
The 4As to Exceptional Leadership

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Mustapha's 4 As to remarkable results through change

Accept reality. Abandon obstacles. Appreciate your people and processes and Adjust to better ways. Below is Mustapha's powerful speech to executives and managers who want to create commitment not just compliance and have staff morale through the roof again. Grab a cup of coffee and enjoy the speech delivered by Mustapha to at the Breakfast meeting organized by the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA) of Uganda and attended by insurance CEOs in Uganda.

Here is the speech verbatim:

Raise your hand if you are a frequent traveller? Yes, there in the corner? Do you travel by air or by foot?

Recently, I have been travelling a lot. As the managing director, my role is look for opportunities. I am always moving around in search of them.

On my last trip in October, my son who was 7 years old came and hugged me tightly: he said "Welcome Daddy, I missed you so much. You are my best Daddy."

Now I got to be honest, up until I got that passionate hug, I thought looking for money was more important than anything else. May be I should stay out of travelling so that I don't become a stranger in my home. But there are some travels you cannot avoid. Like going to the village for the holidays.

Last December, I went to the village and attended a village meeting. While at the meeting, one of the Elders said, since we have Mustapha here today, let him say something before we proceed.

So, how do you turn down elders? I stood up and said something. That is what it means being a leader. You must stay ready.

Again last month, I was at the conference of internal auditors. And the MC noticed me in the room. He said since fraud is a big problem in this country, and we have the President of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners Uganda Chapter, let's ask him say to something. How do you turn down such opportunity? I stood up, and said something about fraud! Did you know that an average organization loses over 5% of her annual revenue to fraud? And then you wonder why your business grows slowly, if any. After my comments,

one of the people inside that room came to me and requested for my business card. He said "I really liked your ideas on fraud prevention. We are organizing a seminar for accountants. Do you mind being one of our speakers. Hey, the seminar is next week." I said, ya, count me in.

These experiences have taught me one thing.

When it comes to leadership or business development I don't have to get ready, I must stay ready. So that I may get any opportunity wherever it is!

My new motto is "don't get ready, stay ready." That way you are able to grab any opportunity that comes your way! Finish this for me, good luck is when preparedness, meets [opportunity]. You want to get lucky? Stay ready! Do I sound like a Viagra commercial?

But that is not just with leadership. It is true with every thing you do. You must stay ready. It does not matter what you do. What matters is that you must stay ready. Because the people who need you always need you. True or false? So what you are going to pick up to today, the 4 As to remarkable results is not only how to stay ready, but how to become a type of leader who can create commitment, when others are just creating compliance.

Be the type of leader who can get other people to admire and what to follow you, rather than have to follow you.

And a type of leader who can have morale shooting through the roof, when for other leaders people are saying do I have to come to work today.

And if you can do that, believe me you will become a leader whom others want to follow. So stand up.

Make sure you can look at me. Can everyone see me? Alright: This is what I want you to do:

I want you to put your right arm straight out like so. And I want you to keep it absolutely parallel to the ground.

Now I want you to take your right thumb and right index finger and put them together like so, making sure that your arm is absolutely parallel to the floor. Now, as fast as you can, without hurting yourself, I want you to take your right thumb and right index finger and put it on your chin and turn to your neighbour and say: that is not your chin. OK, be seated. Be seated.

What I love about that is that most people who did it want to say, see me, I did it. It makes a good point. Actions speak louder than words. You didn't do as I said, you did, as I did. Is that right? Turn to your neighbour and say "I know that is right."

So here is the key. When it comes to the 4 As to

remarkable results, **Lead Yourself first.**

Everything you ask them to do, you must first do yourself. Because they won't do as you say. They will do as you do. If you tell them to be in office by 7 am, first be in the morning by 7 am. If you tell them don't put your phones in silent during a client meeting, always put your phones in silent mode! Lead your self first. Lead by example. The First A to remarkable results is that you must Accept reality.

