File 20100529.1242: Notes from walk today:

What is special about certain people at work that makes them invaluable, irreplaceable, and unlikely to be laid off? Tom Marso invented MAG, he holds the patent on it, and he has a stable of customers who will talk to no one else. He works quietly, never complains, and gets things done. Hawk is steady, brilliant, quiet, knows MAG inside and out, and gets things done. Ruth Pollock has built a reputation with the MDA customer and they will talk to no one else. David Neal is the Java guy. He knows the Java libraries inside and out, works very quietly, never complains, and quietly gets things done. Ian is willing to travel to unlikely places, gets large things done, and is good looking. Ernie travels to the far east, knows everyone, and gets the installation done. Pete Marikle is the unit test and regression test expert, is well known to customers, and gets things done. Kevin Miller came in, did the heavy lifting and got a lot of important things done that had been hanging fire for a long time. He is ambitious and might move on. Savage owns the RM code, goes on a lot of installs, has high-profile customers and gets things done.

The common themes seem to be:

- Works quietly.

- Travels on a lot of installs.

- A personal set of important customers who will talk only to them.

- Gets things done.

Joe is intermittently brilliant and often we don't understand what he is working on. He is an internationally known expert in optical TEMPEST, but TEMPEST is not our line of business. He invented the cryptographic protocol at the centre of our RHR capability, but other people own WinDDS now and WinDDS has always been troublesome. Joe is now working on an extremely prestigious PhD, but that might intimidate accreditors we need to work with.

How can I avoid that trap? By developing relationships with *all* of the government accreditors and a reputation amongst them as someone who gets things done. I can do that by means of my survey questions—what do the accreditors want? What do they need? What are CDS developers doing wrong that make the accreditor's job harder? I need to put these questions into multiple-choice format for SurveyMonkey.

Plan B, in case that doesn't work: my plan B is to go to another company, probably at a higher salary, where I can start fresh coming in the door like Kevin Miller did, taking on a bunch of heavy lifting projects that no one there has had time to do, and finishing them.

Where I would like to go in my career: I would like to graduate, then continue research and publishing (including a postdoc in Oxford) on how to streamline the C&A process. I want to develop close contacts and reputation amongst *all* of the accreditors that touch CDS vendors by getting things done, to the point where the first thing any accreditor asks on a new install is, 'where's Joe? Put him on the line.' I want to develop a set of template docs, site log books, and a bulletproof process that I can use to get any CDS install on track, no matter how messed up it's gotten. To develop a personal style of standard documentation that makes a PAA wet his pants in happiness when he sees it. I want to publish articles about this new process until eventually no one remembers the way things used to be done in the bad old days.

Question: can I still do this from Oxford? I think so, although it might end up requiring security clearances on both sides of the Atlantic. (That ought to make polys fun in future.) I need to develop those relationships with accreditors on the European side of the Atlantic. What is the terminology they use over there? Ask Dr Andy Cooper.

Ultimately, I want to live in Oxford with Andrea for the rest of my life. I will have to fly back and forth across the Atlantic once in a while, but long-distance comms might improve to the point where that is less often necessary, even for classified meetings.

Get list of UK accreditors (terminology?) from Dr Cooper.

References