

Managing Employee Transition from Active Sports Career to Mainstream Work in Kenya Commercial Bank, Kenya

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to determine how Kenya Commercial Bank manages employee transition from active sports to mainstream work activities of the bank. The methodology used in the study is cross-sectional descriptive survey and questionnaires were used to collect data. The study found out that at the time of employment, sportspeople are taken specifically to do sports and do not have any specified qualifications for them except sports. The salaries of the sportspeople are determined by their academic qualifications and on transition to mainstream activities their placements are also determined by the same academic qualifications and also on availability of opportunities. The employees are taken for full time training and on job training is done under supervision. The sportspeople are able to perform at their peak at a period of eight months. Most of the sportspeople are placed as subordinates and clerical staff mainly because they do not have the minimal qualifications required by the bank though, the bank helps them financially to further their studies. The study also concludes that though slow, some employees eventually catch up in the mainstream work of the bank.

Introduction

Princeton (2011) contends that the way we think of sports has drastically changed over the years; these days few people would say that a sport is just a game. Indeed, sports provide serious entertainment and big business in the world and sports managers are crucial to ensuring that the players, fans, coaches, and financial backers coexist peacefully. Sports have a unique power to attract, mobilize and inspire. By its very nature, sport is about participation, it is about inclusion and citizenship and it stands for human values such as respect for the opponent, acceptance of binding rules, teamwork and fairness. Sport is a powerful tool that strengthens social ties and networks and promotes ideals of peace, fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice, (Core 2004).

Kamenju (2005) suggests that sports is used as a program that prepares individuals to apply business, coaching and physical education principles to the organization, administration and management of organisations which includes instruction in program planning and development; business and financial management principles; sales, marketing and recruitment; event promotion, scheduling and management; facilities management; public relations and applicable health and safety standards. The world of sports administration and management is more than professional athletes and ball games. It is a big business full of huge budget decisions and complex negotiations. Sport managers and administrators run teams, ski resorts, recreational programs, sports governing bodies, college sports programs. They are business people specializing in sports organizations, Jomsy (2003).

Literature Review

Young (2001) observed that transition management is about what employees experience personally within them. It is concerned with helping employees let go of how things used to be and adapt to the way things are or are going to be. Managing transitions means helping employees to make a difficult process less stressful and disruptive for everyone. Transitions are periods of opportunity, a chance to start afresh and to make needed

changes in an organization. But they are also periods of acute vulnerability, because you lack established working relationships and a detailed understanding of your new role.

The fundamental premise of Linkage's Transition Management program is that for employees to make the transition required for change, they have to go through three necessary stages: Endings, in which people formally let go of the way things used to be, and the way they themselves used to be; the Neutral Zone, a kind of middle stage where people find the energy to tackle what's coming next; and New Beginnings, where people embrace the change, and move on to begin behaving in the new ways necessary to effect the change. Cole (2004) noted that human resources are the most dynamic of all organizations' resources. They need considerable attention from the organisations' management, if they are to realize their full potential in their work. He says that a training need is any shortfall in terms of employee knowledge, understanding, skill and attitudes against what is required by the job or the demands of organizational change.

Young (2011) says that when change occurs, the actions taken by management can impede or enhance employees' adaptation to change. It is vital to identify the 'whats' and the 'hows' of the proposed change and assess the impact on employees. The 'whats' of a change process include strategy and principles, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, reporting lines, budget responsibilities, individual capabilities, consultation process. The 'hows' need to deal with clear reasons for the change that employees can understand and believe, internal one-to-one communications, awareness and management of stress, emotional support, identifying aspects that individuals and the organization need to 'let go'. Achola (2006) noted that the key issue for organizations is to increase transition awareness among its employees and managers at all levels. This will help to prepare employees for change that will occur at work (and in their home life). It will also help managers to manage and support employees during periods of organizational change.

