

Volume 2

40 FIRST JOBS

Inspiring first job
stories of success



OXFAM



Poise
NIGERIA



WORK IN
PROGRESS! alliance

40 First Jobs
Inspiring First Job Stories of Success
Volume 2

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“The only true voyage would be not to travel through a hundred different lands with the same pair of eyes, but to see the same land through a hundred different pairs of eyes”

- Marcel Proust

“Albert grunted. ‘Do you know what happens to lads who ask too many questions?’

Mort thought for a moment. ‘No,’ he said eventually, ‘what?’

There was silence.

Then Albert straightened up and said,

‘Damned if I know. Probably they get answers, and serve ‘em right.’”

- Terry Pratchett, Mort

Dedication

To every youth desirous of greatness.

Acknowledgement

As Napoleon Hill said, "It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed." The success of this book is driven by the relentless passion of its contributors to pass on their knowledge. Despite very extreme schedules, all our book contributors found time to give us answers. We are indebtedly grateful for the efforts and time spent by these role models.

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Preface



Welcome to *40 First Jobs: Inspiring First Job Stories of Success, Volume 2*. This book is designed to inspire young people with first job stories of role models.

For most people, first jobs are not usually desirable, but in them lie the potential for the desired jobs, only if taken seriously and as a significant learning opportunity. This is what we hope you will gain from the book.

In about ten years, Poise Nigeria, through its Graduate Finishing Academy, has been actively involved in re-engineering Nigeria's workforce by equipping university graduates with skills that employers long for. We have trained over 40,000 young executives and maintained an average of 80% employment rate amongst our trained executives.

With this experience comes several essential questions from youths. Youths have dreams that come with doubts and fears. Oft times, role models are seen as heroes who were lucky. However, like the stories in this book, luck is opportunity meeting preparation. These stories show that dreams do come true even with doubts and fear in the head; the most essential thing is to believe in the heart and persevere.

This book is a book of answers; as the quality of questions usually determines the quality of answers. I would encourage you not to stop questioning; curiosity has its own reason for existence. As John Dewey puts it, "A problem well put is half-solved." Tim Ferriss also reiterates this fact as he states, "Life punishes the vague wish and rewards the specific ask." Often, all that stands between you and what you want is a better set of questions.

"Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish" – Steve Jobs

Don't stop asking clear and specific questions; look for answers until you find them.

Essentially, there are six questions that each contributor answers. First, let us take a quick look of the six questions, and their explanations.

1. Who are you?
2. What was your first job?
3. Given the opportunity to start over again, what would you change about your first job?
4. What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?
5. What specific skills did you build during your first job that are helpful today?
6. What is your advice to someone who is not on his/her desired career pathway?

The first question sets the ground to introduce the reader to the role model. Youths are generally inspired by success. They derive energy from the fact that an obstacle has been overcome, or that someone has gone through what they are going through at the moment.

The second question dives into the first job moments. We will figure out what the most important skills are in finding that first opportunity: networking, critical thinking, taking the initiatives, resilience, or any other. Some of the answers given show that the most important thing to focus on during this time is learning, not remuneration.

The third question inquires what can be done if wrong steps have been taken by a young reader. It also gives some insight and faith for enjoying the process of a situation. It particularly explains Jim Collin's discovery in *Good to Great*. Mix the brutal reality of your present with hope that things will be better in the future.

The fourth question seeks answers that empathize with most youths, but most importantly, how to build resilience, fortitude and a habit of excellence.

The fifth question explains how certain work skills can be built deliberately under intense pressure. Here, we see that work pressure is common to all. It also inquires how the role models prepared proactively for today's success. This essentially gives a clue to why the role models succeeded despite the odds.

The sixth question wraps it up with specific ideas and philosophy of these role models. While facing several struggles, we often desire expert advice, this is what this question seeks answers for.

I hope you find this truly rewarding.

#40FirstJobs #BeInspired

Best,

Asher Adeniyi
Lead, Poise Graduate Finishing Academy

Foreword

Start where you are have you heard the expression "start from where you are"? It means exactly that! What do you have in your hands? Use it! It does not have to be a white collar job. What skills do you have? What are the extra curricular activities you engaged in while in the university? Did you sell things? Were you a speaker? Did you organize events? Are you persuasive? Were you a socialite? These are skills you can develop into profitable ventures while you wait for your ideal job."

Also consider what you really want to do in the long term; start working your way in that direction. Focus on developing knowledge and expertise in this area. Sometimes, your passion dictates your purpose.

There is a young lady who was desperate for a job. She spent years looking and worrying after that elusive ideal job. While waiting, she accepted an internship position that exposed her to teaching. Interestingly, she, who thought she knew exactly what she wanted to do in life, discovered that she was passionate about imparting knowledge. Even then, she went for countless interviews while still conducting lessons. She refused to believe that in teaching lies the end of her search. Realisation came when she made a sizable amount of money in a month. Then she realized that she can make a career out of teaching and carve her own unique niche.

Where you start from does not matter, it is where you end that is important. Don't wait forever to get your dream job, it is a recipe for frustration and/or depression. Don't fall into that hole, climbing out can be a herculean task. There are many things you can do in the meantime. I worked as a sales girl, I roamed around as a cub reporter, made hats, designed cakes, sold *okrika* and sold ice water. While you are so engaged, the likelihood is that you will find your purpose and the wait would not be in vain.

I discovered that in some cases, a rejection from an organization that you believe houses your dream job may be the wake up call you need to get you started on your inner self search. Then you start asking yourself those deep questions and finding the answers in the bits and pieces of things you do to keep busy. Waiting and rejection may not be bad experiences.

Waiting helps you to create your own job's blue ocean. Hone your skills, find your passion and discover your purpose. Don't fret, don't fuss, rather make use of the time effectively. That 'ideal job' may not be so attractive after all.

Mavi Sokia Isibor

Founder/Executive Vice Chairman, Poise Nigeria



ABOLORE SALAMI

CEO, Riby

Abolore Salami is the founder of Riby, a finance technology company that offers a simple and smart finance management platform for groups and their members. More than 60 million Nigerians do not have access to financial services and only 40% have access to bank credits. Riby strives to bridge this gap by enabling people to have access to financial services and most importantly save consistently.

The company's primary goal is to help people achieve financial stability, and to achieve this, it collaborates with companies such as the Development Finance Bank, Bank of Industry, Union Bank, Sterling bank amongst others which have similar missions.

Abolore has over 15 years experience in business development, strategy, sales, management consulting and business/ financial planning, and has developed and managed several projects with local and global companies and partners across several key sectors including technology, power/energy, consulting, financial services/personal finance, insurance, education, agriculture, media, entertainment & film production and transportation.

Prior to Riby, he worked in different capacities with other companies

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such as: Business Lab Africa, Venture Garden Group, Del-York International, amongst others.

He has served several governmental committees and agencies including Lagos State 3,000MW Embedded Power Project which has now been passed into the state law; sub-committee on media distribution for the Nigeria movie industry; ProjectACT - Project for Advancing Creativity and Technology in the Nigeria Creative Industry.

Abolore has a degree from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria; an MBA specialized in Finance from the University of Lagos; and also New York Film Academy (Business of Film Production).

What was your first job experience?

I like to classify the first four years of my ten-year work experience as one. I have been on the entrepreneurship path for a long time, as all the work I did was targeted towards achieving business objectives.

“I do not think anyone should spend less than two to three years in a particular company else they would not get enough value for themselves or from the company.”

However, my first real post-NYSC job was as a business analyst with Ciuci Consulting. I learnt a lot on the job, including, the use of Excel for developing good financial models; before this time, I had been using calculators and Microsoft Word tables for the same task. I also learnt how to write solid business plans, the importance of clarity in presentations, as well as the importance of using appropriate language structure in writing. I spent about a year on this job and only left due to the distance between Egbeda where I stayed and Victoria Island where the company was located.

After my exit from Ciuci Consulting, I continued on the path of learning and building by taking up employment with Del York International where I stayed for another four years. It is important to structure the first few years of your career around what you seek to learn while also being clear about what you want to achieve as an individual. Look for roles that will help propel you towards that vision.

I also learnt the importance of fundamentals; that is the difference between the knowledge of a thing and the utilization of that thing to achieve a particular purpose.

What challenges did you face on your first job?

The major challenge as I earlier mentioned was that my house was far way from the office, and commuting to work became an uphill task especially because of security reasons, as I needed to set out most times as early as 5 am.

Also, during this period, while I was the sharpest at work, I was not the most structured. To overcome this, I focused on my strengths and ensured that I learnt as much as I could from the ecosystem that I found myself in. Generally, my job challenges were more about physical issues such as accommodation than about competence.



Put your all into your job and do not jump from role to role because of money. As much as possible, prioritize getting the right level of foundational exposure above money.



I was placed in a managerial role because I was good at certain things. As is with first opportunities, it came with its own challenge: I had difficulty managing people that weren't in my age-group. However, I sought counsel which still helps me till today. What you know is not the important thing when it comes to leading others; the important thing is that your followers know that you care about them and their work.

How would you say your early career stage affected your personal development?

I imbibed the art of managing people during this period as I realized that people would size you up and respond to you based on their opinion about you. I understood the place of both technical skills and human relations; this helped prepare me for managing my own business.

“Your technical skills will get you through the door, your emotional and social skills will keep you in the room”

What is your advice to young individuals who feel that their jobs are not on their desired career path?

If they are doing such jobs because of money and are good at it, then that is fine but if the opposite is the case, then there is a problem.

My advice to these individuals is that while doing their jobs, they should find ways to build their passion by offering to utilise the said passion for extracurricular activities.

“There is always a way; just pray for right opportunities”

And even when you find a new job, do not destroy your reputation at your current workplace; I strived to give at least three months notice before resigning from all the places I worked.

“No matter what, do not burn bridges.”



ADEBAYO ALONGE

Co-founder/ CEO, RxAll Inc.

Adebayo Alonge is a multi-award winning and renowned global pioneer of in-situ drug checking using deepTech in pharma. He co-founded RxAll™ in 2016 after working for 10 years with Sanofi, Roche, BASF, BCG in market development and strategy consulting.

Through RxAll™, he provides a means for patients in the developing world to authenticate their medicines. His career in pharma is driven by a passion to eliminate fake drugs as he almost died as a child from a counterfeit medicine.

RxAll's AI nanoscanner™ called the RxScanner™ and cloud-based algorithm helps regulators, narcotics control agencies, pharma manufacturers and hospitals ensure that all drugs sold are of the highest quality. He has led RxAll™ to achieve a multi-million-dollar valuation in 2 years and ramp up 7-figure sales orders in its first year. He also led its market entry into East Africa-Kenya & Uganda, West Africa-Nigeria & Ghana, SE Asia-Myanmar, Malaysia & Singapore and the Americas- Canada, USA and Columbia

Adebayo was a keynote speaker at the 2015 US-Africa Business Conference at Yale, where he was a Speaker on the healthcare investing panel. He recently spoke on CGTN about the food crisis in

Northern Nigeria. He also spoke at the 2018 Katapult FutureFest in Norway, where he led RxAll™ to win the FutureFest's 2018 Global start-up award. He recently led RxAll to win the 2019 Hello Tomorrow Grand Prize out of 4500 deepTech startups from 119 countries. ‘

In addition, he is a recipient of the Mandela Washington Fellowship from the US state department for his outstanding contributions to business and entrepreneurship in Africa. Adebayo has bagged the following degrees; Master of Public Administration- in-view (deeptech in public policy concentration) from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Master of Advanced Management (private equity concentration) from the Yale School of Management and an MBA (strategy and finance) with distinction from the Lagos Business School. He graduated with a Bachelor of Pharmacy First Class Honours from the University of Ibadan.

What was your first job experience? Please tell us the year, the compensation, how you got the job, the challenges, the high and low moments, any other relevant (unique) experience. Was it your desirable job at first?

My first full time job experience was with Roche (now Swipha) as a sales representative in 2010. Before I went off to my Youth Service in Bauchi, I put together a shortlist of pharmaceutical companies I wanted to work with. I was clear in my mind that I wanted to do work in sales, precisely because after speaking with a mentor, I realised that this is the core skill in business. I dropped off my cover letter and resume at the receptions of the companies. About three months to the end of my youth service, I was called to interview with a number of these companies. I received some offers and decided to accept the Swipha (Roche) offer because it offered the most challenge, which was to turn around a flagging sales territory. There were a number of high moments. Receiving the chairman's award for excellent performance at the end of my first year was definitely a high moment.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stage of your career?

If I had to start again, I would make more effort to pursue a research degree outside Nigeria and develop my programming skills. Leaving Nigeria for my master's really helped my career develop faster and opened up new vistas of opportunity. Pursuing a research degree would have also aligned much more closely with my academic record of accomplishment of excellence and would definitely have been more meaningful than just trying to achieve sales targets. Although being a salesperson early in my career has now proven to be very useful to my startup, so everything worked out.

What impact did it have on your personal development? How did your first job mould your skills and capabilities, and how did it prepare you for success?

My first job is what you would refer to as 'professional detailing with store by store sales hustle' — a combination of technical with product sales. I worked 8 am to 11 pm daily— spending time with doctors and pharmacists in teaching hospitals in Lagos late into the night. Some doctors only knew my product name, i.e. Rocephin and later on Ocefix and I became really well connected at senior levels in some of the most important health institutions in Lagos. I would organise professional roundtables and clinical presentations where I presented on the pharmacology of the medicines I sold — one of my strong suites from pharmacy school. The breadth of my professional knowledge impressed the doctors. This helped to boost sales of my products so much so that sales for my territory grew 200% under eight months.

On the other hand, I would also go to a pharmacy store around the Mushin and Surulere axis, putting in my products on return or sale basis. I knew every pharmacist in these sales territories; I had their contact details and became friends with them. I also engaged some very large distributors this way. This first job showed me how the drug distribution system worked. Even more importantly, it taught me how to sell. It also showed me how poor quality drugs get into the drug supply chain and gave me a clear idea of how to solve them that led to founding RxAll.

More so, it helped me develop a rigorous gritty work ethic that has helped me push through the challenges of selling our high tech product at RxAll across the world.

Essentially, the same process I used back then, I continued to use to today as RxAll's chief selling officer — I present technical sales of our high tech product to scientists while working with merchants to distribute the product across different countries in the world. Your first job really lays the foundation for your career's future.

What were the key challenges and moments of discouragements on the first job? How did you overcome them? Did any principle or thought in particular help you during this period?

Technical sales jobs are not easy. You have to convince older highly trained professionals that you know what you are talking about. On the other hand, you also have to get on the same level as very successful traders who mostly did not go to college but learned through the apprentice trading system. The required pattern of behavior in these two environments is different. You have to be adaptable to fit in, be likable and sell. People only buy from those they like. Keep your ego at home or go hungry. I would run errands for doctors on call. I would spend time at trader's stores on weekends. In all cases, I would visit them for their family functions and events, and help them where I could with the personal things they required. Some of my best customers were often mean to me on the first contact. For example, a distributor in Mushin shouted me out

of her store as if I was a common thief – but my desire for success is greater than my sense of shame and fear of rejection – I returned repeatedly until I closed the sale and these once hostile people became repeat customers. Some customers defrauded me. In one particular case I lost over \$2,500 (back in 2011; today this is worth \$5,000) – when they refused to pay up for products I left on return or sale. I had to cover the cost of these items with the company. In one case, one of my customers defrauded his customer, who decided that the only way he could get his money back was to report the supplier to the police which in this was I. In this particular scenario, my strong reputation at my place of work helped rally support to resolve the case speedily.

The key principle for me that helped me cope with the challenges I faced was that I wanted to be the best salesperson in my company but even more importantly I saw this period as a learning phase for where I was going – to build my own company. My career discussion with my mentor helped me decide I had to learn how to sell in order for me to learn how to do business. Therefore, I went into a company that offered me what I required – professional detailing and product selling, and I was prepared and willing to accept the vagaries thrown my way.

What would you say to someone whose first job is not on the path of his/her desired career? Any word of encouragement or quotes?

“Make the most of it – your first job is about learning core skills that you can translate into other roles or your desired path.”

Some of the key learnings you can take from a first job are:

i) **Ability to accept feedback:** Many university graduates have an inflated sense of self, that a good first job replete with honest criticism can help deflate. Many young graduates are not just where they think they are and a good first job with a good boss helps you see your true strengths, as well as your weaknesses.

ii) **Subordination to a good boss:** Your first job boss is the most important element of your first job. Your first boss will teach you subordination to authority that is critical in the business world. He will teach you task achievement – in the end, only those who consistently deliver are worth their salt in the business world. He will teach you politicking; believe me, all business is personal. He will teach you business writing using metrics; without you poignantly showing what you have delivered in writing to your superiors, your career potential is dim. He will provide you the opportunity to publicly present in the presence of c-suite managers without which your prospect for promotion does not exist. I would choose a lower-paying first job with a good boss from whom I could learn over a high paying job with a weak boss. See yourself as being in apprenticeship so that you can take what you learn from your boss into more important roles as your career progresses.

iii) **Learn to work as part of a team:** A good first job will help you realise that you are just a part of a mighty whole. This will help you learn how to leverage other people to get to where you want to go.

iv) **Learn accountability to deliver targets:** A good first job will teach you accountability to yourself first, and then your team. You cannot hide results, whether good or bad. Those who work hard are seen. Those who do not are seen. There is no hiding place in the business world. If you are not winning, you are losing. The results you achieve are the mirror of your daily activities. If you are sleeping instead of working, your results will reveal the same. You will learn that there are no short cuts to success.

These key learning points would be critical for you to develop the discipline you need to learn new skills, the humility you need to accept a job beneath what you see as your worth, the vision to play the long game because your stooping today is to help you conquer tomorrow. You will learn what types of people to avoid, such as disloyal people, lazy people, all talk people etc. Whether you go ahead to start your business, go into academia or non-profit; whichever path you take, these key learnings will avail you.

“Make sure you know what you want to take out of the experience and go after it.”



ADÉDÈJÌ OLÓWÈ

CEO, Trium Networks Limited

Adédèjì Olówè is the CEO of Trium Networks Limited, a venture capital. Prior to this, he was an Executive Director of Products and Services with SystemSpecs Limited (Remita), one of the largest fintechs in Nigeria. He was also the Divisional Head of Electronic Banking at Fidelity Bank Plc. where he was responsible for the turnaround of the bank's digital business. He was previously responsible for United Bank for Africa Group's card business across 19 countries.

Alongside other industry veterans, he founded Open Banking Nigeria, the nonprofit driving the development and adoption of a common API standard for the Nigerian financial industry.

Adédèjì was also with Atlas Mara as the Vice President of Cards and Payments, First City Monument Bank, and Access Bank Plc. He was an Advisory Board Member at Verve International (a member of Interswitch Group).

What values would your works have on the community?

Open Banking is a very transformational opportunity for Nigeria. When APIs are standardised, a whole lot of innovative ideas will come to the market. We have a lot of start-ups globally and also in Nigeria today. Prior to the emergence of Amazon AWS, the numbers would not be so

great because if you had an idea and wanted to go live, you would have had to go through the difficulty of buying your own server and getting a personal network connection. However, with AWS, you can create a company and your technology products can go live within five minutes without worrying about a server. In fact, if you are starting small, you may not even pay a dime for a year. That barrier has been reduced by innovation.

A similar thing happens with Open Banking. Within the financial ecosystem, start-ups and fintechs can bring products to the market faster, cheaper, and better. That is what we are working towards because Nigeria needs it. So, it is like we are setting up an intellectual infrastructure for future generations of companies to work on. So, the impact would be very big.

Please, tell us about your first job experience.

I got my very first job when I left the university for the National Youth Service. I was a System Administrator at a cybercafé. I think my salary was 6,000 or 6,500 Naira. I worked there for six weeks, and I learnt a lot. That was when I built my website. I also built my first commercial website for a former Minister of Transport, during Obasanjo's regime. I think I did it for 8,500 Naira. I shared the money with my friends. Even though it was for six weeks, that job significantly transformed my life. I remember working night and day to deliver on time, so that the customer would be happy.

How did you get the job, and what challenges did you encounter?

After I left school, NYSC was about two months away and I didn't want to waste my time. I told my brother about this. He was always going to a cybercafé to browse. I decided one day to apply as a System Administrator, and the job description was just to help set up the computers for people who wanted to browse. It was good. It was a small cybercafé. That was my first job, and I will never forget it.

Six weeks was a short period to even have challenges. I had high moments all through. I can't remember a dull or challenging moment. Fun- nily, one of the guys I worked with then was a nephew to the owner of that place, and we are still in touch till today.

Is there any relevant experience from your career that you never want to forget?

I got all my jobs by leaving my comfort zone. From my first job, for example, I got a contract to build a website which I probably didn't know how to do then. That was how I go into the tech space. When I left Access Bank to go to Fidelity Bank, they asked me to work in finance; which is how I spent almost four years working in finance. I picked up new skills. So, every time I left my comfort zone, something good always happened. A new field of knowledge opened for me and the more I knew,

the better and more valuable I became to my current and future employers. So, I always advise people to walk out of their comfort zone, learn something else, be under stress, and then be successful.

Was your first job the most desirable one at that moment?

No, it wasn't because I knew people were interning with companies like Accenture (which was formerly called Anderson Consulting) and KPMG. I tried Anderson Consulting and passed the test, but was told that the interview process took so long — like up to a year. Many people also wanted to get into Shell, Mobil, Chevron, and the like. That never happened. As of that time, I wanted the other better options. However, I am happy that I got the cybercafé job.



Whatever you find yourself doing, do it well



If you were given a chance to start all over again, what would you have changed in the early stage of your career?

I actually feel lucky with the way my career has gone and with the things that I have done. I stepped out of my comfort zone. Maybe I would have been much more daring. Being daring would have helped me a whole lot more.

What impact did your first job have on your personal development?

I did my first contract website, I had my own website, and I started blogging. For a lot of people, that was way ahead of time. So, that set my career up as a visionary in technology. This all happened in 2001, and it was absolutely foundational for my success today. The job also gave me the encouragement to pursue a career in technology. Everyone was good to me, and it was an awesome experience.

What advice can you give to someone who is having difficulty in starting a career?

Some people would say, "Follow your passion," but I don't understand what that means. I would say, "Whatever you find yourself doing, do it well". There is no better way to be respected than to be excellent at what you do. That I what many people don't like to do. If you find a new career, develop yourself. For example, if your find yourself in a field for the first time, learn about the industry, the product you are making, the technology and infrastructure behind what you are styling, and so on. When you're going to talk to customers, read and learn about the customers ahead. So that when you talk to them, they know you're ready. With that, you surprise them and make them more interested in you too. So, young people should not have this idea that they are doing somebody a favour or someone is doing a favour for them. Youths need to put in some effort.



ADENIYI DUALE

Managing Partner, Duale, Ovia & Alex-Adedipe

A legal practitioner with over a decade experience in various aspects of corporate and commercial matters, Adeniyi Duale is the Managing Partner at Duale, Ovia & Alex-Adedipe who specialises in private equity, energy (oil and gas, power and infrastructure), mergers and acquisitions, business regulatory and advisory. He has been privileged to advise on a number of energy deals across Nigeria and West Africa; this experience in negotiating high profile corporate and commercial transactions, as well as in providing strategic counsel to companies and their boards has enabled him to facilitate seminars, workshops and conferences on national and international platforms.



Mentorship is a two-way street; the mentor, provides information, access, valuable time, and knowledge to the mentee and a good mentee, in turn, thinks up creative ways to provide value to the mentor in order to fully benefit from the relationship.



Adeniyi has a deep passion for mentoring start-up companies and SMEs while facilitating their expansion. He has also been recognized with various awards including the 2018 Law Digest Africa Awards for Managing

Partner of the Year and Young Managing Partner of the Year, as well as the 2018 ESQ Nigerian Legal Awards for Young Managing Partner of the Year.

What was your first job experience?

Contrary to expectations, the journey to the commencement of my first job was not rosy and straight. Prior to the commencement of my BL programme at the Nigerian Law School, I had commenced an internship programme with one of the top tier law firms in Nigeria, and upon my successful call to Bar and a fulfilling internship programme, I applied to be retained in the firm as an employee. However, the procedure was longer than anticipated, so I decided to send applications to other top tier law firms in the country while awaiting the outcome of my in-house application.

Thereafter, two of these firms that I'd applied to invited me for interviews and extended job offers to me. I accepted the offer from the firm with lesser remuneration and was availed the opportunity to work in the Corporate and Commercial Department which had a thorough, detailed and extremely intelligent lawyer as its head.

The great times on my first job mostly came from praises of a job well done from a superior, or client attached to it. A particularly exciting moment was during a commercial transaction of which I bore the lead: the case was a complex one because the client had been heavily fined and suspended from operation by a regulator. Despite being a rookie, I was an integral member of the team that delivered excellent advice to the client, negotiated a suitable resolution, and was commended by the client for a job well done.

Another significantly exciting moment on my first job was when I was appointed transaction lead in the acquisition and subsequent merger between an international oil service company and an indigenous oil service company which led to a global acquisition of their parent companies.

A noteworthy low moment on my first job was being passed over on a promotion which I believed I was qualified and fit for.

What impact did it have on your personal development? What were the vital lessons you learnt on the first job?

Being passed over on a promotion which I believed I was qualified for was quite devastating for me. However, with the passing of time and adaptation to the circumstance, the period helped build an attitude of patience and tenacity towards my career, as I refused to jump ship to the next available job opportunity. I instead, dug my heels in and determined to distinguish myself beyond reasonable doubt to my superiors and colleagues.

In retrospect, I have realized that a young professional's attitude towards the first challenging winds faced on his chosen career path will form the seeds on which that career will be shaped. While a decision to leave the organization with bitterness and resentment might have been a justifiable feeling or action at the time, it could have led to the close of certain collaborations and strategic opportunities further on in my career.

What were the key challenges and moments of discouragements on the first job? How did you overcome them?

I believe some of the challenges were in the workload, long hours, and probably the fact that the “take home” never really took you home. In addition, career paths were not clearly defined yet; the phrase “may your road be rough” usually used by my maths tutor in secondary school kept me going. The statement means that a man will not possess or develop the character necessary to manage and deal with success if



“Personal development and mentorship in a desired industry will work together to provide the desired result for a person.”



things were handed to him without working hard. This principle has kept me going over the years.

“All challenges are opportunities to learn and improve upon yourself.”

What would you say to someone whose first job is not on the path of his/her desired career?

Many first jobs do not appear desirable, but they are often the foundation upon which an individual's career is built, therefore, it is important for every person willing to develop his career in a chosen field to maximize every opportunity available on a first job.

“Seek knowledge as no knowledge is useless.”

In the event that a person's first job is not on the path of his/her desired career, it will be beneficial to seek mentorship from persons who are already established in the field where he/she desires to gain access.

Mentorship is a two-way street; the mentor, provides information, access, valuable time, and knowledge to the mentee and a good mentee, in turn thinks up creative ways to provide value to the mentor in order to fully benefit from the relationship.

Besides mentorship, such individual should invest in personal development and good aptitude in the desired sector/industry, so that he/she

will always be prepared to demonstrate the value he/she can bring into an organization within the sector if granted the opportunity.



AGADA APOCHI

Managing Director, Unified Payment

AGADA APOCHI is the founder and director of PayAttitude, a financial technology (fintech) owned by a consortium of leading Nigerian banks; it seeks to make payments easier for Nigerians, using Nigerian-owned technology. It delivers financial technology that focuses on the digital payment space. It focuses on how people can perform digital transactions using their mobile devices. He is the Managing Director/CEO of Unified Payment Services Limited (UPS).

