

Joseph Waruingi:

techpreneur embellishes on service offering to build consultancy juggernaut

Advantech Consulting managing director, Joseph Waruingi is the quintessential embodiment of opportunity meeting preparation. In 2003, when *Price Waterhouse Coopers* decided to sell its consulting division of the business, Mr. Waruingi, then an employee had a decision to make. He would either work under new management or take the chance and branch out on his own.

By George Wainaina

Coincidentally, the new acquirers of the business decided to shift the business from Nairobi elsewhere and already familiar with the operations at the capital, the opportunity to serve the Nairobi customer base, necessitated the birth of Advantech Consulting.

“From the onset, our business has been very distinct. For instance, we were very fortunate to commence operations already with an existing client portfolio comprised of top local blue chip entities like KenGen, Nation Media Group, Safaricom, East African Breweries Limited, and also international entities,” says Mr. Waruingi.

Advantech is a management consulting firm that provides and seeks to enhance efficiency in business processes. Its core functions revolve around ICT consulting, finance and brand management, monitoring and evaluation, and supply chain management.

Technology he says has its divine positioning in business and any environment that works within a systematic framework, use of relevant technology within context is sure to facilitate



ease of operation and value addition.

“Technology is among the few sectors in which a disruption knows no bounds. Disruptions are healthy because as they introduce value, so do they destroy some old value, which is how innovation comes about,” he adds.

As business leader offering technology based products and services, he emphasizes on the need to keep abreast with new knowledge and always staying ahead of the client.

Already well entrenched in the private sector, the business needed to identify avenues on which it would hinge future growth. This necessitated the strategic decision to expand into the public sector seeking to offer business solutions to governments.

“Governments being the biggest purchases of goods and services it was a golden opportunity that presented a platform on which we would hinge to spread our tentacles across the region.”

While at PWC, Waruingi was head of consulting for the public sector portfolio, where he garnered vast experience and from which he has borrowed to build the public sector portfolio at Advantech.

The company has successfully managed to establish a presence across the Sub Saharan Africa region and boasts of a public sector portfolio spread out across West, Central, and Southern Africa, many which have been forged through partnerships with international firms.

He emphasizes that a key competitive advantage has been Advantech’s ability to introduce new perspectives and offer more value to its clients. In the tech arena, where constant change is the norm, the firm attributes its steady growth to provision of uncompromised value, and building a stellar reputation that precedes the business.

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The nature of the business being predicated on existing human capital output, the company as a matter of principle continuously invests in skills development for the staff through training, webinars, and fully funded conferences around the world.

Offering competitive remuneration is just an aspect of overall incentive but not the only part. He explains adaptive changes made to the human resource structure, that suitably accommodates the new age employees who mainly comprise of millennials. Travel allowances, proper capacitating to allow enhanced performance, performance appraisal based on business performance feature heavily in the HR layout.

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He remains cognizant of the fact that employee turnover is imminent as they seek a different experience but he argues creating that cordial relationship from the onset makes them ambassadors of the business, who make good references.

“We are currently developing an employee share ownership program which we hope will aide in retention of key staff, that gives them stock options based on performance and the duration of tenure at the organization,” adds Mr. Waruingi.

Across Advantech’s portfolio, he anticipates that product offerings around ICT development bear much prospects for scalability in the future. In the current strategic focus, Advantech aspires to become a mid tier niche market management consultancy firm by 2020. Within the same timeframe, the plan is to have the business expand its service offering across the continent and even geographically have a presence in 2 more countries.

From an existing pool of associates that numbers 200, he hopes to expand that five-fold, triple the business volume and office headcount by 2020. With business growth also comes a burgeon to the balance sheet and the target is to increase the annual turnover to range at between Ksh 500-700 million within the period.

Waruinge prides himself at being a practitioner who leads from the front, and in tandem with the organizational philosophy of constantly learning, he encourages a collaborative and consultative approach to tasks among the team members.

“I am deeply motivated by my contribution to the overall economics. Furthermore, bringing on board young talent and seeing them through the career growth process is my delight and I aspire to remain capacitated to perform this roles at an even greater scale in the future,” he concludes ■