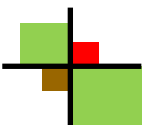


EXIT INTERVIEW

In this seventh issue of the Knowledge Hub, we get to learn from one Young Professional; Ms. Mercy Deche, and the outgoing Human Resource Manager; Ms. Faith Marete. As they share their experiences at the Authority; how they carried out research and used information and knowledge resources, and, finally challenges and lessons learnt during their period at the Authority.

Ms. Deche served at the Authority for a period of eight months . Her areas of expertise are in Public International Law, Human Rights and Environmental Law and Policy.

Ms. Faith Marete has served at the Authority for a period of nine years. She exits the Authority as a Human Resource Manager having risen through the ranks from the position of a Senior officer at the point of entry. She has facilitated and participated in various programs that have seen the growth of the Authority over the years. Her areas of expertise is in Human Resource Management.



Mercy Deche

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hich departments were you first turn to when looking for information to enable you assigned to and what roles did perform your tasks?
you undertake ?

I was stationed in two departments. The first department was the Buyer Power department. Here, I assisted the investigation officers in, investigation of cases, writing reports, research, assessment, and analysis of evidence. Unfortunately, I'm not very sure how the buyer power, department functions, since I wasn't given the chance to handle a case from the beginning to the end. I would get instructions from the investigation officer to do an analysis and create an evidence schedule or to write a letter asking for more information from the client. On two occasions, I was able to do a preliminary opinion analysis. From my perspective, this is was limiting since not much learning happens. I would have preferred to have an intense workload where I would be allowed to navigate and apply what I have been taught. That is an area I strongly felt was absent in the buyer power department and should possibly be looked into. I also took part in meetings with clients to try and understand the evidence they had, where I guided them based on their queries, on how to file complaints or any issues.

Which resources (hard copy and/or web based) did you

My first reference point would be the Competition Act and the provisions of buyer power therein. I would then refer to the buyer power guidelines. All these are available online and on the website. If I needed further assistance, I would reach out to the officer who has assigned me the task for further guidance. The assignments I handled circulated around these two resources. However, I had one assignment where I had to do extensive desktop research and had to find resources from other countries relating to the particular case. I also got a lot of assistance and guidance from Mr. Sylvester Mwazama who played a big role in helping me navigate.

Did you make reference to cases previously handled by the Authority?

I mostly just did a schedule of evidence or a preliminary opinion. It was only on once instance where I had an insurance related assignment and had to go back to an insurance report used in a previous case to retrieve information.

Which skills did you gather from the Buyer Power department?

I improved on my communication skills as we would handle external stakeholders who would at times be temperamental. I also learnt how to articulate the law and buyer power provisions. .

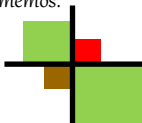
I also gathered problem-solving skills where I would have to properly analyze a client's complaint and provide guidance on the same as per the requirements of the Act. I improved my skills in working with digital tools and especially writing professional emails to clients and stakeholders.

What did you learn about Buyer Power and how it works?

In my years of interaction with competition law, I had never come across Buyer Power. I didn't even know that there's something called rebates. I learned that without Buyer Power, many small and medium micro enterprises are actually going under, because of non-payments or excessive rebates. This has a big impact on the economy and on the individuals doing business. This makes the business environment very viable for small and medium enterprises. Buyer Power exposed me to the struggles that small and medium, micro-enterprises face against the big players in the market. This was a good experience, a good addition to my knowledge, a good addition to my view of public service.

What were your assignments in the Legal Department?

They included drafting government contracts, which required me to refer the Public Procurement Assets and Disposal Act, 2015. Reviewing notices of investigation or documents from other departments, specifically mergers, consumer protection and enforcement. Drafting legal opinions, interpretation and analysis of certain clauses for other departments and drafting minutes and memos.



Which materials did you make reference to, aside from the Competition Act, while in the legal department?

