

We Are All Actors
Act 2, Scene 6
"No Respect"

by
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INT. AN EMPLOYEE LOUNGE

DEIRDRE sits in the employee lounge reading the newspaper.
SUSAN comes in, sits down, and opens a soda.

DEIRDRE
I can't believe it.

SUSAN
What can't you believe?

DEIRDRE
The Courier has this long story
about product safety issues. They
cite analysis from
SafetyResearch.org, including our
data, but they don't mention us at
all!

SUSAN
Ouch. Did they call us?

DEIRDRE
No; they interviewed Jimmy over at
SafetyResearch, but we never got a
call.

SUSAN
Then how did they get our data?

DEIRDRE
Jimmy used it in his report; don't
you remember?

SUSAN
Oh, yeah. Didn't he cite us?

DEIRDRE
Of course he did, but, you know,
it's a footnote.

SUSAN
So the Courier just used his report
without checking with us?

DEIRDRE
Sure. And there isn't really
anything wrong with that. I mean,
SafetyResearch are experts, and
they stand behind their work. And
of course they did their homework -
after all, they asked us, right?

SUSAN
Yeah, that's true.

DEIRDRE
And if somebody challenges the
result and calls us, we have the
records to back up our work.

SUSAN
That's true too.

DEIRDRE
But it's still a big problem.

DEIRDRE's cell phone rings

DEIRDRE
Hello? Oh, hi Tom.

DEIRDRE
Yeah. I'm reading it right now.

DEIRDRE
I know.

DEIRDRE
I think we can put out a sparkler
in our newsletter next week.

DEIRDRE
I know it's a little lame, but
really, what else can we do?

DEIRDRE
Well, we aren't funded to do a full
analysis and report like
SafetyResearch.org does. What do
you want me to do, stop giving them
data?

DEIRDRE
Sure, we can put out press
releases. But I don't see how that
helps - the Courier isn't going to
look through press releases when
they're researching a story.

DEIRDRE
I know. Look, let me put together
a presentation for next week's
staff meeting and we'll see if we
can figure something out, OK?

DEIRDRE

Ok. Bye, Tom.

DEIRDRE puts her phone away.

DEIRDRE

The director's not happy.

SUSAN

What's he not happy about?

DEIRDRE

He thinks our sponsors are going to be unhappy that we're not getting credit for our work.

SUSAN

Oh, yeah - I guess that might be a problem.

DEIRDRE

It's definitely a problem. If it looks like SafetyResearch.org getting the credit, our sponsors are going to think they're doing the work too - and they'll start to ask why they should fund us instead of SafetyResearch.

SUSAN

It's really stupid to have to have this problem. I mean, we're all more effective at research and advocacy if we specialize and cooperate. But it seems like we're being punished for doing that.

DEIRDRE

The alternative is really not very pretty.

SUSAN

What IS the alternative?

DEIRDRE

Well, we and all the other nonprofits could issue individual reports, and make the readers figure out how they fit together. That way we'd all get credit for our work, but it would be really hard for anyone to use that work.

SUSAN

That situation just couldn't work. I mean, if we all did that, some group would just start analyzing everybody's reports and issuing consolidated summaries. And then they'd get all the credits and nobdody doing the actual research would get any credit or any funding.

DEIRDRE takes a pack of cigarettes out of her purse.

SUSAN

I thought you quit.

DEIRDRE

I did. I'm just having a moment of weakness.

SUSAN

Oh no you're not. Put those away.

DEIRDRE

OK. So I have this presentation to Tom's staff meeting next week. What can we do?

SUSAN

Is the problem really just that the Courier didn't mention us?

DEIRDRE

That's a good question. I think probably not. If our sponsors who read the Courier's story can go to the report it's talking about and they can SEE that our research is in there, then they'll probably feel like they're getting some of their money's worth. Of course, it's better if the Courier's reporter sees that and credits us in the story, but you can't control what gets written about you, really.

SUSAN

But the way reports are structured doesn't really make it easy for people to see our contributions - I mean, a bunch of footnotes isn't exactly a banner ad.

DEIRDRE

That's certainly part of the problem. Can we do anything about it?

SUSAN

Do you think SafetyResearch and other organizations would be willing to put our contributions into sidebars or boxes?

DEIRDRE

No; if they had to do that for everybody their reports would look like crossword puzzles.

SUSAN

I guess you're right. Could they just cite us in the text as well as footnoting our reports?

DEIRDRE

Maybe, but we'd have to talk to a lot of organizations to get them to update their style guides. And it still doesn't really solve the problem of how our sponsors find all the work we've done - they still have to look through a bunch of different organizations' reports. How do they figure out whose reports to even look at?

SUSAN

I guess you're right. I mean, they could just Google the issue and see who's written a report on the topic, but not everybody who does a report uses our data, so they'd be looking through a lot of things that aren't really relevant.

DEIRDRE

Yeah, and reports aren't really easy to search - PDF and DOC files aren't exactly Google.

SUSAN

What would be really nice is something like a Wiki where everybody could work on reports together.

(MORE)

SUSAN (cont'd)

Then each little section could be identified by organizational source, and everyone can edit their own material. That way nobody has to change their style sheets to make it easier to find other peoples' material. And everyone knows where to look - since there's only one place.

DEIRDRE

We'd still have to create some sort of format for being transparent about who funded our research and where the data comes from.

SUSAN

That's true - and if we want to get credit then we need to be careful to give credit where it's appropriate too.

DEIRDRE

You know, if we can do this it might reduce the amount of work we need to do. We spend a lot of time summarizing and quoting other peoples' materials. If we can just go to a collaborative document and put our pieces alongside the existing text from other organizations, we might be able to avoid some of that paraphrasing and quoting.

SUSAN

Yeah, but there will be new problems. We'd have to put some energy into agreeing with other organizations on how documents should be structured.

DEIRDRE

Hmmm... You're right. There are probably other issues too. I'll think about them and put together a Powerpoint for next week. Can I call you on Friday to go over a draft?

SUSAN

Sure!

DEIRDRE

Thanks! I'd better go get started.