcycle manufacturing company has been found to have implausible employee loyalty. Their employees are so loyal to the organization that some factory employees have Harley tattoos on their arms. They have a long term view of their future in the organization and they work to leave a legacy for their children. In fact, a good percentage of Harley Davidson employees want their children to work in the company.

Employee engagement doesn't exonerate employers from their responsibilities to the employees lest the concept be misconstrued. Truth be told, employers have a huge role to play in this regard; however, the objective of this chapter is to assist the employee make best use of his potential within

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the milieu of his control.

Going by the Harley Davidson story, let me ask you a few vital questions:

As an employee, do you want to be just another statistic in the employee database or do you want to be relevant to your organization's achievements?

Do you want to be merely successful or do you want to be significant?

Are you 'spectating' or are you participating (engaged), contributing to the growth of your organization?

Are you one of the people that watch things happen or one of the guys who make things happen?

What would you like to be remembered for?

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- The world is round, the place that seems like the end may only be the beginning
- We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are - Talmud
- A dream can be so real and compelling that it would cost you your sleep or it can be so inconsequential that it would cause you to sleep
- Be faithful in interpreting your employer's dream, sometime soon your own dreams will be interpreted
- All the so called 'Secrets of Success' will not work unless you do
- We hired you to get your mind involved otherwise we would have bought a machine - Bankole Williams

chapter seven

BEFORE YOU SHOVE IT AT YOUR BOSS



Caution is not cowardly. Carelessness is not courage

It was the second week of May in 2009, an extremely busy period for the Human Resources department. It was the period when staff appraisal for promotion had to be concluded. Stacks of files on tables, busy people sitting on the edge of their chairs and heightened temperatures were common sights as most of the people in the Human Resources department at that time seemed to wear a constant look that said, “Do not disturb.” The pressure was palpable; everybody had to be on their toes because of the amount of work that needed to be done within the strict deadline - the day of the appraisal committee meeting. On this day, the fate of all staff in the organization would be decided. It was our own version of the proverbial ‘judgment day’, the day the sheep would be separated from the goats (no offense to those not promoted, I happen to fall into this category that year). You were either going to be promoted or not; it was that simple.

On the day of the appraisal committee meeting, all the staff of my department were in the office as it was

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mandatory that we be present although it was a Saturday. We weren't part of the meeting but we all sat in the office waiting for the outcome. It was our responsibility to collate the results and ensure it was published but we also wanted to know if we were promoted or not.

At the end of the meeting, the Head of Human Resources came out with the results and I could sense the tension gauge in the room move several notches higher; we were all eager to see the outcomes. As we hurried to view the names of staff promoted, I looked at the list of people promoted on my level from top to bottom and to my chagrin, I didn't see my name. I checked again and this time from the bottom upwards and it appeared to have been omitted. I was disappointed as I really anticipated a promotion that year. I believed I deserved it but for some reason I wasn't promoted.

With the benefit of hindsight, I learnt a lot from this particular experience. I recognize that promotion is a reward for demonstrated next level performance and not just for doing your job. Your salary is the reward for executing your job, at least that's what you are paid to do. Your boss or employer must be able to perceive that you can handle responsibilities at the next level.

You can proactively take up tasks for the next level before you are offered the position and by doing so; you work on your employer's perception of your capabilities.

In the month of June (being the month after appraisals), it

was not uncommon to receive a lot of resignation letters. It was usually an offshoot of the appraisal as some people left because with their new grades, they were able to negotiate for higher pay with other companies. Others left because they were not promoted and felt let down by the organization they had been engaged to. Some displeased staff even quit in a moment of emotion, forgetting that this feeling would eventually pass.

I believe a lot of us have these emotional moments – in fact, plenty of them – where we want to quit our jobs. If we were to respond spontaneously to these feelings we would probably change jobs like we change our clothes. Give it a couple of weeks, if the feeling still doesn't lift then it is something you may want to take seriously. But you don't want to make a major decision (you cannot reverse later) in the heat of emotions. And remember, it's easier to reverse a decision *not* to quit but it's difficult to reverse a resignation once you have tendered it. More often than not, it's not the employer who is unwilling to have the employee back, it's the employee's pride that gets in his way; he loathes the thought of facing the job, colleagues or boss he just turned his back on.

Yes, I was unhappy about the fact that I wasn't promoted and had contemplated leaving the job, however, I knew that my motive for leaving would have been wrong and it was definitely not the best time to exit. It was more of a re-evaluation period for me and a huge reality check as I remembered the dream of becoming a speaker which

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appeared to have been relegated to the background.

Many people have gone through similar situations on their current jobs. You had anticipated a promotion, a pay increase or bonus but to your dismay, your expectation was not met. This period may appear to be the best time to tender your resignation and shove the job in your boss' face but I think you may want to reconsider doing that. You need to honestly evaluate the situation before taking the 'big leap of faith' (or fate as the case may be).

I strongly believe that the period after such a disappointment should be a period of self assessment and reflection not just a period for instant life changing decisions. The deliberations may lead you into making pivotal decisions but then the decisions would have been thoroughly considered with all factors put into perspective.

