



The Right Fit

By Seth Duodo

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Marketing was thrust upon me. I had been offered a job in a Christian literature publishing organization as sub-editor. I was excited because my long years of teaching English in junior secondary schools in Ghana gave me vast experience to apply in a new but familiar terrain.

Then came the jolt. At the briefing session prior to my assumption of duty, the CEO—with his deputy and the editor in attendance, cleared his throat. Then he said, "Seth, we are reassigning you as the marketing manager has just resigned."

I protested vehemently for a reversal of the unwanted promotion. However, after much persuasion and encouragement I gave in.

The first few days as marketing officer were my most miserable moments in my new work environment. Day in and day out I would stare at the idle computer on my desk and flip through the stack of files that adorned the bookshelf, in a meaningless effort to get started. I had no idea what marketing was all about!

The wake-up call came one sunny Monday morning. Apparently not enthused with my dignified "silence," my new boss broke the monotony of my work ethic.

"Seth," he almost shouted, "I'm waiting for your marketing plan and budget!"

Marketing plan? What did he mean by that? Budget I understand, but *marketing plan?*

When he had left my office, I sank to my knees and asked God to lead me through those troubled moments. Then and there I felt a surge of will and power to act! Learning about marketing became my obsession. Within days, I had drafted a comprehensive plan with an accompanying budget.

Seminars and courses

My efforts at self-study and enthusiasm caught the attention of my boss. In no time, he lined up training programs for me and other key staff. The level of professional insight I gained equipped me for my new position. But, there was still '*something*' missing in my capacity to fire on all cylinders.

I attended Cook Communications' March 2004 International Christian Publishing Institute on marketing, sales and distribution. It provided the missing link. My understanding of marketing changed drastically and dramatically. I felt a sense of great relief and the inner satisfaction of "having arrived."

On my return from Colorado Springs, I was determined to change the face of marketing at my organization. The time for a paradigm shift was imminent. However, suffice it to say that determination for change, which was rooted in *reality* and *knowledge*, was killed by events beyond the control of management.

A new era

I found myself knocking at the doors of my present employer, Smartline Limited. Having been fuelled with a working

knowledge of marketing at Cook's ICPI and a nurtured desire for editing revving to go, I was soon hired in an editorial capacity.

I feel very much at home as the editor responsible for textbook publication. I relate well to teachers and educators, the core of our textbook writers. I now approach my duties and responsibilities with confidence. Indeed, life has been given to my *competencies*. My experience in book marketing and teaching bodes well for my editorial work.

Lessons learnt

The foregoing narrative drives home certain hard facts for management, especially, and also for personnel in the marketing and editorial departments of publishing houses in developing countries.

- The tendency to push staff to assume roles that do not match their core competencies can be detrimental to the organization's overall interest. Square pegs should not be put in round holes.
- Seek the right fit for your employees. Dale Carnegie, quoted in John C. Maxwell's *The Power of Attitude* (Eagle Publishing, 2006; 978-0863474897), once said, "You never achieve real success unless you like

what you are doing." In my personal publishing experience, I journeyed from staggering beginnings to stability. Now, I find my new role satisfying.

- When it is necessary to ask staff to take up responsibilities other than their core areas—though this should be the last resort—no effort should be spared at motivating such staff for optimum performance. At minimum, provide training.
- Marketing and editorial personnel play very important roles in positioning their organizations in the market; therefore, self-study and synergizing at building a store of knowledge in best practices should receive priority attention. I am amazed at the professionalism in my new environment.

Famed coach John Wooden once said, "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." Pursue your vision and mission with stoic determination. Finally, have faith in God; with Him, nothing is impossible.

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