

Matt,

Our goal in this meeting is to share concerns, hear from you, and discuss possible resolutions to what we see as an unhealthy culture. We want to align our expectations of Acts 29 leadership with those of the Board, ultimately helping us make informed decisions about our individual futures with the network.

Ideally, this would be a private conversation between each individual here and either you or someone in an HR capacity, but since those meetings haven't been able to happen, we are doing this collectively. We want to be holy in our communication here and understand that we bring our own sin and selfish preferences to the table. With that in mind, we want to humbly share our concerns with the hope that the resulting discussion would lead to addressing what is seen as an unhealthy culture for our staff. Additionally, the details we share are not meant in any way to be attacks toward Steve, but are to give an honest and accurate portrayal of individual experiences that have led to our concern.

We are grateful for the opportunity to voice these concerns and want to reiterate that our posture in all of this as one of respect for you, Steve, and the Board of Acts 29. We want what is best for Acts 29 and every individual on staff, including Steve, so we gladly submit to the direction you and the Board decide to take in light of these concerns.

A good place to start the conversation is to reference an email Steve sent to our staff in April of 2014, shortly after taking over as Executive Director. It was a long email, outlining his hopes for Acts 29 and the need to be involved deeply in the details of the network and our staff. The email ended with the following statements:

“Most of the time, I will be keeping a watching brief, but on some occasions I will step in and make the necessary call. As I've said, this is not so I can wrest control, but is necessary as we build well. That then allows me to happily and confidently let others assume responsibility and exercise freedom in your respective roles as we grow the work together. Working relationships are no different than any other relationships in that they require trust, grace and forgiveness. So let's give one another all of those in abundance. Also, all relationships that fail do so because of mismatched expectations, so we need to make sure, as far as is possible, that our expectations of one another and the jobs we do are out in the open. We all know that we will all fail at some point - fail in our work and fail in our responsibilities to one another, which is why the virtues of grace & forgiveness are so vital. I so want the culture of Acts 29 to express our gospel values, and for that to be true from the local church all the way through to who and what we are as a Board.”

Since the time of that email going out, our experience is that the culture of our staff has been (in many ways) moving in the opposite direction from what was stated as the goal. This movement has been based on many instances and interactions with Steve relating to:

1. A misuse of power and authority
2. Leading with a heavy hand
3. Developing a culture of fear
4. Bullying
5. Lacking humility
6. A feeling of cultural superiority
7. Micro-managing of staff
8. Lacking trust
9. Lacking respect and kindness

10. Lacking grace toward employees
11. Lacking appropriate communication
12. Overly controlling beyond the bounds of Acts 29

Each member of the Dallas staff took time to write down specific instances that relate to the above points in preparation to this conversation. The list is too long to go over in the time we have today, but the most telling examples of this cultural shift have been included below to begin the conversation. Those full lists can be made available as well.

Chris - On loyalty - Misuse of power and authority, developing a culture of fear, bullying

The Board asked me to participate in a 360 review of Steve in preparation for the Miami Board meeting. I answered the questions honestly, sharing things that were going well as well as things I was concerned about. Steve asked to meet with me in his room the following morning. During that meeting he let me know that he was concerned that I had been speaking poorly about him. He said that for us to be able to work together he would need my *“unconditional loyalty”*. Specifically, he said *“Don’t speak poorly of me to anyone, just like my wife wouldn’t say anything negative about me to anyone”*. This is part of why I’ve remained quiet and not brought up issues related to Steve to you. I have been afraid that sharing concerns will lead to me losing my job.

I came from a place in Mars Hill that had this type of requirement placed on employees, and it resulted in utter ruin with a lack of accountability and openness. Steve said that any and all issues between us would need to be worked out between him and me alone, but this type of “loyalty” relationship will only work if the authority figure is open to receiving feedback. When I have gone to him with specific concerns, it has rarely been received well.

In response to questions or feedback, he has made statements such as, *“You need to understand that you and I are not equals, Chris”* (which I never have thought we were), and *“You don’t need to please anyone - not the board, not Chandler, not the people you work with - the only person you need to worry about pleasing is me”* (which I don’t think is right or healthy). I feel as if there is no freedom to talk to him because when we speak, he is right and I am seen as being disrespectful and insubordinate for bringing up questions or concerns.

Tyler - On developing a culture of fear, lack of trust, micro-managing of staff, leading with a heavy hand, lack of appropriate communication

The following is the summary of a conversation I had with Steve on February 17 after he informed the staff that he had hired Joseph Turner as the new Office Manager, described as *“his man in Dallas”* to oversee our staff.

When asked why we were not consulted on this decision, the response I received from Steve was, *“The reason I didn’t tell you about Joseph is that it’s not easy to tell you things, it’s not easy to manage you. You resist change. You sense that you know things. I [Steve] know what needs to happen.”*

My response was that it would have been a courtesy to share with the staff what he was planning, particularly when it involves a potential new boss. Steve then went on to describe our staff as *“toxic”* and *“dispiriting”*. He then said that *“you (Tyler) describe your work patterns and I think that’s exactly what’s caused the problem”*. My desire to work from home a few days a week (which I’m just as productive and accessible at home) in Steve’s mind is the reason for the toxic environment of the American staff. He later went on to say that we have a problem and that is the office in Dallas is not working

well. I agree that we have a problem, but I would argue that it's not the Dallas staff, but rather the leadership style and culture that our supervisor has created that's contributed to the toxic, unhealthy environment.

Steve continued the conversation on the toxic work culture with "*To be honest with you Tyler, I don't know if we can work together. I don't know whether we can,*" and that he is putting Joseph here to see if we can turn it around so that we can work together. I do not believe that a middle-man to handle the concerns and grievances we have with Steve will solve anything other than make Joseph's job miserable as he will now get the brunt of all the abuse. The conclusions Steve has about me (I've brought on a toxic culture and am difficult to work with) are shocking to hear. I know I'm not perfect, but other than Sutton Turner yelling at me over the phone, this was the worst phone call I've had with someone I work with.

In the conclusion of our conversation, Steve even brought up that he'd been asked several times by others why he doesn't just get rid of the staff in Dallas/America and start new with those he wants to hire that would be local. He said that he didn't want to do that, but to even bring that up is not good leadership and instills a sense of fear by even mentioning that this was an option that he has entertained.