I would run to Kenya Law because that's where you have a catalog of cases if you're drafting. Kenya Law gives you the database of all the laws in Kenya. I would also use the Kenya Information and Communications Act, Communications Act of Kenya, Kenya Gazette, and OECD reports among others.

I'm aware that the authority is subscribed to GCR and concurrences but based on my assignments, I was not able to find answers, from these subscriptions.

Which additional knowledge or skill did you get from the Legal Department?

Problem solving skills, the technique employed in the department were impactful where you're given a problem and expected to come up with a solution. Brainstorming was another skill I improved on and it enabled me think critically before I came up with a write up and this helped build my confidence. Brainstorming with colleagues before anything else gives you confidence, gives you a sense of direction, and allows you to come up with a strategy that makes problem-solving easy and faster.

Did you face any constraints in accessing or sharing knowledge?

I encountered this in the Buyer Power department, when working on a particular insurance case. I experienced difficulty in accessing a report based on how it was saved and the process was quite cumbersome. I however got

assistance from a colleague. I think there is a need to have a catalog or a register of these cases. Reports or resources you have collected using other cases such that a person wants to access the same would have been very easy. I know where to go and how to find it. I also had difficulty in accessing information or cases from the CMS hence I would always have to request assistance from a colleague. I would propose that this could be reviewed to allow for the accessibility of cases and information.

I didn't face any constraints in sharing information as opportunities or the avenues available for sharing that information were plenty. Knowledge sharing was taken very seriously with the various lectures, trainings, and forums. I would like to propose that the Authority would have, specific programmes dedicated to maybe YPs and interns only since most are at the entry levels of their careers and require a different set of skills and knowledge.

What recommendations would you give in terms of Knowledge Sharing and Access with a focus on Interns and YPs

I would recommend having a mentorship and coaching program, or if you want to call it a buddy system. This is where you have one particular person to mentor you throughout your period at the Authority irrespective of the department you will be placed.

Did you find any challenges navigating the CMS/DMS?

Overall, it's a good platform. The only problem I found in DMS is the naming of folders, because the naming of folders you find in buyer power, it's not the same you

find in legal department. It would be efficient to have uniformity in the naming of the folders to as to avoid confusion when the folder has to move from one department to another. Navigating the platform wasn't a challenge on my end since Ms. Tekla Mwasaru gave me a proper induction.

Which critical knowledge is at a risk of being lost?

In the Legal Department, information and knowledge was properly documented hence this would be minimal, ideally nothing would be lost. They had a contract register and a litigation register and matrix. However, for the Buyer Power Department when a report is prepared, I could not trace the report hence there is a risk of loss of information and inaccessibility. This would also be tied to communication or orientation where there is a need for direction as to where the departments' resources are stored and how they can be accessed.

What areas of improvement have you identified in yourself and how do you plan to address the same?

Problem-solving skills is an area I realized I need to work on. This led me to apply for a self-development program at McKinsey. Exposure to brainstorming sessions helped me see this gap and realize the inadequacies I have in problem-solving. Adaptability and resilience, I realize I have to adapt depending on the scenario, situation, and environment in order to be successful

Which training and development or knowledge exchange session did you find helpful?

All of them stood out and were really awesome, listening and getting ideas from colleagues was impactful. Other external exchange sessions that stood out include the training by Kenya Law on how to draft a case law digest.



In an instance where you did not have critical knowledge or information what was your first source? **Do you have additional comments?**

what was your first source?

The officer I'm working with closely. So just to know whether they, have interacted with the information I'm looking for or whether they can point me in the right direction.

Which additional knowledge or skills did you gain during your stay at the Authority?

On consumer protection, this for me was also a class, it added to my legal knowledge of these two areas. I also, got a clearer picture of the workings of the Authority. I got to understand how the government works, how the Authority staff interact with one another and how the Authority itself interacts with other state agencies writing, team work, and interaction with clients. In addition to economic analysis, I understood the financial elements by analysis of financial records and also being able to extract relevant information from financial statements, so that was very new. The more reports I did, the more I got to understand, got the hang of it and learnt to analyze these big statements in order to quickly look for what's relevant to what you're doing.

