

IT WORKED FOR ME

A primer on how to start at the bottom and have fun on your way up.

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This is a short narration of my work life with examples of things that happened along my way that I hope will help you as you start out into the fun and games of the work a day world of corporate America or other countries.

One reason I decided to write this down is because I had to write a critique of a book written by a person who hated his job and I believe was one of the most negative pessimistic people I have run across. His book was very long, I guess if you have a lot to complain about it takes a while to write it all down. Mine is short, happiness is succinct.

I know and have been told many times that I was lucky, started out in good economic times (but I was a pay check to pay check guy and out of work), and that you can't do what I did at my level of education in this day and age (maybe, never say never, never say always). I agree but given you having a college degree and apply some of the ideas I believe helped me you can do what I did and a lot more. I think a lot of the success is because of optimism and attitude. Keep in mind as you read this that the key items I think are important are:

1. Do whatever job comes along no matter how crappy it seems to be at the time.
2. Keep your eyes open so you can find things you can make better.
3. Diversify your understanding of how your enterprise works and how the pieces fit together, what department depends on what other department, which people depend on which other people.
4. Think outside the rule book, actually pretend there isn't a rule book.

5. Keep moving ahead even when your “friends” won’t and don’t want you to.
6. Remember that most work takes place in the white space of the organization chart.

Before I encountered corporate America I worked in two different liquor stores near our home. I would have probably stayed on and eventually bought in as a partner in the second one as the job was quite fun. The reason I didn’t was the Alcohol Beverage Commission people came in to do an audit and made the boss fire me because I was 18 and too young to work in that awful environment.

Since I was in desperate need for a job I went to all the obvious companies in the area. Cincinnati Bell, the Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company (Duke Energy), and Procter & Gamble (P&G). The first two didn’t pan out but I interviewed at P&G four times and was finally offered two different jobs by two different people on the same day. One as a lab tech on the outskirts of Cincinnati and the other as a mail clerk in the general offices downtown. I took the mail clerk job because it was a bus ride rather than a drive to work. More on that decision later.

THE MAIL ROOM

I started in the mail room a week before my 19th birthday and worked with several other 19 to 20 year olds for an older supervisor who was a great teacher. One thing he taught us was there is no excuse for not coming to work. Someone would call in sick and you would hear him growl into the phone “I feel like hell too but I’m here”.

He was a few years from retirement and I felt sorry for him because he had to put up with all our non-sense.

I spent four years in the mail room, longer than any of my contemporaries because my supervisor (for some reason) wouldn’t let me take the first way out that came along. The normal procedure was the one who had been in the mail room longest got first choice at any job that opened up. The supervisor told me to hang in until the right job came along.

He used me as a loaner to other departments (buying, treasury, accounting, etc, menial tasks of course) when they were short handed allowing me to learn a lot about the company (remember item 3).

Being in the mail room was a great teacher in itself as you delivered mail to almost every department in the company. You also met a variety of people on different levels. You can learn a great deal from the secretaries (now administrative assistants) of people in high places even though you don’t realized what you are learning at first.

My favorite story about what happened during this time was when Neil McElroy (who I didn’t know from Adam) came back from serving as Secretary of Defense under President Eisenhower to continue his position as CEO of P&G. The mail room supervisor knew that I walked by the newsstand on my way to work. He told me my job was to stop and buy a New York Times and a Wall Street Journal and deliver them to Mr. McElroy’s

secretary every morning until the subscriptions were changed. Almost every day when I started to pass his office (the door was almost always open) he would call out for me to bring him the papers, then he would talk about baseball for as long as he wanted. My supervisor in the mail room had a hard time believing that I was late because I was spending my time talking to the CEO of P&G.

Another interesting thing that happened that I will expound upon later is that one day we “mail boys” helped the maintenance guys push some very large pieces of equipment up a hastily built ramp from the mail room onto a raised floor platform next to the mail room. We determined that what we had helped push was the first computer to be installed at P&G.

FUNNY MAILROOM STUFF.

Back in the day there were no wall clocks, everyone had a little Westclocks clock on their desk. One Saturday when we were working overtime to make sure everyone had work on their desks on Monday morning. One of our number in his infinite wisdom discovered that the desk clocks were actually alarm clocks. We decided that every clock in the building should be set to go off at the same time in the morning. I assume no one was in the building on Sunday when the alarms went off, but on Monday it was an absolute panic when everyone was at work and the alarms all went off at the same time.

