



7 GUIDELINES to enhancing COMPETENCE in a FRESH GRADUATE

The question of competence in social and professional life gnaws in the background of the minds of several young men in varying degrees.

Questions like: "Am I competent to make a living with my profession in a depressed economy?"

Culled from 'The Young King' by Deji Adepeju

How should I plan my life and how do I start a base for myself?" These heart wrenching questions express concern about how you can achieve excellent performance in a world of people and environments. Generally speaking, lack of exposure will give you some feeling of incompetence. In order to survive and become successful in this world of people and environments, you need functional competence in whatever you do; you also need social competence in relationships. Here are seven guidelines to enhancing your competence as a fresh graduate:

In order to define your career path, you need to settle what your ultimate career goal is. **Where do you see yourself** in the next twenty years? Do you see yourself in the industry or market or academics? Do you see yourself as a public administrator in the civil service or as an entrepreneur? What you see will determine how to set forth in your career life. Next, find out from those who know about what qualifications you need to reach the peak of your career; then set out goals to achieve them.

Be strategic and creative, even if your present need for money may lead you to take a job outside your career path, be strong not to lose focus; live prudently and save money to fund the next level of your career path so that you can return to it as soon as possible. In the meantime, put in your best into whatever temporary job you take because if you are faithful in another man's business, God will help you to achieve your own dream. (Luke 16:12)

As a fresh graduate or a young person starting out in life, you should neither be intimidated by your errors nor so afraid of making mistakes that you hide yourself away from social interaction or from active exposure in your trade. **Open up and interact**; make attempts and participate. Those who know that you are a fresh graduate know that you don't have much experience and would be willing to help you if you show signs that you want to learn. At this stage of your life, if you have a choice, never stay long on jobs that would give you too much leisure time; get on jobs that would expose you to the most challenging aspects of the career you intend to pursue even if the pay is not too fat. You would gather experience very rapidly and your confidence and competence will grow.

Handling of money requires skill. The wise man of the Bible says money can develop wings and fly away (Proverbs 23:5). Make a habit of writing down your spending in a small account book and analyse your

expenditure at the end of every month under various headings. Doing this will give you an idea of the cost of living and empower you to make realistic budgets for yourself. This is the beginning of developing financial competence. If you are fortunate to land into big jobs that pay fat salaries, you may be swooned into a state of stupor and misuse the opportunity. You have to discipline yourself to handle the 'sudden' surge of money wisely and be investment conscious instead of expanding your appetite for mere pleasure. Don't live to impress people in order to be seen as belonging to the class of the rich. That is the mistake a lot of guys make to the extent that if they lose their jobs, they lose almost everything because they have neither reserves nor investments.

Whether you realize it or not, you are always communicating through your words, your silence, actions and inactions. This is what people use to judge you. You are the only one who knows yourself from within hence; you need to make efforts to communicate effectively. You must deliberately act in a way that will not say what you don't intend to say. Avoid two extremes- there are people who don't care what others think about them, so, they speak their 'mind' and just carry out their ideas not minding the effect their actions may have on others. There are also people who bother about what people think about them or their actions so much that they think they must be liked by everyone and so try to 'satisfy' everyone.

You need to understand that the environment in which you must operate in life is composed of systems. Organizations have their systems and policies that run them. Every country has its political, legal, financial and cultural systems. Wherever where you are, once you understand the systems that operate there, and how to maintain your own values within it, you have the potential to excel. Nevertheless, when a system promotes immoral values that are contrary to the righteousness of God, you must be strong to maintain your values and walk in obedience to the values of God. In doing this, don't be quick to engage authorities in open confrontation and avoid verbal attacks on the system. Rather, live according to your own values in a loving manner as an example to those you relate with directly. When you do your job with a touch of excellence, it might make you so valuable to them the extent that they would be willing to accommodate your own values or even change the system for your sake.

As you relate with people, you need to have a right understanding of basic human nature so that you would not relate under illusions. People will always show their best first, so don't be carried away with first impressions. Invest some trust in people by giving them just enough room such that you can bear it if they default, and if clear proofs begin to show that they are not worthy of the trust, take necessary precautions rather than insisting on blindly trusting them (**Proverbs 22:3**). You will also want to be trusted. Trust is earned, it doesn't come automatically. When people leave you to do what you like for some time and yet you behave in a decent and disciplined manner; when you are suddenly scrutinized at times that you least expected and yet you are found to have done all things properly in the absence of supervision, people will begin to trust you. If you continue this way for long enough, your trust rating will increase greatly.

Power is a tool and like any tool or technology, power is morally neutral; it is neither good nor bad. Power merely takes on the hidden character of the person who wields it and gives it expression thereby amplifying it.

“Absolute power corrupts absolutely” is a saying that pungently supports separation of powers in governance. There is a deep a deep measure of truth in this saying, however, there is a problem with laying the blame of intoxication on power. The problem is not with power; the problem is that the fallen human nature is corrupt through and through. A time will come when power will be bestowed upon you. You need to prepare to handle power by understanding **how systems and processes work** and by developing a strong character; the character of proper kingship.



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