

Grace Wanjiru Kimani

CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER · CONSUMER GOODS ·
WORKFORCE COST AND PRODUCTIVITY · PAN-AFRICAN OPERATIONS

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PROFILE

Consumer goods executive with 23 years in human capital leadership across East, West and Southern Africa, currently accountable for the workforce of a multinational group with revenue of USD 1.4 billion, 6,200 employees and operations in nine markets. Proven track record of converting workforce decisions into operating results: employee cost reduced by almost three percentage points of revenue, a field sales organisation almost doubled to open new territory, and an acquisition's people-cost synergy case delivered ahead of plan. Operates at Group Executive Committee level and reports workforce cost, remuneration, succession and people risk directly to the board remuneration committee.

Combines the industrial relations discipline of a unionised manufacturing environment with the commercial instinct of a route-to-market business, an unusual pairing in a function more often measured on process than on trading performance. Recognised within the group for the operating model redesign that removed two management layers and USD 12 million of structural cost, and for building the internal leadership pipeline that now fills three in five senior appointments. Chartered Fellow of the CIPD, Certified Human Resource Professional in Kenya, and chair of trustees of the group's USD 96 million retirement benefits scheme. Seeking a chief human resources officer mandate in a multinational consumer, industrial or services group with African or wider emerging-market scope.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

Workforce Cost Structure. Reduced group employee cost from **14.8% to 11.9% of revenue** across four years while headcount grew **9%**, an avoided cost of approximately **USD 40 million** against a flat ratio.

Commercial Capacity. Scaled a regional field sales organisation from **410 to 780 representatives** across **four markets** in **nine months**, resourcing the route-to-market expansion behind **31%** regional revenue growth.

Acquisition Integration. Delivered the **USD 9.1 million** people-cost element of a distribution acquisition synergy case in **14 months** against an **18-month** plan, across **three unionised sites** with no industrial action.

Industrial Stability. Concluded **three** consecutive multi-year collective agreements across **five unionised sites** in **three jurisdictions** with **no production days lost**, protecting approximately **USD 480 million** of annual manufacturing output.

Leadership Supply. Raised internal appointment to senior roles from **22% to 61%**, removing approximately **USD 1.8 million** of annual external search cost and the productivity lag that follows an outside hire.

Group Human Resources Executive

Multinational consumer goods group · East and Southern Africa · USD 1.4bn revenue · 6,200 employees · nine markets

JUN 2019 – PRESENT

Scope: group accountability for workforce cost, organisational design, industrial relations, reward and leadership succession across **nine markets**, covering **6,200 employees**, an annual employee cost base of approximately **USD 167 million** and **five unionised manufacturing sites**. Reporting to the Group Chief Executive Officer, leading a function of **48**. Member of the Group Executive Committee and standing adviser to the board remuneration committee.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Workforce Cost Structure:** Rebuilt the group employee cost base around a governed ratio to revenue, converting an uncontrolled cost line into a planned one and releasing funding into trade investment and route-to-market expansion.
- **Operating Model Redesign:** Directed the group operating model review that removed two management layers and shortened commercial decision cycles, taking structural cost out of the business without reducing market coverage.
- **Acquisition Integration:** Led the people workstream of the group's distribution acquisition, harmonising four terms and conditions frameworks and delivering the synergy case ahead of plan while keeping every site in production.
- **Market Entry Execution:** Resourced entry into two new markets to the group's first-shipment timetable, standing up the commercial, plant and support workforce ahead of the launch quarter rather than behind it.
- **Route-to-Market Capacity:** Reset frontline resourcing, tenure and incentive design so that territory coverage stopped being surrendered to vacancy and turnover, the constraint on which the commercial plan had repeatedly missed.
- **Industrial Stability:** Took direct charge of collective bargaining across five unionised sites in three jurisdictions, moving the group from an annual confrontation cycle to multi-year agreements and removing production risk from the operating plan.
- **Executive Succession:** Built the internal appointment pipeline that now supplies the majority of senior roles, reducing external search cost and shortening time to full contribution in the seat.
- **Board and Governance Reporting:** Present workforce cost, remuneration outcomes, succession and people risk to the board remuneration committee, and own the workforce content of the group's annual reporting.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Reduced employee cost from **14.8% to 11.9% of revenue** while revenue grew from **USD 1.02 billion to USD 1.4 billion** and headcount rose **9%**, an avoided cost of approximately **USD 40 million** against a flat ratio.
- Delivered the **USD 9.1 million** people-cost element of the distribution acquisition synergy case within **14 months** against an **18-month** plan, across **three unionised sites** with no industrial action.

- Concluded **three** consecutive multi-year collective agreements across **five unionised sites** with **no production days lost**, protecting approximately **USD 480 million** of annual manufacturing output.
- Cut time to fill commercial leadership vacancies from **141 days to 62 days**, removing an average of **79 days** of unowned sales territory across **34 appointments**.
- Raised internal appointment to senior roles from **22% to 61%**, removing approximately **USD 1.8 million** in annual external search cost.

