

Dear Mr. Rossotti:

I have been an employee of the IRS for the past six years. Most of my experience is in the private sector.

As you may have known, the IRS has been trying to modernize its information systems for the past fifteen years without success. The General Accounting Office (GAO) pressured the IRS to hire a few “Technical Managers” as the IRS lacked “Technical Managers”. I was one of the few that were hired by the IRS six years ago to satisfy the GAO—not necessarily to modernize the IRS information systems, it turns out.

I have two Masters degrees in Engineering, plus advanced postgraduate work in Mathematical Statistics and Operations Research at the George Washington University. I also have approximately 30 years experience in the industry, some of which I spent in Japan as a Project Manager for the Mobil Corporation in managing large-scale information systems.

It turns out that at present most of the current information systems projects at the IRS are in trouble regardless of how hard you have been trying. Why?

There are several questions that need to be answered, among them:

Have some people been sabotaging the information system modernization for the past several years?

Are they still continuing to do it?

Are these genuine mistakes or errors in judgment as part of the human condition? Or, are these malicious?

Are these people qualified to do these modernization projects?

Have these people successfully managed any projects before?

Why are these very same people still doing “Modernization”?

How many CIOs have come and gone? How many executives have come and gone?

Were they destined to fail? Why?

How are you going to help the current CIO from being duped?

How do you know that he is being told the truth by the information systems organization?

Is it true that some people are “working hard” to make the current modernization efforts fail and hang it around you neck?

Is there rampant nepotism and cronyism within the Information System Divisions? Will the different echelons of the information system organization be deemed thoroughly incompetent and corrupt by any impartial panel of professionals?

Don't you want to find out? Don't you want to know the truth?

How are you going to find out?

Don't you want to launch a full-blown criminal investigation of the IRS' information systems organization?

Shouldn't you bring in an outside criminal prosecutor of impeccable credentials and unquestioned integrity and put people under oath and take depositions, under penalty of perjury, including me?

How about polygraphs?

Shouldn't documents be subpoenaed to ascertain the facts to find out what has been going on?

Many of those who were hired along with me and thereafter left fairly soon—they had figured out that a massive, surreptitious sabotage by the insiders is underway. At that time—six years ago—I was not willing to accept that a Federal Government organization could be this venal and nefarious. An enormous amount of pressure has been brought upon me to participate in this sabotage. My refusal to participate in these illegal and subversive activities has brought down the wrath of the so-called higher-ups. They have escalated the harassment.

They hired you, Mr. Charles O. Rossotti, an executive from the information technology industry as the Commissioner of IRS, instead of a tax lawyer, as is usually the case. You have spent your last three years at the IRS doing “Organizational Modernization”. While you were doing this organizational modernization, has the sabotage of the information system modernization been going on full blast almost nonstop? Sir, are you sure this is not happening? Why didn't Mr. Cosgrave ask any questions during his two-year reign as the CIO? The one thing he kept repeating like a parrot was, “Modernization the IRS is like building a plane while in flight.”

So far \$9 Billion dollars of taxpayer money has gone down the drain without anything to show for it. No, I did not make up this number—the newspapers and the GAO reports allegedly contain this number. George Will once wrote—I am paraphrasing it here—“If the amount involved has a single comma, it is a crime. If it has two commas, it is a problem. If it has three commas, it is an issue.” It looks like we have a big issue—and there are no signs of it going away. Why?

Sir, do you want to find out? You may want to read on.

Is it because of my refusal to participate, aid and abet in the sabotage scheme, those involved in the sabotage have prevented me from participating in modernization-related activities, especially given the fact that I was hired under pressure from the GAO to fully participate in modernization? Yes, I have documented proof to the lengths these people will go. Once in a while, some modernization related documents get passed on to me for review either by accident or for some other ulterior motive—I don't know.

The information systems management is escalating their retaliation and harassment against me through means subtle and gross.

