

TITLE: "BRYCE'S PET PEEVES OF THE WEEK"

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Since 1971: "Software for the finest computer - the Mind"

"Never trust a person who doesn't have at least one known vice (e.g., drinking, smoking, swearing)."
- Bryce's Law

INTRODUCTION

This represents my last bulletin of the year and, as such, I thought I would do something different. On August 1st of this year, my "Management Visions" (MV) broadcast premiered on the Internet. MV is a free Internet broadcast (aka "Podcast") that is updated weekly (on Mondays) and is made available in MP3, WMA, and RealPlayer file formats (the RealPlayer is accompanied by graphics). During the broadcast, I discuss subjects related to Information Resource Management (IRM), review upcoming events of interest, and review e-mails from listeners. I also describe my "Pet Peeve of the Week" which represents items irritating me at the moment. This has turned into a popular part of the show and, as such, I am including them herein for those of you who missed the broadcast. Hopefully, you will be able to relate to some of these peeves. They are meant to offer some humorous insight into current topics of interest. I hope you will enjoy them. Please note that these are my own opinions and do not necessarily represent the opinions of my company or any other group.

You can "tune into" MV at:

<http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/mv.htm>

I hope everyone has a joyous holiday season and I'll see you in 2006.

AUGUST 8, 2005 - BOUNTY COMMERCIAL

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is a Bounty commercial I recently heard on the radio while driving into work the other day. Now as many of you know, Bounty is Proctor & Gamble's "Quilted Quicker Picker-Upper" paper towels, which I don't have a problem with as such. We use

Bounty in our house. However, the new radio ad described it as having "a new blue-dot quilting" that results in a "high resolution shine." Frankly, when I heard this I burst out laughing. People in the cars next to me must have thought I had lost my mind. "High resolution shine"? I guess it seems funny to me to see something as mundane as paper towels go "high tech". Ah, you gotta love Madison Avenue I guess.

AUGUST 15, 2005 - MICROSOFT WINDOWS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is Microsoft's Windoze operating system. I recently purchased two computers for the office; one a laptop and the other a desktop, both equipped with the latest version of Windows XP. I had to migrate a lot of data to both machines which offhand, shouldn't be a big deal. It was. Now, I don't consider myself a technical guru by any stretch of the imagination but rather I like to consider myself a "power user" who knows his way around a computer.

I've installed a lot of operating systems over the years, both beta and production versions. Now, a lot of you know me as an advocate of IBM's old OS/2 Warp operating system which I still consider the best 32-bit operating system on the block. Nonetheless, my track record of being able to crash a Windows operating system remains intact, for I had no end of problems and found it an extremely frustrating experience. I guess I've been spoiled by OS/2 with its object oriented desktop, System Object Model, and preemptive multitasking. I am still at a loss as to why IBM abandoned it.

But in my mind, I can't imagine why anyone would bother wasting their time inventing computer viruses and worms when you have something like Windoze out there. The only thing that goes uninterrupted is Microsoft's cash-flow. And no, Virginia, there is no o.s. monopoly out there is there?

AUGUST 22, 2005 - SOFTWARE TESTING

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is software testing. As I mentioned in my essay, there is a simple "bottom-up" way to test and install systems. However, I am concerned about the way software vendors are testing their products these days, if at all. The industry has fallen into the nasty habit of letting the customers test the products. For example, it is not uncommon anymore for people to get "beta" releases of software products, play with it, and report back to the manufacturer on problems encountered with it. Further, major releases of software products are being shipped with the manufacturers knowing

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full-well the products are "buggy." To pacify customers, they offer free upgrades of the next release (which actually represents the final version).

This approach to software testing is offensive to me.

I used to beta-test software products for vendors, but I no longer have the time nor inclination to do the manufacturer's work for them anymore. Further, I no longer rush out to buy the latest release of "any" software product; I have been burned too many times by the vendors. As far as I'm concerned, the software vendors really need to clean up their act when it comes to testing. If they really want us to test their products for them, let us know where we should send the bill.

