



CASES OF TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

food for thoughts from
all around Europe and the world

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FOREWORD

The present case catalogue is one of the outcomes of the project entitled “Trust and transparency” - Building mutual understanding between Public service, Media and Business implemented by the Bellevue Alumni Association together with Mummert Alumni Association with the cooperation of media experts and funded by the Bosch Alumni Network. The aim of the project was to facilitate a cross-sectional exchange between alumni of the Robert Bosch Stiftung programmes from the public and private sector and the media in order to improve the mutual understanding and the knowledge of each-others’ constraints and expectations to improve the quantity and the quality of information provided to citizens on governance issues.

The project’s major pillar is a Seminar held in Palermo, from 16-18 November, 2018 where thirty professionals had an opportunity through small group activities, expert panels and presentations to explore ways to increase transparency and communication between the media, the public service and the business sector. Based on this experience-exchange a list of DO’s and DON’Ts is developed by the organisers together with the participants that is hoped to be disseminated within the broader professional public.

This publication includes cases, stories that were provided on voluntary basis by some of the participants of the Seminar. The cases are anonimised in order to protect the identity of the contributors.

The case catalogue includes ases of the public sector, the media and the corporate world. Some of them can serve as inspiring examples, some are more eye-openers rather than success stories. They are arranged around three keywords: “Trust”, “Openness” and “Ethics”. Together they provide a snapshot to the reader on what is considered by the professionals themselves as trust or distrust, sharing or withholding information, dealing with colleagues and members of the public in an ethical or unethical and unprofessional way. It also gives an idea on what the professionals consider as key to successfully manage a situation and what they find best to avoid. In terms of gravity they cover a broad range of issues from unprofessional behaviour to textbook corruption. Each case includes a section for notes of the reader since it is hoped that each story provokes thoughts or ideas.

win-win
reliability
loyalty ethics
care community
TRUST optimism
duty confidence
hope mutual understanding
openness integrity
commitment certainty
trustworthy face-to-face

I

The following case took place in a South Eastern European (SEE) EU member state where the contributor works as a public official in one of the ministries.

The case gives an inspiring example on the importance of respect and partnership with the members of the public and how important effective communication, preparation and training is within the public service mostly in times of major legal changes.

The case

In 2014, with a view to cutting down on red tape, a new law was voted in my country abolishing the obligation for citizens and businesses to provide certified copies of public documents, required for an administrative procedure such as licence, certification etc. Following the implementation of law, my Ministry sent circulars to the public service to inform them about the new simplified legal framework, trying to cover every possible question and clarify all potential uncertainties.

One day, I was contacted by a candidate service provider who complained about her being excluded from the bidding procedure run by a public hospital, as she had not provided certified copies of the required documents. As it was the Ministry which was responsible for the implementation of the law, I mobilised all hierarchy so that a solution be given. If the Ministry was not able to justify its interpretation and adequately implement the law, the simplification measure would be reversed. It was of utmost importance to resolve the issue according to the newly voted law.

The following day and after the hierarchy had been informed, I drafted and sent a letter to the Hospital authorities explaining the issue and supporting the argument made by the candidate service provider. In every step, the service provider was duly informed by me on which actions the Ministry would take to solve the problem.

In the end, the service provider was indeed excluded from the bidding procedure because according to my country's legal framework, the Committee of the Public Service conducting a bidding procedure has the right to interpret, in a very strict sense, the legal requirements of the procedure and could base its decision, in that case, on the pre-existing legal framework.

Even though, the Ministry did not manage to make the Hospital accept the concerned service provider, we later issued new instructions on how to run bidding procedures under the new law. We also tried to monitor as many bidding requirements as possible and involved several other responsible authorities. In the end, we managed to communicate better the simplification measure and installed the necessary monitoring mechanism so a similar case of exclusion for this reason would not happen again. The excluded service provider was satisfied with the actions we took and was very happy to have us let her know in every step the actions we intended to take to solve the issue. Although, the service provider did not participate in the bid, she felt she was treated in a fair, humane, understanding and transparent way, based on legality.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

We treated the service provider in a trustful, humane and understanding way. This is especially important, since the public administration is frequently criticised of being out of touch from the citizens and businesses.

