**File: Mediation.mp3
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START AUDIO

George: Viv, Eric, I’d just like to start by thanking both of you for agreeing to come to the mediation in the first place. We thought it might be useful if we just ran through a couple of the things that we’ve already talked about in the pre-mediation meetings, but just so that everybody is comfortable with it.

Could I just check first of all, I’ve actually used Eric and Viv, is it all right if we use Christian names, first names?

Eric: Yes, that’s fine with me. Absolutely

Viv: Yes, that’s fine.

George: Excellent. I think the first point we’d like to make is that we are not here to judge either of you. It is not our role to make decisions on your part. It is not our role to decide whether you’re right or wrong.

We are here to help you to arrive at a solution that you both can agree with and in our experience those are the ones that tend to work, whereas if we impose from the outside, they tend not to work. Does that make any degree of…?

Eric: Yes, that’s okay

Viv: Yes.

George: I think the other point I would make, is that you may see us taking notes during the day and you are absolutely free to do the same if you feel you’d like to do that.

Because of the point, which Mildred will pick up on in a second, of confidentiality, just to say that our notes will be destroyed at the end of the day and you may feel that that’s an appropriate thing to do with any notes you make. But we’ll pick that up at the end.

Viv: Okay.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:02:22])

Mildred: Just really to stress to both of you the confidentiality of today’s proceedings. That as you know already, the whole meeting today is a confidential one, nothing will be repeated, by either of us or anyone without your permission to do so. Any individual meetings we may have with you throughout the day that George and I may have with you will be confidential within that meeting as well and again, nothing will be repeated without your permission. Is there any query you have from that?

Viv: No, I don’t think so.

Eric: No, not at this point.

Mildred: Okay, thank you. George, do you want to take the mic over?

George: The other thing that we talked about when we met last time was; mediation is very much about the future. What happened in the past can become the sole topic of conversation, and our experience is that that can become destructive.

Where, however, it throws up an example of an issue that’s important to you, then again, in our experience, it’s worthwhile looking at that, because it exemplifies something that you want to correct for the future and ensure never happens again.

You may find that we perhaps curtail some long investigations and some long discussions about what’s happened in the past. Purely because we’re conscious of your time and the need to spend that time looking at how you might want to stop this sort of thing happening again. Will that be all right, will that be okay with you if we do that?

Viv: Yes, yes, thanks very much.

Eric: Yes.

George: Okay, excellent thanks. Any final thoughts you…

Mildred: Yes, just if I talk, possibly on the voluntary nature of mediation, that you’re here today on a voluntary basis, with the result, of course, that you can leave if you want. We hope you won’t do that, that you will stay and, in our experience, parties who do stay and try throughout the day to work through their differences and discuss matters, that’s the best chance of success to resolving any issues. Okay?

Eric: I can leave at any time then if I want to?

Mildred: Yes you can, either of you can. But, as I say, we hope that you will stay and we hope you will want to stay to talk through your differences that you can put right today.

Viv: That’s fine.

Mildred: Is that quite clear?

George: Well it might be worth, I think to, if you feel during the day at any time you just need to take some time out, just take a break for five minutes, go for a walk. You might not want to talk to us in a private session. You might just need to think about something you’ve just heard.

At any time, just say, “Look, I need time out.” That’s fine. That’s absolutely up to you to decide.

Viv: That’s good.

Eric: Okay.

George: Okay. Anything else, then, before we might start the discussions?

Viv: I can’t think of anything.

Eric: Just tell me how long it’s likely to take.

George: I think it’ll take as long as you think it’s worth spending the time on. Again, we’re not here to tell how long you need to spend on resolving something that’s very much between the two of you. If you believe it’s worth spending the time, we’re here; we’ll spend the time with you.

Mildred: Yes.

Eric: Okay.

George: So we’re not limited to today, as we said before. But it’s very much up to you two to just tell us whether you think this is being useful, positive. If it is and you want to carry on, then we’ll spend the time.

Viv: Okay.

Eric: Okay.

Viv: We’ll give it a shot.

Eric: I’ll give it a go.

George: Okay, great, thank you.

(Audio break \_\_\_[0:06:27])

George: When we met, we talked about the possibility of each of you taking perhaps five or six or seven minutes, just to give your view of how you think this whole thing started. What you might hope to get out of this mediation process, and just to do that for each other, you may feel that the other person is absolutely what this is about. But you may actually find that you have different perspectives and that’s fine.

That, we find, is quite a useful way of just starting the ball rolling and then you’ll have the opportunity to pick up on what’s been said and talk backwards and forwards. Wouldn’t that be an idea?

Viv: Yes, okay.

Eric: Certainly on my part, because I’m confused about what all this about anyway and I’ve been told to get involved in this process.

George: Okay.

