

A day in the life with...

Kosso Badilimo

What is your official job title?

Cleaning supervisor

And you've been working here since 2006?

Yes, I joined in 2006, I was at college before I joined, and I was forced to find a job because I was doing an access to nursing course but my partner didn't have papers to stay in the UK, so I was forced to find some work. I left my baby at home, she was only two at the time (born in 2004), and so I started this job. I didn't plan to stay for long, it was just to tide me over.

So I joined as a cleaner, and I started on just four hours in the evenings. I had a supervisor that actually saw my potential and saw what I was doing and was really impressed. He recognised that I was new in the field but the way I was cleaning was a bit different. So he spoke to the manager at the time (it was ISS at the time) and they flagged me as somebody to watch because I was a bit different.

From then, they started giving me more responsibility, asking me to sub when the supervisor wasn't working for example.

It was ISS originally, then TUPED to Mitie, then TUPED to Noonan, and then TUPED to ABM.

So you started at four hours a day, and now you're full time?

Yes, with ISS once I was team leader I was on six hours, then I moved to a morning four-hour shift with an evening four-hour shift each day. But that was too difficult to do with my family, so they moved me to morning, full-time supervisor for eight hours.

Have you always been in the same building?

When I started back in the day we had two buildings, but it's now come down to one. I have been in this one the whole time.

Has a lot changed in those years?

Yes, A LOT! Even just the layout of the building,



because it is a huge business, constantly updating and adapting, moving desks, changing layouts and you have to adapt every single time.

Do you supervise a big team?

Yes, there are 29 people on the team. The team has grown since ABM took over, we used to be less than 20 people.

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I suppose that makes it easier because there are more people there to do the work, but a bit trickier for you because you have more people to supervise?

Yes, it is different people, different ways of dealing with them – it is good though.

Can you tell me about a typical working day for you?

A nice, easy day for me is when we don't have too many employees in the building. It gives us the chance to do more, and we get a lot more done because, when there are a lot of people here, you can't reach all the areas that you want to. So the emptier the building, the better – we have more time to get everything done!

And what kind of things are you doing in a typical day as a supervisor?

I have to make sure everything is out for the team; the cupboards are ready. I check nothing is missing, do stock takes and do stock control, and order anything that we need. I am here to support

the team, I like to move around the building checking on the teams. I also step in wherever the client needs me. For example, the client provides towels to their employees, but there isn't anyone to replace them at the moment. So I have taken that role for now, washing the towels and drying them to make sure they're ready for the staff to go back in to the changing rooms. I just have to go in and get it done if there is nobody else to do that. I will cover shifts myself, too, if there is no cover.

You have been there so long, are there employees that you've come to know really well over the years?

Definitely! There are a lot of people who I know well, I know them by name, they know me by name. It is like a little family! We spend eight hours a day with these people – more than your family!

What is your favourite part of your role?

It is how you get to know a lot of people, and a lot of different types of people and behaviour. You don't get exposed to this many people when you're at home! With my role, I've learnt how to be with people, to interact with them. Before I got this job I didn't know how people can react in so many different ways. Working with so many different people has shaped me in a good way.

The word on the street is that you are really passionate about training?

Yes, I am starting the ABM Mental Health First Aider course next week. I have done so many courses over the years. I used ABM University to do the mandatory courses too. I am also aiming to go on an apprenticeship course for HR. I am totally passionate and focused on getting in to the HR field, I really love it, but I need to get a little more experience before I can go forward with that one, so I am looking at other apprenticeships for management in my field. This isn't limiting me though, because I am thinking of going on the Facility Management apprenticeship.

What about HR do you love?

I think my third or fourth manager had a background in HR, and she taught me a lot about how you can deal with situations in new ways. I always admire how HR colleagues deal with problems or things that go wrong. It represents another way of thinking about things. I want to know more and learn more about it.

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And what made you apply for the MHFA course?

Day-to-day life, even outside of work, is difficult. When you see someone struggling, you want to help, but when you don't have the right knowledge to do that you might not be helping in the right way. I love helping people. I love doing something for someone who is struggling. So this training can help me do that. I want to be able to help the team here who could be struggling too. Anything I can do that might help!

If you could have given yourself a piece of career advice back in the day, what would it have been?

Well, I actually wanted to be a nurse. Because my passion is for helping and caring for people. So I only came to this job with the mindset of being here for a short time. But my family needs changed a lot and I ended up staying and loving it, and the rest is history. I would have told myself that this would be an exciting new opportunity for me that I wasn't expecting.

And if you could give someone else a piece of career advice, what would it be?

I would say that anything you do in life can take you somewhere if you love it and you put your heart into it. You might think you want to do something else, but passion can take you to new places. Never stop trying, you might find a way that you've never dreamt about. I never, ever dreamt I'd be in this field, but look where I am today!

I also hear you speak four languages?

Yes! I speak French, English, my mother tongue Lingala, and Swahili.

Is there anything that you'd like to share with me?

Actually, recently we got a cleaner here, she is very young, and when she joined she hadn't had a job before so she had absolutely no experience. I know from dealing with teenagers at home that they don't listen very well! But anyway, this young girl started and I was passionate about teaching her what we do here. I gave her lots of training, like I do with everyone. But the feedback I got from her mum has made me really realise that I

have made a difference to her. Her mum got my number and started to text me, and then after that, she asked to meet me in person! I was a bit taken aback and didn't know what was going on, but one day she called me and she was thanking me so much, asking how I manage to deal with her daughter, saying I have changed her and now she is tidying the room, cleaning the house – it is amazing! I want to meet you in person to thank you because of what you have done for my daughter! She even said she wanted me to take on her son as well so I could teach him the same things! That was so crazy and made me very proud. I showed my manager and he was really impressed! I am proud, I think that I have made a difference to somebody's life.