Agada obtained his master's in Organisational Psychology with specialisation in Change Leadership from the Columbia University in New York. He also holds a master's degree in Law, and is an alumnus of the Lagos Business School; He has attended different executive learning programmes at the Harvard Business School, the Insead Business School, Cornell University and Bank Card Business School in Cambridge. Agada holds many academic honours and awards including best graduating student. He was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1992 and has since worked and gained experience in company law & practice, banking and financial services, electronic transactions, retail business, administration, strategy, execution and change leadership.

Agada is an innovator, entrepreneur, honorary chartered banker, chartered mediator & conciliator, a fellow, International Academy of Cards &

payments, Certified International Cards & Payments Professional (CICPP), barrister and solicitor.

Unlike many people, his ideal job was his first job; did that make things all rosy for him? Find out in this interview.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was at Union Bank, and it was a desirable one because I had always wanted to be a company solicitor. The job came with its challenges, of which the most difficult was with human relations; I had a number of employees that were older than I but who were on a lower level than I because I came in with a university degree, which they, at the time did not have. Many of them were quick to flaunt their ages and years of experience in my face, probably because they felt that my education gave me an advantage over them.



The principles of commitment, dedication and character are key; irrespective of your start, possessing them guarantees a successful end.



Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

In hindsight, there are certainly a number of things I would do better, given the level of experience I now have. I now know that there are a few things that I could have done in a different way.

Kindly advice those who feel that their first job is not in their desired career path

Irrespective of the organisation you work for, the principles that make you successful are the same.

The principles of commitment, dedication and character are key; irrespective of your start, possessing them guarantees a successful end.



AJEBO (EREM EMEKA)

Founder, House of Ajebo

Erem Emeka Nehemiah Kalu a.k.a Ajebo is a Nigerian standup comedian, entrepreneur, OAP, MC and musician. He is the founder of a production house called House of Ajebo, and also the founder of House of Ajebo Animation Studio.

He started his radio career in 2007 while still in the university ,and has worked with a few radio stations like Naija FM, Rhythm Awka e.t.c. His comedy career took wings after winning the AY Open Mic challenge and being a part of AY Concert for a period of time.

Ajebo is passionate and dynamic, and has taken comedy beyond cracking jokes and being on stage to advertising, PR and content creation.

Ajebo holds a degree from the University of Nigeria.

What was your first job?

My first job was at 16 years old. I was paid 4,000 Naira to anchor a wedding and although I dressed in the full Ibo regalia in order to look older, the first response I got from the person who handed the microphone to me was one of contempt; he asked if I was really the compère. By the end of my presentation however, I had garnered the respect of that same individual. Whilst the job was not my first experience as a comedian, it was my first professional dabble into that area, and

as such really stands out for me.

Was it a desired job?

Yes, I always knew that was what I was born to do. Contrary to the norm at the time, when everyone aimed at becoming either doctors or lawyers, especially in order to provide mothers with material to impress others, I always knew my path was entertainment. As far back as a kid in the children's division at church, I was the one who would act and cause parents to fall off their seats; amongst other similar escapades. In fact, by the time I was ready to go to the university, I was seeking one that offered Comedy. My inability to find one prompted me to study Mass Communication for both my first and second degree.

“Parents should not push their dreams on their children, allow them have theirs.”

What are some of the challenges and discouragements you experienced at the beginning of your career?

The issue of non-payment was the biggest challenge I faced ,especially because I started in the church where they always insisted that each performance was being done for God who gave an individual his/her talents free of charge. However, my mother really encouraged me as she always gave me some money for every free service I rendered. Another issue was the biased view that various persons had about comedians. They perceived us as a group that would come disrupt their events. To combat these, we had to ensure our complimentary cards were well put together. Today, the rest is history.

“Package yourself better to eradicate a biased view”

How does your work add value to the community? And how do you hope to inspire young people?

In a country where there are so many problems, comedians are needed to keep the people sane. Besides this, we, as comedians, rekindle hope by connecting to people and their situations; making light of these situations that people ordinarily take too seriously.

As an individual, I like to encourage a lot of young people, especially because I started at a very young age. I always tell them that, *“Talent is not enough,”* it accounts for just about 40% of what is required for success. Work ethics and character are equally very important as you cannot earn a living out of just talent.

“Talent is raw material; it must be converted to skills.”

Another noteworthy point I emphasize is that music and comedy are not the only talents available; there are many others ranging from conflict resolution to cooking.



Know what you want, go for it regardless of the prevalent trend.



What is your advice for those yet to discover their career paths or whose first jobs are not on their desired career path?

The worst thing you can do to yourself is to do nothing. While you might not be on your career path, you must endeavor to discover yourself.

“The human mind adapts to whatever you constantly subject yourself to.”

Everyone has multiple talents, and is a product of his/her environment, therefore wherever you find yourself, discover new things about yourself and learn about everything by keeping an open mind. When you eventually find your career path, you will find that it would be done effortlessly.

“Keep developing yourself”

Also, do not be afraid to change environment, as it spurs growth. As an example, I resigned from a successful career as a radio host after nine years despite discouragement against such action from various quarters because I knew that environment was not encouraging me to grow. This I did without burning bridges.

“Do not be afraid to start something new due to fear; whether fear of what people would say or fear of hunger.”



AKINYEMI DAVIDS

Founding Pastor, Global Impact Church

The founding pastor of Global Impact Church, currently headquartered at The Goodland, Ifako, Lagos, is the president of Global Impact Institute (GII), aimed at skill acquisition and human capacity development. He also oversees the Human Potential Fund (HPF) that helps youths finance their education and/or entrepreneurial pathways.

A sought after speaker and the host of Wisdom Today on Radio and TV, he is a product of the Obafemi Awolowo University, the Pan Atlantic University, Nigeria; the Institute of Leadership & Management, United Kingdom, Daystar Leadership Academy (DLA), Nigeria; and the University of Huddersfield, London.

He has a passion for leadership and hosts the Ministers and Leaders Forum (MLF) dedicated to leaders. He is a member of the Faculty of DLA Executive, and also possesses an Advanced Diploma in Pastoral and Transformational Leadership, RILA. With a strong desire to see people fulfil their potential, Pastor Yemi has authored many books including the *Achieve Greatness Daily Devotional*, *7 laws of Favour*, *In pursuit of Academic Excellence*, etc.

Yemi, married to Bimbo, both live in Lagos with their four adorable daughters.

What was your first job experience? How and when did you get the job?

While I was still in the University, I applied to intern at Winners' Chapel. This was because I knew I was going to start an organisation in Nigeria of today, it's not what you read, it's what is available. When the desirable is not available, the available becomes the desirable. In Nigeria of today, it's not what you read, it's what is available. When the desirable is not available, the available becomes the desirable — a church, and I saw greatness in Winners' Chapel. It was coincidental because they had just acquired what is now known as Canaan Land. It was my desire to gain a bigger vision and I did, by working there. It was not about the money, it was about the vision. I think what many people need to look out for is their vision and what can enhance that vision. There's something about the mental picture one has.

It was also an opportunity to see life — real life — it consolidates your vision, it makes it very real. They just acquired the property, about 500 acres. You can imagine someone that was still in the university — fourth year, who has the vision to start a church after graduation, and desiring greatness, being exposed to this bold and big task undertaken by Winners' Chapel (which was about to build a 50,000-seater auditorium). I summoned the courage, I wrote some letters and approached the leadership of the church, stating my intentions and desire to work with the church.

Then I was given a job as a store keeper. I was privileged to see how the land was cleared, how everything started from the ground. Looking back today, I'm grateful. I think that will help a lot of people — the foundational things you need to do. If you put money first, you're going to miss it completely. The experience and exposure should be more important. In fact, what it does is to broaden your vision even more and then have this different experience.

Anytime the leader of the church, Bishop Oyedepo came around, I was privileged to have a little chat with him on site. I was also able to throw in one or two questions, and that was a real game changer for me. Those answers you get will help you to begin to build your own bridge towards the things you are seeing ahead. Looking back now, I'm grateful because though I had the opportunity of working in other places just to make money, the vision was more important than the money.

Let's talk about how you started your ministry from scratch — the highs and lows.

Wow! We started in December, 2001. We had been praying, planning and preparing to take off. We had amazing pictures in our minds. I was the best student in my class, so after graduation, I got numerous job offers. I could have gone for one of them as the opportunities were there, and my parents also wanted me to get a regular paying job. Starting from scratch wasn't easy.

The challenge for me was that my heart was saying “yes, yes, yes! This is destiny” but my head was giving me a lot of problems. My head was warning me, “you're going to suffer” and “it's not going to work out. Why can't you just get a job? You did well in school, why are you suffering?” The heart kept saying “this is it!”. We started with humility; you always start small, then endure. It wasn't easy. We started with seven members in attendance in the church auditorium, and I had to shout. On Sundays, I used to feel bad for the people that came more than for myself.



Answers you receive from mentors help you to begin to build your own bridge towards the things you are seeing ahead.



The challenge was always there, there was a lot of work and someone had to start. As soon as we started, however, many people extended hands of assistance to the church. Some people came around and said that they just wanted to attend our programmes. From seven to twenty, from twenty to fifty, sixty, the church grew steadily. We had to move to another facility. The first place we used was setup in a big eatery.

The second challenge I faced as the leader was at the second location we moved to. We moved there during the dry season, only to find out several weeks later that the venue had very faulty roofs. As the rains came, water was always leaking into the auditorium during service. After trying to rectify the situation a number of times, all the carpenters around refused to come for the repairs again. My head kept telling me that this whole thing wouldn't work. We eventually secured the services of an engineer from one of my mentors, and the issue was dealt with. We then increased services for the first time, and it was a good thing. The voice in the head is one thing every young person and startup will go through. If your heart says “yes”, follow your heart, your head will follow your heart later.

Please tell us how watching Canaan Land from its foundation and being a witness of it all influenced your life.

Yes! You have to be stubborn, positively. One has to stick to it no matter what. I've learnt to be stubborn and unrelenting in the face of challenges. It had to work out. For me, I was so deep into my situation and I couldn't go get a job just like that. It was a scenario where one has burnt the bridges so what is open to one has to work. Sometimes, when unnecessary alternatives are available, progress isn't made. So that helps. Whatever the challenge, you will overcome it. Then the second thing I've picked, which is major, is humility. One will need humility as one rises to the top. So, when you remember those heartbreaking challenges, the disappointments faced, the money shortages, it keeps you humble.

It is very key. Some people begin to get results, but somehow, arrogance and pride set in and that begins to impede their progress. But when you remember your humble beginnings, you smile and it keeps you broken. This attitude is needed for one to keep soaring high.

Some people are dissatisfied with their current jobs or employment status because they don't like what they are currently doing or they have better qualification. What's your advice to them?

Dreams will always come to pass if you still believe. Wherever they are now, they must know that it is a stepping stone to where they want to be. Never downplay what you're doing right now or where you are, give your best. I would like to encourage you to be committed to your dreams; it could be sending out CVs or starting this dream of yours, bit by bit. Transition can begin any moment. No matter how small it seems, don't abandon that dream you have. But don't abruptly end or stop what you're currently doing, where you are; you still have to give it your best shot. Life is about transitions. Start taking steps towards the direction of your dreams and along the line you can just transit to building that dream full-time.

Transition can be critical, it can be boring because you need patience. You need wisdom. You need to pray for wisdom because if you don't know how to transit well, it could spoil a number of things. Don't give up on that dream, be dutiful at your current job and know that the experience you're gaining right now will always be useful. See where you are as part of the preparation process, preparation can never be too much. Even if you don't like the job, it's a preparation. Start sending your CVs and getting some training along this line. By the time you transit fully, you'll still gratefully look back at the experience you had now. Don't throw this opportunity away.

Any favourite quotes for this occasion?

Yes. The good news is that nothing is permanent, the bad news is that nothing is permanent. Meaning that if you're going to be challenged now, you can turn it to a good thing, and if you're doing great right now, be careful because it can change.

“Man was not created as a finality but as a possibility; we all have possibilities inside us.”



BARRY OBIOMAH

Chief Consulting Officer, Poise Nigeria Limited

Barry Obiomah is the Chief Consulting Officer Poise Nigeria. He is a seasoned self-motivated and experienced facilitator with over 23 years working experience in consulting, training, banking operations, human resources development, credit control as well as learning and development. He obtained his first degree in Education Psychology from the University of Jos with a second class upper division in 1992, his master's in International Law and Diplomacy in 1996, and his MBA from the University of Ilorin in 2004.

He is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Professional Managers and Administrators (USA), a member of the Nigerian Institute of Training and Development, and is certified by Miller Heiman, UK on Strategic and Conceptual Selling.

Barry played an important role in the team responsible for setting Poise up in Kenya. He has worked in various positions including Head of Training Programmes and Research, Chief Operating Officer, Head Human Resource and Planning, Head of Accounts as he advanced in his career.

His core competences and attributes cut across Business Image Consulting, Business Communication Skills, Human Resource Management, Negotiation Skills, Interpersonal Relationship Skills, Listening Skills, Business Etiquette, Strategic Selling and Service Excellence.

He is an experienced and erudite facilitator of contemporary Advanced Business Writing Skills, Interpersonal Communication Skills, Initiative and Pro-active Thinking, Problem Solving Skills, Social and Business Etiquette, Performance Thinking, Emotional Intelligence, Workplace Ethics, Social Intelligence and Cultural Intelligence. He continues to facilitate programmes within and outside Nigerian during training sessions for multinationals and small businesses alike in his major area of expertise, Business Communication.

What was your first job?

My first job was in October 1993 at Universal Trust Bank. I had gotten the job through my elder sister who was the Human Resource Manager at the bank when I went to visit her to request some money, instead of honoring my request she advised that I needed a job, after which she proceeded to obtain my resume and credentials. She however made it clear that I would not get the job if I failed the interview.

I worked there for about 18 months before I returned to school to acquire a master`s degree in International Law and Diplomacy. After my Masters, I got a job at the First Bank of Nigeria Plc, where I worked for eight years. After my exit from the banking industry, I discovered that I had skills in training and development, which coincidentally had been my last role in the bank. I therefore went into consulting which I have been at for the past 13 years.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

The most difficult aspect of my first job was the lack of freedom to use my initiative. It was very mechanical and did not enable me to think as I only had to follow instructions. This was difficult because I like to be very innovative, try out new things and ways to achieve a particular task. Due to my first job, I developed a fixed mindset which later affected my career as well as my early years in consulting.

However, I made up my mind to become good at what I was doing. I was known at a point for balancing unbalanced bank accounts and books. Whenever any department or even other branches of the bank had unbalanced books, I was called upon to balance it. While I was good at that, the mechanical nature of the job stilted my creativity.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

If I had a choice to start again, I wouldn't go into paid employment, I would rather have moved with the times by developing an entrepreneurial mindset. I would have done my own business and made a good lasting legacy of myself.

“Try something that has never been done before”

In the industry aspect, if I was to revamp the banking industry, I would make it more creative and innovative. Also, I would shift the industry's focus from only trading and ensure that it reflects and contributes to real economic growth.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success?

The job that began to shape me for success was the consulting job. Although, it was not a high paying job, it was able to shape my mindset positively and give me a broader view of what the intricacies of business is all about, and how to do business. My brief association with a very experienced consultant, Mr Johnson Ikube, helped sharpen my consulting skills. I am still using those lessons from him in running my consulting career. Also, in my present position, I learnt how to face difficult challenges, transform nothing into something and resuscitate dysfunctional business units into comfortable and growing ones. In other words, I learnt how to produce results.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

Come in with a growth mindset to make a positive impact first. In other words, you must come with a mind to give and not the other way round.

Kindly share your advice to those whose first jobs are in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path?

I never used any of my degrees. I never applied any of my specialties to work. My specialty degrees were different from my career path. The most important thing is to have the basic skills and also be adaptable to your work environment. I advise young graduates to acquire as many skills as they can, whether it is relevant to your desired career path or not, because they cannot tell which would become relevant for their career progression and development.

“You are not limited by your course of study.”

Learn to have the right attitude to work; be committed to whatever your hands find to do per time.

“There is no dream job; you create your dream job by being the best at what you currently do.”

You reap what you sow, plant the right attitude to work and reap career success.



CHIOMA UKONU

Co-Founder and COO, RecyclePoints

A consummate professional with over a decade of hands-on experience and international exposure in environmental sustainability, women empowerment, youth employment, business leadership, circular economy, government and community engagement, Mrs Ukonu is an Industrial Physics graduate from the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria, and she holds a certificate in Social Sector Management from Pan Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria. She has had a successful career across various sectors including the telecommunications, banking sector, and the environmental sector.

She is the co-founder and chief operating officer of RecyclePoints, Nigeria's foremost waste recycling and social benefit venture which motivates post-consumers to recycle, by creating value from their everyday waste. In her capacity as the head of operations at RecyclePoints, Chioma has led the organisation to win many awards and recognitions; some of these include the 2015 Best Recycling Innovation Award, the 2016 Africa Clean up Conference Award for Recycling Venture of the year, the Chivas Venture Nigeria Award which went on to solely represent Nigeria at the 2017 Chivas Global Awards for Social Enterprise, the LEAP Africa Social Innovator Award 2017 amongst others. She was a global finalist for the 2018 Pritzker Environmental Genius Award by the University of California, Los Angeles. The company was also in 2018 se-

lected as the only African company into LAUNCH Circulars, a global competition for innovations that fosters circular economy; in that same year, RecyclePoints emerged runner-up in the MIT Legatum/Zambezi Prize Award for Innovation in Financial Inclusion, which granted her business training in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston, USA.

She has fostered sustainable public and private sector partnerships through collaborations with various state governments, public institutions and private entities. In recognition of the special talent that she is, and her contributions to the society in the area of social innovation, she was recently appointed a judge for the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Inclusive Innovative Change 2019.

Mrs Chioma Ukonu is a successful social impact advocate who volunteers for several organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Des Moines, Iowa; Meals from the Heartland Des Moines, Iowa, USA; CleanUp Nigeria; ClimateSmart Nigeria; and Green Women Forum. She is also a member of various fellowships and leadership groups including the USA government's Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change, Chivas Venture Global Alumni Fellowship, LEAP Africa Social Innovators Fellowship, Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship Programme Alumni Fellowship, and the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women.

Mrs Ukonu, is well known for her strong business acumen and is a certified broadcaster and internationally sought-after conference speaker who has spoken at the pioneer TED event in Eastern Nigeria, the UNDESA 54th Commission on Social Development held at the UN HQ, New York, USA; the Lioness of Africa annual conference held in South Africa; the Social Media Week, Lagos; and the Cherie Blair Foundation's 2019 International Women's Day Conference held in London, UK. She has received business training from various prestigious institutions around the world including the Saïd Business School – Oxford University; Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa, USA; and the Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) of the Pan Atlantic University, Lagos, Nigeria. She is a Nigerian, a wife, a mother to three lovely kids, a result oriented and resilient hard working young lady. She stands for sustainable development, local content development, and she is a firm believer of a better Africa; where Africans are integral to the solutions for Africa's problems.



Excellence is not the native of any nation; you make excellence a citizen of your nation/home. You have to work it out. Keep working, one day your announcement will come.



What was your first job experience?

My first job post-NYSC was as a sales supervisor with Idea House which was at the time providing activation services for Mobitel's newly launched 4G internet service. Before my employment, my husband had assisted in submitting my CV to Mobitel and although I did not get into Mobitel directly, I was selected from their database when the recruitment for the marketing role commenced. As a supervisor, my salary was 30,000 Naira. At the initial point of appointment, Mobitel had promised to retain the ten best individuals, however, at the end of the project only five were retained; I was one of those retained as the team of twenty-five that I had supervised made the highest sales. The job was a very risky one because if any of the sales representatives had eloped with an internet modem, I would have had to pay for it; this, however, enabled me to build relationships and also taught me to encourage my subordinates. In an attempt to make the cut that would be retained, we used to hawk modems in the traffic and this frustrated some persons, I saw it as a means to an end and kept pushing on. Eventually, I was absorbed into Mobitel's corporate sales team from where I was moved to the relationship management team; my time at corporate sales exposed me to the use of PowerPoint in making presentations, the need to know the company strategy, how to deliver the services and uniqueness of the company to prospects as well as the conversion of prospects to customers.

“As a salesperson, you must have a good technical knowledge of what you are selling.”

Even though my husband was doing well in the oil and gas sector, I refused to be a housewife doing nothing and took that first job knowing that it was a step that would lead me to the next level. I learnt people management, technical support, as well as the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy through my first job, and was able to move to the banking industry after about two to three years with all that I had learnt.

Mobitel being a privately owned company helped to build my entrepreneurial abilities; my husband and I were working opposite each other at the time, and so used to meet up after work hours to brainstorm and research concerning our own business — Recy-

clePoints, as we knew we could not remain in paid employment forever. We both remained in paid employment even after starting RecyclePoints, I only resigned from paid employment after the business started making a centre amount of traction; in other words you have to have a transition/exit plan when moving from paid employment to entrepreneurship to avoid a burn out.

What were the key challenges encountered in your first job?

My late maternal grandmother used to say that the best of you will come out in the tightest corners and this statement inspired me and kept me going despite the various challenges from tracking devices to creating and closing pipelines faced on the job. She also used to say that “Excellence is not the native of any nation; you make excellence a citizen of your nation/home.” You have to work it out. Keep working, one day your announcement will come.

What is your advice to young people whose first jobs are not on their desired career path?

Such individuals should see the job as the first opportunity to build their career and as a stepping stone to the next level. It is their premier training ground since they are just coming out of school and as such, they should be grateful for their first employer who employed them despite their lack of experience. I advise them to deliver their duties such that their employer would be willing to give them a good reference upon their exit from the organisation. Also, such persons should take it as an opportunity to learn basic, transferable skills that would help in their career. Finally, learn the regulatory aspect of your work and expand your knowledge.

“Do not burn bridges.”

“When people give you an opportunity, show up and show out.”



COSMAS MADUKA

Founder/CEO, Coscharis Group

Dr Cosmas Maduabuchukwu Maduka is the founder, president/CEO of Coscharis Group, an indigenous conglomerate with diverse interest in manufacturing, ICT, petrochemical, auto care and auto components, automobile sales and services, agric and agro allied business sectors.

Dr Maduka hails from a relatively unknown and obscure background. The loss of his father at an early age of four deprived him of the opportunity to acquire formal education; however, by a dint of hard work, dedication and perseverance, he has become one of the leading Chief Executive Officers in Nigeria.

He is today an icon in the Nigerian automobile industry as he is regarded as a benchmark for other operators in the industry. This is reflected in the fact that Coscharis Motors was appointed the sole dealer for notable luxurious brands like Rolls Royce, BMW, MINI, Jaguar Land Rover & representative of Ford Motor Company in Nigeria.

He was awarded a honorary doctor of Business Administration by the University of Nigeria in 2003 and distinguished fellowship of the Nigeria Law School in 2004. He is also a Fellow of African Business School, a member of the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria, as well as the Institute of Directors, Nigeria.

He is an alumnus of Harvard Business School (Executive Education Pro-

gramme, November 2009) and in September 2012, he was conferred with the National Honor of the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He served as a director in Access Bank Plc., one of the leading banks in Nigeria for twelve (12) years from 2000-2012. He is currently serving on board of many companies including CG-Eko LLP, First System Refinishes Ltd, CG Biostadt Limited. He is a deacon in the Local Christian Assembly in Lagos and is married with children.

With an original story of the rise of a man from a humble background to the place of honour, Dr Maduka's story is truly inspiring.

What was your first job experience?

My story is very unique; different and unusual from what most people expect it to be. I consider my first job to be the six and a half years of apprenticeship when I trained to sell motor parts. I lost my father at age four, and this cost me the opportunity to further my education beyond elementary three, as my mother was saddled with the sole responsibility of taking care of me and my siblings.

“Your response to the things that life throws at you is most important”

Although I did not have a four-wall education, I took life as a school and learnt from the various challenges thrown my way.

“In the school of life; as you graduate from one position, nature has a way of writing a new learning subject for you. It all boils down to how much you are willing to learn.”

At some point when it became difficult for my mother to train all of us, I was sent to go live with my grandparents from where I was eventually sent to an uncle in Lagos. Before this period, I and my brother used to sell Akara (bean cake) for our mother early in the morning, I usually sold more than one tray while my brother struggled with his first. This built a level of confidence in me as I realized I had a gift in selling. My life received new purpose and direction in 1976 when I gave my life to Christ at the turn of my 15th birthday; this coincided with the period when I gained freedom from my apprenticeship which had been under my uncle.

Even though I had served him well, my uncle gave me only 200 Naira which was not enough to pay for a shop as my stewardship fee. This ill-treatment prompted me to vow that he will be astonished by the time he would hear of my accomplishment in five years; I subsequently wrote down my goals and stuck to them closely.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

The most difficult aspect of an apprenticeship was learning the discipline that the job required for success. The discipline I learnt was unprecedented and it shaped me especially because I was young with a free and open mind. The simple fact that I did not have a formal education and thus could not make notes sharpened my mind and memory as I had to store everything in my brain

“The body can take up more things, depending on the training you put it through.”

Also, since I had an unwritten contract with my uncle and the consequence of disobedience very grievous, I could not hang out with other teenagers or enjoy the things youth did.

“You can either confront and surmount your challenges or cry and complain; life does not listen to your logic, it goes on unperturbed regardless”

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

I would go back to school. If I were asked to assess myself, I would say that had I furthered my education, I would have made a first-class as I am very brilliant.

Nevertheless, I did not give up on myself, I kept looking for ways to improve myself with the understanding that I could not build a reputation based on my plans; people had to see results to trust me.



A goal without a plan is only a wish and a vision without action is a daydream while action without a vision is a nightmare. The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.



What then would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

Going through mentorship is the most important aspect in my life, in fact I recommend it for every young man and woman. That period of apprenticeship taught me how to manage resources as well as how to do research; I researched an informal way and discovered that some parts of cars were interchangeable from one brand to another. This discovery not only gave me an edge over other traders by the time I started my own business, but it also taught me to look beyond the surface to the particulars beneath.

“If you lack knowledge of what you are doing, you will pay in a hard way.”

What would you say is the most important factor in deciding on a career path?

It is best to get a job in the area of your study, or in something you have flair for. If you do what you love, you will excel at it. In life, there is no man born without a gift, once you identify it, treasure and sharpen it.

“You will keep struggling if you do something that you are not good at. The treasure within you is of greater value than anything without”

As an entrepreneur, you must be willing to be misunderstood as nothing can stop a man that has the right mental attitude from achieving his goal.

“Great minds have a purpose; others have wishes”

Do not try to do what people want or expect, else you won't get far in life.



EBELE CHUKWUJAMA

CEO, Poise Nigeria Limited

Ebele Chukwujama is the Managing Director of Poise Nigeria Plc. Poise is Nigeria's premier personality and image consultant that provides practical and applicable career development programmes at all levels through excellence in culture, people impact and service delivery.

Ebele is an experienced Senior Management Executive with proven track record of success in corporate leadership, business management, sales and marketing planning, key account management, profit optimisation, and relationship development. She obtained a degree in Banking and Finance from Abia State University (1997). She possesses first rate skills in providing strategic direction for organisational success and is adept at directing cross functional teams towards attainment of aggressive revenue targets. She holds a certificate in Business Administration and Management from the London School of Business and Finance (LSBF). Subsequently she served as a Senior Manager at Zenith Bank plc (1999-2013).