Eric: Although I’ve entered into it voluntarily, I’m not really… I’m genuinely confused about what Viv is accusing me of.

George: Okay. All right. So would you be happy just to carry on Viv, would you happy if Eric used that as a starting point for a couple of minutes to explain how he thinks and how he feels? And then you’d have the same opportunity.

Viv: Yes, that’s fine by me.

George: Are you sure?

Viv: Yes, yes.

Mildred: It might be worth adding, George, just at this moment, when you are speaking, if we could ask the other party just to listen and listen without interrupting and then, of course, you get the opportunity to do the same. I would ask you, Eric, when Viv’s speaking to do the same. Is that all right with you?

Eric: Well, to be honest, you know, as I said, I’m confused about what the problem is in terms of where I’ve gone wrong or whatever in terms of management style and whatever and so I would rather that Viv told me what she thought the problems were and then I can try and understand what it’s all about, basically.

George: Okay.

Viv: So you’re saying you want me to start?

Eric: Yes.

Viv: Okay.

George: Would that be all right with you?

Viv: Yes, that’s fine.

George: All right, thank you.

Viv: Well. Where to start?

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:08:42])

Viv: I just feel that any suggestions I make, you’re constantly questioning what I do.

Eric: I don’t think quite fair really, because after all, it’s a new job and you’re just into what’s a very complex organisational process that we run here and you can’t expect just to be able to come in and just start off right away.

If you make a mistake or something, you know what the position’s like, you have to go back to square one \_\_\_[0:09:05].

Mildred: Can I stop you there, Eric? Just as \_\_\_[0:09:07], I value your contribution Eric. This is Viv’s opportunity as we said to give her perceptions and say what she thinks.

Eric: Okay.

Mildred: And what she hopes to achieve today. If we could just ask you to listen to Viv and you’ll get the opportunity to do the same.

Eric: Sorry. Okay.

Viv: I’m sorry, but this typical. I try and get my point over and it’s not listened to. You jump in and, Eric, I’m sorry, but if I’m to have my say, these are the things that are problems for me. These are my real concerns. The idea of being treated as a newcomer. The sense that there’s a sort of arrogance. Your attitude is sort of arrogant towards me, that somehow I’m not your equal, I’m not allowed to do the things that I thought I was employed to do. That I’m not listened to and meetings are a disaster; I just feel that I’ve got no respect in the team meetings because they don’t see me as your equal; they see me as your lackey. That I took this job in good faith that I would get the chance to develop my skills, to build up my CV and really, I’m so frustrated and it’s getting to the point that I’m at the end of my tether.

I don’t know how to get through to you that this is just not working for me. I really like the department. I like the idea of the job, I feel I can do a really good job; I’m not getting a chance to do it. But the atmosphere that has developed amongst the teams, between you and I, it’s just poisonous. I just can’t get anywhere with it. I suppose that’s all I really want to say at the moment.

Actually, it’s tantamount to bullying. I feel I’m not getting a chance to do what I’m employed to do, that I’m put down all the time and it feels like I’m being bullied and I don’t like being bullied.

Mildred: Okay. Thanks, Viv, for your openness. We acknowledge, I think, that this can be very difficult to come and meet, so thank you for your openness. Is there anything else that you just want to add at the end there?

Viv: Not really, but I really hope that… I suppose what I do want to add is that if anything out of this mediation process; I want to get it sorted. I am keen to get this sorted. My career is staked on this.

Eric’s been in the job since pussy was a cat, he’s here until he retires, but, this is a career move for me and I’ll probably end up moving on in the future because of the nature of jobs and things, so it’s really important that I get to do the things that I was employed to do.

Mildred: Okay. Thank you for that. Eric do you want to say a bit about why you’re here today and what you would want to achieve?

Eric: Well, I think Viv’s being unfair, because, as I said earlier on, that Viv’s just new into the job, it’s a complex job. If errors are made early on, then we lose time and that puts everybody back. I think in the team meetings that we’ve had, Viv is new and instead of listening, she just tends to just, bull in a china shop kind of approach, and this kind of destroyed the team that I built over years.

The whole kind of way the group’s working is just completely gone haywire since she arrived because she’s just too aggressive. I think she’s just too forceful and the rest of the team are just, I think, anyway, are just not reacting well and it’s making my job more difficult because I’m busy enough. Viv was supposed to come in and help me and take some of the load and as far as I can see at the moment I’m having to mentor her, while having to do my day job, while I’m having to solve all the problems that’s she’s creating within the team and it’s just making my life a misery, actually and that’s the way things are at the moment.

Viv: I’m sorry.

Eric: I’m sorry if that’s the way it comes over, but you want me to be honest, so that’s the view and that’s kind of the way it is.

Mildred: What would you like out of today?

