



Career migration is fast becoming a dominant factor in attracting and retaining talents. This is a story of a young, vibrant Veterinary Doctor who dumped the stethoscope for Human Resource to pursue her passion. She considers it more important to deal with Humans than Animals or pets.

Dr. Stella Onwækpe is a graduate of Veterinary Medicine from University of Ibadan and the Best Graduating Student of CIPM through examination route in 2017. She is currently pursuing her Masters Degree with strong preference for Human Resources. Her strong drive to attain greater height in her career has much to be desired and also a source of inspiration for many who have passion for HR.

“WHY I DUMPED STETHOSCOPE FOR HR”

–Dr. Stella Onwækpe

In this interview with People First Magazine, she lays bare how her journey has been and what lies ahead.

People First Magazine (PFM): Good evening Dr. Stella Nwækpe and thank you for accepting to be interviewed.

Dr. Stella (DS): Good evening and thank you for having me.

PFM: We want to congratulate you on your award as the Best Qualifying Candidate for CIPM in August 2017. Please, we would be glad to know your background and your journey from being a Veterinary Doctor to Chartered HR Manager.

Dr. Stella: Thank you! I am a graduate of Veterinary Medicine from University of Ibadan and I have always had the mind to manage people than to manage animals or pets. My choice to study Veterinary Medicine was not influenced, but I later found my passion in Human Resources. The moment I discovered the passion, I made up my mind to give it all it takes. My passion became deeper when I got HR job in 2014/2015.

PFM: What really inspired you to come into HR?

Dr. Stella: First of all, my passion and because that was the first opportunity I got immediately after school and I gained understanding of what it really means. HR is a profession that is organized, orderly and has procedures and processes that have lots to do with my personality. This inspiration was like a blend to build my disposition. Besides, HR is what I saw as a strong option

for Veterinary Medicine.

RT: Why didn't you look for a Veterinary Service job, but HR?

Dr. Stella: During my service year, I worked at a State Veterinary Services Centre and this was not as fulfilling as I hoped; then HR became the next search point for me. Upon clinching my HR job, I made up my mind to go with HR seeing that there was more I could do than dealing with Animals. Also, our society does not encourage the services of a Veterinary Doctor. The understanding of Veterinary Medicine and the business component is not really clear to many people in our society.

PFM: DO you have any regret being HR Practitioner than a Veterinary Doctor?

Dr. Stella: It is given that I am a Vet Doctor, nobody can take that away, but walking into HR world is more interesting for me. It makes me feel better and fulfilled knowing that the blend of my disposition fits into HR. I have no regret at all. Rather, the journey is becoming more interesting on a daily basis. Though, I do Vet Services by the side, but not as a job, but a hobby. I practice it for fun and not to be rusty in knowledge.

PFM: We are aware that you have bagged your Associate membership of CIPM, but is there any further studies you are taking?

Dr. Stella: I am currently running an MBA program (of which I have a semester to go). I look at specializing in HR next semester. I want to have all it takes academically and experience wise to excel in HR.

PFM: Where do you work currently?

Dr. Stella: I work currently with Lussor Group (an Oil & Gas company on Victoria Island in Lagos). I work there as HR Officer and I intend to grow thereby.

PFM: How many years experience have you gotten in HR now?

Dr. Stella: I have two years experience.

PFM: Do you intend to go further in HR or, are you look at switching in future?

Dr. Stella: For me, HR is a long journey for me and I am prepared to go all the way. For now, I do not have any intention of changing into any other profession.

PFM: Who inspires you in HR?

Dr. Stella: Hmmm! This is a deep question for me! I have many people who inspire me, but one person that clearly inspires me is Funke Amobi of Stanbic IBTC. I have attended her lectures and have also read lots of her write-ups. I also look up to Jibola Ponle as my role model in HR. I have exchanged messages with her. She is a great inspiration for me.

PFM: Where do you see yourself in the future in terms of HR?

Dr. Stella: One of the things I want to achieve in life is to be HR Director of a multi-national company. This really is a great drive for me to positively impact a best practice environment. It is a drive for me to attain a standard and height that will expose me to International experience. I also look at having my own Consulting firm in future.

PFM: Do you have any core preference for Specialization?

Dr. Stella: Hmmm! I am still growing and learning the wide value chains. HR is fast becoming dynamic and it is difficult to predict which area becomes obsolete or relevant tomorrow. I have experience in recruitment, but I have strong thought for Talent Management and Performance

Management.

