

Magavilla's Goodbye "Love" Letter

By Costantine Magavilla

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Dear family,

I have decided to write this Oprah styled "love" letter to you, the people I have shared my life with all along this route, as I mark this monumental milestone in my life. The last five years have been the wealthiest of my entire career and in as much as they have been characterized by, what Charles Dickens famously quipped as, the best of times and the worst of times; *I have no regrets just lessons learned* in this, the ultimate master class called life.

After five years of service in this well intending establishment in a senior management capacity, three years of service in other various corporate entities of equal standing and five years of service, before that, as a youth leader and social change agent; I have decided to take some time off to walk through the burning coals of life for a couple of months before I take my next BIG step. It took me eight months of contemplation to arrive at this decision, but *when the day of reckoning comes we will have no option but to submit ourselves to the forces that be.*

Not all love letters will read like Oprah's, though. Mine is one of those I guess; but at an age three years north of the age Oprah was when she kick started her illustrious TV career, my love letter is not as much about saying goodbye to legions of fans, but more about saying hello to the possibilities ahead! Today marks the end of me trying to 'find' myself. For years, finding

"me" was at the heart of most of my strategic decisions on life; feeding into my versatility and eagerness to become what I probably already was.

I have recently been reminded that life is not about finding yourself as much as it is about creating yourself and that it is not our abilities that show who we really are but our choices. Ironically, years ago, this was what I stood for; I let nothing get in the way of "me" and what I believed in and what I visualized I did and Magavilla became. Then what happened?

When I had no university degree, when I had no job, when I had no money or social image; all I had was "me" and a handful of strengths that defined "me". This made being "me" that much more important. I had nothing to hold on to but "me". My greatest assets were the mindset that I employed to approach any situation ahead of me, my penchant for oratory sparring and my ability to create marvels out of obscurity. I truly had a 'do or die' way of approaching situations. *It was either I die doing nothing or I live doing something about it* and that I did almost always with passion! Irrespective of the obvious limitations, I was bountiful and unperturbed in my quest to do what I believed in most. I was always clear in my intentions and the expected hurdles as a result of taking many of the decisions I did and that was what mattered most.

Suddenly I had a university degree, I had a job, I had money (ok maybe not much but enough to get by) and I had a social image; but, ironically, almost in the same thread, I lost "me". Over time, I learned that being "qualified" for a job may also disqualify you from being you if you are not careful. I found myself in a rat race for corporate relevance and entangled in one conflict after the other and often time on the receiving end of hostilities fueled by themes

unorthodox yet very common place. I was swimming against the current and irrespective of what I did; making progress was no longer an option; *most disturbing is the state of those whose increased efforts lead them back to the same place.* These struggles achieved nothing more than to further distance me from “me” in terms of not only undermining my strengths but also disarming me of my well preserved system of values. In the absence of any clear guidance and mentoring, from once being a rising star, I reached a place where I could barely see my star. I started to burn in my own fuel holding on to whatever I could to survive. I was shrinking at an uncontrollable speed and could never really understand why until one day when I remembered that *in the absence of our strengths all we have to show are our weaknesses.*

The intensity of both these extremes is what characterizes life and life wouldn't be with meaning in the absence of such I guess. As I part ways with this family, a family that I have grown to know and admire over the last five years; I turn back to being “me” as a pre-requisite to moving forward. I have nothing but invaluable lessons gathered that have strengthened me as an individual, career marketer and business thought leader in Tanzania and beyond. And no greater of these lessons than that which reminds me that *the future is much closer than we think and, in effect, for some of us it has already passed.*

Life is by far our foremost teacher, only if we allow ourselves to learn! So here are the five most pivotal lessons learned on personal growth and development in the corporate world, as I have come to know it, over the last five years:

- Define who you are (in terms of strengths, values & limitations), then do something about it and lastly create value for yourself and others (value, in this

case, can be material, moral or a combination) as a result of doing so. Even Oprah was not always Oprah in as much as she actually was... You have everything you need to be your best you; you do not need to find yourself, just define yourself and build on what you have. Remember that *a dream is the lantern of life, it's the only time when you can see even what others cannot*; so just because other people do not see eye to eye with your intentions, it doesn't necessarily mean that you are wrong in your thinking.

