

Dear Deputy Minister,

January 30, 2006

I would like to ask you for your assistance in helping turn a negative work environment into a positive work environment. Last summer, I was looking for ways to recognize the contributions made by several members of BCStats to the development of a software package that I had initiated. While this program offers a tremendous time saving, my contributions have not been welcome by some people. Rather, I have been the subject of antagonism principally, I feel, because I am results oriented. Instead of welcoming positive contributions, I have been yelled at by my co-workers and chastised by the current section manager when I have asked to be treated fairly. I asked the following question of the people involved in the Innovations Inventory, July 12, 2005.

Is there assistance available to help create a positive, supportive, inclusive, and improvement-focused work environment?

When asked to elaborate by Erika Taylor, I replied in another email (August 17, 2005) that ...

Since starting to work here 3 1/2 years ago I have made many improvements to the way my job is done. In the latest project, I was able to get contractors to make a program that can make queriable websites of all of our data. This has resulted in a great time saving and allows us to be able to focus on the quality of the data. This project and the others have been embraced by many but not so by others. These others have been levelling personal attacks at me because of these innovations. It has gotten so bad that I am looking else where for employment, but would rather stay and see these improvements through. Help.

I was pointed to Carol Gore and wrote her saying...

I am interested in finding ways to help create a positive work environment. Are resources available that you could point me to?

Carol Gore pointed to resources but also emphasised the need to involve the other members of the section and the section manager. This led to a meeting with the section manager who reacted negatively about my request for team effectiveness training. He had said to me that this would only make things worse. He has since been trying to discredit me by getting my co-workers to write letters of complaint against me. He has also taken me off of projects aimed at improving our systems and excluded me from meetings with the rest of my co-workers.

Background

When I took this job in January, 2002, almost all of the work was being handled with paper. I asked for several software packages, including a relational database, GIS, and internet editing software, and began to automate the processes. These were very successful, reducing error, increasing quality, and reducing the time to do the work. In order to pursue these improvements further, I proposed to the previous manager that we hire a student to create queriable webpages. At the same time, I was working late

evenings to collect and organize data so that I could help finish writing the narratives for the Regional Index.

<http://www.regionalindex.gov.bc.ca/>

Although the Regional Index was not part of my regular tasks, I thought it would be very useful for my understanding of events and activities throughout the province as my role is to be the BC expert in migration for all areas in the province. I had just finished my Masters degree where I focused on migration by age and sex and across scale (locally to internationally). I was able to work with several adjunct professors from Statistics Canada and got to know quantitative methods and the datasets very well.

Since over seventy five percent of the time to write the narratives such as those in the Regional Index, as well as other data intensive projects, is taken up with finding the necessary data, never mind organizing it in a manner that is easily accessed to do write ups, I proposed that a program be written that would create a structure that would handle all the datasets that BCStats uses as well as write the code for websites like the Regional Index.

This required me to learn even more about databases and database structure as well as computer languages that would allow for databases to be queried and displayed via the internet. I was again thankful and encouraged by the tremendously beneficial resources available through the IT library. Again, after hours, I learned enough about several computer languages to be able to provide direction and work with IT specialists and programmers to be able to initiate and guide the development of a program that would meet our needs. I must say here that there were several people in BC Stats who were wonderful to work with as this program was developed. Indeed, the whole was greater than the parts. Thankfully, the program (called e-statsBC) was successful, even beyond our expectations. Indeed, everyone involved in this project should be recognized for their contributions.

Shortly after its completion a year ago, one of my co-workers was struggling with a project that takes several weeks to do and is very mundane. I asked her send over the dataset and within seven minutes (it took this long because there was an error in the dataset that this program found right away, and took a few minutes to correct) it was done. With the help of our IT section, we wrote up another set of proposals with several versions suggested (to be developed incrementally so that each step could be proven to work).

Need for Core Competencies Awareness

However, during the development of this and other improvements, I was yelled at several times by my co-workers. Also, on several occasions, the new manager called me into his office, told me to close the door, and proceeded to chastise me for my asking my co-workers not to yell. On one occasion, he told me to never again request a co-worker to ask rather than tell, and on another occasion he threatened me with a formal reprimand. I was astonished by first being yelled at, and second, being chastised. Regardless, I had

pointed out the importance of positive behaviour, and wrote a short description of what I thought would be appropriate which I gave to both the new section manager and the shop steward (see attachment).

Nonetheless, the negative behaviour continued even though I continued to have success in improving (automating) our processes. When problems would come up with the old processes, I would offer suggestions of how things could be improved, but these suggestions were met with what I would call negative speak. Examples are, 'we have been doing it this way for years', 'just do it, you will get used to it' 'there are always problems, get over it', and even the current manager has said that my suggestions on how to improve our performance are not wanted.

When I first started working for the government, I was encouraged by the ministry's Vision, Mission, and Values statements with the emphasis on improvements in time, cost, and quality, to be customer focused, results oriented, innovative, collaborative, to work as a team, to be respectful, and to ensure actions and communications are open and transparent.

I was also encouraged to see the core competencies information at http://gww.bcpublicservice.gov.bc.ca/competencies/behavioural_models/corporate/ps.htm

As well, I have taken all available courses on project planning which I have found to be immensely useful and would encourage others to also take. Hopefully, in time the other members of our section will also take these courses. By being acquainted with the definitions and concepts we could have a shared understanding of how we can work together, rather than relying on yelling and reprimanding, to better be able to make our projects succeed.

Since August 17, 2005, Ms. Gore stressed the importance of involving our section manager. I pointed out that indeed the section manager has been less than supportive towards me. Examples of the difficulties are attached. Even though the manager is well aware of the negative work environment, when I asked for team effectiveness training, he responded that it would only make things worse. Although, I could not understand how my request for the available courses could make things worse at the time, I found out that indeed he was right.

Instead of focusing on creating a positive work environment since meeting with Human Resources, the manager has focused on trying to discredit me by soliciting letters listing complaints against me from my co-workers and making disparaging remarks against me, thus making it even more difficult to work towards creating a positive work environment.

Also, he has continued to isolate and exclude me from meeting with the rest of the section members. I am no longer invited to methods and modeling meetings nor do we even have section meetings any more, although these were simply used as an opportunity to tell me what to do and how to do it in front of others. We no longer have pre and post production meetings, which I had asked for so that people are not yelling, ever since I

asked that several of the tasks I perform be included. Instead, the current manager, who has worked with some of my co-workers for many years, and was a shop steward and represented the BCGEU in discussions on Article 29, before taking the managerial position, meets with my co-workers by going out for coffee breaks with them only.

Because the situation is so astonishingly dysfunctional, I have had to seek employment elsewhere, but before going, I want to make sure that every attempt has been made to create a positive work environment. I feel that not only is there is a tremendous reluctance to consider innovations, but that people who are results oriented and innovative are harassed, excluded from working with others, and treated with disrespect.

I maintain that we, the manager and the employees of the Population Section of BC Stats, would benefit from project planning courses as well as team effectiveness training. If there is yelling amongst co-workers, a focus on project planning would improve the situation. If there is antagonism towards begin results-oriented and considering innovations, there should be a focus on core competencies. A focus on how to behave, rather than a focus on trying to find negative things to say about a person would be beneficial.

Interestingly, the IT library now includes management literature as there is an obvious need to be able to adapt to changes that can improve our products and services. Although the IT books have helped me learn how to improve our systems, there has been a barrier erected against change. Therefore, not only have I taken out books on computer languages and project management skills but also on the subject of "Creating an Environment for Successful Projects". There are very useful resources available and all that is needed is the will to move ahead.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Sincerely,

Warren Munroe