A lot of employees today are running away from jobs and not running towards their future. I believe *motives determine results*. Invariably, the reasons for our actions would determine what we get out of these actions. Employees are running from long work hours, strict bosses, and poor working environments without a picture of their desired future before them. They are looking for any other job that pays more than their current job forgetting that the grass always appears greener on the other side. Always.

What are the odds that you wouldn't have a stiffer boss? Or that you wouldn't face a situation similar to the one you are currently running away from? It could even be worse. We

all hope for a brighter tomorrow without regarding the part we have to play in making decisions that shape our future.

I have seen employees leave jobs because they wanted to prove a point to their employers. Most times, the desire to quit a job actually stems from a feeling of powerlessness on the part of the employee. The power dynamics between an employee and his boss in the workplace is such that when your job or boss makes you feel unhappy, you feel that the only way to regain power is to quit and then, that will “*show 'em.*” This at first may be a surprise to your boss or employer but do not forget that they are probably used to people leaving their jobs so they will get over it. Needless to say you have proven another point; you are jobless!

Whilst in the Human Resources department, I always marveled at the fact that a staff would resign from his current job without a clue what his new job was about, the kind of working environment the new job offered, the working conditions or the sort of people he would have to work with. It is only proper to make these enquiries lest you sell yourself short and shoot yourself in the foot. Also, think about the advantages your job offers that you may not find elsewhere. Perhaps your employer gives you an enormous amount of 'flex' time or you have a fantastic short commute that you really value. You need to figure out what is important to you and weigh that against your frustrations.

At the end of 2009, I left the bank (not to worry the next

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chapter explains all that occurred between June and December) and I was compelled to do so by the picture of my future as a speaker and not because I was deprived of a promotion. After all, one of the key benefits of a promotion was better pay so it would only have made sense to take a job that offered a better salary. On the contrary, I took a job with a significant pay cut. However, it was one that played the most significant role in the advancement of my career as a speaker which has given me so much fulfillment. My reward wasn't just what I earned but who I became through the experience.

Before I get ahead of myself, let's address a few things with respect to disengagement.

People often ask me, “When is the best time to leave a job?”

Well, the truth is, there is really no perfect time to leave a job. The perfect time is relative to the convictions of the individual in the situation, the people that would be affected by the fall-out of his/her decision and what the decision to leave means to that particular individual.

But in addition, I know when it is not the best time to leave. The worst time to leave an organization is when you are frustrated with the job and do not have a defined future path with a plan of action for your exit and transition to a new job (if there is a new job). I have seen employees make decisions on the spur of the moment without properly weighing the consequences of their decisions and a proper

plan of action; attempting to build a new career (house) without first counting the cost. While I understand that there are few exceptions, you wouldn't want to base your life on an exception, would you? It would be tantamount to relying on a slim probability as a premise for your resolution.

Lest I be misconstrued, my objective is not to discourage you from taking the plunge but to ensure you have a life jacket before you do it, lest you drown (just doing my job as a Life coach or Lifeguard as the case may be).

Here are a number of questions that you should answer before you take that walk of 'freedom' to the Human Resources department of your company:

- 1) Are you honestly running away from your current job or running towards a dream job?
- 2) Are you experiencing frustrations on the job and have you honestly done everything within your control to manage the situation?
- 3) What is the real reason for your intended resignation?
- 4) What outstanding (indebtedness or obligations) do you have towards your employers?
- 5) How much can you save on a monthly basis to clear whatever financial debt you owe your current

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employer and provide a cushion for the transition? How much time would it take you to save up this money and what do you have to give up to get this done?

- 6) Who will be directly or indirectly affected by this decision to leave your job and what do they stand to benefit or lose from this decision?
- 7) Bearing in mind what you and the affected parties stand to lose or gain, is the decision worth making right now or should it be delayed till a later time when you have a good financial base to cushion the effect?
- 8) Is there a need to communicate this decision to the affected parties? If yes, when and how best can you do this to elicit their love, support and willingness to embark on this journey with you?
- 9) If the next job (as an employee or entrepreneur) comes with a pay cut do you have a good financial cushion to fall back on pending when you will be adequately rewarded?
- 10) Are you prepared to pay the price of transition? This may include a temporary reduction of expenses, standard of living, culture change, change of environment etc
- 11) What promise does this decision hold forth; one of

a bright future or one of uncertainty?

- 12) Is it worth it for you, relative to the dreams you have and the fulfilment you crave; would it take you closer to or farther away from it?
- 13) What does the prospect of the new job mean to you, is it merely an increase in salary or does it offer a better level of fulfilment and satisfaction?
- 14) Is there even a new job? If not, what are you going to be doing for the time being? What if getting the new job takes much longer than you anticipated, are you ready for this?

These questions are essential for everyone about to disengage from a job. These questions are dedicated to the ones wishing to prove to their employers that they are better off without their jobs. Answering these questions will actually let you know if you'd be better off or worse off for it.

The truth be told; having answered these questions, anticipating what lies ahead is one thing but experiencing it is another. However, the experience is a lot easier if you have honestly answered these questions in preparation for the new life ahead.