AUGUST 29, 2005 - MICROMANAGEMENT

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is something a little different: micromanagement. There is a general inclination in the workplace today for managers to try and control "everything"; that nothing happens without the manager's personal stamp of approval. I have also seen this phenomenon occurring in nonprofit organizations, everything from computer societies, to homeowner associations, garden clubs, little leagues, and, Yes, even Masonic Lodges.

Micromanagement represents a Theory X style of management, which means the organization is basically led by a dictator. Now, in some situations, I can understand the need for this. But for the workplace in general as well as our volunteer organizations, I am at a loss as to why people are doing this. One nasty byproduct of micromanagement is that people become complacent and will only do what they are told and nothing more. They evolve into robots with little loyalty for the institutions they work for.

Having played football on the gridiron years ago, I learned a lot about the concept of teamwork. In any team-type of environment you have several players, but only one coach who is responsible for the game plan. However, trying to control the actions of every player on the field is not only infeasible, it can be counterproductive. I have always found it to be more effective to empower people to make decisions and hold them responsible for their actions. People will not seek responsibility and will only put forth the minimum effort if they are not given some latitude. I always liked Ronald Reagan's comment on his management style when he said, *"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon*

is being carried out."

In other words, ease up on the micromanagement, empower your people, give them direction, but don't tell how to do everything in meticulous detail. Bottom-line: Do more management and less supervision.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2005 - UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" are University programs that profess to offer a systems curriculum, but in reality, concentrate on nothing more than software development. I am often asked to give overviews of "PRIDE" at universities, normally at the MBA level, and am appalled on how superficially the colleges gloss over the fundamentals of true systems work. Normally, the curriculum offers an introductory course on systems but little else. Instead, they tend to focus on programming languages, networking, and computer trends. Small wonder when I start to talk about "PRIDE", with its engineering/manufacturing concepts, the students look at me dumbfounded. Terms like "Product Structure," "Blueprinting," "Bill of Materials," MRP, and Production Control are foreign concepts to most systems students. Consequently, our universities are spitting out more software people than we really need. A lot of the customers I deal with are looking for students who can grasp business concepts, know how to interview users, know basic math in order to prepare proposals, understand work flows and work measurement, and write effectively. Frankly, they are screaming for more systems people as opposed to the software candidates churned out by the colleges.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2005 - THE DEATH OF COMMON COURTESY

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is the death of common courtesy. The other day we had a new FedEx driver make a delivery at our office in Palm Harbor. Since I happened to be by the front door, I opened it and watched him approach. He wore a scowl on his face as if he had been having a bad day. I opened the door, greeted him warmly, shook his hand and asked how his day was going. As I signed for the delivery, the driver looked at me strangely. I asked him if there was a problem. He said, No, it was just that I was the first person that day to be friendly to him and actually ask how he was doing. He said in most companies he visits he's pretty much taken for granted and treated rudely.

I asked if he thought this was something unique to him as an individual. He said, No, the other drivers often speak of the callousness of their clientele. Come to think

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of it, I have seen evidence of this elsewhere. For example, when I go to a restaurant, the waiters and waitresses are often taken aback when I kid with them and ask them about their day. Often they look at me like I might have some ulterior motive. But once they get past this, they warm up to me and we have a good working relationship.

This made me stop and think about today's corporate work place. Have we become so jaded and insensitive as to disregard the interpersonal relationships of our employees, our customers, and our vendors? Have we become so self-centered and aloof that we no longer care how we treat other people?

You know, I learned a long time ago that you can catch a heckova lot more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. A little courtesy and hospitality can go a long way with people. For example, I learned the virtues of a firm handshake some time ago. I don't just give them some wishy-washy handshake and look through the person. I look them squarely in the eyes, shake their hand and tell them how glad I am to see them. Something as simple as a sincere handshake can work miracles.

