



The Review

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Issue #12

Journey to C-Suite: A Transformative Experience

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Journey to the C-Suite

By Sandra Mwesigye Mago

This newsletter summarizes Sandra Mwesigye's key takeaways from the Journey to C-Suite program. As Deputy Head, Legal & Commercial at CNOOC Uganda Ltd and Group Leader at Alliance Ascend, Sandra shares her most memorable sessions and insights gained from various leadership experts, highlighting the importance of sustainability, organizational culture, personal branding, and self-leadership.

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Top Sessions and Key Insights

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1. **Moses Kasakya, President Institute of Internal Auditors, on Culture Shaping and Organization Transformation**

Moses' session on culture shaping and organization transformation was transformative. He shared his journey of rising through the ranks and emphasized the importance of integrity and culture shaping.

- **Memorable Quote;** "Tell me and I will forget, teach me and I will remember and involve me and I will learn". What a great summary of how to shape

4. **Emmanuel Otuko, Sustainability Manager on Sustainability.**

Emmanuel Otuko emphasized that sustainability is a strategic imperative, not a side project. He guided that its key to protect value tomorrow while creating value today which is by balancing people profit and plant. Doing business as usual undermines sustainability, especially when we focus on short term strategies. A key take away was the best way to predict the future is to create it.

- **Promotion Interview Tip:**

Prepare well ahead of time, understand industry trends, and organize your documents effectively. Recognize the value you bring to the marketplace and your organization. As he wisely put it, you cant fatten the cow on the market day. Set the bar high from the first interaction with the future interview panel by always and actively distinguishing yourself.

5. **Pamela Natamba, Partner PWC, on Building and Sustaining a High-Performing Bench:**

Pamela Natamba discussed how organizations need to identify the skills and qualities of executives that will support the

organizational culture for lasting results.

- **Key Insights:** Culture is not static, its dynamic and aligns with specific mission, goals and aspirations at a given time. Culture should be looked as much more than studying or influencing shared values, beliefs and behaviors.

It is important is to question whether the team is moving in the same direction, whether the tone at the top reflected through the organization, and whether there is disjointed progress.

- As Peter Drucker says, Culture eats strategy for breakfast but only if you let it. Through culture enhancement, an organization can indeed have the right culture it needs to succeed in meeting its objectives. **Actionable Steps:** Model desired values, behaviors, and actions that align with company goals. Recognize personal values and make decisions based on those values.

In my personal life, I have learned to recognize my values and make decisions based on those values. When someone meets me they should know where I stand based on the actions I'm taking. I hope to grow into an influencer over good initiatives and to be known for a change I've caused along the lines of innovation, efficiency, responsiveness, being honest and caring. I recognize that transformation is a process but with these guidelines I am sure I can create a positive change going forward.

2. **Sylvia Mulomi, Head People and Culture, Stanbic Bank, on Becoming a Top C-Suite Candidate:**

Sylvia Mulomi shared insights on what makes someone a top candidate for the C-suite, including technical skills, industry expertise, strategic agility, effective communication, and collaborative team leadership.

- **Surprising Tip** Align the role with personal purpose to make hard work meaningful and achieve work-life integration.

organization's vision and guide promotions and recruitment decisions.

- **Key Steps:** Clarify the vision and strategy, ensure team ownership of the plan, align on what success looks like, and align results, impact, rewards, and recognition.

Pamela spoke authoritatively about vision and goal alignment, breaking down this complex topic into these simple steps; by clarifying the vision and strategy from your point of view, having clarity of the plan for delivering the strategy, ensuring the team owns the plan, aligning on what success looks like and aligning the results, impact, rewards and recognition.

- **Actionable Tip:** Take an annual personal retreat to reflect on personal goals, clarify plan for the year, analyse the performance of the previous year and any changes in strategy. This is something I plan on doing every year going forward to help me achieve my personal and professional goals.

This way the two are mutually beneficial and all the hard work is meaningful regardless of the role. I think this is a key tip to working towards that elusive work life integration and building a career and life worth sacrificing for. To me this was truly profound without a doubt.

3. **Mr. Jesse Ainebyoona, Inspired leaders International, Wisdom sessions, Personal Branding and Leadership**

Jesse Ainebyoona shared a wealth of information and practical tips on personal branding and leadership.

- **The Ps of Personal Branding:** Perception, Purpose, Personality, Places, Partnerships, Positioning, Problem solving Empowering, Pricetag, Presence. Each P is essential to help any leader grow to their full potential and establish a powerful and compelling personal brand that speaks for itself.
- **John Maxwell's Law of Reflection:** Pausing and reflecting allows growth to catch up. I have now gotten into the habit of quiet reflection after every JTC session to think about how best to apply what I've picked from the day's speakers.
- **Topic mastery:** On another occasion Jesse shared about the hack of practicing 10000 hours for mastery of any topic, something worth striving towards in any area where a leader feels lacking.
- **Healthy vs. Unhealthy Teams:** Based on Patrick Lencioni's "The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team," this session highlighted how to recognize and address dysfunction in teams.

Having experienced frustration from a dysfunctional team dynamic at my workplace, this session was helpful in

highlighting what to look out for, how to recognize dysfunction and some suggestions to address this. My team has benefitted from me growing into a more empathetic and insightful leader.

