Is money everything?

By Costantine V Magavilla

Published by S&C Magazine

Everyone seems to be looking for a higher salary these days – the *so* called *greener pastures*… And I will not even begin to argue against this generally held belief in our evermore capitalistic society. As Tanzania goes through this transition, from a centralized to a liberal economy, a lot of truths are coming to a fold when it comes to matters of remuneration and other work benefits. What should one really look out for in the labor market; is money everything?

In Tanzania's past most job seekers were content with work security and social influence from the position one held. As a result government jobs were ideal and private sector jobs seemed fickle in nature; to be honest there weren't that many legitimate private sector players to begin with. Job seekers today still seek security and social influence, but require money as the principle intermediary to achieve these. As a result there is a growing feeling that if you go into the private sector, you are foregoing job security and social influencing that seem to come with government jobs and hence the pay-off must compensate accordingly.

Players in the corporate sector with the appetite take advantage of this mentality to drive a 'more money' agenda preferring to poach off the shelf ready for use labor as opposed to development of a conducive environment internally that promotes growth of talent. This paints a rather opportunistic and disheartening picture of the private sector players, as traders in human currency, where people are only valued for what they do and traded off as soon as they loose this value; in other words performance management as opposed to performance development...With this background it is no wonder that most of us are trying to exploit the market dynamics and earn at times even more than our actual value commands.

But is more money enough? I wrote the following poem when I was overwhelmed with questions about my first career move…

Greener pastures... questioned... Greener pastures, they are not for me, though tempting they may seem. More interested in fertile soils am I, the richness from which these greens may grow. Tilling, planting, reaping from the passion that feeds my labor, to find this anywhere I must endeavor. Green pastures, they deceive us with morning mist and sunrise glow. What we need know is that fertile soils were there years before; from other's labor green pastures could then grow. Green pastures, they will leave us if we reap, where we have not sown...

Ironically, though, some of the best human resource management approaches have been pioneered by private corporations and even borrowed by governments in some cases. We can actually learn from companies like Coca Cola that have moved beyond transacting in human currency into managing human resources. In as much as a salary is a key building block in managing this relationship so are underlying values that define the culture that the company is striving to promote. For this relationship to endure, the employee and employer have to emulate these values in everything that they do. Most people do not look as far as the values that their employer upholds in relation to what they want. Greener pastures are not enough if we do not what it takes to make them green. You could get a big salary, but find yourself in an organizational culture that is not fertile and compromises your productivity as a result. Money may be one thing, but it surely cannot be everything.