



“Is it really worth it, Hamza, are you sure these people will deliver?” Boyowa inquired worriedly from his Head of National Sales.

“Ah! Oga they will, this guy at Ministry of Infrastructure Services is top-notch – he is a man of integrity. Once we agree terms, he delivers. He has been the Pension Desk Officer (PDO) there for about three years and while I was at Horizon Pensions we worked well together, so I do not expect anything to go wrong.” replied Hamza, the Head of National Sales. Boyowa, the MD/CEO of Axiom Pensions and Hamza, his Head of National Sales, were discussing a “PR” request from the PDO at the Ministry of Infrastructure Services in his office.

Boyowa was particularly skeptical about this deal as they had been ripped off by a PDO from another MDA just a month ago. They had paid the PDO a whopping N200,000 to get his staff to commit to Axiom and he failed to deliver. At the end Axiom ended up having to compete with the rest of the PFAs and the “big 3” got almost 80% of the new accounts. In fact, Axiom could only scramble for the lower level hires (drivers and office assistants) with some of the other smaller PFAs.

“Remind me again, what are we getting if we give this guy 100K?” Boyowa asked rather pensively. Hamza who was keen on closing a major mandate and justifying his recent promotion to Head of National Sales responded with his fist clinched and punching rhythmically into the air saying, “Oga, he is guaranteeing the sign-up of 50 out of the 113 new intakes at their organization, all on Grade Level 13 and above. And you know that means higher deductions! It’s a pretty good deal.”

“But is this right, Hamza? Forget about that fellow from NLTI who played a fast one on us last month. I am more concerned about this whole PR stuff – are you sure we won’t get into trouble? You know, since the federal elections, people are starting to get jittery about issues like this”. Hamza, still pumped up and confident, responded “Hmmm, some things won’t just change like that. Everyone does it; it’s just a gift, a way of saying thank you. After all, it’s not like we are dipping into contributor’s funds to pay for this. It’s our budget – can’t we spend it on finding new business? Remember how this helped us when I first got here with the SCR sign-up. If we were not sharp that time we could have lost everything. Let’s not worry too

much about stuff like that. The “Big 3” didn’t just mop up all those forms at NLTl like that, they paid top dollar and the guy we paid to was not in the inner clique”.

Boyowa sighed as he reflected on Hamza’s response. “Oga, okay, worst case if anything goes wrong we will cover your back – we are working for you sir – *no shaking!*”

The conversation was still going on when Head of HR, Temi knocked and poked his head through the slightly opened door. “Good day sir, well done” he said as he bowed his head multiple times. As soon as Hamza spotted Temi’s head he gave a nasty look and got up to make himself a cup of coffee. Hamza had come to find Temi quite irritating and it wasn’t just him. Temi was fondly referred to as the MD’s boy and was known for perpetual *ass-kissing*. He was from the same part of the country as the CEO and didn’t hesitate to play the ethnic card from time to time.

Temi wasn’t very fond of Hamza either and so they generally just ignored each other. Temi had a few other more “suitable” candidates for the Head of National Sales position and tried to play the ethnic card to his favour. While Boyowa was quite in touch with his roots in Warri, he

always tried to be professional with appointments and other business decisions. Temi was one of those people who thrived on creating internal cliques and always allowed his biases affect his decisions.

“Ah! Temi, come in,” Boyowa said with a smile on his face, “what’s going on?” “Well done sir,” he repeated “it’s Ladi’s case sir, you said you were going to set up a committee to look into it today. I just wanted to follow up on that.”

Oladipupo commonly known as Ladi was the Admin Manager at Axiom Pensions who had been accused of soliciting and taking a bribe from one of the Company’s suppliers. According to the supplier, he had always “squared” Ladi for the contracts he got, but Ladi started getting greedy and asking for much more than usual.

“That’s right, that’s right, thank you for reminding me,” Boyowa said “I had actually been thinking about who to include in the Disciplinary Committee (DC)...okay yes, we’ll have the Head of Risk Management, Ade, ED Ops, and yourself.”

Temi had a bitter look on his face as he heard Boyowa suggest that the Executive Director of Operations (ED Ops) heads the

DC. He wanted to object loudly but restrained himself because of Hamza's presence in the room. Instead he walked up to the CEO and whispered into his ears, "Oga, do you really think ED Ops should be on the committee?" "Why not?" Boyowa said loudly. Temi, sensing that Boyowa didn't appreciate his point switched to their native Itsekiri "*oneyin, omaju to e wi no. Wey ow aka fuo oyibo kpokporo. Urun te se ukurun, oka le ne owo ro....*" (That one, you know how he is always stubborn and difficult. He will soon start speaking some big grammar and making the simplest things complicated).