Kiganjo (2005) observes that career in sports has emerged as one of the most lucrative options in the world. Sports as a hot career do offer a plethora of opportunities. Sports have opened up many career opportunities for young talents in the world. Down the ages, the popular mindset has been that sports are good for the mind and body but it cannot help you earn your daily bread. Lately, this mindset has given way to acceptance of various sports related activities as viable career options. Other than actually being an active sportsman/ player, the other vocations in the field like sports management, sports medicine, sports journalism, adventure sports, fitness and health clinics and the like, have come to be regarded as full-fledged and highly paid careers options. He argues that sports persons with years of experience are now being offered to work in a related field, such as, sports journalism, sports goods manufacture/marketing or as commentator

Sports career and sport achievements could influence one's sense of achievement of important goals and satisfaction with different social roles. Athletes who invest heavily in sport and whose self-concept does not extend beyond the limits of their sport, often experience sport-career termination as an identity loss, Allison & Meyer (1988). Because of their early commitment to sport, this may lead to identity foreclosure. Murphy (1996) sportspersons experience difficulties adapting to social roles unrelated to sport. Athletes with strong athletic identities experience more difficulties in developing a post-sport vocational identity and less frequently explore career options and plan post-sport life than athletes with lower athletic identities, Brewer (1993).

The only inevitabilities in high performance sport is that every competitor terminates his/her sporting career at the elite level. However, some individuals experience adjustment difficulties when faced with such retirement. Oakle (1983) suggested that focusing on sport retirement as an event that occurs in isolation and inevitably leads to distress is likely to mislead research efforts. Retirement from sport maybe a difficult transition but it is a transition that occurs among other transitions, Baillie & Danish (1992). Sussman (1971) also argues that professional athletes do not experience difficulties because they know that their sport careers would be short and they prepare appropriately. He further asserts that most sportspeople are assured of second occupations upon retirement. Atchley (1980) suggests that retirement seems to have little influence on personal adjustment and self-identity and most sports people possess the necessary coping skills to overcome any problems that may arise. Orlick (1986) suggests that coaches and sportspeople be made aware of and taught how to ease the

transition out of high performance. Sinclair & Orlick (1993) expressed concerns for the number of sports who experience traumatic effect upon sports career termination including alcohol and substance abuse, acute depression, eating disorders, identity confusion, decreased self-confidence and attempted suicide.

Managing Employee Transition from Active Sports

To perform effectively on a job, an individual must have both the ability and the motivation to do so (Mwathi, 2005). To this end, organizations have developed different types of tests to measure these different aspects of a person's performance potential. Many international organizations have recognized the importance of sports to individuals, organizations and the society at large. The United Nations (UN) declared the year 2005 as the International Year of Sports and Physical Education. The declaration noted the role of sport as a tool for crime prevention, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue and recognized sport as a powerful and cost effective way of supporting development and peace objectives. The declaration viewed sport as a universal language that brings people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. People learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance in sports (www.un.org). Kiganjo (2005) observes that sports is the best school in life and offers values to the younger generation. Sports competitions are known to promote understanding and respect for cultural diversity, foster international partnerships and increase greater awareness of global social issues such as human right, the role of women in society, and drug prevention. Moreover, they generate a deep sense of national pride.

Achola (2006) noted that sports appeal to the inner potentials of young people and engages them emotionally, physically, psychologically and socially. Community owned sports has a big role in initiating social development, improving cohesion and exploring employment opportunities. Community sports can be used to blend social, economic, and moral enhancement of youth in humanization and restoration of values lost to the dehumanizing living conditions of the slums. Weebotsa (2010) noted that sports and cultural activities have been known to break chains of discrimination. During such events, issues such as gender, ethnic and social divisions are buried as people collectively celebrate. Research has shown that many professional athletes find the transition from a life of professional sports to a life without it very tough. He says that some of the reasons that athletes can't stay retired include: Age; Athletes retire when they are relatively young. They still have thirty, forty, fifty or more productive years ahead of them. Addiction to the Limelight; Professional players – especially ones at the tops of their games – are adored by fans. Once retired, it can be lonely. Addiction to the Thrill of the Game; Playing sports is undeniably thrilling. Retiring from that excitement can be tough. Depression after Retirement; Transitioning out of professional sports is a huge adjustment. Changing one's whole way of life is extremely stressful.