The mailroom was located next to the loading dock. One day the pretzel vendor who was not the cleanest, neatest, or best smelling human being in the world pushed his cart through the parking lot adjacent to the loading dock. One of us saw him and told him that the people on the 11th floor, where the executives resided really like pretzels. He put him on the freight elevator, pushed the 11th floor button, and told him when the doors open to push his cart, out into the hallway and announce his presence the way he did on the street by yelling "Pretz" at the top of his lungs. Needless to say our mailroom supervisor caught hell for that one, of course whenever anything weird happened the mailroom always got blamed, probably for good reason.

While trying to clear a jam in the dumbwaiter that was used to carry mail from the main mailroom to all floors we discovered an access to the roof. Some of us thought that the roof would be a great place to eat our lunch each day. The view was fantastic and we didn't have to wear our suit coats (by the way, the dress code in those days was a long

sleeve white shirt, suits, and ties) like we did when we went to the cafeteria. As always happens, someone got a bright idea and decided to fly paper airplanes off the roof. Again our poor supervisor got a call from a furious secretary on the 11th floor demanding to know why airplanes were flying past the window of her office.

THE COMPUTER CENTER

An assignment came along that my mail room supervisor thought was a good one. A computer operator. I found that this job (still down town, still a bus ride) entailed working different shifts, there were only two shifts at the time, 8:00 until 4:00 and 4:00 until midnight except when we got behind in our work then you might be asked to work over to help clean up the back log (see item 1 concerning both shift work and overtime). It is amazing how much you can learn from an experienced data center supervisor when you are on overtime without anyone else around. In any case I learned how to operate the IBM 705 (the one I helped push up the ramp), 7080, 1401 computers, etc. Operating the computers was easy as long as you followed the instruction book. The real learning was understanding what systems you were running and how they fit together and who the business people were that were responsible for them as well as who the technical people were who wrote and maintained them (see item 3).

I had to learn the archaic IBM card oriented and Electronic Accounting Machine (EAM) systems when someone quit unexpectedly. It was sort of tedious at first but the supervisor, noted earlier, taught me some tricks that allowed doing the work in parallel rather than serially (see item 1 again). It was really more fun than operating the big computers as you could see what was happening, the same processes (sort, merge, collate, extract, etc) as the mainframe computers only in slow motion. In this capacity I also needed to interact much more closely to the people whose jobs depended on the systems I ran (see item 3). As I incorporated the learnings from my supervisor I tried to make them part of the standard operating procedures for my fellow operators but for the

most part they liked the old serial processing method (see item 5) easier, safer, took longer, no thinking involved, etc.

Even though we had made the old processes faster my supervisor / mentor/ teacher, decided I should learn to program the new 1401 computer. This was because he had been tasked with the job of eliminating the card oriented equipment and systems but hadn't been given the resources to do the work needed. In any case it was against company policy for "non-management" people to be programmers but my boss decided I should help him anyway (see item 4). Once I was confronted by the big boss who came in early one morning and caught me working on one of the conversions. He said if I was doing programming he would have to fire me. Fortunately my supervisor / teacher was able to conjure up some weird BS to get us out of trouble.

A minor triumph for me was writing a system that eliminated a job that was never finished on time. The person who was responsible for the job went on to become P&G's Treasurer. I always told him I was responsible for getting him the job because I fixed it so his reports were on time.

Somewhere along the way I was asked to go to the employment office (now Human Resources) and take some tests. I didn't know it at the time but they were aptitude tests for both management and programming jobs. I think I passed since I was prompted to programmer. I have to thank both my supervisor in the data center and my old boss from the mail room, I know they and others went to bat for me.

FUNNY DATA CENTER STUFF

There was the time that we found an input card to the order shipping billing system that was punched incorrectly. Therefore the card reader could not properly read the card. My supervisor and I decided that we should figure out what the card should have said and punch it correctly. Well we did that and input the card into the system. We had determined that the quantity field should have been 2000. We didn't know anything about the other contents of the card such as brand code or customer number. What happened is we wound up shipping 2000 cases of Duncan Hines strawberry supreme cake mix (a whole trailer full) to a little mom-and-pop store somewhere. What they actually wanted was two cases. Not long after that we received a friendly letter from the people in charge of the order shipping billing system thanking us for our effort (see item 3), but requesting us not to help them anymore.