We were firm and based our arguments and interpretation on rules and legal framework, in a transparent way.

We made sure all available resources were mobilised to solve the issue. By ultimately making sure the new rules were properly observed, we enhanced the trust of citizens and businesses towards the public administration.

When we realised that an explanatory circular was not enough to explain a complex new legislation, we set up a monitoring mechanism and sent much clearer instructions on how to deal with the bidding procedures in particular, under the new legal framework.

And what is best to avoid....

We have overestimated the ability of the public administration to get out of the comfort zone and accept very easily simplification and new ways of dealing with things.

We assumed that the new legal framework was clear enough. We should have been more active in informing and communicating better all stakeholders for the new measure.

We believed that an explanatory letter signed by the hierarchy would be enough to solve the issue.

My notes...

II

What can a new manager do when they enter an old and traditional company where processes have been unchanged for decades, there is reluctance towards modernisation and communication between persons or units is seen as inability to work independently and thus is a weakness? The story below gives an encouraging answer to this question. And, although this is the case of a manager at a private company in a Central European EU member state, the way trust is built within the organisation can give an idea or two for all of us regardless the sector we work in.

The case

Since 2014 I have been working in a company that has about 1 000 employees and I manage the Department for Sales with over 50 employees, many of whom have worked for more than 25 years there. The company is old and traditional and most of the employees are women. The same processes have been followed for many years and have not been revised or questioned by anybody for a long time.

Our Department is responsible for contracts, bills, claims and accounts payable by the customers. We have about 700 000 customers from which we are directly responsible for about 200 000. We have directly about 50 000 current account for our clients. We are working in 4 units. 2 heads of units have been working for 3 years, one for 4,5 years and the other one has been in the leader position for 9 years.

When I arrived, I was told that all of the teams worked "alone" and "independently", without cooperation with the other units in the department. The rules included regulations and a lot of unwritten traditions ("*we have been doing it in this way for 20 years...*"). Education and trainings were rare for the colleagues.

It was a very slow process that we could build up a new organisation based on trust and transparency. In the last years new working methods were introduced, where the units and the people cooperate and help each other. There is a new training programme for the new colleagues and training courses for the whole department.

To reach this succes I relied on my communication skills, strength, self confidence, optimistic attitude, and most importantly, I could rely on the support of the management of our company and our coworkers.

I think, we are in the right track in my department.

I have listed below the main factors that played a key role in our success:

- spend time directly with the colleagues to see the exact processes in the organisation
- be patient and accept that development is a never ending story
- be open for the new ideas from all stakeholders
- ask your colleagues and learn from them
- involve your colleagues in the processes and in preparation
- provide your coworkers with new challenges and the possibility to develop
- be strict and be fair
- build continuous contact with the management
- develop fair partnership with partners inside and outside the company, on which your work depend

- bring new, unusual solutions in the culture of the organisation
- take responsibility for your decisions
- give independence for the colleagues, but at the same time let them see that you keep the organisation under control.
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Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Strength, trust, transparency

Give time for the changes and move step by step

Be always available for your coworkers and be transparent by giving them feedback, information and time to prepare for changes

And what is best to avoid...

To see coworkers as machines instead of persons.

My notes...



This story, provided by a contributor working with NGOs in a country in the Caucasus, is about the power of perception. It is an alarming example of the influence of what others assume your political affiliation might be based on decisions made by your previous managers and how this influences or even prevents a career in the public administration.

The case

I used to work for an international non-governmental organisation that still is active in my country. The organisation was accused of misrepresenting the opinion polls and supporting the ruling party a couple of years after I left working there. The opposition party that won the elections accused the mentioned organisation of influencing the public opinion during the Election Day that according to the opposition party, would have given the green light to the rigging of the elections. The opposition party won the elections. One of my former managers joined the former ruling party and now is a Member of Parliament.

