

# Chapter 1

*“The Marketing  
Department  
is the  
beating heart of  
a forward- looking  
company”*

In my opinion, there are few sterner tests of a senior executive’s caliber than a lengthy meeting with the President of the company with a bladder brim full of coffee. I had occasion to reflect on this fact, as I noticed by the clock on Rich’s desk that our “little chat” had now lasted over an hour. I crossed my legs, changed my mind and uncrossed them again. It was an unwise move. Previous experience in similar situations had proved beyond doubt that the most effective technique was to remain immobile as far as possible. By rigorous application of this method, a powerful mind can erect a barrier between itself and the bladder, enabling it to focus on the matters under discussion. I got a grip of myself. I had to. Rich had finished speaking and was looking at me in a way that invited a response.

“The trouble with Harvey,” I said, “is that he still seems to think he’s working for a small-time company.” I removed my glasses and wiped them with my handkerchief, a gesture which, though completely natural of course, always tends to reinforce the insightful in-

telligence of my remarks.

“Mm, I know.” Rich took a sip of his coffee. “They all do. All these SuperPumps people. It’s inevitable I suppose. A small outfit, doing well enough in its way. Then along comes a corporation like us with a big company structure. These people don’t find it easy to come to terms with our professionalism.” He sipped his coffee again.

“Yes Rich, that’s it exactly. People like Harvey have to realize that there comes a time in a company’s life cycle when it, you know, reaches a size, a complexity where the old management style just won’t hack it. That’s when they need people like us, with our uh...you know...”

Despite my best efforts, my attention was straying to my bladder again. It seemed to happen each time Rich took a sip of coffee.

“Professionalism, TJ Yes you’re right. It’s up to us to bring the same level of corporate discipline to SuperPumps as you find up at Corporate. In a way I suppose you could call us missionaries.” Rich leaned back in his big leather chair. His head struck the frame of one of the modern art prints on his office wall, and he leaned forward again quickly, rubbing his distinguished, silvery gray head. His hair was gray, of course, not his actual head.

“Missionaries, Rich. Exactly.” I removed my glasses again, not because of the insightful intelligence thing this time, but to pick off a large piece of lint from my handkerchief, which had inexplicably become stuck to the inside of the left lens.

Rich continued: “It’s our job to make everyone at SuperPumps realize that they’re part of the Pumpex family. And that means doing

things the Pumpex way. By the way, how are you coming along with that New Product Development Procedure? It needs to be.... Where are you?”

“Right here, Rich,” I said, rising from under the desk, where I was engaged in retrieving my glasses. “It’ll be ready for the meeting on the seventeenth, as promised.”

“Good. Well, if there’s nothing else, I have to get to my three o’clock meeting with Ken and the people from Pumps-R-Us.”

“Right. No. Nothing else. I’ve got a three o’clock myself. Got to try and knock some discipline into the PX-3 project team.”

The executive restroom was directly across the corridor from Rich’s office. I had been able to see it from where I was sitting in front of Rich’s desk and, during our conversation, had imagined many times the relief I now experienced. I had even calculated the number of steps it would require to reach the point where I now stood, surrounded by the plush carpet, marble finish and padded seat covers. Of course, I could have interrupted my meeting with Rich at any time and strolled across the hall to the rest room. I am not the kind of man to be in any way inhibited by a meeting with the company President. It was just that Rich depended on me to be there to listen and give advice. And once he had got started, I hated to interrupt his flow. Although I could not now recall precisely what he had been talking about toward the end of the meeting, it had been important and he had valued my contribution.

Now that my mind was clear and incisive again, I used my time in the rest room for some strategic thinking. It had been a year since

the Pumpex takeover of SuperPumps, although I myself had only recently made the move down to North Carolina from Boston. It had not been easy managing the Marketing Department from a distance of a thousand miles. Perhaps now that I was here as Rich's right hand man, we would have more success in instilling the kind of professionalism a top class company needs to survive in the highly competitive pump market. My thoughts turned to Rich's meeting with Pumps-R-U.s.

Pumps-R-U.s, SuperPumps' largest customer, had been complaining that our standard of service had declined since the take-over by Pumpex. In fact, they were threatening to take their business elsewhere. The owner, Clayton Sipe, and his Purchasing Manager had come up from Greenville, South Carolina to "get a few things straight." I had never met Clayton, but I understood he was one of those gruff blustering types, who liked to shoot from the hip. So this meeting with Rich and Ken, our VP of Sales, was important to smooth things over.