PFM: Recently, we observe HR practitioners changing jobs and getting dissatisfied and changing job again. Do you have that challenge or possibly see that challenge coming your way?

Dr. Stella: This may be obvious because of the workplace we have now. Many organizations do not want to comply with regulatory standards and also appreciate the values delivered by HR Managers. Many HR managers find themselves in

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unstructured environment (especially one-man business). Some of these business owners want to cut corners and do unethical practices, but the HR Manager who stands on integrity will consider it better to change a job than to continue in an environment where his/her value is not appreciated. In most cases, HR practitioners are hired to set up culture or set-right organizational culture; however, the business owners are not willing to comply. It can be a serious challenge for the HR managers. I do not think that those who work in a structured organization will jump jobs like that.

PFM: Talking about your award, how do you feel about the award?

Dr. Stella: I was not expecting the award at all because I did not put my mind to it. I was just all out to give my best to the examinations and ensure I performed excellently. It was not about expecting an award. It came as a surprise to me. I had a very hectic schedule. It was challenging. I almost moved my diet exams to February this year 2018. I was not even prepared to take the induction. I got a call from CIPM to ensure I do induction because I was the

best qualifying student. I was doing my Masters Examinations about the same time I wrote my diet examinations. Many things happened at the same time for me, but I thank God that I excelled in all. Changing career was quite challenging and the award came more like a strong motivation that I am in the right direction. Even if the reward for the award was not really motivating, it remains on record that I am a proud best qualifying student for August 2017.

PFM: What is your opinion about CIPM?

Dr. Stella: I would say that in the past one-year, there have been complaints about bureaucracy, slow treatments of issues and also rigorous processes. These seem to have changed because the speed to resolving matters is now encouraging. I believe the Leadership of CIPM is bringing something new to the profession. I am really impressed with what I have seen in the last one year. I believe that we are growing gradually. I believe CIPM needs to grow its social platforms to encourage participations. Being the best qualifying student, I think there are lots that CIPM can do. There are lots of CIPM members who do not have jobs. I met a few people at the induction who do not have jobs. I think CIPM can open a platform where these talents can be further refined and set for the market. There is no point having certificates without practice. I think first 3 best qualifying people can be given jobs. I also think that people who are not CIPM qualified should not be given top positions in any company in Nigeria. CIPM should be empowered to sanction such organizations. This is what will make people take the profession seriously, just like Accounting Profession. You cannot be sign audited Accounts if you are not chartered. Same should apply to Heads of HR who provide HR reports in Annual Financial Statements of their organizations. Many want to have international certification above CIPM. I think we should grow our profession locally and make headway. I think CIPM should find a way to do this. People will have respect for the profession and those who are not qualified can be mandated to become members.

PFM: In what way can you contribute to

CIPM?

Dr. Stella: I love writing and I do not mind sending in articles that will be of value to the industry. I believe publications should not be a challenge for me. I will be careful to say I will start right away, but publications is fine for me.

PFM: What advice do you have for young people coming into HR?

Dr. Stella: I believe that HR is a very robust profession that can be explored and will enhance career values. As a science student and a Veterinary Doctor, I have seen HR adding values in different areas of my life. I believe that HR can make willing professionals better people. I believe HR will make someone become organized and professional. The integrity that comes with the profession is much to be desired. It is a profession that makes people manage their temperaments. People management cuts across all sectors and spheres of life

PFM: What do you think is the future of HR in Nigeria and globally?

Dr. Stella: HR is one career that will

never go obsolete as long as there are human beings. The future of HR is very bright and each day, there are changes. HR does not come across as a profession that can die as long as we have people.

PFM: From your story, what message do you have for people struggling in their career?

Dr. Stella: I think it is very important to find what you can do with all spirits and what comes to you naturally. This is where you get fulfillment. We all have our strength and passion, we should convert these to our career. It is never too late to find your passion and work in it. If you are struggling in your career, you can identify where your passion lies and pursue it. You should find time to identify what makes you happy.

PFM: Dr. Stella, thank you for your time. It has been great discussing with you. We appreciate your time.

Dr. Stella: Thank you very much for having me. It has been a great pleasure discussing with you.

HR is fast becoming dynamic and it is difficult to predict which area becomes obsolete or relevant tomorrow. I have experience in recruitment, but I have strong thought for Talent Management and Performance Management.

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