I studied abroad during this situation. When I came back, any interview at the public service job I applied for, would not inquire my experiences and education, however, would highlight my work experience at that mentioned international non-governmental organisation. The interviews would include the replicas from the interview panel, such as “you rigged the opinion polls”, “supporters of the X party”, “you wished that other results were the case”. This collective “you” associated me with the mentioned organisation and its management. It was really odd to respond to this kind of accusations because I was not responsible for them. I would try to explain to myself that I had nothing to do with this situation but it would not help.

I think I played an indirect role in this situation. First of all, I did not have anything to do with the opinion polls even when I used to work at that mentioned organisation that was long before the elections. And when I used to work there, the organisation would not conduct the opinion polls by itself but always contracted the survey companies/organisations.

As the former Director of the organisation retired, the issue was solved at least for the functioning of this organisation and, on the other hand, it is an organisation of the country that has big political, military, economic, and social influences locally. However, it did not change the fact that your perceived political affiliation does matter in public sector jobs that should be independent, and I also discovered that the political affiliation of your managers can be perceived as your own. That is why the sector should be further reformed, to become more independent and transparent.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Evaluation of persons based on their individual achievements

Professionalism

Political neutrality

And what is best to avoid...

Consideration of factors that are outside of the framework of a job description when making decisions that influence people's' careers.

My notes...

IV

Shadows of the past are oftentimes root causes of distrust in the present. The following story, provided by a contributor working in the public administration of a SEE EU member state, is a fine example of how two devoted persons by way of honest communication and mutual respect can take steps towards the reparations past traumas.

The case

Over the last three years I have been supervising projects funded by the German Foreign Office. Germany established some years ago a fund that supports projects in my country, especially in those places that suffered by the Nazis in World War II.

I am not just the project manager but also the person that facilitates communication between the donor, i.e. the German Foreign Office, and project partners in my country. In that sense I kind of mediate between the community and public administration.

The main stakeholders in my case are the German authorities on the one hand and the public of my country on the other. The core challenge in my case is that there is wide distrust among people living in communities that were destroyed by the Nazis in World War II because any reconciliation initiative from Germany's side is perceived as an excuse not to pay war reparations. In my opinion the cause of this case is the fact that for Germany there is no issue of war reparations towards my country while the latter still believes that the former should assume responsibility for the atrocities of World War II, among others by paying war reparations. This conflict results in wide distrust and deeply embedded stereotypes among each other, especially over the last few years in the context of the recent Euro crisis. A film director approached me once seeking funding for his documentary film. I had to persuade him to cooperate with us by trying to convince him that irrespective of the reparations narrative, which has nothing to do with this specific funding tool, it is all about delivering a good product which is going to have a lasting effect for a long time. The director agreed to accept our funding and his documentary on a World War II massacre in my country has been a big success. Thus, although he was quite sceptical at the beginning, during our working together and communicating on a regular basis, distrust was gradually replaced by mutual respect and trust.

In my story distrust does not derive from the lack of communication but from a longstanding conflict and a deeply traumatised relationship between the two countries and thus between citizens of my country towards German authorities. Dealing with this case showed my that systematic and honest communication is a prerequisite of trust. Patience is also necessary in order to turn distrust into trust.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Systematic communication

Honesty

Patience

And what is best to avoid....

Dishonesty

Opportunistic communication

Unreliability

My notes...