Which training and development would you have liked or needed that you didn't receive?

I would have loved to have more training on buyer power. This is an area where even other staff members could get more sensitization on.

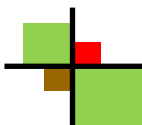
It would be good to have a feedback system where the YPs or Interns receive feedback after they complete a task to enable them to evaluate their performance.

There should be a structured way to distribute assignments so that there are minimal periods of idleness or moments where one is overwhelmed with assignments.

There is also need to work on the communication mechanisms. There were instances where information would be relayed to the entire staff members but the YPs would be left out yet they were to be part of those activities.

The Authority could consider trainings that are particularly tailored for YPs and Interns since most of them are at the entry level of their careers and may not benefit from advanced training for all staff members.

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Faith Marete

What roles did you undertake at the Authority?

The roles involved coordinating administrative activities related to personnel such as recruitments, payments, training and development and general staff well being among others.

Which Knowledge/Information resources did you use during your work processes and did you have any challenge accessing the same?

In human resource and administration, we rely so much on policy permissions and seculars and, any precedents that has been set. When we realize that we have a gap, and especially in our internal policies, policy documents, we go back and look at what the Public Service Commission guidelines provide on the matter at hand and other, when we are benchmarking, we use. I know sometimes it is very hard to get information from other state agencies or, government agencies, because sometimes it may take long or one may never get feedback at all. I have always used my professional networks. We have, been able to create a professional network amongst my peers in the various agencies. Therefore, when I need any information, I will go to them and they will be able to assist me in the shortest time possible.

We also have, a WhatsApp group as HRM of state corporations.

So in that group, when you need any document, when you need any information that you feel you're in a dilemma and you need to make a decision, you can always get information from the professionals in the group. So I can say that more often than not, I have not faced a challenge when it comes to information.

Which training and development or knowledge exchange session did you find helpful?

I received quite a bit in terms of capacity development trainings. That is both technical management and leadership trainings, they all had their own way of impacting on me as a professional in HR. And also not forgetting, what we always did on continuous professional development trainings that you always go to as a professional, which is a requirement by the regulating body of HRM. The training that stood out was the strategic leadership development program that I received from Kenya School of Government, because, it does not only, build capacity in the classroom or theory or policy, you get to know, what you expected to do as HR. The course also offers skills on how to build your emotional intelligence, how to handle different situations, while in leadership where you are required to create a balance between, different personality interests, and at the same time ensure that you are operating within policy. The course further provided skills to ensure compliance to relevant laws and policies of the institution and those of the public service. In a nut shell, the course enabled me to realize that the challenges I face in my day-to-day activities are not just unique to me, but they cut across all professionals. In human resource, I would recommend this course as the skills gained made me feel at ease in my work, enabled me make informed decisions and I become more diplomatic in handling sensitive situations

especially where I would be required to balance the decisions between the employee and the employer. In Human Resource, you have to help the employer achieve their mandate by ensuring compliance to all the necessary laws and policies, and at the same time manage people, people's emotions, people's feelings, and people's issues. In order to balance the two, you require a lot of emotional intelligence.

This I would recommend for the incoming HRM. There is however the need to have, a lot of capacity building on emotional intelligence, not only for the incoming HRM, but for the employees as they progress up the professional ladder. It is a key requirement since as you deal with and supervise people, you need to ensure they are happy and are enjoying their experience as employees in the organization, and at the same time are productive and help the organization deliver on its mandate.

Which skills and development have you gathered over the period you have been at the Authority?