By December 2009, I had successfully answered all these questions and was fully convinced it was time to come off my current career ladder. I had a fair idea what I was about

BEFORE YOU SHOVE IT AT YOUR BOSS

to face; now it was time to live the life and pay the price.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- The grass always appears greener on the other side, check again!
- Before you take the plunge of a lifetime, verify the lifespan of your life jacket.
- We must accept finite disappointments but not at the expense of infinite hope that lies ahead.
- You may not yet be in the right position but make sure you are in the right location
- It is in the moments of decisions that you frame your future and carve your destiny
- Anytime you suffer a disappointment or setback, put your head back down and plough ahead - Les Brown

chapter eight

STEVE HARRIS and FELA DUROTOYE



*Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen,
and a push in the right direction - John Crosby*

I can bet you are wondering, “Why would a chapter be dedicated to these two individuals?” Let me help you with the answer; without these two gentlemen, this book would still be a mere thought and not a tangible product that you can hold in your hands right now. Certain people come into our lives and their presence positively alters the course of our lives forever.

Recall I had earlier mentioned that you can only connect the dots looking at the past and not looking forward. The first day I heard Fela Durotoye (by the way he's the 'dapper head to toe' gentleman who came to Unilag to give that enthralling speech), I wondered how our paths would ever cross again. I couldn't connect the dots looking at the future. However, from where I stand today, with the benefit of hindsight; I not only see how our paths crossed again but also why they did and I can connect the dots. Indeed, time and chance have an interesting way of colliding in our favour. I am sure you can't wait for the details but I implore you to hold that thought for a second

or two (maybe more).

MY ENCOUNTER WITH STEVE HARRIS

In July 2009, I was working in the training unit of the Human Resources department of the bank. I had been transferred from the welfare and compensations team to the training department but little did I know that this transfer was going to set me on the course of destiny. Whenever we had training programmes in the bank's training school, my boss would usually go there to meet with the participants and the consultants facilitating the training programme. He would address any issues that came up and ensure that all parties were well taken care of. However, on this particular day in the month of July, he wasn't available and he asked me to go in his stead.

I got to the training school at lunchtime and met the participants as they were exiting the classroom to go have their meal.

“Bankole!” screamed some of the participants, “Where on earth did you guys in HR get this facilitator from?” asked one of the trainees.

“Why do you ask?” I replied as I was a little puzzled by the question.

“The gentleman has greatly impacted our lives,” said another participant.

“In fact the entire class has decided to contribute funds to buy him a gift because of the immense value we have gotten from his training,” whispered yet another participant.

“Wow! That is awesome. Please what's the name of the facilitator?” I asked since I knew only the name of the consulting firm handling the training but not the trainer.

“Steve Harris!” chorused what appeared to be the entire class and just as the name was mentioned, a nice-looking gentleman dressed in a suit, looking distinguishable from all the other people walked up to me from the back of the class.

Suddenly I noticed that I had a feeling of nostalgia; I had felt this way before in the past. This was exactly how I felt that day in the main auditorium of the University of Lagos when I heard Fela Durotoye speak. Once again, I met someone living my dream of being a Public Speaker, talking and making huge impact on people's lives.

“Hello sir, I am Steve Harris,” said the gentleman, stretching his hand out for a warm handshake.

“And I am Bankole Williams,” I responded, with a huge smile on my face as I took his extended hand.

We began to talk about how the class had been and somewhere in the middle of the conversation; I mustered the courage to tell him that I admired his job and also had a

keen interest in becoming a speaker someday. He told me about how he also had been in my shoes wishing that someday he would get a chance to speak and people would listen. He also told me about his first encounter with Fela and how he had a similar feeling when he heard him speak.

At that time, Steve Harris was the Head of the Consulting team of Visible Impact, Fela Durotoye's company (such a coincidence, you would say). He happened to be Fela's protégé and now he was a facilitator making huge impact on the lives of his listeners. He encouraged me to live out my dream and said he would be more than honoured to assist in any way he could.

A few weeks later, I bumped into Steve in church and we got talking again. He suggested that I could come understudy him anytime I was available to attend any of his training sessions. I really appreciated this suggestion as I realised that I could learn a lot just by being around him.

At the end of the conversation, he looked me in the eye and I bet he must have seen a keen desire and burning hunger to affect people through Public Speaking and he said, “Bankole, anytime you are ready, I will be honoured to have you on my team.”

“Huh, what did you just say?” I asked, as I wasn't sure if my mind had misinterpreted the words from his lips.

“I said, anytime you are ready, I will be honoured to have you on my team,” he reiterated.

“Bbbbut you barely know me,” I stuttered in shock.

“I actually do; not to worry, you will do fine, I will give you a call when I have any weekend training programmes so you can attend,” he smiled in response and walked away.

I stood there for a couple of minutes still baffled at what just transpired. “He literally just gave me an offer with an option to choose a resumption date. Who does that?” I wondered to myself.