A word cloud centered on the word "OPENNESS" in large, bold, white capital letters. The word "OPENNESS" is the largest and most prominent. Surrounding it are various related terms in different sizes, colors (white and light blue), and orientations (horizontal and vertical). The terms include: "perception", "communication", "involvement", "freedom of information", "acceptance", "responsibility", "plain language", "measurable", "awareness", "mindful", "inclusion", "accountability", "ethics", "trust", "transparency", "open data", and "partnership". The background is a solid dark blue.

perception
communication
involvement
freedom of information
acceptance
responsibility
plain language
measurable
awareness
mindful
inclusion
accountability
ethics
trust
transparency
open data
partnership

V

The following case concerns the capital of an Eastern European EU member state where a journalist endeavours to disclose, in his documentary film, information to the public that is withheld in order to ease the way for construction projects. It sheds light on how the lack of transparency, openness and competence facilitates abuses of power and may lead to corruption.

The case

In 2010 the Capital City Hall started the works of enlarging the road which connects the Government and Parliament Building. This enlargement of the road involved also the demolition of common houses in the area, patrimony buildings, families' evacuations. Part of these changes were made illegally by the authorities. Some civic groups and very few citizens reacted to these demolitions; especially to the demolition of a patrimony building, symbol of this downtown area which is also named after this symbolic building.

I am director, cinematographer and producer of a documentary project about this process. The key players in this case were the City Hall and all its representatives (mayor, chief architect, chief urbanist), the corporation which has already started to build in the area where demolitions took place and the corporation which are in expectation to build. The main challenge in the story was to find out official answers from the authorities regarding the authorisations for demolition, the costs of these operations or to get an interview with the investors who are building in the area. In my opinion we have two main causes of the problem: on the one hand was the lack of interest of authorities who did not do their job in protecting the patrimony. On the other hand are the interests of the real estate companies which corrupted the authorities: expensive lands in central areas of the capital were "cleaned" and sold for special clients. Many of the people interviewed for the documentary speak about the corruption of authorities and the lack of transparency in their decisions.

The main issue of the case is that there were no real public debates between the authorities and citizens' representatives. There were some formal meetings, which took place after the authorities had already decided for demolitions. The authorities never communicated the dates of the demolitions; some demolitions were made during the nights in order to avoid public attention.

Sadly the issue was not at all solved. For example, the former mayor (during demolitions) promised that the symbolic building of the area would be reconstructed. Despite the fact that 5 years passed this reconstruction did not happen. So what I learned from this story is that corruption is very present at high levels.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Three key elements of successfully managing similar situations may be honesty, competence and transparency.

And what is best to avoid....

... is the same behavior as in the story. In fact the municipality is preparing for a similar operation in a different central area of of the Capital.

My notes...

VI

The following case was provided by a contributor who works in the field of media in a SEE country. The story - an episode of a series a similar ones - is an alarming example on how transparency can be misinterpreted for the exact reason of preventing the disclosure of otherwise public information.

The case

There were many cases when my professional work was interrupted by either my bosses or by other governmental bodies with the intention to apply the censorship. The most radical case that hampered serving the public good was when in April 2015 the minister of infrastructure blocked a story to be broadcasted in the public television. The focus of the story was on the lack of transparency from the governmental institutions when signing and implementing huge contracts with private enterprises. In this particular case we are talking about over a billion Euros public contract signed by government with the construction company to build one of the highways in the country. This public contract has never been public and the focus of my story was on the lack of transparency on public spending. What the ministry did was, to invite media and civil society to see a hardcopy of the contract of 500 pages (all technical terms in English). Media were not allowed to take pictures or film the contract, a copy of it was out of question. This is how the government played the role of “the transparent”.

The most ridiculous part is the fact that governmental officials have the power to intervene on media content, more precisely on the public broadcaster. That’s how the minister succeeded to avoid the public pressure, by blocking the story to be published. The chief editor decided not to allow the story to be broadcasted with a simple explanation the NGO that was interviewed to criticize the behaviour of the minister was not relevant for this story, and the Ministry had the right to decide how they want to publish the public contracts.

The lack of transparency of governmental institutions and the absence of professional independent media can be considered one of the main causes of nosedived of public trust, in general.

