MY EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Strong Opinions, Strongly Held

By Stephen Senkomago Musoke

@ssmusoke

WHY ME?

☐ Self taught software tinkerer who loves growing techies

☐ Working hard at a normal regular family life

☐ My fair share of failed, successful, mind blowing and soul haunting projects

☐ Served clients in UK, US, Australia, Europe, South Africa

☐ 12 years setting up, growing & running a Ugandan custom software development shop

☐ Executive management stint - Worked in and ran a large international custom software service provider in South Africa & Uganda

☐ 4 years back to full time software delivery practice

OTHER FACTS

- ☐ Maternal grand-father was a Reverand Cannon - Anglican religious influences

- ☐ First mentor and business partner – consider him a father figure

- ☐ Proud product of strong willed women

- ☐ Cultural influences – staunch Muganda

- ☐ Family – wife (14 years this October), 4 biological children, village of non-direct dependants

- ☐ Tech influences – old skool tools of trade ... PHP,CSS, JQuery, Java, XML, FTP

THE EARLY YEARS - PRE UNIVERSITY

Always work yourself out of a job ~Charles Mukasa

Your competition is not your neighbor, but people in US, China, Europe who have more resources than you ~ Charles Mukasa

- ❑ First computer contact – May 1996 (S. 6 vacation)

- ❑ Part time vacation job – editing a Linux user manual & troubleshooting modems

- ❑ Started Unix scripting and MS Access database development – using a reference manual

- ❑ Lost my first and last file on a floppy disk – led to file management OCD

- ❑ Great compliment to Civil Engineering degree

- ❑ 2nd year Industrial training in University of Zimbabwe through part time job connection – capacity building

THE EARLY YEARS - WORK (TECH GROWTH)

Focus on one thing and do it right ~ Charles Mukasa

Wovudde toyombye wotera okudda ~ Luganda Proverb

- ❑ Started custom software delivery services in Kla – mix interns & full time staff. Website development & outsourcing

- ❑ Consulting with BoU – staff training on LAN migration → Disaster Recovery Project support (Civil Engineering)

- ❑ Tech

  - ❑ Java → PHP (3/4)

  - ❑ MS Access → Oracle → MySQL

  - ❑ Tech growth – Javaworld, The Serverside, SQL 92 (no internet)

- ❑ Navigating business environment in Uganda

GROWTH YEARS – BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

If anything can go wrong it will and usually does at the worst possible moment ~Murphy

- ❏ Consulting – Credit Reference Bureau: specific domain knowledge

- ❏ Software development – genealogy site (Buganda kingdom)

- ❏ Timesheet management solution – 5 year dev and evolution

- ❏ Internship program – strengthen talent pipeline ~40 over 10 years

- ❏ Business challenges:

  - ❏ Poorly defined projects & non-payment by clients

  - ❏ Move to Elance (escrow select projects in specific domains)

- ❏ Business went under so was forced into formal employment

THE CHANGE – NON TECH STINT

Find something you love and you will never work a day in your life

Say yes first then figure out the rest ~Branson

- ❑ Mercy Corps – finance, tech, agriculture – 1 year
- ❑ ThoughtWorks

  - ❑ 4 roles in 2 years: Project Manager, General Manager in a box (SA), General Manager (Kla), Lead Consultant

  - ❑ EELD – insights into my personality, why I am the way I am

- ❑ Stress related burnout – first ever

- ❑ Realized: executive management is not for me I am a techie, at heart and in disposition so focus on technology based work streams

TECH GALORE

Stand on the shoulders of giants, however feed the giants so that they are strong enough to keep carrying you ~ SSM

Good developers write excellent code, great developers write no code, zen developers delete code

- ❑ Started at UCSF in METS Program

- ❑ Working with UgandaEMR – facility based EMR system for public health facilities based on OpenMRS

  - ❑ Installed in ~900 public health facilities

  - ❑ Over ~1500 people trained to use and maintain EMR

  - ❑ Public support via Whatsapp/Email

  - ❑ User manual & technical guide

  - ❑ Modified agile delivery process

- ❑ Play multiple roles - architect, tech lead, developer, trainer, business analyst, technical PM, product manager

- ❑ Dreadlocks! 7 years in waiting

LESSONS

TECH

- ❑ Master your tools – languages, IDEs, practices
- ❑ Read, Read, Read to understand your current project domain
  - ❑ Refactoring
  - ❑ Patterns of Enterprise Architecture
  - ❑ Clean Code
- ❑ Strive for mastery of your craft – software delivery
  - ❑ Coding
  - ❑ Design & Architecture
  - ❑ Deployment & Production management
  - ❑ Support, Maintenance and Evolution
  - ❑ Training and presentation delivery
- ❑ Stay formless, learn, evolve, adapt, grow

CAREER

The best way to learn something is to teach it

If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room

Ask and thee shall receive

The best way to predict the future is to create it

- ❑ Work for Andela – spend 50% of your own personal time exploring and improving yourself

- ❑ Share your knowledge experiences and lessons with others

- ❑ Learn who you are and leverage your strengths – personality tests, find a mentor and a coach

- ❑ Read, Read, Read

  - ❑ Blue Ocean Strategy

  - ❑ The Innovator's Dilemma

  - ❑ The Art of War

  - ❑ 48 Laws of Power

- ❑ Keep LinkedIn up-to-date

FAMILY

Companionship is a key factor

Love is temporary insanity that makes one see another as better than all else

Relationships are trying to make 1 + 1 = 3 even when the ones are not full

Jerry McGuire: I love him not for the man he is

- ❏ There is no silver bullet or short cuts

- ❏ Hard but fun work & fulfilling

- ❏ There is no best approach

- ❏ There are however best practices

    - ❏ Companionship vs Love

    - ❏ Network – friends, family (despite challenges)

    - ❏ Talk with your partner (at least 1 hour per day)

    - ❏ Work together

    - ❏ Do, Learn, adapt, refine, repeat….

- ❏ There is no work-life balance just a pendulum that keeps swinging

FINANCES

Watch the pennies and the pounds will work themselves out

Multiple income streams are no-longer a luxury but a necessity ~ Cash Flow Quadrant

Be the one person everyone wants to call and work with

Search for wealth not riches

- ❑ There is no silver bullet or short cuts
- ❑ There is no best approach
- ❑ There are however best practices

  - ❑ Pay yourself first – Rich Dad

  - ❑ At times it may be difficult to save, so maybe easier to take credit and pay off

  - ❑ Play the long game

  - ❑ Investing in your craft pays off – become better each day
- ❑ Side hustles

  - ❑ Compliment the day-job

  - ❑ Ensure "NO CONFLICT" of interest or create questions of integrity

PARTING WORDS

- ☐ Ontime is late!

- ☐ Always show up, deliver even on your bad days

- ☐ Grit – out work, outlast the competition

- ☐ When in doubt over-communicate, Bad news must travel fast

- ☐ Invest in yourself – buy books, software tools, computer equipment, productivity enhancements

- ☐ Pay It Forward – answer questions on StackOverflow, Volunteer to help others, even within your team & org

- ☐ Work hard so that you can know when to work smart

- ☐ Be the change you want to see in the world

IN CLOSING

DO NOT BE TOO BUSY
Enjoy your projects, family and life
Keep learning
Read
Stand on the shoulders of Giants
Share your stories with others
Discipline, Discipline, Discipline

AND MOST OF ALL
Keep driving to get better every day

THANK YOU

For questions or suggestions

@ssmusoke

http://ssmusoke.com