

**DISCUSSION & POLLS****Is this the worst motivational memo ever?**

"Pipeliner All ! Many thanks to all of you for your contributions to this week's Bi-Annual Challenge.....and what a Challenge it is going to be for all of us!" Thus begins an email from David Greer, the deputy chief executive officer of Sakhalin Energy Investment Company, the consortium running the Sakhalin 2 project, revealing that he despises "cowards" and urges his staff to "Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way". Is this the worst motivational email you've ever read? Do you have examples of similar memos - or worse?

Hosted by - FT.com

Topic Is Closed

**Search**

31 replies Page: 1 2 3

All times are BST

Is this the worst motivational memo ever?

**Is this the worst motivational memo ever?**

05 Jun 2007 10:02 PM

by FT.com FT Administrator

**Poll Question:**

Is this the worst motivational memo you've ever read?

**Choices:** Yes No**Vote now****Vote results****No it is not ...**

05 Jul 2007 08:06 AM

by Bujang Segat

I have worked for David in the Philippines and although he is not a perfect human being (and none of us are) he is a great leader to work for. The motivational tools he uses are good for people who are prepared to work hard and present him with data, solid staff work and a decision for him to endorse.

If you come to him with half baked ideas or incomplete data or with a problem then you will be sent away with short shrift. But isn't part of what a leader does - it is called creative tension and pushes people to do better next time.

Yes the project world is tough and sometimes some people can't hack it so they leave. My advice to them - look in the mirror and don't become bitter at David Greer - your problems were probably of your own making ... become better and not bitter or vindictive!

He is a big loss to Shell. Of course there are other good project managers in Shell - no one is indispensable - but I am sad to see him go - he could still have contributed significantly to Shell over his remaining career.

**So Greer has gone**

23 Jun 2007 02:35 PM

by Greer - who are you?

Most people will rejoice in this fact and wonder how such an arrogant man ever got to where he was in Shell. Most supporters will point to his 'incredible' track record of producing projects 'on time' and 'on budget'. All these claims are false since Greer constantly moved the targets to make himself look good. Take a good look at the Prime Scope estimates and there will come the truth.

The fact is that Greer has no respect for people and their feelings, he is totally polarised by Greer plc and what his people can do to make him look good. If this is disputed just look at his staff turnover which is the highest in any project.

I worked for Greer on the Malampaya project and he asked me to follow him to Sakhalin, I declined because I could see what he was doing. He offered me a double JG but still I declined. Since that he totally ignores me in public and private. Is this a man who cares about people?

So I for one will not mourn his passing. Yes he gets the job done but at what cost?

**David Greer resigns** 21 Jun 2007 07:38 PM

by John Donovan

Today information was leaked to us that David Greer had resigned.

We checked with Sakhalin Energy and a Mr Jim Niven confirmed by email that this is indeed the case.

With regard to the question of whether Ed Crooks described our website as being "anti-Shell", it turned out that he had. This was fair comment on his part and not a problem. Mr Crooks dealt with the whole Greer story in a fair and balanced way which does him great credit.

I do not think that anyone takes any pleasure from the outcome. It is sad that Mr Greer's long career with Royal Dutch Shell has ended in this unfortunate way.

Posted by John Donovan co-owner of the website [www.royaldutchshellplc.com](http://www.royaldutchshellplc.com)

---

**A culture of lies** 20 Jun 2007 10:07 PM

by DP

The FT's articles on "General" Greer's plagiarism are more than welcome, despite the Greer apologists that continue to snivel in this blog. The "General's" plagiarism is symptomatic of the larger culture of deceit within Shell that results in everything from the reserves scandal to the company's false assertions that it applies anything even close to environmental and social best practices on Sakhalin II (e.g., see the damage to the wild salmon runs). And look at the way the police thugs working on Shell's behalf rough up local community people on the Corrib project in County Mayo, Ireland....

---

**Is this the worst FT Article Ever ?** 19 Jun 2007 12:23 PM

by Grapevine

So FT has clearly acquired the Journos to go Red Top.

When can we expect FT to complete the job ?

---

**Ed Crooks and the David Greer Memo** 12 Jun 2007 03:59 PM

by John Donovan

Ed Crooks has quite correctly pointed out that contrary to my assertion, he did not describe our website as being "anti-Shell".

This in fact was a description used by The Moscow Times in their front page story on Saturday which contained the following paragraph: "Greer's memo, which was leaked to an anti-Shell web site, [RoyalDutchShellPlc.com](http://RoyalDutchShellPlc.com), appears to show the pressure that he and his fellow managers have been under, as it talks of "the risk of becoming a team that doesn't want to fight and lacks confidence in its own ability."

My sincere apologies to Mr Crooks for my silly mistake made in the early hours.

In contrast with David Greer, mine was an honest error which I have owned up to and apologised.

---

**David Greer Memo** 12 Jun 2007 01:02 AM

by John Donovan

I am the joint-owner with my father Alfred Donovan of the website referred to by Ed Crooks as being anti-Shell.

We are in fact dedicated supporters of Shell's Statement of General Business Principles pledging honesty, integrity and transparency in all of Shell's dealings.