We must remember that we don't conduct our business with inanimate objects, but rather with human beings. Sharpening our people skills is incredibly important to accomplish anything worthwhile in life. Simple common courtesy is a big part of this. Try it. Next time that FedEx or UPS driver comes to your door or a waitress to your table, look up at them, greet them with a smile and ask them how they're doing; heck, even often them a handshake. You will be pleasantly surprised with the service you'll get in return. I'll tell you this; we have no problems with shipments or deliveries at our office. How about yours?

SEPTEMBER 19, 2005 - THE COMPUTER PRESS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is the Press. No, not the general press as distorted as it may be, but rather, the computer trade press. Years ago we had numerous publications you could count on to print an unbiased view of the industry. Publications such as *"Infosystems," "Datamation," "Computer Decisions,"* and the *"EDP Analyzer"* were able to give balanced reporting while still generating sufficient advertising dollars to sustain themselves. But something happened along the way in the 1990's with the propagation of the PC in the workplace. Suddenly, new interests and allegiances were formed and the trade press basically sold its soul to upstart vendors who now command the market. This resulted in jaded

reporting and, unfortunately, the credibility of the various publications have diminished. So much so that circulation of the publications are at an all time low. Even *"InfoWorld"* and *"Computerworld"* are mere shadows of themselves.

What is missing is a little integrity in the trade press. Instead of trying to invent the next fad, how about some honest reporting on what is actually going on in this industry, both right AND wrong. I've got news for you, not everything is as peaches and cream in this industry, regardless of what the press tells you.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2005 - WORKAROUNDS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" Is the word *"workaround"* as has been commonly used in the IT field for the last ten years. I tried looking up "workaround" in both Webster's and The New Heritage Dictionary and, of course, I couldn't find it. As we all know, it has come to mean finding a way around a technical problem. It doesn't mean its a correction to a problem but rather, a way of addressing a problem. But make no mistake about it, "workarounds" ultimately represent errors or bugs in the system and we should refer to them as such. I'm amazed by programmers when they proudly proclaim they've found a "workaround" as opposed to admitting they have a problem and don't know how to fix it.

An IT Department should avoid the term "workaround" as it tends to irritate end-users and causes them to lose faith in the development staff's ability for solving their problems. A bug is a bug, I don't care what you call it; don't try to sugarcoat it, fix it.

As an aside, I was finally able to find "workaround" defined in one dictionary, the Redneck Dictionary. Its typically used to determine the location of employees. For example, *"Hey Y'all workaround here?"*

I don't know, I guess I'm getting tired of the sloppy language in this business.

OCTOBER 3, 2005 - MICROSOFT

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" Is Microsoft, whom I refer to as the Howard Johnsons of the computer business (with apologies to HJ). We call them this because they offer products that are never state of the art, but they are not the worst either; just mediocre and very predictable.

Recently, I read that Microsoft announced its Windows Workflow Foundation (or WWF - which sounds remark-

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ably like the World Wrestling Federation). Nonetheless, WWF is a Windows technology that will enable developers to stitch together MS Office applications and in-house developed software into workflow applications. Here again is another example of "bottom-up" system design. Instead of first determining requirements and designing the overall system architecture, they are proposing a means to assemble programs bottom-up. Vintage Microsoft. Frankly, I think they should stick to wrestling.

OCTOBER 10, 2005 - CORPORATE DRESS CODES

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" Is corporate dress codes. Back in the 1970's it was generally expected that a man wear a suit and tie to work and women dressed well. During the 1980's this code was relaxed and you would see "dress down" days on Fridays. By the 1990's suits and ties had been replaced by golf shirts and slacks. But now, in 2005, we see t-shirts, blue jeans and shorts in the workplace.

Ben Stein recently wrote an interesting piece in the *New York Times* complaining about the slovenly appearance of corporate America which I have to agree with. I think we have gone too far. Dress codes have an impact on the corporate culture of any business. If we dress sharp, we tend to think smart. If we dress sloppy, we tend to be lazy in our work habits. Show me a workplace without a dress code and I'll show you a pigsty that produces questionable results. I know we like to promote rugged individualism in this country, but there is nothing wrong with a little uniformity and teamwork either.

