

CASE 1: THE CASE OF THE FRUSTRATED CEO

The Story

Gerry was the very frustrated Chief Executive Officer of Blair Wood Products, Limited (BWP). He had directed the activities of some 5,000 employees working in the forest sector for the past two years. Despite his best efforts he hadn't been able to get any movement on some of the key issues affecting the company. For example, he wanted his people to enter new markets out West. Not only had his staff not prepared any plan of how to enter those markets, his desire to have a Western office as a focal point for this venture had never been acted upon.

There were always good reasons why this and other issues were not being managed: market conditions, talk of recession, cost of financing, local restrictions, labour costs and any other factor to support inaction. This was forcing the CEO to examine his tenure in office. He wondered what he was doing to cause the company to ignore key issues despite the best of intentions from his managers.

At the last management retreat, where company directors prepared the coming year's Strategic and Operational plan, Gerry raised the issue of indecision with his troops. He was quite direct. There were some sheepish looks around the table. Nobody wanted to discuss what was preventing the company from being proactive. Harry Desmond, a senior Director and 18-year veteran of the company finally managed to speak out up:

"Gerry, we want to meet your expectations of expansion. But I have to tell you that what's holding me back: I don't know how to do it. I don't like to do anything till I am absolutely sure of how to approach it."

Everyone agreed. People acknowledged for the first time how helpless they felt when they were placed before Gerry's very fair expectations. But these were new expectations which they had never had to work towards before; they simply didn't have the necessary skills to pull it off.

The Intervention

It's one thing to prepare a Business Plan; it's quite another to move it out throughout an organization. Gerry needs to:

- Build his Executive Team to ensure that its members are comfortable in sharing concerns on performance;
- Establish a Change Plan to guide people through the transition in the company's direction;
- Identify the knowledge, skills and motivation to deliver on both the Business Plan and the Change Plan, and ensure that the Executive Team have the means to acquire them;
- With his Executive Team firmly behind him, shop the plans around the organization, to ensure understanding and commitment.