In this particular case the issue was not solved despite all the procedures followed. I was doing the investigation in cooperation with another Think-Tank. Later, the then general director of this institute wrote a public letter which criticized the public broadcaster for censorship. The institute also raised a case against the Ministry of Infrastructure, for violation of the Law on access to public documents. Two years after, the court decided for this case in favour of this institute, obliging the Ministry of Infrastructure to publish all the documents which are not classified confidential. However, the ministry did not follow the court’s order, because the democracy and the rule of law in this country remain fragile.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

When deciding to deal with such complex stories, one needs to find the right channel where the story can be published.

The journalist should follow FOI rules and if it does not work, send the case to the court and let the justice system have the final word.

My notes...

VII

The following case was sent by a contributor who works in the media in a Central Asian country. The story gives an insight into the causes and consequences of the lack of open communication between a local community, the national government, civil society organisations and international organisations. This inability to see eye to eye and to effectively spend aid funds is not a unique matter. What makes this story special is the fact that due to the lack of openness and efficiency, trust and transparency, a community of 25 000 people and their surrounding environment is continuously exposed to radioactive contamination.

The case

Radioactive contamination in the Town X in my country is having an impact on the population of 25,000 and surrounding areas due to environmental hazards, inadequate government oversight and lack of resources to maintain radioactive tailing sites. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is gearing up for a project in Town X to remediate radioactive waste sites but the bank may need more attention to the grievances of the local community. My job is to facilitate communication between the local population and EBRD; and by extension other parties involved in the project. I have been reporting on the environmental concerns in Town X since 2015 and made 5 trips to the contaminated areas to date. I also joined efforts with the local NGO to raise awareness in the community and general public. The main stakeholders of my case are the local population, EBRD, European Commission, CEE Bankwatch, the Government and civil society groups in the Republic. In my opinion the core challenge in the case is the ineffective communication between the local community, NGOs and the Government and by extension donors such as EC and EBRD.

There are multiple causes of the case. The Government does not pay enough attention and does not address the local community's grievances including social and environmental issues in Town X. As a result this town is suffering from a lack of basic government services such as proper healthcare, water supply, insufficient communication between the Government and local residents.

Unfortunately, this is still an ongoing, unsolved case. EBRD is planning to do a project to remediate the radioactive tailing sites in Town X which is why it is extremely important for the European Commission and the parties involved to effectively plan and manage the project. First and foremost reason why the issue hasn't been solved is lack of funding due to weakness of the Republic. The country simply does not have resources to fix environmental issues. Then, lack of transparency in the Government that is also prone to corruption. And thirdly, ineffective and sometimes no communication whatsoever between the government and the local population in Town X.

Dealing with this case I have learned that donor groups and organizations (EC, EBRD etc.) must establish presence on the ground in the project area in order to open up a communication channel with the local communities and CSOs. It is important to have CSOs in the project designing phase to avoid or minimize corruption of all sorts during implementation of the project. EC and EBRD needs to address the problem of communication between the local population and CSOs and the Government.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Transparency

Effective communication with all parties involved

Meticulous oversight of spending on the ground

And what is best to avoid...

Lack of transparency

Inadequate communication or lack of it with CSOs and local communities

Condition that facilitate the occurrence of corruption

My notes...

VIII

The following case took place in an overseas country and was provided by a Central European contributor working in the business sector. It is quite an impressive example on conflict between a human and a professional relationship and where it might lead both parties.

The case

The case took place in a small country where I spent a limited amount of time for research. I was there with a colleague - let's call him "Chris" - to conduct some research in the name of a commission which was specifically created and authorized by the country's parliament to research some recent economic developments in the country.