Just then, the door opened and Ken walked in.

"Oh, hi TJ" he said, as he took up position beside me.

"Hi Ken. Ready for your meeting with Pumps-R-U.s?"

"Oh, I don't think they'll be any problem, TJ," he smiled.

I understood exactly what he meant. Ken was a Pumpex man like Rich and me and a real "mover and shaker." He exuded professionalism, with never a shiny black hair out of place and a fine collection of ties which I had always admired. He was tall and imposing and never failed to make a powerful impression with customers with one

of the firmest handshakes and finest eye contact techniques in the business. He would soon make Pumps-R-Us understand the benefits of our new quality-oriented customer service procedures. After all, for someone who had handled the International Pumps account at Pumpex, a small-time distributor from South Carolina like Pumps-R-Us should not be too difficult to deal with. As I washed my hands, I smiled confidently at my reflection in the large wood framed mirror above the sink. I glanced at Ken, who nodded to me from where he still stood at the urinal. There was no doubt about it. Once the Pumps-R-Us people got a look at our “big guns,” they would feel a whole lot better about everything. I checked my glasses for lint, straightened my red silk tie, swung open the door and made my way back along the corridor toward the Marketing Department.

As I walked, I reflected on the signs of change since the take-over. Not just the new Pumpex purple paint on the walls, but the impressive modern prints which informed visitor and worker alike that he was entering the up-to-the minute state-of-the-art facility of a top class company. The changes really were striking. Plush new carpet in the corridors extended into the executive offices. Even the executive restroom I had just left had been upgraded with the same plush carpet and stylish new faucets.

The Marketing Department is the beating heart of any forward-looking company, so it was entirely appropriate for it to be right next to Rich’s office. It was a bit disappointing, therefore, that it was in fact so far away. To get to it, you had to go past the Accounts Department and Personnel, as well as Ken’s office. Rich had ex-

plained to me that it had to do with the inefficient layout of the SuperPumps building. SuperPumps had not been a forward-looking company and had not even had a marketing department *per se*. All the marketing functions had been handled by Harvey, a Product Manager reporting to the VP of *Sales*, of all people. I shook my head sadly, as I reflected on this absurdity. A company without a proper appreciation of the unique and vital role of marketing is destined for failure. I was sure that, as the effect of my department came to be felt, Rich would want to do a bit of modification to the lay-out of the building and give Marketing its proper place at the heart of things.

Organization is one of my greatest strengths, and anyone entering my office is bound to be immediately aware of the kind of person he is dealing with. *Everything in its place* is an important maxim in my book. On my arrival I had insisted on the replacement of the desk with a larger oak model, which allowed me adequate space to keep the organization of the office running smoothly. One of the secrets behind my management success is to keep a very tidy desk. I always emphasize the importance of this to my team and make sure to set an example with my own desk. Half an hour each morning and evening arranging papers, writing utensils, calculator etc. is time well spent in my opinion, and American business would run more smoothly and efficiently if more people realized the value of a tidy desk. "It may not be in the business text books," I often remark humorously to friends and colleagues, "but it certainly ought to be! How much business has been snapped up by the Japanese, while

American management was looking for its stapler?”

I was therefore rather surprised not to find the papers I needed for the PX-3 meeting in the “Meetings” tray on the left edge of the desk. I went over to the filing cabinet and looked in the “PX-3” file, but they weren’t there either. I concluded that my secretary, Jill, must have misfiled them. I had made it perfectly clear to her that papers concerning the PX-3 project in general should be placed in the “PX-3” file in the filing cabinet, while those pertaining to the PX-3 team meetings in particular should be kept in the “Meetings” tray on the left edge of the desk. I liked Jill and was willing to believe that she tried her best, but she was not the kind of secretary I had been used to up at Corporate. She seemed to have difficulty keeping her mind focused on the job. I resolved to go out to her desk and have a word with her about her concentration span and the need to remain focused, when I happened to notice that the plant on top of the filing cabinet seemed to be wilting a little. I picked up my coffee cup and set off for the executive restroom to get some water. When I returned, Jill was standing at the door to my office.

“Ah Jill,” I said. “I want to talk to you about something.”

“Yes, TJ”

“I believe I have explained quite clearly several times where the papers for the PX-3 meetings should be filed, have I not?”

“Yes, TJ”

“And where should they be filed, Jill?”

“In the “Meetings” tray.”

“Exactly. Well they’re not in the “Meetings” tray.”

“I know. They’re here.” She held out a pile of papers. “You left them in Rich’s office. Debbie just dropped them by a couple of minutes ago.”

