



## BEING AN EXECUTIVE

To be an executive is the ambition of many young men and women because they are a prominent figure in the economic and social life of enterprise in Africa and around the world. Not everyone is a natural born executive, but many can become good executives by learning, listening, observing the method and abilities needed and by working their selfdevelopment.

Being an executive is always about meeting challenges. He must know his job, make decisive decisions, and direct the work of other people. He needs imagination and courage in face of tough challenges. He is not paid on the thing he does but for the moral content of his effort and his achievements : **his enthusiasm, his specialized capabilities, his knowledge, his experience, and his judgment.**

Successful executives have a high degree of ability to organize and keen vision to see the path ahead. They are skilled in taking several seemingly isolated events and parts and detecting the relationship between them.

The problem in business is to find the right men and women, keep them and develop them into good or great leaders. Facts are better than opinions in this screening:

- **What has he/she done?**
- **How has he/she done it?**
- **What can he/she do today?**

Seniority does not entitle or qualify someone for an executive rank. He must have learned to see things that do not appear to the surface. He must have soft skills like working well with people, building networks, being resilient, resisting pressure, being positive. Above all he must be a leader, not someone who achieve by his personal skills and power, but one who inspires people around his command to perform at the higher level.

The executive also needs courage. As Mandela said, courage is not an absence of fear, it is the ability to control one's fear. He who realizes clearly all risks involved and decides to go ahead with his plan is a courageous man in the face of challenges.



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In fact, bravado is to be officially censured as well as cowardise. The question is "are you coming to see your boss with decisions or for decision ?". If the candidate executive is not decisive, he will fail the leadership test going forward.

Confidence and control are critical to executives. Success will never be attained by a person who always has to ask advice before doing anything important, or who asks the boss, or who asks how to execute an order. A man's confidence measures the height of his possibilities, and no man passes his own selfimposed limitations..

Professional promotion should not be given as a reward for best services. It is given for the sole purpose of enabling the person to carry more responsibilities and make more decisions. Everyone in an organization should know precisely what he is responsible for, what is the scope of his authority and who he should depend on to get things done.

It is a good policy for an executive to refrain from driving himself everything that can be well done by a subordinate. If he manages everything, he is being unfair to himself as well as to his people. Of all the challenges faced by an executive, the human problems by far exceeds operational difficulties.



It takes superior capacities to treat people in a way that drives their respect and performance. It's about helping others succeed, inspiring commitment not fear, praising people when they perform even when it is not perfect.

It is also wise to refrain from the habits or criticizing juniors. Humiliating or forcing them to admit they are wrong will destroy their will to do good work.



One of the great marks of a good executive is the appearance of ease with which he performs his duties. Too many executives have the wrong idea that their irresistible drive demand that they ignore questions of health, leisure and relaxation. In fact when the body is in great shape will the mind function at its highest efficiency. Another great foe to executive efficiency is the wrong belief that he can turn everything on anything, downplaying the role of experts.

At the end what counts is the number of opportunities he gets, taking advantage of winning the little ones as they come. Wasting time waiting for big opportunity may be a losing game.

Complacency and self-satisfaction are dangerous traits. They cannot lead to that sharp vision of higher and better things which is the mark of great leaders. If there is one point worth remembering more than anything else both for the aspiring young executive and by the man or woman who has been through the mill, it is this: ***The successful business leader gets more satisfaction from doing a job than from contemplating the finished product or service.***

As Mandela puts it ***“A winner is a dreamer who never gives up”***. An executive will always keep trying, he must have a certain idealism, a vision of what might be, an honest purpose and a steady obedience to the rule of life that he has decided is right for him and his organization.

Let me quote few proverbs that wise men and women in Africa would say:

***‘Don’t aim for success. If you want it, just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally’.***



***“Patience is not the ability to wait, but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting.”***

***“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.”***