We rang alarm bells far and wide about the failure of Shell senior executives to abide with the SGBP long before the reserves crisis which brought about the end of Shell in its former guise. We warned about a deeply ingrained culture of deceit and cover-up only to be proved right by subsequent events resulting in regulatory fines of \$150 million and huge settlements of class action litigation.

We receive many leaked Shell internal documents – the most recent being the now notorious David Greer memo. Contrary to the assertion made by one contributor to the FT Greer memo debate, we do not publish recklessly. As the FT is aware, we obtained confirmation from a Shell General Counsel that the email was authentic before passing it on to the FT and publishing it ourselves. Consequently that allegation is entirely unfounded.

It is our routine practice to approach Shell on such matters. Shell has a standing invitation to supply

for publication on an unedited basis any comments they might wish to make on any article published by us.

The Literary Dictionary of the Oxford University Press has the following definition for plagiarism:

"...the theft of ideas (such as the plots of narrative or dramatic works) or of written passages or works, where these are passed off as one's own work without acknowledgement of their true origin; or a piece of writing thus stolen. Plagiarism is not always easily separable from imitation, adaptation, or pastiche, but is usually distinguished by its dishonest intention. A person practising this form of literary theft is a plagiarist. The older term plagiary was applied both to plagiarisms and to plagiarists".

I have never come across a more blatant example of plagiarism than is the case with Mr Greer's memo. His conduct appears to be directly at odds with Shell's code of ethics: the aforementioned SGBP.

I note that Time magazine website featured a quote of Mr Greer's inspirational memo, presumably before learning that the stirring words were not his, but General George S. Patton.

Irrespective of any sanction by Shell, this embarrassment is likely to stay with "General" Greer for the rest of his days.

It was naive of him to think that in the internet age such an extraordinary internal email, awash with such gung-ho content and circulated to numerous employees, would not quickly reach a larger unintended audience.

Posted by John Donovan of the website [www.royaldutchshellplc.com](http://www.royaldutchshellplc.com)

John@shellnews.net

## Two Thumbs down, FT !

 09 Jun 2007 02:18 PM

by AG

It is amazing how media can twist public opinion by taking abstract information out of context and use it against their potential targets. David Greer is a man who gets 'on with it'. Look at the man's track record, watch him in the field with the men on the coal face, see how much passion he has for his job & this project, and THEN judge him. Two thumbs down FT!!

## Proving a point -

 09 Jun 2007 07:18 AM

by et al

My interpretation of the email was that it was meant to keep moral and efforts at a high when conditions, location, engineering complexity, procurement, and even governments appear to be standing in the way of the projects progress. If this is not enough pressure, every aspect is under microscopic scrutiny from the press.

Whether quotes were taken from Patton or any other historical leader simply proves that he is well read on different styles of leadership. If this is the result of 24hrs news stations and a desire to find news at all costs, bring back news at ten!

## Inspirational by Headhunter

 09 Jun 2007 06:58 AM

Appalling journalism by the FT. You should be ashamed. I would have no hesitation in hiring General Greer. Such inspirational and courageous leaders are hard to find in his industry and he should be encouraged, not mocked, and certainly not mocked by the FT. Lets see all of your internal emails and run a global poll on them. Thats only fair after what you have done by peeping into somebody else's mail.

PS.I would never hire Ed Crooks

## Out of Context by Masha

 09 Jun 2007 01:44 AM

What a load of sensationalist rubbish, not expected from a publication like the FT - a newspaper who claims to know business!

This email has been taken entirely out of context and DG is most certainly not an email/powerpoint manager as posted earlier.

If the public had even an inclination of the issues he and the entire project have had to work through over recent years then it would go a long way to help them understand the email above.

## Continued... From This is not Journalism

 07 Jun 2007 12:03 PM

by S. Jasper

Addendum and on a more somber note: I am NOT from Shell (am a subcontractor that deals with building admin. and yes, carPets.) But have been a keen follower of the Sakhalin-2 saga. Stakeholder, environment, employee esp. the Russian workers & the benefits Russian people get from this project. My pun below was to point out the funny thing that if you send them (source) anything that has the company on it they'll bite. Usually bordering on sensationalism and this is just one of them. I have high regard for FT. Please stop making mountains out of molehills. There are other newsworthy tales to tell. Thank you.

---

### Motivational Memos

📄 07 Jun 2007 08:11 AM

by Expat Bob

Would someone please post an internal motivational memo from the FT or its parent company, Pearson.

This is just for reference purposes in helping us to benchmark the worst memo, you understand, and definitely not to satisfy vulgar curiosity.

---

### Not Newsworthy

📄 07 Jun 2007 07:26 AM

by Talula

This is the problem when you jump into the wagon of peeping toms who read other people's email. This was not for publication. A personal, confidential note even, to his team - the intended recipients, who probably knows him better than we do. A known Patton fan who interjects quotes and inspiration from him and other inspirational leaders.

If I have a penny for everyone who used Warhol's "15 minutes" and Marie Antoinette's "let them eat cake", without a peep of their names, I'd be rich! And most of them get no flack, and so should this.

---

All times are BST

[New topic](#)

[New poll](#)



Topic Is Closed

Industries

Go

Administrative Options: [Reopen Topic](#) | [Archive/Move](#) | [Delete Topic](#)

© Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2007. "FT" and "Financial Times" are trademarks of The Financial Times.  
© 2000 Infopop Corporation.