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Anheuser Busch ombuds

1985

*Bob Race*

SPIDR CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

OCTOBER 30, 1985

GOOD MORNING MEMBERS OF SPIDR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MY NAME IS BOB RACE. I AM MANAGER OF THE PERSONNEL COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM, OR THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM, FOR ANHEUSER-BUSCH COMPANIES, INC.

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY HAS THREE MAIN DEFINITIONS OF CONCILIATION. THE FIRST IS TO GAIN (AS GOOD WILL) BY PLEASING ACTS. THE SECOND, TO MAKE COMPATIBLE OR RECONCILE, AND THE THIRD IS APPEASE OR TO BECOME FRIENDLY OR AGREEABLE. IN SOME WAYS THESE DEFINITIONS HAVE SOME OF THE ELEMENTS OF HOW AN OMBUDSMAN USES CONCILIATION. BUT THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES IN PRACTICE.

MY DEFINITION OF CONCILIATION IS TO CARRY INFORMATION BETWEEN TWO PARTIES IN SUCH A WAY THAT AIDS THE SOLVING OF THE PROBLEM TO THE MUTUAL SATISFACTION OF BOTH PARTIES. HOW IS THIS DONE? THE STEPS BASICALLY ARE THESE:

1. GET A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLIENT'S NEEDS.
2. GET A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HE/SHE WANTS DONE AND YOU AGREE TO DO. WE CALL THIS THE CONTRACT.
3. GATHER INFORMATION WHERE NECESSARY FROM CORPORATE SUPPORT GROUPS, FOR EXAMPLE COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, ETC. PRIOR TO TALKING WITH THE SUPERVISOR.

4. GATHER INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERVISOR.
5. SHARE MEANINGFUL INFORMATION WITH THE CLIENT.
6. PROBLEM SOLVE WITH SUPERVISOR AND CLIENT IN TURN.

THERE IS ALSO A SALES SIDE OF CONCILIATION. ONE THING THAT I TRY TO DO CONSTANTLY IS ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. FOR INSTANCE, I'LL GIVE EMPHASIS TO THE STRENGTHS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S BACKGROUND PARTICULARLY WHEN DEALING WITH AN EMPLOYMENT SITUATION, BUT WILL NOT, WHEN APPROPRIATE, IGNORE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.

THE ADDITIONAL POINT TO KEEP IN MIND ON THE SALES SIDE OF CONCILIATION IS THE QUESTION THAT THE MANAGER WILL FREQUENTLY HAVE IN MIND--"WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?" SO WHEN I LOOK AT TRYING TO PATCH TOGETHER A SOLUTION WHICH PEOPLE CAN LIVE WITH AND WHICH IS APPROPRIATE, I HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE MANAGER WILL ALMOST ALWAYS HAVE THAT QUESTION. SO WHEN I INTERVENE IN A PARTICULAR PROBLEM, I OFFER A SOLUTION OR AN APPEAL THAT WILL HELP THE MANAGER ANSWER THAT QUESTION FOR HIMSELF OR HERSELF. FOR INSTANCE, IF A MANAGER IS IN VIOLATION OF CORPORATE POLICY, I MAKE IT KNOWN TO HIM AT THAT POINT OR IF HE CAN REALIZE A PRODUCTIVITY GAIN, I WILL POINT THAT OUT AS WELL.

IN MY EXPERIENCE, THERE HAVE BEEN CERTAIN TYPES OF CASES THAT MORE EASILY LEND THEMSELVES TO CONCILIATION. THE FIRST IS WHAT I CALL FIELD HARDSHIP TRANSFERS. I'LL GIVE YOU TWO EXAMPLES.

