

# Projects and Parties...

— by Ben Clark, Director

As a consultancy which regularly advises on and resources major projects, we feel it's fair to say we understand how to make a mark at a new company in a short period of time.

*However, an external consultant or contractor can sometimes struggle to 'fit' in a new environment and rather than being embedded into the rest of the team, find they are left on the periphery and seen as 'outsiders'.*

*But jumping onto a new project and expecting everyone to immediately welcome you with open arms is rare. This is a bit like turning up to a party, getting a drink, standing by a wall and then waiting for people to come to you and talk. Unless you happen to look like David Beckham or Angelina Jolie that just isn't going to happen.*

*You have to be the one to make the effort when you're new at an organisation and that means dealing with a number of different stakeholders. So how many of these 'party animals' do you recognise?*

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## **THE COURT HOLDER**

Every party and project has one. This is the individual who will gather up a small band of disciples and lecture them on anything and everything. Woe betide anyone who disagrees with them!

How to deal with them: You need this person on your good side, so never undermine them in public. Away from their entourage, you'll get really good response by asking them to give you advice and even help make decisions. Just don't do it in public or they will emasculate/criticize you faster than you can say 'idiot!'.

## **THE GUY IN THE KITCHEN**

This person will arrive at the party/project early and will be there throughout, never moving and possessing a seemingly iron bladder. They're always there, they know everyone else who's there and they feel like part of the furniture.

How to deal with them: Always go to this person for pointers – best leverage for your efforts, best way in to a department. They are there because they have kept their neck in, but they see everything....



### **THE OUTSIDER**

No one knows who they are, who invited them to the party or what they're doing there. They will often be a legacy vendor from a previous failed project.

How to deal with them: Chit chat at the coffee machine, a nod as you pass in the corridor. Do not invite to meetings.

### **THE ELABORATE STORY TELLER**

You know the guy at the party who tells you he's a multi-millionaire tech entrepreneur and plays for Man Utd at the weekend without offering any proof of their claims? Well he's on your project and he's championing a solution that you know will never make the light of day, despite appearing to resolve all of the problems in the world. The danger only comes when people start to listen to them!

How to deal with them: Unfortunately, this is going to hurt... Him! Invite him to formally present his solution and make sure the Court Holder(s) are attending. Begin the Q&A session by asking a few penetrating questions and then wait for the carnage. You can mop up and look like the good guy by extending the guy a lifeline at the end.

### **THE COOL KIDS**

No explanation needed, but safe to say this writer didn't fit in that group. However, those of us with a few grey hairs are having to "connect" with the agile creative upstarts who don't care so much for tradition or risk being side-lined with the "I remember when music was music" fogies whilst we watch on as the hipsters get all the best party action.

How to deal with them: Let them ask questions and push the boundaries. This group wants to influence and have some really great ideas to contribute, so make sure they know they have your ear. If they get entrenched, be sure to clearly justify your reasoning for (disregarding) their input – outright rejection of their ideas is like a red flag to a bull. They may get up your nose, but remember, we're all getting older and some day this could be your boss!

### **THE VIPS**

This is the group that's caught your eye and can ultimately make or break whether you can consider the party to be a success or a failure. But questions remain, how do you get in front of them? What do you say when you're there? What if you get so nervous your presentation goes wrong? Or you fluff your lines? Help!

How to deal with them: Ask the outsider for advice on how to engage them and what makes them tick. If the worst happens and you fluff your lines, be honest, be yourself. The pressure will be on to get it right if you get a second chance, try not to panic. Breathe. If it goes (tits up) again, you might need to bow out for the good of the engagement.