As soon as I came back to earth from my elated state, obviously reality began to set in. Was I going to leave my bank job with a healthy salary for a consulting firm? I didn't need any soothsayer to tell me what that meant; a pay cut. I worked in Human Resources so I had a fair idea of the salary bands for different industries and I was well aware that consulting firms didn't pay as much as banks.

I had a pretty comfortable career in the bank, a good working environment and nice colleagues so why would I want to leave all that for a consulting firm? More so it just didn't make logical sense to resign at this point as this was the peak of the economic downturn which had a huge impact on the banking industry. A lot of banks were downsizing and had to lay off some of their employees, why would I want to lay myself off during this period? I developed a headache; too many thoughts were swirling in my head. The drive home was longer than usual as I kept drifting away into deep thoughts; replaying what just

happened in my head over and over again with thoughts of caution consistently lurching into my head.

I gave it great thought for about two months and prayed to God for clarity. After praying one day in the month of August, I knew the effective date for my resignation, December 31, 2009, exactly 4 years after I joined the bank. I had peace even though there was unrest in the banking sector and I knew in my heart it was time to leave. The picture of my future was too compelling to hold me back, I also had counted the cost of my decision and the implication it would have on me and my family. I recognized that this was a huge price I was going to have to pay but I was willing to pay the price for the actualization of my dream. I had savings which could serve as a cushion to the effect of a salary reduction and I had a plan to clear all my outstanding before I left the bank.

CROSSED PATHS

So back to that thought which you held; on how time and chance collided in my favour and how Fela Durotoye's path and mine crossed.

A few months after I graduated from the University of Lagos, The Rock Foundation organized a programme and Fela was one of the key speakers. You can bet his speech was phenomenal. At the end of the event, we walked him to his car and Fela stopped in his stride, turned around and beckoned on me to come. Hastily, I walked towards him

and he took me by the hand and whispered words which I can never forget. He said to me, “that which I have, I give unto you.” I was startled, how did he know I craved for what he had? I really desired to be a speaker like him.

True mentors have a way of spotting the gold in what appears to be a barren land; they see the king in the kid. I knew this had to be my mentor because he saw in me the reality of a future that I was yet to comprehend.

I exchanged contacts with him and I promised to keep in touch. I remember the day I asked him to be my mentor. I had called him and we agreed to meet during the lunch break at the bank's training school. I even invited him for programmes a few times during my service year in Kaduna which he agreed to attend without hesitation.

THE PLUNGE

By the month of November 2009, I called Steve to tell him about my resolve to leave the bank and join his team. He was excited about my decision and arranged for me to meet with Bunmi Ajagbe (the Chief Operating Officer of the firm) and Fela. We met and agreed on a resumption date in the month of January 2010.

It was now time to tender my resignation. Gosh! Typing that letter was difficult. This was the only job I had known and leaving that which I was familiar with wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I summoned the courage and I took

the plunge because the vision of what was ahead was too irresistible.

Several people thought I had lost it; “How could you be resigning to take a reduction in salary?” they asked in shock. Some believed that there must have been some other reason for my exit while a few saluted the act of bravery. For me at that point, making income was secondary; impact and fulfilment were primary hence working at Visible Impact was expedient for me.

In the light of my experience, I would like to encourage someone who craves for much more than what the current circle you find yourself in can afford. You are not working on a job just to earn a salary but to make an impact on the business and its people. You are more than a salary earner and if your motive for exit is for significance and relevance, take that plunge (of course after going through my disengagement checklist); income has an interesting way of locating impact.

In the words of Winston Churchill, “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

You need to strike that balance between making a living and making a life for yourself. Find your equilibrium lest you topple over in life.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Success gets you to the door, significance grants you access
- A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could
- Tormentors put you down, mentors lift you up; find the right mentor today
- If you are not living for something you will die for nothing. Find a worthy cause to live for
- Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth

chapter nine

DO WHAT YOU LOVE



*I am yet to see a fish drown
from too much swimming*

It was a bright Monday morning in the month of January; I woke up early in anticipation of my resumption at my new office. I had hardly slept the night before because different thoughts kept racing through my mind. I was finally going to be working with the man I so greatly admired. I was going to do my dream job; at last my dream had become a reality.

I had earlier driven past the office to acquaint myself with the location and I had also done my background enquiries about the firm. I was optimistic and in high-spirit that morning, looking forward to the work and the wonderful people I had heard so much about.

I got there around 7a.m and met a bunch of very lively young people, guys who evidently loved their jobs and the impact it had, not just on their lives but other people's lives. They were full of joie de vivre and certainly didn't have the usual Monday morning gloomy look on their faces.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

I entered the office that morning and heard the phone ring, suddenly a bubbly young lady picked up the phone and said, “It's a great day at Visible impact, Uju speaking, how may I help you?” with such an amazingly assertive tone. I could bet the person on the other end was convinced that it was indeed a great day in the office. The employees in this organization were extremely passionate about their jobs; it appeared unreal but having worked with them I recognize that they truly enjoyed what they did. You could hear the passion in their words, see it in their deeds and sense it in your heart; it was real, they loved what they did.

