#### Patrick's story

#### 'We can work it out'

## Chapter 1

As a graduate of Coketown University in the '70s you have kept an eye on its development mainly through its annual newsletter for alumni. You have noted reports of its successful research programmes; and so, when you were appointed as your firm's university liaison officer, you made a particular point of visiting it each year to seek out potential recruits and make contact with one or two of your old lecturers.

Today, however, you are surprised to receive a personal call from Professor Sir James Harthouse, the current Vice-Chancellor, inviting you to dinner later in the month, 'I'd like your views on how we might forge closer links with forward-looking firms in the new technologies'. Dinner a few weeks later at The Lodge is convivial, not least because Sir James' cellar has been stocked by a discerning predecessor. But you are not prepared with an immediate response when over coffee and liqueurs he invites you to join the University's governing body, Council, 'for a couple of years at least to give us some advice on building up our relationships with British industry'.

In fact, especially since you recall that your in-laws have only recently retired to the area, you readily agree, and are soon pleasantly surprised by the vast amount of information and invitations that now start to come your way. You attend university meetings most months and particularly enjoy this year's annual meeting of 'University Court' when the contribution of the University to the local and national economy was, to your pleasure, highlighted.

You also feed back your impressions to your Company Chairman, a highly-qualified man himself, who shows great enthusiasm and encourages you to look out for ways in which the relationship with the University can be developed to the Company's benefit.

In July while you are having a few days holiday in the Lake District you receive a call on your car phone from Professor Brian Taylor in the Department of Electronic Engineering explaining that they have just heard of a marvellous opportunity to get money to work on a collaborative project. Apparently a Government Research Council is offering

In the event, when the form arrives it describes what looks like an interesting, if rather vague, topic area; and you note in particular that Company's intellectual property rights on work the student carried out on the Company's premises will be protected.

You have a short discussion with the Chairman who, despite being pre-

Following this you immediately write to Brian, confirming a date for a meeting at the Company in January; and you ensure that Pat, the Chairman's PA, has put it in his diary and that a space in the visitor's car park has been booked for the day.

The meeting is held in the Director's room. Two lecturers from Coketown arrive a little late - apparently there had been difficulties with an out of date street map - together with Adrian, who turns out to be a rather scruffy youth in jeans.

From the start you find the meeting acutely embarrassing. The lecturers, who are the joint supervisors at the University, seem to have a different concept of research from the company and to be unclear about the key issues raised in the discussion. They also give the impression of rejecting each of the research ideas the Chairman puts forward. They present nothing in writing. 'We can't decide on a final thesis topic in just four months', one of them points out . 'Leave it to us and we will work it out when we get back'. You suggest that

Two months later an eight-page document arrives from Adrian, titled 'First thoughts on my CASE Project'. You read it with increasing disappointment. Nowhere is there a clear research topic, let alone any indication of what the student might be doing for the Company. Moreover, the area described is in the academic foothills compared with the material you have been getting from your collaboration with the University of Perugia.

So before showing it the Chairman you phone one of the supervisors at the University making three main points: that the project is ill-defined; that it is not a response to the Company's agenda; and that the level is rather basic compared with the Company's current knowledge. 'What do you expect?' he replies. 'Adrian's only a postgraduate student'.

The Chairman re-affirms his scepticism and recommends 'pulling out right away', but you persuade him that you would like first to have more informal discussion at the University to see what can still be rescued.

In the event, you never manage to make contact with anyone with responsibility for the studentship at Coketown; the weather improves, and with it the prospect of the annual holiday in the Lake District comes closer ....

The next written communication from Coketown is a second invoice for £2,500 arriving in early October.

Q4 What do you do now?

A month later, you are attending for a Chair Committee for another department. During the discussion the Registrar passes you a note asking what the problem is with the project. After the meeting you briefly explain, but he is too busy to stay long.

Two days later Pat, the Chairman's PA, passes you a note which indicates that unless a bill for £2,500 is paid within 14 days the Chairman is to appear before Coketown's Magistrate's Court for non-payment. She explains that he is adamant that the company should not pay, and asks you if you would 'sort it out'.

At the end of May a second and final notice arrives, indicating court action for non-payment. You phone the Finance Director indicating that you are n