

The Two-Boss Problem

On May 15, 1991, Brian Richards was assigned full-time to Project Turnbolt by Fred Taylor, manager of the thermodynamics department. All work went smoothly for four and one-half of the five months necessary to complete this effort. During this period of successful performance Brian Richards had good working relations with Edward Compton (the Project Turnbolt engineer) and Fred Taylor.

Fred treated Brian as a Theory Y employee. Once a week Fred and Brian would chat about the status of Brian's work. Fred would always conclude their brief meeting with, "You're doing a fine job, Brian. Keep it up. Do anything you have to do to finish the project." *→ cm flower*

During the last month of the project Brian began receiving conflicting requests from the project office and the department manager as to the preparation of the final report. Compton told Brian Richards that the final report was to be assembled in viewgraph format (i.e., "bullet" charts) for presentation to the customer at the next technical interchange meeting. The project did not have the funding necessary for a comprehensive engineering report.

The thermodynamics department, on the other hand, had a policy that all engineering work done on new projects would be documented in a full and comprehensive report. This new policy had been implemented about one year ago when Fred Taylor became department manager. Rumor had it that Fred wanted formal reports so that he could put his name on them and either publish or

present them at technical meetings. All work performed in the thermodynamics department required Taylor's signature before it could be released to the project office as an official company position. Upper-level management did not want its people to publish and therefore did not maintain a large editorial or graphic arts department. Personnel desiring to publish had to get the department manager's approval and, on approval, had to prepare the entire report themselves, without any "overhead" help. Since Taylor had taken over the reins as department head, he had presented three papers at technical meetings.

A meeting was held between Brian Richards, Fred Taylor, and Edward Compton.

Edward: "I don't understand why we have a problem. All the project office wants is a simple summary of the results. Why should we have to pay for a report that we don't want or need?"

Fred: "We have professional standards in this department. All work that goes out must be fully documented for future use. I purposely require that my signature be attached to all communications leaving this department. This way we obtain uniformity and **standardization**. You project people must understand that, although you can institute or own project policies and procedures (within the constraints and limitations of company policies and procedures), we department personnel also have standards. Your work must be prepared within our standards and specifications."

Edward: "The project office controls the purse strings. We (the project office) specified that only a survey report was necessary. Furthermore, if you want a more comprehensive report, then you had best do it on your own overhead account. The project office isn't going to foot the bill for your publications."

Fred: "The customary procedure is to specify in the program plan the type of report requested from the departments. Inasmuch as your program plan does not specify this, I used my own discretion as to what I thought you meant."

Edward: "But I told Brian Richards what type of report I wanted. Didn't he tell you?"

Fred: "I guess I interpreted the request a little differently from what you had intended. Perhaps we should establish a new policy that all program plans must specify reporting requirements. This would alleviate some of the misunderstandings, especially since my department has several projects going on at one time. In addition, I am going to establish a policy for my department that all requests for interim, status, or final reports be given to me directly. I'll take personal charge of all reports."

Edward: "That's fine with me! And for your first request I'm giving you an order that I want a survey report, not a detailed effort."

Brian: "Well, since the meeting is over, I guess I'll return to my office (and begin updating my **résumé** just in case)."

Edward: "That's fine with me! And for your first request I'm giving you an order that I want a survey report, not a detailed effort."

Brian: "Well, since the meeting is over, I guess I'll return to my office (and begin updating my *résumé* just in case)."