

ICONS AFRICA

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Business Magazine

CHARACTER COMPETENCE AND CAPABILITY AS CORPORATE TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

*Empowering characters
drive corporate success
through competence and
capability.*

THE POTENTIAL OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN EDUCATION

*Unlocking immersive
learning: Virtual Reality
revolutionizes education.*

Temí Marcella

The Flawless Face of Tech Excellence

ISSUE NO. 2



Captivating *Female Icon*

An altruistic maverick, a Goldman Sachs Global Leaders Scholar, the
cataclysmic queen of billion dollar investments



By Nwannukwu Stephanie

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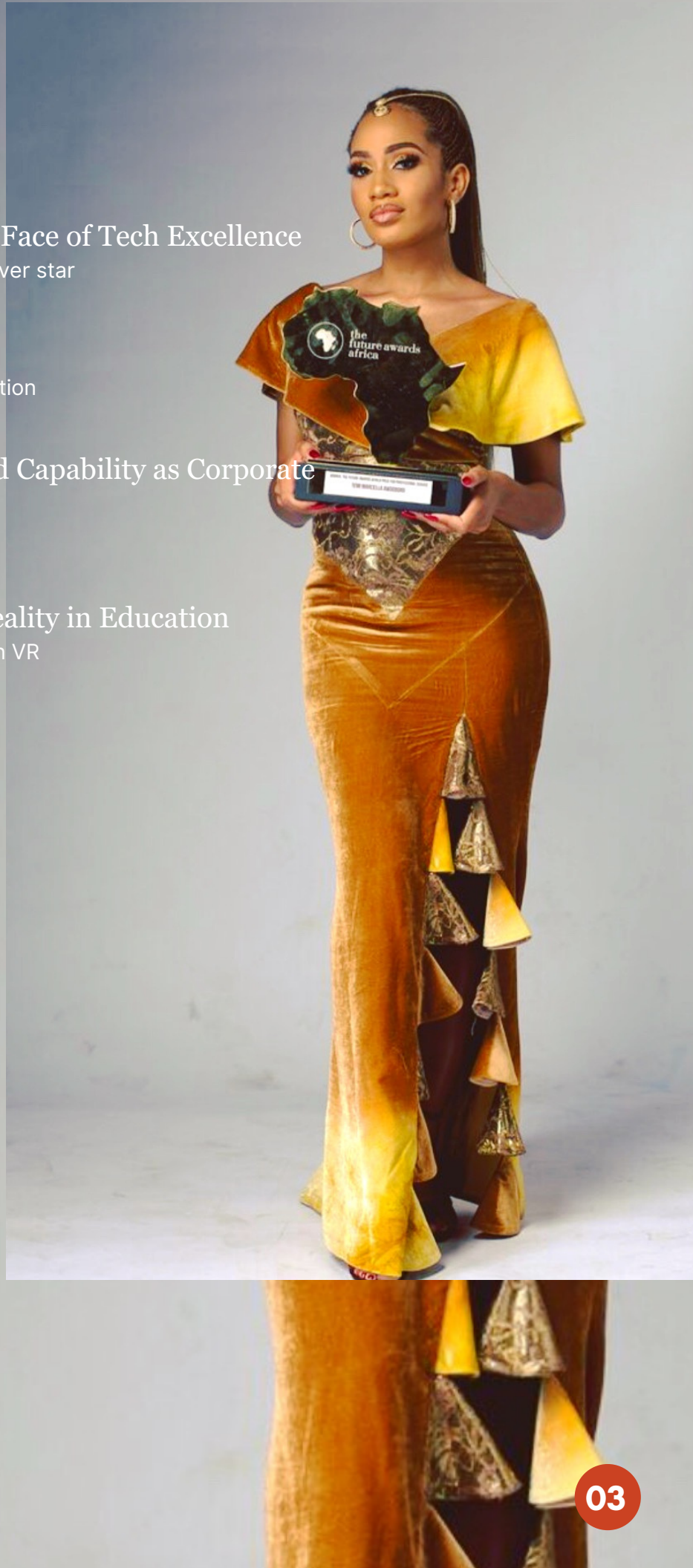
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Purpose . Passion . Performance

While many shy away from taking the bull by the horn, accepting fate & bending it to their will, Temi Marcella is the opposite. She shares with us how she has threaded in unfriendly male-dominated waters, mastered the act of being present and managing being born in varying cultures.