After 15 years serving at top management level in the banking/financial sector with remarkable results, she turned her career towards providing innovative leadership within the wellness and fitness sector where she successfully developed and led teams to initiate and implement business systems and programmes that impacted thousands of lives, attained nationwide customer base and improved revenue performance

by huge percentages.

She recently took the helm of leadership as Managing Director and Board Member at Poise Nigeria, Africa's leading personality and image consultancy. At Poise, she daily takes on exciting challenges of providing strategic leadership for the team to take new frontiers in the business of human capital development.



As a young graduate, you must have a vision and a goal. Some persons can serve as a springboard for you to achieve something, so do not look down on anyone. Your destiny might be aligned with such people.



Tell us about your first job experience

For me, it was from NYSC straight to work. I started my career in the bank at the lowest rung of the ladder. I started out as an EA, what we now call graduate assistant. My first role was in customer service. It was all a very exciting process. I got to meet new people, and I liked the job. It was my first experience in a corporate environment aside from my youth corps service experience with Union Bank. It was exciting to work at Zenith Bank, being a tech-savvy new generation bank. The job was a learning curve. I started at the EA level, and after about seven months, I moved up to sales and marketing; I remember being sceptical about this promotion. I was afraid because I didn't really know anyone — I did not even grow up in Lagos — I was worried about how I would excel in the role. I think it was my knowledge of the product that built my self-confidence because you cannot sell what you do not know.

Performing in this role meant meeting people and being customer-centric. I had to go out of my comfort zone, and my bosses thought that I had the potential to excel in this role. My boss kept saying to me, "You can do it." I was a rookie, but I had a positive spirit. I remember crying back then because everyone dumped their work on me. I did not know where to start. It took one senior colleague to say to me, "Come, let me teach you," for me to build my confidence. When I got home that day, I, complained to my cousin about everyone dumping their work on me. She said this was good for my career because it would give me an opportunity to learn.

I never forgot this fact as a young professional. From there, I continued to grow. Zenith Bank was good for my career.

What were the major challenges you experienced in your early career?

My major challenge was punctuality. I always got into trouble for not getting to work early. I remember that my boss pointed out that my senior colleagues, who were married and lived very far were always early to work, while I, who was still single at that time, couldn't seem to make it to

the office in time. That was the last day I was late.

As a customer service executive, it was also challenging to deal with difficult customers. I remember a particular customer who had an issue with confirming her cheque. It was not actually the fault of the bank. While we worked hard to resolve the issue, the customer was right there in the banking hall, shouting. When I found out that the delay was not from the bank, I went to inform the customer and he had an outburst on me. He rained a lot of insults on me. Of course, I could not respond because of the ethics of the job. At that time, I was just two months into the banking job. I was so embarrassed that I could hardly walk back to my seat. After he got the cheque confirmed, he came back to apologise quietly, but the deed was already done. Of course, I did not take it personal.

“One of the things that I learnt as a marketing and sales executive was ‘never give up, keep knocking.’”

I was eight months pregnant when I landed my first deal. Many of my colleagues in the office did not believe the account would come through. It was after this achievement that I got my promotion. From there, it kept getting better. Never underestimate the power of discipline and hard work.

“Sometimes, when you knock on a door and you get a negative response, do not despair but keep knocking. Never say never until it is over. It is never over until you say so.”

Is there any other unique experience you would like to share?

It has been a long time, I cannot really pinpoint anything, but I would say just be prepared because opportunity meets preparedness. I advise people to be prepared at all times. Emotional preparedness is what you need the most. If you cannot visualise the role in your mind, you will not be able to assume such a role.

“As a young graduate, you must have a vision and a goal. Some persons can serve as a springboard for you to achieve something, do not look down on anyone. Your destiny might be aligned with such people.”

As a graduate, you may have the desire to work with an oil and gas company, but such an opportunity may not be forthcoming at the time. Then, you may get a job with a smaller company and you refuse the job because it's not what you want. While it might not be what you want, you may learn something new in this role while you wait and prepare for that oil and gas company. I believe that there should be no limits to people's dreams. Dream big and let God decide the rest.

You have to commit to the process. You cannot achieve your dreams

overnight. You have to commit to the process of perseverance, patience, resilience, and grace. By the time you achieve your dreams, you will be ready for them because you've gone through the process.

Do not focus on the people that started ahead of you. This life is about your name and your race. Maintain your lane and know your vision. You are uniquely made, and you have potential. We all have greatness in us. Some people have it easy with their first job experience, while some persons do not. Yes, you need to aspire to get better, but still, do not compare yourself with others. Just have the passion and the drive, and with God, all things will be possible for you. As a man thinketh, so he is. If you can think it, you can become it. The problem is many of us think too small. Focus on thinking big. The "how" with regards to achieving your dreams will happen.

If you could change anything in your past, what would it be?

I would have probably saved more and done more investments; knowing that there would be a time I would need to fall back on my investments and savings. My dad would always tell us to save but I did not take it seriously. I really thought he was trying to make me not to spend my pocket money. If I could change anything, I would develop better savings and investment culture.

What impact did your first job have on your personal development?

I learnt negotiation skills, interpersonal skills, and relationship management skills. I had to work with an account that was foreign to Nigeria, and my relationship management skills helped me manage this for about seven years. I also learnt the art of selling and PR. And, I had to learn soft skills on the job.

Did all these skills prepare you for success?

Yes, they did. I did not know that I would ever leave the banking sector, but I left there to become an entrepreneur. And now, all of these skills put together is what I am using to lead Poise Nigeria. These skills were built for over twenty years.



Believe in your dreams. Understand that no one can limit you except you. More importantly, if your dream doesn't scare you, then it is not big enough.



Did you experience any discouragement in your first job?

My first job was like my dream job. I never thought I would work with Zenith Bank. At that time, I was earning even more than the General Manager of another old generation bank. Also, because I seemed unserious during my service year, no one expected me to get that kind of job. Zenith Bank was my dream job, and as God would have it, I stayed there and I

grew there. The organisation was good to me, up until the moment I left. Maybe I would feel differently if I had tried something different.

What is your advice for someone who is not on the right path in his or her career?

Yes; you need to feed your passion, and passion is not always what you think you like. Learn to write down your goals and vision. Research and acquire the skills that you need for that desired job. You cannot move from where you are to where you want to be without having a clear destination. The Bible says, "write down your vision". When I realised that I needed to get involved with the development of my children, I had to make a radical decision, so I resigned. Now, you don't have to do what I have done.

When I wanted to return to a 9-5, I was clear on the job role I wanted. When the opportunity came, I was able to recognise it. In my heart, I was convinced that I needed to get a CEO role, and when the opportunity to work with Poise Nigeria came along, I was sure it was for me.

For a fresh graduate or someone in the mid-career, I need you to know that it is not all about where you are now, but where you want to find yourself. Be sure about what you want. Be clear on your vision and start working towards it. Opportunity with preparedness is success. But if you are not prepared, you cannot seize any opportunity.

Be prepared, passionate, and focused.



ELIJAH AYOLABI

Professor & Pioneer Vice Chancellor,
Mountain Top University

Ayolabi, Elijah Adebowale (Professor and the pioneer Vice Chancellor of Mountain Top University) is a renowned Geophysicist with over 20 years of experience in environmental studies. He specialises in Environmental, Engineering and Exploration Geophysics. He has executed several environmental and exploration studies for reputable organizations such as Schlumberger and Celtel (Zain). He is also a member of a number of professional bodies such as the Nigerian Mining and Geoscience Society (NMGS), Nigerian Association of Petroleum Exploration (NAPE), Science Association of Nigeria just to mention few. He is an external examiner and external assessor for professorial position for many universities in Africa. Ayolabi has successively trained over 100 postgraduate students with over 90 articles in journals and referred conference proceedings locally and internationally

What was your first job experience?

It was in 1978 or thereabout; upon the completion of my modern school education, I was employed as a petrol attendant on a monthly salary of 20 Naira. It was a very exciting job which I had gotten through a cousin of mine and was targeted towards raising funds to further my education at the teacher's college.

What challenges did you have during that period?

The job had periods when we made losses; however, I was happy on the job because as a young man at the time. I had found something to earn me a living. My time on the job came to an end around 1980 when the employment of an individual placed under my supervision became characterized by the incurment of loss at the station. Since I was in charge, the losses incurred were always removed from my salary which had been increased to 30 Naira at the time, in fact, one particular month I was left with only 50 kobo at the end of the deductions. I got tired of the situation and decided to continue my education; my father's friend was the local inspector of education in this period and thus I was immediately given a letter of admission into secondary school where I was placed in year 2 as a result of my previous modern school qualification. Looking back, I realise that the stealing issue was actually a push from God because I would not have left the job had it not occurred. I stayed with my Christian grandmother during the period and learnt how to pray as well as the habit of early rising from her.

What impact did your first job experience have on your personal development?

I learnt hard work from that first job as we always resumed early and closed betw

“The acquisition of a degree is not the important factor; your ability to apply the knowledge gained to the development of the environment is”

What is your advice to individuals whose first jobs are not in their desired career path?

There is always a starting point; you cannot begin today and expect to attain the last rung of the ladder on that same day. Think and plan.



You might have a humble beginning but with constant self-development and commitment to work, you begin to experience growth





EMEKA NDU

Group Vice Chairmain, C&I Leasing Plc

Emeka Ndu is the Group Vice Chairman of C&I Leasing Plc. He was the Chairman of The Equipment Leasing Association of Nigeria, (ELAN) and also served as the Chairman of the Shipping and Marine Services Sub-Committee of the National Consultative Forum set up by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (National Content Division) to promote indigenous content in the Nigerian oil & gas industry. Mr. Ndu was the Vice President, Africa Leasing Association, and a member of Nigeria Economic Summit Group.

He is a speaker and has spoken at the World Leasing Convention, London in 2009, the World Leasing Convention, Amsterdam, Netherlands in 2008, amongst others.

Mr. Ndu holds a degree in Accounting from the University of Nigeria, and is also a Chartered Accountant by the Institute of Chartered Accountant of Nigeria (ICAN). He possesses a wealth of experience which he brings to the business industry

What was your first job experience?

My first job was as an audit assistant with PriceWaterhouse; I had applied for the job during my youth service year and was fortunate

to have been selected after series of interviews. I was not familiar with Lagos as I had hitherto lived and schooled in the east all my life, so I had an accommodation challenge. However, I had an uncle in Lagos at the time that I stayed with for eight months, after which a friend and I pooled funds together to rent an apartment. Another challenge I had was with transportation, as PW had clients all over Lagos.

Some of the factors that I believe gave me the advantage of being selected for the job could include the fact that I had finished with a Second Class Upper Division degree, which was quite fortuitous as I was not really always a serious student. And, I may also have impressed the interviewers with my motivation and attitude to life.

What were the key challenges faced in your role itself?

Every job comes with challenges; so even though PW had decent pre-deployment training, there were times when the task assigned were well over my head and I sometimes did not understand what to do. The expectation was therefore that I learn on the job. Also, the job was associated with very long work hours; I could spend as many as 10-12 hours at the office every day. But that taught me a number of things, one of which was the importance of every person you encounter in achieving your goals, as you cannot operate effectively as an isolated island.

Given a choice to start over, would you change anything about your early career stage?

No, I think it was a perfect job as I learnt a lot from it. The pay was not the greatest but it laid the foundation for succeeding at a lot of things that I did after I left the firm. The mistake a lot of young people make is to assume that immediately they graduate from the university, they become workers. You should really look at the few years after graduation as an extension of your learning process as "The university only equips you to start the 'school of life.' The first few years (5-10) after the completion of university studies should be taken as a period of learning."

What did you gain from that early stage of your career that has helped shape your personal development?

PriceWaterhouse exposed me to both good and bad companies as well as the habits that distinguished these two groups. And sometimes, it's not always the big things that are the indicators. For instance, I noticed over time that there was a correlation between a company's hygiene and its performance. "Once people get careless with basic hygiene (dirty toilets etc), it is very unlikely that they would do business the way they ought to." I found that companies that had clean toilets invariably had well kept books as both endeavors require some dedication and devotion to details.

In the same vein, I learnt that an individual has to take great care of his

personal appearance and strive to appear neat and well groomed at all times, as this is what people see first.

“People form their first impression within minutes of meeting you rather than after a lengthy interview.”



Your attitude to small jobs will make people entrust bigger things to you.



What would you say to individuals who feel their first job is not on their desired career path?

I believe that such individuals should know that regardless of the job that they do, they are in business; the only difference between a business and a job is that the former involves multiple clients while at the latter; your only client is your employer. Therefore, having a perspective that the job is your business would ensure that you prioritize serving your client and would invariably propel you to do the job diligently.

When I was about to start C&I Leasing, I realized that most of those who invested their money in the business were those that I had previously worked with or interacted with in one sphere or the other. At the time, I had no idea that in a few years I might be asking them to invest in a start up business. These persons had formed their personal impressions about me and were impressed enough to entrust their resources into my hands. So, you must realise that **“Every job that you do is an interview,”** so we should always strive to do our utmost best.



ENIOLA FADAYOMI

Chairman, IoD Centre for Corporate Governance

With over 40 years of practice, Eniola Fadayomi is one of Nigeria's most famous commercial lawyers. She started her distinguished career with the Lagos State Ministry of Justice in 1972, and left in 1979. She was a member, Citizenship Committee and also the Executive Secretary, Council on the Prerogative of Mercy. In 1980, she joined First Bank of Nigeria Plc as legal adviser.

She was appointed Lagos State Attorney General & Commissioner for Justice in 1987, and served as member, Body of Benchers, Body for International co-operation in Criminal Prosecution and Enforcement, Council of Legal Education. She was a Senior Partner at Nigeria's oldest law firms of Messrs Irving & Bonnar and Messrs Bentley Edu & Co. between 1990 and 1998. She was also the Principal Partner of Eniola Fadayomi & Co. firm of Solicitors and Advocates between 1998 and 2002

Mrs. Fadayomi was the Senior Partner and Team Leader for the finalisation of the US\$785 Milbon OSO 11 (Condensate) Field Development Project owned by Mobil Producing Unlimited and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 1992. The project was partly financed by equity from the sponsors and debt capital from the World Bank, IFC, US Export/Import Bank, Japan Export/Import Bank and the European Investment Bank.

Mrs. Fadayomi also led the legal team which advised and negotiated the project financing, documentation and designing of the investment vehicle of the OSO-NGL Project, a gas utilisation project, which was sequel to the OSO-Field Development Project Originally estimated at US\$810 million. Mrs Fadayomi has vast experience in negotiation of both local and international commercial contracts and in advising foreign companies investing in Nigeria. She has appeared before numerous courts in Nigeria. Mrs Fadayomi was chairman, Afribank Plc She is the founder-trustee Atlantic Hall Education Trust Council and Millennium Harvest Limited. She is currently the chairman of the Law Reform Committee, and a former president of the Institute of Directors, the chairman and publisher of the Financial Standard Newspapers. As a widely acknowledged Transaction Lawyer, Eniola Fadayomi is a respected expert in Corporate and Commercial Law and Practice.

Chief (Mrs.) Fadayomi is a recipient of a National Merit Award, Member Federal Republic (MFR) of Nigeria.

Please tell us about your first job, and if it was a formal or an informal job.

I got a vacation job in Shell Nigeria during the break around July in the legal department. My boss was Mr Lekan, a legal advisor and head of the legal unit in Shell. It was an interesting job because my boss had an interesting personality, and was very relaxed and always said the experience was great because you meet a lot of people, and you will get to wine and dine. He was also flamboyant. My job was looking at leases of oil pipelines. It was my first interaction with MEND in Niger Delta.

In law school, we had to work six months with a firm of lawyers called Fedegbe & Co. in Western House — it was a very classy, upscale solicitor) very high profile and great inter office relationship. He used to take the staff along with clients. He allowed us to review cases and talk about them, and through this, we were exposed and learnt a lot about practicing law.

My first main job was with the Ministry of Justice, Lagos State at the administrative general office at Obalende. We dealt with administration of estates for those who are deceased. I started with the legislative drafting unit, and we were given formal training on drafting of legal documents. This knowledge stayed with me throughout and it was a very useful exercise. From that department, I moved to DPP, when the Ministry of Justice was on Marina, before it moved to Oba Akran in Ikeja. I was in DPP for many years before going to work in First Bank, which was very different from my military experience. I was in charge of every aspect of law that the company handled, ranging from loans to releasing the estate of a deceased person. My background with the Justice Department was valuable and a huge asset to me.



When you get opportunities, it's not really clear where it's coming from, but if you are consistently focused, others may notice your work ethics and behaviour, and say a lot about you, whether in jest or seriously.



From First Bank, I was appointed to become a commissioner, and went back to some of what I was doing before, however at a higher level, and with a much broader perspective of what was going on. It gave me a broader knowledge of all aspects of law. My career was enjoyable, as it was challenging and interesting.

What were the biggest challenges, especially in the early years?

I constantly had to do research in order to know what's going on around the world and to know what I was talking about and be prepared. Continuing to work on the job was a challenge. When I got married and had kids, it was a challenge, but I got an elderly lady to take care of the kids, and I also kept my lifestyle simple and uncomplicated.

How much value did your first job add in terms of the direction you took in your career?

It was an immeasurable experience from every place that I worked. If you go somewhere and always give excuses and waste time on frivolous things, you wouldn't get much chance to work. I got a lot of experience about working, about the work, and about dealing with human issues. In terms of the impact it had long term, you never really know who's looking at you while you work.

What are the most important factors that people should look out for when looking for a job?

Look at what you are good at; it may not always be what you enjoy. It is an added advantage if it's what you enjoy doing. Also look at your career/work opportunity, although that is a bit more difficult to know. These two factors are very important. Some people are lucky that they get a work that they enjoy and are good at. You also have to look at the environment in which you are working. You don't want to work in an organisation that doesn't have a good reputation because it will rub off on you.

For instance, if you apply for a position in a large and reputable organisation, they will check your employment record, and if they find that you have worked with a disreputable organisation, it could hinder your career growth. You should always have good references, and be ready to give your time for necessary research and preparation when going for interviews.



FEB IDAHOSA

President, Benson Idahosa University

Bishop Faith Emmanuel Benson Idahosa II, popularly known as Bishop FEB, is a prominent man of God, an exceptional professional and a reputable entrepreneur who leads an exemplary life worthy to be reckoned with. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Business Administration from Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA and has a master's degree in Public Health. He is currently a Doctoral candidate for Educational Leadership at the Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

Bishop FEB Idahosa has been in the education field for the past 20 years, and has served as the President of Benson Idahosa University since March 15th 1998. Along with his duties as President of BIU, he is the President of Big Ben's Children Hospital, the Vice President of Faith Mediplex group of hospitals, the Vice President of All Nations for Christ Bible Institute International, as well as the Vice President of the Archbishop Idahosa Foundation and Idahosa World Outreach. He is a member of the Church of God Mission International (CGMI)

Council of Bishops, its Board of Administration, Board of Education, the International Communion of Charismatic Churches, Victory Christian Fellowship Newcastle DE, and the Edo National Association, USA.

In all of these responsibilities, Bishop FEB functions with excellence and godly professionalism.



Several things would bring you before great men; two notable ones are diligence and your gifts.



In his capacity as an entrepreneur and businessman, Bishop FEB heads the Above Only Group, the Pear Systems Development Company, DFI Nigeria, DFI U.S.A., Rejuvenate Media and BIU Property Development Company. These reputable establishments are thriving in their various areas of expertise, providing exquisite services both within and outside the country. He is also a business facilitator and teacher as he teaches success strategies for Nigerian startups. He regularly shares these business tips on his social media handles.

Bishop Idahosa who has authored six books, is the loving husband of Rev. Laurie Whetstone-Idahosa, the father of three sons and an elite minister of God. He remains an epitome of vast knowledge, a man of humility, integrity and a multi-faceted leader.

What was your first job experience?

During my undergraduate studies at Oral Roberts University, USA, I took up my first paid job as I needed another source of income besides the monthly stipend that I received from my father. The job, which was part-time, placed me in the employment of the university's carpool division as a driver; my role involved car maintenance and transportation of the university's guests during the weekends. The next major job that I did was during my master's programme; it was a sales-related job at a gadget store which required me to deal and take care of customers. Both of these jobs helped me understand people and deal with customers while keeping them happy.

How did these early career choices help prepare you for success today?

They helped me build a good work ethic; I understood the importance of work as well as being on time.

“If you do not work, you would not eat”- Holy Bible

Even though I had a guaranteed monthly source of income, I had to work to be able to afford and do the things that I wanted; so these jobs helped me learn that I had to work hard for anything that I wanted to achieve in life. During the duration of my first job, I was at one time assigned to pick up my father, Archbishop Benson Idahosa who was a member of the board of regents at my school; although he smiled when he realized my designation, he later confessed to having cried in his room because as a Nigerian, being a driver appeared demeaning. He, however, supported me as he understood what it was building in me.

What challenges did you face on these jobs?

Both jobs were customer-facing in nature and my assignment was to keep these customers happy; so as is expected for such jobs, I met some very difficult individuals, who did not want to work in the right way. To combat this, I had to learn how to turn around an unhappy situation and find a way to bring these individuals to my side of the table.

What is your advice for young people looking for jobs?

The biggest skill that a young person can learn is how to improve his/her mind. So while seeking a job, spend time learning as much as you can about something you have a passion for.

“Passion is good, but it is very important to have some knowledge about it and how to convert it into income.”

Utilise the internet which is the best university in the world appropriately; you can learn how to do anything from there.

What is your advice for individuals whose first job is not in their desired career path?

While it might not be your career path, give it your best for as long as you are at it. You need to be diligent in whatever you are currently doing, to get to a bigger territory.

“Several things would bring you before great men; two notable ones are diligence and your gifts.”

If you are not utilizing your gifts in the work that you do now, remain diligent and strive for excellence, so that you will be noticed wherever you are. This would allow you to stand before great men and inadvertently place you on your desired career path.



FUNKE ALOMOOLUWA

Executive Director, Chams Plc.

Funke AlomoOluwa is an Executive Director at Chams Plc, a foremost Information Technology Company quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. Her responsibility covers innovation, business development, marketing, and corporate communications.

Funke is a seasoned business executive spanning about two decades in both the financial and ICT sectors, with a proven track record of successfully guiding major expansion efforts, turnarounds, strategic partnerships, and transactions in both public and private sectors. As the Managing Director, ChamsAccess, she was the brain behind the transformation of the company. She successfully put in place an organisational-wide succession plan that ensured the success she recorded continued after her exit.

She was the deputy project manager of the Bank Verification Number (BVN) project initiated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Banker's Committee to implement the customer identification and verification project of banks in Nigeria — the largest KYC project in Africa. On the same project, she was also the Chief Installation Officer responsible for the design and strategies for deploying over 30,000 devices across 5,000 bank branches all over Nigeria, and managing a team of over 100 staff members across the country. This project added tremendous value by sanitizing the financial system and curbing corruption.

She is an alumnus of the IESE Business School, Barcelona Spain and Lagos Business School Executive MBA programme. A fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), Funke holds a degree in Computer Science and Economics (combined honors) from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. She is a member of the Nigeria Computer Society (NCS), a member of the Institute of Directors (IOD) and an associate member of Women in Business (WIMBIZ).

Funke attends several high-profiled seminars, symposia, training workshops, conferences, and courses locally and internationally. She has delivered speeches and has been on a panel at many of these events.

She is multiskilled, a people-person, and has a passion for causes such as support for less privileged and aged people.

What was your first job experience? Please tell us the year, the compensation, how you got the job, the challenges, the high and low moments, as well as any other relevant (unique) experience. Was it your desirable job at first?

My first job was coincidentally at Chams plc, as an NYSC corp member in the year 1998. On resumption, I was deployed to the networking unit, and after a few weeks down the line, I was told I would be moved to the accounts department's cash office to support the cashier in the payment of cash. To say I was devastated was an understatement! I felt it was a demeaning position. I studied Computer Science and Economics, combined honors, and could not just imagine being moved out of my career path. I gave myself two reasons; first, I purposely redeployed from Anambra state because I wanted to pursue a career in computer science., and secondly, I was a core science student, and if I wanted to pursue Accounting, I would have been a commercial student and enjoyed 4 years in the university as against 7 years, courtesy the ASUU strike. As such, I refused to resume at my new duty for 2 weeks.



My advice would be that they keep trusting God, the author and finisher and in due season, He would make all things beautiful in His own time.



I was later humbled by the words of my aunt, Mrs. Bimbo Cole, who I was living with at that time, and was a branch manager, who told me if I had done that at her branch, she would have ensured I rot in the said unit. The following day, I went to the AGM, Finance and Accounts, at the time, and apologized profusely. It was then that I was informed that my suspension letter was just about being written.

I bought Accounting Frankwood, because I needed to understand the basics of debit and credit. Along the line, there was an opportunity to implement an accounting package for the unit, and I was recommend-

ed. By the grace of God, I am a fellow of ICAN, and there are many other feathers to my cap.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stage of your career?

Absolutely nothing. I have learnt to conserve my energy by minimizing the time spent in regret or complaint or in situations I have no control over. Every event is a lesson to me, every person, a teacher.

What would you say to someone whose first job is not on the path of his/her desired career? Any word of encouragement or quotes?

I would quote a verse from my favorite scriptures, which I also make reference to when I am counselling my mentees; it is in the book of Jeremiah 10 vs 23

“Lord, I know that none of us are in charge of our own destiny; none of us have control over our own life.” — Good News Translation.

My advice would be that they keep trusting God, the author and finisher and in due season, He would make all things beautiful in His own time.

What impact did it have on your personal development? How did your first job mold your skills and capabilities, and how did it prepare you for success?

As earlier mentioned, I did not study Accounting in school, but being moved to accounts and finance early in my career made me big on improving myself. Every day after work, you would see me buried in my Frankwood trying to perfect my skills; weekends were not left out as I would always have a book in my hands, trying to gather as much I can. I consciously get materials that aid in the development of my competencies in whatever role I find myself in. I also encourage my team members to make learning and development a lifestyle.



GODDIE ISIBOR

Pro-Chancellor, Benson Idahosa University

Dr Goddie O. Isibor is the Chairman of Council, and Pro-chancellor of Benson Idahosa University. He holds an MSc in Industrial Engineering from Cranfield University, Bedfordshire, UK. He is also a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate in Science & Business Administration from Benson Idahosa University and has a wealth of experience which he gained from his various appointments as Managing Director, BUA Sugar Refinery (2013); Group Chief Executive Officer and Group Managing Director, Nosak Vegetable Oil Refinery; Marketing Director, Honeywell Flour Mills Plc (2000), Sales Director, Raleigh Industries Plc; Head Production Materials Control, Shell Petroleum Development Company, 1978; and Chairman, Anza Micro Finance Bank.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was in Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited following my return from the UK. I worked in the Production Material Control Department. I had been recruited by the company from Cranfield University, Bedford, England, where I studied both Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Engineering at the master's degree level. Back then in Shell, everyone worked hard and was measured by results. We were given a lot of training on the job. I got to work in more than one department, simply because there was work to be done and I worked hard to deliver good results without looking at anyone. After

I had worked with Shell for a couple of years, I moved on to Kaleigh Industries Nigeria Limited, Kano, where I got to handle more job roles. I maintained the attitude of work that I had gotten from Shell for the rest of my career. This is what has helped me to get and do really great jobs all through my career.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

We had to work long hours, but it wasn't so difficult. The most challenging part was getting to the out-station locations. The only means of going there was by boat which usually took about 3 to 4 hours. It was generally a difficult job working in the production department. You had to apply yourself to the job and take it seriously, in order to be taken seriously.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

I wouldn't change anything about the early stages of my career, because it was good training and helped me develop a good character and the right attitude to work. These valuable traits, developed at the early stage of my career have helped me through the course of my career. Even now, I am usually the first to get to work and among the last to leave; this has rubbed off on my subordinates, making them more hardworking.