I looked at the papers. They appeared to be in order. I handed them back to Jill.

“Well you know where to put them Jill.”

“Oh yes, TJ I know exactly where to put them.”

“Excellent.”

One of the first things I had done since coming down from Boston to take on the Marketing Manager’s position at SuperPumps was to institute a proper procedure for reserving the two meeting rooms, known at the time as the “Fishbowl” and “The Blue Meeting Room.” Of course I had changed the names to Meeting Room A and Meeting Room B. This was easier for everyone, when it came to filling out the forms. These forms were then handed to Jill, who entered the reservation in the book. I had a few minutes to spare before my meeting, so I took the opportunity to stop at Jill’s desk and check the book.

“Excellent, Jill.” I noticed that Jill had filled in my 3 o’clock in the Meeting Room A column. “You seem to be getting the hang of it. Nobody else having any meetings?” This last remark was in my famous ironic tone, perhaps a little too much so, since it was hardly Jill’s fault if nobody else was using the procedure. I arched my eyebrows humorously to put her at her ease. Man-management has always been one of my greatest strengths. Or woman-management. Person-



management. Anyway, I am sure that this was one of the leadership qualities Rich had recognized in me when he picked me for the Marketing Manager's slot at SuperPumps.

"Nobody else has handed in any forms."

"Yes Jill, I'm sure that otherwise you would have entered them in the book, as per the procedure." I looked at my watch and started toward the meeting room door, which was directly opposite Jill's desk. "Well, I'd better get in there. Is the team assembled Jill, *ready for action*?" I said *ready for action* in a dramatic voice, like in the movies and arched my eyebrows again. Jill didn't smile. I was beginning to think that she wasn't much of a one for office humor. A pity; I always think a little humor is a good thing in the office, so long as it doesn't get out of hand.

"Well they're there, all right. But the thing is, they're not *in there*." She gestured toward the door to Meeting Room A, which I was on the point of opening.

"There, but not *in there*, Jill?" This time I gave her my quizzical half-smile, that says "I'm very busy, but I always try to be patient with my people."

"The thing is, The Fish...Meeting Room A was occupied, so they went to Meeting Room B instead. Harvey said to tell you that's where they'd gone."

"Occupied? I don't recall seeing anything in the book! We'll soon see about this!" I opened the door and strode in, not too fast, and my voice was angry but controlled as I said "Right. This meeting's now officially over. If you people can't follow a simple procedure.

...”

I still believe that Rich’s reaction was unjustified. After all, if he had followed the meeting room reservation procedure, the whole embarrassing episode could have been avoided. It was indeed unfortunate that the negotiations with Pumps-R-Us were not going well and were just then at such a delicate stage. Still, I believe that calling a colleague, even a subordinate, a bonehead in front of customers is unprofessional and can only make a negative impression on the customer. It was particularly unjustified since it was my quick thinking that went some way toward retrieving the situation created by *his* failure to follow the procedure. As soon as I saw Rich, Ken and the people from Pumps-R-Us sitting round the table, I turned and looked out the door to where Harvey was passing, thus skillfully creating the impression that my earlier outburst had been directed at him. I continued in the same tone, turning the situation to our advantage by showing Clayton Sipe and his Purchasing Manager that the new regime at SuperPumps were not the kind to take any nonsense from their subordinates. “Next time, Harvey, follow the procedure, OK? No more screw-ups!” Then turning to Rich, I said “Sorry about that Rich,” and, handing him my notes for the PX-3 meeting, “Here are those papers you have to sign.” I then turned toward the Pumps-R-Us people and smiled at them in a way that said “Sorry about this, but these papers are important. Won’t be a minute.” Then I took the papers back, smiled at everyone in the room, and left briskly and efficiently. Or I would have left briskly and efficiently if Harvey hadn’t still been standing in the doorway hold-

ing a cup of hot coffee. He failed to get out of the way, so that the coffee spilled over both of us, scalding me quite badly. Another man might have let out a far louder scream than I did. It was at this point that Rich uttered the words which I considered unjustified and unprofessional.

“Get out, you bonehead!”

I turned to Harvey. “Yes, get out Harvey! What are you still standing there for?”

“I thought you might still need to shout at me,” he said.

I gave him one of my “You’re skating on thin ice, my boy” looks, which he seemed to miss completely. He set off down the corridor toward the other meeting room. I went over to Jill’s desk and said: “Jill, please get out the book and change my three o’clock to Meeting Room B.”