Back in the day computers were really cool, they had many flashing lights and made a myriad of interesting noises. When my supervisor and I were working on third shift (which actually didn't exist) trying to clean up a backlog of work that cannot be done and finished on the existing first and second shift, we would turn off all the lights in the data center, open the doors of the tape drives so that you can hear the buzzing noises made as the tapes were being read and written. I think it was before Star Trek had ever been on television, but it was very, very much like being on a spaceship. Computers in those days were so slow compared to what we have today. You could actually watch the operations register and see the programs running.

Little things that might actually get you promoted, one night while printing the checks produced by the Payments and Accounting Entries system, I noticed a check that look like it had a smudge. I tried to wipe it off but it would not go away. As I look at it closely, I saw that there was actually a minus sign after the amount to be paid. I called my supervisor out and had him examine the check to see if I really saw what I thought I saw. When we decided it was actually a – we called the programmer who was responsible for maintaining the system to come in and see what happened. The programmer determined that the way the system had been written if a credit memo was being processed and there were no payments to offset the credit, the system would actually write a check for the amount of credit. The next day when I reported to work on second shift. My supervisor and I were met with a group of people, including data center management, accounting department management, internal auditing and the several other interested parties. They wanted to know how many times this had happened in the past. My answer was damned if I know this is the first time I ever printed those particular checks. There was much finger-pointing and recrimination and concern over how much money the company has lost because of this problem. I was a hero.

One day someone got the bright idea that the data center should have a fire drill. The big boss decided that when the surprise drill was called we would all evacuate the room until the drill was over. As you may have noticed we were always behind in our work so my favorite supervisor / teacher decided that because I was short and could hide behind the huge machines I would stay in the room and make sure work was done while everyone else went outside. It must have worked, we didn't get caught.

PROGRAMMING

Since I had learned to program as a computer operator I thought being a full fledged programmer would be the greatest job in the world. I was wrong. Be careful what you wish for.

Programming in those days required you to do the job of business analyst (talking to business people to define business requirements), coding (giving the computer instructions on how to do the job), testing the programs, and implementation. Talking to the business people was fun but you were only talking to one segment of the company.

Business analysis, trying to get people to explain their job to you so you can eliminate it is not the easiest thing in the world but it can be done if they trust you and the company to do the right thing. In those days people didn't lose their job, they were transferred.

Business analysis is fun, coding is boring, testing is fun, implementation is great because of the urgency.

It took three years to complete the system we were assigned. The system calculated what freight charges should be for a given shipment, audit the freight carrier's bill against what our system had calculated, and then pay the bill if it was accurate.

During implementation a serious flaw in the design was discovered because of a type of shipment no one had mentioned when we were doing the business analysis. When one of these occurred the program would stop "hang up as the operators called it" and further processing could not continue until the offending shipment was purged from the input file. Since I had been a computer operator, knew how to run the computers, had worked shift work in the past, knew the people responsible for the computer operation (see items 3 and 4) and also knew the guts of how our system worked it fell to me to come in to

work in the middle of the night whenever a failure occurred and get things running until the other team members figured out a permanent fix. It got to a point that when I got a call at home about a problem I could talk the operators through the process of getting things running. One morning I woke up at a normal time and said to my wife, “things must have gone well last night, I didn’t get a call”. She said, “oh really, you were on the phone with work for at least 45 minutes last night”. I didn’t remember, I guess I figured out how to fix it in my sleep.

After implementation was successful I requested to transfer back into computer operations as a Data Center Supervisor. The first person in the “Data processing Department” who had ever made that request. Word on the street was that data center supervisors were programmers that couldn’t program.

FUNNY PROGRAMMING STUFF

While writing the program to allocate freight charges to each shipment we came across a problem that occurred when different orders and commodities were shipped in the same truck, a combination shipment. We gave the Traffic and Accounting department people several options on how to allocate the cost, by weight, by sequence of drop off, inversely proportionate to weight, etc. They had never had to deal with this before because they had no way to find the data. In any case nine months later when we were getting close to implementation we forced the issue and asked for an answer. I forget what they decided but I remember well that it only took three lines of code and about ten minutes to do what took nine months to decide.