When we started our company in the early 1970's, our dress code was "business casual" except when we knew customers were coming into the office where we were then expected to spruce up and dress professionally. Over time, we abandoned business casual and mandated at least a shirt and tie for men and proper attire for women. This had a positive effect, particularly on our IT staff. What I found interesting though was while we, as a small business, were learning to "dress up", corporate America began to "dress down."

Ben Stein was right in criticizing today's corporate dress codes. After all, who would you rather do business with, someone who looks like a bum or someone dressed for success and has their act together? I think the answer is rather obvious.

OCTOBER 17, 2005 - CELL PHONES

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is cell phones. As you will

remember, cell phones first became popular with doctors and other members of the medical community who rightly saw it as a vital link between their patients and themselves. Next came business people who needed mobility to talk with their office and clients. This included realtors, salesmen and service people. But then it landed in the hands of housewives and children under the clever ruse that it was a great way to get in touch with our loved ones in the event of an emergency. And this is when all hell broke loose. Now, it seems everyone has one, not only on their hips or in their ears, but in their cars, on their motorcycles. I've even seen kids talking on them while skateboarding, riding bicycles, and, Yes, even tri-cycles. Its now more of an annoying habit than a working tool or status symbol.

What I find amusing is how it has affected our social skills. Its now common to find people walking alone on a street or in a store seemingly talking to themselves. Maybe they are and the cell phone is nothing but a clever ruse. But what disturbs me more than anything is how people jabber away on the phone while they're in traffic. Now you know darn well not everyone has something vital to communicate all of the time. It is now common to see 16 year old girls talking to their boyfriends and making plans for the weekend; moms chatting with their girlfriends, guys talking with their buds, and so on. We're doing everything but paying attention to the road. Have we become so bored with our lives that we find it necessary to talk to someone just to kill time while in traffic? I guess so.

In 1967, James Coburn starred in a movie called *"The President's Analyst"* which has become a cult classic. If you haven't seen the picture, Coburn uncovers a plot by the telephone company to implant a chip into everyone's head whereby everyone can send and receive telephone calls (I'd love to see how they would handle faxes). Nonetheless the movie is very prophetic in terms of where cell phones are heading. I'm just worried about the social implications.

Please do me one small favor though, if you find it absolutely necessary to talk to someone on the phone while you're driving around, please pull off to the side of the road and talk to the person like a rational human being. And Yes, I am very much in favor of legislation regulating the use of cell phones.

OCTOBER 24, 2005 - BLOATWARE

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is "Bloatware." Ever notice when you get a new computer how fast it runs, Yet, over

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time it starts to slow to a crawl. This is primarily attributed to what is called "bloatware" in the industry. Years ago, programmers were very careful in how they wrote software. The code was very tight and there was concern over efficient use of machine resources. But as disk space, memory, and processor capabilities grew, programmers became less and less concerned with machine efficiency. I remember just a few years ago I was able to install IBM's OS/2 operating system on a PC with 50mb of disk space, and it ran just fine with plenty of room to spare on my hard drive. But the times have changed; hardware improvements and the Internet have seen to that. But the programming is getting sloppier and sloppier. If you have tried to install a word processor or a graphics package lately you know what I mean.

I can't help feeling this is all a grand scheme to build-in obsolescence into our computers. Slowing down software means purchasing additional hardware. Understand this, a computer is considered an antique when it reaches three years old. We would probably hold onto our computers longer if we didn't have so much bloatware running on them. But I guess that wouldn't be good for the economy.

OCTOBER 31, 2005 - GUESTIMATE

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is the word "*Guestimate*." I have been involved in the IRM field for a long time now and it has always bugged me how people try to invent new words in an attempt to appear cute and clever. One such word is "Guestimate" which tries to imply that performing an estimate is simply a guess, to which I have to give a big DUH. Estimating is fundamentally an effort at projecting the future. Like all projections, the more facts and information available, the better the estimate will be, but rarely is it ever perfect. There is a natural human tendency to avoid making estimates because estimates are expressions of commitments, and people tend to shy away from commitments and accountability, particularly when they are not sure of the facts. Look, lets keep it simple, an estimate is an estimate and a guess is a guess, let's not create any more 3rd grade words such as "guestimate."