Casey Smith - On a lack of humility and cultural superiority

There have been two specific instances I have experienced where Steve, Janet, and Jen Baxter have spoken openly and quite disparagingly about their distaste for Americans in general [which is understandable to a certain extent from a cultural perspective], American Christianity, US megachurches [some of which are in Acts 29], Acts 29 Board Members' wives [where they lacked humility in dealing with cultural differences], and the women who taught and led workshops at the retreat in Miami. This attitude [which is almost singularly directed towards Americans] was seen and overheard throughout my time in Sheffield. While I could go into specifics of what exactly was said and who it was said about, I'd prefer to have that conversation privately, if necessary.

Tyler - On bullying, cultural superiority, and a lacking of respect and kindness

We had a staff meeting on January 29 on how to communicate the "invite" for this year's retreat. Chris proposed that we use the Retreat Promo Video that's already been produced along with additional content describing the invite and details of the retreat. Steve immediately said "*I have strong pushback in regards to that*" (paraphrased). The tone and way he said it was just rude and awkward. Steve then went on to describe wanting to have a couple do a short promo of the retreat that we would use instead of the promo video. He was strongly pushing that that was the way he wanted to invite everyone to the retreat. Later, Andrew Moffett followed up with the exact same proposal that Chris had presented earlier and Steve immediately responded in affirmation that that was a good plan and that we should go with that. Steve seems to not be trusting or supportive of the US staff. It's frustrating when a majority of what we hear are directives with no explanation and micro-managing employees that should be trusted.

Casey - On a lack of trust, misuse of power & authority, lack of grace towards employees

Surrounding the nature of my hiring, I took this job because I was informed by both Steve and Chris that I was the right guy for the position. I was told that I was hired because of my skills and expertise. Since that time I have been made to feel that Steve has graced me with this job as a favor to me. This view of my hiring has since been confirmed by a separate elder at TCH in an email. Had my employment been presented to me this way when I was offered the job, I would not have taken it.

Chris - On the circumstances of Casey's hiring, lack of trust, misuse of power & authority

The details surrounding the hiring of Casey raised some serious concerns with me, specifically with regards to Steve's denial of moving assistance for his family and the justification for that decision. Steve's reasoning he gave for making that decision was "*I'm providing a job for him because he is moving back to the States, rather than him moving back to the States to do a job for a29*".

This is not the reason I wanted to hire Casey - I wanted to hire him because he was the right person for the position. We were also requiring that he and his family move to Dallas, not wherever they wanted in the US. I pushed back on this and that was not received well by Steve and he indicated that there was a history there that I didn't understand. I have since figured out that this history had nothing to do with his employment with Acts 29 and I think that using that history as a basis for not giving him transition assistance was in bad taste.

Casey Smith - Misuse of power & authority, culture of fear, overly controlling

We had an Acts 29 staff trip to Sheffield scheduled for Feb 14-18. I notified Steve, as a courtesy, that Jessica was planning to visit her friends in Sheffield during that week and would try to catch the same flights as Chris and I. The intention behind this was so that she would not have to spend travel time alone. I made it known that once in Sheffield her visit would be completely separate from the Acts 29 trip - down to staying in different accommodations. The visit was to be with her own free time and our own family finances.

Steve's response was to notify me and my wife that she was "*not allowed*" to have a personal visit to Sheffield during the same time as our staff trip. He gave no specifics as to why other than he wanted things to remain "*uncomplicated*". Steve's oldest son and his wife, who are close friends of ours, advised us not to discuss the situation further as doing so would "end badly" for us and cause problems at the workplace despite their disagreement with Steve and disappointment in the situation. For fear of work related repercussions we did not bring the matter up again though it was deeply disappointing and concerning for Jessica and myself.

Leana - On a culture of fear

From viewing how Steve interacts with our staff in the Dallas office, via email, in staff meetings, as well as in person in Dallas and Miami, I have begun to fear interactions that I have with him. With Steve, there seems to be no room for error. Errors are dealt with in a belittling manner, rather than the loving rebuke of a leader. This is not only limited to the Dallas office. In a retreat meeting in January with Matt Adair, Andrew Moffett, and myself, I watched Andrew become uncomfortable with the thought of not informing Steve of a particular detail, a detail of which was minute in the grand scheme of things. Andrew later requested an individual meeting with me letting me know that he was afraid that we have to let Steve know about the small detail and that it would be best if we ran every decision about the retreat through Steve. I believe this is evidence that there is a culture of fear among not only the Dallas staff, but possibly the Sheffield staff as well.

Tyler - On a culture of fear

In another situation, as part of the covenant renewal process, Leana was responsible for collecting the documents that came in via Wufoo. Andrew noticed that a few didn't have signed Covenants uploaded (we eventually found 7 of the 365 didn't have this, but followed up with each and they sent back signed Covenants. So their intentions were not to be deceptive.). As part of the communication surrounding this mistake, we were informed by Andrew (under the directive of Steve) that this

mistake was serious and had become a “*trust*” issue, impacting future responsibilities. It’s contradictory when we are told that we need to be a staff of respect and trust when we aren’t in turn shown grace.

Leana - On bullying, culture of fear

While I don’t have as much interaction directly with Steve as others do, I do have the opportunity to view his interactions with them. His communication style is often threatening, passively aggressive, and demeaning, all of which I believe is bullying. I have watched my co-workers come away from conversations with Steve feeling shame and much frustration. As a specific example, in a staff meeting in January 2015, I watched Steve force Andrew Moffett, Tim Brown, and then Jenny Charteris into stating that they couldn’t remember how a particular conversation went. It was uncomfortable, and I felt like I was witnessing Steve bully them and shame them in front of the whole team for not being able to remember specifics. He then said in a demeaning manner that he would just have to be the one to tell everyone about the conversation. This is my perspective on how that conversation went, and this perspective is shared among the US based staff that were present on the call.

Situations like this lead to a culture of fear in which staff members no longer feel comfortable contributing or voicing anything on our team calls. Most of our staff meetings consist of Steve speaking and everyone else keeping silent. I don’t feel like my input is valued, and I don’t want to be shamed.

Chris - On lack of appropriate communication, lack of trust, leading with a heavy hand, and job performance judgement.

After our conversation in Miami, I set out to re-earn Steve’s trust, setting out on some aggressive projects to build upon what we did for Miami. These included a series of “mini-Annual Reports” called the “Acts 29 Quarterly” (which would share stories from around the network, details on the Healthy Churches initiatives, and general network info) and the new Acts 29 website. We had made a lot of progress on the fall Quarterly and our team was starting to work together well. Then we had a staff meeting in September where we were instructed to drop all existing communications projects and be “*all hands on deck*” for the North America Conference and the Fundraising Banquet.

From that point on, and for the next few months, we did exactly what we were instructed to do. We worked with Derrin to make sure that the NAC was a success, including promotion, production, physical materials, etc. We also dove into the Fundraising Banquet, driving much of what happened for that event, including the venue, evening flow, invitations, presentations, and even the table settings and menu. Our team worked hard and I am proud of the work that we did.