Now let's be honest. Have you ever been forced to face reality? Raise your hand if you feel sometimes reality hurts. Me too. [The darkness at noon story]. Isn't it interesting how when things don't seem to go our way or we don't seem to measure up, it is almost in our DNA to place the blame on someone else. Isn't it ironic that I am blaming my general manager for placing a wrong article when I the one responsible for the final product. But be honest. How often do we blame others for our mistakes? How often do sales blame underwriters blame HR and HR blame loss assessors. When loss assessors learn how to talk, I am sure they will blame someone else!

Average leaders place blame. Exceptional leaders take it. Now get this. They take it even when sometimes it is not their fault. Why on earth would you take blame when it is not your fault? Ok, go on and say something...

Great that is good. But here is another reason why. You are responsible for the environment. Take the blame, and they will also take the blame. When it is not their fault.

What is your scale? What is the thing that lets know whether you are getting worse or better at what you do? What is the thing that lets your team know whether you are improving or not? What is your scale. Write this down. You master what you measure. Now I have interacted with several insurance executives and I must say, a lot of their efforts is not measured. Many insurance companies have websites, but none measures the amount of business generated through them. And you wonder on which basis do they operate it?

If you are the CEO, which reports do you receive daily to see whether you are improving or not? As a CEO or senior management, what is your scale. Once you Accept reality, you've got to Abandon your obstacles i.e. remove what is on your way... I've never told this story.

There is an old story about two Buddhist monks. One was an old monk and the other a young monk. They were walking through the forest. As they walked through the forest, the young monk

really admired the old monk. And there was a stream on their left side. As they walked, all of a sudden they noticed on the other side of the stream a beautiful woman. The young monk was thinking hey, we are monks. So we are going to just keep thinking. We are not supposed to admire beautiful ladies. We are just going to keep on walking. But to his astonishment, the old monk ran fast across the stream. Picked this beautiful woman in his arms, and carried her across the stream. Put her down the other side. And then ran up and caught up with the young monk. And the young monk was like look, what are you doing. We are monks. We are not can't be carrying beautiful ladies. Why did you carry that woman across the stream. And the old monk looked at the young monk straight into his eyes and said: "I put that woman the other side of the stream so that you won't be caring her." Are you still caring her? Raise your hand if you have ever been hurt emotionally. Eh, you want revenge. Do you? Are you still caring it.

Write this down: if you are holding a grudge, that grudge is still holding you. It is holding you back from any thing that you ever can be. So you have to accept reality, and abandon everything that is on the way.

Once you do that you must Appreciate your people and processes. When I resigned my first job in the bank, I had a rough time on the streets. I moved office after office and I could not find any consulting project. It was horrible. I decided to get back to employment, but into a big audit firm. I did my research and discovered that most partners in those firms were Golf addicts. I also had read a book "What they don't teach at Harvard Business School" and it suggested that business is given based on the sofa factor risk. People do business with people whom they know. So, if you want to get business, network with people. I wanted to get a job in a big firm. And the partners were regulars there. The following day, I went to Uganda Golf Club and enquired about becoming a member. Now, I have to be honest. Golf is not my game. Mine is Rugby and football. Even then, the membership fee was too much for me then as unemployed.

But there was a solution. After eating at that restaurant for several days, I noticed that after playing, Golfers sat at the restaurant and chatted about business. All I needed to know, was the Golf terms, like teeing and the like. You get the idea.

So, my luck came. I timed one of the partners of the big 4 audit firm going to serve food and I served with him. He had forgotten his fork. I asked and helped him. He asked me how did I come to like Golf, and told him my dad was a pro before going