After I left Shell for Raleigh, I often had to work long hours and when there was no power supply; I would use a torch to carry on with my work. This helped me develop a stamina that I have maintained throughout my life.



The world continuously opens up for you when you have a plan.



If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/ experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success?

Apart from my first job, my work with God has impacted on my career as well as other aspects of my life. At every stage of life, God was always present with me. The opportunities I have had and the types of work I have done have been as a result of this.

Another thing that has impacted my life greatly is the desire to work with God and not do anything that will displease Him. This desire is present in my family, work and social life. It has put in me, the drive to always deliver results that are not just pleasing to man, but also to God.

“If it is pleasing to God, then it is pleasing to anyone.”

What would you say is the most important factor in determining an ideal first job?

The first thing to try to teach young people is how to set goals; decide

what you want your goals to be. In deciding what your goals are, you have to decide what you want and what you want to do in life. Having decided this, you then have to determine how you are going to get there.

“You cannot hit a target that you cannot see.”

If you decide on where you are going to, you will find a way to get there. Having a goal helps you plan your life and stay on track when moving towards it. If it's a job you want, you need to send out as many resumes as possible.

“Think Strategically.”

The second stage is to get effective about getting the job. To get that ideal job, you have to get efficient, think consciously and deliberately look for the right firms, who knows them and also look for who has contact with them. Send resumes to them and develop right interview techniques. Also tailor yourself to the needs of the company. Most importantly, do not get tired as you move towards your goal.

Do not develop the “IyaAlakara Syndrome”, where you just sit in a place and wait for customers to come and buy your goods; make yourself visible, market yourself.

Kindly share your advice for those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path?

Research on your desired career path. Decide on the path, plan how you will achieve your goal, look for companies that you want and plan towards them. In most careers, almost everything is learnable, read books and learn all you can about it.

Never stop asking questions and developing yourself. Decide the critical success factors for becoming the best in your career. Find out how those who are successful in that field did it, because if you do what the successful people did, you will be able to do it as well, or even better.



ID CABASA

Song writer/Producer

Ogunade Olumide popularly known as ID Cabasa was born in Lagos in the mid 70s to a Christian family which hails from Ogun state. The third child in a family of four, Olumide attended St Finbarrs College, Akoka, after which he proceeded to the Lagos State University where he studied for a bachelors degree in Economics before pursuing a master's degree course in Management Science at the University of Lagos.

He worked briefly with Savannah bank Plc before deciding to pursue music full time while studying for his master's degree at UNILAG. He is a director at Coded tunes entertainment; a recording and entertainment company which has produced and nurtured great talents such as Lord of Ajasa, 9ice, Jabless, Reminisce, Olamide, 2phat amongst others in the Nigerian entertainment industry. He has also nurtured music producers such as Cheefo, Pheels and several others.

ID Cabasa has several awards to his name including the Hip-hop world awards, the best producer award 2009, the Future awards best Music producer, NEA best music producer and the NMA best music producer.

Olumide Ogunade who is also the CEO of the creative/brand consulting firm, has worked with several top musicians such as Banky W, Wizkid, Durella, King Wasiu Ayinde, 2face Idibia, Tiwa savage, Faze and Pasu-

ma.

As a brand, he is known for making superstars from people who came from almost nothing. Over the years, his beat has created waves that make people refer to him as "the man with the magic finger." Some of the hits songs he has produced include 'Gongon aso' and 'Totori' which featured Olamide and Wizkid.

ID Cabasa is the creative pastor of Global Impact Church, Lagos and is gentle, down to earth and a very emphatic lover of innovation and good music He is married to the beautiful Sijuade and is blessed with 3 great kids; Kanyinsola, Dolapo and Asher.



Start in bits; you do not have to start big all at once.



His name whenever mentioned in the music arena brings greatness to mind.

What was your first job?

I did my youth service at Savannah bank and was eventually absorbed after a written test which I did not expect to yield positive news as nepotism was prominent in the bank; Igbo were the dominant tribe there, and I was the only Yoruba person selected at the time. I started with the bank in the year 2000 and subsequently worked there for two years with a remuneration of about 40,000 Naira which was a lot of money for a young man at that time.

During this period, most Nigerian banks including Savannah bank were trying to computerize their operations and as a young management trainee working in their Makurdi branch, I was able to distinguish myself; prior to the arrival of those hired to set up the computers, I had helped to connect everything as a result of the knowledge of basic networking I had acquired from my music background, this impressed and prompted my manager at the time to move me from the credit/debit unit and place me as the head of the IT unit. This promotion availed me the opportunity to learn software hacking, which became a side job for me and also helped me realize that the bank's software was extremely penetrable. I reported the penetrability of the software to the Lagos branch and got arrested for a few hours as they needed to make sure that I had not moved some of their money. Upon finding no breaches, I was apologized to and moved to the Abuja branch where I received a two-step promotion.

However, Savannah bank shut down shortly afterwards, and I had to move to Oceanic bank where the nudging to follow my music passion

intensified. I decided to pursue a master's degree in Economics and it was during this period that I started music professionally; I first worked with a studio where I was not paid a dime for the 24 sessions worth 3000 Naira each that I did. The owner felt he was helping me and only began to pay when I decided to leave. In retrospect, I am grateful that I worked in that studio as it happened to be one of the first in Nigeria to use digital mixers; it provided a relevant experience which is still useful for me till date.

Why did it take such time before going you went into music?

While I did not have fears about achieving success with music, I had fears of survival because in those days, music was not as huge an income source as it is today. Also, since I went to the university and finished with a good grade, I was afraid that people would opine that I had wasted my parents' money. These fears eventually served as a catalyst which propelled me forward as I felt I needed to do something to prove them wrong. I started to get more confidence and courage to pursue my passion when those I worked within the studio began to see the extraordinary in what I considered my normal output.

What is your advice to people who do not like their jobs?

It is not bad that they are working there now; I learnt a lot including how to work in the corporate space, systems and structure, perseverance amongst others from all the places that I worked and found myself. So do not just up and leave your job, instead, practice what you intend to utilize in your own business where you are currently, this would open you quickly to your desire.

***"Whatever your hands find to do, do it well."
"Excellence is not in what you do but in who you are."***

Stay on that job and gradually prepare the ground for what you intend to do; once that ground begins to show some prospect, then, you can take a leap.



IHEANYI OKORO

Senior Vice President, Babcock University

Iheanyichukwu Okezie Okoro who was born on October 11, 1953 began his educational career at St Paul's Anglican Primary School, Jos in January 1959 from where he proceeded to the Adventist High School, Ihie in January, 1966 for his secondary education. His secondary school education was temporarily interrupted by the Nigerian Civil War from 1967-1969, thus delaying his completion of same till 1972 when he finished as the best graduating student with a Division One Distinction.

In 1973, he attended the Federal Government College, Ilorin for the Higher School Certificate which he completed in 1974, once again as the best. For his university studies, he studied Medicine at the University of Ibadan as a Federal Scholar; he graduated top of the Internal Medicine class in 1974, after which he proceeded to the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria for his housemanship training. He subsequently carried out his National Service in Rivers State between July, 1980 and June, 1981, after which he returned to Zaria for his Post-graduate training in Surgery. Bearing strikes and the temporary sack by the Buhari/Idiagbon administration, he completed his postgraduate training in May 1987, having passed all levels of examination at the first attempt. He has several professional qualifications including the fellow of the Nigerian Medical College in Surgery (1987), fellow of the West African College of Surgeons (1990), and the fellow of the International

College of Surgeons (2002).

He was appointed Lecturer I/Consultant by the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital in January, 1988. Irked by the inconsistencies in government service, he left ABUTH for private practice in December 1989. He had a short stint at Abia State University Teaching Hospital between October, 1994 and September, 1996. Iheanyi joined the services of Imo State University Owerri in October, 1999 as Senior Lecturer and pioneer coordinator of its School of Medicine. In April, 2005, he went for a short course in Neuroscience at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada



So, for those who get jobs that is not in line with their career path, they should make the best of what they`re doing.



He was promoted to Associate Professor of Surgical Anatomy in 2006; he was subsequently appointed Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in 2009.

In January 2010, he moved to Babcock University as the Provost of the College of Health and Medical Sciences. Later that year, he was elected as the Senior Vice President of Babcock University. Since joining Babcock University, Iheanyi has assisted in the establishment of three medical schools in the country.

He is currently the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academics/Provost, College of Health and Medical Sciences, Babcock University. Iheanyi is widely published in both local and international journals. He is happily married to Professor Clara Okoro, the University Librarian of Babcock University.

What was your first job experience?

I was one of the best graduating students from the University of Ibadan, in 1979. I applied for housemanship in Zaria, and I got it with ease. I went to the teaching hospital to ask what the experience was like. I was told I had the opportunity to do hands-on training, which was a great opportunity. The job in Zaria was quite challenging because it was the only teaching hospital in the north. So all the patients from Benue, Sokoto, Kano, Maiduguri came to Zaria. As a house officer, I did hernia and appendix, which was unusual. I remember one man whose son had an industrial accident, and his ear was cut off. I treated him and took good care of him. I recommended that the boy should be taken to Kaduna for plastic surgery. The man offered me a lot of money to show appreciation, however, I rejected it, to his surprise. And that has been my principle; I never charge anything from my patients, up till my late service. The besetting aspect of the job is the time that goes into it. I would work till about 11 p.m. sometimes, then go home to cook, as I was not married then. While cooking, I would sleep off, then the smoke of the burnt food would wake me up. My first job experience was exciting because that

set the path for me as a surgeon. It gave me the rudiments. At Zaria, we were trained to operate in such a detailed manner.

What was your compensation like?

Well, it's just the normal salary they paid us. I can't remember how much they paid us, however, it was very small. But I was just a contented person, because even when I was serving as a corp member in Port-Harcourt, unlike other corp members who would want a comfortable private hospital, I wasn't interested. I went elsewhere where I was paid only the NYSC allowance of 200 Naira. I dedicated my time to them, and they treated me as a king when I was leaving. So I've always been contented with what I've been getting. When I deal with people and they say "God bless you," that's far more important than anything else. The Bible says, "Make your light so shine, so that people will see you and glorify your father who is in heaven." So when people appreciate you for what you do and thank God for you, that's a lot.

Did you have any challenges?

Since I'm doing what I love to do, I don't think I had any challenge. The people I worked with loved me, so I loved my job. The only challenge was the stress, however, generally, I enjoyed the experience.

If you had the opportunity to start all over, what's one thing you would change?

That's a tough one. Looking back, I don't think there's any regret in what I've been able to do in life. The private practice thing is one long decision I took, and if I had the chance, I wouldn't do it again. I was a very good doctor and academic, but out of annoyance of what the government did to me, I said I would, and open up a clinic. It takes a lion's heart to run a clinic, because people would try to take advantage of you. So one regret I have in life is opening a private clinic. I won't do that again.

What impact has your profession had on your personal development?

It has helped me be where I am today. As an academic doctor, you want to be a professor; that's the highest achievement for an academic doctor. In terms of position, doctors want to be provosts of colleges of medicine. And in terms of administration, I don't want to be a Vice Chancellor. As a Deputy Vice Chancellor, I think I've made my mark, both here and internationally. So all these things I've done in life have helped me to be who I am today, and I'm grateful to God for that. And also, I've been a source of encouragement to young people; I've trained a number of them. Many of my students are professors now, and each time they see me, they give me that respect.

Is there a principle that guides you?

I'm a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian, and that has influenced my worldview and my relationship with my God. I believe that the Lord doeth all

things well. However, one principle I have in life is to leave a place better than I left it. So, if I get to a place, I want to make a mark. The time I'm leaving, there should be an obvious difference between the time I got there, and the time I'm leaving. I believe in thinking out of the box to make things work for those around you.

“In Nigeria of today, it`s not what you read, it`s what is available. When the desirable is not available, the available becomes the desirable.”

What word of encouragement do you have for people whose first job is not in their path of career?

If for some reason, the job isn't what you planned for, but somehow, you just got yourself into it, I would want that person to make the best use of the opportunity. Stop grumbling and mumbling that this is not what I want to do in life. That is what opportunity has given to you; you can create a career out of that, or you keep hoping for the one that will give you job satisfaction, because that is important in whatever one is doing.



JIDE ALLO

Head, Investment Management, Stanbic IBTC Pensions Managers Limited

Jide Allo is a thoroughbred financial expert with over fourteen years' experience in finance and wealth management covering international banking, investment analysis, stockbroking and fund management.

Prior to assuming this role, he was the head of investment for Stanbic IBTC's Asset Management Limited (SIAML) where he was responsible for providing overall leadership and direction for the investment management team. Before that, he also led the team responsible for acquisition of financial institutions mandate within the Business Development Division of SIAML. He also has extensive experience in investment management, research and risk management, having been involved in developing and implementing investment and portfolio risk management strategies for some of the oldest and largest privately and publicly managed funds since 2006. During this period he was also involved in developing and launching various pioneer products such as Stanbic IBTC Money Market Fund, Stanbic IBTC Umbrella Fund, Stanbic IBTC Dollar Fund and SIAML Pension ETF 40.

Jide holds an MBA from Lagos Business School (LBS) Pan-Atlantic University, a bachelor's degree from the University of Ilorin and is an Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA).



One needs to have that ability to continuously do a self-appraisal and give their very best to doing whatever their hands find to do.



Please, tell us about your first job experience.

I started doing part-time jobs when I was in S.S.1 or thereabout. I started by teaching some neighbouring primary school children in the evening. After sitting for WAEC, I worked in a shop as a salesman for about three months. I then moved to becoming a teacher at a school for about a session. It was a new school, and I was part of the founding teachers. They had about three pupils in primary four, and about eight pupils in primary five. The proprietor's daughter was in primary six. I taught the three classes together — as one class. However, I still had to fix the normal eight or nine periods per day for each of the three classes. It was quite energy-sapping. So, I did that for almost one school session before I got admitted into the university.

My first proper job was at Overland Airways immediately after my NYSC. About six of us, young men were employed and trained. The vision of the organisation was to serve as an airline hub, particularly for redundant airports like Ibadan airport, Ilorin airport, Akure airport, and the like across the nation. The business model was to get a small aircraft that could move people around in those locations and connect them to the bigger airports in bigger cities — a gentleman and I were sent to Akure, and we spent about four months there. Chief Olusegun Agagun was the governor of Ondo State at that time.

As an accountant, my focus after university was to do my ICAN exam and become a chartered accountant. When I got to Akure, I thought I would have the opportunity to receive lectures and prepare myself for the exam, but after being there for a while, I discovered that there was no ICAN centre in Akure, and that the town was purely a civil service based community. In fact, our airline operation became a sort of taxi that was used whenever the governor and his entourage wanted to go to Abuja. If the governor was not travelling, then there wasn't any operation. So, I just made up my mind to go back to Lagos and do my ICAN exams.

After I resigned and went back to Lagos, I enrolled for tutorials at an ICAN training centre and started preparing for my exam. Thankfully, I passed the exam. Once the result came out, I started applying for another job, shortly after, I was employed by Investment Banking and Trust Company – currently Stanbic IBTC.

So, the major challenge you faced in your first job was just inactivity?

Yes, that's correct; a very low level of activity. Then, the fact also that

it did not provide me with the opportunity for personal development which was very key to me. I knew that as a graduate of Accounting, the next important hurdle was for me to become a chartered accountant – that was the natural progression, however, that location just didn't afford me the opportunity to be able to move in that direction so, I had to re-navigate.

Could you tell us about the job you got after ICAN?

So, after ICAN, I got employed by Investment Banking and Trust Company. I was in the Foreign Operations Department and was responsible for reconciling all foreign bank accounts, processing letters of credit and bills for collection as well as handling other foreign currency remittances. It was a dream job because banking was one of the leading sectors – most undergraduates were keen on getting such opportunities. However, it came with its own challenges. The first challenge was distance. I was still living with my parents somewhere around Abule Egba, and I had to navigate to V.I. everyday. So, I would typically leave the house around 5 a.m. I also had to work very late because I was new on the job and had a lot of catching up to do. So, on getting back home most of the time, my parents would be waiting in the living room for me because every other person had gone to bed. I would get home around 10:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and be out of the house by 5:00 a.m. the next day. After doing that for about two or three weeks, I just told myself, "This thing is not sustainable. Life cannot be this hard." So, I had a conversation with my eldest brother who worked with Zenith bank at that time. I told him about the difficulty I experienced and how I could not cope with it. It was a very interesting conversation - I can't ever forget. He said, "Well, I hear you. It's true, the challenges are real, but the decision is yours. If you want to drop the job, it's fine, but just know that your name has been removed from the list of dependants in this family. So, if you drop that job, you would have to fend for yourself." This was less than a month after I started; I had not even received my first salary. It was quite instructive. I just had to pick myself up to know that although it was not all that I wanted in a job, it was what I had at that moment, and I had to make the best of it. So, I remained there, and to the glory of God, I have been there for 15 years now. It has been a story of growth, progress on the job, with my family and in diverse areas. Looking back, I'm glad I made the right decision.

Can we talk about the particular skills and capabilities you developed from the job experiences you had?

Looking back to connect the dots, two or three things stand out for me across all these opportunities I have had. Overland helped me to build my self-confidence. As I said, at that time, the governor was our only real client. Imagine a young boy that just graduated and finished NYSC, having the opportunity to relate with such calibre of people. I

had to be able to plan and juggle multiple balls at that time because I was dealing with people who were the high and mighty in society, and who would want to do things at their own convenience. Even as a young boy, I remember that I had to stand with the Chief Security Officer of the governor to say, "Sir, you can't take guns to the tarmac. It's not done. It is a breach of safety procedures. We won't allow that". I had to stand my ground and insist that they had to check in those guns and not take them into the terminal. So, that self-confidence was something I had to nurture from the very beginning of my career.

It also created a sense of responsibility for me. I was in a civil service state where nothing was happening. The natural tendency would have been to use the extra time to just live a wayward life. However, I knew that I was fully responsible for the outcome of my life so I had to immediately take relevant steps to maximise that opportunity by navigating in the right direction.

What would you say to people who are currently engaged in jobs with which they are discouraged and unsatisfied?

I think the reality of the environment we live in is that there is a very high degree of under employment. In fact, there's even a higher degree of unemployment and most of those employed are underemployed. We have graduates doing what school cert holders should be doing. We see people who have 10 years of experience doing what graduate trainees should be doing. But, that is the reality of our environment. Therefore, being in that kind of environment means that one has to maximize whatever opportunity is available and give it the very best. My maxim has been **"whatever your hand finds to do, do it as unto the Lord"**. So, the reward ultimately comes from God, my employer is just a channel and God can use multiple channels. Such mind set will release people from immediate gratification and the focus on pleasing people.

Giving the baker's dozen and going the extra mile should be a guiding principle because it is the midst of those things that you think may not be the best opportunities that best of opportunities would emerge.

My pastor would usually say, **"Inside the little lies the great.** So, even if it is a little thing today and doesn't look like much, it embodies a great thing which you aspire to attain. Your ability to do that which you have with your very best would lead to bigger opportunities - like someone commending you because of your diligence. And, that is how what you greatly desire would come. However, if you keep looking down on today's opportunity – cancelling them out with thoughts like, "It's not my dream job, and it does not fit my skill set or qualification," and do nothing, you would just be destroying your chances of achieving the greatly desired future.



JOAN AGHA

MD/CEO, Joan Consulting

Joan Agha is an author, a motivational speaker, a certified life coach and a certified management consultant. She is the founder and president of the Joan Agha Foundation (JAF) as well as the Joan Agha Life Coaching Academy. She is also MD/CEO of Joan Consulting.

She has co-authored a book titled, *The Spirit of Abundance* with world-class motivational speakers and bestselling authors like Brian Tracy and Jack Canfield.

She is a division one student who has distinguished herself academically; Joan obtained a BSc in Business Administration from the University of Benin in 1979, as well as an MBA from the University of Lagos in 1989.

She has served the nation meritoriously in different renowned institutions such as the Federal Ministry of Education, the Central Bank of Nigeria, Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company Limited (SNEPCO), and Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) where she worked until her retirement in November 2011.

Over the years, Joan Agha has undergone a number of professional, management and leadership trainings, some of which include the Leadership Development Forum for Women Executives held at Ma-

laysia in 2011; the Law of Attraction Retreat held at Glastonbury, UK in 2013; the Professional Development Programme held at the Harvard Extension School in 2019; the 2019 Strategic Leadership and Leadership Communication amongst others. She is a certified life coach trained in 2013 at the Inspired Spirit Coaching Academy, Australia as well as an accredited management trainer from the centre of management development in 2014. She had the courage for change after 17 years in a particular sector. Do you want to know how? Read on.

What was your first job? How did you get the job?

My first job was immediately after my youth service as a teacher at Queens College, Yaba. I had been recruited from the University to the Federal Ministry of Education from where I was deployed to Queens College. As a graduate of Business Administration, I taught Economics and Business studies and enjoyed the experience. My love for children and the youth is probably a part of what propelled me to take the job as opposed to a banking one as my course of study suggested.

What challenges did you encounter?

I did not stay at Queen's College for long. My husband and I lived in Festac town area, and as young graduates, did not have a car; this was a major challenge due to the lengthiness of the commute. To combat the issue, I got a transfer from the Federal Ministry of Education to the Federal Government College, Ijanikin where I continued to teach Economics and Business Studies. My new place of work only required a single bus ride from my house.

What was the high point of your job?

Many of my students kept excelling in their exams and took to sending me their final university grades. A number of these students made first-class grades; one noteworthy experience was at the London airport where one of my students honoured me by prostrating publicly thus reminding me about the reward of teachers.

While I enjoyed teaching these two subjects in these schools, I eventually got tired of the classroom. By this time I had taken a transfer to Federal Government Girl's College, Benin because my husband had been transferred to the town; I sought change and went into the inspectorate arm of the Ministry of Education becoming a Federal Inspector of Education. This new job involved assessing a school's curriculum, environment and students performance while also meeting teachers in order to give them feedback. We sometimes gave the Commissioner of Education feedback as well. The job was very objective as we could not be bribed.



The worst thing a person can do to him or herself is to be in a place where he/she is not happy.



Beside the professional benefits, my job with the Ministry of Education helped me as a young mother to pay attention during the impressionable ages of my children. I was able to, in collaboration with other mothers, pull resources together, which brought about a daycare which is today the Ijanikin staff school. This early career choice generally helped my family a great deal.

Do you think that this first experience had an impact on what you do currently?

Yes, it did. I discovered that one of the purposes of my existence is to impart knowledge in the life of people; at my first job, it was through teaching secondary school students and now through senior management staff.

“We are all placed on this earth for a purpose.”

What principles helped you overcome the challenges/discouragements faced?

One of the greatest discouragements I faced was the inadequate remuneration that teachers received; we were neither well-paid nor well regarded in society. It was particularly frustrating for me because some of my mates who were not necessarily better than me whilst in school but worked with the Central Bank of Nigeria and the like earned more. Therefore, while I enjoyed teaching the children, I had to leave because I needed a better earning. I started to look outside the Ministry of Education and eventually got a job with CBN as Manager (Medical Services).

What would you say to a person who is not on his/her desired career path?

As opined by Sunday Adelaja in his book, *The Secret of Life*, Life is predictable and understanding the laws of life as outlined in the Bible would enable us to predict our future. Therefore, if you have a job that is not in alignment with your career, nothing compels you to stay there. Instead, rebrand yourself, rethink your career path and launch into what you want. Do not limit yourself; personally, when I found that I was no longer happy with my teaching career, I left.

“The worst thing a person can do to themselves- is to be in a place where they are not happy.”

There is no second chance to live; hence a person must make the most

of it in alignment with the creator.

Favourite Quote?

“If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you are right.” — Henry Ford



KOLA AINA

Founder/CEO, Ventures Park

Kola Aina is the founder and CEO of Ventures Platform, a seed stage fund accelerator which through its 16 weeks programme, provides advisory, mentorship, back office support, seed –funding and need based residency to selected start-ups.

He is also the Chairman of Ventures Park (Nigeria Premier co-working and co-living campus), founder of Ventures Platforms Foundation, founder of Emerging Platform Ltd(a multi sector technology provider), and Chairman of Edu Platform Ltd (an EdTech solutions provider) amongst other companies he has either partnered with or invested in.

Kola has a degree in Electrical Engineer and an MBA specialized in Finance. He is married with kids.

What was your first job?

I had always worked; as far back as high school, I interned in my dad's business or sold something. In the university, I had a formal business that involved graphic designing and event management. As an Electrical Engineering student, I worked as a laboratory scientist; it was the most boring job in the world for me. In fact, I disliked every minute of it but it enabled me learn the discipline of showing up every day.

Since my dream was to end up on Wall Street as an investment banker, I decided that a role in corporate finance was the best option for me,

therefore in August 2005, after the completion of my MBA, I took a job as a financial analyst with payment just below \$50,000 which was a lot at the time. It was an interesting opportunity because I was not an accounting student and the only financial knowledge was from the MBA and the business that I did. During the interview for this job, the Chief Financial Officer of the bank gave me a financial statement to interpret into a story; I believe I got the job because instead of trying to buttress my way through, I asked clarifying questions that enabled me to put my thoughts together and give a more informed response.

“Be Inquisitive; Ask Questions.”



People do not want to know you only for your job; they want to know the kind of person you are. It would help you rise in your career.



The high moments on the job were derived from helping the company's stock perform well in the market and the fact that I was responsible for very important decision making. Also, I had a great boss who despite being busy was full of insight. I learnt so much from him. Many of the principles I learnt from him, I apply till date. Financial modelling, which I have utilized throughout my career as an entrepreneur and an investor; I learnt on this job.

“You never want your pay to exceed your experience.”

After a while, I got bored as I realized that monotony which characterizes the finance sector was not for me. I soon found that the true purpose of my life was to build platforms through technology.

Did you have any low moments during that period?

Yes, I had a few, but the most outstanding as I earlier mentioned was the monotony. Also, I was about the only black person in the entire department, so there were times I felt culturally out-of-place and misunderstood; this formed part of the reasons for my exit from the role.

What were your key challenges? How did you overcome them?

As a very good talker, I had been able to convince my interviewers that I would do well on the job, however, it was a very technical job and I did not come into the role with all the knowledge I needed. I knew this in my heart and had to figure out ways to get the job done in an environment that did not accommodate any excuses. At the time, the internet was not the treasure tool that it is today and so I had to identify people who knew the things I did not while also figuring out a way to get these persons to be open with their time. I had to learn fast because it was a high-performance environment and I also had to build a network of

people around myself who I could reach out to when I needed help. Another key lesson I learnt on the job is the importance of being a personable, social person in the corporate environment.