Despite being mandated and authorized by the parliament to be given access to any relevant documents for my research, the public agency which was in possession of such relevant documents first refused to grant us access and later, when it accepted that we had the right to see the documents, made one claim after another to justify why they were still not able to show me the document. We were only able to finally access the documents with the help of a high-ranking employee of the public agency - let's call her "Sara" - who ex officio also formed part of the aforementioned commission. Sara generally was very supportive of our case and she obtained some office space for us to do our research right next to her office. By coincidence, Chris, Sara and I also lived close to each other. The three of us got along very well, also privately, and became friends. The outcome of my research partly blamed some recent problematic developments in the country on the public agency's department that was led by Sara. Even though we never really considered not to publish the critical details connecting some of the problems with Sara's department, Chris and I still discussed how to go about it. It felt bad to target the person without whom we maybe never would have achieved such good research outcomes and whom we also liked a lot personally. For us the behavior of the agency was totally intransparent and we were completely uncertain whether they would have finally provided us with the information we needed. There was also a lack of communication on Chris's and my side. Ideally at the beginning we should have already made clear that our research could possibly cover the past activities of Sara's department. Then we should have talked with our project leader about our situation and possibly also with Sara.

We published the outcomes as they were, without informing Sara beforehand. I am not so satisfied with our way of managing the case. In the end, everything went well but it is difficult to assess which of the positive outcome were achieved due to and which were achieved despite our behavior.

In the future I would try to make myself more aware of the different relationships and roles of people involved in a case and I would try to consider this topic before becoming too close with others. It might also be useful to more fiercely require the agency to clearly explain us their reasoning and which would be their next steps etc. At the other hand, I would talk to the project leader about challenge that an otherwise cooperative person might be negatively effected by our report and ask whether I could inform Sara beforehand.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Make yourself and others be aware of your role.

Always make clear that your professional duties will not and must not be impacted by personal relations.

Escalate things if necessary.

And what is best to avoid...

Try to not depend on only one benefactor even if it seems the most efficient way to go in the short term.

My notes...

IX

The following case took place in the EU involving several national and European-level stakeholders.

It shows the importance of strategic communication and the importance of planning and preparing for unexpected situations.

The case

My case concerns a global public health emergency situation where I was one of the representatives of the ministry of health in an EU country. Other important stakeholders in my story were representatives of the Ministries of health of the EU Member States and the EC institutions (ECDC, EC and HSC).

The core challenge in my case related to the share among the involved stakeholders the measures implemented in the preparedness and response phase in relation to the outbreak. In my opinion the causes that lead to my case was an unexpected outbreak of major public health concern that could be widespread and so required the implementation of measures and the coordination among involved stakeholders.

My case shows that high-level informed decision making based on scientific knowledge are required and that internal coordination among the different Member State' stakeholders is necessary, just like the management of uncertainty, the provision of transparent and up to date information to the public through the media. Trust in the international institutions is indispensable as well as sharing information.

The case was solved thanks to the stakeholders' awareness of the consequences of a poor management of the situation as well as scaling up decisions and demanding information and coordination.

This case showed me that frequently we only have partial information on a case and so we have to decide to take decisions having this minor data or to raise awareness in other stakeholders or high level bodies in the need to compile additional data and share them with others affected by the same concern. Authorities should work very closely with the media in order to inform citizens appropriately.

What I would do differently if I come across a similar situation is that I would try to scale up the case and its context, explaining past situations and its consequences as well as which are the standardised procedures to be followed.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

To raise awareness of the importance of the situation

Strategic communication to the public

Preparedness

And what is best to avoid...

Improvisation

Unilateral decisions

Not assuming responsibilities

My notes...

X

The following case was provided by a contributor who works in the corporate sector in a SEE EU member state. Although this case does not concern trans-sectoral trust and transparency, it is still worth studying it, as it shows an example on the dark side of new technologies, that are meant to make our lives easier and more effective.

The case

My case relates to the transparency of communication which has become a challenge in my daily job. I lead a team of 15 people: most of them proud millennials and some of them even younger. All the communication between those young people is going through messengers and on Skype. It is an open space and everyone is pretty quiet with their headphones on but at the same time there is intensive communication going on between them via the messengers. The problem is that now some personal conflicts and other controversial issues remain hidden from me until the very last moment when they escalate.