I would say I may have had the knowledge and skills. However, the application that is the competency ability to put that knowledge and skills into action may not have been as it is today. I'm leaving the authority, a more competent human resource personnel because of the experience I have gathered over the years. It was not easy at the beginning since when I joined the Authority in 2014 systems, procedures and policies were being put in place, and shortly after, the automation process began, besides where we also had the responsibility of populating the organizational structure. When I joined the Authority there were about 25 employees. We therefore, had to quickly set in and start populating the structure with the competent or skilled employees in order to, deliver on the mandate.

I learned a lot on matters recruitment, since I had come from an institution that was, larger than the Authority and I didn't get an opportunity to fully participate in all HR functions. Up on joining CAK, I was exposed to all HR functions, and this really sharpened my skills, my knowledge, and I was eventually able apply my knowledge and skills.

This really motivated me and I believe my performance was good hence earning a promotion to principal officer and further on to Manager. My encouragement to colleagues is that when you remain focused and ensure that you are performing and are productive, you can easily move up the professional ladder. Therefore, as much as the structure is lean, there is still opportunity for growth. Overall I would say I'm leaving the Authority a more competent professional, considering the challenges I have faced in the organization, which have helped me grow, and enabled me know how to deal with different situations.

You were able to move from a Senior Officer level, up to Manager HR. What strategies did you employ?

It may seem like there are no opportunities to move because all the positions are filled, possibly in your department. But it's important to, put your papers right. There is a public document on career progression guidelines where one can make reference to get information on what is required. It is therefore important to work on your qualifications so that when the time comes and the opportunity arises, you have all that it takes in addition to your performance. Whatever assignment you are given, do your best and of course, it'll be noticed. Your output is what matters. Therefore, if you are focused and you have your papers right, then there's nothing that

will deny you an opportunity when the chance presents itself.

Give two recommendations on how the HR department can better engage staff

Especially now that we are working remotely, it's very important to identify strategies in order to keep all staff engaged. I would recommend that to continue having frequent or quarterly town hall forums, where employees come together and raise any issues that they could be going through. This is an opportunity to meet staff and be able to interact, and bond away from a formal kind of setup. It also gives a level of motivation and a feeling of appreciation to employees. So when it comes to staff engagement, staff motivation is key. A number of staff motivation strategies have been implemented but it is human nature that when you give me a certain benefit today, it could be motivating me today just for a short while. Then after a short while, the benefits may no longer be motivators but just fringe benefits.

Therefore, I would suggest the need to look at the motivation strategies by reviewing the HR instruments and structure the organization to provide more opportunities, which also informs the structuring of our salary structures and getting necessary agencies to support. Therefore, for us to be able to engage our employees and ensure that they're not thinking outside CAK, we need to do something different. In addition, we had begun review of the medical benefits, which also have been in existence since inception of CAK. This is work in progress and is currently at the board level. This is also one other way of staff motivation that could go a long way in ensuring staff productivity and service delivery. I would recommend that the organization conducts a culture audit. Cultural audit is where

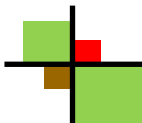
you develop a tool that informs the culture of the organization by asking certain questions that lead you to, identifying which are those values of the institution and which are the negatives of the institution that we need to deal with to ensure they're eliminated. Once you identify the opportunities or positives you build on them and ensure that whatever is negative in the organization, we change it and transform it into an opportunity or a positive value.

There would therefore be need, with the many changes that have taken place currently, for a culture audit then thereafter, development of strategies and implementation of the findings.

You may have handled a task that didn't turn out as planned. Which lessons did you learn and what advice would you give?

I spearheaded an initiative but it did not turn out as expected, though it was not an auto failure, but did not turn out as expected. About two years ago, we did a proposal to, establish a coaching and mentorship program. Presently, the Public Service Commission has required all public institutions to implement a coaching and mentorship program but this had already kicked off at the Authority.

We had envisioned this as a means to augment the, trainings and developments that we offer, considering that more often than not, there are budgetary constraints when it comes to matters training and development. Therefore, when you do coaching and mentorship, you also help employees grow and become competent, not only at the workplace, but also in their own personal life. Hence the proposal for the coaching and mentorship program.