What's the one thing you remember in your earlier days that you can say shaped you to this version of yourself?

I am Nigerian with German and Scottish heritage. I was born in Nigeria, raised in the UK and have lived and worked across four continents. My childhood was one of constant discovery, adventure, and exploration, however I always felt like somewhat of an outsider, like I never quite fully belonged. I shied away from group think and identities, often straddling very disparate worlds. This lived experience forced me to forge a strong personal identity that was not wedded to culture, dogmas, traditions, and ideological concepts but rather drawn from a strong sense of self from within. It gave me the courage to be different, not settling for the status quo, which has been a great source of inspiration and creativity over the years, enabling me to bring unique perspectives.

What's the one word you'd use to describe your relationship with social media?

Inspiration. I am for the most part, an introvert and in my natural state, would shy away from attention, often preferring to graft behind the scenes. As such I've always had a love hate relationship with social media. The turning point for me was becoming a mother to girls. I became highly conscious of the narrow, limiting and dis-empowering representation of women on social media, the ultimate manifestation of a world designed by men for men. The correlation between the rise of social media and more challenges to mental wellbeing, especially amongst teen girls, is well documented. I decided I could continue to complain about the poor representation of women if I was not ready to put myself out there - that was the motivation behind my building a more public profile leveraging social media.



I am intentional about trying to promote a different image of women, one that combines strength, with intellect, courage and other traits that are typically associated with men. I am passionate about helping build confidence and self-belief, encouraging women to be the very best they can be because, "you can't be what you can't see." In that sense, I use social media as a force for good to inspire and be inspired!



Here, you can place a caption for the photo. It can be a short description or it can credit the production team.

Lowest moment in your life/career

One of the lowest moments in my career was the public demise of the private equity fund I had joined straight after Stanford GSB. I recall reading the headlines in the Wall Street Journal during my first Kauffman module and going through a range of emotions from disbelief to shock.

As a perfectionist, extremely focused on building a professional reputation centered on exceptional performance and professional integrity, I had always taken pride in working with world-class institutions. As someone who planned their career so meticulously, the ultimate collapse of the fund was a devastating experience.

In the period of reflection, I committed to “planting the seeds for future success in present defeat.

I made the conscious decision not to attach myself to any institution or individual, rather to my purpose, my mission, and my calling.

I forced myself to drown out the noise and fears, and focus on the why, the purpose. It was out of the chaos that Evercare Hospital Lekki, the largest most advanced private hospital in Nigeria, was born, part of a platform we built that is transforming healthcare in emerging markets and shaping the world of tomorrow.

What’s the one trait that has stayed with you growing up and the trait you’ve lost that you wish you hadn’t?

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What's the one trait that has stayed with you growing up and the trait you've lost that you wish you hadn't?

I have a tenacity that has brought me through personal and professional crises. The one trait that I've neglected over the years is my creativity. A somewhat natural consequence of an almost two-decade career steeped in the world of finance and investing. I recall being intentional about this when I was at Goldman Sachs when I signed up to join a Brazilian samba dance group.

I was an artist in my spare time, at one time considering studying the history of art at University, and loved languages. I am exploring avenues to nurture and unleash this creative spirit again. My kids give me such a wonderful opportunity to indulge my creative side. Watch this space!

Tell us the origin story of your favorite nicknames

From a young age, my parents and close family nicknamed me "Small But Mighty" because in my small package, came mighty aspirations.

I recall childhood stories, from the baby that ate mouthfuls of spicy Suya, red in the face and crying with every mouthful yet insisting on being fed more, to the 5-year-old intent on riding her big sister's bicycle and ending up in an open gutter when my feet failed to make contact with the pedals. To the 9-year-old who won numerous trophies at Shotokan karate sparring competitions, known to make boys cry as I graduated towards black belt rank.

As a child, I always refused to be restricted by the limits imposed by external expectations of me, with a burning desire to push beyond the limits perceived in my mind or externally imposed

One trait you can attribute to being successful in your career

As I reflect on my journey to date, I have faced a plethora of challenges; navigating my career at the epicenter of the global financial crisis, encountering significant resistance trying to break into the private equity industry, navigating the extremely lonely path of rising the ranks in male-dominated industries, witnessing first-hand the destructive impact of toxic leadership and failed institutions and juggling the failed relationships and the demands of being a present and invested mother to two girls, while building institutions and my career as an investment professional.