Eric: Well, I would like Viv to become part, a productive member of the team. Because we are a team and, you know, Viv was appointed to be my equal. I’ve no problem with that, but the thing is and my time is coming to a close, so to speak and we do need continuity in succession and things like that. But the bottom line is, instead of helping me, it’s hindering me, it’s making my life more difficult in terms of my workload and that’s contrary to what the whole business was about.

Today I would like to reach some professional agreement with Viv that we would work together productively and that she wouldn’t upset the team so much. I’m certain she has been doing that, I think, anyway. And that’s all I want to say at this point.

Mildred: Okay.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:14:21]

Mildred: From what was said, it seems as though there are a similarity of issues. You may not think that, but it’s sitting right here at the moment. But it would perhaps be a good idea if we could summarise things at the moment before we moved on to more detailed discussions. Do you think that would be helpful?

Viv: Well, I think we’d better, because what I’ve heard is just ridiculous. I’m sorry, I don’t mean to be negative, but yes.

Eric: Yes, it will focus the discussion; I think it’s a good idea.

Mildred: We could maybe use the flipboard, just behind us here to jot some notes on these ideas and piece \_\_\_[0:15:06] [words].

Okay, now, what I think we heard there and George, maybe you could…

George: Okay. I would like to say thank you, too, to both of you. As much as anything else, for being honest and being open.

Eric: Well there’s no point in being here if we don’t try and get this resolved.

Viv: True.

George: Excellent. Well thank you both for that, because we do understand it’s not the easiest thing for either of you to go through.

The one main interesting point I noticed, both of you were concerned about the team. You very much want to be part of the team; you want to be seen to be adopting a role that’s valued within the team. The team is something you’ve built up over the years.

Eric: That’s right.

George: It’s something that you value; it’s what makes \_\_\_[0:15:52]

Eric: It’s my team.

George: It’s your team, exactly.

Mildred: Maybe.

George: There are obviously discussions that need to happen around the team. Would that be a fair statement?

Viv: Yes.

Eric: Oh, I want Viv to be a productive member, but it’s not for me to actually \_\_\_[0:16:07].

George: The team…

Mildred: Contribution to the team? Would that be a \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:16:12].

Viv: [I would have assumed] they’re my team. I mean, I thought we were equals.

George: Okay.

Viv: Not our team?

Eric: Well I lead the team at the moment…\_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:16:22].

Viv: The team is a [feature 0:16:23].

Mildred: Well maybe you could put that with a question mark. That aspect of equality. Because I think you both mentioned that in some way and that’s something we could come back to and see how your contributions and the equality can be resolved and what needs to happen there.

George: Yes. The other thought that occurred to me is, it strikes me you may have slightly different views about the role of, let’s call it, Team Leader and Number Two.

Viv: Yes.

George: In gaining our experience when job descriptions are written down, they don’t necessarily translate into what’s written on the paper. What perhaps you intended and what perhaps, you believed. The other thought that occurs to me is that it might be useful at some point just to return to this whole thing of, either the job description or possibly what Mildred was just referring to, which is this notion of transition.

You’ve both mentioned the idea that you’re not going to be here forever, what’s the point of this Number Two, so perhaps what might help is a look at how that transition might work, what you would like it to achieve. What Viv would like it to achieve and see how the two can be married together. Would that be a fair…

Viv: Yes, I think it’s vital, actually.

Eric: I think it’s all based on the job description, that the idea was that Viv would come in and learn the job in terms of, it is a complex job, as I said, the business, fill in these forms, again, there’s forms you have to fill in and if you don’t do it correctly then we have to start again.

That is definitely something that Viv has to learn, she can’t just come in and lead the team from day one or day two and expect to get the respect of her colleagues and me, it’s just not…

Mildred: Is there a question there about how the two of you communicate that and the aspects of the job?

Eric: I try to speak to Viv and…

Viv: No, no you...

Eric: You’re assertive to me and there’s an example there, you just don’t want to listen.

Mildred: So perhaps if we put even something as general as communication and how that is achieved between the two of you. I agree it’s fundamental.

Viv: I have to agree we have a problem, Eric. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:18:49].

Eric: For me that’s a starting point. Communication.

(Break in audio [\_\_\_0:18:54])

Mildred: Communication. Anyway, you start with the job timing, you said Viv.

Viv: The timing is tied in with the learning curve.

George: Is that part of planning? I mean, again, what I was hearing from both of you was this idea of, Viv, you’re looking to be able to take on parts of the role and say, “I have achieved sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to do that part.”

Eric, what I was hearing from you was a slight uncertainty about whether Viv’s actually trying to take on everything at once or whether there are particular parts of her role which you would like her to pick up quickly or that you think it might be easier for her to pick them up more quickly.

Therefore, if one could look at this, you may actually find that there are very natural stepping-stones. We have a big issue here, which is how you take over a role, can we break it down?

