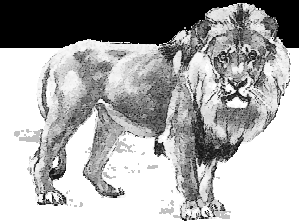


Tech Talk



National *What* Month?

After such a blustery and blizzard-filled winter, most of us are ready for things to warm up. We are looking forward to March 21st, the traditional first day of Spring. It's also time for "Spring Cleaning", both household and on-line. But what else is March famous for?

Here's a partial list:

- American Red Cross Month
- Music in Our Schools Month
- Women's History Month
- National Sauce Month
- National Peanut Month
- National Nutrition Month
- National Frozen Food Month
- Irish-American Heritage Month
- Caffeine Awareness Month

... yes that's right, for coffee addicts there is even a Caffeine Anonymous group. Whatever your interests, we hope March is a good month for you!

MAILBOX CLEAN UP 101

— Elizabeth Taylor

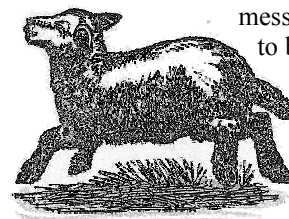
Do you feel buried beneath a mountain of email? Does the task of cleaning it up feel daunting? If you are anything like me, you probably answered yes to both questions. To make matters worse, my husband and business partner is the King of Email Neatness. Don't those people make you sick?? In order to get him off my back and clean up the clutter, I decided to do a little mailbox clean up and thought I would share these tips with you.

To begin with, I had over 2,000 messages in my inbox and my mailbox was taking up over 3,000,000 KB of space. Shocking, I know. I began by trying to start with the oldest messages, and set a goal to delete 100 a day. It seemed like a good enough idea and I figured if I committed to this for a solid month my mailbox would be cleaned up. Right?

...WRONG. With the constant barrage of

email I receive from various newsletters and marketing solicitations — in addition the all of the legitimate email I receive in a day — the 100 I was deleting were quickly being replaced by new mail. Granted, my mailbox wasn't growing as significantly as it had been, but it wasn't shrinking either. I set out with my dear friend Google.com to find a better way...

Set a goal for yourself and set aside some time. For the sake of this article, and mailbox cleanup, I set aside 4 hours with the goal of reducing my inbox to less than 150 messages. I also wanted to bring my total mailbox size to under 2,000,000 KB of space.



(Continued on page 2)

Lies Your Customers Tell You: "You Lost on Price"

— Charles H. Green

Unless you are divinely blessed, you've probably been involved in competitive bids. Some you've won — and some you've lost. And when you've lost, you've probably heard, "Sorry, nice work, but your price was just too high."

If you believe that, you're a sucker. Because it's almost always a lie. Here's why.

Proof You've Been Lied To: Here is an exercise I've done in a hundred seminars. It almost never fails. I ask people, "Think of your most recent competitive loss; raise your hand if your customer told you that you lost on price." Between 20% and 50% of the hands typically go up. Then I say, "Now think of your most recent competitive win; raise your hand if the customer said you won because you were the low bidder." At most, one or two hands go up.

So, 20-50% of the time you lose on price; and yet you almost never win on price.

What's wrong with this picture? In one of

those two situations, the client is lying to you. Which one do you think it is?

Why Would a Customer Lie? Sometimes people lie to cheat, trick or hustle you. But more commonly, people lie to get out of uncomfortable situations. That's what's going on here.

Imagine that the customer has entertained several bids. The easiest way to narrow down the bids internally is to look at overall quality and qualifications. If one offer is clearly inferior, or lacking in qualifications, then it's usually out the door — even if it is priced very low. The bids that make the "final" round are all seen as strong. Some may be strong in quality, some in capabilities, some in track records. How's a customer to make the decision?

Interestingly, those final decisions are rarely made on price. They are made on things like reputation, character, chemistry, trust and confidence.

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Mailbox Clean Up 101

(Continued from page 1)

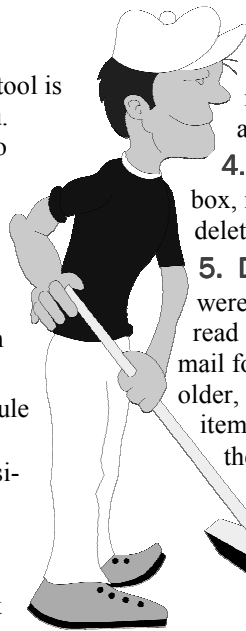
If you use Microsoft Outlook, the Mailbox Cleanup tool is your friend. You can find it under the “Tools” menu. This is where you can view your mailbox size and do several other cleanup functions. If you are using a different email client besides Outlook, you should be able to find similar functions, although the naming conventions might be different (i.e., it might have “filters” instead of “rules”).