Another word that bothers me is "*reiterate*" and you hear it just about everywhere these days. Think about it; what does it mean? The word Iterate refers to the repetition of something. So what do we mean when we say RE-iterate? An infinite loop? The language in the IT industry is sloppy enough without us having to add new words to our vocabulary. But I guestimate I am reiterating myself.

NOVEMBER 7, 2005 - COMPLICATIONS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is entitled, "*Why do we make things more complicated than they really are?*" Over the last 30 years I have been fortunate to travel the world, visit with many corporate customers, and hobnob with gurus in the field. One thing I've always found fascinating is how the IT industry tends to make things more complicated than they really are. For example, building systems and software is really not as complicated as they appear to be. Systems consist of business processes, procedures and programs. We also have inputs for collecting data, outputs for transmitting information, files for storing data, records, and data elements. Period. It has always been this way and it will always be this way. But the IT Industry seems to reinvent itself every five years or so. We now like to talk about apps, agile programming, data mining, SOA, business rules, meta data, and things that go bump in the night. The only rationale I can give for changing the vocabulary so often is that it must sell a lot of books and magazines. Either that or people use it to make themselves look smarter than they really are. The sad part is that this new vernacular is creeping into college studies and we then have to spend the next several years debriefing the kids. I don't know, as I get older, I find the better things in life are the simple things. I guess I'm surprised that more people don't challenge needless complexity.

NOVEMBER 14, 2005 - SNOWBIRDS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is entitled "*Snowbirds*." November marks the beginning of the snowbird migration. This is where northerners, predominantly retirees, begin to make their annual trek down here to Florida. Sure, their money is nice for our economy but we have to contend with some God-awful drivers. There are New Yorkers in SUV's who think they own the road, people from Ontario who believe they are always driving in a school zone, and others from the midwest who are just plain lost. It sure would be nice if we had a national driving standard. It would make it a heckova lot easier and safer down here for all of us if we did.

NOVEMBER 21, 2005 - SMOKING

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" the Great American Smokeout sponsored by the American Cancer Society last Thursday, November 17th. As many of you know I enjoy a good cigar. I never acquired a taste for cigarettes but I definitely enjoy a good cigar when I'm going about my business. I don't bother anyone with it. Its just something I do on my own time. Yes, I am aware of the

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dangers of smoking, as I am sure all smokers are. And, No, I do not consider myself a smoking advocate. Having said all this, let me just say to all the Anti-smokers out there: Will you please get off our backs! Being a smoker doesn't mean we're demons or some misguided fools, but we sure get characterized this way. The Anti-Smokers are making it harder and harder to find a venue for us to enjoy our pleasure, everything from airplanes and airports, to restaurants and bars, the workplace, even cars. Next, will be our homes where I definitely draw a line and tell them to mind their own business. I will continue to enjoy my cigar regardless of the browbeating I may take from the Anti-Smoking lobby. I don't think they realize that as they become more obnoxious in their campaign, it stiffens my resolve to enjoy a good smoke.

I will also remind you of one of my more memorable Bryce's Laws that says, "*Never trust a person who doesn't have at least one known vice (e.g., drinking, smoking, swearing).*" I have always found that such a lily white person always has a dark side or something they are trying to hide. As for me, I'll continue to enjoy my cigars and keep my vices aboveboard.