CASE 1. WE HAD AN INDIVIDUAL WHO WANTED TO BE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE BREWERY TO ANOTHER. HE HAD WHAT I CONSIDERED TO BE VERY GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIBILITY. HIS REVIEWS WERE OUTSTANDING. THERE WAS ALSO A STRONG FAMILY NEED. HIS WIFE HAD JUST SUFFERED A DEATH IN THE FAMILY AND HAD A NEED TO GET BACK HOME. THERE WAS ALSO A POSSIBILITY OF A ONE FOR ONE SWAP IN THE SAME DEPARTMENT, IN A DIFFERENT BREWERY. THE PROCESS WENT LIKE THIS. AFTER RECEIVING THE MAN'S PERMISSION TO SPEAK WITH HIS SUPERVISORS, I ULTIMATELY TALKED WITH THE HEAD OF HIS DEPARTMENT AT HIS BREWERY. HE RECOGNIZED IMMEDIATELY THE FAMILY NEED, HE AGREED WITH ME THAT THE EMPLOYEE DID HAVE GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIBILITY AND HE WOULD SUPPORT WHAT HE COULD AS FAR AS GETTING THIS GENTLEMAN MOVED TO THIS OTHER LOCATION. I, IN TURN, CALLED THE DEPARTMENT HEAD AT THIS OTHER LOCATION, TALKED ABOUT THIS GENTLEMAN AND HIS NEEDS. HE WAS AWARE OF THIS PERSON FROM SOME PRIOR ACQUAINTANCE, FELT VERY POSITIVE ABOUT HIM AND ALSO SAID THAT IN A MONTH OR TWO HE WAS GOING TO HAVE A RETIREMENT IN HIS DEPARTMENT WHICH WOULD OPEN A SPOT. SO WITH THE FIRST BREWERY'S ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE THE NEED, THEN THE SECOND BREWERY'S ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR THAT OPENING, WITHIN TWO MONTH'S TIME THE INDIVIDUAL WAS MOVED TO THE NEW LOCATION, SATISFYING EVERYBODY'S NEEDS.

THE SECOND CASE OF A FIELD HARDSHIP TRANSFER DEALT WITH AN EMPLOYEE WHO WANTED TO BE TRANSFERRED TO A DIFFERENT LOCATION. HE HAD WHAT I WOULD CALL GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIBILITY. THERE WAS A STRONG FAMILY NEED AS WELL, BUT THERE WAS NO OPENING. SO

THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF A ONE FOR ONE SWAP IN THE SAME DEPARTMENT AT A DIFFERENT LOCATION. THE PROCESS, HOWEVER, WAS SOMEWHAT SIMILAR. I TALKED TO THE SAME DEPARTMENT HEAD AS IN THE FIRST CASE AND GOT HIS AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT THIS MAN'S EFFORTS TO MOVE. I, IN TURN, CALLED HIS COUNTERPART AT THE OTHER BREWERY AND DETERMINED QUICKLY THAT YES, HE HAD GOOD ORGANIZATIONAL CREDIBILITY IN THAT DEPARTMENT SINCE HE ORIGINALLY CAME FROM THAT DEPARTMENT AND WAS TRANSFERRED TO HIS NEW LOCATION. YET THERE WAS NO OPENING. THE PROBABILITY OF HAVING AN OPENING WAS SIX TO NINE MONTHS DOWN THE ROAD, PENDING SOMEBODY'S POTENTIAL RETIREMENT. I BECAME AWARE OF AN OPENING IN ANOTHER DEPARTMENT, ANOTHER PRODUCTION AREA WHERE THE MAN'S PRIOR EXPERIENCE COULD TRANSLATE QUITE EASILY. HE HAD BEEN WITH OUR BREWERY SYSTEM NOW FOR ABOUT 13 YEARS AND WAS FAIRLY FAMILIAR WITH THAT DEPARTMENT ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NEED TO GO THROUGH ROUGHLY A THREE TO FOUR MONTH LEARNING PERIOD. AFTER TALKING WITH THE DEPARTMENT HEAD, AND WORKING BACKWARD DOWN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND AS I GOT EACH ONE'S AGREEMENT, I FINALLY GOT TO THE SUPERVISOR WHO WOULD BE MAKING THE FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER HE WOULD CONSIDER THIS GENTLEMAN FOR THE JOB. HE WENT AHEAD, GAVE IT SOME THOUGHT, COMPARED HIM AGAINST SOME OTHER CANDIDATES AND FINALLY SAID YES, HE WOULD HIRE HIM, BUT BECAUSE IT WAS A MOVE THAT THE EMPLOYEE WANTED TO INITIATE HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO COMPANY POLICY, WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PAY FOR HIS MOVE. I CERTAINLY HAD NO QUARREL WITH THAT. THE GENTLEMAN AT THE OTHER BREWERY HAD NO QUARREL WITH IT AND HE SAID HE WOULD TALK WITH HIS WIFE AND GET BACK WITH THE DEPARTMENT HEAD IN THE MORNING. HE CALLED BACK THE NEXT MORNING