back to the village in retirement. He gave me his card. He liked my company and asked me to visit him at his office. After a couple of days, I paid him a visit. He asked about what I was doing and told him, other than helping mum with his shops there was none. But I seriously wanted to get back to work in a professional firm. He gave me a card of his manager and said I send my CV to the manager for an opportunity in their forensic and fraud investigations department. I sent the CV and we made an appointment with the manager. On the agreed day, I went to see the manager and he made me wait for over 4 hours at the reception. When he finally came to see me, he was visibly in a hurry and it was clear he was not technically competent to interview me. He just asked me to tell him about my self. And why I needed to work with the firm. I was disappointed. Now, I have been taught not to accept being bulldozed. I went back home and wrote a powerful email to the partner and cc'd the manager. I explained how I thought the firm was highly respectable with great people. However, my experience with the manager was awful and would not like such to happen to other people. Within a day, I received an invitation for a more formal interview. On the d-day, I went to the firm. I entered in that boardroom and found over 6 people. One by one they introduced themselves to me. All were partners, and two of them had flown in from Nairobi for that interview. The manager was also in. It was a thrilling two-hour interview. After a week, I got the good news. I had been offered a position in a big four firm.

When I reported on the first day, I began making excuses for this manager. I was like, may be he was too busy on that day. May be he no longer wants to be in this firm. In other words I was making excuses for him. But let's be honest. Have you ever made excuses for somebody? Here is what I have learned in life. When you make excuses for someone, you invite them never to change. I made excuses for him that is until I visited his office. Just as I entered, the first thing he said to me was "on Mustapha, I am sorry for the first incident that happened." Which it broke my heart. Because it made me realize that he knew exactly what he did to whoever he thought I was. And whether you are a CEO of a very big insurance company or just a lowly broker, you don't treat people that way. But I got a gift out of it. And the gift is no matter where I go to day, as a CEO and every encounter I ever have with any body, I take with me the gift of what I call the Mustapha Factor.

Do you know what the Mustapha Factor states. The

When you make others feel visible, they make you valuable. And I guarantee you will absolutely be invaluable and people will want to follow you.

Mustapha Factor states that I don't walk around trying to show you whom I am. I don't walk around trying to remind you who I am. I walk around trying to remind you are. As a leader you don't walk around trying to show people your own importance. You walk around trying to remind people of theirs!

Do you know what happens when you do that? When you make others feel visible, they make you valuable. And I guarantee you will absolutely be invaluable and people will want to follow you. Now let's review this. You must accept reality, and when you accept reality what happens. You must abandon obstacles in your way. Because if you don't forgive, it only hurts you. Negative energy is the worst thing you need to succeed. And once you abandon obstacles, you must appreciate people and processes.

And finally, you must Adjust to a better way. OK. I need you to stand up and grab a partner. Stand up and grab a partner, and don't let me

define grab.

OK. That is OK. Listen up. Little too close back there. Alright. Clap one time if you can hear me? Clap one time if you can hear me. Here is what I want you to do. I want you to turn around so that you cannot see your partner. Here is what I want you to do. I want you to change 12 things about your appearance. Change 12 things about your own appearance. Hey, hold on, hold on..

Just change any two things about your own appearance.

OK . Look this is not drama class. OK turn around and check if you can figure what changed on your partner Can you notice what changed on your partner?

OK. Listen up. Clap one time if you can here me X2

Now I want you to turn around, one more time so that you cannot see your partner. Change one more thing about your own appearance. Check if you can figure what changed on your partner. Go ahead and have a sit. Have a sit. Alright.

So, what was that activity about? [Wait for the audience to answer]

What was it about? What do you think?

Hey you said the magic word... change.

What did you feel when I said change 8 things about your own appearance? I know you were looking at me saying, Mustapha I don't have 8 things on. Sande did not tell me that it was this kind of breakfast meeting. Some of you looked too anxious, to start changing 8 things. But what did you feel when I said change 2 things about your own appearance? What about when I said, change one more thing? I can guarantee you, I could have continued saying, change one thing. Change one more thing, until you got up to 8. You could have found a way. So what was the problem with my request? Too much request. That is the problem most leaders make in their organizations. Trying to change too much, too soon. So write this down: the key to peak performance is to change small but change often.

Change small, but change often.

It is the same reason that right now I cannot find parking at the Gym. Most people go to the Gym and want to lose 20 kilograms in a day.

Life style changes cannot easily be undone.