I have remained optimistic and learned to thrive under the pressure of doing the 'hard things' fuelled by a deep sense of purpose, an unrelenting tenacity, and an unwavering belief in myself.

In his recent Grammy speech, Jay Z aptly said "Just keep showing up. You've got to keep showing up until they give you all those accolades you feel you deserve. Until they call you chairman, until they call you a genius, until they call you the greatest of all time." The modern rendition of one of my favorite speeches, 'The Man in the Arena' by Theodore Roosevelt, in which he reminds us that he or she who dares, wins.

Have you ever felt like an outsider?

I was born in Nigeria and raised in the UK and have lived and worked across four continents. I felt like an outsider growing up, a by-product of my mixed heritage and moving across continents at a young age.

I found a way to turn this lived experience from what could be perceived as a disadvantage, to embracing it as a core part of my identity. I found the experience of not belonging anywhere liberating.

It gave me the courage to be different, forced me to create my own rooms and build my own tables, reach across divides, and comfortably straddle disparate worlds, focused more on building consensus than belonging.

As a technology leader, what advice do you have for aspiring women in the tech industry, especially those aiming for leadership roles?

Global statistics indicate that by 2050, 75% of jobs will be related to STEM. Yet today, women hold just 22% of positions in artificial intelligence, to name just one.

In my opinion, a gender-responsive and inclusive approach to innovation, technology and digital education is critical to ensuring the opportunities afforded by the digital revolution do not perpetuate existing patterns of gender inequality and women do not continue to be left behind as a result of the digital gender divide.

My advice to women everywhere is that you are powerful beyond measure, and your voice matters. Do not feel less entitled, expect more, take up more space and demand more, be bold in challenging the status quo. I encourage women and young girls to be proud of their ambition, knowing they can attain the highest levels of leadership in their chosen fields.

As Kamala Harris said in her acceptance speech, it is important to “dream with ambition, lead with conviction, and see yourself in a way that others might not see you, simply because they’ve never seen it before.” I am thankful for the platform to use my story to bring hope, motivate and inspire women all over the globe.

As someone who has navigated the tech startup scene, what are some of the most valuable lessons you've learned from both successes and challenges along the way?

Navigating the tech startup scene has been a journey filled with invaluable lessons. Successes underscore the importance of adaptability and a keen understanding of market dynamics, while challenges emphasize the need for resilience and swift problem-solving.

Building a strong and diverse team has proven crucial in overcoming obstacles and fostering innovation. The ability to pivot when necessary, learning from failures, and maintaining a customer-centric focus are key takeaways.

Ultimately, the startup journey is a continuous learning process, where both successes and challenges contribute to the growth and evolution of the venture.

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How do you handle setbacks or failures in your professional journey, and what advice would you give to others facing similar challenges in the tech industry?

Failure for me is an unavoidable part of living a limitless life. Navigating setbacks in my professional journey involves embracing them as learning opportunities. I analyze the root causes, extract valuable lessons, and use the experience to refine my approach. Maintaining a resilient mindset and viewing failures as stepping stones rather than roadblocks has been crucial.

To others facing similar challenges in the tech industry, I would advise embracing setbacks with a growth-oriented mindset and leveraging setbacks as a catalyst for innovation and improvement. Remember, setbacks are not endpoints but pivotal moments in the journey toward success. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who ultimately do.



As someone who advocates for diversity and inclusion, how have you seen diverse perspectives positively impact the teams and organizations you've been a part of throughout your career?

Women do two-thirds of the world's work yet receive ten per cent of its income and own just one per cent of the means of production. This is frankly unacceptable! The IWD 2024 campaign theme is Inspire Inclusion, recognising that when we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment.

The benefits of gender equity are well documented. "Having a diverse workforce is not only the right thing to do, it's a business imperative.

Emory Samaha

According to Oliver Wyman's report, 'there is at least a \$700 billion revenue opportunity from better serving women as customers. In light of this evidence, it is imperative that other organizations follow suit and lend not just their voice but their capital to this cause.

In championing diversity and inclusion, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of embracing varied perspectives within teams and organizations. Diverse viewpoints bring a richness of ideas, fostering innovation and creative problem-solving. Embracing diversity cultivates a culture of respect, where individuals feel valued for their unique contributions, leading to increased morale and team cohesion.

Overall, my advocacy for diversity stems from the belief that it not only aligns with ethics but also yields tangible benefits for excellence.

