

## **Population Projection Project Planning Meetings**

### *Preamble*

I advocated project planning meetings for the Population Section to help us address the stated goals of the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, but instead, these meetings were used as a stage to make a false accusation against myself, namely that I made a co-worker feel unsafe. After being fired, the accusation was expanded to two female co-workers.

My requests for assistance to address the dysfunction led me to Carol Gore of Human Resource who suggested the work place skills courses. The manager stated that these would only make things worse. I was also told by the manager and the shop steward that it was not my place to request such courses for the Population Section. The lawyer for the BCPSA representing the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services stated that my requests were an attempt to go through the back door.

These types of statements lead me to conclude that these courses are a source of contention within the government. I should not have been treated unfairly, placed at the bottom of a hierarchy, and blamed for the deficiencies in the quality of the work and the dysfunction, and eventually dismissed for just cause, for asking for these courses. These courses are excellent at improving the quality of projects while reducing time and cost; however, there are those who resent these courses.

A dangerous precedent is being set where employees who advocate project planning could be falsely accused by managers and co-workers hostile to such courses, of making them feel unsafe, and where such an accusation is used as a grounds for dismissal.

The following is a description of how project planning meetings were used as a stage for a false accusation of making a co-worker feel unsafe.

### *May / June 2005*

As the deadline approached for the completion of the P.E.O.P.L.E. project (annual population projections), I had asked a co-worker (Jennifer Hansen) about a statement in the projections paragraph that claimed that for an area there would be 8 dependants out of every 10 people by the year 2031. That would mean that there would only be 2 out of 10 people between the ages of 15 and 65. I could not believe that this could possibly be true and went and asked Jennifer how this was calculated and if this statement was true.

She could not explain to me how the figure was calculated but assured me that the statement was true. She said that if the ratio of the number of dependants (both children and elderly) added up to .8 that meant that 8 out of ten people were dependants, and that only 2 out of 10 people would be of working age. Because time was short and she is suppose to be the expert in this, I accepted her decision.

I wrote similar statements about the number of working people versus dependants into approximately 50 paragraphs randomly throughout the ~240 areas projection paragraphs. However, I eventually found an area where when you add the children to the elderly dependency ratios you would get over ten out of ten. This was obviously wrong and I went to Jennifer about this and she suggested that the inaccuracy had to do with rounding errors.

I found this hard to believe nonetheless, because that would mean that there were no people of working age. I therefore went about figuring out how the calculation was made and found that the ratio meant for every 8 dependants there would be 10 people of working age. Therefore, if the ratio added up to be slightly over 10 then there would be slightly over 10 dependants for every 10 people of working age.

I explained this to Jennifer so that she understood how the calculations were made and proceeded with finishing the write ups with the corrected meaning, choosing to fix the wrong statements after. This mistake cost me at least over one days work both in the time spent trying to figure out the correct meaning as well as searching for the wrong statements (this was particularly time consuming as they were dispersed throughout the areas basically requiring that I check every paragraph again) as well as the time to rewrite the sentences.

I told Dave about the rewrite and the correct interpretation of the numbers and the extra time it was taking because of the mistake.

Also, I should add here, that on Monday May 30, 2005 just one day before our scheduled completion date, Dave came to my office and asked that I change the projection for North Thompson because a known expert in the field had called our estimates into question. Dave said that it would only take a minute to change the numbers and that I should do so.

I explained that it would take much more than a minute and that it would impact the rest of the teams work ( processes would have to be repeated). This exercise cost us over a half day of extra work in addition to my requirement to fix Jennifer's incorrect statement which I had not yet finished.

*June 1, 2005,*

Two days later, Jennifer came to ask me when I would be finished my portion of a project. Since I had been working late and made many of the corrections, I said that I felt comfortable that I would be finished by the end of the day and asked how her portion was coming along. There had been problems with pstats which Keith (Programmer) was working on and also it was my understanding that Jennifer was also working on her portion of the write-ups. She asked many more times about when I would be finished and I continued to say what I had already said, but, she would not say how she was doing.