I recall later that day, Fela came into the office and it was almost like everyone, except me, instantly had a sugar high. It was as though Alex Ferguson had just entered the theatre of dreams at Old Trafford; there was a sudden wave of excitement. This guy was not just the boss, he was a coach and regardless of how close they were to him, they were still inspired by him. “He must be an incredible leader,” I thought to myself as I could tell that he earned a great amount of respect from his staff.

The weekend before I came to the office, the furniture had just been changed and Uju was exhilarated about her new chair and she basked in that euphoria the whole day. These guys were excited over the little things, they always focused on the ‘half full part of the glass’ and this set off their positive attitude to work. They not only were doing what they loved but they found reasons to love what they did.

What made the employees of this firm different from other employees? How come they had such an incredibly positive attitude towards work? The answers lie in the fantastic work ethics which they exuded, a few of which I would love to share.

- 1) *Team Spirit*: They were willing to co-operate with one another for the common goal of the organization, not bothering about who got the credit. You would often see people rejoice over another colleague's success because to them the success of one was the success of all. Working there was like playing in a football team; one player was willing to do all he could to lay a pass to another player, resulting in a goal.
- 2) *Team bonding and cohesion*: There was an incredible amount of bonding that occurred within and outside the office. During lunch, we would all gather round the table to discuss and it always afforded us an opportunity to get to know ourselves better in the office. Celebrating staff birthdays was a huge deal; the celebrant was definitely in for a surprise. We also had a few hang-outs outside the office; in fact, the weekend after I joined the office, Steve invited us over to his house to have lunch and play soccer on Play station. It was tagged 'team bonding.'
- 3) *Great team leader*: Fela was (and still is) an

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

inspirational leader who was always willing to share from his vast wealth of experience yet never felt like the sole repository of knowledge. He raised leaders who could use their initiative and not just followers that needed to wait for his instructions.

The employees were extremely passionate people. They not only loved what they did, they were obviously doing the jobs they loved. There was Michael; who joined the firm from America because of a project he heard about and was eager to be a part of the project team in Nigeria. Tony and Femi; who left their families in Ibadan (to live in Lagos) to be part of the same project team. Steve; who loved to train and naturally excelled at it. They were fishes that never got tired of swimming, birds that never got weary of flying.

Everyone has got a unique environment where his/her unique grandeur can be revealed. It is your responsibility as an individual to locate that place and function in it. I strongly believe that the gifts and talents that we all have are as diverse as our faces. If God could be so creative about our externals, then I wouldn't want to believe he'd decided to be lax about our internal characteristics. No two faces are exactly alike (even identical twins have distinctions) and such creativity cannot be restricted to external features only. Invariably, there must be that thing that makes you stand out from the pack; that peculiar touch that distinguishes you from every other person.

Your goal should be to discover this uniqueness and

commit all your resources to becoming the best at it. Let your objective be to build a name that would be synonymous with what you do because of how exceptionally well you do what you do. Google is the name of a company co-founded by Sergey Brin and Larry Page but has since been adopted as a word (verb) in the Oxford English Dictionary on June 15, 2006 meaning 'to search'.

On my new job, I met passionate people but I also learnt that passion though important is not always enough. These guys regularly added skill acquisition to their passion and improved consistently. I have seen people launch out into the deep, thinking they can ride aboard the boat of passion. However, the tides in business particularly in this country are tumultuous and often sink people's boats leaving them disillusioned. They wonder how come it works for some other person, yet it doesn't work for them. Well, I dare say that passion is good but not good enough; you must learn to add competence to passion and to your competence, add business acumen.

People hastily leave their current jobs under the deception that it has absolutely nothing to do with their dream jobs. On the contrary, they are actually blind to the basic knowledge of running a business, which the job affords them. No job is 'all-bad' in itself, it is this mindset that shields us from the opportunities to learn that which the job presents. There is something to get from the current job, which may not appear useful at the moment but will definitely be helpful in future. There are certain basic

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business ethics that can help employees convert their talents into skill on their new jobs but which they blatantly ignore, forgetting that what you practise often enough, you become perfect at.

Unknowingly, they have perfected the art of ignoring knowledge and skill acquisition and this trait is usually carried over to the new job.

To further explain this principle, I have captured below a portion of the commencement speech by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers to Stanford graduates on June 2005 (culled from Stanford University news).

“Reed College at the time offered the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus, every poster, every label on every drawer was beautifully calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take calligraphy classes to learn how to do this. I learnt about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between the different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, and artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture and I found it very fascinating.

None of this had a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac, it was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in College, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts.”

Looking back, Steve Jobs was able to connect the dots; the skill he acquired in the calligraphy class became immensely useful in the future. No knowledge or experience gained on any job is totally useless, though it may appear like there is no hope of any practical application in your life right now, just give it a few years and you will be grateful you didn't ignore it.

It is one thing to have talent, it's another to have skill but beyond talent and skill, there is the business of one's skill (I know you like this one, got this covered later in this chapter). Converting talent to skill takes the diligent, dedicated and disciplined honing of one's talent. It requires patience, time, commitment and hard work, yet many people hop from one career to another in anticipation of quick wealth forgetting these principles.