On December 8th, the week after the fundraiser, Steve requested to talk with me and on that call he voiced his concerns that we were “*not producing enough*”, and that he was not happy with the job performance of our Communications Team, and me in particular. This was due to not enough being done in the world of communications for Acts 29. This was incredibly disheartening and frustrating, as we accomplished exactly what we were instructed to do, dropping the communications initiatives that would have been completed during that time frame. I feel like we were being rebuked for not doing our jobs, though we accomplished exactly what we were asked to do.

As part of the rebuke of my job performance, Steve sent me a document for revised working arrangements, dramatically effecting my job and responsibilities. He expected me to sign the

document that same day, showing my agreement with all the details. I told him I would need some time to consider and process it. I sent it to him the next morning, but since I didn't sign it the same day, he felt I was being insubordinate to his authority, specifically saying "*please explain why you think that was your call to make*". This implied that I was being forced, or even bullied, to sign the document without considering the implications.

Another note on that is that as early as last Spring I have asked for regular 1:1 meeting times with Steve, just to connect and be able to make sure we were on the same page. Previously, I was told by Jen and Steve that regular meetings with him wouldn't be possible due to his schedule (which in of itself doesn't feel right - that an employee wouldn't have regular interaction with their boss). This document said that now those would start happening, but the context of this communication made it seem as if these were more of a result of poor performance and/or needed oversight for not meeting his expectations rather than an empowering time to invest in me and my work with Acts 29. Overall, I feel like I was not treated well in this situation on many different levels and it made me question my desire to be at Acts 29 long term.

In general, I don't have confidence that I can truly earn his trust. Each time progress is made, something else makes him feel like we have to "reset" back to square one. I don't see this as being a healthy relationship for me, my co-workers, Steve, or Acts 29 as a whole and it is impacting very practical day to day actions as well. At this point, as the Communications Director for Acts 29, I can't post single a blog, tweet, or Facebook status without Steve's prior approval.

Chris - On misuse of power & authority, overly controlling

I have experienced many instances where Steve has been overly controlling in ways that had no connection to his authority at Acts 29. Some areas where I have seen this control are his say over where employees would work after their time at Acts 29 (Dan Romer), his control over what individuals do with their free time (Jessica Smith going to Sheffield), and asking the staff to attend after-hours meetings as a job requirement, though without compensation (the staff in Sheffield having to go to the pub every Friday after work).

One specific way that I have experienced this unnecessary control was through the process of getting new computers for the COM Team. Since starting at Acts 29, I had been working on my personal computer and Casey was working on a very old Acts 29 computer that we had lying around (it wouldn't even run Fuze or edit photos, but Steve wouldn't approve a new one till after his "probationary period"). Given Casey's need for a working computer and the fact that Lydia's computer recently broke and I wanted to give her mine, I requested two work laptops. Steve approved the purchase, but required us to get one laptop and one desktop. When I responded saying that two laptops would be ideal for the work we need to do, he said no, and his reasoning for that was because "*Anyone I know who works in media prefers working on a larger screen,*" and "*with an overall view to the work we need to get done in terms of website, design stuff etc., I want us to purchase a larger screen desktop so you can work on that from the office.*" I felt strongly that this was not the right solution, especially with the travel and media capture required for our team, but given Steve's previous comments to me about not pushing back on his decisions, I didn't have a choice.

This new computer situation has not been helpful. For travel, Casey and I have been instructed to just swap computers when that happens, though that's not in any way ideal or efficient. And in the ice storm earlier this week, when the rest of the staff was able to work from home, I had to drive into the office on the ice. As a professional, I understand my computer needs and the needs of my staff

and don't understand why Steve would feel the need to control something like this. (As an aside, I could have purchased a laptop and a large professional video monitor and still paid less than then what I did for the computer I have now, but given Steve's previous instruction "*not to come back at me and my decisions*", I didn't feel the freedom to press this issue a second time.)

Finally, yesterday Steve requested to talk to me on Fuze, and on the call he asked me for my take on the meeting we are currently having with you now. I felt very uncomfortable that he was putting me in a position of sharing the details of what was going to be said. I shared that it was about concerns about work culture. I mentioned that I have asked to speak with you (Matt) in the past about work culture in general, but we've never been able to sit down and talk about that, and in this specific situation the request to meet came through Tyler. I encouraged Steve to talk to him as well. Steve's response was "*I won't do that and I'll let the meeting go ahead and see what happens. I was more concerned really in terms of you in it.*" Him saying "*I'll let the meeting go ahead*", and then singling me out for reasons that I don't understand all contribute to the culture that's being discussed here.

These are just a few examples that have led to the meeting that we are having today.

In processing why things are the way that they are, there are two high level issues that seem to drive much of this:

1. Organizational structures and a lack of accountability

We believe the best way to describe this is to compare Acts 29's organizational structure to that of The Village Church. At TVC, there is no single person who is in charge of everything on a day-to-day basis. Each leader has their own strengths and weaknesses, and that is known and embraced. There are three Lead Pastors, each with accountability to the other two, and then to the Elders of the church. We have heard you (Matt) speak many times about how this is intentional and a healthy way to operate. It also provides protection that no single person could steer the direction of the church independently in an unchecked way.

With the current structure of Acts 29, Steve has been placed in a position of unchecked authority, in that he reports to the Board, but yet is also a member of the Board, and there is no way to give feedback to the Board except to go through Steve. This has decreased confidence among staff that what the Board is hearing is objective and accurate. And from a place of care, this structure places an incredible weight on the individual in the position of Executive Director.

It seemed like Acts 29's leadership was moving in a different direction in early 2014 when you, Steve, and Matt Adair were working together as President, Global Director, and Operations Director. That obviously didn't work out for various reasons, but the resulting consolidation of power under the role of Executive Director seems to have been detrimental to the overall health of our staff. Going back to the TVC analogy, that would be like Brian Miller being removed from the equation and expecting either you or Josh to assume that role on top of your other responsibilities.

2. The specific giftings of Steve and what is needed for operational health

We feel like Steve is in over his head and operating outside of his gifting, leading to the constant need for control, micro managing, lack of trust, and fear based oversight of our staff.

A topic that is related to this is that Acts 29 has a history of hiring Lead Pastors into key leadership positions within the network. While this is understandable given the nature of the network, most Lead Pastors are not operational masterminds and subsequently hire others to fulfill those needs as their churches grow. Again, with the example of TVC, things run so smoothly because of the giftings of men like Brian Miller and Doug Stanley understanding the day-to-day needs of operating such a large endeavour. Steve is a pastor at heart, and the expectation for him to assume such a huge organizational load given his past experience doesn't seem to "click" right now.

