

CASE 16: THE INTERNAL OPTIMIST

The Story

A government department responsible for regulating one mode of the transportation industry has recently received some \$40M dollars to realign its organization, hire new people and increase its application of the regulations guiding its activity. The current staff is largely legacy-based, i.e. due to the nature of the department's activity; they have been there for their entire career. This has given rise to a strong sense of ownership and also of entitlement, re. the use of the extra resources and the expectation of promotions and raises. Meanwhile, an independent consultant's report has pointed to many of the "old timers" as the cause of non-compliance of the industry, due to the unwillingness of the public servants to force their industry counterparts – often called colleagues and sometimes clients – to comply with emerging legislation that takes into account the more modern realities of the transportation industry. The Director General of the department has been inundated with e-mails, some subtle, some overtly aggressive, stating positions on both sides of the compliance questions. The question for him is: how to bring his department up to regulatory snuff, following modern standards and renewing itself as an agency responsible for the safety of the travelling public. He has depended heavily on internal resources to help bring about the changes needed:

- The HR group, which is more transactional than consultative and are not skilled nor experienced in change management;
- A project leader on loan from another department where his role was considered redundant and whose expectations were for a senior leadership position;
- The Senior Team of the Department, whose meetings were fraught with overt competitiveness as each member jockeyed for position.

The Intervention

Third party neutrality is needed in this case: the dear people involved in the change are too close to it to understand its dynamics. The DG will need an outside intervention team aimed at, among other things:

- Re-defining the functions of the organization;
- Reviewing the profile of departmental human resources;
- Involving employees in work sessions and interviews to gauge their skills;
- Matching people with functions and building the new form of the organization;
- Replacing, re-skilling and/or retooling the department's people;
- Proceeding at pace with the changes, aimed at protecting morale.