



Jayanta Bhattacharya
Hony. Chief Editor

Culture™

Preparing Employees for the Responsibility: A Cultural Deficit in the SAM and MOGI Companies

(Part-2)

(Part-1 describes the organization in the fast-paced world and what happens in a crisis, a case of dam failure here)

Following the Breach

Following the breach, Engineers and Geoscientists BC took actions to improve dam safety in BC, which included producing professional practice guidelines for site characterization for dam foundations in BC, updating existing guidelines to confirm the duties of the “Engineer of Record”, and holding professional development seminars. **Engineers and Geoscientists BC is also currently updating its guidelines on legislated dam safety reviews. Engineers and Geoscientists BC has also recently been granted the authority to regulate engineering and geoscience firms- a new regulatory responsibility that will enhance its ability to protect the public and address standards of conduct and practice at the organizational level.**

“The ability to regulate firms that provide engineering and geoscience services is an important regulatory tool that will enable us to improve public safety and confidence in the engineering and geoscience professions, ultimately resulting in stronger regulation

and a safer British Columbia”, said Yang. **“Our robust regulatory framework will enhance public protection by introducing established standards of practice for all firms engaging in professional engineering and geoscience, which will be enforced through regular audits to ensure compliance”.**

In the course of these disciplinary proceedings, Engineers and Geoscientists BC did not make allegations or findings as to the cause of the embankment failure. That matter was separately addressed in reports of the Mount Polley Independent Expert Engineering Investigation and Review Panel and the Chief Inspector of Mines.

Found Guilty and Related Penalties

Todd Martin

A disciplinary proceeding relating to the conduct of former engineer Todd Martin has been resolved by way of a Consent Order. From March 2011 to December 2012, Mr. Martin was the senior geotechnical engineer responsible for the geotechnical engineering work at the Mount Polley Mine TSF. **In the Consent Order, Mr. Martin admitted to some of the allegations that aspects of his engineering work were not consistent with**

prudent engineering practice, including his failure to recommend drilling from the 2011 embankment crest into soils under the footprint of the TSF perimeter embankment to improve the characterization of embankment foundation soils. Mr. Martin further admitted that he failed to make a record of important field observations in 2011, a matter which constitutes unprofessional conduct. Mr. Martin agreed to pay a fine in the amount of \$25,000 and \$69,000 toward the legal costs of Engineers and Geoscientists BC. Mr. Martin ceased practising engineering in 2018 and resigned his engineering license in January 2020 and accordingly is no longer permitted to practice professional engineering or geoscience in British Columbia. Should he ever re-apply for registration, the Consent Order identifies the steps Mr. Martin will have to take to successfully be licensed.

Laura Fidel, P.Eng.

A Discipline Hearing Panel found that Laura Fidel, P.Eng. committed several acts of unprofessional conduct in relation to her engineering work at the Mount Polley Mine TSF. **The Panel found that Ms. Fidel failed to ensure sufficient observation and monitoring of the tailings dam while acting as Engineer of Record, including by failing to ensure sufficient site visits and failing to monitor seepage flows which could provide evidence of a potentially unsafe condition within the embankments. Ms. Fidel also failed to ensure that an excavation left unfilled at the toe of the embankment was assessed to determine what impact it may have on the stability of the embankment and demonstrated unprofessional conduct by sealing design drawings for the Stage 9 embankment raise without undertaking sufficient review of the design which was not prepared by her. A number of other allegations against Ms. Fidel were found by the Panel not to be proved and were dismissed.**

In its penalty decision, the Panel ordered Ms. Fidel's registration as a professional engineer be suspended for a period of two months. In addition, Ms. Fidel was ordered to complete three education courses relating to tailings management, tailings facility design and operation, and engineering management for mine geowaste facilities.

Stephen Rice

The Panel found that Mr. Rice failed to properly fulfill the role of review engineer, demonstrated unprofessional conduct by allowing a junior engineer

who had little experience with embankment design (Laura Fidel, P. Eng.) to act as Engineer of Record for the project, failed to ensure sufficient observation and monitoring of the tailings dam, failed to document his review work, and failed to ensure an excavation left unfilled at the toe of the embankment was assessed to determine what impact it may have on the stability of the embankment.

The Panel imposed a \$25,000 fine, and Mr. Rice also agreed to pay \$107,500 in legal costs to Engineers and Geoscientists BC. Mr. Rice resigned his engineering licence in January 2018 and is no longer permitted to practise professional engineering in British Columbia. Should he ever re-apply for registration, he would face a two-year suspension and would need to comply with remedial and supervisory measures before he could successfully be licensed.

The Debate

There is debate and heated discussion brewing over the conviction of Laura Fidel. **One can discover Ms. Fidel was a junior engineer put in charge of the work on the dam by her employer. They knew she did not have the experience for the job, and they did not give her the instruction or the budget to do the required work. Yet the disciplinary process did not sanction the company at all. Ms. Fidel bore the brunt of the investigation; others, who worked under her direction and who oversaw the work for the company, retired and faced only a financial penalty. Ms. Fidel was under corporate pressure to perform. She made mistakes, and technically looking, the mistakes were entirely predictable. A person died. A dam collapsed. But the findings would not teach the top executive management to look for flaws in the system. They teach managers to look for scapegoats – people to blame. Such judgements are a disincentive to look honestly at mistakes and learn from them. They will put a gap for the organization to escape the process of improvement.**