I came in one morning and found several managers and others in my cube. About the same mix of people I mentioned earlier when I talked about the check with the minus amount. I was wary and asked what was up? The question they asked was what have you done in your program to insure that the proper payables tape is used, this is before the days of data file catalogs and automatic error checking. I went through the scenario about how we wrote a date record at the front of the payables data on the tape that would be checked against a date stored internally in the computer and if it didn't match the program would halt and print an error message on the console and if the operator inadvertently hit start it would halt again and again five times and if he kept going it wasn't my fault anymore. I asked why they asked and was told that an operator had mounted the wrong master payables tape in the Payables system and had paid today's bills along with yesterdays bills a second time.

An aside to that story is when a payables system is run the checks would go to treasury to be signed and a docket would go to the buying department to be verified before the checks were mailed. They asked the old gentleman why he signed the docket allowing the checks to be sent. He said he always signed the docket. When asked if he read it he said “no, when I took this job they told me I was supposed to sign the docket every day they didn’t tell me I was supposed to read it”.

My boss on this project was a great person with an interesting quirk. If you have ever done a software system project you know how things get behind schedule and stress occurs. About every six weeks or so my boss would ask if he could speak to me confidentially and in private. He would close his office door and start ranting and yelling about the people we were writing the system for, his boss, his boss’s boss, some of my co workers, and so on. Occasionally he would pick up a book or other large object and fling it against the wall. After about a half an hour or so he would calm down and thank me for listening and tell me how much better he felt. Maybe that is why I like psychology classes these days.

BACK IN THE DATA CENTER

I think working in operations is the best of all possible worlds, you get to do things simultaneously that are very full filling. Getting the day to day work done correctly and on schedule offers instant gratification on the other hand you are always doing projects that are long term, will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation and as I have said before you are working with systems and people that affect the overall working of the enterprise (item 3).

Some of the responsibilities were, scheduling the rotation of 40 non exempt people over 3 shifts, 7 days a week, 365 days a year on several different computing platforms, training new operators and existing staff on new equipment and systems, and training new exempt people as supervisors and managers. My boss put me in charge of training because he discovered I had taught my wife to drive. He said if I could do that and not get divorced I could train anyone. Many of the people who I was now responsible for were my peers when I was an operator (see item 5).

I had my first taste of Project Management (then known as the accidental profession) when we had to move the Data Center from its existing location because of company expansion. This entailed helping to design a new building, select and test new computers, plan and execute the physical move which included changing data storage platforms.

During this project we had to go to IBM sites in Poughkeepsie (say that three time fast) New York to test our application systems on the new hardware. Because we didn't have enough people to staff both the testing and the production site I suggested that we have some of the technicians (people who actually know how to do the work) travel with us so we had enough people in both places. This idea met with much weeping and

gnashing of teeth by upper management because non-management people traveling was forbidden. When they couldn't come up with a better idea the technicians traveled.

I helped convince my management and peers to do away with manual record keeping to keep track of data stored on tape and rely on the internal abilities of the computer operating systems. This eliminated the need for several people who had to make physical labels and paper records to keep track of data files.

Another neat thing that started to happen, similar to my mailroom experience, I was asked on several occasions to go to one of the regional data center sites to fill in for the local manager for a couple of weeks while he was out for one reason or another. A great experience, my first taste of business travel and dealing with people I had never met and things that I had never done. On one occasion I happened to be in Kansas City when the government decided to change the payroll tax rules. People in Kansas were to pay one rate and people in Missouri were to pay another. The payroll system was written in RPG which I had never used. Not only that but I had to figure out how to differentiate between where people worked and lived. It was an anxious couple of days and long nights.

Management decided it was time for me to change jobs and offered two alternatives, one meant moving to an office just outside the data center or moving to Boston. We chose Boston.

THE BOSTON REGIONAL DATA CENTER

The network of Regional Data Centers we being phased out and I was responsible for shutting down the Boston location. I worked with both the Quincy Plant and Boston office staff to install the new systems and train the people on the operation so that the data center could be phased out and order and other data entry could be done by existing office and plant personnel.

Shortly after starting in Boston I decided to spend more time at the plant in Quincy than the office as the plant was more exciting.