For example one of the coworkers has been criticizing one of the new starters each day on skype for her poor work. I didn't know about it and I could not have even the slightest clue about this until this colleague felt very disturbed and decided to share. It appeared this have continued for three months and the girl was even thinking about leaving.

As a newcomer to the company and with no visible face-to-face communication among the teams it is very difficult to get a picture of coworkers, of their personality, of their relations. It is not impossible but takes a lot of time and a lot of effort to build trust in them. The core challenge in this case is that the whole world aims at transparency and new technologies. Internet and social media give possibilities to learn everything, right away. The shared online spaces for projects and work progress are positive but at the same time the communication between the people and teams have become even more invisible and hidden which for me personally is a challenge. The way people communicate has changed. We are increasingly using messengers rather than talk to each other. But this kind of communication will prevail so we need to adjust to it. Maybe for people messengers are good - save time and probably when chatting they will be more comfortable to express opinions and thoughts but this also creates opportunity for hidden conflicts and tensions that escalate out of nowhere. I think this applies to all sectors. The fact that face-to-face communication is substituted by chats is seen everywhere.

I hope I managed to build trust among teammates so that they are comfortable to come and share whenever they have problems. One lesson learned is that with young people if you want them to start talking to you better use chat. When you approach them on Skype they are much more talkative than if you talk directly to them.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

- *Encourage dialogue no matter whether oral or written*

And what is best to avoid...

- *We have to accept the fact the the communication channels have changed and so instead of trying to go back to the old ways, we need to adapt to these new forms.*

My notes...

trust
common sense
morality
social expectations
ETHICS norm
decency
professionalism
conscience
ethos
openness
fairness
honesty
integrity
good conduct
respect
compass
moral

XI

The following story is worth having a close look. At first it might seem to be just a common story of unprofessional attitude. But if we consider the context where it took place and the fact that it happened at the European Commission, and if we think of the possible consequences, it becomes a more alarming story.

The case

The context of my case is an international issue in the European Commission. I was policy officer in the international unit of one Directorate General of the European Commission, following the negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between EU and the US.

The other main stakeholders were my peer colleagues in another Directorate General of the European Commission, and our US colleagues as counterpart. Given the sensitivity of the issue and the clause of confidentiality that was requested by US, we were all very stressed about document management and information sharing. That was especially true in relation to possible leaks of information to the press and to civil society in general. What I was not expecting was an issue of information sharing inside the service where I was working in.

Specifically, the challenge that I had to face was related to a lack of trust and transparency within colleagues in my same DG. As contact point for my DG with the delegation of US, I had to participate to a technical meeting on a specific topic related to food safety. When I started the preparation for the meeting, looking for all the relevant documents (letters, emails, scientific dossiers exchanged by the parties...), I had to ask to my colleague of the policy unit where those documents were saved. This colleague did not want to share that information and invited me to make photocopies from hard copies. There was no reason not to share those documents with me.

This incident was related to a lack of trust within different units of the same Directorate and to some extent within two directorates general of the European Commission. I partially solved the problem by asking support to my peer colleague in the other DG who had participated to the previous meetings of the same working group and had all the past documents. Then I asked for the missing information to the line manager of my colleague who did not want to help me.

The issue was partially solved, because I was able to prepare for the meeting, collecting the documents anyhow from other colleagues but with an extra effort and time dedicated to the process. I say ‘partially’ because the main lack of trust and transparency remained and had a bad influence also on following meetings.

I learned that there may be unexpected barriers within the same services and that it is important to early detect them in order to overcome the negative effects that they can produce. I also learned how important is to build up trust between colleagues that work for different services. It is important to have in mind the overall mission of the institution for which we work and build bridges instead of barriers in order to achieve the expected results.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

Ask for help and support at an early stage to the right people responsible for the files you are working with.