I firmly believe the unique experiences and perspectives of women at all decision-making levels are critical in the formulation of decisions, policies and laws that work for all. Women are powerful beyond measure, when we are liberated to demand and create the life we deserve.

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Your view on the startup landscape in Nigeria/Africa, the good, the bad & the ugly?

I have worked closely with ecosystem architects, building and investing in companies at the forefront of the African growth story. The growth potential is evident from the remarkable surge seen in venture capital funding in Africa over the last decade, growing by 1597% from \$277 million in 2015 to \$4.7 billion in 2023.

This pace of growth is remarkable, significantly outpacing growth in other global tech ecosystems. The ecosystem faces inherent challenges, capital is unreliable, rounds are highly fragmented, there is a dearth of local capital funding growth and exits are rare, with Africa's most notable and disclosed exits totalling only \$2-3 billion to date.

Addressing these issues will be critical in unlocking capital and attracting larger pools of institutional capital on the continent.

In addition, there will need to be a concerted effort to address challenges like the productivity of nations (stemming the pervasive decline in currency values), bureaucratic hurdles, infrastructure gaps, and unpredictable regulatory environments. I am encouraged by the resilience and creativity of African startups, despite the circumstances and believe in the immense potential for growth and positive impact in this evolving landscape.

How do you balance the demands of a successful career in the tech industry with your personal life, and what habits or routines have helped you maintain that balance?

As a woman that has risen through male dominated fields, trying to 'have it all', I have had to come to terms that inevitably there will be trade-offs, as such the notion of maintaining balance can seem like a task in futility. I have days in which I am overwhelmed by the pressure, born of outsized expectations at work and at home and I go through days where I feel I am not able to give the best of me to any one area of my life – after all energy too has its limits.

It is these times that I remind myself that life is ultimately a series of trade-offs.

We trade work for leisure, money for meaning, productivity for peace of mind, anger for love, and so it goes. I am less focused on maintaining balance and more focused on being fully present at any given point in time while being very intentional about the trade-offs I am making.

I have since redefined success in more human terms, rather than the fantasy of women – or men - that have it all. In my view, real success – the true definition of having it all – is defining what success means for you individually and channelling your energies there. I strive to live the highest version of myself each day, whatever it is I'm doing.

Pessimist, realist or optimist?

Pessimist! It's something I'm actively working on - I have a tendency to see the worst case in every scenario, which is great from a risk management perspective but can have its adverse effects on a sustained basis.

As such, I have trained myself to be aware of the pessimism or negative self-talk and override it with positive affirmations and manifestations of the outcomes I wish to create in the world. Ultimately I believe the best way to predict your future is to create it.

What's your view on the quote that says success breeds success?

The concept that success breeds success reflects my belief in the compounding effect of achievement.

Each success not only builds confidence and motivation but also opens doors to new opportunities, creating a positive cycle of growth.

Beyond tangible rewards, the experience and lessons gained contribute to continuous personal and professional development. Success, in this context, acts as a powerful catalyst for ongoing advancement. I have always believed strongly that we are what we repeatedly do. In that regard, excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.



What emerging technologies do you find most exciting, and how do you think they will impact our daily lives in the next decade?

As a generation, we are witnessing a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the next phase in digitization, driven by disruptive trends including the rise of data and connectivity, analytics, human-machine interaction, and improvements in robotics.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at the core of the 4IR and is opening up a new world of opportunities. With the advances in AI, technology has moved beyond analytical to predictive to prescriptive applications unlocking enormous potential, across automation, predictive analytics, personalisation, robotics, autonomous vehicles, precision medicine and cybersecurity amongst others.

AI-powered assistants, such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home, are becoming common fixtures in our homes. AI-powered chatbots and assistants are entrenched in our daily lives. And AI-powered recommendation engines are helping us discover new products and services. In the workplace,

AI-powered tools are being used to automate mundane tasks, allowing employees to focus on more important work. In marketing, AI-powered analytics are being used to gain insights into customer behavior and improve decision-making. The transformative impact of artificial intelligence, machine learning and embedded technology is transforming our worlds as we know it. How economies, markets, ecosystems and organizations react and respond in this ever-expanding yet the interconnected world remains to be seen. What is clear, as discussed in depth at the 2024 World Economic Forum, Davos, is that the potential threats posed including governance over data privacy, net ethics and cybersecurity issues, underscore the need for broader cyber laws and policymaking in the future.