Every morning at the data center we printed shipping documents for the plant. An office across the hall (liaison between the plant and accounting office known as the Plant Liaison Office) would take the pile of shipping documents and split them into two stacks. One stack just sat there while they worked feverishly on the other stack. Then, just about lunch time then would send both piles of shipping documents to the Quincy Plant in a cab. On day I decided to ride with the documents to the plant. When we arrived at the plant the plant shipping department grabbed the stack of documents that the Plant Liaison Office had ignored. I asked why they were doing what they were doing and why the Plant Liaison office did what they did. I was told that the stack they worked on at the office were small to medium size customer shipments that required combining and routing while the stack the plant worked on were large customer railcar, full truck load, and interplant shipments. I asked if it would help if the stack the plant worked on first got there first thing in the morning. The answer was, "if we could get those early we could plan them and start scheduling carriers and by noon we could start working on the smaller stuff and we wouldn't need a night shift to handle that. When I proposed the idea

of making two cab runs the answer from the office people was “a cab run costs \$20 we can’t afford that”. My response was, “I have a budget, I will pay the extra \$20 a day, \$100 a week, \$5200 a year if we can eliminate the entire third shift in the shipping department, five people at the Quincy plant. So we did (remember items 2 and 6) think of the savings.

A sad occurrence involved the person who was the computer operator who worked with me. He decided that what we were doing was a fad and that the new equipment and systems would fail and we would have to go back to the old regional data center model. I found out that eventually he worked in the mail room of the office and lost his job when the offices were consolidated in Cincinnati (see item 5).

Another interesting people related occurrence was four of the five keypunch operators who worked with me in the data center quit the company rather than become order clerks in the accounting office. They would have been paid the same and had essentially the same type of job but as a group they told me “we are keypunch operators not clerks.” The one who stayed was a woman I hired as part-time and she wound up being promoted to cashier for the office.

As an aside Boston is one of the neatest cities in the United States. If you get the chance visit there but don’t drive, take the T. Those people are crazy behind the wheel.

While in the process of shutting the Boston data center the manager of the Baltimore data center decided he would not participate in shutting down his operation. I was asked to move to Baltimore and replace him.

BALTIMORE DATA CENTER AND PLANT

Closing down the data centers was becoming a fairly routine job. Again I spent most of my time at the plant rather than the office. After we closed the data center we were supposed to come back to Cincinnati but we discovered a very pleasant surprise. My wife was pregnant and we decided we did not want to move until the baby was born. In order to grant my request to stay in Baltimore the company arranged for me to take the job of “Systems Engineer” and work in manufacturing.

The Baltimore Plant had an extremely militant union. I never had an experience like that before. You could not even pick up a box of soap that had fallen off a conveyor without having a grievance filed for “management working.

I made a lot of progress fixing old systems and implementing new systems and working my way around problems with the union by using the computer to make work life better for the plant clerical staff.

I helped fix a long standing problem between the management team and the union by suggesting that the bonus could be paid on a weekly rather than monthly basis and running it with the regular payroll than doing it manually and getting it out late. Doing the bonus in that manner avoided a multi thousand dollar project to develop a new system just to process the bonus payment. The trade off was programming a new check stub for the hourly people in the plant (see item 3).

The Baltimore Plant management was extremely aggressive in implementing new management strategies and training that they invited me to participate in even though I was not going to be a permanent employee. This was invaluable as I was well ahead of the game when I transferred back to Cincinnati.

BACK IN CINCINNATI

Having become known as the person who was responsible for closing two regional data centers and helping to build the model to close the rest I was greeted by one of my “friends” with the statement, “where is your cloak and scythe, we thought you came to close the General Office.”

There was a bit of disappointment when I came back as I was slated to report to a very dynamic manager who eventually went on to become P&G’s senior VP of Information Technology and after he retired from P&G the COO of Microsoft. Instead I was working for a gentleman that we nick named Sleepy as he was about to retire and wasn’t about to make any waves. He kind of distanced himself from me and let me do my thing.

In any case I wound up being responsible for the capacity planning, physical planning of computer equipment placement, environmental equipment, budget, and cross charging of data center services with the title of Industrial Engineer.

I found a system (ForeSight), the forerunner of spreadsheets that ran on the mainframe (there were no PC’s). I was able to accomplish in hours what had taken months to do manually in the budgeting, capacity planning, and cross charging area.

I became responsible for a group of people who supported the operation of what grew to several hundred remote locations around the country. These locations were the result of closing the regional data centers noted previously. I began to see how change begets change and new challenges. This organization was the predecessor of the formal Help Desk.