Human Resources Director, East Africa

Multinational consumer goods group

MAR 2015 – MAY 2019

Scope: regional accountability for the workforce across **four East African markets**, covering **2,900 employees**, regional revenue of **USD 520 million**, two manufacturing plants and a field sales organisation. Reporting to the Regional Managing Director with a functional line to the Group Human Resources Executive.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Plant Turnaround Contribution:** Rebuilt the shift, manning and overtime model at the group's largest Kenyan plant as part of the site turnaround, removing the labour cost overhang that had held the site in operating loss.
- **Sales Force Expansion:** Resourced and onboarded the field expansion that opened new distribution territory, holding cost per representative flat while the organisation almost doubled.
- **Regional Reward Design:** Reset incentive structures across four markets so that field earnings tracked outlet coverage and volume rather than attendance, aligning pay directly with the commercial plan.
- **Restructuring Negotiation:** Led plant-level negotiation through the restructuring, reaching agreement on manning changes without stoppage and protecting the production timetable.
- **Regional Leadership Bench:** Established the regional talent review that produced internal successors for most commercial director roles, reducing the region's dependence on external search.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Delivered the workforce element of the Kenyan plant turnaround, cutting overtime from **19% to 6%** of the site wage bill and lifting labour productivity per case by **24%**, contributing to the site's return to operating profit.
- Scaled the regional field sales organisation from **410 to 780 representatives** across **four markets** in **nine months**, resourcing the route-to-market expansion behind **31%** regional revenue growth.
- Reduced frontline sales turnover from **41% to 17%**, alongside a rise in outlet coverage from **68% to 84%** over the same period.

Head of Talent and Organisational Development

Pan-African telecommunications operator · 4,100 employees · seven markets

AUG 2011 – FEB 2015

Scope: group accountability for resourcing, leadership development and organisational design across **seven markets** during a period of network expansion and rapid subscriber growth, reporting to the Group Human Resources Director.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Technical Retention:** Addressed the loss of network engineering capability to competitors, the single largest risk to the rollout timetable, through targeted reward, career structure and deployment changes.
- **Resourcing Economics:** Replaced fragmented country-level agency use with an in-house resourcing capability, lowering the cost of every hire and shortening lead times to the rollout plan.
- **Organisational Design:** Redesigned country structures ahead of two market launches, sizing each organisation to its own subscriber plan rather than replicating the largest market.
- **Graduate Pipeline:** Established the group graduate programme that became the primary source of commercial and technical entry talent across all seven markets.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Reduced regretted attrition in network engineering from **28% to 11%**, retaining the scarce capability on which the **seven-market** rollout timetable depended.
- Cut annual external recruitment spend by approximately **USD 2.1 million** while raising annual hiring volume by **18%**.

Human Resources Manager, Manufacturing Operations

Regional food manufacturing business · Kenya · 1,200 employees · two plants

JAN 2007 – JUL 2011

Scope: site accountability for two manufacturing plants and a unionised workforce of **1,200**, covering industrial relations, resourcing, safety and workforce planning.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Industrial Relations:** Negotiated the business's first multi-year recognition and wage agreement, replacing an annual cycle that had twice interrupted production.
- **Safety Performance:** Moved safety accountability into line management rather than the people function, reducing lost time and the production hours it consumed.
- **Shift Model Design:** Introduced a shift pattern matched to seasonal demand, removing structural overtime from the wage bill.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Reduced lost-time injury frequency by **62%** across two plants within **three years**.
- Removed approximately **USD 640,000** of annual structural overtime through shift redesign.

Early Career

Commercial bank, Kenya · 1,800 employees

FEB 2003 – DEC 2006

Human Resources Business Partner, Retail Banking (2005 – 2006) · Human Resources Officer (2003 – 2005)

Progressed from generalist administration into business partnering for the retail branch network, taking first accountability for resourcing and employee relations across a region of the branch estate.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration · 2013

Strathmore Business School, Nairobi

Higher Diploma in Human Resource Management · 2005

Institute of Human Resource Management, Kenya

Bachelor of Commerce, Human Resource Management · 2002

University of Nairobi

CREDENTIALS

- **Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP-K)**, Institute of Human Resource Management, Kenya
- **Chartered Fellow**, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

DIRECTORSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Member**, Group Executive Committee, 2019 – Present
- **Chair of Trustees**, group staff retirement benefits scheme, assets of approximately USD 96 million, 2020 – Present
- **Director**, group shared services company (Kenya, wholly owned), 2021 – Present
- **Standing adviser**, board remuneration committee, 2019 – Present

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Advanced Management Programme, Strathmore Business School, 2022
- Leading Organisational Change, INSEAD, 2019
- Executive Remuneration and Reward Governance, University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, 2017

CORE COMPETENCIES

Enterprise Leadership

Group executive committee contribution · Operating model design · Post-acquisition integration · Market entry execution · Board and remuneration committee reporting · Cost allocation

Workforce Economics

Employee cost management · Labour productivity · Reward and incentive design · Workforce planning · Organisational design · Span and layer analysis

Commercial Capability

Route-to-market resourcing · Field sales scaling · Frontline retention · Manufacturing labour models · Cost per hire and search economics

Industrial and Employee Relations

Multi-union negotiation · Multi-jurisdiction collective bargaining · Restructuring and consultation · Employment law compliance across nine markets · Grievance and disciplinary governance

Leadership and Succession

Executive succession · Internal appointment pipelines · Executive assessment · Leadership development · Culture and engagement

MEMBERSHIPS	Institute of Human Resource Management, Kenya · Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development · Federation of Kenya Employers
LANGUAGES	English · Kiswahili
REFERENCES	Available on request.