NOVEMBER 28, 2005 - MICROMANAGEMENT

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is "*Micromanagement.*" Today we live in a Theory X world where managers like to dictate the specifics of any given task which is commonly referred to as "micromanagement." Employees are told what to do and when to do it, without any interest in their input. Such an approach is basically saying to the worker, "*Look, you're not smart enough to do this right so I'm going to tell you how to do it.*" Consequently, micromanagement tends to irritate and alienate people. More recently, I've noticed this same phenomenon occurring in nonprofit volunteer organizations, such as homeowner associations, clubs, school organizations, sports associations, and even church groups. The people that run these groups may have the best intentions, but rarely do they know how to actually manage. Sadly, some people get involved with such organizations to satisfy a petty power trip they are on. They have little regard for organization and adherence to policies and rules. Instead, they try to micromanage everything. People, particularly volunteers, have a natural aversion to micromanagement and quickly lose interest in their work.

Instead, I recommend an approach where you delegate responsibility and hold people accountable for their actions. I refer to this as managing from the "bottom-up" as opposed to "top-down." By treating workers like responsible adults, there is a tendency to accept

responsibility and see a task through to its successful completion. As President Ronald Reagan said, "*Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out.*"

Basically, Reagan said, "*Don't micromanage; empower your staff and get out of the way.*"

DECEMBER 5, 2005 - RERUNS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is "*Reruns.*" Last week it was announced that the Rolling Stones were going to perform the half-time show for the 40th Super Bowl next February in Detroit. I found this announcement somewhat amusing in that Paul McCartney of the Beatles provided the half-time entertainment in the last Super Bowl. Its not that I have anything against these aging rockers, as I have been a big Beatles and Stones fan for the last 40 years, I'm just wondering where the new talent is or if there really is any talent to replace my generation's music. We hear a lot about Rap, Hip-Hop, and Country, but who are the musicians who truly define this generation? Frankly, they're not our there. Oh, I'm not suggesting the talent doesn't exist, for I believe it does, but it is being tightly controlled by marketers who engineer every note being recorded today.

In the old days, it was not uncommon for artists to write their own music, sing their own songs, and play their own instruments. This is hardly the case any more. Instead of developing a generation of craftsmen like the Beatles and the Stones, the current wave of musicians are simply marketing "flash in the pans" that have no staying power. The Beatles and the Stones are great, but ultimately their music represents reruns which is indicative of the artistic void that has been created by the media moguls. Take Hollywood for example; How many times are we going to remake King Kong, the Pink Panther and just about every TV show from the 1960's? Instead of computer generated graphics, how about some creative plots and well written scripts? I can't believe we've run out of ideas in Hollywood, so much so that they find it necessary to reproduce old stories. Does the younger generation really lack any form of creativity? I seriously doubt it. They're just not being allowed to express it and, instead, we have to sit through reruns. I'm becoming increasingly concerned what effect this stagnation in our culture will ultimately have on us. To me, it represents complacency and signals a decline in our ability to strive to achieve. It also represents another indication of the "micromanagement" going on in the corporate world. Consider this, if the Beatles and Stones were to emerge

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in today's world, they probably wouldn't be allowed to practice their craft.

Oh well, I guess I'll go home, turn on the television and listen to Led Zeppelin sell Cadillacs.

DECEMBER 12, 2005 - SERVICE (THE LACK THEREOF)

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is "Service" (*the lack thereof*). Recently I stopped by a new cigar shop to buy some cigars. I went into their humidor and checked their inventory. There were several custom-rolled cigars made on the premises as well as the usual commercial cigars from the Dominican Republic and the Honduras. I happened to find my favorite (which is a Hoyo de Monterey, Sultan/Maduro) and took a dozen of them up to the cashier for purchase. Ahead of me in line was a gentleman also purchasing a dozen cigars all of the same kind. I noticed the cashier was painfully slow in scanning and recording each cigar. Next to her at the counter was the shop owner who was preoccupied reading a magazine. There were other customers also in the shop, all of which were of no concern to the cashier or owner.

What should have been a simple transaction for the guy in front of me took at least ten minutes. Fortunately, I was in no hurry, but I was starting to become impatient nonetheless over a simple purchase. When she finally finished the transaction, the cashier greeted me, took my cigars and began the laborious task of scanning and recording my order (again, a simple transaction turned into a lengthy task). As she processed the last cigar, I pulled out my wallet and presented her with my credit card. She looked at it and said, "Oh, I'm sorry our credit card machine is down right now, do you have cash?"

