Employee should try to catalyse their exposure by emulating the job performance competencies of their superiors. PHOTO | COURTESY | FOTOSEARCH

Imagine that following a long job search, you finally land your ideal position. You drive to work winding through Nairobi traffic on your first day in the new post. Excitedly hurling up the stairs, you arrive at your new office.

Following your human resources orientation that morning, you finally meet your new department manager.

Now visualise the type of supervisor that you desire. Of course everyone desires a high integrity boss who will keep his or her promises, not embezzle, and not lie as well as one who holds high
benevolence towards you by keeping your best interests at heart, promoting you where possible, and coaching you towards a better career.

However, Sub-Saharan Africa differs greatly compared to the rest of the world on another desirable salient leadership quality. On average, Africans from Zambia to Uganda to Tanzania to Kenya all prefer managers with low levels of ability. Our preferences in Africa stand in stark contrast to the rest of the world where the plurality of workers strongly desire highly competent bosses. Research released in 2016 by this author hypothesised the reason for the average African preference originates from a fear of receiving unattainable key performance indicators and being watched over too keenly in jobs from highly skilled superiors.

However, researchers passionately plead the case that we should actually desire to work for competent high ability managers. Researchers Pearl Malhotra and Manjari Singh looked into the career trajectories of employees with both low and high performing managers. They uncovered a framework for career success that depends on the ability of one’s supervisors.

In the midst of the commotion surrounding selecting a new position, job seekers should prioritise roles where the prospective manager possesses both high performance qualities as well as networking abilities. In such a scenario, then the employee should try to catalyse their exposure by emulating the job performance competencies of their superiors and leverage on their networks.

The subordinate then enriches their own human capital capacity in their conscious brain with decisions and actions, but also their subconscious brain through exposure that leads to more accurate gut feeling reactions to corporate occurrences. Additionally, employees augment their own social capital through broader depth and breadth of network contacts.

The research shows that the subordinate’s improved human and social capital then leads to a substantial boost in one’s career prospects over time. Greater career forecasts lead to more salary, flexibility, and job satisfaction over time that ultimately leads to better satisfaction with one’s life.

Does the above scenario work for all employees? No. If workers hold low perceptions about their own capabilities, suffer from glum self-efficacy, are too introverted to socially interact with new contacts, or possess dismal self-esteem then they will fail to take advantage of their highly competent bosses and positive chain reaction of positive outcomes that could ensue.

So, assess your own self-efficacy, extraversion, and self-esteem. If you feel strongly that you possess all three, then actively run towards job positions with high performing competent bosses. You and your family will be glad you did.

Scott may be reached on scott@ScottProfessor.com or on Twitter: @ScottProfessor