Eric: My view is that Viv is trying to take on everything at once, and that as I said is the basis for what I’m thinking.

George: So, a plan, that broke it down to give you some feeling of timing, some feeling of…

Viv: And trust. Some feeling of trust that I can do the job.

Eric: But Viv, do you feel you have tried to take on everything at once, or do you not? I mean, secondly, do you think, you know, I haven’t given you enough feedback on how you’re progressing, on how you’re settling in?

Viv: I just… \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:20:16].

George: Could I pause, could we come back to that? It’s important that you’ve got the opportunity to ask those questions and that you’ve got the opportunity to respond. At this stage, just before we on to that, I’d be keen to try and just get reassurance from both of you that what we’ve got up here is a good starting point. Because you’ve…

Eric: Yes.

George: You’ve understandably gone straight into asking Viv.

Viv: Yes, that’s fine.

Mildred: Is there anything vital, do you think that we’ve missed there, that you would like to add to that list? As a starting point. As George says, it’s…

Viv: My position on the team is one, so we’ve got the team. My role and taking on activities, but I suppose that’s all about this learning curve and that’s ok. Trust. Perhaps something will come out of this and I’m just trying to think if there is anything else. Projects, actually, but again, that’s about… Perhaps that comes out of the learning curve and…

George: Projects in what sense?

Viv: Well, actually, running… I mean, correct me if I’m wrong Eric, but when I was appointed for this job, I thought the whole reason that I was going to be a \_\_\_[0:21:29] was that we could be more productive as a department. Because I could run projects and Eric would be running projects and, I just thought that by now I’d be running some projects.

Projects is maybe part of something else, but projects are important to me, because that’s actually about me having autonomy to move the stuff, having people working under me, with me and at the moment, all that isn’t happening and therefore, I feel undermined and, this is where it’s all coming from, because I feel there’s no trust in my abilities.

I mean, I do have a string of qualifications, you know, I have done other jobs, and I need to be able to, to be allowed to prove myself. That’s it I suppose.

Mildred: You need to prove yourself. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:22:16].

Mildred: A timing, a timing issue.

Eric: You’re saying that. You’re saying that I’ve never given you any projects to do then.

Viv: No, I’m not running with anything at the moment. I’m just in your shadow and the team members avoid me, well not avoid me, but, you know where I could be doing things with the rest of the team, they’re going to you and you’re always too busy to talk to me. But that’s maybe because the team members are always going to you. I just feel there’s…

How can the organisation be, as a wider team, and between us, that’s what I’m saying about the whole situation in the office being poisonous because it’s… It’s not poisonous, it’s not that, but it certainly isn’t productive, you know, it’s…

Mildred: It’s productive?

George: If we were to look at this idea of planning of there being a degree of certainty perhaps about stages and steps and particular roles and responsibilities with identified hand-over points. One of the things that we try in mediation is to look at practical steps that will help you to begin to rebuild the trust that has perhaps gone.

That will enable you to measure when you’ve actually achieved something. If one looked at this as a sort of a planned hand-over, one of the questions we might be asking towards the end of this is, given that you’ve identified a particular part of your role, your responsibility, that Viv is going to take over at a particular point in time and we’ve identified what it is she might need to learn to pick up on to demonstrate in order to take that role on.

But that both of you have a clear point, which if it’s reached and you know what it looks like, both of you know what it looks like, then that’s ticking the box and there’s a hand-over. The feeling of uncertainty…

Eric: Well I thought the shadowing approach was the best way of learning a job. That’s why I maybe haven’t given Viv a particular project to do, because I thought, as I said, it’s a very complex organisation and I thought if she just watched the kind of things that I did and came in to the meetings, then she would learn, you know, quietly, in terms of how to take things forward. But, so maybe there is some merit in that, in the staging.

George: A project approach.

Mildred: Are there any questions there then, going back to this?

Eric: Well I don’t know whether Viv feels that she’s able to take on any projects at the moment.

Viv: I think… I’ve been left a bit confused, because I thought I was able to do these things, but I’ve felt a bit undermined. I mean I don’t quite know why I can’t just run with one of the projects that we were particularly looking at the other day in the team.

Eric: Well, the finance one is the key one. Because I told you about, that if you get it wrong you have to start again. It’s an incredibly long and complex process and it’s just so time-consuming taking it that way.

Viv: The problem is Eric, you never have time. A, I’m not stupid, I can learn and I have done other finance projects in different institutions, so I’m sure they’re not fundamentally different. But whenever I come to you, and I say, “Well, let me run with this,” you just say, “No, no, no, I’ll do this one, I’ll do it.” You won’t let go and let me learn and maybe it’s something to do with your time management and not my time management.

George: Given that there are a number of elements that you would both be looking to have in the plan, finance is obviously one of them. I’m assuming that out of some of the other projects you’re referring to would be actual research projects being run by the department, so not just, as it were, in terms of administrative type projects.