Are the projects assigned to me calculated to make me fail—either they are not needed, resources and funding are not provided, the required information to do the work is denied, and actively sabotaged? Do you want proof? Yes, there are documented proofs.

I particularly resent the pressure and coercion brought upon me by the IRS to participate in what I regard as unethical, possibly even illegal activities at the expense of the trust demanded of public sector Federal Government employees.

Are you interested in tackling these problems? Seriously?

If you are interested, you can start with a recent project I completed that was thrust on me. It is called "Alternatives Analysis for the Service Center Recognition and Image Processing System (SCRIPS)." It was completed on June 16, 2000. Even the production of that report was paid out of my pocket. You may want to launch a criminal investigation on how much sabotage was done during this project. In addition to the other Divisions involved in SCRIPS, my own Division actively participated in sabotaging this project. If IRS assigns a project to someone, why actively sabotage it? Unless you put people under oath and start taking depositions, you may never find out the truth.

My health has been ruined—I have developed an ulcer and an acute stomach pain. I am still trying to recover.

There are other things about this SCRIPS project that you may wish to discover for yourself. A criminal prosecutor outside of the IRS—no, not even from the Treasury--should do the investigation so that there are no collusions to cover up the truth. What is there to hide? Let it all come out! This investigation may reveal to you how one of the ways sabotage is practiced within the IRS. If you rigorously pursue this investigation all the way to the finish, you may even end up waking up this information system organization—finally they will understand, "Yes, the Commissioner means business." You may also be surprised—the information system modernization may just happen, ahead of schedule. You may need to send such a message—if you are serious. You owe it to yourself, you owe it to this country, and you owe it to every honest man and woman that has been toiling within the IRS to make the information system modernization work.

Otherwise, it will be business as usual—sabotage, followed by a massive failure—and you testifying in front of Congressional committees why modernization failed one more time.

Aren't you surprised why my own Division will participate in the sabotage?

We have a Branch Chief—and I am supposed to report to him—His Excellency Steve Benigni. His Excellency Steve Benigni sits in his office doing crossword puzzles! I assume that he is excellent at something—if not anything else—at least in doing crossword puzzles. In the past six years or so I have known His Excellency, even going back to our days in 1995 when we were at Rosslyn, he seems to essentially spend his time in one of these activities: planning for vacations, going on vacations, taking training classes, gossip, or doing crossword puzzles. If I approach him for anything related to work, he apparently believes that is an intrusion on his favorite pastimes and activities. I have put up with it so far, so have others. When he fails to do his job or explodes when confronted with essential, job-related questions, it is intolerable, and unacceptable behavior. What is his Excellency's contribution to SCRIPS? You may want to find out!

You may want to find out whether His Excellency even read that report. You may even want to make him sit down and read that report and find out whether he understands it. Going one-step further, you may wish to find out too whether His Royal Highness, my Division Director Cecil Hua read that report. It is not a voluminous report—barely 12 pages. If anyone had, there would have been several questions. Is SCRIPS costing the IRS a bundle? Is the IRS getting ripped off? If I get a chance to meet you, I will be glad to point out where the investigation should start.

We have another Branch Chief--His Highness Jon Holland. He brings his own unique set of idiosyncrasies to the job: bluster, bullshit, blather, utter banality, and a sheer vacuity of mind. Again, it can reasonably be said that I have not, neither have some impartial observers, seen him do anything useful nor offered to do anything useful, or for that matter, enabled anything useful to happen.

You may want to find out their qualifications, if any.

How have these people come to occupy the so-called "leadership" and "managerial" positions? I may be wrong, but this must be a unique occurrence in the IRS! There are other people that I can name, but I will leave it at that.

In this organization, there seems to be a profound confusion between mere administrators and managers. Administrators are clerks with a clipboard in their hand to make sure that the people who do the real work of the organization have all the essentials to do their jobs. We have made these Administrators into managers supposedly possessed of some mystical, esoteric attributes--and obviously that seems to have gone to their heads--and over a period of time, these people have really come to believe this nonsense that these people are part of the proverbial "inner circle" with its own initiation ceremonies, rituals, and secret handshakes. Well. Most of us know how these people got where they are-- by simple groveling and making "connections". No professional qualifications required! Gutless wonders and spineless specimens, all.