PROBLEM AND CHANGE MANAGER

I became responsible for tracking and eliminating problems that caused service outages to the customers of the corporate data center. A rudimentary database of problems was created and analyzed. It was determined that most of the problems were created by changes to the applications, infrastructure, or in some cases the organization itself.

We found that 46% of the changes made to applications each night before production processing were made to fix changes that failed the previous day because they were not tested properly, if at all, before being installed. This caused two really cool things to happen that are sort of circular. We took the data concerning the 46% problem to the person we thought could / would / should do something about the problem. His response was “I can’t confront people with this data it would be too embarrassing for them”. Translated that means someday I may have to work for one of the people responsible for this mess and they will remember when I confronted them and I will never get a promotion again”. So the next night I had the operators back out all the changes that were supposed to be installed that evening before we started the nights processing. We sailed through production that night with no outages and were done on schedule for the first time in months. The next morning at the all hands shift change meeting I presented what we had done the previous night and the data on the 46% problem to the entire management team. The reaction was phenomenal (see item 4). The division director, an old navy man declared our operation “in extremis” which he said is one step before abandon ship.

The positive outcome of this exercise was that a change management process was instituted that called for changes to be reviewed and approved by a board of both managers and technical people and the changes had to be tested before installation. In addition moratoriums on change were instituted during critical business processing cycles such as fiscal year end and other business critical times.

These changes caused a great upheaval in the organization as people thought their creativity was being threatened and their integrity being questioned (see item 5). Oh well so it goes.

THE PERSONAL COMPUTER PHASE

I was promoted to equivalent of Section Head and put in charge of determining if the Personal Computer (PC) and other distributed technologies would become part of the Information Systems infrastructure.

PCs were beginning to appear around the company and the Central Information Technology division was not happy about it and wanted them to go away (see item 1). My charter was to figure out how to get rid of them. My immediate management was terribly unhappy when my report stated that our division had better jump in the boat and learn how to support the new technologies. Immediate management was overruled by upper management as they and almost everyone else knew this new Personal Computer stuff was not going to go away.

I have to give credit to a young woman I had the honor of working with on her first assignment at P&G. She was just out of college and taught me everything she knew about PC s. If it hadn't been for her this job would have been a total disaster. She was able to deal with all the vendors concerning the technology and I got to watch her back when they would try go around her and work directly with our management. She helped me when I didn't have a clue technically and hopefully I was able to help her learn how the corporate world works and get by the garbage.

The "technology wars" soon began between the various technology bigots (Mac users, IBM users, HP users, Metaphor users, etc). I characterized this conflict as being akin to the crusades, the inquisition, Jihad and other religious wars. This caused enormous problems throughout IS and P&G as a whole. Resolution was a long time coming, if it ever has.

THE ACCOUNT MANAGER PHASE

I then became the liaison between Central IS and various line and staff organizations. These included Health and Beauty Aids, the Paper Division and several manufacturing departments (see item 3). This was an excellent job. It entailed analyzing what the clients of the IS divisions services needed to accomplish their work and goals and matching the results against what IS had to offer. Sometimes IS was required to provide new services while other times our clients were convinced to use services currently available.

During this period I was involved with the acquisition of several companies purchased by P&G. These include Richardson Vicks (Over the counter medications and cosmetics), Norwich Eaton Pharmaceuticals (ethical pharmaceuticals and clinical research), and Noxell (cosmetics). In all of these I was usually the first person at my level in IS to go onsite at the acquired company to determine how their IS division and P&G's would fit together and to begin the transition. This involved not only the infrastructure and systems but most importantly the people.

As I continue to mention, connections with people all over the company had many facets (see items 3 and 6). For instance, I was contacted by a woman from the Mehoopany paper plant who had gotten my name from someone. The Mehoopany Plant had developed a system that depended on the Corporate Computing Facility to finish the Order Shipping Billing System at a specified time that was earlier than the system owner or the operations department knew about or committed to. She explained that the Mehoopany system was going to be rolled out to all the paper plants, showed me how much money it would save the company, and asked me to help getting commitment to the scheduling needed. This is just an example of how the knowledge of who owns what part

of the business, who talks to who, who owns what budget, etc. We needed several business owners, the technical people who supported the systems, and the operations people to agree to fund the needed infrastructure and staff to make the required schedule happen. In the end the payout and rate of return on the Mehoopany project was more than enough to get the job done. The trick was getting all the players together that needed to be involved.