If we think about those as being part of the overall plan that we want to see if we can develop today, is it right that we should perhaps take something like finance and perhaps one other as examples of how we might approach everything to do with our projects.

For example, touching on the communications issues, how that impacts on the team. How your role within the team would change as that particular project evolved and developed. How you would need to allocate time at various stages of that evolution in order to ensure that not only is Viv getting the support that she feels she needs from you, but you’re also getting the feeling of, “Yes, the progress is being made, the trust is being built up, that I can hand this over to Viv.”

All those sorts of issues, is that one way of approaching this that you would find useful, or would you rather do it in a different way?

Eric: Well, I can see that is a way forward and certainly that, as I said, that finance project is the one that takes up the most of my time as it’s the most complex. But I’m just a bit reluctant to hand over to Viv at this early stage, because of the complexity and if you make a mistake, you waste such a lot of time. But I don’t know whether Viv thinks that she’s up to it or whether you think you could handle that project.

Mildred: What about if we perhaps separate it, had a bit of time and we spoke with each of you to look at the finance project and just see our different expectations and what you would see dealing with that project and then perhaps when we had a picture from both of you, if both of you came back to discuss your different pictures. Do you think that would work?

Eric: Well anything to make it simpler. Which I’ve never had time to look at, actually looking at how we do the fundamental, then that would obviously save time. But again, I don’t know whether Viv could handle that she has the ability.

Viv: Well come on, you employed me, surely you thought I had the ability to, you know. But…

Eric: Well I did, so there is a way forward then. But I can also check on how she’s doing the project and if she’s succeeding with it and that will give me a milestone, an indicator of her.

Viv: I would quite like to just maybe take time out to look at what my job description was, actually, and from that, given what we’ve been talking about, it might signal up to me the key points that I want to clarify with you and see what your opinion is. Whether I’ve read it, whether it’s been hieroglyphics to me, or whether I’ve got it right.

George: It’s quite possible and again, it’s our experience in this sort of situation, it’s all about expectations and where your expectations and Viv’s expectations match, you have happiness and a smooth life and everything works well. Where they don’t, there is conflict, there is uncertainty, there is confusion and those are the sorts of things that contribute to having this sort of discussion.

If what we can do today is to help you to get a degree of clarity about the expectations, then if you feel that would be useful…

Eric: Well, anything that, as I said at the start, anything that will give me more time back, because I agree this has been an unfortunate situation to have come about. So anything that can resolve it... \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:30:01].

George: It may be a good idea to take a break now and I would just like to thank both of you for the approach that you’re bringing to this, because it seems to me wholeheartedly positive and we’re both very grateful.

Eric: Well, if we’re not honest, we’re not going to get anywhere.

George: Okay.

Mildred: For each of you, giving time to the other, just being listened to is very useful, I think.

George: Could we say, what fifteen minutes, would that give each of you enough, or perhaps half an hour?

Eric: Well I’m fine with it, so it’s just for Viv. I’m willing to take a break.

Viv: Maybe half an hour.

George: How would you feel? Ok, half an hour. Would it be all right if we just came and knocked on your doors in half an hour just to see how you’re doing?

Eric: Well I’m fine, it’s okay with me.

Viv: Yes, that will be fine.

George: Yes, all right.

Mildred: Good.

George: Thanks both very much.

Mildred: Thank you.

George: Jolly good, so see you in half an hour.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:30:50 – 0:30:59])

Mildred: How are doing Viv?

Viv: Hi.

Mildred: How are you feeling?

Viv: Well I’m quite tired, actually, it’s quite a stressful situation, all this. But, hopefully it’s going okay. I think.

Mildred: What are your thoughts about it?

Viv: Well, I’ve been going over my job description and just trying to clarify what I thought the role was and also I’ve been thinking about what I would like, given what we talked about this morning. There have been some positives come out this morning. I mean, at least Eric is talking to me and listening, but that might be because you two are here, I don’t know, or me.

But I’m anxious that when we walk out the door all this will crumble like a pack of cards. But, yes, well, we’ll see, we’ll see how it goes. But, as I say, I’ve been looking at the job description and I think that I’ve identified things in the job description that to me were, “You will be doing this, and that, and the next thing.” I’m just not getting to do it.

That’s kind of what I want. We’ve all had this preamble this morning and it has been quite positive and, yes, Eric says he’s going to listen and he perhaps recognises that maybe, this may be that. The proof is going to be in the pudding. Unless he actually lets me do things, then I’m beginning to wonder, why is he not meeting me half way here.

Mildred: It’s a good place to start with your job description then, just what you’ve been going over.