At Visible Impact, I was passionate about speaking but I recognized that there was a whole lot to learn and I was willing to pay the price required. I would go for different training programmes with Steve and take notes like my life depended on it (in actual fact, it did because this was my chosen career path and I needed to prove a point to myself by excelling at it). I would get back home to practise all that I had learnt with an imaginary crowd standing in front of me. Month after month, I understudied the art of preparing engaging proposals, irresistible slides and delivering compelling presentations, keenly waiting for my opportunity.

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One day, Steve had to facilitate Superior Service Delivery training for the bank I used to work for. He had just finished the training for the first day and suddenly he turned to me.

“Banky, so you are handling tomorrow's class.”

“Huh?” I exclaimed with a baffled look.

Steve often joked that he wasn't going to show up one day for training and I would have to do it but this time around there appeared to be some element of seriousness, which I was yet to place a finger on.

“Are you serious?” I asked, unsure what to think.

“Yes, I am serious, Banky. I want you to take the morning session tomorrow,” he said.

Now this time, I knew he wasn't joking, he had this serious look, which I could easily interpret.

“No problem bro, I'll make it happen,” I said with every bit of confidence I could muster.

Now this wasn't just any usual challenge or task, this was a little different. I was going to be presenting before people who were my colleagues and a few who were my superiors when I was with the bank. Unknown to Steve, a few of the participants in that class questioned my decision to leave the bank so if I flunked on this task, I would confirm their

doubts and make myself an object of derision.

I left the training school pondering on what Steve had just told me. I knew this was the opportunity I had been preparing for in my solitary place. I went back home to prepare my slides and practise for the next day. Sleeping that night was pretty difficult; several thoughts kept racing through my mind. I woke up several times thinking it was morning only to look outside and find that it was still pitch-dark. I couldn't wait for the morning to come as I kept slipping in and out of sleep.

On getting to the training school that morning, Steve was already in class; he had an interesting habit of getting to class extra early. We chatted for a bit before the class began and I remember him sharing a principle he had learnt from Fela just as I was going up to speak. He said, "Do not speak to impress, speak to bless."

I was a little skittish when I started; it felt like I was on pins and needles as I tried not to look into the eyes of my former superiors who probably wondered what I had to offer them. Nonetheless, I soon got into the rhythm of what I was doing and I could tell I was on a roll!

At the end of the session, I got a resounding applause; I couldn't help feeling like a quarterback that just scored a touchdown. It was a remarkable feeling of fulfilment; getting appreciated for doing what I love. If you have never experienced this, I really hope this book challenges you to

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

eventually pursue your dreams.

The fulfilment you will get is better than gifts of diamonds and pearls. I still recall the look of shock on people's faces when Steve told them this was the first time I was facilitating training. My sleepless night, my months of private preparation, my fiery passion had just paid off. This really was the beginning of my career as a speaker! And lest I forget, I cleared the doubts in the heads of people who questioned my decision to leave.

...MAKE MONEY WHILST AT IT

Doing your dream job will not always be rosy (at least not at the beginning); I'll be honest, I had a few rough patches. I had taken the job with a pay cut and I had to live with the consequences of my decision. Being a banker, I was already used to a certain lifestyle; the 'compulsory' Friday night out, buying new clothes every month, issuing post dated cheques, living life on a whim, knowing that at the end of the month, I would receive that credit alert on the phone and then I'd repeat the cycle. "Stopping this really needs some getting used to," I often thought to myself. I remember once, while preparing my budget for the month, (and yes you should have a budget for each month) I realized that my outflow exceeded my inflow.

It was a really tough period considering where I was coming from; however, I had counted the cost of my

decision and chosen to pay the price. I kept telling myself that I was becoming someone that would soon command a lot of value even though in reality, the bills were no respecter of my choice to follow my passion. This experience made me realize that talent and skill weren't enough; I needed to understand the business of my skill.

I have come across a lot of talented people who do not have the money that should be a reward for their talents or skill. People do not pay for raw talent, they pay for skill but you can make more from converting your skill into a product. A skilled person is a limited resource but then a skilled person with a well packaged product has unlimited representation.

I stumbled on an article written by Business Insider's *Alyson Shontell on Yellow Smiley Faces* that aptly captures this concept.

Estimated Profit: \$500M

You order takeout and the deliveryman leaves you with a white plastic bag. On the exterior is a goofy yellow face grinning back at you, encouraging you to "Have a Nice Day!" You take your food and plop in front of the television to find the same stupid smiley rolling down the aisles of a Wal-mart ad, bringing customers shopping cheer as they peruse the super store.

Now imagine your father is the one who first drew this world-renown image. Imagine further how upset you would be if your father never trademarked his image and only made a measly \$45 from the icon.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

This is the story of Charles Ball's life.

Back in 1963 his father, Harvey, first drew the happy face for his PR Company's client, State Mutual life Insurance. The only money the Balls ever made from the simple sketch was the two-figure dollar amount they made selling it to the client.