When Jennifer asked Keith how long it would take him to fix pstats, Keith replied that he did not know, it could take 3 hours or 3 days. Jennifer accepted this but became angry with me, even though I stated clearly and repeatedly that I was almost finished.

She became very upset and began yelling at me, even though I had said many times that I felt comfortable about finishing by days end (2 more hours). She yelled across the partitions from near her office that I was supposed to be finished already.

I was astounded by her yelling at me. I again replied that I felt comfortable about finishing by the end of the day but that I could not be sure that the Director would not ask me to do something for a minister or that even a consultant might not phone with a request that the numbers be adjusted. A little while later, after she had some time to calm down, I said that I was going out to get a coffee and asked her if she would like one too. She politely declined.

*June 2, 2005*

Dave O'Neil could not make it into the office so he called the co-worker who had a history of negative behaviour towards me to tell me that I had to get a particular job done that day.

The portion of the project that had to be done that day had taken 4 days to do the previous year, but because I had automated the process, I had told Dave that it should be done within a half day. Indeed, it took less than an hour as it worked so well.

Also, it should be added that I had been asking Pat Blumel for concordance files so that we could tell which areas were exactly the same so that the write-ups could be reused for the correct areas. I have been asking for this for years but every year I had to do this manually which also takes extra time.

Tuesday, June 7th, 2005 - new hierarchy explained

After the weekend, I went to Dave O'Neil's office to talk about Jennifer yelling at me and to talk about Dave O'Neil calling Pat Blumel, who has a history of yelling at me and telling me what to do, to have her come and tell Jennifer and particularly myself that another task had to be done by the end of the day. I said it looks like I answer to Jennifer, who answers to Pat Blumel who answers to Dave O'Neil.

I pointed out that the yelling by my co-workers towards myself appears to have been instigated by the section manager, because he phoned Pat Blumel and had asked her, instead of calling me, to tell us and in particular myself that I had to be finished by the end of the day. Dave O'Neil became upset and called Marvin, the shop steward in.

Dave O'Neil told Marvin and I that Jennifer had been given responsibility over my work. I was surprised and replied that no one had told me. I asked what if the Director had wanted me to do something or a consultant called for changes? Dave O'Neil replied, if the Director, Don McRae, wanted me to do an emergency task he would have to first go through himself, the manager, and my co-worker (Jennifer) first. I was very surprised.

I requested that this arrangement be made clear before hand rather than me finding out in this manner, and that in fact since my co-worker and I have the same classification and that I have been here longer, that we should be treated as equals.

I also insisted that Dave O'Neil, the manager, be the manager as my less experienced co-worker may not be familiar with best practices of a manager. I also pointed to the importance of projects being laid out clearly so that team members (everyone in the Population Section) know what is expected of each other. I requested that he call me and not Pat Blumel about my tasks schedule.

I also requested that we have pre and post production meetings so that all the tasks would be clearly laid out with time lines.

Because there have been so many problems with how projects are handled since Ruth retired, I have been taking Project Management Courses (Professional Project Management, and Advanced Project Management) through the BCPSA - great courses. I think that this section would benefit greatly if we all took these courses.

*August / September 2005 - Population Projection preparation meetings exclude my tasks*  
Thankfully, Dave O'Neil, Jennifer Hansen, and myself started to have meetings in preparation for the next Population Projection run (I had asked that we have pre and post production meetings to improve operations). After the meetings with Dave O'Neil and Marvin Paxman last June, I assumed that Dave O'Neil was the manager of the project and that Jennifer and I were equals, equally interested in sharing the chores and equally interested in helping each other get the job done. Dave O'Neil called the meetings and they were in his office and he had started getting the information into a Project Planning program.

At the first pre-production meeting, Jennifer said right away that there was a problem with my task of completing the write-ups of the projection paragraph. I said that it was not necessarily my task, since anyone involved in this project should be able to explain the projection. She continued to insist that it was my paragraph and that she was not doing it. I suggested that these meetings were an opportunity for us all to try to do as much as we can so that we can work together to get things done.