Viv: The job description reinforces all the things about how I will taken on as his equal, with a view to…

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:32:57])

Viv: He implies that I don’t have the capability of running of the project, but how is he ever going to trust me to run a project unless I get to run a project? What do I do to get him to trust me to do it?

George: There’s some degree of certainty over transition steps of a real hand-over.

Viv: Yes, I mean, the man’s got to let go. I just wonder if this guy has got an inability to let go of anything. He’s like a complete control freak.

George: What do you think he might, if you were in his shoes, what do you think you might need to see to hand over?

Viv: Gosh, I don’t know, that’s trying to get inside Eric’s head. Which is not easy. I suppose he would need to see that I can do the job. That it’s not a disaster. That, actually, I can run with something, get an outcome, a positive outcome and that it doesn’t all fall apart.

George: Do you think he might want to see that in stages, or you go away and come back and surprise him six months later with a perfectly running project?

Viv: No, I mean, I never expected to come in and just…

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:34:21])

Viv: I mean, I would have thought that what we could have done is to have some blocked out time together, or… I mean, we have actually just to sit down and work out how is he going to let go and how am I going to take a bit. Maybe I don’t need to take it all it once. Maybe he needs, you know…

Mildred: Would you like something like a plan to take to him, to say, “Well, this is how I see it working.” Do you think that would help?

Viv: Well, yes. I mean, we’ve got a number of projects running in the department. You mentioned the finance one that was mentioned earlier. Maybe we could start, I mean, I feel a bit miffed, I have to say, that I have to prove myself in this way. Because I feel that by being appointed, in a sense, deemed they trust me, but, given the circumstances and the intolerable conditions in the office, I am prepared to perhaps concede that, yes, I can’t do everything all at once.

But maybe he has to give me a project to run with and an identifiable one and then maybe we can go through all the bits and get agreement, or something, I don’t know. But whether he’s going to go for it, because as I say, I’m a bit scared to \_\_\_[0:35:43].

Mildred: Well, it did seem \_\_\_[0:35:46] he was willing to listen, so why don’t we just see and give it a go? Would you like that?

Viv: Yes, yes. I’ve got nothing to lose.

George: I think the other thing from our experience is that when this sort of lack of trust has developed over a period of time, the reality is it’s going to take time to rebuild. I think you’ve just identified, I think very well, a series of stages where you work together, you communicate together, you achieve something together. He demonstrates to you that he’s approving what you’re doing, you feel that you have actually attained the level that you wanted to and on that basis, trust is gradually going to be rebuilt.

I think the reality for us is, in this sort of session, how can we help you to put into place the practical steps that will help you to communicate, will help you to demonstrate to each other. That will help to lead to a rebuilding of the trust. Because this is not about all sitting around the table holding hands and being jolly nice to each other.

Mildred: When you say things like, I remember you said at the very outset, of being important to you, maybe you can remember, \_\_\_[0:37:02] he said about him seeing your career and the stepping-stones to a career and would you say that was appropriate?

Viv: Yes, absolutely, there were quite a few things that I took this job for, to enhance my CV and I was under the impression that by doing this job I would get to do certain…

Mildred: Do you want maybe just to take a few minutes to jot these down? They’re the important things that are…

Viv: Okay, okay, yes.

Mildred: Vital to you in your career change. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:37:39].

Viv: I’m just trying to think.

Mildred: What are you wanting a year from now? What would it be?

Viv: What would I like to have on my CV?

Mildred: Yes.

Viv: Well. I’d like to manage my own team.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:38:01])

George: What we’re recognising, to me, is that the finance project is important, with you because it demonstrates some fairly key skills and authority that you would like within the team. For Eric, because of its very importance, it may be one that he is worried about letting go. Worried about how that transition could take place.

Because, as he said this morning, it is, he is so keen, it is so central. It’s so easy to make mistakes and therefore to lose time and potentially to lose budgets and all that sort of stuff. To me, it would therefore seem to be a good project to look at in some detail. If one could use it in such a way that you, between the two of you, could agree the way in which that whole finance hand-over, from him to you, is going to be run.

Because the other point that I heard you say about teams this morning, is that it’s not just the team of people within your own department, but your department interacts with every other department in the university in some way, shape or form. In the finance one, presumably, there are going to be people on the finance who will become part of the team.

Viv: Yes, that’s right.

George: For that particular project. Might it be a good idea to take a new piece of paper and what we might do is to map out the stages that you might think of going through, because this is a project. We could then take that as a picture and pass on to Eric to do the same thing and then maybe just use those as the basis of a conversation between the two of you, where it’s simply saying, “Look, here’s my picture of how this might happen,” “Here’s my picture of how this might happen.”

Where they match, where they differ and then it gives you something on which to negotiate between you with our help if you feel you need it. How that project could actually be put to bed and from today and any other time you feel you want to spend on this, you might then end up with something that’s very tangible. Very clearly time-scaled and mapped out.