It seems like this is already known, and is attempting to be addressed through the hiring of Joseph Turner to come on staff and oversee the team in Dallas, but this is again placing a Lead Pastor into an operational role. While Joseph is a fantastic man and pastor, the elders of his church in Houston specifically hired an Executive Pastor to fill the operational gaps that were there while he was Lead Pastor. Additionally, Steve's description for Joseph to be "*his man on the ground in Dallas*" as Office Manager does not give confidence that responsibility will be distributed or organizational relief will be provided for Steve. Rather, it feels like we will now just have someone looking over our shoulders each day on behalf of Steve - another move to gain control rather than empower the staff we already have.

Moving forward, we would like to discuss how these issues can be addressed, accountability can be established, and our staff culture could be set on a path for long term health. We appreciate you hearing these thoughts and pray that these can lead to a healthy, productive discussion.

Tyler Powell
Casey Smith
Chris Bristol
Leana Dusek
Dave McCurdy

CASEY SMITH

- **Jan - Aug 2014** — Casey Smith — Misuse of Authority — During my time in Sheffield Steve made it a requirement for Acts 29 & TCH employees to attend The Stag pub after working hours every Friday. This was unpaid time, yet still a requirement. There were repercussions if one did not attend or make a case for why they could not attend. It was not infrequent that Steve was not even present.
- **April 25, 2014** — Casey Smith — Culture of Fear — In an email entitled “A New Brush” Steve introduced himself as Executive Director to the staff saying, *“I have no intention of intruding into the process to slow things down, or to assume control.”* He goes on to detail how he plans to lead as Executive Director, then follows up with, *“I’ve said, this is not so I can wrest control, but is necessary as we build well. That then allows me to happily and confidently let others assume responsibility and exercise freedom in your respective roles as we grow the work together. Working relationships are no different than any other relationships in that they require trust, grace and forgiveness. So let’s give one another all of those in abundance...I value open communication, where secrets are at a minimum. It also means that if I have concerns or issues, I will speak to you about those.”* I have yet to experience Steve happily and/or confidently allowing freedom for Acts 29 staff members to do their respective jobs. I have not personally experienced a culture of “trust, grace, and forgiveness” or feel the freedom to express “open communication” since this email was sent.
- **June/July 2014** — Casey - **On a lack of trust, misuse of power & authority, lack of grace towards employees** — Surrounding the nature of my hiring, I took this job because I was informed by both Steve and Chris that I was the right guy for the position. I was told that I was hired because of my skills and expertise. Since that time I have been made to feel that Steve has graced me with this job as a favor to me. This view of my hiring has since been confirmed by a separate elder at TCH in an email. Had my employment been presented to me this way when I was offered the job, I would not have taken it.
- **Casey Smith - On a lack of humility and cultural superiority** — There have been two specific instances I have experienced where Steve, Janet, and Jen Baxter have spoken openly and quite disparagingly about their distaste for Americans in general [which is understandable to a certain extent from a cultural perspective], American Christianity, US megachurches [some of which are in Acts 29], Acts 29 Board Members’ wives [where they lacked humility in dealing with cultural differences], and the women who taught and led workshops at the retreat in Miami. This attitude [which is almost singularly directed towards Americans] was seen and overheard throughout my time in Sheffield. While I could go into specifics of what exactly was said and who it was said about, I’d prefer to have that conversation privately, if necessary.
- **July 2014** — Casey Smith — Breaching confidentiality — My wife and I encountered a lack of confidentiality and inappropriate behavior from Steve on multiple occasions in the Acts 29 workplace in Sheffield, both in sharing of personal and business matters. One specific example regarded a co-worker who had asked for a day off due to medical reasons, but through conversations held in the Timmis household it was made known in the office that this “medical day off” was for a specific feminine issue. This was highly inappropriate and embarrassing for this individual, who later shared with women in her Life Group, one of which was my wife, about being teased and feeling humiliated. And a business matter was spoken of freely in conversation at one of the mandatory meetings at the pub on Friday that “so-and-so has to go” [meaning this is another reason why this person must be fired]. The reason he gave was for not attending the mandatory meeting at the pub, and not giving specific notice in advance. These are not conversations that a public audience should be privy to and contribute to a culture where there is no confidence in “open communication”.
- **December 4, 2014** — Casey Smith — Misuse of Authority/Lack of trust — An email conversation with an elder at TCH regarding a housing reimbursement led me to believe that Steve might be treating my job as a “favor” to me. This correlates with a confusing series of conversations I had in

mid-June/mid-July with Steve & Chris regarding the hiring process and policies for Acts 29 and the circumstances surrounding the job offer.

- **December 8, 2014** — Casey Smith — Lack of appropriate communication — In an email entitled “Changes” Steve outlined some major structural changes to how I operate in my job on a daily basis. There were no specific reasons or explanation given other than “*leaving the COM team to their own devices has not worked,*” and though questions were invited, when I asked for more information so that I could understand what had taken place I was told “*I don’t think you need any more background information.*” Coming off the heels of a successful fundraising event in which the COMs did put in an exceptional amount of work, this communication was very confusing and no clarity has since been provided.
- **January 6, 2015** — Casey Smith — Lack of appropriate communication — An email was sent regarding the new Acts 29 vacation policy. Vacation days were removed without any sort of explanation or discussion, particularly for the staff that have been in place in the US for some time. The language in the policy was unclear and seemed to exhibit a lack of respect/trust [i.e. “*failure to do so will be taken quite seriously*”].
- **Casey Smith - Misuse of power & authority, culture of fear, overly controlling** — We had an Acts 29 staff trip to Sheffield scheduled for Feb 14-18. I notified Steve, as a courtesy, that Jessica was planning to visit her friends in Sheffield during that week and would try to catch the same flights as Chris and I. The intention behind this was so that she would not have to spend travel time alone. I made it known that once in Sheffield her visit would be completely separate from the Acts 29 trip - down to staying in different accommodations. The visit was to be with her own free time and our own family finances. Steve’s response was to notify me and my wife that she was “*not allowed*” to have a personal visit to Sheffield during the same time as our staff trip. He gave no specifics as to why other than he wanted things to remain “*uncomplicated*”. Steve’s oldest son and his wife, who are close friends of ours, advised us not to discuss the situation further as doing so would “end badly” for us and cause problems at the workplace despite their disagreement with Steve and disappointment in the situation. For fear of work related repercussions we did not bring the matter up again though it was deeply disappointing and concerning for Jessica and myself.
- **January 29, 2015** — Casey Smith — Lack of trust — On a Fuze chat Steve asked for input, when it was given by Chris, Steve said he was going to “*push back quite a bit*”. It was an open rejection of Chris’s idea with no feedback. Not more than 10 minutes later the exact same idea was put forward by Andrew Moffett, without reference to Chris, and the idea was warmly accepted. People on the call seemed genuinely confused as to what just happened. Nothing was mentioned on the call, but the confusion was palpable among the staff.