Of course, I didn't and suddenly I realized that after waiting twenty minutes to make a simple purchase I had come to loggerheads with her over the purchase.

I said, "Is there nothing that can be done?"

"No sir, we need cash."

Interestingly, the shop owner who had been listening to our banter simply kept flipping through his magazine.

I asked, "Can't you take an imprint of my card and process it later when the machine is back up?"

"Oh, no sir, we can't do that."

"In other words, instead of trying to find a way to make this sale happen, you're telling me that I just wasted twenty minutes of my time in your store."

She looked at me dumbfounded and the owner turned another page in his magazine.

I told them this was the last time I would frequent their establishment and stormed out without any cigars. Frankly, I don't think they cared one bit.

I'm sure we have all seen similar situations where there is a lack of decent service, whether it be in a retail shop, restaurant, automotive repair, in the corporate world, or wherever. People are becoming less and less sensitive to customer service. Its like they come down with a bad case of the stupids when dealing with customers.

As I was growing up, I was always taught that the customer was king; that if you took care of the customer they would return the favor with repeat business and provide sparkling references of your business to others. But evidently, the times are changing and teaching good customer service is becoming a rarity. For those of you who really don't care about the customer, I would remind you that everything begins with a sale and the customer should never have to wait to pay the bill. Instead of finding ways not to make a sale, here's an idea; why not try to find ways to make it happen. But I guess that would require a little personal initiative which is something that is also sorely lacking these days.

DECEMBER 19, 2005 - HOLIDAY MADNESS

My "Pet Peeve of the Week" is entitled "Holiday Madness." December is the month where we celebrate a lot of things:

- Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, although the exact date of His birth is questionable.
- The Jews celebrate Chanukah which represents a lengthy battle where the Syrians were driven out of Israel.
- Kwanzaa has been around since 1966, and unlike Christmas and Chanukah that are religious in nature, Kwanzaa celebrates African culture.
- We then celebrate the end of one year, and the birth of a new one.

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There is so much to celebrate during December that I always felt sorry for those people who were born during this month and are typically gypped out of the parties and presents they deserve.

Comedian Lewis Black recently commented on the encroachment of Christmas on other holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Halloween, that the retailers won't be happy until the Christmas season encompasses Labor Day and the 4th of July. Lewis has a point. It is simple economics that drives this year-end holiday frenzy and little else. You don't really believe those people fighting in WalMart over a DVD player, digital camera, or iPod are really thinking about "*peace on earth, good will towards man*" do you? Hardly. The holidays bring out both the best and worst in all of us, which is a shame as this is not what they were intended for. It is supposed to be a time of reflection and renewal, not traffic jams and chaos in the shopping aisles. Ever wonder what these year-end holidays would be like if the exchange of gifts were removed from the formula? They would probably be as subdued and respectful as Veteran's Day or Memorial Day. But this will never happen as the retailers and the media holds us in their tight grip. We'll now spend the next 90-120 days paying everything off. I'll just be happy when the tinsel comes down, the house is cleaned up, the relatives go home, and everything returns to normal. At least until April 16th which is Easter Sunday and the sales cycle starts all over again.

END

About the Author

Tim Bryce is the Managing Director of M. Bryce & Associates (MBA) of Palm Harbor, Florida and has 30 years of experience in the field of Information Resource Management (IRM). He is available for training and consulting on an international basis.

"PRIDE" Special Subject Bulletins can be found at:

<http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/mbass.htm>

They are also available through the "PRIDE Methodologies for IRM Discussion Group" at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mbapride/>

You are welcome to join this group if you are so inclined.

The "Management Visions" Internet audio broadcast is available at:

<http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/mv.htm>

Also, be sure to read Tim's Blog at:

<http://blogs.ittoolbox.com/pm/irm/>

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<http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/pride/>
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