

## **CLIFF BEACHAM**

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### **General Electric Company (Zambia) Ltd**

The initial appointment was titled “Special Assistant to the Managing Director” a Company troubleshooter. Wanting to build up a wider range of experience Cliff accepted the position and soon found it to be an extremely challenging position. As “Right Hand Man” to the MD, Cliff was involved in many and varied projects.

#### **Example 1 – Reducing Accounts Receivable**

At first it seemed a glorified debt collection but soon became an accounting and investigative task. Many accounts receivable were sadly in arrears.

The first and foremost of these was the Nchanga Consolidated Copper Mines account which had a huge balance and no reconciliation. Without any accounting experience at that stage Cliff reconciled the part of the account that was less than 3 years old. (Yes – years). The reconciliation was 35 pages long.

Cliff systematically investigated and liaised with the Mines accounting staff. The result was a 94% collection. After that stat he cut right to the chase and negotiated a settlement from the Mines of 85% of the balance without doing any extra work (remember the newest amount was more than 3 years old).

#### **Example 2 – Computerization of the Accounting System**

Another large project was the computerization of the accounting system. At that stage Cliff was not an accountant but. Nevertheless, he headed up the task. Cliff worked with IBM System Engineers to install the hardware. He also aided the Developers and programmers with customizing the system and designed an Inventory SKU numbering system based upon a partial logical-coding scheme.

In addition to these parts of the project, he was in charge of building the office accommodation that had been decided to house the expanded department.

#### **Other projects:**

Other projects are too numerous to mention here but he thoroughly enjoyed being the “swing man” and tackling anything that needed his talents and abilities.

For example, he was instrumental in solving problems ranging from plumbing and electrical wiring problems to settling customer disputes.

## Lessons Learned:

The lessons he learned from this included:

- Organization well and divide and conquer the most daunting of tasks
- The biggest tasks start with small steps
- The most important step can be the first one but it may not be too important which direction you take
- Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM
- Design the system then use it, commit to it and carry through to win the day (Carpe Diem)
- You can achieve far more than you think if you don't get frightened by the enormity of what you are aiming You can achieve far more than you think if you don't get frightened by the enormity of the target that you are aiming at
- Effort that it put into planning is never wasted and there always exists a critical path to your goal. Planning locates it

## Results achieved included:

- Reduced Accounts Receivable by 40% using negotiation and dialog with our valued customers
- Achieved a much better way for dealing with situations that arise from the inevitable breakdowns in customer relationships
- The accounting methods progressed to the 20th Century, enabling more effective management and efficient operation