TYLER POWELL

There are 3 areas of concern that I have seen among the leadership style and staff culture that I would like to bring to your attention. They are 1) misuse of power: leading with a heavy hand, developing a culture of fear, bullying, lacks humility (always right), and micro-managing staff. 2) General lack of respect, kindness, trust and grace toward employees. We are not looked upon as co-laborers in Christ but employees that should just take orders with no explanation or personal interaction.. 3) Communication: lacks tact, change with no explanation or communication.

1) Misuse of power (leading with a heavy hand, developing a culture of fear, bullying, lacks humility (always right), and micro-managing staff.

- January 29, 2015 - We had a staff meeting on January 29 on how to communicate the “invite” for this year’s retreat. Chris proposed that we use the Retreat Promo Video that’s already been produced along with additional content describing the invite and details of the retreat. Steve immediately said “*I have strong pushback in regards to that*” (paraphrased). The tone and way he said it was just rude and awkward. Steve then went on to describe wanting to have a couple do a short promo of the retreat that we would use instead of the promo video. He was strongly pushing that that was the way he wanted to invite everyone to the retreat. Later, Andrew Moffett followed up with the exact same proposal that Chris had presented earlier and Steve immediately responded in affirmation that that was a good plan and that we should go with that. Steve seems to not be trusting or supportive of the US staff. It’s frustrating when a majority of what we hear are directives with no explanation and micro-managing employees that should be trusted.
- February 9, 2015 - Micro managing: Examples 1) the A29 podcast by Alex Early, 2) social media posts (all tweets have to be approved through him; bottleneck), 3) when we can/can’t have a lunch break, 4) Work hours and not able to work from home. The situation of always having to “check-in” and not be trusted as salaried staff to get our job done has created a depressing work environment.
- Steve’s email to all staff once he became the Executive Director, April, 25, 2014, titled “A new brush!” he said, *"I am very aware that in coming into this role, I am coming into an already established, structured and functioning network. Things are already in the works, and you are all running fast to make things happen. I have no intention of intruding into the process to slow things down, or to assume control. We are clearly in a period of adjustment, whilst we get used to new ways of working, new rhythms of communication etc....Because of where we are in our development, there is no detail too small for me to be bothered with. Most of the time, I will be keeping a watching brief, but on some occasions I will step in and make the necessary call. As I've said, this is not so I can wrest control, but is necessary as we build well. That then allows me to happily and confidently let others assume responsibility and exercise freedom in your respective roles as we grow the work together. Working relationships are no different than any other relationships in that they require trust, grace and forgiveness. So let's give one another all of those in abundance."*
 - Since that time, his involvement with the details has slowed things down, his desire for control is stifling when it comes to my specific role as I feel like “big brother” is always watching, and have not felt any trust or grace. I’ve never heard him say I’m sorry for his harshness, but rather he just explains that that’s the way he always communicates and leads (“*it’s a cultural thing*”).
- February 9, 2015 - The joy of working for Acts 29 has waned because of the way that Steve leads. Leana even brought this up as something that she has observed last December. Though I love my specific job, I feel like the joy of working for Acts 29 as a network has been sucked out through an overbearing, bullying, micromanaging, law based (not grace based) form of leading. I hate to say it, but these are similar leadership frustrations that were present at Mars Hill.
- February 11, 2015 (Discussion with Acts 29 staff: Dave, Leana, Casey, Tyler):

- Dave commented in noticing a “heaviness” among the staff in just being here 1 day a week. He recognizes a “discomfort” or “uneasiness” among the staff.
- Dave: The leadership style and cultural differences can make managing remotely quite difficult. It’s hard to lead staff if a trusted/personal relationship with them has not been established, especially remotely. If you don’t feel loved and trusted then it is hard.
- Unanimously: It hasn’t worked to talk to Steve directly about these concerns or grievances (though most all of these have been discussed with Steve) as there is no equal with him and we don’t feel that we would be heard.

2) General lack of respect, kindness, trust and grace toward employees

- January 19, 2015 - In another situation, as part of the covenant renewal process, Leana was responsible for collecting the documents that came in via Wufoo. Andrew noticed that a few didn’t have signed Covenants uploaded (we eventually found 7 of the 365 didn’t have this, but followed up with each and they sent back signed Covenants. So their intentions were not to be deceptive.). As part of the communication surrounding this mistake, we were informed by Andrew (under the directive of Steve) that this mistake was serious and had become a “*trust*” issue, impacting future responsibilities. It’s contradictory when we are told that we need to be a staff of respect and trust when we aren’t in turn shown grace.
- February 11, 2015 - Leana told me that she doesn’t feel like she gets treated with respect or like a “human” in settings with Steve. There is a culture of fear now. In working with Adair, she felt valued and that she could speak into things as appropriate, but now she just doesn’t want to talk. Steve has in a very few months created a culture of fear; whether purposely or not, it’s there.

3) Communication (lacks tact, change with no explanation or communication).

- The way forward needs to be explained without a sense of vagueness (changing things without explanation isn't helpful).
- The perception of time sheets without explanation and heaviness of new vacation policy.
 - Email from Andrew Moffett 1/16/2015: *"All sick days must be reported to Jen, along with relevant manager/team members, within one hour of the time you were due to start working. Failure to do so will be taken as a no show and taken very seriously...All time off MUST be requested to your relevant manager AND Jen and agreed before the overtime commences. Failure to do so will be seen as a no-show and be taken very seriously."*
 - I asked, *"What does "Failure to do so will be taken as a no show and taken very seriously" mean? What are the consequences and why such a strong statement?"*
 - Andrew replied with *"I'm sorry Tyler, I didn't mean it to seem heavy handed or harsh, it was just for clarity's sake, as it is quite a big shift in policy."*
- February 17, 2015 Video Call -

The following is the summary of a conversation I had with Steve on February 17 after he informed the staff that he had hired Joseph Turner as the new Office Manager, described as “*his man in Dallas*” to oversee our staff.