**A PULL QUOTE IS AN IMPACTFUL QUOTE
TAKEN FROM THE ARTICLE. YOU CAN PLACE
THE QUOTE YOU WANT TO HIGHLIGHT HERE.**



What role do you see yourself playing beyond financial support when investing in a startup? How involved are you in the strategic decisions and operations?

I am deeply committed to investing in entrepreneurs tackling some of the world's greatest challenges. Through the early-stage platforms I have built, I identify aspirational entrepreneurs and teams building impactful solutions, invest in this talent, provide mentorship, access to networks and functional support to power their trajectory.

The degree to which one is hands-on, is ultimately driven by the stage at which one is investing and the needs of the entrepreneur and/or the management team. As such, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach I engage as a thought partner, a resource to help them think through strategic and operational pain points and then identify how best to solve for their stated objectives.

I tend to be more on the active side as an investor because of my background as an operator/entrepreneur. I find that founders ultimately want investors that have first-hand insight into building a business and can leverage these insights to their benefit.

Can you share some key lessons you've learned from investments that didn't go as expected, and how do you apply those lessons in your current investment strategy?

Investing ultimately centers on trust. The instances when I have gone against my better judgment and overlooked my instinct regarding an individual, or teams, has typically not worked out well. The analysis is crucial, sizing the addressable market, articulating inherent risks etc.

However, ultimately when you invest you are placing your trust in the entrepreneurs you are backing to be effective stewards of and custodians of your capital. As a result, I am very intentional about getting to know the entrepreneurs I am investing in beyond the surface level interactions.

This goes beyond the surface level diligence and referrals, to investing time in getting to know potential partners, investee companies on a deeper level - surfacing their principles, their values, their strengths and areas for growth and ensuring alignment on the key foundational values.

“

Just keep showing up. You've got to keep showing up until they give you all those accolades you feel you deserve. Until they call you chairman, until they call you a genius, until they call you the greatest of all time.”

”



"Always seek to embody the spirit of limitless possibility, where dedication, empathy, and resilience converge to illuminate pathways of innovation and impact."

Letter from the Editor

When reviewing our cover stars, we were really struck by Temi's profile. Her dedication to record keeping, and consistently publicizing summarized data, thus positioning her brand as an unrefutable data source. She is an interviewer's dream.

From our very first conversation, she was not short of impressive, and I'm pretty happy that I get to share her story with you.

I thoroughly enjoyed my conversation with her, and it consistently strikes me how similar we are in certain life ideologies.

So enjoy, because in this edition, we delve into her stories told from her ceaseless source of unwavering excellence. It promises to resonate with the essence of resilience and unwavering determination.

Stephanie Nwannukwu

Editor-in-Chief

Character Competence and Capability as Corporate tools for Success

Dr. Ikenna M. Okafor,
(OgaHR)
Human Resource Professional
and Management Consultant



When I was working in the Mines in Kogi State, we had a very bright and intelligent staff. He is always like he knows it all and there was nothing you asked him in his field he wouldn't be able to answer, but unfortunately, he had a gangster approach toward his work style. He had poor corporate culture and no corporate character. Fast-forward to my current place of work, I have this staff with a personal drive to achieve success in whatsoever tasks he is given within the timeline provided. Unfortunately, he would talk to his Line Manager rudely if things weren't going as he expected. He would display all forms of arrogance to make his position known. Most interestingly, when he is corrected, what is more important to him is being heard than taking the correction. Obviously, this is not the way to go. Character remains a very important and strong tool in ensuring success in the corporate world. With a strong character comes respect for constituted authority, and thus follows loyalty. No matter how competent or capable you are on your job, poor character will simply lead to a disconnect between one with team members. It will further bring somewhat abhorrence even before one's boss. Poor character is displayed in many ways.

Some of such ways are: failure to take correction, displaying rude and arrogant behaviour, disregard for superior officers or constituted authority, mixing personal issues with professional matters, and displaying other behaviours that doesn't conform with general societal norms repeatedly in the professional environment. I have heard of managers and supervisors say they rather have one with a good character but incompetent than one who is competent but with a bad character. When I was working in the Mines in Kogi State, we had a very bright and intelligent staff. He is always like he knows it all and there was nothing you asked I actually share the same bias with people who say this. During interviews, I'm coordinating or conducting, my assumption is that the person is competent and capable which is why he or she made it to the interview session in the first place. Secondly, I also believe it's the work of the HOD of the candidate to choose candidates for job based on competence and capability, but character which happens to be more powerful lies outside the hands of the Head of Department.