Mildred: Also, that gives you both what you want.

George: Yes, absolutely.

Viv: Yes, yes. Well.

Mildred: Which might be just the thing.

Viv: Yes. It sounds feasible, if Eric will go with it.

George: Well, would you, would it help if perhaps you spent ten to fifteen minutes with Mildred, just looking at what the stages of that might be? Would it give you a bit more comfort if I went and had a word with Eric to see if he would indeed look at this in a similar way?

Viv: Yes, I mean there’s no point in me just doing this, because to Eric, that would just be my wish list. I need to be thinking about; we need to meet in the middle, somewhere.

Mildred: You think a joint meeting might be a good idea? Again, once you’ve got your wish list?

Viv: Yes. After we’ve got my stuff down, if you can get Eric to put his stuff down and then we’ve got something concrete to look at and if there’s huge gaps, well, we may have a major problem, we may not be able to resolve this. But at least, we know there’s a huge gap potential \_\_\_[0:41:33], or, hopefully, we can bridge gaps.

Mildred: Are there many areas that are common to you both that you’re wanting?

Viv: Yes. I can’t believe he doesn’t want to work with me. Because it must be hellish for him too, you know, it’s not productive.

Mildred: Would you maybe like us to share that with him?

Viv: Yes, yes.

Mildred: That you appreciate that it might be hellish for him too, as you said?

Viv: Yes. If you can get through to him. Actually, I’m not a difficult, aggressive, pushy female, a horrible person.

Mildred: Is that important to you?

Viv: Well, it can be. Because it’s hard enough in a man’s world, especially finance world, to make a mark and I’m not meaning to make an issue of it. But, I don’t want to be labelled the kind of, woman, I want to be…

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:42:22])

George: Would you be happy to work through what that project plan might look like on your own, or would you like Mildred to stay with you while I go and have a word with Eric?

Viv: I’d appreciate some help with this. That’s handy.

Mildred: Okay, I’d be pleased to do that, of course.

George: Well I’ll go and do that and then, at least, we’ve got some certainty about what’s going on. Other than the point that Mildred just raised about your attitude towards Eric, which you’re happy for us to share with him.

Viv: Yes.

George: Just to reiterate that everything we’ve talked about in this room is confidential, so we won’t be repeating it to anybody, unless you specifically give us permission to do so.

Viv: I mean, I just want you to try and get over to Eric that I want to work with him and I’m keen that this, that we can resolve this.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:43:15])

Mildred: Okay, thank you very much Eric and both of your individual sessions. I think that was very useful, as you can see, we’ve got your two plans up on the wall here, which I think is a good starting point for discussion. How would you like to take this forward? Eric, any ideas?

Eric: Well, I suppose, one thing is to look at the overlaps between the… There seems to be some similarities between what Viv’s identified and the things that, how I see things happening, so it might be an idea to just look at the overlaps and \_\_\_[0:43:59].

Mildred: Right.

Viv: Yes, I agree. Actually, maybe we just need to go through this together and decide whether we’re talking on the same lines or whether we’ve got it different.

Mildred: It makes it a bit awkward for you, do you maybe want to… Would it be easier if the two of you got around here and maybe had a look at the…

Viv: Perhaps if we…

Eric: Yes.

George: Would it be easier if you move over there and we’ll just move over here, or how would you like to do it?

Mildred: I wondered if you would like to work up the board and we’d all just do…

George: I’ll do the board. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:44:33].

Mildred: So…

George: Viv, you start with…

Viv: Okay, well, my first, if I’m taking this as a project, my first thing I really would want to do is actually sit down with you.

Eric: Right.

Viv: Which is kind of what we’re doing here, and work out a timeline, I suppose is quite important and I think you’ve put timeline here.

Eric: Well we’d have to meet anyway first of all to sort out this project description anyway.

Viv: Yes, sorry, I kind of have made an assumption that maybe that would be done. But yes, that would… Do you mind if I add some stuff up?

Eric: No, go ahead.

Viv: The meeting with you could be to look at, you’re at point one, and I’m looking around, sort of shorthand a little bit, the description and the time.

Eric: The time first of all. What we’re trying to do and what the outcomes are supposed to be.

Viv: Yes and the timing. I suppose we’ve probably covered quite a lot there, but if I go through mine, because I can see there is some crossover. Quite specifically, we’d have that one down there, and that one down there.

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:45:52])

George: I think that we’ve agreed that we’ll meet probably next week some time to have a look at the project description. Get that defined about what we’re trying to do. Have a look at who’s going to be involved and the timing of it, kind of get a project sorted out.

Viv: When do you actually want to meet?

Eric: We’re busy just now, but say next week Tuesday, or something.

Viv: Tuesday would be fine. I think I’m keen to get on with this.

George: An hour, maybe to start with, anyway.