When asked why we were not consulted on this decision, the response I received from Steve was, *“The reason I didn’t tell you about Joseph is that it’s not easy to tell you things, it’s not easy to manage you. You resist change. You sense that you know things. I [Steve] know what needs to happen.”*

My response was that it would have been a courtesy to share with the staff what he was planning, particularly when it involves a potential new boss. Steve then went on to describe our staff as “*toxic*”

and “*dispiriting*”. He then said that “*you (Tyler) describe your work patterns and I think that’s exactly what’s caused the problem*”. My desire to work from home a few days a week (which I’m just as productive and accessible at home) in Steve’s mind is the reason for the toxic environment of the American staff. He later went on to say that we have a problem and that is the office in Dallas is not working well. I agree that we have a problem, but I would argue that it’s not the Dallas staff, but rather the leadership style and culture that our supervisor has created that’s contributed to the toxic, unhealthy environment.

Steve continued the conversation on the toxic work culture with “*To be honest with you Tyler, I don’t know if we can work together. I don’t know whether we can,*” and that he is putting Joseph here to see if we can turn it around so that we can work together. I do not believe that a middle-man to handle the concerns and grievances we have with Steve will solve anything other than make Joseph’s job miserable as he will now get the brunt of all the abuse. The conclusions Steve has about me (I’ve brought on a toxic culture and am difficult to work with) are shocking to hear. I know I’m not perfect, but other than Sutton Turner yelling at me over the phone, this was the worst phone call I’ve had with someone I work with.

In the conclusion of our conversation, Steve even brought up that he’d been asked several times by others why he doesn’t just get rid of the staff in Dallas/America and start new with those he wants to hire that would be local. He said that he didn’t want to do that, but to even bring that up is not good leadership and instills a sense of fear by even mentioning that this was an option that he has entertained.

LEANA DUSEK

- **September 18, 2014 & January 19, 2015 – Lack of Confidence in Staff's Abilities & Lack of Trust** - Tyler & I were informed that a new master document would be created to hold all of our members' information and that Amy Westlake would be taking over the project. This came as a bit of a shock to Tyler and I, as we had previously been responsible for the document. Amy had not been working for Acts 29 very long and did not know about the particular nuances involved with this document. Through the course of many emails, we came to understand that Amy would be taking over because Steve did not like how we kept the records, as some of the information was out of date. To a degree, this database will always contain information that is out of date. Contact information is constantly changing and we are not always informed. However, we were not given the chance to explain that or make the changes Steve deemed necessary - the project was just given away. Steve was advised by Matt Adair that Tyler and I should continue to oversee this document, but Steve was not interested and mentioned that he just couldn't understand why we couldn't do this right (paraphrased). Thus, at Steve's direction, Amy moved forward with the project and emailed our Regional Directors requesting more information. This was done on the heels of us sending out our Covenant Renewal email, which was intended in part to help us update our database. Not collaborating with Tyler and I on the database project, though, led to confusion among our Regional Directors who did not understand Amy's email and how it tied in with Covenant Renewal. I bring this up for a couple of reasons.

 - 1) When Steve sees something that, in his eyes, is wrong, he doesn't seek to understand the situation or ask clarifying questions. The conclusion is immediately reached that we simply can't do it the right way. In this particular situation, this caused confusion and slowed down work that was already being done.
 - 2) Regarding the same Covenant Renewal process, through additional circumstances that Steve did not seek to understand, the conclusion was immediately reached that Tyler and I could not be trusted to do things the right way. So it is not just that we can't do it the right way, but it becomes an issue of trust.

- **December 24, 2014 & February 17, 2015 – Micromanaging & Demeaning Attitude** - On Christmas Eve, Steve sent Tyler and I an email informing us that we would no longer be considered North American staff since Matt Adair had been removed as the North American Director. In the email, he stated that it would be "*important for me to know when you are out of the office, so that I'm not trying to get hold of you if something crops up*". I understood this to mean that if we were not going to be able to work at all on a specific day, whether from home or the office, that we would need to let him know. On February 17, I received an email from Steve reminding me of this policy. Tyler & I had both been working from home as Tyler had three phone interviews that day. In Steve's email, he said that if we were to be "*thoughtful and consistent employees*", then we needed to abide by this policy. My initial response was confusion as I had clearly misunderstood the policy. I responded back to Steve asking for forgiveness for the misunderstanding and told him that I would begin informing him whenever I worked from home. In his response to me, he stated that he accepted my apology, but that I would no longer be allowed to work from home so as to connect with colleagues. I bring this up for a few reasons.

 - 1) What I now understand is that Steve needs to know each time I am away from my desk. I have never worked in an environment where I had to inform my boss' boss each time I had to go to something such as a dentist appointment. While this is an easy thing to do, it has created a heavy-handed environment.
 - 2) Steve's mention of the phrase "*thoughtful or consistent*" felt demeaning. The way he communicates, both in person and via email, often leaves me feeling belittled.

- **Culture of Fear** – From viewing how Steve interacts with our staff in the Dallas office, via email, in staff meetings, as well as in person in Dallas and Miami, I have begun to fear interactions that I have with him. With Steve, there seems to be no room for error. Errors are dealt with in a belittling manner, rather than the loving rebuke of a leader. This is not only limited to the Dallas office. In a retreat meeting in January with Matt Adair, Andrew Moffett, and myself, I watched Andrew become uncomfortable with the thought of not informing Steve of a particular detail, a detail of which was minute in the grand scheme of things. Andrew later requested an individual meeting with me letting me know that he was afraid that we have to let Steve know about the small detail and that it would be best if we ran every decision about the retreat through Steve. I believe this is evidence that there is a culture of fear among not only the Dallas staff, but possibly the Sheffield staff as well.
- **Devalued as a Person** - This is a hard one because it's more intangible than something I can put a date on. I use the example of how Matt Adair treated me because it helps explain what I have felt is a shift away from a working environment that, while not perfect, was one in which me and my contributions to the team were valued. Matt made an effort to form a relationship with me and show me that he not only valued me as a person, but he also valued my work. I always felt as though I were able, when appropriate, to respectfully contribute to a conversation because he communicated that my input and opinions were worth something. As someone in a behind the scenes, support role, I was incredibly encouraged by this. In contrast, when I interact with Steve, I feel small and as though I don't have intelligent thoughts to contribute. In his communications with me and with others, Steve is constantly reminding us of his authority, power, and value. The way he does this, though, communicates that we lack value. It is truly discouraging.

I have also heard Steve say on multiple occasions that we will know that he likes us when he puts us down or makes fun of us. How we communicate value as an organization should not be in putting another person down. It's not kind and communicates the opposite.