“People do not want to know you only for your job; they want to know the kind of person you are. It would help you rise in your career.”

I realized the importance of building relationships and this has helped me all through my life.

Given the opportunity, would you change anything about the early stage of your career?

Not really, as everything I went through built and set me up for the person I am today. Although, I would have learnt how to write code earlier as it would have been useful for me today because I am actively surrounded by technology. I wish I was more technical on the software side. Hence, I advise young people regardless of their fields to develop the ability to write code as it is a superpower for any professional in today's world.

“Technology and software can be used to enhance any field of endeavour.”

What is your advice for persons whose first jobs are not in their career paths?

It's not the end of the world; there are a lot of people in this bucket, rather see the job as a stepping stone for the next level because there is something to learn from every job. However, you cannot stay in a job you don't feel connected to, especially if you want to be outstanding or successful.

“The only way to be successful is to work in an environment that is aligned with your purpose and strength.”

While I will encourage such an individual to stick to it in order to be financially stable, it is also important that he/she aggressively seeks to understand his/her purpose, and in the interim could volunteer their time to endeavors which align with their purpose and which could be an entry point to opportunities in his/her desired field.

“Be pragmatic and yet strategic.”

What keeps you going? Any favourite quotes?

I believe that when we live and walk in alignment with our purpose, the universe will ultimately conspire in our favour because the world has a system of balance.

“Impossible is nothing. Anything we set our minds to, would happen.”

When you figure out your purpose, find a career in that field as any work you can do for free is the best way to find success.

“Figure out the purpose of your life. Organize all your social and professional activities in alignment with that purpose.”



LUCY NEWMAN

MD/CEO, FITC

Dr Newman's overall goal is to add value to organisations and individuals in pursuit of a fulfilling career, as well as a ministry in counseling and intercession. Her overall objective is to help people and systems to be the best that they are meant to be. She has a personal philosophy — that being in God's plan is the perfect place of optimal performance, and that personal values of equity, humility, integrity, empathy founded on a foundation of godliness, as well as innovation and continued improvement are important for sustained success.

Dr. Newman's background includes development finance, private sector banking, consulting and academia. She has over the years earned the reputation of being a results-focused person with proven success in aligning strategy, structure, people, policies and systems to optimize individual and organisational performance. She has over twenty-nine years of formal industry and consulting work experience.

In May 2009, she became the MD/CEO of FITC from the Business Advisory Performance Improvement Practice of the firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Nigeria. Dr. Newman has a doctorate degree in Business Administration (Leadership and Performance) from the University Of Phoenix, Arizona USA, an MBA [International Business] and a B.Sc. in Business Administration [Financial Management], from the Ahmadu

Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

She is a fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), the 2012-2014 International Director of the Global Board of the International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPI), was the Chairman, FSS2020 Human Capital Development Implementation Committee From May 2009 to December 2011 and has been a member of the Executive Committee of the West African Bankers' Association [WABA] from May 2009 to date. She is an elected member of the Governing Council of The Institute of Directors, Nigeria from 2018 to date.

As a young girl, Dr Newman wanted to practice architecture; at certain period in her life, she worked in a drug company. Today her scope of expertise covers finance, research, training and consulting, she is the MD/CEO of Financial Institutions Training Centre (FITC) and she loves it.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was an informal job. I started working for my father, the Late Mallam Angaya Mshelbwala from my penultimate year in secondary school up until my final year at the university when he passed on. My father was a registered nurse having studied in the UK in the 1960s. Upon his return to Nigeria, he served his state from where he retired in the late 1970s. Afterwards he got into a partnership with his former colleague, Late Alhaji Musa Tumsa who was a pharmacist, and together they established the Savannah Pharmacy, which was later mutually dissolved. He went on to establish the Kwari Drugs & Pharmacy Company Limited, a commercial dispensary, dressing and primary care provider located in the Maiduguri Metropolis.

My role at Kwari Drug & Pharmacy Limited was temporary as I only worked during holidays, three times every week for the same number of hours as my father. On alternate days, I accompanied my mum who was a seamstress to her various private clients and helped her to pick materials, take measurements and make deliveries.

At Kwari Drug & Pharmacy, I had various responsibilities; I was a store supervisor, I balanced the cash books, kept track of expiry date on items in the store, monitored debtors, flagged bills for settlement, reviewed bank statements and monitored renewal of permits and levies as my father was strict on compliance to rules of trade.

At that stage, I was simply exploring life and playing my role as a member of the family. The entire experience was normal as I saw it as a path to self-discovery.

“See every opportunity to do something as an opportunity to learn and contribute.”

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

The most difficult aspect of my first job was keeping the same hours as my father three times a week; especially the part that involved waking up in the morning and leaving the house as early as 7:30am to open the shop while my peers were still sleeping.

My father knew that and ensured my mother allowed me to sleep immediately after the Network News so that I could have my eight hours of sleep.

In hindsight, I think these roles helped condition my perspective to life and natural career paths. Keeping a balance on 'things to do' while also supporting my father and mother, allowed me to focus on the most important things and optimize



Careers are conditioned by learning, experiences, interests, perspectives and 'Aha!' moments.



I understood how money made could get lost; I learnt a lot from my parents as I watched them pray and help others even in the midst of their success.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stage of your career?

I would have grumbled less and done everything more zealously! Maybe I would have done much better in life; maybe not! I am extremely grateful to my parents for giving me such an early foundation. At secondary school level, all my father gave me for the work I did was a stipend for lunch while my mother rewarded me by simply giving me the privilege of making my own clothes. It was only after I got into the university that she began to allow me collect and keep the full income made on small jobs, which I delivered for her. Sometimes, I had so much money during the long holidays from Ramadan sewing that I didn't need pocket money by resumption in September aside from my air fare.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

I think my first job helped condition my skills, perspective to life and eventual career path. I had intended to study Architecture; however, destiny happened as someone at the admissions office of my first choice university committed a blunder with my JAMB form which was not traced until admissions for that faculty closed.

Although the Faculty of Administration which housed my second course choice, Accounting was still open, the department's final list had closed as well. Only Business Administration was pending, and

since it had similar courses with Accounting especially in the first year, I chose Business Admin. with a plan to crossover to Accounting in year my second year. In business administration, I saw the concepts behind what I had been doing in my parents' businesses. Upon the completion of my bachelor's degree, I went further to carry out a master's and even a doctorate in Business Administration.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

Having learnt from personal experience, through my work with my growing children as well as the observation of career blinders in employees of some of our client organizations, I realized the most important factor to consider in determining one's ideal first job is one's ability to do that job for free. The objective must be to learn important skills and not money generation.

“One's propensity to make a living is directly proportional to the value that one adds to society.”

These are invaluable life skills for sustained personal leadership, success and happiness that must not be sacrificed on the platter of searching for 'happening jobs' with cool perks as first jobs.

Kindly advise those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path.

It is wonderful if one has clarity of where one's career is headed from one's first job. Otherwise, for optimal performance in later career,

“One's first job needs not be in an area of one's aspired career, because careers actually emerge and get refined over time.”

In fact, as a performance improvement consultant, I actually recommend that an individual gets a broad clarity of where his/her career is likely headed while keeping an open mind and identifying opportunities for learning related perspectives and skills. It is however desirable that they avoid destructive career derailment.

Note that fresh perspectives which create excellence and competitive edge usually come from areas other than one's career.



MARTIN ABRAHAM

Associate Director, Group Talent Development at IHS Tower

Martin Abraham is an Associate Director, Group Talent Development at IHS Towers, a company specialized in building towers and managing sites for mobile network operators.

He has a professional career that spans over 15 years. He was the Managing Partner and Principal Training/Coach at MOHSPIRE, he has worked with law firms such as Olufon & Co, Ukpong & Omotoso and the much esteemed Babalakin & Co. He has also worked with Oceanic Bank in the learning and development department.

A certified NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) practitioner, he delivers lectures, teachings and trainings in personal development, spiritual and professional growth; approaching the area of internal processing and directing from a unique blend of personal experiences and well researched training and teaching from wisdom of the ages.

Mr. Abraham is an ardent researcher who has facilitated various training programmes amongst which are: result oriented thinking with NLP, team building, communications skill enhancement, front desk skills, customer service excellence & customer management, presentation skills, train the trainer, conflict resolution, anger management, intrapreneurial skills training, persuasion, influence & negotiations, master mind, time

management & meeting effectiveness, problem solving, goal setting, strategic thinking and mapping e.t.c

Mr. Abraham holds a degree in Law from the Federal University of Ilorin and also a bachelor at Law degree from the Council of Legal Studies, Abuja.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was in 2004 during my National Youth Service when I worked actively as a lawyer with Babalakin & Co. I spent a lot of time in the Court of Appeal as well as the Federal High Court dealing with mainly corporate and civil cases. It was a cordial, helpful and empowering experience which exposed me to the law and gave me a broad perspective of the legal environment. Although I was a corper at the time, I was not treated as such. Instead, I was regarded as a lawyer and was assigned cases to deal with. The job was better than most similar roles as I was paid about 20,000 Naira besides the Federal Government stipend allocated to corporers. I have no bad memories of the experience as I worked with people who were interested in helping others grow.



Who we are is not defined by what we do, what we do stems from who we are.



How has the experience contributed to your personal development?

I imbibed a lot during the period; I learnt communication, the implication of language, the utilization of language as a professional tool, people management, the importance of feedback and reports as well as customer relations.

“You have to study hard to show yourself approved”

It taught me the “flatness” of the professional personality; the owner of the firm, Wale Babalakin though already a prominent man at the time, would never allow another lawyer regardless of their age to carry out any domestic activities for him. This particular experience helped shape the flat mentality I have which ascribes that irrespective of the position a person holds in an organization, all professionals are on the same level.

What challenges did you have on the job?

I did not have many professional struggles. The only noteworthy challenge was in the fact that I was not very good with the computer at the time, this made typing very difficult and I had to spend a lot of time getting my documentation together.

Also, the job did not allow for downtime as I had a lot of responsibilities,

however, this forced me to grow quick.

Given the opportunity, is there anything you would like to change about the start of your career?

Yes. I had more time when I was younger and feel that I should have done more certification courses such as CIPD and CIPM. I should have delved into other disciplines and invested more of the money I made during the period in developing myself professionally.

What is your advice for individuals whose first jobs are not in their career path?

First and foremost, I would not encourage anyone to stay on one path. Also, do not be concerned about the path you are walking rather pay more attention to the one who is walking the path. The challenge is not in finding a job that taps directly into your skills and qualifications; it is in discovering who you are. For instance, it is not about studying medicine, it is about the person practicing the profession. Know clearly that *“who we are is not defined by what we do, what we do stems from who we are.”*

“We are not human doings; we are human beings”

Quote

“Do not rejoice for having found a path; rejoice because you have found the soul that walks the path” –Kahlil Gibran (Self Knowledge)



MAVI ISIBOR

Executive Vice Chairman,
Poise Nigeria Limited

Mavi Sokia Isibor is the founder and current Vice Chairman of Poise Nigeria Limited, the first personality and image consultancy in Nigeria and Author of Nigeria's first and only etiquette handbook, *The Art of Refinement*.

In 18 years, she has grown the organization into a group of four subsidiaries: Poise Business Image Consultancy, Poise School of Communication, Poise Graduate Finishing Academy and Ekobits (ICT Academy). With over 30 years of experience in the corporate world, she is recognised in international circles as an authority in the field of Etiquettes, Personality Development, Corporate Image and Branding, Success Strategies, Ethics, and Elocution and Public Speaking. Her passion to enhancing the image of business executives has seen her spend the last seventeen years equipping and grooming business executives with vital skills necessary in today's globalized and highly multicultural business environment.

She is also dedicated to proffering expert and unique strategies in projecting businesses and ideas plus positioning images of corporate establishments. As an active propagator of the values of etiquette and ethics, she speaks regularly at international Business Leaders Forum. She spoke at the Howard University African Business Conference in Washington, contributed at the United Nations Global Compact Leaders' Summit

(CEO) Study in the USA and she was two-time Legacy & Legacy's guest speaker at the Festival of Ideas in Accra, Ghana, and two-time speaker at the IOD Women Directors' Forum. Most recently, here in her country, she has collaborated with several professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN); The Chartered Insurers Institute of Nigeria CIIN; The Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) on the first ever African Female Professional Breakfast Meeting in the World Conference of Banking Institutes 2017; Institute of Directors Nigeria and a host of other professional and business entities.

Please tell us about your first job, and if it was a formal or an informal job.

My first job was immediately after secondary school. I got a job at UTC (it was a departmental store) as a sales girl. My parents couldn't afford to pay for me to take my education further, so I had to do some work to earn an income. I worked with UTC for a year as a sales girl, but my salary there still wasn't enough to pay my school fees and because my mates were already in the university, I decided to go to Benin for a better job. I worked at the Nigerian Observer as a cub reporter for a year. I saved every dime I made in the two years that I worked for both UTC and the Nigerian Observer. This was easy because, I was living with my parents in Lagos and later with my sister in Benin at that time. When I had earned enough money, I decided I had wasted enough time, and got admission into a university in the UK. I used all my savings to pay; at that time, school fees weren't expensive. I got my passport and ticket. A ticket to the UK cost 3,000 Naira, which was a lot of money then. At that time also, we didn't need a visa to travel, because both Nigeria and the UK were members of the Commonwealth. I got to the UK and started schooling, but I needed money for my upkeep and to survive. I had to work two jobs. I didn't have any support coming from anyone, rather, I had to send money home to Nigeria from my meagre earnings.

I got a job at a breakfast restaurant. First thing in the morning, I would go to the restaurant to serve breakfast to people who were going to work early in the morning and finish at about 9:00am. From there, I would go to school and afterschool; I would go to work at the theatre where they had live shows. They had musicals and plays, but mainly musicals. I sold snacks and drinks moving up and down the rows. During the summer break, I worked three jobs. I did not know what it meant to holiday or to have a vacation. I worked at the breakfast restaurant in the morning and later at the theatre for the afternoon and evening shifts. There were days when I would get back home very tired. I'd be so tired that I'd eat a meal of maybe eba or something, and just fall asleep on the spot without washing my hands. It was a very hectic time in my life and I maintained this routine for years.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

Selling, meeting people and getting them to buy was the most difficult aspect of my first job. I had been brought up by very strict parents, so this made me reluctant and reserved. One mantra in my home was never talk to strangers. Although I was very stubborn and brash, I didn't have the social graces to meet or approach people; so suddenly being in the face of people, selling to them and getting them to be willing to part with their money was a huge step away from the teachings I had received.

It took a lot of strength, and it literally broke me and remoulded me. It chipped away every day all the values I knew and had been taught by my parents, and that wasn't easy because they were values I had held on to all my life. It was like fighting a losing battle. It got worse when I started working for the newspaper because I had to go look for news, and many times I was put in the governor's entourage. I had to get used to sticking my sheet of paper in people's face because a recorder was a luxury we couldn't afford then. This helped me to improve on my writing skills. I had never been a good writer, but that made me realise that writing was important. I met some great people during my stint as a cub reporter. It was quite exposing for a sheltered young girl.

Another difficult aspect for me was learning to deal with men. I had to learn to manage them without bruising their egos. I learnt to say "no" in a nice manner, meaning the words, with all seriousness and firmness. Everything that my upbringing had imparted in me just went against the grain of everything I was required to do in my job.



They were life lessons that I had to learn, tough experiences, but without them, I don't think I'd be where I am today



As a sales girl, I remember crying many times from frustration, because it felt like that was all men wanted my body. They could decide to buy from just one person, so they could proposition you. When I was a cub reporter, they would specifically call and say that there was a job that they would only give it to me. This made performing my job very difficult, if I tried to do my job, people would take advantage and if I stayed back, I don't get any news to the ire of my editor.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

If I had to, I would try and go to school earlier. Not having the opportunity to attend university at the same time with my mates toughened me. Although, I don't see the difference between where they are now

and where I am, and I don't know if it was good or bad, but at that time, it was a very bitter pill to swallow. It negatively affected my psyche at that age. It greatly affected my self-esteem because I felt deprived and lacking in something important. This made me more determined to excel and succeed and a lot more competitive to be the best at whatever I do. I had the best marketing paper in the whole of my school in the U.K. I don't know what benefit that was to me, but it sure feels like an expression of a form of low-esteem. People thought I was a goal getter, but I knew deep down that was not the case. My drive for success was born out of the fact that I wanted to prove to the world and myself that I could still catch-up despite the delay.

I would change that, but I wouldn't change the experience because it helped to remould me and remove the wool from my eyes. It helped me to unlearn some of the things that were not profitable to me at the time. For instance, I had to unlearn the "do not talk to strangers" talk fast because my job required me to constantly speak to strangers. It also taught me emotional intelligence because very early in life, I could manage situations and still come out unscathed. I would definitely change the way I felt about being short changed by my parents. I used to blame my parents and was very angry with them for having children they couldn't cater for, but I later got over the anger, and realised that it was his (my father) level and ability to achieve.

As a result, I was determined never to get back to that level ever again. You could say I had four first starts from UTC, to Nigerian Observer, to waiting tables in the U.K and finally, the job in the theatre. My first real job after graduating and completing my NYSC programme was at Bayero University, Kano in 1981 as an Administrative Officer. It was in the North. I was exposed to diverse people, religions, ideologies and perspectives to life, which broadened my mind, made me culturally intelligent, and prepared me to work with just about anybody. I also sold ice block, cakes, clothes, and some other things to boost my income. I was able to handle difficult situations because of my past experiences with difficult people of varying cultures, traditions, and thinking.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success?

My very first job as a sales girl strengthened me and my resolve to succeed. It made me realise the different levels of work. My first jobs were a launching pad to bridge the gap between the life I was born into and the life that I really wanted and desired for myself. My first official job was already taking me to the life I wanted, while the others were a launching pad. They were life lessons that I had to learn, tough experiences, but without them, I don't think I'd be where I am today. My launch pad jobs (which is how I will describe my very first jobs), taught me not to take no

for an answer, not to see failure as a place to stagnate and moan and whine about.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

“Is there anything like an ideal first job? I don’t think an ideal first job is real. If someone says that they have found an ideal first job, I would say to that person that they haven’t started life.”

An ideal first job for me is a “cushy job”, it gives you soft landing and doesn’t prepare you for life. When you go from ideal to ideal, a time comes when you buckle under pressure and fall due to unyielding challenges of life. Most people that have had an ideal first job might have a stellar track record, but when they are faced with situations where they need to be strong, they may not be equipped to cope because they were not equipped for the hardballs that life throws their way at certain levels.

Kindly share your advice for those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path.

Basically, when looking for a first job, look for a job that will build character and stamina to withstand the hardballs of life because they will definitely come. They come in diverse forms and vary from person to person, so you have to be prepared. There is always something to learn. When you stay in a field that is unrelated to your desired career path, it may just turn out to be where God had for you in the first place. There are people who have been in a place by default, and they found out that the role had helped them. Take me for instance, I believe my early experiences have helped me, as evident in the selling and networking that I do easily now. The truth of the matter is that if I had gone straight to my first official job that was in the university, I don’t think I would have learnt these skills at all, and I would have just followed the routine life while struggling to learn these lessons. Every experience you gather from what you are doing now, related or unrelated, will become useful to you later in life, so don’t despise where you are right now.

“Do your job very well wherever you are right now, regardless of where you think you should be. Don’t rest on your laurels; have the insatiable itch to improve yourself.”

Do what you are doing very well while you are looking for your ideal job.



NKEM OKOCHA

Founder, Mamamoni

My name is Nkem Okocha, I'm the founder of Mamamoni, and Mamamoni is a fintech social enterprise that empowers women in rural and urban slum communities. We provide free vocational and financial literacy skill for low-income female entrepreneurs in rural communities and urban slum communities in Nigeria. And also, through our fintech platform, we provide micro loans, for these women to either start their businesses or push the businesses that they already have, so basically, I would say I'm a social entrepreneur that creates sustainable economic opportunities for poor women in Nigeria, and our aim of doing this is to end poverty. Because, as it has been said, Nigeria has the highest population of poor people and if you look at the percentage of those people in Nigeria, women have the higher percentage.

There are really no structures to help these women, so we are trying our best in the little way we can to help these women. Mamamoni began in 2013, and we've been able to assist over 6,300 women. There have been free trainings for women to start their businesses, and we also provide loans for them to boost these businesses. However, we discovered that some women don't have a flair for business, so in 2017, we started a liquid soap factory that employs only low-income women. We currently have 20 women in employment.

We've received several awards, as a result of what we are doing for

women. I'm a Tony Elumelu Foundation pioneer Alumna, winning a grant from the Tony Elumelu Foundation in 2015; I'm an outstanding LEAP Africa Social Innovator for 2016; I'm also a Mandela Washington Fellow; I also won the most impactful Tony Elumelu Entrepreneur award in 2017 from the Tony Elumelu Foundation. I've won other awards and recognition from the Office of the Presidency and other organisations for our work with women.

What was your very first job?

My very first job was with Equity Bank and I began in 2014. I was a note counter in the bulk room. I then became a customer intimacy officer in Intercontinental Bank for two years, before becoming a customer data processing officer. Between these roles, I marketed the bank products.

The job shaped me, because it helped me put systems in place when I started Mamamoni. The policies and trainings of the bank system helped me build discipline and a culture of integrity. It also afforded me with the skills of networking, and I developed crucial relationships from my days in the bank.

Did you encounter challenges at that first job?

I always craved personal development which the banking job didn't give me an opportunity for. There were trainings and seminars I couldn't attend because I was at the bank from Monday to Saturday. Hence, I spent my leave periods and public holidays on trainings.



Discipline, Integrity and Networking are essential skills for success.



If you had an opportunity to start all over again, what would you change about that early stage of your job?

I believe that everything that happened to me was orchestrated by God to shape me for what I am doing now, and will do later. I wouldn't say I have anything I'd like to change. Well, maybe I'd like to change the Saturday banking which deprived me of building relationships, and rest.

What would you say to people who feel sad about their current job, which is probably their first opportunity?

I'd say they should have an open mind. When my bank job took all of my time, I was sad, I didn't understand how it was shaping me. I'd say they should learn, and look for one thing that gives them joy.

What's your favourite quote?

"Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve,"
— Napoleon Hill.



NONYE CALLY-BECHI

Chief Operating Officer, Poise Nigeria Limited

Nonye Cally-Bechi holds a degree in Performing Arts from the University of Ilorin and a master's degree from the University of Ibadan. She is a qualified image consultant and a speech coach. She has a major intellectual interest in Personality Development and Public Speaking. She has garnered a rich reserve of knowledge from managing people and has featured as facilitator and coach to many prestigious organisations, including the public and private sectors; and high net worth individuals.

Her training competencies span across several interests in Personality Development, Etiquette, and Ethics, Corporate Image, Elocution, Public Speaking, Business Presentations, and Modern Manners. She is ardent and an advocate for best practices.

She has also participated in a number of Leadership and Management courses, member Nigerian Institute of Training & Development (MITD); has a deep interest in people skills and human resources management.

She has, since January, 2012, been the Chief Operating Officer of Poise Nigeria Limited, and since January, 2018, been the General Manager and Senior Consultant of the organisation.

Please tell us how you got your first job and if it was a formal or an informal job?

My very first job was informal; I was fully engaged in my mother's business of buying and selling in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria. She travelled to the rural areas of the state to buy grains for storage. It is a business that keeps you on your toes. I also had to do some other supplies for her. Some of her customers expected us to deliver to them as early as 6 o'clock every morning. I did this when I was barely 12 years old, and somehow I got a stipend from what I did.

My first formal job was in the Tourism Bureau of Jigawa state during my NYSC, and as a corps member, we had little to do in the office. So I decided to take up a part-time teaching job in a secondary school, just to avoid being idle. The job kept me busy and also made me read more. However, my first formal job post-NYSC was a learning ground. The company is called Education Resource International. I got this job through a TV station I was supposed to work for. We were sent there for one-month in Pronunciation and Diction. After the training, I was expecting to work in the Lagos office of the TV station, but was asked to go to Ibadan. Because I just concluded my master's degree from the University of Ibadan, I declined the offer.

Eventually, the company that trained us in elocution offered me a job as a teacher. The job requires you to go to different primary and secondary schools to teach elocution/pronunciation. Teaching primary and secondary pupils was a tough job, but I enjoyed it while it lasted.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

I'm not sure I learnt anything from my first formal job during the NYSC, but the informal job with my mother taught me some basic lessons about business. The biggest lesson I learnt from that experience was tenacity and commitment, to be committed to what you do; no matter how small. My mother made me understand this clearly from the way she handled me, that "punctuality is the soul of business;" this has helped me till today. My other first job as a teacher even to kindergartens, (pre-schoolers) was very challenging. Handling and managing that age was tough, it was even tougher with the secondary school students. That experience has helped me even in what I do today as a trainer. The only challenge with this particular job was that you were not allowed to think for yourself, you don't even prepare your lesson notes. The lesson note is prepared by someone else and given to you to deliver in class. There was no room to explore and be creative.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

Given the choice to start over again? I would seize every opportuni-

ty to develop myself in the course of the job. Though, naturally, I am a hard-working person; I would not have allowed opportunities to pass me by; I would have gone for an employability course to understand how things are done in the workplace. Understand the work and environment more and invest in personal development no matter how little.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

My first job with the Education Resource International lasted for about a year, I had to leave the job because I felt it wasn't what I wanted. I started something of my own before I eventually got the job with Poise Nigeria. My job at Poise Nigeria moulded me and impacted greatly on my personality, skills, and capabilities. It is a huge learning ground; it also gave me the opportunity to discover myself more.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

I strongly believe that there are no small jobs, though the organisation may be small. Consequently, it is not how big or how small the organization is. It is the understanding of what you want. Therefore, commitment and willingness to learn should be a major factor because most times the very big companies might not offer you the opportunity to be as productive as you want. Be open as much as you can to learning and acquiring new skills, also commitment should be your watchword. Even if it's not what you want, the knowledge gained might be very useful in your future endeavours.



Knowledge gained from whatsoever we do can never be a waste, enjoy the job while it lasts.



Kindly share your advice to those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path?

Maybe you are there for a reason because nothing happens by accident. We have heard stories of people who after several years of work had gone back to build careers and even organisations from the experiences of their first jobs. Also note that our first job, whether formal or informal shapes us and sometimes put us in a career path. Never take it for granted, so you do not look back someday with regret.



OBAFUNKE ALADE-ADEYEFA

Board Member, Union Bank

Obafunke Alade-Adeyefa joined the Board of Union Bank in April, 2017 as an Independent Non-Executive Director. She graduated with a First Class honours degree in Economics from the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife in July 1981.

Her professional journey started in July 1987 when she took on her first post-graduation job as an audit trainee with Peat, Marwick & Co. Having won the first prize at both the Foundation and Professional I examinations of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), she obtained her certification as a Chartered Accountant and an associate member of ICAN in May 1985, following which she was retained as an Audit Senior at the same firm. She started her 10-year banking career in May 1986, when she accepted a position in the Corporate Finance department of First City Merchant Bank; less than two months later, she was transferred to the treasury department of that bank where she developed her treasury management skills over the course of the ensuing four years.

In April 1990, she was appointed the pioneer treasurer of Marina International Bank (Merchant Bankers), a position she held until December 1993. Afterwards, she moved into the position of Group Head, Corporate Banking/Capital Markets of the bank in January 1994 and was in this po-

sition until April 1996 when she quit banking.