- Your personal strategy must inform your strategic engagement into the business you work for. Employment is ultimately a passage to and not the end destination in itself. Working hard will often time fit you squarely into the strategy of the business you work for but does not guarantee you anything on a personal level in the long run and if the business strategy changes then you can almost guess what that can do for you. And due to the limiting nature of the corporate world, conflicts are almost guaranteed to ensue as people scramble to claim or reclaim "territory" within these limited confines. One saying always comes to my mind – when you do not have a strategy, you become part of someone else's strategy and trust me you some strategies you would rather never be part off.

- Growth is a must in any organization over time, just as much as shrinkage is (it's the evil cycle of career progression); basically if you are not growing over time, you are shrinking. What doesn't build you overtime will almost surely break you. Shrinking is not a bad thing if it is within your control but if it occurs outside your control shrinking can affect you psychologically and result into further uncontrollable shrinkage. So own up and shrink it your way.

- It is not the situation you are in that matters most, but rather the mindset that informs the approach you take to address the situation you are in. The only thing you are assured will be yours to control to the last date in your life is your mindset and/or attitude. Invest time to develop it as you can be assured it will not develop out of its own fruition. With the right mindset, every situation is one that can be overcome.

- Sadly most of us will only appreciate the power we have when we lose it – mentor and be mentored religiously. The future (of a society) is a reflection of how the past takes care of its present so there is no better time to start building it than now. Nothing in life happens by chance; once you and your intentions are defined, your growth will be a reflection of the quality of mentorship/support you get and give to make it a reality. We all need positive encouragement to realize our true potential so the best mentorship will always help an individual identify with and value their strengths and not otherwise.

Having survived this business through 3 ownerships and 5 MDs all within 5 years, it would be unfair if I was also not to share with you, at least one on the many lessons I have learned on leadership. Arguably the most pivotal of all lessons learned thus far on leadership – the power of promoting harmony.

In business, what we do is rarely nuclear science, in effect, what matters most in business management is not what we do in our individual capacities as much as how we do it collectively as a team! So the underlying secret to successful and sustainable businesses leadership is not what people do individually (because what people do will almost always change depending on who is managing the business) but how they do it as a team.

To see how this works just look at an orchestra. An orchestra is a collection of instruments, often varying and diverse in range, being played by instrumentalists and lead by a conductor. Depending on how they are arranged, the same set of instruments can create beautiful music or horrifying noise. The conductor, who leads the orchestra, has as his main role, the responsibility of creating harmony amongst the different instrumentalists in as much as he himself is not playing any of the instruments. As a result, the conductor has to take the time to understand the music first, and then study the uniqueness of the members in terms of strengths and capabilities, give directions accordingly, define roles of each member in achieving these directions and ensure adherence when the music is being played. To get the best music out of the orchestra, the conductor has to be able to listen through the clutter to hear the music that is often hidden deep inside; this takes patience and endurance. In the absence of harmony, even the best instrumentalist can look lousy.

Every time, I think of orchestras and the role of the conductor, I further my appreciation our role as leaders in organizations and the importance of us creating and nurturing harmony in how people do what they do. Harmony in anything we do depends heavily on how everyone plays their role (so roles should always be clearly defined and directions clearly set) and as a result harmony doesn't come about by chance, it requires design and desire. *Harmony is so powerful that with it, even noise, becomes music* and that is the power of harmony.

In keeping with the spirit of Oprah, for this, my “last” show/ article while in service at Airtel, I also give you my top five articles from the last five years. In as much as I find purpose in all that I share through my articles and that is why I share them, the following articles, not only stand out, but also serve as narratives of the road well traversed to arrive at this place where I am at now:

- *The rebirth; a disruptive intervention* (published 2011)
- *Fight the greater battles* (published 2010)
- *The story you tell, growth and the end of a chapter* (published 2010)
- *The passion prophesy* (published 2010)
- *Beyond survival, the power of abundance* (published 2009)

You can read the above articles through my website: www.magavilla.com and contact me through email: costantine.magavilla@gmail.com or mob: **078 367 0802 .**

I take this opportunity to thank all of those who have aided me along this journey and there have been many. Airtel Tanzania, under the wise and able leadership of Sam Elangalloor will surely get places; already we are seeing powerful leaps and bounces in the right direction. Sam, through you, I have learned volumes; thank you for generosity in sharing. To the myriad of colleagues, who have served alongside me in building this great business, both within and outside Tanzania; you have been part of me in so many ways for so

long, words cannot begin to adequately explain my appreciation and indebtedness.

I look forward to your continued engagement and support as I begin this new chapter in my life.

With love,

Magavilla

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