So who did make that money off the brilliantly simple symbol? Two brothers, Bernard and Murray Spain, stumbled upon the unrealized potential of the smiley. Wanting to start a novelty store, Bernard and Murray bought the legal rights to the mark along with the now infamous tag-line, "Have a nice day." The brothers began slapping the image on everything possible. The yellow smiley swept the nation and soon, the world. The fad peaked in 1971 and diminished after a year and half, but that was enough time to do a lot of damage – 50 million in sales worth of damage.

The Spains opened the first Dollar Express in the '80s where they continued to sell the smiley. In 2000, they sold their chain to Dollar tree for \$500 million.

And what of Harvey Ball? He became a yellow smiley-based philanthropist. What else would you do if you let a gazillionaire-dollar idea slip through your fingers?

That is a story that clearly spells out the difference between skill and the business of one's skill. The Spains were able to convert the idea into a product and “*began slapping it on everything*,” the product went farther than they could go.

Passionate and talented folk come a dime a dozen but guys with business astuteness are rare. They are the people who see opportunities in problems, turning simple ideas into million dollar enterprises. I suggest you get around such people, a simple idea they share might just be the spark you need.

For some other people doing what they love and not yet making money, it may be that you need a bit of time and patience to build a brand that proffers solutions that people are willing to pay for.

You may have to juggle what you do with what I call a good “temporary fallback plan” pending when you get appropriately rewarded for what you love doing. The objective is to strike a good equilibrium. You may say this is a distraction but I think the unpaid bills are a bigger distraction.

I soon realized that products and not just passion would pay my bills. I began to see the need to diversify my portfolio, packaging ideas as irresistible products. I started to think of ways to convert my skill into products people could pay for, guess what? You are holding one right now!

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- People don't pay for ideas, they pay for products
- Private preparation precedes public success
- Build an impressive brand and people would pay you a premium for it
- Talent wins games but teamwork wins championships
- You can get a lot done as a team if you decide not to bother about who gets the credit

chapter ten

MARRIED FOR LIFE



“So I'll taste every moment and live it out loud, I know this is the time, this is the time, to be more than a name or a face in the crowd, I know this is the time, this is the time of my life. The time of my life.”

– Lyrics of David Cook, Winner American Idols 2008

It is so funny how I changed the course of my life and in the process found the cause for my life. Speaking, for me is not just a chore, it's an opportunity to impact people's lives. I was born to do this, you should find out what you were created to do.

I am currently a senior partner with EdgeEcution, a management consulting firm; I am a UK certified Life Coach and I am married to my dream job. It's a life of fun and fulfilment; it's the time of my life and this can also be your story. I work with Steve Harris, and he has been like a forerunner in my life, in fact reading his book gave me a huge inspiration to write mine.

Steve sometimes would say to me, “Catch me if you can,” and it's always fun to take up the challenge.

MARRIED FOR LIFE

Other times he would say, “It's like you are in my blind spot, I had better accelerate quickly,” recognizing that I'm trailing really close.

I am growing fast in my chosen career path and I am not relenting or resting on my oars. I facilitate training interventions for banks (including the one I used to work for) and other corporate organizations. How better can life be, being able to charge a fee for something you could have done for free!

I must be honest with you; leaving a good paying bank job wasn't the easiest of decisions to make but it was one of the best decisions of my life. I had to pay a significant price for making a decision to pursue my dream but for me, it was ‘worth it’. You have to discover what is ‘worth it’ for you.

The concept of getting married to a dream job is like a man looking for his dream spouse. A friend of mine named John once told me about his friend called Frank who used to nag and complain about his girl friend. He claimed he really loved her but she often did things that frustrated him and forced him to constantly complain to John. He would whine about the issues wondering if he could get married to her. After listening to all of Frank's complaints, John would encourage his friend to hang in there but John's wife being a perceptive person (like most women) knew that the relationship was heading for the rocks.

She always told John, “We will know when he meets the wife of his dreams; when he stops visiting us with

complaints but with an intention to marry.” True to her word, Frank parted ways with his girlfriend and after a year, he met another lady and he started dating her. He practically stopped going to John's house for a while and one day he showed up at the front door of John's house with an envelope. As he knocked on the door, John's wife opened to see this gentleman with a grin from ear to ear and a sealed envelope in his hand.

“Hello Frank, it's been a long while,” she said as she beckoned on him to come in.

“Yes, I know it's been a while, I just came to tell you guys that I am getting married.”

“Now you are talking. I know you have met the one,” she responded with a look of assertion.

“Why do you say so and appear so certain?” asked Frank.

“I knew that when you meet your wife, the frequent visits to complain would stop and then you would be willing to take the big leap,” she said. “You see, a man can date a girl he can live with but he wants to marry a woman he can't live without and when he meets her, he is willing to take that big leap.”

“How come your initial plan to get a master's degree this year has been relegated to the background and all of a sudden you want to get married?” she asked.

MARRIED FOR LIFE

Frank at this point was speechless as he knew her words were spot on!

“You have found someone you can't live without and I can bet she is the one. Congratulations! I wish you a happy married life.”

