

Set and Achieve High Goals: Launch Your Career onto a Higher Growth Trajectory by Going Beyond Professional Training and an MBA Degree

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Today, I listened to a story about a talented student trying to choose among several different job offers. Each hiring organization offered the chance to become wealthy in 20 years but required that many years of 80-hour weeks to gain the money: The student faced four different ways to be a highly paid drone who would rarely be at home before 9 p.m. or enjoy a family life. Yuck!

Just a few hours later, I was reminded that substantial career advancement doesn't have to be so difficult while reading career-planning notes that a former student of mine, Dr. T.A. Makoni, had sent me. His early career resembled the student in the story: Huge efforts promised big rewards down the road, but not much current advantage.

That career path became rockier after he failed a course during the third year of veterinary school. Because of the school's rules, Dr. Makoni faced having to redo all of his courses for that year even though he passed the other courses.

He decided to step back and re-evaluate his commitment to a veterinary career, and he chose instead to become a dentist. This was certainly not an easier road because he had to start his professional studies all over again. He also faced the hurdles of needing money for this schooling and getting into a good program.

After carefully considering his choices, Dr. Makoni enlisted as an officer candidate in the Zimbabwe Army to gain a dental education. This decision presented major challenges because all of his training would be in Greece, and would be conducted in the Greek language. His first year in the army was dedicated to learning this new language far away from home. After that, he simultaneously studied dentistry and military leadership for seven years before graduating and beginning a dental internship in Greece.

Always open to new concepts, Dr. Makoni was fascinated by his wife's MBA studies while they lived in Greece, often helping her with dissertation

research. He saw that business concepts could be useful in accomplishing more in most other aspects of life.

After fourteen years in the army, Dr. Makoni retired as a captain, purchased an established dental practice in Zimbabwe, and began developing entrepreneurial opportunities. He soon found that adding a junior dentist as a partner brought increased profits without much more work.

Dr. Makoni began to appreciate that his dental practice would be more successful if he learned more about business. He enrolled in a distance MBA program based in England and soon graduated with distinction.

In the process, he learned a great deal about strategic thinking and began to apply what he had studied. His success in dentistry soon led to being elected to the National Executive Committee of the Dental Association and later to becoming the Chairman of the Practice Management Committee of the association. He also branched out by helping found a dental supply company to help reduce costs and improve materials for dentists in his country.

Dr. Makoni's high intelligence and sound knowledge were recognized, and he was appointed as a part-time lecturer at the university where he earned an MBA and at Celebration College, a church-run school in Zimbabwe that offers Biblical and business training.

Dr. Makoni developed a bigger vision that built from the sound foundation of his success:

He would help entrepreneurs to live their dreams of providing new health care choices throughout Africa by providing financing, education, and leadership to them. He would help his church by serving in its educational ministry and providing financial support for its expansion. He would serve his family by developing financial independence from passive income sources so that he could spend more time with his family.

As you can see, he was beginning to realize that career success should lead to a richer life, not just a more bulging wallet. Rather than committing himself to longer hours at work and more time away from his family, Dr. Makoni chose to use his success to improve and spend more time with his family and church.

When a rocket takes off for space, the first stage engines and fuel are jettisoned after just a few seconds. But by building on the speed and momentum provided by the first-stage rocket, the payload can rapidly accelerate upwards into a higher orbit by firing a second-stage booster.

Dr. Makoni was looking for such a second-stage booster for his career. Having taken an enormous number of successful career steps up through earning an MBA, Dr. Makoni recognized that investing in earning a DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) degree could be that powerful second-stage booster that would carry him much further than excellent professional training, a good career, and an MBA degree could do.

Such breakthrough progress begins with ambitious goals. While many people would decide that they simply wanted to become more proficient in one or two areas over four years of DBA studies, Dr. Makoni set the following goals for his education so that he could gain the benefits faster:

1. Graduate in 15 or fewer months.
2. Retire from working as a dentist upon graduation while continuing to earn a living from passive income derived by dental partnerships and franchising.
3. Create multiple streams of investment income during the same time through investing in real estate, venture capital, and public securities.
4. Write a book on business leadership before graduation.
5. Begin doing international consulting and public speaking about business while earning his DBA.
6. Spend much more time traveling with his family after graduating.

When asked why he set such high goals, Dr. Makoni responded that these were the logical next steps of what he wanted to accomplish. With the proper mentorship and focus, he was sure these goals would be easily achievable.

How did he do? Except for his first and third goals, Dr. Makoni did better than planned.

1. Graduation followed in 16 months rather than 15.
2. A few months into his studies, he used one course assignment to develop a breakthrough business model for expanding his dental practice that allowed him to stop doing the work himself.

3. His investing on the Zimbabwe stock market grew substantially, and he began working with a real estate developer to create a larger investment base in this arena. Although he fell short of his graduation goal, he was well advanced in a program to reach that goal.
4. Before graduating, he completed one book, *Nurturing Champions*, that was published in 2006 and has sold well. He also wrote 10 of 14 chapters for a second book about entrepreneurial finance in Zimbabwe provisionally titled, *Entrepreneurship on Trial*.
5. He was asked to join the board of an entrepreneurial investment bank while still studying for his DBA.
6. A trip to Israel with his family was planned and paid for before his graduation, and the trip occurred just a few months later.

Since graduation, career progress has been substantial as well.

1. In 2007, Dr. Makoni was appointed director of Celebration College. The school is making fine progress towards being licensed as a university in Zimbabwe. Many new programs and courses have been added, and the student body is growing nicely.
2. His dental practice has been successfully expanded into Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo. Opportunities for two further expansions are under study.
3. He helped start a new church in Bulawayo.
4. Since graduating, he has joined three more boards. In addition, he began speaking at business seminars sponsored by Celebration College where he serves as the program coordinator.

Dr. Makoni clearly made wise choices in setting high goals, getting the right help to prepare himself to achieve those goals, and working hard and intelligently to bring those goals to fruition.

With the career velocity that he has established, it's hard to see Dr. Makoni as anyone other than a continent-changing leader in both the business and spiritual realms.

What do you want to accomplish?

What help do you need to be able to accomplish those goals?

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