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Leadership Inspiration: Dream Big

By Carlos Arocha

Editor's Note: In the Leadership & Development Section's Leadership Inspiration Contest, entrants were asked to tell us what inspired them to be a better actuarial leader. Here is an entry from the "Defining Moment/Event" category.

It occurred to me while traveling by train from the Swiss town of Yverdon-Les-Bains to Zurich, where I am currently based. I was returning from a board meeting of a consortium that four colleagues and I founded a few months prior.



In my train commute I realized it all had started with volunteer work.

It all started at an actuarial conference in early 2014 in Africa, where I met some actuaries from Ghana who were planning to attend the Society of Actuaries (SOA) Annual Meeting & Exhibit in Orlando. Their leader asked me for a time slot to meet. I had been volunteering with the SOA for a few years (and still am), and through some connections, they thought I could somehow contribute to the advancement of the profession in their home country.

Later on, the leader of the group learned that we both lived in Switzerland, albeit in different cities. One thing led to another, and we started to discuss the creation of a project. We invited three other people, and we worked out the details. We formalized the project and established a board of directors. I had the privilege of being appointed chairman.

The consortium's mission is to deliver unique, Web-based educational platforms and services for knowledge transfer, education and capacity building to public and private insurance large-scale projects. This is admittedly a big dream, but we have taken the first step. In my train commute I realized it all had started with volunteer work: helping African folks to develop their profession; hosting them at the SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit, including an invitation to speak about their situation and needs at the International Section Reception; and then moving forward with the ambitious plan of building capacity for insurance projects in less economically developed countries.

I earned the chair of the board without even asking for it. I committed to excellence and in the process I was able to develop my unique talents and abilities. I found the appointment inspiring because it made me reflect about traits that help actuaries to progress in their careers: dreaming big, dedicating oneself to life-long learning, becoming an unshakeable optimist, serving others, and learning as many details as possible about our industry.

It all occurred to me while traveling by train. ■



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