Annette (2001) observed that most athletes retire when they have a drop in performance or feel they have nothing more to achieve in the sport. Sometimes it is a loss of passion or they might want to raise a family - which is challenging and very hard to do when you are on the road all the time. Athletes will also retire if they think they are too old or that the risks outweigh the benefits. In Kenya different kinds of books and research papers have been written concerning sports and its management but there is no research on the management of employee transition from active sports engagement to mainstream work activities especially in the bank industry.

Kenya Commercial Bank Limited (KCB)

KCB Group was the largest financial services group in East Africa, with an asset base estimated at over US\$2.5 billion (www.kcbbankgroup.com october 2012). As of July 2009, KCB Group had the widest network of banking outlets consisting of over 180 branches in Kenya, Rwanda, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. KCB owns a sports club that has enough sports facilities which enable its teams to practice and participate in

Kenyan football, rugby, volleyball and basketball leagues. Kenya Commercial Bank also has rugby, volleyball and basketball teams all of which play in respective men's top flight leagues in Kenya and beyond.

At the time of this study, KCB had 163 employees engaged fulltime in various sports. At the same time, there were 63 former sports men and women who had been redeployed in different sections of the bank such as telephone switch board. Sports persons leave active sports due to reasons such as bad injury, age and drastic decline in performance (www.kcbbankgroup.com). An individual lasts up to about 30-35 years for those who do not drop out due to injury. This is the reason why many sportsmen and sportswomen retire from sports when still in youth age bracket and are put in working as bankers and the different roles and duties that KCB has. This is quite challenging to the individuals concerned and the bank as many of them are not qualified or do not have the necessary experience to work in a bank hence making difficult for the Human Resource managers to help from active participation in sports to mainstream banking work.

Research Problem

Career transition may be an especially difficult and disruptive if it impacts negatively on income and ego involvement of the sportspeople (Baillie & Danish 1992). At the end of their sport careers sportspeople may experience feelings related to the long-term sacrifices that were necessary for competitive excellence, fear of the future, perceptions of inability to catch up and doubts about being involved in a new life-style may be prevalent. All transitions are followed by a period of disruption in which old routines, assumptions and relationships change and new ones evolve (Schlossberg 1989).

Kamenju, Mwathi & Kiganjo (2005) did a research on athletes' retirement from active sports, Gordon (1995) also did a research on Career Transitions in Competitive Sports, while Taylor (1998) conducted a research on career transition among elite athletes. However, there has been no research on the challenges in the management of employee transition from active sports engagement to mainstream work activities. This is the research gap this study intends to fill. The question this study sought to answer is: how does KCB manage the transition of its employees from active sports to mainstream work activities of the bank? Based on the question, the following research objective was developed: to determine how KCB manages employee transition from active sports to mainstream work of the bank

Research Methodology

Population of Study and Sample design

The population of study was 78. This comprised 5 training managers, 7 heads of divisions 6 recruitment managers and 60 of the employees who were undergoing the transition process. The sample comprised all employees on transition from sports to mainstream work of the bank and the managers. This gives a total of 78 which is considered adequate because it is well above threshold that is recommended by experts.

Data Collection

Structured questionnaires was used to collect primary data from the employees who were involved in the transition. The questionnaires were dropped and picked later. The questionnaire was divided into three sections representing the variables in the study. Section one captured the biodata, where personal details of the employee in the transition process was taken, section two comprised the placement of the employees on transition into the banks' mainstream activities and section three had the strategies used by the employees in the transition process to cope with their new work at the bank. A five point likert type scales were used to present the measures of the variables.

Data Analysis

The collected data was thoroughly examined and checked for completeness and comprehensibility. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation, frequency distribution and percentages was used to analyze the data. Data presentation was done by use of tables.