I became responsible for liaison between Central IS and several departmental projects to help lessen the impact on the total organization and to try and make sure all the projects were successful. These projects, the New Order Shipping Billing System, the New Credit System, and the Sales Communication and Network system were all going on simultaneously. (This assignment becomes very intertwined with an assignment I will document later). There were many problems and much conflict concerning resources both people and infrastructure availability.

By some stroke of fortune I was invited to a meeting of the IS division VP and his direct reports. This happened because my boss's boss and my boss were unavailable to attend. The group at the meeting called themselves the Technology Planning Team. At this meeting I sat quietly (unusual for me) and took notes (because no one else was) concerning all the problems the participants described as causing them from being able to meet the schedules they had committed to. After the meeting I prioritized the list and found there were many things that we, in Central IS had not known were causing problems and could be fixed without too much difficulty. I contacted the VP who headed up the team and told him we could get some people working on the items on the list and requested that I be allowed to attend the next and future meetings of the team. At the next

meeting I explained to the attendees that we had eliminated the top four or five items on the list and were working on some of the others so that the obstacles to their progress were being eliminated and the projects could go forward on schedule. One of the directors said out loud and in the presence of his boss and peers “you bastards in operations are always screwing me up, you fixed the problems I was complaining about and now I’ll have to make the schedules I agreed to”. That describes what we call systems chicken, a game where you commit to something knowing full well that some other circumstance or someone else’s problem will allow you to blame someone or something for your failure to do what you committed to.

During this assignment I became involved in Total Quality Methodologies. I went to a couple of classes and became a Total Quality convert. I wrote a memo to my management that said “if we don’t start measuring and advertising what we do well our customers will be advertising what we don’t do well and we won’t have a leg to stand on”. Be careful what you wish for as I was then asked to get formally trained as a Total Quality training facilitator (see items 1, 2, and 6). I formed a team to help train the central IS division. We trained over 400 people internal to our division and went on to train many of our internal and external customers and suppliers. Several very cool things came out of the Total Quality training that will come up later.

One of my last duties in this era was helping to write the first Service Level Agreement that formalized the levels and cost of service between the infrastructure provider and the customer. This document grew and shrank in size depending on whether the technical people had a hold of it, three inches thick (performance somehow based on transaction size and the phase of the moon) to a couple of pages when the customers had

it in their hands (based on transaction size and the business calendar). It is fun dealing with people.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE JOBS

This is the assignment I mentioned in the Account Manger chapter of this document. I was asked to take responsibility to help “FIX” the corporate computing facility (see items 1, 2, 4, and 6). The major application system (New Order Shipping Billing noted earlier in the Account Manager section) was being changed from a batch process to an online real-time system and the Data Center could not process their existing workload in a 24-hour period.

We formed a SWAT team to identify and fix the high profile problems using Total Quality tools and methodology. These included infrastructure, application and organizational problems. While the SWAT team was operating we formed a follow on formal Quality Improvement team to deal with the situation long term.

The nightly production process required that all the systems that ran the company’s business be run from start to finish and then backup copies of all the data be made. The applications ran in a serial fashion starting with Order Shipping Billing (the mother of all systems) which fed data to all dependant systems (Credit, Accounts Receivable, Finished Product Inventory, Accounts Payable, Outbound Freight, etc etc). We had to determine what time each system had to start and finish in order to complete the cycle in time to bring up the new on-line systems on time in the morning. We went to the owners of each application and asked them when the application had to be finished in order to meet their needs. Each of them stated that they didn’t care when it finished as long as their particular output was available at the start of business in the morning. None of them would look at the big picture concerning the overall problem. So we went to the technicians (computer operators) that actually ran the applications (see item 6). They had

the answers. They knew exactly when each application had to start and finish in order for us to make our schedules and bring the new applications up on time. (By the way we called our SWAT team the On Line On Time team).

Given the data supplied by the operators we began to publish daily reports on what ran on schedule, what didn't, what the problem was if it wasn't on schedule, and most important who owned the problem application. This data was sent to the entire department as an e-mail every morning and presented to management at the weekly quality meeting. (Samples of reports attached). There was much weeping and gnashing of teeth among those who were causing schedules to be missed. The most often heard phrase was "well I don't believe those numbers". The response was "we are not making this stuff up". As shown on the reports things began to get better since upper management believed the numbers.

