

CASE 17: BUN FIGHT IN PARADISE

The Story

A government department with regulatory responsibilities has a serious role definition problem going on in its ranks. Two unit chiefs are in conflict because their job descriptions read practically the same. This anomaly occurred through the lackadaisical management style of a former Director who wanted an extra unit chief but didn't wish to take the time to write a new job description: "Nobody reads them, anyway", he was heard to say. In fact, one unit chief is accountable for the development of regulations; the other is accountable for ensuring that they become legal. In other words, one unit chief deals primarily with the content of the regulations and is qualified as such; the other unit chief primarily deals with the process of the regulations. Unfortunately, since the unit chief dealing with the content of the regulation arrived much later than the one dealing with the process, a conflict has arisen over who does what and at what point in the regulatory development process. Symptoms include:

- Open and loud altercations between the two managers;
- Staff discussing how "fed-up" they are with the situation;
- Sniping between the staff members of the two affected units;
- Strong concern expressed by senior management on productivity;
- An atmosphere of hostility and secrecy prevailing throughout the organization;

Meanwhile, the senior management level of the organization has a strong need for a robust and harmonious content-process relationship in the development of regulations in order to meet its legislated mandate.

The Intervention

An intervention by a neutral third party is needed to provide corrective actions to the systemic problems present. Senior managers of the organization will need an outside intervention team aimed at:

- Clarifying the roles of the two units involved;
- Re-describing the roles of the unit chiefs to ensure clarity;
- Redefining the juncture points in the content and process of regulatory development;
- Defining an operating value system based on emotional intelligence for both teams;
- Rebuilding trust, morale and productivity in the two conflicting teams.