In June 1996, Mrs Alade-Adeyefa moved into the oil and gas sector when she accepted a job with Texaco Overseas (Nigeria) Petroleum Co. Unltd, as the head of its treasury unit. In January 2002, following a merger with Chevron Nigeria, she became the treasury manager for ChevronTexaco Nigeria Limited. By December 2004, she was assigned the role of the Joint Venture Finance Manager after which she became the MD/CEO of Chevron Nigeria Closed Pension Fund Administrator Limited in June 2008.

Mrs Funke is on the roll call of the International Who's Who of Professionals and sits on the advisory board of Poise Graduate Finishing Academy Nigeria. She loves music of varying genre and looks forward to doing a lot more writing at her retirement.

Please tell us about your first job?

I had an aching curiosity about what it felt like to work in a formal setting due to my observation of my late father's endless years of professional life and my sister's seemingly glamorous job as a researcher in a Federal Research Institute. I finally got satisfied when I landed my first job ever at the Nigerian Tobacco Company (NTC), then in Ibadan. It was a vacation job which I had obtained through my father during the summer following my second year at the university. I was posted to the market research unit of the company. I was motivated, full of energy and extremely enthusiastic; in hindsight, I realize I might have across as an overachiever as the job was only a holiday filler. Given that I rode with my father in the mornings, I was usually in the office before almost everyone else. The work itself was fun for me because it played to my interest and strength; it involved sorting research questionnaires and transcribing the data into a usable form for further analysis by the research staff. It required significant initiative as some of the responses demanded interpretation and context. The job demanded a lot of time and effort.

Even though there were several affirming comments and commendations from the various permanent staff and my supervisor throughout the period, it was not until the end of my stint that I realized that they had found me quite unusual from their regular vacation employees; I had noticed that the others got sent on menial errands far more than I did and this taught me a huge life lesson.

"Those who can, do; those who can't, get left behind."

"You will be addressed or treated the way you present yourself. You will be taken seriously if you come across as serious. You will be suitably and adequately challenged if you step out and step up."

I learnt that people noticed both big and small things. At the end of my two months with them, the team insisted on having a little send-off event

primarily for me, also the manager in charge of the department showed up to visit me in school while in town because according to him, he had never met anyone like me and could never forget me.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

The greatest benefit from that experience was how much I was able to learn in such a short period. I gained new knowledge, acquired new skills, got an insight into the workings of a well-run company, learnt a lot about myself and my motivations. I also picked up capabilities that would feed into my research a year and a half later. Most significantly, it laid a pattern of behaviour for me that would evolve and accompany me not just in my subsequent professional endeavours but in my private life as well.

“Excellence has its reward.”



The foundations of a good life are laid by incubating the right attitudes, habits and behaviours during those formative years.



Right out of my NYSC period, a year during which I had the opportunity of working in the Economic Planning Ministry of the Bauchi State government and during which I picked up additional analytical skills, I took up an Audit Trainee position with Peat Marwick & Co, a professional accounting and audit firm. Before this, I had never harboured any conscious intention of pursuing an accounting career; however, my strong graduating grades propelled the firm to pursue and recruit me.

“Good grades will open doors, it, however, does not necessarily get you to the top, it is merely a valuable building block in the structure of your career.”

I saw the job as an opportunity and with a mindset driven towards excellence in whatever niche I found myself, I soon embraced the pursuit. It was extremely rigorous because it required working full time during the week, and attending lectures through the weekend in preparation for the professional accountancy examinations. This was 33 years ago and I believe that even though it was low paying, it was the most beneficial and impactful job I ever held. The training was second to none; the environment was professional and devoid of rancor and rivalry.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

I have consistently preached the model of my career background to

those just starting. Having the kind of background that I had, prepares you for a life long journey where challenges rarely faze you. It enables you to build phenomenal capacity and engenders the right attitudes. The ideal first job is one where the structure is in place for self-development, self-motivation and self-discipline; it is one that presents daily opportunities for constant learning and the stretching of the individual's limits.

This season of life is meant to be a learning experience geared towards shaping and developing the individual's versatility and core values, without the distraction of burning concerns about earnings. A high-quality beginning provides the springboard into much higher income brackets further down one's career path

Kindly share advice to those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path?

In a career, there will always come a time when you might have to do something outside of your preference.

“Do not take your eyes off the ball, don't lower your standards, stay on top of your game and be determined to shine where you are, while you wait for what you want. Do not ever give less than your best”

Do your best where you are, someone will notice. At some point in my career, my interest in accounting began to wane and shift to consultancy-type work, I, however, stayed the course and remained diligent. In no time, other doors began to open up.

Finally, the most important thing is to never forget or underestimate the God-factor. The steps of the righteous are ordered by the Lord. I can boldly say that my steps from those early, humble beginnings were ordered by God and I have learnt to stay attentive to His leading.



OLABODE OPADOKUN

MD/CEO, FBN General Insurance Limited

Bode is a consummate financial services professional with over 25 years of experience spanning underwriting, risk assessment, operations and marketing in the insurance sector.

Prior to joining FBN General Insurance Limited, he was the Managing Director/CEO of Nigeria Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC). Within his first year of stewardship there, his astute business acumen helped the Company successfully overturn its loss position. Since he joined the Group in 2016, he has continually improved on the company's performance to the satisfaction of all stakeholders

Bode holds a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State and is an Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute (ACII), UK. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Lagos Business School (LBS), and also a fellow and a member of the Governing Council of the Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria (CIIN).

What year was it and what was the competition like in your first job?

I started my career as a young graduate in 1991. Fortunately, in my third month of resumption, I was professionally qualified as a Chartered Insurance Practitioner – and that was around the age of 22/23. What the job entailed then was 'underwriting'; that is, risk Assessment – when two risks

are presented, you serve as an underwriter. I called myself an underwriting trainee: I was just fresh from school and was learning the rudiments. Yes, one has the academic requirements and professional qualification, but it's a bit different from the practical side. I was privileged to work with the late Tunji Ogunkanmi at that time. He had a very good work environment and also, the level of training was one of the things that made us different. Beyond the technical side of learning, a lot of things that relate to Customer Service as well as Human Relations provided a foundation and helped people like us gather the stunt to get to the peak of our career.

How did you get your first job?

Interestingly, I got this job on the street of Marina. How do I mean? When I was in school, I did my Internship Programme of three months with Royal Exchange Assurance and that was where Tunji Ogunkanmi was working then. There and then, I started my professional exam from my early days in school and qualified within three months after graduation. While working with Tunji Ogunkanmi, he facilitated extra lessons for those sitting professional examinations at no cost. He noticed my keen interest which brought us closer. Coincidentally, after I left school, I met him at Marina and he asked what I was doing. I told him that I had just finished school and that I planned to get a job soon. He asked me to see him in his office, that was about two days after. On getting to his office, he told me about his idea of starting up an insurance company and the strategy he was to employ, as well as the prospect of me joining the team. I told him I was interested and he requested my CV. I brought everything out immediately.

He was surprised at this and I told him I was prepared and it was my duty to hunt jobs. Since he mentioned an appointment, my initiative and instinct was to guess the probable discussion of a job. I gave the CV to him on a Wednesday and he requested to see me on Friday – I got my letter of appointment on that Friday. I was quite lucky to have got that kind of job at that time, because it was one of the highest paying jobs which also had a very good work environment. I worked there for 10 years.

During your experience in your first job, were there challenges; high points and low points?

I'll count myself lucky; there wasn't really any low point for me at that time. During the June 12 crisis, when people could not move in Lagos for days, some of us sneaked out and found our way to the office because we felt incomplete after spending 2-3 days sitting at home. Then, the Managing Director came one day and found half the staff in the office; and was wondering how they would manage to find their way home. A week after resumption, they decided to increase the salary of the entire staff. The board approved this on the level of commitment the people had. So, what was driving us then was the objective: we wanted to make

a change, we wanted to be part of the group of people who made the change; we wanted to be part of the changing tools and not just watch change happen. So, it was always a high moment.

“ Don't look at yourself from the point of financial gain. Take it that your first job is still part of the schooling. The only difference now is; you are being paid for being trained. ”

If you were given a chance to start all over again, especially in your early days of your career, would you have changed anything?

No. I think I see myself as lucky and privileged to have been where I am today. If there is anything I wish to change, maybe my age shouldn't count again; I should still be as young as I was before. Because sometimes, when my children see me, they say “Daddy, you're becoming an old man” and I'll say “You guys are not serious”. The profession I practice; I love it so much that today, my daughter is also an Insurance Practitioner and has a master's in Insurance Risk Management. She was also able to achieve something good which I'm always proud of – and that is getting professionally qualified at the age of 21. She says she wants to do better than I, and I'm so proud of her. She practises Insurance presently in Nigeria, and she is still doing some other courses too.

How did your first job prepare you for the success of your career?

The trainings I got have really helped, and I'll also make reference to self development. It was very easy to understand what I want for myself and also, to identify my areas of strengths and weaknesses. One of the things I set out for when I started, even before my first job, was experience and relevance. I believed I needed to gather experience, I needed to ask questions, I needed to learn from those that had been on it. I also gave myself a target that by a certain age, I wanted to be the CEO of an institution. Even though I didn't achieve that, it took close to five years downtime before I could achieve it. But it was a journey I had planned and I always review everything at the end of each year. I set goals for myself every three years and take time to review whether I am still on track. So, it also helped at that early stage, as well as in doing some things. Then also, I exposed myself to training, readings, etc. I remembered when I was a student in Poise, I was there to be trained on Elocution and Public Speaking. It was not that I was sponsored by my company; I sponsored myself because I saw it as a necessity to achieve my goal. I got the job in Abuja after three years of graduating from Poise. So, preparing yourself for the future is what I'd advise other youths out there. It's like the Boys' Scout Motto: “Be Prepared”. Opportunities may strike at any time and you can only see it if only you are well prepared for it.

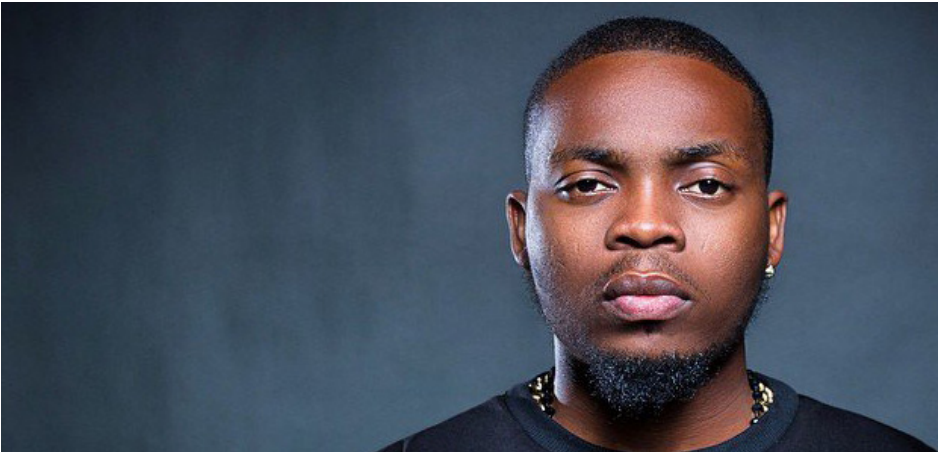
To wrap it up sir, what advice do you have for someone who probably is on their first job, but not in the desirable career path? Any words of encouragement?

I do have them around me a lot. My advice to them is to strive for relevance and knowledge. It's what you should be on the lookout for. Don't look at yourself from the point of financial gain. Take it that your first job is still part of the schooling. The only difference now is that you are being paid for being trained. In the past – the university, you paid tuition for the training. But now, see yourself as someone that has continued to be trained but is being paid an allowance. What should drive you is the knowledge.

That's why you can have about two or three graduates of the same course, in the same school, starting work at the same time; but over time, you see one above the other – it's the foundation. Because, one may come today, because of the drive for money, spends a year or two and leaves for a job of a higher position where there is a higher pay. Meanwhile, the other who stays calm for over four to five years would have acquired knowledge. When you put them side by side with the one that has been jumping around; you can see more people moving to a level that is even far higher than the other one that has been moving around because of pay.

“You cannot give what you do not have. A time will come when because you never had the right foundation in terms of knowledge, it will expose you when you get to a certain level in your career – and it might be late.”

But as you're starting, just be focused. Keep striving for knowledge. The knowledge is there – no one can take it away from you. You can always display and prove the experience you have anywhere you go.



OLAMIDE ADEDEJI

Founder, YBNL Nation

Olamide Adedeji popularly known by his stage name Olamide is a Nigerian hip-hop recording artist who records mostly in Yoruba his native tongue.

Olamide was born in Bariga, Lagos State. He started his musical career in 2000. When asked why music? He said: "I found out I was gifted so I had to explore it. It's my life, my hustle, my world."

In 2010, Olamide released a single titled "Eni Duro" under the Coded Tunes record label which he was signed unto at the time. The song was an instant success and shot Olamide to limelight.

In 2011, he released his debut studio album titled Rapsodi while signed to Coded Tunes and in 2012 released another album titled YBNL under his label imprint called YBNL . So far he has released nine studio albums which includes Baddest Guy Ever Liveth (2013), Street OT (2014), 2kings (with Phyno) (2015), Evan Mayweather (2015), The Glory (2016), Lagos Nawa (2017) and YBNL Mafia Family (2018).

Olamide is very versatile and is able to blend different tunes and beats which is what sets him apart. He has attained a great level of success in his career some of which include, being the first Nigerian to sign an endorsement deal with Ciroc as well as being the first person to sell out the Eko Convention Center for four consecutive years (2014 – 2018). He

has also sold out the Teslim Balogun Stadium holding over 12000 persons as well as the 5000-capacity Eventim Apollo. His Culture Tour alongside Phyno at the building six of O₂ Arena in 2017. was also a sell-out event.

He has had several collaborations with other prominent Nigerian artists such as Phyno, Wizkid, Reminisce, ID Cabasa, Dbanj, 9ice to mention a few.

Olamide has had several nominations and won several awards which includes Rap Artist of the year 2016 (City People Entertainment Award), Rap Act of the Year (Nigeria Entertainment Award 2016), Best Street-Hop Artiste, Artiste of the year (Headies 2015), Certified Banger Of the Year, Video Wonder Of the Year, Male Artiste of The Year, Best Hip Hop Track, MixtTape Of The Year, Album Of The Year (TooXclusive Awards), Best Rap Album, Album Of The Year (Headies 2013), Most Gifted West (Channel O New Video Award), Best Indigenous Artiste, and a host of other awards. He is the founder of YBNL Nation.

How did it all begin? Why did you choose your style of music?

Music chose me, in fact my childhood ambition was to become a football player but sometime in primary school, I fell in love with rap music and this enabled me to nurture and perfect my skills early in life. I grew up listening to ID Cabasa and 9ice, so I believe that their music influenced my style. In 2000, I decided to actively pursue my music career and this birthed my hit track, 'Eni duro' in 2010. By 2011, I released my debut studio album, Rapsodi under ID Cabasa's Coded Tunes label; this was followed up by YBNL in 2012 under my own record label, YBNL Nation. I kept going and the rest, as they say, is history.



Keep doing what you believe in.



What has kept you going in all this time?

Given the fact that my parents were poor, I determined that I would succeed in life at all cost and therefore embraced doggedness, perseverance and hard work. Also, my ability to stay away from scandal and the development of a strong work ethic has really been a driving force for me. This has allowed me to release a large number of albums within the short time span of my musical career. Furthermore, I ensure that my lyrics are relatable and that my beats are pleasing to the ears; I constantly seek live performances as this helps me to connect with my fans and drives me to work harder. Primarily, I feel that the reason why I have had so many hits is because music is my passion and my dream; it costs me nothing to live my dream.

Finally, I attribute a lot to prayer, and constantly advice young people to pray hard as they pursue their dreams.

What are the challenges faced on the job?

My biggest challenge in the music industry is piracy. We are however grateful for where the industry is now; there has been growth and improvement. Although, much work and commitment need to be put in, the advent of technology has hit hard on the pirates.

Given the chance, is there anything you would like to change about the early stage of your career?

No. I am extremely grateful for those like ID Cabasa who helped me in that early stage.

What is your advice to young people who are just beginning to find their feet?

I advise them to work hard, pray, and never give up as they cannot function, progress or succeed without these three. Many times, a lot of people do not make another attempt after a season of failure; whenever you fail, pick yourself up and try again.

Also, be original. Be true to yourself no matter what, know that everyone will not achieve success in the same way.

“Rome was not built in a day; keep trying in order to get it right.”



ONYEKA AKUMAH

Founder & CEO, Farmcrowdy

Onyeka Akumah is the founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Farmcrowdy, a start-up he launched in November 2016 and is currently referred to as Nigeria's First Digital Agriculture platform that empowers rural farmers by providing them with improved seeds, farm inputs, trainings on modern farming techniques and provides a market for the sale of their market produce.

Prior to Farmcrowdy, Onyeka was the Chief Commercial Officer of Travelbeta – one of Nigeria's leading online travel agencies. He has also worked with Konga as Vice President, marketing, Jumia as Director of Marketing & Partnerships, Wakanow as Online Marketing Manager, E-Marketing Coordinator for Deloitte for West, East and Central Africa, and Webmaster for British Council in Nigeria.

In addition to being the CEO of Farmcrowdy, Onyeka currently sits on the Board of leading tech start-ups in New York and Lagos and constantly seeks ways to impact on Nigerian youths through media and technology.

Onyeka Akumah has been referred to as one of the most creative internet and online marketing entrepreneurs focused on building household names out of internet businesses in Nigeria . In 2017, he was appointed

to the E-Agric Stakeholders Forum by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Nigeria and was recently made one of the youngest members of the Honorary Council of the Abuja Chamber of Commerce & Industry in recognition of his innovative way of fusing technology with Agriculture while empowering thousands of farmers. Onyeka holds a degree (distinction) in Applied Information Technology from the Sikkim Manipal University, India.

He has received various awards and recognitions, some of which include; The 100 Most Outstanding Individuals in Africa (2019), Top 5 Outstanding Entrepreneurs in Nigeria (2018), Top 20 Young Entrepreneurs to Watch in Africa by the African Youth Forum in Egypt (2017), amongst others.

In his capacity as a public speaker, he has been invited to speak at a number of platforms, some of which are The Economist Summit in Kenya, Abuja International ICT Conference, The Nigerian National Career Fair, Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria, Social Media Week, Mobile Web West Africa, Business Day: Agribusiness and Food Security Summit and the London Metropolitan School of Business Management. In 2014, he was appointed as a Mentor for Start-ups and Entrepreneurship at the Rise Network. In 2015, he also mentored at the Tony Elumelu Foundation and at the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria.

Could you please tell us about your first job experience?

In 2006, I got my first job which paid 25,000 Naira at a software engineering company called CITzar because of my web design portfolio. I had been designing websites for various customers since my days in the university. My task at CITzar was to help them with their user experience on a couple of projects, including the Unity Bank website. As a fresh graduate, the experience was a good start point for me as it helped me learn how to prepare myself for work and structure myself. It also helped me understand how to talk, how to work and how to send emails.

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stage of your career?

My answer to this question is always that I will never change anything about my past as the combination of everything that has happened in my life has created the person I am today. I believe that if I go back and change anything, I would most likely not be the individual you are speaking to now; I enjoyed all my experiences and learnt from them both from working for others as well as building my own businesses.

“My failures and successes taught me all that I know today”

How did these experiences shape your skills and capabilities? How did they prepare you for success?

I have certain core values which by extension guide all the companies I have built. One key value is my hunger to learn. In all my experiences, I consistently look for the opportunity to learn something new while also seeking avenues to apply myself. However, in my quest to learn new things, I endeavour to remain as humble as possible in order to present myself as a teachable individual.



The start of your career is not the time to look for a lot of money, it is the time to learn and equip yourself. Your earnings will rise in proportion to the value you offer.



Furthermore, I strive for excellence in all that I do. This makes me a competitive person as I want all that I do to stand out and be the best. Career-wise, I have learnt to start a project on a small scale, learn from the mistakes made and then eventually scale the project up if I am able to mitigate the risks involved to the barest minimum.

“Stay in the learning phase early so that you can build yourself before scaling up on any project”

What key challenges did you have on your first job? How did you overcome them?

I was excited about my first job as it was the first time I earned for something I considered fun. Also, about 90% of my colleagues were go-getters, with the hunger to carry out exciting projects. However, the major challenge I had was convincing my company's Chief Technology Officer about the value of my work and the fact that I did not want to be a programmer. I wanted to focus on the user experience rather than the core software development area of the business. This was a challenge because while I had the talent to write codes which were impermeable, I did not particularly enjoy doing it. I was able to eventually deal with that and move on.

What is your advice for people doing jobs that are not in their desired career path?

Every job you find yourself doing is an opportunity to learn; never take for granted the reason you are in that current job. Regardless that you are not enjoying what you are doing, remove the veil from your eyes, take a look at what other departments do, learn from them and use the process to build yourself.

“Remember that if you eventually own your platform, it would not only be about what you are interested in but about the overall operation of an organisation with different elements in it.”

Therefore, for people who are frustrated about their current work positions, I advise that they first learn all that they need to in that environment. Do not resign while looking for new opportunities, especially if you are just starting out. Personally, prior to starting my own business, I worked in several organizations for over nine years and not all the jobs were ideal; however, I ensured that I kept learning and increasing my value such that by the time I moved on to the next job, I was getting in at a higher level.

“The start of your career is not the time to look for a lot of money, it is the time to learn and equip yourself. Your earnings would rise in proportion to the value you offer.”



PATRICK UTOMI

Foremost Economist and National Leader

An illustrious entrepreneur and motivational speaker, his journey to the top is a testament to the importance of mentors in a person's career. His first job was as a sales intern — a different career from his chosen field — however, what he took from the organisation set the pace for the rest of his career.

Patrick Okedinachi Utomi is a fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants of Nigeria, Chairman, Poise Nigeria and founding Senior Faculty of the Lagos Business School -Pan Atlantic University. He was Director of the Centre for Applied Economics at the Lagos Business School. He has served in senior positions in government— as an adviser to the President of Nigeria; in the private sector— as Chief Operating Officer for Volkswagen of Nigeria; and in academia. He is the author of several management and public policy books, including the award-winning *Managing Uncertainty: Competition and Strategy in Emerging Economies* (1998) and the 2006 book, *Why Nations are Poor?* His academic background covers a range from Policy Economics, Business Administration, and Political Science to Mass Communication. As an entrepreneur, he has founded or co-founded companies that are active in fields including financial service, ICT, media, and agriculture.

Appointed Professor of the Social and Political Economy Environment of

Business, the pioneer entrepreneurship teacher at LBS has been a scholar-in-residence at the Harvard Business School and the American University in Washington DC. As a leader of the Civil Society, he is the founder of the Centre for Values in Leadership; The Widow Support Centre and the Concerned Professionals, which was bulwark against-military oppression, among numerous other social enterprise initiatives. He has collaborated fairly frequently with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington and Chatham House in the UK. He has also written commissioned papers for the UK's DFID including collaboration with colleagues from Oxford on the political economy of growth in Nigeria. He is visiting scholar at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

He has studied and written about the political economy of growth in Latin America and Asia, particularly Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Hong Kong, countries in which he is much travelled. Utomi, who was voted one of the top 10 Nigerian living legends in the Vanguard Newspaper/Silverbird Television poll in 2009.

Adept at multitasking, he has reached the top in several endeavours, becoming one of Nigeria's top managers in manufacturing before his 33rd birthday, reaching a presidential advisory position at 27, earning two master's degrees and a PhD at 26, a professorship and global acknowledgement as a leading scholar in Business, Political Economy and Media Studies in his forties. His first publication in a refereed international journal appeared in 1981 in the European journal, Gazette. He is perhaps the first candidate for President in Nigeria to be formally endorsed by such renowned scholars as the Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka; and Professor Sam Aluko, among others.

Honoured by so many Professional bodies as a distinguished fellow, including the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations; Institute of Directors (Nigeria), Institute of Strategic Management, Academy of Entrepreneurship Studies, and inducted into the Junior Achievement (Nigeria) Hall of Fame, and by the Senate of the University of Nigeria and Alumni of UNN (ALPHA — A Lion of High Achievement) with a collection of more than 700 plaques that mark a life of service. He was awarded the Hon. Doctor of Business Administration (DBA Honoris Causa) by the University of Nigeria in 2012. He was recently along with such legends as Mr Akinola Williams, Dr Michael and Dr Christopher Kolade, honoured by the Convention on Business Integrity (CBI) in the only such recognition in two decades.

He has passionately pursued the building of a viable opposition political party in Nigeria and a transparent, accountable government. He was candidate for president of Nigeria in 2007 and 2011. He is a man of faith and family who is widely travelled through all the continents of the world. He has visited more than eighty countries.

Please tell us about your first job, and if it was a formal or an informal job?

My very first job was a vacation job in 1974 at the British Petroleum head office at Broad Street, Lagos Island. I was an undergraduate at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) at the time. I was attached to the office of the executive director of sales at that time and my main job description was writing reports and minutes on meetings held and also conducting research in areas of sales development and market opportunities for the company.

My very first experience with mentoring was at the company. I was taken under the wings of a group of upwardly mobile business executives. They took me to lunch most days, and I learnt more about the core aspects of working and developing a sound work culture from them.

British Petroleum had a serious and strict work culture; you were expected to be at work at 7:30 am and not a minute later. No time was wasted on idle chatter or lazing about. You were expected to be doing something constructive at every moment. It was almost graveyard silent at all times.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job and how did it shape you?

The discipline of doing everything properly and on time, was a bit of a shock. We resumed at 7:30 am and not a minute later. Work days were from Mondays till Saturday, and we only got to dress down on Saturdays.

Given a chance to start over, what would you change about the early stage of your career?

I would'nt change much about the early stage of my career. With the benefit of hindsight, I better appreciate the opportunities it gave me at such a young age to network and gain that level of exposure as an undergraduate.

“My first job taught me two things: the value of work; and being careful that your own choices determine your actions, rather than group choices.”

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

I had a really good run with the company which I almost messed up towards the end of my internship because I didn't trust in my own self and I took the advice of another intern. It was about a week or so left before the end of our internship, and I had gone to inform my boss that I wouldn't be staying till the end of the month, and that I was handing in my registration letter.

“The university develops your capacity to think, while life and career develop your creativity and aptitude that you apply to things and situations. Learn more about what you would like to do, and move towards where you would like to go.”

There was another intern there from my school that had worked there previously, and he convinced me that I shouldn't hand in my resignation letter but keep working so that we — all the interns — could collect full payment for the month and leave when we want, instead of the payment we would get for the days worked. So I went back to my boss and collected back my resignation letter, he didn't say anything then and just handed it to me. A couple of days later, he asked why I collected my letter back, and I explained to him. It was then that I realised that I shouldn't have gone with the general plan. I should have just stuck with what I knew was right.

J.K Rowling, in one of the Harry Potter books says,

“We are the choices we make.”

“The good news is that nothing is permanent, the bad news is that nothing is permanent.”

We make choices daily, and those choices ultimately define who we are. I have been impacted by the choices that I have made in the course of my career. If you commit to doing the right thing all the time, the reward is much.

What would you say is the most important factor in determining the ideal first job?