In addition we instituted a project to automate the operation of the data center. The automation project, the SWAT team efforts, and the formal Quality Improvement Program allowed us to cut 9 hours of processing out of a 24-hour day. Not only could we meet schedules but we avoided purchasing another mainframe. It was determined that the capacity plan calling for the additional mainframe included the time needed to do all the reruns that had been occurring and causing schedules to be missed.

The data center automation project unearthed another few cans of worms. It seems that some highly technical people who were needed to accomplish what were thought to be very complex duties were not needed nearly as much when the computers took care of themselves. Also some people lost a lot of overtime pay when we found the problems they were fixing night after night at time and a half could be handled automatically. We

also unearthed the fact that some very poor systems designs were eating away at time that could be used for real productive work.

A difficult part of this entire transition was the restructuring of many of the jobs in the data center because of the automation project. We formed a Transition Team that was responsible for redefining the roles of data center personnel since most of the jobs were drastically changed by the automation of the operation. The change was typical of many change initiatives. There are those who embraced the changes, those who resisted, and those who stood on the sidelines to see what was going to happen. It was great to see some people who had been what some would call mediocre dive in and become gurus of the automation software. It was sad to see some who just would not even try. One young man came to me and told me his job should not be restructured as he was the best at what he did. He just would not accept the fact that what he did was not done anymore.

This whole transition took about three years with never a dull moment.

LAST LIVES

I was on a team responsible for helping to identify major cost savings projects that would materially impact the company's bottom line. We proposed consolidating all mainframe and mid range computing centers to central locations in Cincinnati and Brussels. As well as standardizing all desktop computing saving over \$40 million per year.

I participated on teams that defined the Pan Asia and Latin America IS master plans.

I started a project that reorganized the data center infrastructure into three categories. One for processing Corporate Production Systems, a second for Decision Support Systems, and third a test bed system.

I helped lead the teams that planned and executed the move of the major mainframe data centers both logically and physically both within the US and internationally providing as good or better service to the customers. This was especially fun as we would do the physical moves over a weekend so as not to disrupt the business. We would do an enormous amount of planning, test the move and then do the real thing. We called it a job that entailed hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror. I enjoyed the end of the physical move because I was always the one who worked the night shift. When we decided everything had worked properly and we were up and running I would update our information recording to let everyone know what was going on. As I was giving the update I would play music in the background, the Theme from the movie 2001, or the Ode to Joy. This is what makes work fun.

An episode from the moving of mainframe data centers came when we moved the last mainframe from downtown Cincinnati to Blue Ash. The original plan called for

replicating the infrastructure and just doing a move of all the data at a cost of \$750,000. I asked some IBM engineers if it was feasible to dismantle the existing computer, truck it out the road, and put it back together, they said yes, cost \$75,000. I made the proposal for the second option and my boss took it forward. The VP of the division tapped me on the shoulder at a coffee break during a meeting and said “you have ten minutes to convince me that we can do it your way and it will work”. Well I did and we did. We started the move at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon and were back up and running almost eight hours ahead of schedule (8:30 Monday morning). I found out later that my “friends, peers, etc” had made up a pool and picked times on how badly we would miss the schedule. When I found out I demanded the money but it was never forth coming.

Helped do the project plan for consolidating the mid range data centers.

Retired from P&G.

INTERESTING PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

During a division reorganization I was called into a director's office and he told me he was asked to explain what my role was to be. He showed me the organization chart, who I was going to report to, where I was to be located, what my title would be, who else was in the organization etc. He asked me if I had any concerns or questions. My answer was "No that's all fine with me". Then he said "great, now go away and do whatever it is that you do".

This one was a little more formal as it was written. It said "Finishes things that will never be done again, does things that have never been done before, and takes care of things that are in dire need of intervention".

Key Items

1. Do whatever job comes along no matter how crappy it seems to be at the time.
2. Keep your eyes open so you can find things you can make better.
3. Diversify your understanding of how your enterprise works and how the pieces fit together, what department depends on what other department, which people depend on which other people.
4. Think outside the rule book, actually pretend there isn't a rule book.
5. Keep moving ahead even when your "friends" won't and don't want you to.
6. Remember that most work takes place in the white space of the organization chart.