We began by developing a policy which was approved by the board. At the time of implementation, we requested the Kenya School of Government to come in and, assist and they began by capacity building on the same. When the K S G team came on board, they completely, reviewed the policy and changed several things and we had to go back to the drawing board and seek another approval from the board. Once we were ready to implement it, we called upon staff to take up the coaching and mentorship by selecting or choosing among the trained, coaches and mentors. Unfortunately, the uptake was below 50%. Most of the staff indicated that they would not prefer coaching and mentorship that is formal. However, at the time of implementation, the public service had already required us to do this, and therefore we had to keep records to show that we're implementing the coaching and mentorship program. So I would say this was not as I expected, and therefore it did not meet my desired results. My learning point from that is that it is important to involve other agencies, people, and all stakeholders as much as possible from the beginning. It is important to do so in order to avoid back and forth and wastage of time and demotivation during the process.

CAK should evaluate the program to determine what has worked so far, because we have about 18 people who have taken it up. Evaluation and feedback on the program is yet to be done. It is important that we don't lose on this coaching and mentorship. We evaluate what has worked, what has not worked and see what has worked so as to make adopt it and ensure the program is successful. Officers at the entry level can be able to learn so much from those who are more experienced and who have been at the Authority longer. So I would say that coaching and mentorship was right in my heart, but somehow has not really achieved as I had anticipated.

What advise would you give to Interns and Young Professionals?

I always tell them during induction that they have been given an open check where they can fill out whatever they want based on the focus they have, the attitude you have, and the commitment in whatever tasks they are assigned, no matter how small and especially for the YPs who come with very high qualifications. In the case of CAK, sometimes one would feel like they're being given very, small responsibilities. But how you deliver on those small responsibilities sends a message to the officer that has given you the assignment. It could be a test of your attitude, of your commitment or of your tolerance. So I would say, that when you're coming in at that very young age for these programs, have an open mind and ensure that your attitude is right. Remember that you not only come to learn on the technical areas but you're also learning on how to deal with people in the office setup. In the public service we have protocols on how you address and communicate with your seniors, peers, and your juniors, so there's much to learn apart from the technical aspects. So I would encourage them to keep the eye on the ball because I always give them examples of Yps and interns who have been absorbed into the establishment when positions opened up.

I would also encourage them, to build networks, as I said, from the word, go in everywhere you go, ensure that you have built good networks. Social and professional networks are very key and are good investments.

In the years you have served at the Authority what was your most memorable moment?

The most memorable is the recent relocation of CAK from block D to the new office. It's a project that is still ongoing, but I've, been quite involved in it. This is the

very first relocation where we had to, send staff to work remotely. We therefore had to look for a way of ensuring that we create space for the Kenya Railway staff who are the incoming occupiers of the building while at the same time ensuring that our services are not disrupted. I felt some satisfaction because it was a big challenge for us and the ability to transition seamlessly was a memorable moment and the project is ongoing even as I exit. Another memorable moment is the automation of CAK procedures. The Authority was about 1 year when the process began and I had the privilege of being the departmental champion where we worked closely with the system developers. This was such a timely initiative since when COVID came, staff were able to comfortably work remotely. There are of course, one or two challenges, which we are still improving on and as you continue implementing and using a platform, you realize that there are one or two things that you should have done differently. There have been some recommendations on the recruitment portal that are currently being addressed in order to have it at optimal level.

What ONE key leadership lesson are you taking with you from the Authority?

One of the key lessons I've learned is to listen to people and be diplomatic. I have learned to communicate in a more pragmatic way so that as much as I am telling that this is what the policy provides, I get the good language to communicate that so that I don't also kill spirits, I don't hurt emotions, I don't hurt feelings and ensure that my staff members still remain mentally sound and, motivated and engaged and happy and enjoy the experience of being CAK employees. Its important to have emotional intelligence and know when and how to communicate.

*****THE END*****