- **Bullying** – While I don't have as much interaction directly with Steve as others do, I do have the opportunity to view his interactions with them. His communication style is often threatening, passively aggressive, and demeaning, all of which I believe is bullying. I have watched my co-workers come away from conversations with Steve feeling shame and much frustration. As a specific example, in a staff meeting in January 2015, I watched Steve force Andrew Moffett, Tim Brown, and then Jenny Charteris into staying that they couldn't remember how a particular conversation went. It was uncomfortable, and I felt like I was witnessing Steve bully them and shame them in front of the whole team for not being able to remember specifics. He then said in a demeaning manner that he would just have to be the one to tell everyone about the conversation. This is my perspective on how that conversation went, and this perspective is shared among the US based staff that were present on the call.

Situations like this lead to a culture of fear in which staff members no longer feel comfortable contributing or voicing anything on our team calls. Most of our staff meetings consist of Steve speaking and everyone else keeping silent. I don't feel like my input is valued, and I don't want to be shamed.

CHRIS BRISTOL

Spring 2014 - Chris - On confidence in employees (Can't pin specific date, though it was right after Steve took over)

When Steve took over, I approached him about my job as Communications Director. I know it's not uncommon for a new CEO or person in that type of executive role to evaluate key staff around them. We were still in our apartment and considering a potential move and I wanted to make sure that Steve wanted me to be in this role.

Steve said that having me on staff in this position wasn't his first choice. He said that having someone in Sheffield would be his preferred option, but he knew he had to have staff in Dallas - and since I'm already here and having all the staff over there wouldn't work we'll just have to live with it.

This began our working relationship in a really unhealthy way. I want to be at Acts 29 and wanted to make this work, but have felt like this vote of no confidence has negatively impacted many of our subsequent interactions.

Chris - On loyalty - Misuse of power and authority, developing a culture of fear, bullying

The Board asked me to participate in a 360 review of Steve in preparation for the Miami Board meeting. I answered the questions honestly, sharing things that were going well as well as things I was concerned about. Steve asked to meet with me in his room the following morning. During that meeting he let me know that he was concerned that I had been speaking poorly about him. He said that for us to be able to work together he would need my *"unconditional loyalty"*. Specifically, he said *"Don't speak poorly of me to anyone, just like my wife wouldn't say anything negative about me to anyone"*. This is part of why I've remained quiet and not brought up issues related to Steve to you. I have been afraid that sharing concerns will lead to me losing my job.

I came from a place in Mars Hill that had this type of requirement placed on employees, and it resulted in utter ruin with a lack of accountability and openness. Steve said that any and all issues between us would need to be worked out between him and me alone, but this type of "loyalty" relationship will only work if the authority figure is open to receiving feedback. When I have gone to him with specific concerns, it has rarely been received well.

In response to questions or feedback, he has made statements such as, *"You need to understand that you and I are not equals, Chris"* (which I never have thought we were), and *"You don't need to please anyone - not the board, not Chandler, not the people you work with - the only person you need to worry about pleasing is me"* (which I don't think is right or healthy). I feel as if there is no freedom to talk to him because when we speak, he is right and I am seen as being disrespectful and insubordinate for bringing up questions or concerns.

July 9, 2014 - Chris - On the circumstances of Casey's hiring

The details surrounding the hiring of Casey raised some serious concerns with me, specifically with regards to Steve's denial of moving assistance for his family and the justification for that decision. Steve's reasoning he gave for making that decision was *"I'm providing a job for him because he is moving back to the States, rather than him moving back to the States to do a job for a29"*.

This is not the reason I wanted to hire Casey - I wanted to hire him because he was the right person for the position. We were also requiring that he and his family move to Dallas, not wherever they wanted in the US. I pushed back on this and that was not received well by Steve and he indicated that there was a history there that I didn't understand. I have since figured out that this history had nothing to do with his employment with Acts 29 and I think that using that history as a basis for not giving him transition assistance was in bad taste.

December 8, 2015 - Chris - On communication, expectations, and job performance judgement.

After our conversation in Miami, I set out to re-earn Steve's trust, setting out on some aggressive projects to build upon what we did for Miami. These included a series of "mini-Annual Reports" called the "Acts 29 Quarterly" (which would share stories from around the network, details on the Healthy Churches initiatives, and general network info) and the new Acts 29 website. We had made a lot of progress on the fall Quarterly and our team was starting to work together well. Then we had a staff meeting in September where we were

instructed to drop all existing communications projects and be “*all hands on deck*” for the North America Conference and the Fundraising Banquet.

From that point on, and for the next few months, we did exactly what we were instructed to do. We worked with Derrin to make sure that the NAC was a success, including promotion, production, physical materials, etc. We also dove into the Fundraising Banquet, driving much of what happened for that event, including the venue, evening flow, invitations, presentations, and even the table settings and menu. Our team worked hard and I am proud of the work that we did.

On December 8th, the week after the fundraiser, Steve requested to talk with me and on that call he voiced his concerns that we were “*not producing enough*”, and that he was not happy with the job performance of our Communications Team, and me in particular. This was due to not enough being done in the world of communications for Acts 29. This was incredibly disheartening and frustrating, as we accomplished exactly what we were instructed to do, dropping the communications initiatives that would have been completed during that time frame. I feel like we were being rebuked for not doing our jobs, though we accomplished exactly what we were asked to do.

December 9, 2015 - Chris - On the working arrangements doc

As part of the rebuke of my job performance, Steve sent me a document for revised working arrangements, dramatically effecting my job and responsibilities. He expected me to sign the document that same day, showing my agreement with all the details. I told him I would need some time to consider and process it. I sent it to him the next morning, but since I didn't sign it the same day, he felt I was being insubordinate to his authority, specifically saying “*please explain why you think that was your call to make*”. This implied that I was being forced, or even bullied, to sign the document without considering the implications.

Another note on that is that as early as last Spring I have asked for regular 1:1 meeting times with Steve, just to connect and be able to make sure we were on the same page. Previously, I was told by Jen and Steve that regular meetings with him wouldn't be possible due to his schedule (which in of itself doesn't feel right - that an employee wouldn't have regular interaction with their boss). This document said that now those would start happening, but the context of this communication made it seem as if these were more of a result of poor performance and/or needed oversight for not meeting his expectations rather than an empowering time to invest in me and my work with Acts 29. Overall, I feel like I was not treated well in this situation on many different levels and it made me question my desire to be at Acts 29 long term.

In general, I don't have confidence that I can truly earn his trust. Each time progress is made, something else makes him feel like we have to “reset” back to square one. I don't see this as being a healthy relationship for me, my co-workers, Steve, or Acts 29 as a whole and it is impacting very practical day to day actions as well. At this point, as the Communications Director for Acts 29, I can't post single a blog, tweet, or Facebook status without Steve's prior approval.