In fact, in some climes, I have seen after successful interviews, the second or the third best is picked for the job over the candidate who scored first on competence and capability on the basis of issues related to character. The importance of having a positive character over competence and capability can not be over emphasized. One of the reasons for this is because people will naturally be attracted to one with a respectful, loyal and positive character over one considered as a radical. This is important because the greatest currency in the corporate world is the "People Currency". This implies that there is a limit to where your capabilities can carry you and where it stops, you will need people to carry you overboard. For instance, when talking about one's promotion, the beneficiary isn't usually in the room. Both line manager and even other senior staff outside the beneficiary of the promotion participate in the conversation. Most times, the conversation is not about whether the worker is capable or competent, but whether the staff has a good character (loyal and respectful). Last week, I partook in a conversation in a WhatsApp Group about a particular employee who doesn't greet people either superiors or elders at work. Some were of the opinion that greeting at the workplace isn't by force, others said greetings don't mean friendship while another asked how not greeting people, affects productivity. Well, greeting does not directly affect productivity, but I can tell you that it constitutes a very important part of organizational culture. It speaks to the behavior of the person in question. It is therefore not likely that co-employees will find it comfortable working with such an employee. Indirectly, productivity will be affected. In summary, we can't talk about corporate behavior and corporate growth in a workspace without these three C's – Competence, Capability, and Character. As important as the first two C's are, the last seems to be more important as it creates influence. It has a subtle way one can use in achieving their goals with little or no effort. The "Character" virtue is a value to access "People's Currency" if properly used.

THE POTENTIAL OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN EDUCATION

ENGAGING AND INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCES THAT CAPTURE STUDENTS' ATTENTION AND IMPROVE THEIR LEARNING

By Busayo Oloruntobi

Virtual reality offers engaging and interactive experiences that capture students' attention and improve their learning, and it has the potential to completely transform education. Imagine a classroom where students wear virtual reality headsets and are suddenly thrust into space, the ocean's depths, or historical sites. This is what a group of high school students went through as they took a virtual tour of ancient Rome for their history class. They could see historical events and engage with virtual replicas of old artifacts as they walked around the streets of the ancient city. The students were not just learning about history; they were living it.

Virtual reality offers hands-on learning, which allows students to get real-world experience in a secure setting. Learning becomes more captivating and memorable when interaction is fostered. Moreover, virtual reality's inclusivity guarantees that every student, irrespective of their learning style or geographic location, can enjoy top-notch educational experiences. Virtual reality also helps students collaborate and communicate with one another, which equips them with the needs of today's job market.

Virtual reality (VR) makes abstract concepts more tangible and understandable by mimicking actual scenarios and environments. With the use of this immersive technology, learning experiences might be tailored to each student's requirements and preferences, improving learning results for a variety of learners. The potential of virtual reality (VR) to create a stimulating learning environment is one of its main educational benefits. Students' attention is captured by this thrilling experience, which also increases their involvement with what is being taught. Virtual reality (VR) can take pupils to locations they could not otherwise have access to, such as historical sites, space, or the human body, by recreating realistic scenarios and environments. This increased level of involvement can result in better memory recall and a more thorough comprehension of difficult ideas. Furthermore, VR technology could improve inclusivity and accessibility in education. By providing remote students with access to top-notch educational opportunities, it can dissolve geographical barriers. Additionally, because virtual reality offers configurable learning environments, it can accommodate students with disabilities and suit a variety of learning methods.

All students benefit from this inclusivity, which also creates a more diverse and equitable learning environment. Students can engage with the course material and one another in fresh and engaging ways in a virtual reality setting. Experiences with collaborative virtual reality (VR) facilitate group work, problem-solving in teams, and interactive dialogues, all of which enhance interpersonal and communication abilities. Because VR fosters collaboration, it prepares students for the needs of a highly interconnected and worldwide profession by simulating real-world settings. Conclusively, virtual reality has a great deal of potential for use in education. VR has the potential to completely change the educational environment by increasing engagement, offering chances for experiential learning, fostering inclusion, collaboration, customisation, and overcoming the drawbacks of traditional teaching approaches. With the advancement of technology, incorporating it into educational environments has the potential to produce learning experiences that are more impactful, effective, and engaging for students worldwide.

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