AND SAID HE DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE--THAT HE WAS GOING TO STAY WHERE HE WAS AND IF HE COULDN'T COME BACK IN THE SAME DEPARTMENT, THEN HE WAS NOT GOING TO MOVE AT ALL. NEEDLESS TO SAY AFTER PUTTING ON WHAT I CONSIDERED A VERY THOROUGH CONCILIATION CAMPAIGN, IT WAS SOMEWHAT OF A DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE GENTLEMAN WAS NOT GOING TO MOVE.

LET ME OFFER ONE MORE TYPE OF CASE WHERE CONCILIATION IS USEFUL AND THAT'S THE BENEFITS AREA. A SECRETARY FROM AN OUTLYING PLANT CALLED ME AND EXPLAINED THE FOLLOWING PROBLEM. SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE HAD RECENTLY MARRIED A NAVY WIDOWER WITH TWO DAUGHTERS. AFTER ADOPTING THE TWO GIRLS, SHE SUBMITTED HER FIRST MEDICAL CLAIM. SHE WAS TURNED DOWN BY OUR INSURANCE CARRIER. AFTER RECEIVING PERMISSION FROM HER TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THE CASE, I CALLED THE LOCATION INDUSTRIAL NURSE WHO SAID "ALL I DO IS SEND THEM ON TO ST. LOUIS." MY NEXT CALL WAS TO THE CORPORATE INSURANCE MANAGER WHO ASSURED ME THAT IF MY CLIENT WAS BEING DENIED THE RIGHT TO FILE, THEN IT WAS FOR SOUND CONTRACTUAL REASONS. I THEN CALLED OUR CONTACT AT THE INSURANCE CARRIER WHO GAVE ME REASONS FOR THE TURNDOWN. HE SAID, "SHE MUST BE ABLE TO PROVE THAT SHE IS THE PRINCIPAL WAGE EARNER THROUGH DOCUMENTATION AND HE SUGGESTED W-2'S AND/OR SOME FORM OF PAYROLL RECORDS. WELL, THE RECORDS FOR THE PREVIOUS YEAR INDICATED THAT HE (BECAUSE OF SEA PAY) MADE ALMOST \$1,000 MORE THAN HER. BUT HER PROJECTED PAY FOR THE CURRENT YEAR WAS GOING TO BE MORE THAN HIS BASED ON HER RECENT RAISE. I WENT BACK TO THE INSURANCE COMPANY AND ASKED IF THEY WOULD RECONSIDER BASED ON PROJECTIONS. THEY

ASKED MY CLIENT TO SUBMIT HER PAPERWORK AND THEY WOULD GIVE HER A JUDGMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WITHIN TWO WEEKS THEY RULED IN HER FAVOR.

THESE EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATE HOW AN OMBUDSMAN CAN USE CONCILIATION IN THE PROCESS OF RESOLVING PROBLEMS. IF ANYONE HAS A QUESTION, I'D BE HAPPY TO ANSWER THEM.