

Strategy: War on Systems

Every organization with more than one person—maybe even with one person—has got to have systems of some sort. And then as the place grows, the systems get more and more elaborated and eventually they strangle you like vines, or cholesterol, or what have you. Some companies—smart companies, small or big—put the systems in place and then immediately go to war on their own systems.

One like that, retail banker Commerce Bank, actually bought by Toronto Dominion a while back, every computer terminal has a red key, a bright red key. And you push the key under the following circumstances. Here's the words of the CEO:

"On it, it says, 'Found something stupid that we are doing that interferes with our ability to serve the customer? Tell us about it, and if we agree with you, we'll give you \$50.'"

In other words, there's a visible, big, obvious way to attack your own system in an effort to serve the customer better. I love that. Build systems, need systems, war on systems. Big red button on every terminal.