Making the fresh and young workers more responsible by association and training

The above tailings dam case showcases that the organization was not found responsible anyway but the blame went to the individuals. The outcome is more or less predictable- under the organizational culture. Employees need to be told of the job requirements so that the responsible view of work can be retained, to believe

that their company typically tries to do the right thing by supporting them through implementing work time offs, leisure and holidays, rewards, recognition, training, learning, flexible work arrangements, and personal and career development activities. Marketing managers need to advocate and champion corporate social responsibility initiatives such as societal welfare projects, sustainability issues, and philanthropy activities that collectively provide a nurturing setting to help employees identify more closely with their company. These initiatives make the employee proud to work for the company. A strong corporate culture of employee well-being and propagating CSR and ESG activities should therefore encourage frontline employees to behave like stronger organizational citizens, supporting their company during a crisis.

Employees' perceptions of the extent to which they feel supported by their organization is an important antecedent to enhancing employee support. The mediation analyses indicate that subsequent perceptual variables serially mediate that relationship. We find that the frontline employees' discernment regarding the CSR activities of the firm strengthen their decision to stand with the firm during a crisis. Further, the frontline employees' perceptions of their own Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) work style is also a strong predictor of their desire to support the firm during a crisis. Together, these findings suggest that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is an important component for frontline employees' support, but it is nevertheless not sufficient to ensure such support without model serial mediators, which is an important finding for top managers to consider when designing corporate policy.

Managing Fresh and Young Workers (courtesy: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/fall2021/pages/managing-young-workers.aspx>)

Management experts point to these seven tips:

1. **It's OK to fail- as long as lessons are learned.** The key to nurturing 20-something talent is to communicate a clear goal and let each employee determine the best way to accomplish it. "That means asking questions instead of offering answers", says Michael X. Heiligenstein, director of content strategy at Flex, a rental payments services company in New York City. "It means sometimes letting younger staffers take an approach you might not otherwise recommend. Sometimes, it means letting them fail on their terms and then helping them understand why a given strategy didn't work". Heiligenstein, who has spent

his career mentoring and training younger employees to become managers, says **he wouldn't give someone a sizable project on day one. "Start with training them on core tasks, progress from there to working independently on straightforward assignments, and then progress to more open-ended projects", he advises.**

2. **Be patient.** One of the most important tips to remember when developing younger workers is to have patience and remind yourself that they are starting from square one. **"New employees, especially younger ones, do not have the same level of experience and knowledge as senior employees,"** says Jeff Dundas, founder and CEO of Talk Central, a telecom company based in Houston. **"It's in the best interest of the company to keep that in mind to minimize [unrealistic] expectations and to avoid discouraging younger staffers."**

3. **Tailor training methods to experience level.** "Training and nurturing 20-something-year-old employees is significantly different from training established employees because the training regimen for older employees can build and expand upon their pre-existing foundation of experience and knowledge," Dundas says. **"Because 20-something-year-olds have minimal experience, they don't have an established foundation to start with". As a result, their training should be slower-paced and broader than others'.**

4. **Capitalize on each employee's strengths.** Give your 20-something team members assignments that challenge and excite them and that allow them to do their best work. "Conversely, if you know that a young worker has a weak spot, offer to help them with it", says Deborah Sweeney, CEO of MyCorporation.com, an online document services company in Calabasas, Calif. **"You may encourage them to sign up for classes where they can better finesse their skill sets or partner them with a mentor who has experience in that department and can guide and help them to learn new concepts."**

5. **Follow up with feedback.** Managers should provide plenty of feedback to younger workers. "This generation loves constant feedback- good or bad", says William Taylor, senior recruitment advisor at Velvet Jobs in Los Angeles. "Good feedback fuels them to redouble their efforts in their jobs".

It's important to understand that younger workers are still in a process of transition- and to train them accordingly. Training programs are also a great way of helping them understand what the company wants to achieve and their role in that process, Taylor says.



Figure 1. Managing Young Workers (Courtesy: SHRM).

6. Find out whether the training is yielding results. Managers should check in with the rest of the department to see how younger workers are doing in their respective roles. “Department members may be able to provide key insights into concepts that the new hire is immediately grasping and where they still need training”, Sweeney says. “They can help outline the strengths and weaknesses they observe in the new hire and compare notes with other members of the team to see if there are any common themes.”

7. Identify top performers and future company leaders. “I’ve found there is a variety of ‘the right stuff’ that contributes to a young employee being able to expand into a leadership role”, Sweeney says. “These team members will often take ownership of a project- after getting a go-ahead from management first- and will ask others in the department where they can help when they have downtime.”

On the other hand, troublesome signs are when they do nothing in their downtime or begin projects that may not necessarily be worth the time and investment, she adds. Additionally, know that success on independent

projects doesn’t necessarily make for a great manager. “Some team members are better solo contributors than managers, and that’s OK”, Heiligenstein says. “Good managers should offer progression paths for both.

“**For someone to become a manager**”, he adds, **“I always have them take on tasks involving people management before they receive a promotion. That could mean training new employees or managing a group project. If a team member does well on their own projects but has a hard time managing others, that’s a clear sign they’re not yet ready to take on the role of manager”.**

Reference

1. Pangarkara, A., Fleischman, G.M., DawnIacobucci. (May 2022). Enhancing frontline employee support during a product-harm crisis: Evidence and strategic managerial implications for firms. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.102909>