Please check my credentials, experience, and expertise. Why am I forced to report to these people? Is there a message there?

There are a lot of people in our Division with almost nothing to do other than wandering hither and thither as though afflicted with the mad-cow disease, or they have mistakenly taken viagra to cure their athlete's foot.

Reggie McFadden had integrity. He was hesitant to do anything of questionable value. He was professional. I could hold a technical conversation with him. He was receptive. He never groveled. So what happened? We shipped him out to Austin! I have a special respect for anyone who has integrity.

You may want to find out why after Mr. McFadden left, this Division degenerated so fast.

Among all these episodes, I can honestly say one thing that made an indelible impression on me. That is this--no African American ever lied to me or misled me in this organization.

This place appears mainly hospitable for "friends and family" at the expense of taxpayers. My main interest is work and I don't have any other interests. I work at the office. I work at home. I work weekends. I am not ashamed to admit that I like work. I enjoy work and I want to be able to enjoy my work.

Modernizing the IRS information systems should be exciting! That's the reason I came to work for the IRS. Right now not only it is not, it has almost become

Sir, I respectfully request you to take a look at all the work I have done here at the IRS. If it does not meet the highest standards of excellence as determined by you or a panel of independent professionals under the conditions and the environment I had to endure, I am more than willing to offer my resignation. Indeed, if you so desire, you may choose to accept this letter itself as a resignation.

Here is a question you may want to ponder: If you let all these unethical people force out all the honest, qualified people—people with professionalism, with integrity, people with ethical qualms, how is technology modernization going to take place?

Shouldn't you take away the hiring authority of people who select, promote, and appoint people who will carry out their bidding, and not yours? Don't you want to find out the truth of whether the information systems organization is saturated with such people?

You may bring other new people from outside, but if you don't provide the right environment in which they can function, nothing much will happen at the IRS—there are people who will make sure of that.

It is often said that "I have principles", "I hold some principle", so on and so forth. I say, "No". My principles and I are one. If you take away my principles, there is no "I" left.

With the best regards,
Nick "The Damn Foreigner" Srinivasan.

H: (703) 759-6099.

O: (202) 283-6048.

Narayana Srinivasson Counseling Letter

Date: 12 Feb 2001

Received on
3/9/01
at the cubicle
thrown at my face
With violence

Dear Employee:

On 7 Feb 2001, we discussed my concerns regarding the work you were assigned as part of the Engineering Review Board. This is action item A150, change request – modify key concept #10 to identify DCC as the long-term location of the enterprise data warehouse. Al Holloway was present at the discussion, since he was being assigned to assist in this effort. While discussing the topic, you decided to leave and when asked to sit down to continue the conversation, you refused, even after I mentioned that it was insubordination. This conduct is unacceptable.

Also, you sent several e-mails that were not professional, showed insubordination, and angered other employees. Both were dated 1/30/01, and state: "No, I am not doing it", and "are you a bunch of imbeciles, etc".

We reviewed the Performance of Duty, in the Interim IRS Rules of Conduct, which states, "Employees are expected to conscientiously perform their duties to the Government and the public, respond readily to the direction of their supervisors, and conduct their relations with fellow employees in a manner which does not cause dissension or discord".

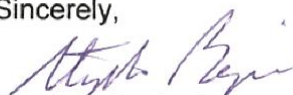
I counseled you regarding your behavior in the above mentioned.

If you continue to violate the Rules of Conduct by your discourteous treatment of customers and associates your actions may result in disciplinary or adverse action, up to and including your removal from the Service.

We also discussed your option of contacting the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if you feel a need to do so. Their telephone number is 1-800-977-7631.

I am confident that we can work together to alleviate this problem. Please feel free to discuss this with me at any time.

Sincerely,


Stephen Benigni