- **Leadership Function:** Produce more leaders, not more followers .
Using the acronym EMPOWER he shared how to Exemplify, Motivate, Provide authority, Organise, Work culture of feedback, Equip or provide tools needed and Relate with the team to build trust. Short, sweet, memorable and very actionable.
- **Work life balance:** life is a wheel and any good wheel must be balanced.
Divide the wheel by different aspects of life that is career, social, family, intellectual, physical, spiritual and financial and pinpoint where in the wheel each lies. The point of imbalance is where support is needed to bring back into alignment. So with intentionality, some kind of balance can be reached and a less bumpy wheel achieved to carry one through life.



My top 3 speakers

By Sandra Mwesigye Mago

1. Jennifer Musisi, Council Member Global Future Council on Cities of Tomorrow

Jennifer tops my list because she is one person I admired for her impact in her roles and her successful transition from legal work to leadership, which is very encouraging being a lawyer myself. Jennifer spoke about building a career that lasts through the power of integrity, professionalism, hard work, faithfulness and self supervision.

In this time of endless publicity around corruption scandals, it was refreshing to hear someone emphasize integrity. Jennifer was open about her struggles with powerful government officials and death threats due to her stance and insistence on doing the right thing. She wisely stated that without integrity, your career is a sinking ship.

Some key tips to take away included, build networks that will support me long term, make difficult decisions and be bold, firm and committed to them, celebrate every win and take care of everyone, empower those you supervise. I especially took note of the life lessons such as maintaining a strong connection with family, and keeping that work life balance. And when you leave the role, leave at the top of your excellence and walk out with your head high.

I will never forget her resignation letter that was published in the newspaper and was literally over 20 pages long highlighting her accomplishments. It was a powerful and memorable statement that really underscored her challenge to be excellent in all we do as leaders.

- **Key Tips:** Build supportive networks, make difficult decisions boldly, celebrate wins, empower those you supervise, maintain work-life



balance, and leave roles at the top of your excellence.

- **Key Takeaway:** Know when to walk away and trust that better things will come your way.

2. Francis Kamulegeya, Social Entrepreneur and Philanthropist. Former Country Senior Partner of PwC Uganda

Francis's session was about why leadership is an inside job first. He shared his long illustrious career journey and how he was able to rise to the top of the global audit firm. I learned from him that before you can be an effective leader anywhere, you must learn to lead yourself effectively. You simply can't give what you don't have!

He emphasized that continuous life-long learning is the key to unlocking clarity of purpose and the best of ourselves. Indeed Self-awareness must be a priority and we should ask ourselves questions like who am I? (Which is different from what you do!) And what do people say about me when I'm not there? What do I want to achieve? (which is different from what I want to be!) I especially appreciated the reminder that networth is different from self-worth and values are different from valuables! One must know their values in order to authentically grow their capabilities and skills to take on the Csuite. While values create legacy, you can't take valuables with you when you're gone. Profound lessons indeed from this distinguished leadership icon still building a legacy and touching lives through Masaka school for the deaf, coffee farming, leading on boards and so much more.

- **Key Questions:** Who am I? What do people say about me when I'm not there? What do I want to achieve?
- **Key Reminder:** Net worth is different from self-worth, and values are different from valuables.

3. Hassan Saleh Managing Director DSTV.

Hassan's life and career tips were very insightful. You could tell these were hard won lessons from a lifetime of making good decisions, not just textbook motivational speaking.

He taught that every organization has a culture, so find yours. Then as long as there's more than one person, you will be managing the dynamics of coexistence. In other words people can't be avoided and they come in all sorts.

It's good to figure out which hills to die on don't fight fights that aren't worth it. People challenges don't change no matter which organization you're in. Leaders will be confronted with managing up or managing down. The approaches to both differ so figure out which situation you are facing. The idea is to follow orders like a military general, and stop questioning authority.

Other key tips; only apply for jobs you know you're ready to take on because no one appreciates half-baked cakes and be ready for the buck to stop with you. Check the small things, the 10% because even if the 90% is well, the 10% could have immense impact if you drop the ball on it. Mentors are essential, find them within and outside your organization. Management has fundamentals, hard skills make up 70% and soft skills 30% but don't underestimate the power of soft skills. Be humbled to be led. Have empathy for those below you because karma is real! Decisiveness is a key skill to grow. In time results will be your savior. Seek alliances with the tail that wags the dog in every organization but remember that it could be the last person you expect! Lastly patience pays!

These tips are practical, readily applicable to any organization and have already helped me address a sticky situation I was facing at my workplace. I had communicated an instruction from management to my team and it was being resisted by some team members, but I was able to diffuse the situation by explaining that it was a directive and needed to be implemented like a military order. By using a mix of soft skills like empathy and hard skills like technical ability, we were able to deliver the instruction as expected by management.

- **Key Reminder:** We rise by standing on the shoulders of giants.

All my thanks to the great team at Journey to the C Suite ; founder Janet N. Bugembe, and the lovely admin Patra N. Higenyi plus the rest of the team for this life changing experience and opportunity to meet and connect with amazing speakers, an inspiring cohort and I feel uniquely equipped to take on a variety of leadership challenges with no fear.