

**Transcript of the testimony of Robert James (a.k.a. Jim) Challenger
in the case of the BC Forest Service vs. Knowledge Management.**

Clerk: Do you agree to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

Mr. Challenger: Well, most of the time.

Judge: Good enough for me. Mr. Prosecutor, you may begin.

Prosecutor: Mr. Challenger, are you or are you not a member of the BC Forest Service's Knowledge Management committee?

Mr. Challenger: Maybe I am, maybe I'm not. Why do you want to know?

Judge: Just answer the question, Mr. Challenger or I'll smack you with my gavel.

Mr. Challenger: What a grouch! Yes, I am a member of that group.

Prosecutor: Did you volunteer to be a member out of the goodness of your heart and because you had always wanted to be involved in Knowledge Management and because you wanted to make the world a better place?

Mr. Challenger: Yeah, that's it exactly...make the world a better place.

Judge: I remind you, Mr. Challenger, that you are under oath and that I have the power to throw you in the slammer if I think you are lying.

Mr. Challenger: Oh, that's good to know. OK, then I confess. I was fingered. Apparently word went out that the exec were looking for people to sit on the committee and my supervisor cornered me in my cubicle and made me volunteer against my will.

Prosecutor: How did he do that?

Mr. Challenger: He made promises...that there would be muffins at all the meetings. The creep...he knew my weakness and took advantage of it.

Prosecutor: So, once you were a member, what happened at the meetings?

Mr. Challenger: The first one was pretty intense. It was some sort of ritualistic KM indoctrination involving a coven of witches and intense study of all KM practices.

Prosecutor: A coven of witches?

Mr. Challenger: Well, actually they were consultants and except for one I'm not sure they were witches. Well, to be truthful none of them were witches but one was pretty scary if you didn't pay attention when she was talking.

Prosecutor: So, by the end of the meeting how did you feel about Knowledge Management?

Mr. Challenger: Actually, I was pumped. It could have been the 12 muffins, but I don't think so. It was exciting. It really brought together that we had always been doing Knowledge Management and didn't even know it. Plus there were new methods and tools that we could use to make it even better.

Prosecutor: Can you give some examples of how KM already exists in the BCFS?

Mr. Challenger: Sure can. One example of how we've always been doing Knowledge Management is our library...they've been collecting, cataloguing and helping people retrieve forestry knowledge since before I started back in '73. And most of our BCFS staff have always had that "Glad to help you" attitude when you call and ask them for advice.

Prosecutor: You also mentioned new KM methods and tools?

Mr. Challenger: Yeah...one that really got me pumped was the expert locator system. Sort of a yellow pages for finding staff who have specific areas of expertise all across the ministry. They showed us some examples of them in other jurisdictions and I immediately thought "We need one of those for sure!"

Prosecutor: So, what did you do after the meeting?

Mr. Challenger: There was actually a couple of other meetings too, with muffins, and we wrote up an action plan.

Prosecutor: What action did you take on?

Mr. Challenger: I started researching expert locator systems. Not surprisingly the people who built them were more than happy to share their expertise with me. Because of that I didn't have to invent an expert locator— I just built it based on their experience and knowledge. The result was that I was able to quickly build one for the Ministry, with the help of other staff and members of the KM committee. It's already in pilot.

Prosecutor: So, how do you think KM, if I may call it that, is going to help the Ministry cope with staff leaving for retirement and changes to their mandate?

Mr. Challenger: I believe that it is going to enable us to work smarter...with less time spent trying to rediscover how to do things, have more sharing of best practices and better staff morale.

Prosecutor: How about for you, personally?

Mr. Challenger: Me? I had thought that when I retired in a few years that the Ministry might stumble. I wondered if, when I walked out the door, they would be able to keep all the systems and web going. But what could I do? I have to leave someday, even if it's in a box. Then KM came along. I realized it didn't have to be that way. There were things I could do now to ensure that the people I left behind didn't get stuck with having to rediscover all the things I already know.

Prosecutor: For example?

Mr. Challenger: Well, I've started involving my staff in doing the routine tasks that I've always taken care of. That way, by the time I leave, it will be routine for them.

Prosecutor: So, let me summarize, if I may. You are telling this court that you went from being put onto a committee through the use of, dare I say, a bribe of some muffins, to where you are already implementing KM tools and practices in your workplace? All in less than a year?

Mr. Challenger: Yup. Amazing what a few fresh muffins can do, eh!

Prosecutor: I rest my case.

Judge: Defense may question the witness.

Defense: This won't take long, your honour. Mr. Challenger, do you believe that KM is here to stay in this Ministry and that all it needs is to be encouraged and supported by the executive to be successful?

Mr. Challenger: Actually, I believe that the executive and managers need to walk the talk for KM to be successful. They need to weave KM into everything we do. Every project, application, process and EPDP must have KM practices included. Then all we need to do is watch it grow, because it will.

Defense: How can you be so sure?

Mr. Challenger: Because I've worked in this Ministry for over 32 years and I've seen it time and again...we get a challenge and we meet that challenge, every time. Right now, the challenge is to cope with all us old dudes retiring, and the solution is KM, so that's what we'll do.

Defense: That does it for me, your Honour.

Judge: Thank you Mr. Challenger. You may step down. There are muffins out in the lobby, if you wish...