

NETWORKING

62. One Line of Code: The Shortest Distance Between "Critic" and "Champion"

"They" say that complex software implementations fall short of promised effectiveness almost all the time. "They" add that the problem is rarely the software; it's almost always less-than-enthusiastic down-the-line users.

I have the answer (which an Aussie CIO gave me): One line of code!

You're in IT.

The software you've got on offer will change the world!

But implementation will take place far from home. What's the success secret? If you're wise, it's sales; you hit the road and ... sell sell sell ... would-be users ... retail ... one at a time. You sit down with, say, Erik H. in marketing. He listens to your pitch, agrees on the importance of the project—*but*—has a host of concerns. You listen, you go home; and, in effect, you alter ... one line of code ... which deals with ... one ... of Erik's issues.

Bingo!

Nine out of 10 of Erik's issues are still not addressed ...but ... you changed ... SOMETHING ... DIRECTLY ... BECAUSE OF ERIK!

In 4.2 out of 5 cases, Erik flips from thorn in your side to fellow champion! Suddenly the whole damn thing is "Erik's project"! In Erik's mind, the whole thing would have collapsed without his precious, save-your-ass input!

63. "Suck Down" for Success. Forget "sucking up"—it's a low-odds strategy. If you are willing to invest the time, and it takes time, "sucking down" is a high-odds affair—to paraphrase the immortal robber Willy Sutton on why he chose to knock off banks, "It's where the money is." (Oh is it ever!) In addition to the plain fact that "down there" is where the real work is done, indirectly, where the deal is effectively done, the folks a couple of levels "down" ["down" always in quotes—"down" is the real 'up'" is the anthem here] are typically bowled over by your time and attention—we all crave being taken seriously. Hence, the next thing you know (after a lot of work) you've got a network to die for in the bowels of the customer organization working for you—and it's a network, typically, with staying power; there's not so much volatility "down there."

As always, the point is not "catch as catch can" or "a good idea." It's about a well thought-out scheme, in fact, no less than a "way of life"—a measured, systematic effort to penetrate the ranks of a client organization and develop a set of relationships with the real deal makers! (Hint: As in so many implementation issues, women are instinctively better at this than men.)

(NB: Alternate formulation to "Suck down for success": "Success does not depend on 'the people you know in high places'—it depends on 'the people you know in low places.'")

64. Formula for Success: C(I) > C(E). I've long argued that the set of relationships inside your own company is almost as important as the relationships with external bill-paying customers. While it may not be a universal truth, it struck me as I talked to a GE group that sold

big international projects that in many cases our Internal Customers/"C(I)" are in more important than our External Customers/"C(E)." That is: $C(I) > C(E)$

In the GE case, to win with External Customers the systems salespeople typically want an "unfair share" (the words of one GE informant) of a host of insiders' time—engineers, the logistics team, lawyers and the all-important ("yes" or "no") risk-assessment staff.

Bottom line: What ... PRECISELY (measure it!) ... have you done lately (LAST 36 HOURS!) for your all-important "portfolio" of ... INTERNAL CUSTOMERS? I.e.: Do Not Let A Single Day Pass Without Doing Something Notable For Some Internal Customer.

65. How Does Your "Inside Game" Measure Up?

Given: Cross-functional communication is such a universal problem that it could fairly be called enterprise "Problem #1."

Solution (one more part thereof): All staff departments ought to/should/*must* quickly install first-rate internal customer satisfaction measurement systems—with tough up and down incentives. In my experience, it is the rare staff department that measures (internal) customer satisfaction religiously—and the ever more rare internal unit that ties substantial rewards and penalties to such measurements. That must change!

Case: I met the boss of Staff Services at a large Italian bank. He was fanatic about "customer" satisfaction for his departments' internal customers. In his scheme, each staff department's internal "customers" themselves devised the measures; and the primary dollars and cents (Euro) incentives for staff departments were based primarily on quantitative measures of their internal customers' satisfaction—the staff department exec called this Internal Customer Satisfaction System "my principal strategic initiative."

This document is #17 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit tompeters.com.

