

Lemmingaid: Who do they think you are?

Wood and Trees

'All paid jobs absorb and degrade the mind.'

Aristotle 384-322 BC

In spite of all the irritation that the private sector has for copper-bottomed public servants, we all know that the financial squeeze is on. It is nearly possible to feel sympathy for those in the private sector had they not voted most heavily for the idiots who introduced the catastrophic financial deregulation that underlies all our woes in the first place. Job-planning gets more like a mugging as each month passes. Our pensions are beginning to look like Thermopylae. And some 20-year-old in Finance has convinced himself that Wood and Trees earn too much money.

Wood is nationally regarded and has clawed his way to a Silver award. Trees, meanwhile, has edged his way towards a Bronze in a misguided belief by the powerful that more pay might encourage him to be less misguided. In the spirit of a life boat occupant smashing the knuckles of the drowning who dare reach for the boat, the 20-year-old cannot let this 'cost improvement' opportunity pass.

'Did you get this letter?' Trees enquired of Wood. 'Mm, I did.' Wood replied. 'Cutting my PAs! They can't...I mean, it has to be negotiated doesn't it? What do they expect me to do?'

At this moment, the 21-year-old General Manager hove into view. He was valued for his no-nonsense approach – which is a nice way of saying that he was rude, callous and repulsive.

'If you cut my pay, I will do less work...' said Trees, with a triumphant, theatrical flourish of his elastoplasted spectacles. 'Good.' said the GM. 'Eh?' Wood finally woke from the favourite daydream of retirement, Balinese flower girls and winning first place with his own prize marrow (it takes all sorts). 'We can't work less – there aren't enough consultants as it is!' 'Get another one. You cost too much per hour. A new consultant works out cheaper.' 'Fine!' said Wood, and he meant it.

'Fine!' said Trees and he thought of the drop in his own income, the mortgage, the payment on the Volkswagen and the tongue-lashing he would get from his wife. (Words like 'backbone' and 'hopeless', would be used; as would expressions such as 'call yourself a man', etc).

Wood dusted off an old job description. In the time since it was current, the Chief Executive had changed three times, Clinical Directors were now called Divisional Medical Directors and the Trust had had a name change, acquired a motto and sported a new logo. Wood felt that sense of depression you get when you tell your wife that you're quickly nipping to the shops and she says "Oh, good!" and hands you a two-page A4 shopping list.

Importantly, which potential candidates were available? Nowadays, because of the Guantanamo-Deanery-trap, you mostly know which of the up-coming trainees are grafters and which ones should be graft-donors. But it's not foolproof – how

many times has a sincere, humble and dedicated junior dropped the act immediately on appointment and swallowed, snout first, into the local BUPA trough? It happens.

After approval from the colleges and societies, adverts were written, winks were tipped and short-listing began. It was at this point that Wood became dimly aware of unfamiliar rumblings in the whole process. Management seemed very keen to be involved – more keen than normal. The Chief Executive, who dreamed only of being Alan Sugar for a day, wanted a more comprehensive appointment process.

'A process cannot be understood by stopping it.

Understanding must move with the flow of the process, must join with it and flow with it.'

Frank Herbert.

"Huhh?" said Trees, when Wood told him. "I know. I have no idea what that means either." Wood continued. "But I've almost promised Jurgen the job!" Trees wailed. "Try not to do that. It has to appear a free and fair process – then we get the person we wanted all along. Thank God you're not on the interview panel."

"So why is the Chief Exec meddling?" "I don't know..." Wood resolved to find the Medical Director – the real one, not the fake little ones that seemed to have sprouted up all over the place.

Eventually, the Medical Director explained: "The Execs feel that the quality of candidate we're getting now is below par. They need to be mentored. They're not fully trained and professional attitude is a concern."

"Well don't shortlist those ones, then." said Wood. "We don't know who they are." "I do." "Yeah, well...we don't. And, thusly, we are engaging a company to psychologically profile a longlist of candidates to create a shortlist whom we will interview."

"Look, I can spot a pl*inker from 50 paces and I can do it for free." Wood hollered. The Medical Director scanned Wood's expression suspiciously for any additional meaning – they did go back quite a long way, after all. "Chief Exec wants it." he said, finally.

'The best way to appreciate your job is to imagine yourself without one'.

Oscar Wilde 1854 - 1900.

Sarah-Jane was from VLD Solutions Ltd. She was brutally engaging, spoke without breathing and would never be seen alive as a patient in an NHS hospital. Plucked from some graduate jobs fair 18 months ago with her degree in Art History, she felt more than able to conduct and interpret the utterly unvalidated 'Personality OSCE' her boss had dreamt up while on the toilet.

That module in 'psychology and myth' in the second year at Uni had come in extremely handy when bagging this job. She couldn't believe her luck; fantastic salary, long lunches, company car – in return for telling a load of saggy-faced, no-hope doctors what a bunch of losers they were. Of course, the management thought VLD was fantastic because her boss was an Olympic schmoozer and it gave them an opportunity to maintain the campaign of terror against clinicians. In the grand scheme of things £15,000 of tax-payers' money for one day of Sarah-Jane's time and VLDs 'infonalysis' was a bargain.

Best of all, she only had to set up the various psycho-stations. She actually got the clinicians to run it. Trebles, all round! They could decide who ran the 'compassion station' or the 'complaint response' station or the 'conflict resolution' station, etc. Then she would score it all, relay the results and trot off with her devastating smile. Her boss once said that Big Brother was the only educational programme on TV. Although she was barely intelligent enough to know this was not true, her pronouncements would alter the course of careers approaching 15 years in the making.

Worst of all was the allocation of the clinicians to run the stations – the clinician who only took his foot out of his mouth

in order to replace it with his other foot ran the 'complaint station'. The one who had spent way too long in the army ran the 'compassion station' – and so it went on. And the poor candidates were in turn horrified and humiliated. It's bad enough losing out at interview – but is it necessary to be told you have suddenly developed a massive personality flaw?

Woods was furious. Trees was grateful it wasn't there in his day. He had enough insight to know how lacking in insight he was.

Jurgen lost out at the 'complaint station' for failing to date his response letter – he never looked back and sailed into a much better job, at a much better hospital without having to experience this circus again.

Wood and Trees now have a brand new colleague. He's very quiet...difficult to know what he's thinking. The nurses seem happy enough and he hasn't said 'activated protein C' once, so maybe it will all work out OK.

'It's a job. Grass grows, birds fly, the waves pound the sand. I beat people up'.

Muhammed Ali. 1942-present.

The Intensive Care Society

ICM CAREER DAY

MAYO BUILDING, SALFORD ROYAL HOSPITAL

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2011

Intensive care medicine (ICM) has gone through some seismic changes recently, not least of which has been the birth of a Faculty and the development of a new curriculum with the option of training for a single CCT in ICM.

Consequences of this are that trainees are going to be invited to compete for entry into ICM at a far earlier stage than previously through a new national recruitment system. On top of this, increasing numbers of medical students and junior trainees are being exposed to ICM and are therefore considering it as a career.

The ICS together with its Trainee Committee continuously strive to create a cohort of well-informed and motivated trainees so are therefore holding this 1 day session for **Foundation year and CT1/2 trainees** who are contemplating ICM. The day will provide an overview of the new training system and the application procedure and an opportunity to question speakers from the ICS and FICM.

Fees:

- Trainee ICS member: £50
- Trainee Non-member: £75

Registration and programme available at: www.ics.ac.uk.

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