



### Problem Solver – Truth in Reporting

#### Problem

The client project manager misses a date or deliverable on their side. It is 100% their fault. They try and shift the blame to you and your team in order to save face with their company. They do this through status reports that aren't entirely accurate to management (both theirs and yours), halfway truths, and details that are left out.

How do you, in a professional manner, make sure their problem is not unfairly shifted to you and your team?

#### Solution

Unfortunately this is not an uncommon problem, particularly for project managers whose firm is providing outsourced services to a client.

The solution is transparency or truth in reporting.

First I would prepare my own status reports that I provide to both the client project manager and my own management. This report would separate the performance of my team against their tasks from the time taken on the client side.

Second, I would inform my management why I have sent them a copy of my status report. At this stage I would keep it low key...a simple phone call or hallway meeting would be sufficient. This conversation would go along the lines of:

*I've provided you with a copy of the status report I've sent the client project manager so that you have the latest up-to-date status of how our team is performing. I've noticed that, on occasion, my status report has not, for whatever reason, been reflected in the overall project status report presented by the client project manager.*

Thirdly, I would then provided the client project manager with a copy of my written status report. Again I would keep it low key. No use getting them too riled up...you still have to work with them. This conversation would go along the lines:

*I've provided you my status report in written form this time to make it easier for your to incorporate pertinent parts in the over status report.*

I would also let is 'slip' that I have also provided a copy to my manager who represents my firm on the project board.

These steps should give the client manager pause and reduce the likelihood that the client project manager will grossly alter my project status reports in future.

Unfortunately, the outcome is not guaranteed. Therefore I would continue to monitor the situation. If, at anytime in the future I were to discover that the client project manager was misrepresenting my team's performance, I would ask the client project manager why the discrepancy – in this way your reminding the client project manager that 'you're on to him/her'. If I was unhappy with the response I would go to my manager, highlight the differences and outline what the inaccuracy means for (i) the project; and/or (ii) the firm.

It is important that you highlight what the discrepancy means. Just highlighting the discrepancies is not sufficient. You need to outline the impact. Managers often wear rose coloured glasses and are prepared to overlook shortfalls on the client's side. You need to highlight the impact on the client-provider relationship, contractual payments (if relevant) and/or the potential for extension of the engagement. These are the only things your manager will actually 'care' about. If you do not do this your concerns may well be dismissed or overlooked and when you really need your manager's support you could be dismissed as a nit-picking complainer.

For this reason I would also not go to my manager on each and every occasion. One needs to 'keep the powder dry' and only fire when it has a good chance of achieving the desired outcome.