

“Che Guevera - the Restless Revolutionary”

With hindsight it was no surprise that Jean had won the election to become MP. A combination of being a younger candidate, super presentation and debating skills on the hustings and a compelling picture of a stronger, bigger, more vigorous, and above all more profitable, firm had clearly struck a chord with the partnership. In fairness Jean had been a noisy and disruptive voice in the partnership since their arrival as a lateral hire. The criticisms of steady, organic growth rather than taking bold steps; that the firm didn't move quickly enough and was being left behind; nor being positioned to exploit technology and the opportunities afforded by the possibility of external investment had been a growing refrain over the last few years. Even though the detail of how to achieve these things had been scant – the high-level themes had clearly resonated with enough of the partnership.

Now with the formal nomination secured, Jean's agenda “to move the firm up the rankings” was becoming clearer. It was also obvious that Jean had some distinct shifts in mind from the current direction and way of working that had been directing the firm over the last 8 years of the present MP's two terms. Jean had been openly critical of the firm's “good place to work” culture and performance needed to be driven harder: the client base needed a detailed review and business services were severely under performing and in need of a rigorous review, pruning and streamlining.

Things were clearly looking to be going in a different direction if Jean has a free rein.

- How can the Senior Partner deal with this situation?
- What is the role of the Senior Partner?
- What outcome are you seeking to achieve?
- What steps would you take to manage a smooth transition?
- What are the risks you are managing?
- Who else would you involve in working through the situation? Who can support you?

“The Long Goodbye”

Partner conferences are always great occasions and an opportunity for partners to reconnect and reinforce the social bonds that help glue the partnership together. An openness of conversation is inevitable and partners revel in the fact that they are in the closed company of colleagues and friends. So, whilst there was a spirit of candour and reverie it came as a huge shock when Chris, the managing partner, as part of the expected update on the strategy had announced that they would not be seeking a second term as MP – even more concerning was that the announcement was made only 18 months into a 4-year term.

That was all of 12 months ago and now, with 18 months still to go - and this year’s conference looming, there is a sense of expectation and a febrile atmosphere in the partnership. It is clear that camps are forming and discipline in the partnership is loosening by the month as Chris’s authority is increasingly tested, decisions taking longer to implement and partners – especially the big billers – are doing their own “thing” not all of which is “on strategy”. The formal process to determine the new MP is not due to start for another 6 months.

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“Farewell my Lovely”

Twelve years is a long time thought Paul as he reflected on his time as Managing Partner. During his tenure the firm had been transformed from a respected but fading City firm into a top 20 global firm with a powerful international brand. Paul knew he was well respected but wondered how it would be during the final six months of his tenure. The election for his successor was still to be held and he worried that once it was under way he would increasingly become an irrelevance. Where once his views on all manner of issues were eagerly sought out by partners from offices around the world he was anticipating the next few months being very different. He wasn't sure how he would feel. He had only ever worked for this one firm and had no idea what he was going to do next.

Saskia had been elected Senior Partner two years ago. She suspected that during her term she would have to oversee the transition to a new Managing Partner and Indeed shortly after her election Paul confided in her that he would be stepping down. This would be the first transition the firm in its modern incarnation would experience. As part of the succession process she had been considering how to ensure that Paul was treated with respect and consideration. However she also knew that there had been more criticism in recent years as the firm's performance lagged their peers. Saskia wondered how she could ensure that these issues were discussed by the partners without the debate becoming about Paul's legacy and also avoid any personal animosity between Paul and the emerging contenders for the MP role.

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“The once and former king”

Finally it was over. The partnership had been very divided on whether it was wise for there to be a challenge to the incumbent Managing Partner after only one term in the role. The external environment had not been especially favourable but other similar firms seemed to be performing better. Many thought that Robin ought to be given the chance to see through the strategy they had voted for. Others were more impatient and felt another 4 years was a long time and it would be better to make a change now. Robin hadn't seen the challenge coming. They were shocked when it emerged that there would be a contested election. And the challenge was coming from someone they thought was a loyal ally.

With the election concluded and the partnership starting to come together after a fiercely fought and highly personal election Robin felt angry and lost. They had been faithfully executing the strategy that the partners had supported and busily planning for a second term. Their relationship with previously close colleagues had been badly damaged by the criticism that had been levelled at them during the campaign.

As Senior Partner, Pat had sought to remain neutral during the election. They had a good relationship with Robin but Pat's unwillingness to endorse a second term had resulted in some tension between the two. Exhausted after overseeing the succession process Pat knew that they needed to turn their attention to managing a smooth transition.

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