Someone whose first job is in an undisciplined environment, where you come and go as you please will not get the right work ethics, and this can affect the rest of their career. The work ethics I developed in my first job has sustained me through the course of my career, even during my youth service when I worked with a newspaper company. I was treated far better than other corp members, and even some staff members because of the amount of effort I put into the work, and my ability to work unsupervised. Cultivating the right work ethics helps to develop your career and grows it faster.

Kindly share your advice for those whose first job is in fields that seem unrelated to their desired career path.

There might be learning gaps between where you are now and where you desire to go, but you can fill that easily by taking short courses. From your current position, you can move on to another career that is similar to your desired career, and eventually on to your desired career.



SEYI BELLA

Partner, Banwo & Ighodalo

She started as an intern and has risen to the position of Partner at Banwo & Ighodalo; Seyi Bella works in the banking and finance practice of the firm and as opposed to the specialist practice approach obtainable in most jurisdictions, her practice is expansive, as she advises on banking and financing matters across varying sectors, some of which include; real estate, oil & gas, technology, projects amongst others.

She believes that adding value to the immediate community is in seasons and stages and is dependent on a person's position per time. As she advanced in her career, she received several invitations to mentor young people, this she affirms is a result of the steps she took early on in her career and advises young associates to focus primarily on building technical skills which will help them create appropriate network of influence.

As a young associate Seyi was an active member of a Non-Governmental Organization called Invent. She advises young professionals to volunteer as in her words, "You do not have to be recognized as technically sound to impact your immediate community." This successful lawyer who remains down to earth walked us through her career path in this interview. Read on to have a glimpse into her professional experience.

What was your first job?

Unlike many people who have worked in various places, I started at Banwo & Ighodalo in 2004 through an internship I had not particularly pursued; I had gone to the firm in my capacity as the vice president of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) Law Society to seek for funds for our annual dinner, coincidentally the Partner I approached for funds had earlier that day spoken to another person about the need to begin to culture UNILAG law undergraduates and my name had come up. He eventually gave us N100, 000 for our dinner on the condition that I work at the Firm for a month.

This one month internship changed my perspective of Law because as a university student, I had only seen Law through the eyes of litigation/dispute resolution and had always thought that I would be a human rights lawyer. The Internship provided me with great exposure to the world of Business and Corporate Law. It also afforded me a foot in the door because as soon as I graduated from the Nigerian Law School, I was offered a job with the Firm.

Although my prior experience with the firm as well as my accomplishment as the best graduating student in my class at University of Lagos did not automatically make things easy for me, my understanding of the Firm's culture set me about two or three steps ahead of my contemporaries in terms of my professional organization as well as in the quality of work I did. I was extremely diligent during this time because I wanted to be sure that I actually liked Law before proceeding for a Masters degree. My diligence and hard work payed off because it helped me discover that while I liked Law and was doing well at it, I did not enjoy law practice as a litigator.

Some of the challenges young people can expect to face include knowledge of their subjects, exhibiting proper writing skills and development of emotional intelligence, necessary for negotiating in the work environment.



Knowing your work and doing it properly is not enough, you must know how to conduct yourself professionally as this combined with your technical skills will help you succeed.



If your attitude is zero, no matter how smart you may be, you will discover that things are simply not working for you. Although I learnt the hard way sometimes; I learnt how to manage people rightly as well as not to take things personally as it was not about me but about the value I brought to the work place.

If you had the opportunity, is there anything you would like to change?

Yes, I sometimes feel I should have expanded my scope of specialization, maybe taken on some work in Capital Market and developed myself in the Practice. But generally, I do not think that I would change many things as I am satisfied where I am today.

How did your first job impact your personal development?

Banwo & Ighodalo (B & I) is a very thorough work environment where the best is celebrated; hence it makes it difficult for an individual to do less than his/her best. B & I is filled with smart people and seasoned professionals who keep demanding more from you; the moment you begin to show capacity; responsibility is pushed your way. I personally believe that driving young people into positions of leadership is very good as it pushes them to have an entrepreneurial perspective to all that they do.

“The earlier in your career you begin to have an entrepreneurial perspective and cease to see yourself as just an employee, the better”

I always say that I am grateful for a good work environment that provided the relevant challenge and still remained friendly, as I could not have thrived in a hostile environment with my personality type. This ambience was perfect for me and is part of the reason I chose to stay at the Firm.

What were your key challenges? How did you overcome them?

I came from an educational environment where we were told what to do; however at Banwo & Ighodalo, I found that majority of my learning was on the job. Nobody had the time to explain how anything was going to be done until an individual had personally taken the time to carry out some research on the subject. At the end of the day, the more I did a particular thing, the better I got at it. Also, the trainings that the firm regularly sent us for helped.

What would you say to a person whose first job is not on his/her desired career path?

I believe that such an individual is only doing such a job to make ends meet and should see it as a means to an end. They should not get distracted and just settle because the job is paying their bills. Also, these persons should have an open mind and examine the situation thoroughly; if they find that their current job does not make them happy neither does it offer room for career growth, they need to move as staying would be equivalent to doing themselves a disservice.

“There is a difference between a job and a career. Do something that makes you feel like you are creating value.”



SOWEMIMO ABIODUN

Chairman/CEO, InfoMetriQ

Sowemimo Abiodun Alex is a computer programmer, internet entrepreneur, diplomat, domain broker and computer media application mogul. Experienced in computer programming, information technology management, data entry processing and internet, he founded the global data system of information profiling application, Pagepedia. He is the Chairman/CEO InfoMetriQ; Jazaza commerce, Vice chairman, Vapour paint plc; and founding partner of Infocus T&M.

Mr Sowemimo holds a degree in Estate management from the University of Lagos, he also has a certificate of leadership at the Accra Business School and advance diploma in Software Engineering at AP technology institute. He has a Ph.D in Information Technology Management, from the prestigious ICON University of Management Science & Technology, Republic of Benin.

Dr Sowemimo Abiodun is the Revolution of innovation, and was appointed as ECOWAS youth council anti-corruption ambassador, representing over 200 million youths in 15 West African countries at all levels of governance, conference and in line with standing against corruption. He received the (SVNED) Silicon Valley Nigeria Economic Development Certification and Award for his exemplary performance.

He was certified by Oracle in Internet of Things (IOT), Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Chatbots. Over the years, he led a company involved in the web design and development of public and private application design projects in many communities. In addition, he formed and led companies in the development, building, auction and sales of premium web domains.

What was your first job? Where was it? And what was the experience?

I have been an entrepreneur since childhood. Before I finished university, I'd been using my technology to sell properties for people and companies such as Megamall. I was also using bulk SMS, bulk email, online postings, etc. to solve problems in that industry. I broke through even at the age of 16 or 17 years old, having sold properties worth over 300 million Naira. I sold these properties via an online platform I created because I'm a computer programmer. This was in 2009. The website advertised properties for construction companies and individuals, with a promise that their properties will be sold or rented.

Given a choice to probably start over again or do something differently, what would you change about that experience?

No, I don't want to change anything because over time, I've never known a better yesterday, and everything has been a work in progress. I grew up in an environment that taught me how to be a serial entrepreneur, and I was able to nurture my upbringing to become a global business tycoon. I don't think there's anything I want to change about my past.

That first experience when you created that platform, can you describe how it imparted on your personal development, and how it prepared you for success today?

The first platform gave me something to leverage on, because I made a lot of money, and I was able to use that money to set up different businesses that failed, while some others succeeded. In the businesses that failed, I gained a lot of experience, which has been helping me to become the man I am. From my failure, I've learnt a lot about corporate governance, how a proper corporate environment should run, the operational structure, and how to bring in international and local investors.

Were there key challenges that you faced on the first job, and how did you overcome them?

I brought in an investor, who caused some problems for the other investors. He invested a lot of money till the moment he had 1% stake over me. Then, he gave me a tough time; giving me a Non-Disclosure-Agreement to sign, which I refused to sign. This challenges persisted for more than a year, but I did not give up. I kept being myself and pushing harder. Today, the story is different. Now I've set up a bank in my thirties, and I have set up several other companies that are accepted globally, among others.

What would you say to someone that is currently not on the path of his/her desired career? How would you tell them to navigate themselves?

Anything you do should be passion-driven. But don't just abandon a job that is putting food on your table because you have no passion for it. You have to keep doing what you're doing, make sure you save enough money. Not everybody will start a business or be at the top. We all have different roles, but make your role significant. Be indispensable and the world will pay you a fat fee. In summary, follow your passion, save enough capital, (and you have to know how much capital you need), understand the business very clearly, and put everything to God.

“Passion can open doors, and can make magic happen.” People who are not in their desired job, don't give up, save enough capital, learn more about corporate governance before you venture into entrepreneurship. And learn about how to bring investors — foreign investors. You don't expect to use all your capital to set up a business. And most importantly, have a proper structure of the business you want to do.



TADE CASH

Cashflow King/Entrepreneur

Tade Cash is a world class cash flow entrepreneur and the king of rental income properties, and a cash flow investor and educator. He is a co-ounder of Weath Island Properties Limited, a property development and environment enhancement company with emphasis on creating a beautiful environment with a world class lifestyle. He has also co-founded about four other cash rich enterprises.

He is the creator of the Shut and Sell programme. He is the creator of The Money Mastery programme and the books, *Shut up and Collect the Money*, *The Money Mastery Revolution*, *Build Asset not just a Business*, and *The Wealth Genotype*.

Through his programmes and processes Tade creates value and high income asset that is consistent, portable, transferrable and sellable. He made his first million Dollars at 28 years.

Tade is a coach and a thought leader on matters bothering on financial or economic freedom of an individual, as he is a firm believer in prosperity being a system and not a secret. He has appeared on many platforms around the country and featured on many TV and radio shows.

What was your first job experience?

I have always been a 'jungle entrepreneur', however, the key job ex-

perience that I had was about twenty years ago when I was trying to figure out life. I worked in different places including a plating line and a publishing house for a short duration. I spent less than two months at the former and did not receive a salary on the job. My role at the publishing house involved opening up a new market for the company, and this taught me to be courageous and because I was partly paid by commission, I learnt that if I could master how to create opportunities for myself, then I could create my own financial destiny. All of these early experiences prepared me for building companies.

What has been the impact of these experiences on your personal development?

I realised that besides God who is the source of our lives, another important factor in achieving success is our ability to be daring.

Those experiences taught me to be daring and because I started early, I was not afraid of the consequence of failure; when things did not work out, I learnt from them, and moved forward. I was able to develop the mentality that my future is better than my past.



Always be prepared for discouragement; lack of preparation is what makes a lot of people give up when faced with it.



“Courage is a skill.”

I also acquired selling skills as I realized that my income and economy were dependent on me. I also discovered that one of the leverages I had was my mindset, so I focused on developing it through reading books, by the time I was 25 years old, I had read about 700 books.

“Selling is not being talkative but being persuasive; it means the ability to get people to your side or perspective.”

Did you face any discouragement in this early stage of your career? How did you overcome them?

Definitely, I was a young man and had some of my ventures fail. That moment when courage is lost is called discouragement. Always be prepared for discouragement; lack of preparation is what makes a lot of people give up when faced with it. To overcome discouragement, I developed a rule of life: I could only be discouraged for a day. After which I had to forge ahead.

One key discouragement I had at that early stage was that my first job did not pay very well compared to the income of some of my mates. To overcome the temptation of comparison, I told myself that while I

was permitted to learn from others, I could not run the races of others, hence I was able to focus on myself and where I was going.

What is your advice to those who have a first job that is not in line with their desired career path?

Life begins with knowing what you want. There are three codes of caution that you must know; one is desire, that is what you want to create out of your life; the next is resistance which tells you that simply having a desire is not enough, expect some challenges and the final code is neutralize which is simply the development of greater capacity to produce more.

“You do not need to love the job when you start it; do it with excellence and a love for the job would be triggered.”

Also, do not wish that your problems get smaller, only desire to be bigger than your problems. Work is designed to make you better; rise up to the challenge.



TAIWO AYANLEYE

Co-Founder, Stutern

Taiwo Ayanleye is the co-Founder of Stutern, a leading online platform for internships and entry-level jobs placement in Nigeria, focused on igniting Nigeria's economic growth through skills and career development by connecting employers who need talent, to millennials with plenty of it. Stutern is an initiative of Taiwo and his twin brother Kehinde during their NYSC which became a reality in 2015. Taiwo holds a degree in Economics from Bowen University and a master's degree in Business Analytics and Management Sciences from University of Southampton (2013).

What was your first job experience?

My first work experience was in 2009 at a company in computer village and it was during the holiday leading into my second year at the University. I had sought a job that was in direct opposite of my introverted personality because I wanted to develop diverse skill sets. My major role was to deposit the money made from the sales of the company goods, in the bank while also relating to customers and assisting them with their purchases.

Although, not directly relevant to my career today, the skills I learnt on the job were transferable ones and helped me build selling skills while also enabling me to gain a network of people who I still have contact with till date. I got the job through a family friend whose fiancé was the chief accountant at the company. However, by the next year even though

the company wanted me back, I did not want to stay in the circle of my friends and family, so I researched online and sent out CVs to various companies before I eventually got a job at a small consulting firm.

What were the challenges that you faced on the job?

I did a lot of cold calling which involved trying to convince people via calls; since I was an introvert, this was a very hard rock. I, however, learnt communication as a result of this challenge.

“When selling to people, it is important to focus on what they will get from the product and not the product itself.”

Another challenge I had, this time on my second job was in the fact that I was not paid a salary for the first month of work; this was a hassle as I lived quite a distance from the office. I, however, stuck to it because it was crucial for the future I envisioned for myself; I did not want to be like most people who spent years commuting long distances just to get to work, so, I decided to take the pain to learn as much as I could at the time. The job gave me the opportunity to read a book titled *The world is flat* which helped place me on the right path. I was also able to acquire technical skills and gain knowledge of their importance.

“Your course of study has no impact on your ability to acquire technical skills.”

Would you change anything about the early stage of your career if given the opportunity?

Not really, I appreciate everything that I went through and believe they were just right for me. I only would have wished to *“get my hands dirtier.”*

How did this early career choices mould your skills and capabilities for the success you have today?

Since my initial foray into the labour market was with small businesses, I learnt that nothing gets done unless someone does it. You can plan extensively; however, if you don't work on that plan, nothing will change. I also learnt the importance of asking questions; most of my colleagues then, just did things as they met them or according to how they were asked to do them, however, my employer at the second job always insisted on our input and this further improved my ability to ask questions as well as my confidence level as I realized that my opinions were not useless. This further propelled me to identify problems and proffer solutions to them.

Furthermore, as I watched my bosses read books, I also imbibed the culture because I thought that if people of their status were doing so, then it had to be a part of the ingredients responsible for their success.



All we know right now is what we went through and for us to know more things; we have to go through other different things.



What is your advice to a person whose first job is not in his/her desired career path?

Looking back, none of those first jobs that I did pertain to what I do, so it is really not about that. For such a person, do not say no to any opportunity that comes your way, whether or not it is what you are looking for. Say yes to every opportunity because the soft skills which you will gain are more important than the technical skills learnt on the job. Also, know that a lot of skills learnt are transferable and would be useful whether directly or indirectly.

Finally, wherever you find yourself, ensure that you work with the best people in that place and not mediocre people.

“Be Deliberate.”



TEMITOPE OGUNSEMO

MD/CEO, Krystal Digital Network
Solutions Limited

Temitope Ogunsemo is the MD/CEO of Krystal Digital Network Solutions Limited, a fast-growing edtech company, which specialises in the development, research, deployment and creation of bespoke and service-oriented software applications.

He holds a masters in Information Systems Management from the University of Salford, and a bachelor's degree from the University of Ibadan; he is a member of the Nigeria Computer Society (NCS), the Nigerian Internet Group (NIG), the British Computer Society (BCS), is a three-time delegate at the Young CEO business summit, a delegate at the 6th High Level Dialogue held in South Africa, and a member of the Crans Montana Forum.

Temitope, in his capacity as the MD/CEO of Krystal Digital leads a group of like-minded people who are passionate about a common goal: bridging the digital divide between education and technology. They are committed to solving a myriad of challenges through the automation of reoccurring tasks in organisations as well as by helping institutions and businesses position themselves better for growth. Primarily, they recognise the need for strategic placement in the leading market place.

Krystal Digital provides IT solutions to Federal Unity Colleges, Institution

and organisations at large and has a wide range of services which include e-payment, school management information system, IT consultancy, Web development amongst others. The company also constantly carries out CSR projects targeted at meeting the needs of every community in its immediate vicinity.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was as an intern at the Kings College Old Boys` Association, Lagos chapter; I obtained the job following the completion of my tenor as the president of the University of Ibadan chapter of the association. The need to make a difference as well as serve diligently propelled me to get involved with the association and whilst serving, I revamped the association's website and offered database management services without receiving any form of salary.

As the youngest person in the committee, I learnt from older associates who I regarded as mentors. In 2008, I was elevated from the position of a volunteer, thus becoming the chief operating officer of the association. It was a great opportunity as it appeared my consistency, hard work, dedication, values and ideas came in handy for the organisation. Thereafter, I got several recommendations and monetary value for my services which are today useful in the running of my own business.



If you want to go fast, walk alone; if you want to go far, walk together.



What impact did it have on your personal development? How did your first job mould your skills and capabilities, and how did it prepare you for success?

My first job helped me develop a wide range of skills; self-confidence, the need for self-improvement as well as the importance of adding value everywhere I found myself. The job also birthed some of the ideas that gave rise to Krystal Digital, enabled me to build meaningful networks through interactions with personnel of large organisations. I advise young people to serve and render value at all time even when monetary compensation is not available; also they must have a mentor.

What were the key challenges and moments of discouragements on the first job? How did you overcome them? Did any principle or thought in particular help you during this period?

I faced several challenges on my first job; I was the youngest person in the organisation and was also the first within my age bracket to attain the position of the Chief Operating Officer in the organization, this brought a lot of envy and strife my way and I had to learn to manage my relationship with my colleagues and superiors appropriately. Through all these challenges, I remained professional and never took

anything personally.

Furthermore, I learnt to test the potency of my dreams and ideas by understudying the best processes that could be applied for success, making adjustments and aligning it with my long-term goals.

***“Tough times never last, but tough people do”-
Robert Schuller***

What would you say to someone whose first job is not on the path of his/her desired career?

It does not matter. The most important thing is to make yourself valuable while giving your best wherever and whenever possible. Statistics have shown that young people with skills and abilities fail to harness opportunities because they are disguised as hard work. They should understand that no learning experience or knowledge is a waste as an individual would grow in the process, thus building capacity.

Summarily, the key is to give your best, add value and become indispensable by offering solutions; this opportunity would offer you the network that could usher you into your desired career, thereby helping you attain long term success.



TOLULOPE AGIRI

Chief Human Resource Officer,
Interswitch Group

Mrs Tolulope Agiri has a first degree in Psychology from the Obafemi Awolowo University and a master's in Industrial Relation & Personnel Management from the University of Lagos.

Her career spans two decades as an HR consultant and practitioner. She worked with SCG consulting and Arthur Andersen (now KPMG Professional Services) in various capacities before joining Unilever Nigeria Plc. As Company Learning Manager at Unilever, she worked as Regional Training Manager for Unilever Africa Regional Group, Learning Director (Africa Middle East & Turkey – AMET), Leadership Development Director, AMET, before assuming her final role at Human Resources Nigeria in 2010. She is currently the Chief Human Resource Officer at Interswitch group.

Tolu is happily married to Abayomi and they are blessed with two children, Ifeoluwapo and Oluwatimilehin. She didn't have a clear career path in mind when she got her first job. She took up the job because it was available at the time, but it set the stage for everything.

Please tell us about your first job?

My first job was in 1993 at SCG Consulting, Surulere after I had done

my master's programme at the University of Lagos. A colleague from where I had done the industrial training for my master's referred me to the company. The organization provided consulting services to other organizations and my job title was trainee consultant, and I was involved in executive recruitment, upgrading of new staff, training facilitation and project reporting.

What was the most difficult aspect of your first job, and how did it shape you?

The hardest part for me was giving presentations, mostly because it was my first time. It was heart-warming when I started receiving commendations from my boss as regards making presentations. In retrospect, I think my reluctance to make presentations was linked to my low self-confidence at the time.

Another difficult aspect of my job was the salary; I was earning about 13,000 Naira per annum which roughly translated to a little more than 1,000 Naira every month. It wasn't easy for me at all. I come from a polygamous home (with a near absent dad) so I had to fend for myself. In those days, I was usually broke by the 2nd week & would have to travel home to Ilesa to get assistance from my mum as there were no mobile phones or internet transfers in Nigeria then.

Writing reports was another difficult part of the job because my boss was so fastidious. If the report was not done well, you would have to do it repeatedly till it looked right to him. I must say that while it was difficult at the time, I am grateful for it now as my colleagues tell me I have a knack for spotting errors.

Despite the challenges I went through, what kept me going at this job was my desire for knowledge and the feeling that I needed to get another job before quitting. I eventually quit after nine months even in the absence of another job.

Looking back, I am most grateful for the training (formal & informal) I received in 9 months and also now understand the low wages we received at the point. There were months when the company didn't have any running projects and we still had to be paid!

"I believe that the choice of your first job is so critical because that is where your foundation is laid."

And by the way – I met my husband at that first job!

Given a choice to start over, what would you change about the early stages of your career?

I wouldn't change a lot about my career except for my lack of ambition

in the early period of my career. I had always taken work as 'oh this is a good thing, let's just do it', without looking ahead to the future. I didn't have a plan but I had been blessed with good jobs and employers. I suspect my career would be remarkably different if my employers had been different. I worked with Arthur Anderson (AA now KPMG) for eight years and I have been with Unilever for 13 years- these are 2 great organizations.

If I had to do this again- I would inject a lot more ambition and also avail myself to mentors who would have inspired and helped paint the picture much earlier in my career. I only just started planning my career and setting goals a few years back.

If your first job did not impact greatly on your skills and capabilities, which job/experience would you say moulded you the most in terms of preparing you for success and why?

Like I said earlier, my first job impacted my career positively, but I feel every job I have been blessed with has added tremendous values to me.

When I worked with SCG Consulting, I picked up work ethics and writing skills; since it was a small organization of about 10 consultants, I had no choice but to work hard and learn how to use computers. I also learnt to go the extra mile; we had only two computers in the entire organization and had to wait on queues to use them, I usually had to go to work on Saturdays to complete my tasks and improve on my computer skills.

At Arthur Anderson (KPMG), I learned that anything could be achieved if I set my mind to it. One of my roles at AA was in the payroll division, where I had initially thought I would never be able to function, however, a year later I had mastered it and was seeking new challenges.

At Unilever, my technical abilities as a human resource professional got better. I have learnt the importance of networking.

Kindly share your advice to those whose first job is in a field that seems unrelated to their desired career path

It doesn't matter if your first job is not in line with your course of study, what is important is finding something worthwhile to do while you continue to aspire and search for that perfect job.

"Whatever your hands find to do, do it excellently well."

The attributes I mentioned earlier (work ethics) are more important than any congruence between your course of study and your desired career. In Nigeria, you cannot always match your course of study with your dream job, but understand that no knowledge is lost and any job that you do will add to your future.

“Young leaders should concentrate on picking up skills in whatever job they find themselves because those skills will eventually pay the bills.”

On the last note, I refer to a thought I got from Steve Jobs

“The dots always align when you look at them backwards.”

Things make sense eventually! Ask Joseph.



UCHENNA ONWUAMAEBGU UGWU

Founder, Edufun Technik

Uchenna Onwuamaegbu Ugwu is the founder of Edufun Technik, a Social Enterprise that focuses on the implementation of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education for children and youth from 3-18 years old in underprivileged and underserved communities in Eastern Nigeria.

Edufun Technik, addresses the challenges of inaccessibility and unavailability of Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) education through a design-driven customised STEM curriculum. Our advocacy model is by increasing the number of girls between ages 3-18 years to have full access to STEM education in order to develop requisite skills ready for the Big Future. Edufun Technik has covered over 500 classes of STEM curriculum since 2014, trained 1,200 pupils and 2,100 students in after-school STEM workshops and in-class activities as well as consulting for schools on designing curriculum that will enhance STEM/Robotics Education.

Uchenna holds a degree in Psychology at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. She is a public speaker, a Mandela Washington fellow and Obama Foundation African Leader.

Tell us about your first job experience.

My mum is an industrialist who engages in the production of toiletries. As a secondary school student, I sold these items in school in order to have some more pocket money. This was my first business experience. I remember that when I returned from school, my siblings and I took some of these items to the market to hawk. When I got into university, I needed to continue growing my income, so I began a popcorn business, as I saw that people were making a lot of money from it. The profit I got from the popcorn business enabled me to start trading in *Okrika* – used clothes from Cotonou. At this time, I had already got someone who I put in charge of the popcorn business. I would leave school on Friday night, get to Seme border on Saturday morning, buy the clothes, and return the same day. I did this twice every month. I also hired someone to help me wash and iron the clothes. I did my clothing business on the school premises.

Those were my first experiences with doing business. At that time, I didn't even know I was building entrepreneurial skills. I was merely doing business for survival. In the long run, however, these skills have served as a solid foundation for my current entrepreneurial endeavour. I don't have an office job.

How did these experiences prepare you for success?

During this period, I acquired useful skills like record-keeping, client management, and negotiation. I also learnt how to identify and appeal to my target customers. Many of these skills were impulsive. Now, I understand the importance of these skills, especially in terms of business management. My early entrepreneurial experiences prepared me for my present life, as they shaped the way I think.

“I believe that anything that you put your mind to can be achieved.”

Without any formal knowledge of business management, I was able to survive with the little profit I made. Now, I am better prepared for excellence.

What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?

Surviving daily was challenging because I didn't know what to expect. I did not have a definite means of sustaining the business, and I had no idea where the business was heading, however,

“...one of the things that gave me hope was the fact that I needed to be persistent. I had to keep going.”

Persistence, for me, is about seeing the big picture. I had to keep moving, no matter how difficult things were at that time. This was one of the principles that worked for me. I had the mindset that if what I was doing didn't work out, then I would try out something else.

“I was not afraid of failure. I believe that failure is part of the success story.”



I always wanted to do big things, and those small experiences that I had helped to shape me into what I am today.

“Another value that helped me is consistency. In order to succeed, you need to be consistent in your thoughts and in the process.”

What's your advice for young people who are still trying to forge a career path for themselves?

Judging from my experience, I actually feel sorry for young people today. Many of them have a sense of entitlement. The truth is, nobody owes you anything. Rather, you owe yourself a lot.

Your parents do not owe you anything. Even the government does not owe you. If you have been able to get a tertiary education, then you are lucky. You need to get up and do something for yourself.

 *Another value that helped me is consistency. In order to succeed, you need to be consistent in your thoughts and in the process.* 

Do not take any work experience for granted. Even if you are volunteering, take it seriously as this experience would definitely prove useful in the future. If you are assisting your mother in her business, take it as a job. You do not need to have a white-collar job before you can succeed.

Many young people are egotistical. You need to get rid of your pride and focus on survival. With perseverance, you will eventually scale up. There is no business you are consistent at for three months that would not yield a positive impact.

Young people should understand that they owe themselves. Their destinies are in their hands. You cannot have a miracle by folding your hands and sitting in your room. You need to get up and work. If you do not know what to do, when you wake up every morning, go to a garage and clean the cars. Definitely, you would receive some compensation for this. Interestingly, you can get a lot of connections

from doing odd jobs. It's only when you start that you can get better.