Various Dates - Chris - On job threats

On various occasions Steve has used the phrase, “I really hope this can work out, Chris.” This has always been in relation to a concern or criticism that he has of my job performance. This is a threatening phrase and it instills fear for my job in a way I think is inappropriate.

January 6, 2015 - Chris - On Steve letting outside issues dictate staff decisions.

I requested that Casey come to our conference in Nottingham, as he is a key member of our Communications Team. Steve said he didn't want Casey to come, and when asked about it, Steve said it was due to a lack of trust for Casey, specifically a financial issue between the Smith family and TCH. Along with this lack of trust, Steve said that he thought Casey was greedy, using both of those reasons for his decision to say no. I have an issue with this, as it was allowing a situation outside of work to negatively impact the work of our Communications Team. It should have been dealt with separately and not impacted our jobs.

January 9, 2015 - Chris - On trust, expectations, and Communications Director vs Project Manager

On January 9th, Steve sent me a Slack communication expressing his frustration over me green lighting Tim Brown to film some invites for the Acts 29 Conference in Nottingham. The Working Arrangements doc that Steve sent over specifically mandated that our COM Team not do any work on events without Steve's approval. This specific situation was a simple misunderstanding, as we had agreed to help Philip Moore with this before that doc was sent over. I didn't respond to Steve right away and took the morning to craft a thoughtful response, but when he hadn't heard from me he sent another Slack message around 10am. I had taken an early lunch because Lydia had a dr. appointment. Later that afternoon I sent Steve my response and he said he wanted to speak to me on a Fuze call. During that call, he rebuked me and my job performance, saying that I am the most difficult employee he has ever had to manage. He also said that he simply didn't trust me, and when asked for reasons why, he gave the following:

1. The fundraiser video was not delivered to Steve on the date he asked for before the Fundraising Banquet and he was very disappointed in that. He did not feel like that project was a win and he felt like I should have communicated to him better in that. I acknowledge that I didn't communicate well in that situation and said that I would do my best to not have that happen again.

2. Flights. We had just purchased flights for me, Casey, and Tyler to go to Sheffield for a meeting in February. Steve brought this up because I had paid extra for upgraded seats (about \$40/person). He said that me doing that showed my desire to just make decisions on my own without including him. He said that he always flew Economy until he was given specific approval to fly in nicer seats. This was frustrating, in that I had purchased the tickets the week before and the reimbursement was already processed. Never was this situation addressed in the approval process. This makes me feel like there are things Steve is unhappy with that he's simply not saying, but rather harboring against me. Additionally, I have upgraded to exit rows or bulkhead seats on almost every flight I have taken with Acts 29 in the past two years. This was ok'd by Derrin while he was still doing Boot Camps, so I had no idea this was even an issue. Since Steve took over the expense approval process, I have taken trips to London, Miami, Australia, Ohio, and Sheffield, with each trip including a seat upgrade. This is the first time that it was ever addressed by Steve. If it was an issue of lost trust, why was this not brought up before?

3. Steve thought it was out of line for me to go home for an early lunch without telling him. I didn't have any meetings, phone calls, or pressing needs to be in the office during that time, I was only gone for an hour, and still worked a full day afterwards, but this was seen as me "making my own decisions", which was not appropriate.

Finally, one of the major points I communicated to Steve in that conversation was that based on the revised working arrangements and controls, I feel like I am not being asked to be the Communications Director, but rather a Communications Project Manager for things Steve wants to see. He agreed with this statement, saying that he has had to operate as the Communications Director due to the lack of trust or production that he has seen from me. This change in his thinking was never communicated to me up to this point.

General Thoughts

- Every win we have is followed up with multiple "fails"
- I don't feel like I can ever earn his trust, and each time progress is made something seemingly minor makes him feel like we have to "reset" back to square one, such as:
 - Leading up to miami and then after
 - Leading up to the nac/banquet and then after
- I feel like I'm not equipped to do the job I was hired to do, whether that be the freedom to direct and think creatively, or staffing needs.

I have experienced many instances where Steve has been overly controlling in ways that had no connection to his authority at Acts 29. Some areas where I have seen this control are his say over where employees would work after their time at Acts 29 (Dan Romer), his control over what individuals do with their free time (Jessica Smith going to Sheffield), and asking the staff to attend after-hours meetings as a job requirement, though without compensation (the staff in Sheffield having to go to the pub every Friday after work).

One specific way that I have experienced this unnecessary control was through the process of getting new computers for the COM Team. Since starting at Acts 29, I had been working on my personal computer and Casey was working on a very old Acts 29 computer that we had lying around (it wouldn't even run Fuze or edit photos, but Steve wouldn't approve a new one till after his "probationary period"). Given Casey's need for a working computer and the fact that Lydia's computer recently broke and I wanted to give her mine, I requested two work laptops. Steve approved the purchase, but required us to get one laptop and one desktop. When I responded saying that two laptops would be ideal for the work we need to do, he said no, and his reasoning for that was because *"Anyone I know who works in media prefers working on a larger screen,"* and *"with an overall view to the work we need to get done in terms of website, design stuff etc., I want us to purchase a larger screen desktop so you can work on that from the office."* I felt strongly that this was not the right solution, especially with the travel and media capture required for our team, but given Steve's previous comments to me about not pushing back on his decisions, I didn't have a choice.

This new computer situation has not been helpful. For travel, Casey and I have been instructed to just swap computers when that happens, though that's not in any way ideal or efficient. And in the ice storm earlier this week, when the rest of the staff was able to work from home, I had to drive into the office on the ice. As a professional, I understand my computer needs and the needs of my staff and don't understand why Steve would feel the need to control something like this. (As an aside, I could have purchased a laptop and a large professional video monitor and still paid less than then what I did for the computer I have now, but given Steve's previous instruction *"not to come back at me and my decisions"*, I didn't feel the freedom to press this issue a second time.)

Finally, yesterday Steve requested to talk to me on Fuze, and on the call he asked me for my take on the meeting we are currently having with you now. I felt very uncomfortable that he was putting me in a position of sharing the details of what was going to be said. I shared that it was about concerns about work culture. I mentioned that I have asked to speak with you (Matt) in the past about work culture in general, but we've never been able to sit down and talk about that, and in this specific situation the request to meet came through Tyler. I encouraged Steve to talk to him as well. Steve's response was *"I won't do that and I'll let the meeting go ahead and see what happens. I was more concerned really in terms of you in it."* Him saying *"I'll let the meeting go ahead"*, and then singling me out for reasons that I don't understand all contribute to the culture that's being discussed here.