Viv: Yes, whatever you think.

Eric: If we look at our diaries and just see if we can a mutual…

Viv: Okay, I’ll do that.

Eric: The project itself, or are we to cover the project description or the outcomes to get an idea of what we hope to achieve. What happens if it goes wrong? Well, we can look at it more closely, to meet more regularly on this specific topic, so we can follow there.

Viv: Actually, we can maybe discuss that at the meeting…

Eric: Like a Plan B sort of thing \_\_\_[0:46:52], just take it a stage at a time, I suppose, really.

Viv: What do you want to do with this one? Do you think it will be useful if I type this up?

Eric: Yes, I think so. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:47:04].

Viv: A huge piece of paper.

Eric: No, no, no, it will make it more formal as well.

Viv: Okay then, I’ll…

Eric: If we were to get to.

Viv: Thank you.

George: Is it a useful process, a way of looking at the issue that you originally raised, which was project planning a particular project? Do you find that way of each of you looking at how you would want to handle it and then comparing the two, a useful process?

Eric: Yes. As I said, it’s a starting point, so we’ll see how it runs and at least it’s more focussed this time, we’re on one project and not looking and trying to do everything and everything, it’s sort of allowed me to see how Viv’s getting along in terms of her managing a big project, which is a complex one.

I think that would be useful. It would also help her with getting in touch with the finance office staff, which is an area she’s not really had any contact with, because I’ve been trying to deal with them. Yes, I think that’s okay with me.

Mildred: How does that sound to you?

Viv: It’s been really useful, actually. It’s just been good to have something tangible to work on and also, timelines, so it’s none of this, “You will do, you will do,” it’s like it’s moving forward and hopefully it will be positive.

George: The reason I asked the question is just that communication is one of the early issues that you were both talking about and it strikes me that as a process, perhaps that will, pictorially mapping out anything that you need to communicate with each other, may just be a way of giving you a common understanding of what it is you are starting the conversation about.

The map will change, the picture may change as you have that conversation. There’s just a thought there, of that process of using flipcharts and mapping things out might be helpful to you in the future. Don’t just think about it being something that’s used within a mediation, it’s a communications tool.

Mildred: I wonder George, if it might be helpful to go back to the first thoughts here and just \_\_\_[0:49:17], and just look at the initial things they came up with. This kind of process, do you think it might be helpful in other areas that you perhaps haven’t touched upon?

Viv: \_\_\_[0:49:31] processes, running through them.

Eric: No, I think it will be difficult to deal with the equality one, because I don’t think that exists, but, I don’t think that’s an issue as far as I’m concerned, but certainly communications, that should help us to get clearer about…

(Break in audio \_\_\_[0:49:47])

Viv: Well, we’ve obviously done project plan. I’m hoping that, and I wouldn’t say equality hasn’t been an issue because, obviously, it felt an issue for me at the beginning. But the trust equality, it was kind of a slightly difficult concept I suppose.

I’m hoping they’re going to disappear, given what we’ve just done with the project plan because I think if the project plan is successful, then, whether or not you trust or me or not, hopefully it’ll be proof that you can trust me and it’ll also give me proof that I am seen as an equal. I’m hoping they will sort of disappear of their own accord. I think the team, if we follow through the reporting to the departmental team about the projects, then maybe that’s going to disappear.

Some of them will be the proof’s in the pudding, you know, but the only thing that might be useful to do a similar exercise on is a general communication one in that, I don’t know quite how we’d do that, but we’ve built in communications with the project plan. But there’s more generic things, like understanding how we both communicate, we obviously have different styles, maybe we can kind of…

He can learn about when I come barging into his room, desperate to speak to him, it’s not that I’m being pushy, it’s actually that I’m desperate to speak to him and I’ve got something. Likewise maybe I can learn his style, maybe we just need to learn a wee bit about how we communicate and \_\_\_[0:51:28]. The exercise would be quite useful.

Eric: As I said a bit earlier here, I stated at the time that I just want to go one step at a time, I think.

George: Would you find it useful spending a bit of time now just looking at that general communications issue?

Eric: Yes, I think as we’re here and now, we might as well, we’ve started.

Viv: I’m hoping it’s not going to be major, I think we’ve cracked a lot this morning. \_\_\_[Crosstalk 0:51:51].

George: How would you like to do that? The same sort of project approach or pick a particular example, or…

Eric: I think it’s probably easier to pick up a particular example, another one other than a project, say, maybe the team meetings. That’s obviously all about communications.

George: How do team meetings work at the moment?

Eric: I convene the meetings; I chair them and then the agenda’s set by me. But in consultation with other people in the team. That’s the way it runs at the moment.

George: Who else in the team might you be consulting with? I missed that.

Eric: I do the initial agenda, then I let other people see it before the meeting and then it’s…

END AUDIO

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