Research Findings

Demographic Data

Gender of the Employees

This is important as it will enable us to establish the rate of men to women on transition. Out of the 60 employees 56 of them were able to respond to the questionnaires and the results are as shown in table 1:

Table 1: *Distribution of respondents by gender*

Gender	No. of Employees	Percentage
Male	39	70%
Female	17	30%
Total	56	100%

Source: Author (2012)

Job Position of the Respondents

The respondents were asked what positions they held in their respective mainstream activities of the bank. The results are as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: *Distribution of employees (Respondents) by position*

Position	No. of Employees	Percentage
Subordinate Staff	33	59%
Clerical Staff	15	27%
Lower Level Managers	5	9%
Middle Level Managers	3	5%
Total	56	100%

Source: Author (2012)

Length of Service in the Bank's Core Business

The sportspeople were asked to indicate how long they have been involved in mainstream activities of the bank and the results are as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: *Distribution of respondent's by length of service*

No. of Years	Frequency	Percentage
0-3	26	47%
4-6	14	25%

7-10	13	23%
Over 10years	3	5%
Total	56	100%

Source: Author (2012)

Academic Qualifications

The respondents were asked about their academic qualifications and they appear as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: *Distribution of employees according to academic qualifications*

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
O Level(High School Certufucate)	19	34%
A Level(Advanced high school certificate)	3	5%
Certificate (Post high school)	18	32%
Diploma	11	20%
Degree	5	9%
Total	56	100%

Source: Author (2012)

Transition Process

In this section respondents were asked to rate the extent to which each of the statements given in the questionnaire accurately described their feelings about the transition process and outcomes.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the bank’s decision to transfer less active sportspeople to the mainstream work of the bank. Majority of the sportspeople in the study are satisfied with the procedure which the bank is using to introduce them to mainstream work of the bank shown by the mean score 3.89. This translates agreeing to a great extent. This attitude arises from the fact that the procedure helps them learn and know the banks policies and procedures before they get into doing the actual work of the bank. In this regard they get to learn how to work in a different environment and how they are suppose to relate to other employees at different levels in the bank. Furthermore, through this system, the employees on transition are able to acclimatize with the different situations in terms of dress code among others.

The training system provided to the employees is accepted by most respondents with a mean score of 4 out of 5. The employees on transition, however, suggest that the training period be increased since they need more time to learn the mainstream activities of the bank. They also suggest that they should be trained in their area of interest instead of the general training provided it is irrelevant. The respondents are of the view that during training the employees be subjected to guiding and counseling as this would help them psychologically. This is because most of them used to earn more than they earn after transition. Guiding and counseling will help them manage their finances well.

Discussion

Majority of the employees on transition have either high school level of education or post-secondary school certificate. Very few are degree holders. This explains why they are mostly placed in subordinate and clerical jobs. However, it was found that sportspeople are encouraged to go back to school to obtain higher qualifications that will enable them be considered for higher positions. On the other hand, many sportspeople feel that it is

very challenging to go back to school immediately and so they would prefer to work in their current positions for quite some time before they can go back to further their studies in order to get promotions.

It emerged that job specifications do not apply to the sportspeople at the time of initial employment. This is mostly because they do not have any experience at that time except the ability to engage in sports, in addition to the fact that their academic qualifications are too low. This solely applies to sportspeople and not other persons who have not been in sports.

Given the fact that the bank considers a university degree as the minimum qualification for employment in the bank's mainstream work, the sportspeople usually get a low salary considering the fact that most of them do not meet the requirements hence perform subordinate and clerical work. The managers further agree that for them to be considered in the bank's main salary scale, they need to have at least a degree. This is mainly the reason why the sportspeople are earning low salaries. This has led to the employees who have retired from sports being frustrated since they are used to earning more money due to the allowances that they are given when in sports compared to what they get net when deployed on the bank's regular work. This has led to some of the employees on transition quitting the bank.

It was confirmed that employees who are taken to the mainstream activities of the bank owe those who have not reached the retirement age as per the bank's policy. Several reasons make them undergo the transition. These include injuries and decline in their performance in sports. However, not all the sportspeople agree to be taken to the mainstream activities of the bank. Such employees are given send home package. The reason given by the said employees during the exit interview is that they do not feel that they will be able to catch up with their counterparts while others say that they do not have interest in working in the banking industry.