Boyowa caught on and wanted to suggest that the ED be taken off the committee. He however thought about the fact that Hamza had heard him recommend the ED initially and that word might leak out that their little language chatter had influenced the ED's exclusion from the DC. Boyowa wasn't entirely insensitive to how people felt about his relationship with Temi, but still considered Temi a very valuable ally. So with this train of thoughts, Boyowa concluded by saying, "That's okay; you all will be good on the committee." Temi, furious, but never one to pass up an opportunity to suck up to the CEO responded saying, "You are right sir, it's the right blend, thank you

sir, we will convene immediately" as he left the room. "Aha, Hamza, where were we" asked Boyowa as he beckoned to Hamza to continue their conversation.

Meanwhile, Temi went back to his office and typed up a quick email informing the selected members of the committee that their attention was required at 1pm that day (2 hours later), at the small board room per the CEO's directives. All members responded confirming their availability for the meeting and Temi prepared with his team.

The Committee gathered at the small board room a few minutes before 1pm and started discussing the case and the possible verdicts they would pass depending on the outcome of their meeting. It looked quite simple said the ED Ops – "our ethical guidelines and that of PenCom are quite clear on these matters". It's really tragic the kind of culture of impunity we are breeding. Someone as senior and well paid as Ladi should not be involved in this kind of mess". "Oga, it is real impunity – even demanding more than usual," said Ade as they waited for Ladi and the support staff from HR to arrive.

Ladi came in with this smirk on his face that could not be ignored. As soon as Temi spotted the look he turned and whispered in Ade's

ears; “Look he isn’t even remorseful.” Ade did not respond, but nodded, seemingly in agreement.

The ED started by saying, “You are welcome Mr. Oladipupo Adeniyi, I’m sure you know why you are here, but for clarity, let me read what I have here: The allegations made against you suggest that ‘You solicited and accepted gratification from one of the Company’s suppliers – EDISON & Co.’ Is this right?” “Yes, that’s true sir.” Ladi responded confidently. “Would you like to expatiate? I mean, can you give us your response to the allegation?” Ade interjected.

“Thank you very much sir, actually EDISON & Co wanted to be one of the first to be considered in the bid for the supply request we had put out and you know that it usually involves a lengthy process. I figured that since EDISON & Co does repeat business for us, there was no harm in giving them a slight advantage. When we got discussing and I mentioned the strings I would need to pull to give them that edge he understood the situation. Consequently, he offered to give me a little something for my efforts and I accepted. It was not a forced case so I really don’t know how all this got blown out of proportion.”

“Ladi, you are lying!” shouted a very dramatic Temi: “Eddy told us that you were harassing him for more money, more than he usually “settles” for the contracts he does and that you threatened him. Say the truth and tell us what really happened. Eddy has no reason to fabricate this story, so you are not being honest”

“I don’t know why I am being asked to face this committee, yes I took the bribe but this entire organization thrives on similar arrangements. What have I done wrong? You think I don’t know what goes on even with the CEO’s involvement?”

The committee members were stunned at Ladi’s outburst. Temi freaked out and started lashing at him. He got defensive, calling Ladi out for speaking ill about the CEO and the organization as a whole. “What do you mean? Do you know that we have the power to fire you right here, right now?” Temi yelled. Ladi laughed hysterically “Fire me? You must be joking!” I have audio/visual evidence and you all know it! What about when we went marketing in my home state for the state pension scheme? MD provided the briefcase that I handed over to the Director. I booked the meeting with the Head of Service for MD and that was

how we made the shortlist. Haha! If I go down, everyone goes down with me.” “I know the PenCom guidelines for Whistle Blowing and I will do just that – blow the whistle and let all hell break loose on us all”.

For a moment the room went quiet. Ladi had voiced out the unspoken truth. Then Temi went crazy hauling abusive words at Ladi and they engaged in a loud debacle that went on for about 5 minutes. The ED Ops had to call them both to order and asked Ladi to leave the room. “I think its best we call in the Compliance Officer, what do you both think?” The ED Ops said quietly.

Temi’s antenna shot up as he heard the words ‘Compliance Officer’. He thought of everything that could go wrong once the Compliance Officer got involved in the case.

“I agree.” said Ade. Temi parted his lips as if to make a suggestion but hesitated. “This issue has flared up a little more than we bargained for” Ade continued.

Temi kept quiet but sent a quick text to the CEO alerting him of the extent to which the case had deteriorated and emphasizing that the ED Ops, as he had earlier warned, was not handling the issue properly.

## Discussion Questions

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- What are some of the ethical dilemmas that are evident at Axiom PFA?
- Are the CEO and this PFA guilty of double standards as Ladi has suggested?
- Is there a universal standard for ethics to which everyone should adhere?
- Why is it that in spite of clear regulatory and legal standards, people still indulge in ethical violations?
- What lessons are there for your institution and industry?