

EXPLORING NEW FIELDS

Adotevi Johanna

For the majority of it, change receives mixed reviews. Some abhor it, others adapt to it and there are few who willingly opt for it, never hesitating to open doors to the multitude of benefits that it can bring along.



Working as the Marketing Director at Ivoire Coton in Ivory Coast, Ms ADOTEVI Johanna is a German who recently opted to try her hand in the cashew sector. Although her area of specialization lies in cotton production since she was previously working in that field, when she was transferred in the group that she was a part of, IPS, she saw it as a wonderful opportunity.

An unexpected yet welcoming change

Ivory Coast, being a region where the cotton production areas are similar to cashew production, her experience from the cotton domain she had mastered in, came in handy. While it cannot be denied that the shift from her stable routine came as an unexpected challenge in the course of the actual activity, given the many perks of the vast cashew sector, Ms Johanna had nothing to complain.



Acquiring the skills to master the job

To start off with, in order to acquire the skills required for the post, she built a number of contacts and participated in numerous forums which helped her understand the field. She even willingly indulged herself in discussions with key people in the sector, broadening her scale of thoughts with the help of their enormous experience.



Besides, as the majority of her work is to do with marketing and negotiation, it provides her the platform to come in contact with a number of people from the same field as her. She is able to collaborate, anticipate, act and decide throughout the course of her work, and at the same time she is required to stay result-oriented to achieve the goals set by the TOP management.

Stabilizing the foundation to ensure steady growth

While the company has about a 100 employees, it is wonderful to know that she works alongside 75 other women who put in their sweat and blood to help maintain the high standards, which in turn is needed for the firm to keep up to its brand image, fulfill its social responsibility and continue to ensure that it stays the innovative company it is. Associated to the cotton company's social actions, the company holds an excellent reputation, the credit for all of which goes to those working in the backdrop, making their efforts count.

Focusing on the success of womenfolk

As we skim through, we are enlightened that the company has achieved quite a lot so far, and they only wish to grow even further and have bigger plans to enlarge their base. Being one of the biggest providers of female employment in the area, they have also initiated training plans so as to attract more women towards the sector. To add to this, the various benefits they offer, including a fair gender policy and activities aimed at female promotion, serve as additional perks to support their aims.



Through a better valorization of the work and local market, she is positive that innumerable women can have higher and stable footings in the cashew market. In her opinion, prejudices and lack of self-confidence prevents them from becoming leaders.

Experience as a mother comes handy

As for her male counterparts, she is not one to feel like she is denied rewards in their comparison. Apart from that, given the situations when working with them becomes an issue, she says being a mother of three and her experience in motherhood helps to tackle problems in this sphere at work. When asked if she thinks she is recognized in a sector where the men occupy bigger positions, she refuses to comment. She reasons that she is still new to the sector, and while she does not dismiss the possibility of receiving enough acknowledgement, she puts an end to it by saying in the next three years, she will be better equipped to give a clear answer.



Conquering big forces with a positive attitude

Still considering herself fairly new, we see that Miss Johanna is looking forward to everything the sector has to offer with a welcoming smile. Given her attitude, we're sure she'd be able to conquer all forces, whether big or small.

Moving on to the bigger challenges that she encounters, she says the need for developing new markets and obtaining international food safety certifications are some mighty tasks. In such situations, the knowledge she has received through her post graduate degree comes in handy. She is also on the constant lookout for training sessions that focus on her field so as to gain and imply beneficial knowledge not only to overcome the challenges, but to also inculcate new practices that will yield positive results. Apart from this, she believes in involving herself in constant research and reading through the published studies to help her gain more insights of the ongoing trends.

Learning the power of women at an early age

Peeking into Ms Johanna's early life, we see that she was raised along with her 5 siblings in a polyglot family, which explains her fluency in German, French and English. Her father was an entrepreneur and mother an officer. This essential





detail of her life tells us from the very beginning, she was raised to believe in the powerful attributes of women. In her family, since her mother balanced the household and her professional and demanding career with excellence, it's understood she has been familiar with the fact that as long as you are focused, gender does not come in the way to accomplishments.

It was such a mindset that did not stop her from exploring the cashew sector, although she did not know any other women nor did she have prior work experience in the said field.

Plan, orchestrate and discipline all events

When asked about the efforts that goes in striking a work life balance, she says being a mother of 3 children (18, 9 and 7 years old) and working along side in the company is not easy. She confesses that it becomes difficult to always be there for the kids, but with the support of her sisters and family, she does her best to manage the time between work and children. Since everything is planned, orchestrated and made with much discipline, it doesn't give much room for the unexpected things to spring up.

Hoping for positive growth and staying optimistic

Five years down the line, she sees herself working with more women and more cooperatives, and being operational in the local market. Her work is a blend of balance, independence and development and she envisions a positive growth curve in the years to come. While she believes there is innumerable scope for improvement in her work and with enough funding women can reach greater heights, when asked if she'd wish to start her own enterprise, she declines the possibility at the moment.

Organization is key

Right now, she is focused on exploring the cashew sector, and adapting to the environment. She hopes to contribute magnificently to this vast region and also hopes to grow in the process. She believes in pre planning and organization, for one must always think ahead and be equipped but at the same time, embrace the many changes that life has to offer!