“As a young graduate, you must understand that no one pays you for your certificate. What people pay for is your skill. No one needs your certificate.”

Also, do not underestimate the power of volunteering. When you offer value to people, they will be willing to reward you. The truth is, it is hard to find any firm that is willing to pay you and train you at the same time. Only the government does that. You must understand that life is not about entitlements.

For young people who are discouraged, you need to brace up and do something for yourselves. You need to think outside the box. Look around your community and identify problems that you can solve. Start doing something today. Learn a skill. That is the only way you can survive in this day and time.



UKINEBO DARE

Head, Edo State Skills Development Agency

Ukienebo currently serves as the Senior Special Adviser to the Edo State Governor on Skills Development and Job creation. She oversees the Edojobs initiative with a mandate to create 200,000 jobs by 2020.

With an Msc. in Management from the University of Bradford and a Computer Science degree from Benson Idahosa University, she started her career in Oando Plc working in the Information Technology Department.

Her passion for people development led her to change her career path in 2010 and set up Poise Graduate Finishing Academy (PGFA). PGFA achieved an 87% employment rate of its graduate and was endorsed by the National Universities Commission and multiple reputable employers in Nigeria.

Uki won the Ford Foundation Prize for Youth Employment at the Future Awards Africa (2015). She is credited for the execution of employability interventions projects in partnership with international organizations such as Oxfam Novib, SOS Kinderdorpen, Google (Google Serve in Nigeria 2015) and so on. Over 33,000 youth have benefitted from employability initiatives executed by Ukienebo and her team.

She is also invested in economic empowerment and this can be seen through her volunteering activities as Programme Director of EkoBits in

February 2016. She was appointed the chairperson of the board, BITS Global; a network of ICT and digital design academies across Africa. Her outstanding accomplishments saw her rise to the position of Group Managing Director of the Poise Nigeria Group in September 2017. She is a Mandela Washington Fellow, winner of the 2017 JCI Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award and a recipient of the Business Day 40 under 40 award.

What was your first job experience?

Although I had an insightful experience as a cyber café attendant during one of my high school holidays, my first official job was as a secretary at Poise Nigeria. It was quite tasking because I was the first employee and most importantly because Poise was pioneering an entirely new field in Nigeria at the time; this caused the job to be characterized by a lot of research.

Also, the job required the preparation of PowerPoint presentation slides and my role as the secretary and only junior staff made this my responsibility; I had to teach myself how to prepare these slides, write letters e.t.c. because IT was a new skill at the time. The job taught me a lot including independence, the art of giving myself instructions as well as the use of initiative.



Everybody can follow instructions; it, however, takes a special kind of person to follow a vision and create his/her own instructions.



Although I had gotten the job as a secondary school graduate, a lot rested on my shoulders and as such, I had to learn to communicate professionally and be on time. All of these lessons added a lot of value to my life and helped prepare the professional I am today.

Another noteworthy job that has had an impact on my career is the first job I did immediately after my university education; it was a pre-NYSC job in the IT unit of Oando Plc. This was where I first worked with individuals who were on the same level as I was and soon realized that I had a different work ethic from the others; this further propelled my desire to teach others and was the embryo that birthed PGFA. In my role as an IT support staff, I did not like to be made to feel like being a woman was a handicap, so I did everything that there was to be done. I stayed for long hours because I liked to ensure that all my daily assignments were completed. All of these made me outstanding as I began to be assigned tasks that were normally beyond my level.

Many times, I did not fully comprehend the instructions of my supervisor, but rather than disappoint them, I would research extensively online

“Nothing is impossible; I simply do not know how to do it yet.”

The aforementioned jobs gave me the opportunity to 'learn how to learn', a trait that has helped me every single day, month and year of my career.

What were the high points on the job?

The difficulty index of a task assigned to me, usually tells me how the task assigner perceives me. It was, therefore, a compliment whenever I was assigned a difficult task as it proved to me that I had shown myself to be of value.

As a corper at Oando Plc, I was one of the only two corpers allowed to handle certain things asides management staff, this was a particular high point for me.

Given the opportunity, is there as anything you would like about your early career stage?

Even though I changed my career in order to follow my passion, I would'nt change anything, not even the difficulties of that period. All the experience I gained from IT continues to play a huge role in the execution of all my projects. Even the taunts of my colleagues who regarded me as an 'ITK' helped prepare me for the job that I do now.

What would you say to individuals whose first job is not on their desired career path?

Do that job with all your heart, might and soul because while you are waiting for your ideal job, you must not waste your potential. Understand that overcoming difficulties in your not-so-ideal job will equip you with the skills needed to overcome difficulties even on your ideal job. Use the opportunity to build your soft skills such that when you get into your ideal job, your only concern will be developing the technical skills specific to the job.

Strive for excellence in all activities. If you do these things, when you eventually get into your desired career, you will be prepared and will rise fast to catch up with those who started ahead of you.

“Whatsoever your hands find to do, do it well. Autograph your work with excellence.”

YOUTHS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

TESTIMONIALS FROM
EKOBITS & CAREER KICKSTART



ONYINYE NORMAN-ROBERTS

Executive Assistant, First Aluminium
Nigeria Plc.

Onyinye Norman-Roberts is an advocate of continuous learning and self-development. She believes that with diligence and persistence in any given task, even the most insurmountable challenge can be overcome and excellence obtained.

She is an Executive Assistant at First Aluminum Nigeria Plc. She has worked with different companies in various capacities some of which include Community Development Volunteer, Plateau Aids Control Agency, Allure Africa, amongst others.

Can you please tell us about yourself?

I am from Southern Nigeria, Rivers State, I'm 30 years old, I currently work as the Executive Assistant to the Chairman of First Aluminium Nigeria, Plc. In my role, I've made it easier for junior staff to relate with top management.

What`s your first job/project?

The first job ever in my life was being a sales girl at a grocery shop, that is what we call "supermarket" in Nigeria. I got that job after senior secondary school, and it was better than being idle, while we waited for the result of my UTME (United Tertiary Matriculation Examination). I had to retake the exam a second time which meant that I needed a job

in order not to be idle. I can't remember the remuneration though because it's such a long time.

Tell us the training you benefitted from the Oxfam project, and how it has benefitted your personal development.

I benefitted from the three-week employability training tagged Career Kickstart. Even though I knew I had potentials, I was overcome with fear and doubt for a long time. I couldn't relate with people without being afraid or less confident. The experience at Poise brought me out of my shell; I discovered myself; and why I act the way that I do. This made me to interact with a lot of my class mates, and I made a lot of friends.

“ Every opportunity you find to do something for somebody, whether you're working under the person or volunteering, it's a blessing in disguise. You learn, and no knowledge is wasted. ”

In addition, I learnt selling skills during the entrepreneurship project where we were given a seed capital of 10,000 Naira to start a business and make at least 40% profit in less than 10 days. I learnt how to put myself together, dress well, dress the way you want to be addressed, and the knowledge I got from it helped me in securing the job I have now. I also learnt how to comport myself during interviews.

Would you say the training has helped in determining your career path?

I wouldn't say that, because I knew what I wanted before coming for the programme. It's still a journey as I am not yet there. One thing the training has done for me is to bring me closer to the kind of person I want to be because when I look at my boss, I see myself in her. I aspire to be somehow like her.

What were some of the challenges and setbacks you encountered on your first job, and how were you able to overcome them?

I had a boss who would always come and take things from the shop without paying for it. Although, It was my job to make customers pay, I couldn't really do anything and I found myself accepting it happen. The shop eventually ran down. I couldn't fight with my boss, however, I determined that when I have a business, I'd pay for everything that I take from there because my business money is different from my personal money.

What impact has the training had on you so far?

For my first job, I think it made me value money; it made me understand the dignity of labour, that you work and earn money, no matter how small it is. It comes with a sense of pride. It made me also start learning the importance of saving. I think I was 16 at that time, and I was already

keeping some money aside to do certain things then.

So how are you going to connect with or inspire youths who are looking for such opportunities? Do you have a plan of action?

I am doing this to accomplish this goal too because I know it will be published, and that it will reach millions. Oxfam was so kind to give us this opportunity; it was unpaid for. Therefore, I see this as giving back, so whoever comes in contact with this testimony benefits immensely.

What would you say to someone whose first job is not in their career path?

Every opportunity you find to do something for somebody, whether you're working under the person or volunteering, it's a blessing in disguise. You learn, and no knowledge is wasted.



OPEYEMI ADESHINA

Beneficiary, Ekobits ICT Academy

Opeyemi Adeshina is a 20 year old UI& UX Designer (User Interface and User Experience). He is an alumnus of EKOBITS Academy (2016); a youth based social enterprise that uses ICT creatively to improve the lives of less privileged youth from non-formal settlement. Ekobits has Oxfam, Work in Progress Alliance, Butterfly works and Poise Nigeria as its partner/ sponsor. Opeyemi is currently a UI&UX designer at Upperlink Limited; an IT information technology company that specialises in internet applications and database management software development services in Nigeria. Prior to Upperlink Limited, he was an office assistant at Giga Stream Consulting, a HR firm.

What was the experience like on your first job?

My first job experience was with Giga Streams in 2017. I got the job at one of the job fairs held at Poise. I started out as an office assistant. That was not the kind of job I was expecting because I graduated from a digital school. I expected a job as a developer or graphics designer, but I ended up working as an office assistant. I did this for a while, and I was paid ten thousand Naira or thereabouts.

Would you consider it to be your desired job?

No. I graduated from a digital school, so I was looking for a digital job, and not one involving sorting office papers and sending emails, but

that was what I ended up doing. I was the only one employed at the office, so I didn't really have a job role. I just did whatever job my boss had in mind. I did the job for a while to gain some work experience and develop myself for the other roles I intended to grow into. I also did it for the remuneration.

At that time, I didn't have a personal computer or smartphone, so I needed the money to enable me buy a laptop. Learning was really hard for me after I left school, so I had to work to enable me save some money and get my career started.



There are things that happen that may not seem advantageous at the moment but if you think through it objectively, it could help you forge your future.



So, tell us about the training you benefited from the Oxfam project and how it has impacted your personal development.

I would start with what life was like before the training. I graduated from digital school in 2015. After my graduation, I was just sitting at home doing nothing. I wasn't really inspired to do anything. I wanted to be a petroleum engineer and work for the big oil companies. That was before I heard about the Oxfam training from my friend. After the training, I was able to think objectively and know what I really wanted for my life and how to go about it. I enrolled in some online courses in personal development. For me, it wasn't just about the training, it was about shaping my whole life. The training was more than learning the basics of designing, it taught me character and workplace attitude.

Would you say the training has helped you choose a career path?

Yes, it has.

How?

As I said, before the training, I didn't have any direction for my life. I was just like other secondary school graduates out there, who just write JAMB after school without really knowing why they want to get into the university. After the training, I understood why I needed to further my education. I wanted to study Petroleum Engineering initially but right now, I want to study Psychology because it will be useful to my career as a UI/UX designer. As a UI/UX designer, I need to understand how people think and why they like what they like. Many tech companies actually pay a lot of money in order to understudy their potential customers, just to ensure these people remain loyal to their applications. That is the kind of job I intend to end up doing.

What are some of the challenges and setbacks you experienced during the training?

The major challenge was finance. There were days I had to trek down from Ajah to Jakande. Throughout this time, however, my mind was focused on the goal. I believe in purpose and destiny as a Christian. I had the conviction that the training was what I needed to do, regardless of the circumstances. I was convinced that nothing could stop me from achieving my goal.

How were you able to surmount the challenges?

On the issue of finance, some people assisted me. Some persons gave me funds to cover my transportation. Also, I had a friend who used to walk down with me from Ajah to Jakande, and after the training, we would return home together. He was a major motivation.

What is the reward and impact of this opportunity so far?

This opportunity has been life-changing. It changed the way I think. I grew up in a place that made it difficult for one to think about his or her future because of the mentality of the people there. Participating in this training has changed the way I think, and my general outlook on life. It has helped me have a vision for my life.

I didn't directly learn this from the training, but the training helped me think about it.

How do you hope to inspire young people seeking similar opportunities?

After the training, I drafted an action plan for my life. Of course, I can't implement some of the plans now, due to financial constraint. But in the long run, I intend to build an academy like this for UI/UX training. UI/UX is a new field in Nigeria so, I want to set up a UI/UX design school.

Can you elaborate on that?

UI/UX means User Interface, User Experience. For every device we use, there is always a UI and User Experience. When you click on a button on your phone, you expect it to perform a certain action. If it doesn't perform this action, you get angry. That's the User Experience. The UI is what you see, that is the interface. For example, the button you clicked on is the interface. It's the interface that you use to relate with the phone. The User Experience is what works in the background. Generally, it has to do with gadgets, electronics and the internet of things. There are several ways you can implement UI and UX.

So in what capacity are you trying to create this kind of opportunity for others?

Last month, I started a free graphics design training in my neighborhood, but the response and turnout was poor. The major issue was that many of them did not have laptops, and I could not provide laptops

that they could use for the training. That was the major reason it didn't work out.

Do you intend to continue this project, or would you try something new?

All my dreams are interconnected. I told you that I intend to set up a UI/UX academy in the future. The reason I want to start the graphics design free training is to enable me to have the experience of teaching and relating with students. This way, I would be able to build on that knowledge and experience for the UI/UX academy.

What would you say to someone who is yet to discover his or her career path or whose first job is not in line with his or her desired career path?

First, to someone who is doing a job that is not in line with his or her desired career path, as I said earlier, I believe in purpose and destiny.

There are some things that happen that may not seem advantageous at the moment, but if you think through it objectively, it could help you forge your future. Using myself as an example, I have worked with four companies in three years, and each of these experiences has turned out to be worthwhile.



OPEYEMI AGBAJE

Beneficiary, Ekobits ICT Academy

It is never too early to start out; 18-year-old Opeyemi Agbaje projects the truth in this statement. As a media trainer at Eko Bits ICT Academy, she takes us through her learning curve and gives us insight into her goals for the future. Learn more.

What was your first job experience?

My first job was in 2018 with Oxfam for their annual report. I got the job through an Oxfam training which had earlier exposed me to designing for Poise Nigeria.

What did you benefit from the Oxfam project training?

The training I underwent with Oxfam was the Ekobit ICT where I learnt graphic design, UX, UI and Cinematography. The training really helped me as I did not have any computer knowledge prior to this time; I only utilized computers for watching movies. It has imparted my life greatly, allowing me visualize my future.

Has the training help in determining your career path?

Yes, it has. While I am currently preparing to resume at the university for a BSc. in Psychology, the training has afforded me a certificate that

would allow me return to graphic and photography upon completion of my study.

What was your goal? What opportunities were given to you to take the next step?

The training particularly improved my communication skills and confidence level. It also afforded me the opportunity to travel to Benin to talk to youths during the youth day where several keynote speakers such as Waje as well as investors were present.



Do not keep your dreams to yourself, share them so that the right people can help you achieve them



What are some of the setbacks you encountered?

I really did not have any challenges. However, during the process of preparing and applying to the University, I was afraid that I might have to stop the training, but thankfully, I was able to finish up and will be resuming school in a short while. My parents were also very supportive, assisting me with majority of my needs during the course of the training.

What has been the reward of the opportunity?

I now know the way forward and know what I need to achieve in order to get to the future I envision.

How do you hope to connect with youths looking for such opportunity?

I utilise my social media handles in broadcasting the activities at Eko-bits. Also, we are currently through the alumni week, getting more people to be sponsored for the programme.

What is your advice for those who have not found their career path?

I would advise that they take out time to know what really draws them before moving to the next thing. Also, to get opportunities, such persons should not keep their dreams to themselves, but share them so that the right people can help them in achieving such dreams.



YETUNDE ODUSOGA

Talent Acquisition Specialist, WorkForce

28 years old Yetunde Ibidun Odusoga is a talent acquisition specialist with Workforce group who has aided various candidates at different entry levels to get job opportunities in the Finance sector. She sat with us to give insight into her premier job which kick started her career. Enjoy.

What was your first job experience? How much was the compensation? How did you get the job?

My first job experience was in 2016 as an intern at Poise Nigeria for a compensation package of 20,000 Naira. I got the job after the Career Kickstart program that ended with me being one of the two top candidates selected for an internship with the organization. I was promoted to the position of the recruitment and reporting officer, that same year.



“If you don't try, you will never know”



What did you benefit from the Oxfam Project? How has it affected your personal development?

As part of the premier Career Kickstart stream, I gained a lot of expertise through the project ranging from presentation skills to communication skills, amongst others. In my personal development, the training

continues to have great impact in my present work which focuses a lot on ability to convince clients through presentation to buy my products. I believe strongly that if I had not taken part in the program, I would not be as effective as I am currently in presentations and communication.

Did the training help in determining your career choice?

No, it did not determine my career choice rather it has aided my career path as it enhanced my entire being, enabling me to communicate with confidence and generally have improved soft skills.

What was your goal? What opportunities were given to you to take the next step and how did you use them?

My goal was to learn more about soft skills; however, the opportunity to intern with Poise Nigeria helped initiate my career in line with what I studied; Human Resource Management.

What challenges did you encounter?

When I became the reporting and recruitment officer, I had to send reports on Career Kickstart alumni progress to Oxfam and it was a bit challenging as it was an entirely new terrain for me. I was however able to push through with the support of an adviser in person of Ukinabo Dare and also because it was my passion.

Even if a person supports you and teaches you how to do a thing, without passion on your part, it's a NO. I did not give up since HR is what I love doing, I kept pushing till I was able to get through.

What has been the reward of this opportunity?

I have had a lot of rewards. Immediately I left Poise where I had dealt majorly with graduate level and few mid-level recruitments, I started core recruitment for senior level candidates at my subsequent appointment, which was easy for me.

How do you hope to inspire youths looking for such opportunities? What is your plan of action?

Prior to my exit from Poise Nigeria, I got the owner of the hostel I stayed in during my studies at the Lagos State University to send a list of graduates who had finished their National Youth Service or were preparing to round off to us, so that they could come for the Career kickstart program. Even after my exit, I continue to follow-up on this, referring individuals to the program.

What would you to say a person who is yet to discover his/her career path?

Always try to do things, do not just assume that everything is not for you. If you do not try, at the end of the day, nothing would be for you. For instance, personally if I had not tried going for the Career kickstart pro-

gram, and just assumed it was another employability skill programme I would not have gotten the opportunity I have now.

“If you don’t try, you will never know.”

40 FIRST JOBS **TRIVIA**

1. **Whose job challenge was learning to deal with difficult customers?**

- a) Mrs Obafunke Alade-Adeyefa
- b) Bishop FEB Idahosa
- c) Dr Cosmas Maduka
- d) Mr Gbenga Showole

2. _____ **practiced Law for only a year.**

- a) Mrs Seyi Bella
- b) Mr Agada Apochi
- c) Mr Martin Abraham
- d) Chief Mrs Eniola Fadayomi

3. **Which of the contributors left their first job due to unjust punishments?**

- a) Professor Pat Utomi
- b) Prof Elijah Ayolabi
- c) Mrs Mavi Isibor
- d) Dr Lucy Newman

4. **One of his favorite quotes is by Kahlil Gibran. Who is this?**

- a) Mr Taiwo Ayanleye
- b) Mr Kola Aina
- c) Mr Martin Abraham
- d) Professor Patrick Utomi

5. _____ **wished to have towed the path of entrepreneurship.**

- a) Mr Martin Abraham
- b) Mr Barry Obioma
- c) Professor Goddie Isibor
- d) Mrs Tolulope Agiri

6. **Whose first job helped him realize his true calling was in a different path?**

- a) Mr Kola Aina
- b) Mr Taiwo Ayanleye
- c) Mr Agada Apochi
- d) Dr Goddie Isibor

7. **Who worked as a driver in his first job?**

- a) Mr Olamide Adedeji
- b) Bishop Feb Idahosa
- c) ID Cabasa
- d) Dr Cosmas Maduka

8. **Who among the contributors got her career as a result of a mistake in her JAMB details?**

- 1. Mrs Joan Agha
- 2. Mrs Obafunke Alade-Adeyefa

- 3. Dr Lucy Suryhel Newman
- 4. Mrs Mavi Isibor

9. Who among the contributors made this statement: “We are not human doings, we are human beings.”?

- a) Mr Martin Abraham
- b) Professor Pat Utomi
- c) Mrs Ukinebo Dare
- d) Dr Goddie Isibor

10. Which of the contributors found their career path as a child?

- a) Mr Barry Obioma
- b) Mr Emeka Erem Nehemiah
- c) Mr Taiwo Ayanleye
- d) Mrs Nonye Cally-Bechi

11. Who became successful without formal education?

- a) Dr Cosmas Maduka
- b) Mr Gbenga Showole
- c) Mrs Nkem Okocha
- d) Mrs Mavi Isibor

12. _____ left their first job primarily because of distance.

- a) Mr Emeka Ndu
- b) Professor Patrick Utomi
- c) Mr Abolore Salami
- d) Mr Olamide Adedeji

13. Who marketed their company at Alaba Market?

- a) Mrs Chioma Ukonu
- b) Dr Lucy Newman
- c) Mrs Tolulope Agiri
- d) Ms Nkem Okocha

14. Who had read 700 hundred books at 25?

- a) Professor Elijah Ayolabi
- b) Mr Tade Cash
- c) Mr Onyeka Akumah
- d) Dr Goddie Isibor

15. Who had their secondary school education interrupted by the Nigerian Civil War?

- a) Mrs Nonye Cally-Belechi
- b) Professor Iheanyichukwu Okoro
- c) Ms Onyinye Norman-Roberts
- d) Mr Opeyemi Adeshina

16. **Who said, "Excellence is not in what you do, but in who you are"?**

- a) Mr Barry Obioma
- b) Mr Olamide Adedeji
- c) Mr Agada Apochi
- d) ID Cabasa

17. **Who stopped teaching to work at the Central Bank of Nigeria?**

- a) Mrs Joan Agha
- b) Mrs Seyi Bella
- c) Mr Emeka Nwakanma
- d) Chief Mrs Eniola Fadayomi

18. **Who worked at Cornerstone Insurance?**

- a) Mrs Tolulope Agiri
- b) Mr Gbenga Showole
- c) Mr Emeka Ndu
- d) Mr Bode Opadokun

19. **Whose first job was at Computer Village?**

- a) Mr Taiwo Ayanleye
- b) Mr Emeka Akumah
- c) Dr Cosmas Maduka
- d) Mr Agada Apochi

20. **Whose first pay was 4,000 Naira?**

- a) Dr Goddie Isibor
- b) Mr Adeniyi Duale
- c) Mr Temitope Ogunsemo
- d) Mr Nehemiah Kalu

21. **Who worked as a doctor in Zaria?**

- a) Dr Goddie Isibor
- b) Dr Lucy Newman
- c) Professor Iheanyichukwu Okoro
- d) Professor Elijah Ayolabi

22. **Who refused to be a stay-at-home wife, even though her husband was successful?**

- a) Mrs Mavi Isibor
- b) Dr Lucy Newman
- c) Mrs Tolulope Agiri
- d) Mrs Chioma Ukonu

23. **Whose favourite quote is "Whatever the mind can conceive and**

believe, it can achieve”?

- a) Mrs Tolulope Agiri
- b) Ms Nkem Okocha
- c) Mrs Mavi Isibor
- d) Dr Lucy Newman

24. _____ said this: “Knowledge gained from whatsoever we do can never be a waste, enjoy the job while it lasts. Maybe you are there for a reason because nothing happens by accident.”

- a) Mrs Nonye Cally-Belechi
- b) Professor Iheanyichukwu Okoro
- c) Mr Emeka Ndu
- d) Mr Bode Opadokun

25. Whose bank job denied them of self development opportunities and made them seem introverted?

- a) Ms Nkem Okocha
- b) Mrs Obafunke Alade-Adeyefa
- c) Dr Lucy Suryhel Newman
- d) Professor Iheanyichukwu Okoro

26. _____ was appointed Lagos State Attorney General & Commissioner for justice in 1987.

- a) Mrs Obafunke Alade-Adeyefa
- b) Chief Mrs Eniola Fadayomi
- c) Mr Temitope Ogunsemo
- d) Mr Nehemiah Kalu

27. Who said, “When you come in contact with anyone, you must be able to impact them positively. To do this, however, you must first connect with your passion”?

- a) Mrs Ebele Chukwujama
- b) Ms Nkem Okocha
- c) Mrs Mavi Isibor
- d) Mrs Seyi Billa

28. Who was considered unserious during their youth service?

- a) Mr Opeyemi Adeshina
- b) Mrs Ebele Chukwujama
- c) Mr Bode Opadokun
- d) Mrs Nonye Cally-Bechi

29. Who was paid 200 Naira as NYSC allowance?

- a) Mr Barry Obioma
- b) Mr Emeka Erem Nehemiah
- c) Mr Taiwo Ayanleye
- d) Professor Iheanyichukwu Okoro

30. ***"I do not think anyone should spend less than two to three years in a particular company else they would not get enough value from themselves or the company."*** Who said this?

- a) Mr Abolore Salami
- b) Professor Pat Utomi
- c) Mrs Mavi Isibor
- d) Chief Mrs Eniola Fadayomi

SPONSORS



Oxfam works with a diverse and broad range of individuals and partner organizations to create sustainable and lasting solutions to eradicate poverty, suffering & injustice. Through the Work in Progress! (WiP!) project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Oxfam aims to create more employment and positive expectations about the future for young men and women in Nigeria, Egypt & Somalia.



Spurred by a vision to enhance youth employment and raise a truly global labour force, Poise Graduate Finishing Academy (PGFA) was founded by Poise Nigeria Ltd, Nigeria's premier image and personality consultancy.

PGFA has one goal: To Re-engineer the Nation's Workforce. This goal is relentlessly pursued by providing workplace learning and education that bridge the gap between the knowledge gotten from formal education and the practical Knowledge, Attitude, Skills and Experience (KASE) required for success in life, career and entrepreneurship.

It established the PSENSE Employability certification, approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC), which is a true measure of an employee's readiness for the workplace. In 10 years, PGFA has trained over 40,000 young executives with 87.5% employment rate amongst its PSENSE Executive Alumni.

40 FIRST JOBS

OUR ESTEEMED CONTRIBUTORS

ABOLORE SALAMI	JIDE ALLO
ADEBAYO ALONGE	JOAN AGHA
ADEDEJI OLOWE	KOLA AINA
ADENIYI DUALE	LUCY SURHYEL NEWMAN
AGADA APOCHI	MARTIN ABRAHAM
AJEBO	MAVI SOKIA ISIBOR
AKINYEMI DAVIDS	NKEM OKOCHA (MAMAMONI)
BARRY OBIOMA	NONYE CALLY-BECHI
BODE OPADOKUN	OBAFUNKE ALADE-ADEYEFA
CHIOMA UKONU	OLAMIDE
COSMAS MADUKA	ONYEKA AKUMAH
EBELE CHUKWUJAMA	PATRICK UTOMI
ELIJAH AYOLABI	SEYI BELLA
EMEKA NDU	SOWEMIMO ABIODUN
ENIOLA FADAYOMI	TADE CASH
FEB IDAHOSA	TAIWO AYANLEYE
FUNKE ALOMOOLUWA	TEMITOPE OGUNSEMO
GODDIE ISIBOR	TOLULOPE AGIRI
ID CABASA	UCHE ONWUAMAEGBU UGWU
IHEANYI OKORO	UKINEBO DARE



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