

## Consultant Influence

### TRAFFIC. QUESTIONABLE INFLUENCE.<sup>1</sup>

A software consultant, Frances Turner, was hired by a local town council, Goolgolplexville, to design their traffic control system. Turner recommended that Goolgolplexville select the TCS system out of several available systems on the market. Turner failed to mention that, several years ago, they were an analyst and designer for Terraific Lighting GmbH, the company that produced TCS software.

The tender was awarded to Terraific Lighting and a public announcement made with the Mayor of Goolgolplexville, Allen Unacke, the Managing Director of Terraific, Suzanne Wood, and the software consultant Turner smiling for photos. In the press release statement the Mayor said that the tender was awarded after an extensive and objective evaluation process by a company (Turner Tenders) specialising in such systems.

The press release caught the eye of one Eva Grodzinzky, an ex-colleague of Turner's at Terraific. In the past Turner and Grodzinzky had been on the same team that won a tender for a traffic control system for another community. In that case Turner falsely claimed that they were chiefly responsible for winning the tender and that Grodzinzky merely an able assistant. The truth, however, was that it was Grodzinzky's professionalism and competence in explaining and demonstrating the qualities of the system's software that won the client over. Rather than cause a furor which might jeopardize the contract Grodzinzky said nothing. Turner was promoted and subsequently left Terraific (amicably) to form their own software consulting company<sup>2</sup> specializing in software tender preparation and evaluation. Grodzinzky also left Terraific after being passed over for promotion when it was explained to them that they were not taking enough of a leading role in obtaining further contracts: they did not show enough leadership.

With the aim of showing Turner's bias and preferential treatment towards Terraific (and in an act of revenge), Grodzinzky informed the Mayor of Goolgolplexville, the Head of Public Relations for Goolgolplexville Council, Kari Klecun-Dabrowska, and a reporter for Goolgolplexville's only public broadcaster, Ela Coleman, of Turner's history with Terraific.

After a protracted and acrimonious public dispute Turner's Tenders eventually went bankrupt, Turner left the ICT industry, and Grodzinzky was sacked from their current job<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This case was related to me and is similar to Johnson, D.G., 2009, *Computer ethics*, 4th edition, Scenario 7.3 (p.164-165), .

Cast	Role
Ela Coleman	Reporter
Eva Grodzinzky	Mayor
Kari Klecun-Dabrowska	Head of Public Relations
Frances Turner	Software consultant

Table 1: T<sub>1</sub> Cast

<sup>2</sup> Turner Tenders had prepared and evaluated about 50 tenders of which Terraific had won 40.

<sup>3</sup> And is currently trying to find work in the industry.