When you come in contact with what is ‘worth it’ for you, you will be willing to make great sacrifices like Frank did. Never commit your entire life (you may initially commit part of it but not all your years) to a job you can merely live with, find one that one you cannot live without, be the best at it and the world will soon recognize your worth.

I have seen many people commit their entire lives to doing a job that doesn't give them any fulfillment. When you ask them about their future plans, they'd say, “I am just living everyday as it comes,” forgetting that success is not accidental but intentional. They take whatever life throws at them as their lot in life and never place any demands on life. They settle for what they call their “fate” and never take the bold walk of “faith.”

To them their jobs are just a means to make a livelihood and not a means to make a life. At some point in their careers, it occurs to them that they have just been existing and not really living. At this point, they have probably risen to the top of their career ladders only to discover that the ladder had been on the wrong wall. It's like walking down the long aisle only to lift the veil and then you get an epiphany; you are about to make a lifelong commitment to the wrong

bride. Can you imagine turning to face the congregation after you have been pronounced “Man and Wife” and spotting the lady in the crowd that you should have married?

Nobody wants this to be their lot in life yet we keep living our lives by casting lots; living as victims of chance and never placing any demands. I believe we are the architects of our destinies and we need to start taking responsibility for our lives. If you don't have an agenda for your life, life will create one for you. Grab life by the throat and demand what you want from it.

I have met a number of people who are unwilling to give their dreams an opportunity to see the light of day. They have different unfounded fears, forgetting that fear is just an apparition and though it appears real, when confronted, it vanishes.

Let me ask you a question, “What would you do, if you knew that you were guaranteed a successful outcome?”

After answering this question, I want to ask you, “What is stopping you?”

I have asked these questions in a lot of places and more often than not, the answer to the second question is usually “the fear of failure” or “the fear of the unknown.”

But then I believe “the unknown” is afraid of you. What about the promise of success or better still, what if you

succeed?

Once again, I am reminded of the video I watched of Susan Boyle's audition on *Britain's got Talent*. The forty-seven year old had mentioned that she left her village to come for the auditions which eventually marked a huge turning point in her life. The Scottish spinster had admitted her secret dream of becoming like Elaine Paige and the audience openly sniggered. But little did the audience know that this *Britain's got talent* contestant was going to be a bigger star than the woman she hoped to emulate.

The two finally met on a US talk show with President Obama being forced to switch his prime-time TV health care address because of a clash with the interview - putting it back by an hour. The two ended up doing a duet in December 2009 on ITV television show, hosted by Piers Morgan. This was definitely the time of her life!

Imagine if Susan hadn't taken the leap of faith to go for the audition. Imagine if she said she was too old and gave up on her dream. She said she had dreamed this dream since she was 12 years old. 35 years of intention and in less than 5 minutes of musical display, she changed her life forever. In May 2010, Susan was voted by TIME magazine as the seventh most influential person in the world.

I believe that, like Susan, the prospects of your success can dwarf the fear of the unknown if you take to heart all of the principles I have shared in this book.

One of the biggest honours of my life was when I got a call from a Manager in the bank, telling me about how she was challenged by my decision to leave and was inspired by my results. She went ahead to say she had a big passion for the kind of job I was now doing and the impact it had on people's lives. She also asked if she could learn under my tutelage. I felt really privileged that my one time superior would ask for my advice and seek to learn from me.

I do not take these blessings from God for granted. In fact, it motivates me to keep getting better, never resting on my laurels. I believe people only get proud because they are not striving for anything and humility comes naturally to those who have their focus on the victories ahead. I know there is much more in front of me than there is behind me. More battles to fight (you may not like this one but it's just the fact of life), more mountains to climb and more victories to be won.

Don't give up until it works because if you don't give up, it will work. Remember my analogy of the pent house suite? Take the walk on the corridor seriously; love what you do and in doing so, you will come in contact with the attendant, willing to usher you to the penthouse suite of your palatial manor.

I watched the finals of American Idols in 2008 and the lyrics of David Cook's song were definitely a huge wake up call for me. By the next year I was out to make the chorus below my reality.

MARRIED FOR LIFE

“So I’ll taste every moment and live it out loud, I know this is the time, this is the time, to be more than a name or a face in the crowd, I know this is the time, this is the time of my life. The time of my life.” – Lyrics of David Cook, Winner American Idols 2008

Now it's your turn, make the words of this song your reality!

I pray you find the grace to love what you do, in due time, the courage to do what you love and the wisdom to make money whilst at it.

God bless you

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Everybody dies, not everybody lives
- The number one rule in life is that there are rules in life, play by the rules and you will rule in life
- Sharing your riches with people is good, revealing the riches in them is better
- Better is always better than best. The minute you think you are the best, you stop growing
- Find out what you are created to do and you will never have to work for the rest of your life
- You wander for distraction, you embark on a journey for fulfillment - Hilaire Belloc

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greatest craving is to speak and cause people to move from the level of mediocrity to excellence and optimize their God given potential.

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This book is extremely inspiring. It is a must read for every young professional, final year students and graduates seeking jobs... Simply remarkable! - **Dr. Charles Ononiwu (International Coordinator, Youth With a Purpose)**

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