Share as much as possible the information you have with all the relevant colleagues that may be involved with the files now or in the future.

They will take your gesture as a sign of trust and will appreciate it.

Dedicate effort and energy to build up trust at personal level in parallel with carrying out your institutional tasks. You may think it is a waste of time but it isn't.

And what is best to avoid....

Your emotional intelligence, together with your high professional skills is what makes you special and what will bring positive energy toward you and your job. We will all achieve more goals in less time if we were all prepared to share more and to trust our own colleagues, considering them allies instead of competitors

My notes...

XII

The following story takes place at an unexpected, seemingly peaceful professional field: archeology. But what only seems to be scientific envy at first is actually a serious breach of professional ethics that negatively influences how much we know about our past. The case was sent by a contributor who works for an NGO that cooperates with the public administration of a SEE EU member state.

The case

The country where my story takes place is well known for being one of the richest in ancient archeological sites. However the archaeologists of one of the Government Offices responsible for antiquities originally refused to share information about the whereabouts of local monuments. When this story took place I was a student researching for my dissertation in the school of Architecture. The main challenge in this case was that the public institutions refused to share what should be public information because they were afraid that somebody could claim their work as their own. In my view the root cause that led to this situation was a common phenomenon in the field of archaeology, namely that archeologists keep findings “secret” so that you are the one to publish them later on. In that sense it is quite usual that valuable results of researches are kept in drawers for many years and occasionally for decades. Even more, sometimes researchers try to prevent others from gain access to the sites of their interest so that they will be first in publishing what they have found, something that is considered highly unethical. This whole issue originates from distrust of the archaeologists of the public sector to third parties.

In my case the issue was solved because I, a student at the time, managed to persuade that there would not be any conflict of interest. Ironically, after some years the director of the relevant government office changed and I had the rare chance to cooperate with them on a still ongoing project. In the end, it was all a matter of what kind of people are in charge.

I learned that I have to be extremely cautious and persistent when dealing in that kind of matters. Given that it all got resolved at the end, I wouldn't do anything different next time.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

It is very important to remain calm and be polite at all times even though the other side's arguments may seem unreasonable. Also, you need to know exactly what you are asking for and have prepared all the necessary paperwork in advance if possible. Lastly, you should check for connections in your network with the ones that have the power to give you access to what you want. Having personal relationships sometimes can make things easier.

And what is best to avoid....

Disrespect, impatience and unpreparedness.

My notes...

XIII

The following case that was provided by a contributor working in the media in a central European EU member state. However the story takes place overseas and is an interesting example on how believing in the importance of talking about sensitive topics might lead to skipping the scrutiny that could disclose unethical behaviour.

The case

Few months ago, I pitched an editor a profile of a documentary filmmaker on the event of the release of her documentary at the Berlin Film Festival about domestic sexual abuse set in northern India. This is the first time I am working with this editor, he bought my story based on my pitch and when I submitted the story, the editor wanted more details about the documentary. It was a 13 minute long documentary and I shared it with him. Perceptive enough to understand the nuances of the documentary, my editor suspected that the documentary felt like it was acted out. Upon subsequent discussions, we realised although the documentary deals with an important topic like sexual abuse, the director has filmed the subjects without their explicit consent. For example, the subjects knew they were being part of something, but they never got to know that it was for a documentary about domestic abuse. If they did, they would not have given her consent to film them.

As for me, I did not realise that was the case when I pitched and wrote the story. I got a kill fee because the story could not be run after this conflict. Though my editor agreed for a kill fee, he did mention this could have been avoided if I had been more perceptive. It taught me how important it is to employ the cynical journalistic eye to weed out such issues before starting to write a story, even though some work has gone into the interview of the director.

Key elements to successfully manage a similar case

■ *Be perceptive*

■ *Question everything until you receive a satisfactory answer*

■ *Be open wherever possible*

And what is best to avoid....

■ *To sign up for anything without applying the necessary scrutiny.*

My notes...

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