Surprisingly, my regular tasks were not included in the project planning.

At the second meeting I brought a list of 22 of my tasks and asked that they be included. I gave a copy to Dave O'Neil and went through each of the tasks but Dave O'Neil said either that the task was not important enough to include in the plan or that it would only take a minute therefore would not be included. These statements were ridiculous as many of the tasks were pivotal in the generation of the numbers. Instead, Dave O'Neil and Jennifer focused on hierarchy. For example, Jennifer was given the task of editing my work yet no one else's work was to be edited.

At the third meeting, Jennifer told me to write out the projection paragraph for each region of the province (~240 paragraphs - one for each area) in order to practice for next year. She wanted this to be included in the project plan.

I was told by her and Dave O'Neil that these write-ups would not be used but that this exercise would be a good practice for me so that I could do them more quickly next year.

Jennifer and Dave did not discuss Jennifer's error in explaining the dependency ratio numbers. Therefore, I raised the issue stating that the error had cost valuable time and that I had figured out the correct calculation and had explained it to both Jennifer and Dave; therefore this error would not be made next year and therefore it was a waste of time for me to practice writing the 240 paragraphs. Indeed, I had improved the system for doing the write-ups and had vastly improved the language in the write-ups over the years since starting with BC Stats. Jennifer abruptly left the meeting.

When I asked about another meeting (as I thought that we were just getting to the tasks) Dave O'Neil told me that Jennifer no longer wanted to have these meetings.

At the meeting I requested to advocate team effectiveness training courses, on October 13, 2005, Dave O'Neil stated something to the effect that these meetings had made my co-worker feel unsafe. On October 18, 2005, I went to Jennifer on bended knee to say that I would rather quit than make a fellow employee feel unsafe. Later, Dave O'Neil asked Marvin the shop steward to find out when I was going to quit. When Marvin asked me when I was going to quit, I said that I was still advocating workplace skills courses

including team effectiveness training courses. I was told that the most positive thing I could do was to quit. I replied that I would not be bullied out of my job.

*November to January 2005,*

My work conditions deteriorated and I was given more and more menial tasks with less time and even poorer direction. I requested mediation (to the Director Don McRae) but instead was stripped of all responsibilities. Don McRae did not even want me to bring him the monthly interprovincial numbers directly which had been so important previously. The e-statsBC project was severely restricted and would not be used. I complained, and Don McRae had me start a grievance against Dave O'Neil (December 1, 2005) which Don McRae ruled on in support of Dave O'Neil.

Dave O'Neil was on holidays. Since nothing was going to be done to address the discrimination, and in order to meet the 30 day time limit, I submitted my grievance to the Deputy Minister on January 30, 2006. The BCGEU told me many times not to pursue the grievance and with the deadline looming they said that their computers were down (good thing I called); therefore, I made the submission myself. This grievance was accepted by the Deputy Minister and ruled on, but later after being fired, when I submitted a copy to the Deputy Minister of my letter to the BCGEU disputing the dismissal for insubordination it was ignored for 5 months. Then I was told that by writing "constructive resolution" that I had abandoned arbitration.

*February 15, 2006,*

Dave O'Neil ordered me to attend a population projection planning meeting with him and Jennifer. Because I had been accused of making Jennifer feel unsafe at the last population projection meeting, I refused and requested mediation again. Instead, I was told to turn in my security pass and vacate the building. I gathered my books and belongings and left. The investigator from Employment Insurance told me that I was "escorted" out of the building which is ludicrous.

*Comment*

As mentioned, I advocated project planning meetings for the Population Section to help us address the stated goals of the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services, but instead, these meetings were used to stage a false accusation against myself, namely that I made a co-worker feel unsafe.

My requests for assistance to address the dysfunction led me to Carol Gore of Human Resource who suggested the work place skills courses. The manager stated that these would only make things worse. I was also told by the manager and the shop steward that it was not my place to request such courses for the Population Section. The lawyer for the BCPSA representing the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services stated that my requests were an attempt to go through the back door.

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