

LIFE IN THE TECH LANE v2.0

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
- ❑ 7 years back to full time software delivery practice

OTHER FACTS

- ❑ Maternal grand-father was a Reverend Cannon - Anglican religious influences
- ❑ Cultural influences – Muganda & blend with Islamic influences
- ❑ Charles - First mentor and business partner – a father figure
- ❑ Proud product of strong willed women (mother, wife, sisters, Ssenga, bosses and colleagues)
- ❑ Family – wife (15 years this October), 4 children
- ❑ Large village of non-biological support & dependents
- ❑ Tech influences – old skool tools of trade web dev... PHP (Laravel), CSS (Tailwind), JQuery, Java, XML, FTP, OpenSource now adding PowerBI, R, AWS/Azure skills

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 & F1 key
- ❑ Lost my first and last file on a floppy disk – led to file management OCD never lost a file again
- ❑ Great compliment to Civil Engineering degree
- ❑ 2nd year Industrial training in University of Zimbabwe through part time job connection – capacity building & eye opening

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 & web application development outsourcing
- ❑ Consulting with BoU – staff training on LAN migration → Disaster Recovery Project support (Civil Engineering) -> Website
- ❑ Tech
 - ❑ Java → PHP (3/4)
 - ❑ MS Access → Oracle → MySQL
 - ❑ Tech growth – Javaworld, The Serverside, SQL 92 (no internet)
- ❑ Navigating technology 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 - agile, use cases
- ❑ Software development - genealogy site for Ganda culture
- ❑ Timesheet management solution - 5 year evolution and maintenance
- ❑ Internship program - strengthen talent pipeline ~40 over 10 years
- ❑ Business challenges:
 - ❑ Poorly defined projects & non-payment by clients
 - ❑ Project & payment challenges - move to Elance now Upwork (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 ~1300 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

*The hardest thing
about writing
code is knowing
what to build*

*The end of a
melody is not its
goal but if the
melody does not
end it does not
achieve its goal*

*To go fast, go
alone. To go far
go together*

*Si vis pacem, para
bellum*

- ❑ Master your tools – languages, IDEs, practices
- ❑ Invest in your tools – spend on software, courses, toolkits
- ❑ Read, Read, Read to understand your current project domain
 - ❑ Refactoring now in v2
 - ❑ Patterns of Enterprise Architecture
 - ❑ Clean Code
 - ❑ Language, framework & domain specific books/articles
- ❑ 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 your employer – 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
 - ❑ Atomic Habits
- ❑ Keep LinkedIn up-to-date & your resume polished
- ❑ Find your strengths and maximize the value/impact

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 but
the man he wants
to be*

- ❑ 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 ~ Kaizen

THANK YOU

For questions or suggestions

@ssmusoke

<http://ssmusoke.com>
