

**From:** Boris Nikolic <[REDACTED]>

**To:** "jeevacation@gmail.com" <jeevacation@gmail.com>

**Subject:** FW: Existential Concerns Re Boris

**Date:** Thu, 08 Aug 2013 02:15:06 +0000

**Importance:** Normal

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** FW: Existential Concerns Re Boris

**Date:** Wed, 7 Aug 2013 14:19:23 -0700

FYI....

I didn't say 'Boo' in Larry's direction, but Bill has seen fit to do so.

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**From:** Bill Gates [mailto:[REDACTED]]

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 07, 2013 12:03 PM

**To:** Lowell Wood

**Cc:** Larry Cohen

**Subject:** RE: Existential Concerns Re Boris

*Thank you for the note. You don't need to apologize as we respect your views immensely. I am just returning from a family vacation today and will be discussing this with Boris over the next few days. He has done a great job and would be hard to replace.*

*I will see you at the TerraPower meeting this coming Friday.*

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**From:** Lowell Wood [mailto:[REDACTED]]

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 6, 2013 10:31 PM

**To:** Bill Gates; Melinda French

**Subject:** Existential Concerns Re Boris

Dear Bill and Melinda:

I'm writing to convey some serious concerns that I have regarding Boris.

In the course of a recent, wide-ranging discussion with him, he asked as to my bottom-line 'take' on various VC concerns. [I've encountered more-than-a-few of these since graduate school, having 'lost' many of my brightest-&-best protégés to them during the past four decades of their preying-upon my various programs – and then from a somewhat different perspective, post-'retirement.' ☺]

Curious as to why Boris – who routinely interacts with a wide range of these outfits while supporting you (both at the Foundation and far more so via bgc3/Cascade) – would be inquiring, I asked further, and I was profoundly shocked-&-dismayed to learn that he’s considering transitioning to such an organization, moreover distinctly “*this side of the indefinite future.*” After semi-choking on my food, I protested rather frantically that he simply couldn’t seriously consider doing this, relative to the seemingly huge void that he’d leave in personal support and assistance to you both in Foundation and in bgc3/Cascade universes. Although I tried persistently to determine precisely why he would consider making such a move, I was largely unsuccessful in doing so.

My best guess is that he has been working in recent times at entirely non-sustainable paces, and just can’t any longer face continuation of this without the prospect of obtaining large-scale relief of some nature-or-another – especially in view of the unquestionable fact that he could enjoy a much ‘easier’ professional existence, perhaps at a substantially-higher income-level, at a VC firm.

I gather that he would leave your employ very reluctantly – as he seems to fully share my commitment to your goals at the Foundation and to your interest at bgc3 – but I infer that he’s rapidly approaching classic “burn-out,” especially under the extraordinary stresses of the past seven months. As you know well, he’s been working at full speed for a long time now, and is quite unstoppable. [A memorable example of his relentlessness occurred a half-year ago when, just 3 days after major eye surgery, he prepared extensive Strategy Review commentary for you even though he then had only partial vision remaining in a single eye, following a bilateral surgical procedure.]

I’m determined to never attempt to admonish either of you as to “how to run your business(es),” but I do most earnestly hope that you’ll consider the extraordinary breadth-&-depth of professional services which Boris has been providing over the past half-dozen years since he came to the Foundation on a one-year leave from his Harvard professorship – and that you’ll then determine how to most aptly retain these services or to transition more-or-less gracefully to some new arrangements with at least his “minimum essential support” in-the-interim.

I don’t have any specific recipes to proffer, but my present guesstimate is that a significantly-enhanced personal compensation package and a much-augmented degree of staff support would likely be key, if not essential, ingredients to retaining him at bgc3, either permanently or at least through a somewhat-graceful transition-interval, while others attempt to transfer-&-assimilate the contents of his capacious ‘corporate memory’ that he so ably-&-routinely exercises in your behalf.

I’ve been very greatly impressed by the complexity-&-variety – and sheer magnitude! -- of workloads which Boris has increasingly shouldered, especially in the four years since coming “full time” to bgc3, and I suggest that the hassle-&-variously-(non-dollar)-denominated expenses of replacing him – and of coping with his absence during the hiatus – would be quite considerable. You, of course, have a far better estimate of these matters-&-potential costs-&-impacts than I possibly could.

However, I don’t know of anyone at BMGF or bgc3 or Cascade who would be more tedious to replace both with respect to recruiting all-ways-apt candidates and then in getting the new recruit “up to speed.” Boris appears to provide very high-value linkage/coordination between these organizations, as well as with IV/GG/ISF, and transitioning this functionality just would be remarkably challenging. Moreover, his loss would be a grievous blow not just with respect to his contributions suddenly “going missing” but also in the inevitable impact on the morale of the very many folks who count on him to keep you posted on essential aspects of their activities.

It’s not easy to fully declare how highly I value collaboration with Boris – and I suspect that my feelings aren’t at all unique among the people in your domains. Not only is he exceptionally intelligent, well-educated/deeply-

backgrounded and extraordinarily people-knowledgeable, but his dedication to your mission and loyalty to you personally induces levels of professional productivity which are a continuing marvel to everyone who witnesses them – as I know from many remarks to this effect over the past several years.

I therefore trust that you'll carefully consider alternatives – and will take appropriate-&-timely steps to retain-&-conserve a most remarkable asset for the support of both your Foundation-related and your personal efforts.

Thanks very much for your consideration – and please accept my apologies for imposing along these lines (which I assuredly wouldn't have done in any less seemingly-demanding circumstances).

Respectfully,

Lowell