Majority of the sportspeople accept the offer by the bank to join the mainstream work. Their decision is informed by the acute shortage of jobs in the Kenyan labour market and the sportspeople feel like they do not have chances of getting other jobs outside considering the fact that most of them do not have university education and relevant experience since all they have engaged in is sports. Most of them perform poorly in the mainstream work of the bank at the beginning of their redeployment but some of them keep improving as time goes by. Similarly, some quit after some time because they are unable to cope with the mainstream work of the bank. According to Young (2011), this is normal and can be addressed with guiding and counselling and patience and understanding because with passage of time, they get used to the work and catch up. If they are not shown understanding, trust and communication they will resign due to frustration. He suggests that management style must adapt to different phases of the change process.

In several cases, redeployment is done after training and identification of persons strengths and weaknesses. The training lasts six months and is done off and on-job. The employees are then expected to perform better and are given targets to achieve. Despite all this, some employees find it difficult especially when they get hostile reception from the other employees who have been working in the mainstream activities for a reasonably long time. This is the time the employees need openness and involvement as this will make them feel accepted. The employee respondents explained that the transition process comes with challenges for both employees on transition and the banks management. These challenges include dress code. This is because the sportspeople are used to sportswear and casual wears being the dress code in the field where they spend most of their time. Changing to official or office wear becomes a great challenge to them. They are also used to running up and down, exercising most of their time and thus sitting down in an office the whole day with a computer and writing makes them get bored and less excited.

From the foregoing, it is clear that transition of sportspeople from active full-time involvement in sports to full-time work in a highly regulated organizational work environment, is beset with many challenges that can only be surmounted with concerted effort from both parties.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

The research revealed that most of the managers had worked for the bank for more than 5 years. The selection of the “sports employees” is done from different sports facilities and tournaments by the banks team coaches. Although the trend is now changing, as they focus mainly on universities and colleges as opposed to past practices by which they used to source the players from secondary schools competitions.

It was also found that employees are absorbed into the mainstream activities of the bank mainly when the sports is no longer attracting large audience and when a sports employee is injured and can no longer play their respective game, or when the employees is no longer able to play effectively. Other reasons include cost cutting for employing new staff, lack of interest in sports, among others. The sportspeople who do not meet the minimum qualification of the bank are mostly taken in as subordinate staff while being given opportunities to further their studies and later get promotions. Those who have degrees are usually put in the mainstream activities of the bank according to the opportunities available and their level of experience.

The survey found that due to the challenges in the transition, 30% of the employees on transition resign a short while after starting the mainstream activities of the bank, 40% continue working in the mainstream activities of the bank though not satisfied with their new work and the remaining 30% are able to cope and learn the new work. The transition of the employees from sports to mainstream activities of the bank is done two times every year, depending on other factors like availability of opportunities and staff for the transition and the number leaving sports. The number of employees who are taken each year also depends on the same factors. The managers places the employees on transition depending on their qualifications. For example those who have degrees or have done some specialized courses will be placed according to what they have done while those who do not meet the qualifications are randomly placed depending on opportunities in the different divisions. The survey further found that the employees are taken for both full time training, then after placement they undergo on job-training for a period of six months. In total it takes up to a period of ten to twelve months for them to reach their peak in performing mainstream activities of the bank. Some of the challenges that the managers face with the employees in transition include the fact that employees lag behind in terms of performance and thus they have to be monitored all the time, it is time consuming and the managers confirmed that it needs a lot of patience and understanding.

Recommendations

It is recommended that organizations should develop detailed concepts and come up with effective programs for assisting the employees on transition. The managers should involve employees who are on transition in developing these programs. The bank should also consider an overlap kind of transition where they introduce the sportspeople to mainstream activities of the bank before they fully exit sports and join the mainstream activities of the bank. Supervisors and the heads of divisions should also be patient and be more understanding with the employee on transition. There should be a 360 degree kind of communication between the management and the employees on transitions, where there is feedback from both the employees on transition and the managers.

Suggestions for further Studies

Other areas of study on transition include the disciplined forces from where most athletes are drawn. Transitions from working to retirements and how athletes/sportspeople take this transition. The effects of transitions in old age and how to cope with it, and how to cope with stress that comes with transitions among other transitional issues. All these are potential areas of research. Coping with transitions from one organization to another is another area of study that can be explored.

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