I don't think there is any right or wrong way to clean up your mailbox, but here are the steps that I took:

1. Set up rules for repeat emailers. I set up a rule for each employee in our company, each of our vendors, each of our customers, and for my personal business. In Outlook, you can use the Rules Wizard.

2. Delete your deleted items. Since you didn't want them in the first place – get rid of them. Right click on the “Deleted Items” folder (for non-Outlook users, it might be called “Trash”) and choose Empty.

3. Eliminate messages with large attachments. In Mailbox Cleanup, look for the button next to “Find items larger than ___ kilobytes.” I filled in 5120 KB (which is 5 MB). Here you can select one or more messages to delete – but be careful, if you just press “Delete”, it moves them to the Deleted Items folder, and then you will have to go back to the previous step! You can delete the messages permanently by using Shift + De-



lete. If you still need the message, but not the attachment, you can open the email, right click the attachment, and choose “remove”. Then save and close the message.

4. Sort through the junk. Go through your junk mail box, make sure there is nothing legitimate in there, and then delete.

5. Delete old messages. Lastly, I deleted messages that were over a year old. Oddly enough, many of them were unread forwards or marketing pieces! If you need to keep older mail for a reason, consider archiving. To find messages that are older, look in Mailbox Cleanup for the button next to “Find items older than ___ days.” I filled in 360, and then followed the same steps as above.

The results: Folders – I went from 7 to 12 (plus sub-folders), with rules directing mail to each folder. My mailbox size ended up at 1430951 KB, and I now have only 12, yes 12, messages in my inbox—after starting with over 2,000!!

Moving forward. I am vowing to take time at the end of each day to go through my inbox and delete any unnecessary emails. Anything left in my inbox will be treated as a “to-do” list item, and deleted or filed once the action is completed.

I hope that this article will inspire you to try to make your inbox more manageable. If I can do it, anyone can.



“You Lost on Price”

(Continued from page 1)

Now, assume you're a customer, and you have to tell a competent bidder who came in second or third that they've lost. Do you tell them they lost because they have an inferior reputation or character? Do you tell them they didn't get selected because you didn't have chemistry? Or you didn't have confidence in them? Do you say they lost because you didn't trust them? Very few customers will have that honest discussion with a bidder they have turned down, and may not speak to again soon, if ever. It is that honesty that makes them uncomfortable to begin with.

In addition, buyers have to justify their decisions up the line. How many of them, if asked by higher-ups to explain, will say, “We went with Seller X because, well, we had good chemistry with them and I trust them.” That's not an easy internal sell in the quantitative land of business these days. Fortunately for buyers, there is a far easier solution close at hand.

Why Price is the Perfect Lie. Price is the perfect solution to the buyer's problem. First, it's quantitative. It's a metric, it's the denominator in return-on-investment calculations. Who can argue with measurements?

Second, the buyer holds all the cards. Presumably, none of the sellers know what the others' bids were. And they don't want to know – because the only thing worse than knowing your price was too high, is knowing the real reason you lost: reputation, character, chemistry, trust, and confidence.

If a man asks a woman out on a date for Friday night, and she doesn't want to go, the most gracious way for her to decline is to say, “So sorry, I'm busy Friday.” Often the man will read between the lines, particularly if this happens twice. After all, it allows him to save face too.

That's how it is with price. It's the socially acceptable lie, the thing that lets everyone go home feeling not too bad about themselves, having avoided an uncomfortable social situation. Whew.

What To Do Next Time It Happens. Here's the final proof price is a lie: if a customer really did like you, and really did want to work with you, yet felt your price was too high — what would they do? They would most likely go to you and say, “Listen, we really like you guys and want to work with you — but your price is just too far out for us. Can't we figure something out together? We want this to work.”

When price is given as a reason for rejection, what's really going on is a failure of relationship. You can't fix a relationship issue by cutting your price. Nor can you fix the relationship retroactively after you've been told you lost the bid. However: you can learn from it, and you can set the stage for the next bid.

This guest article is courtesy of Charles H. Green, Founder/CEO Trusted Advisor Associates, www.trustedadvisor.com; (originally published in The Customer Collective, <http://tinyurl.com/4lryxel>)

Tales from the Trenches

— Nancy A. Ridenhour

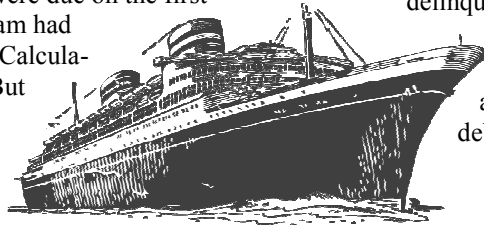
This is a series that will allow you an opportunity to look into your colleagues' real world business lives, in order to learn from their mistakes - without having to make those mistakes! These are actual incidents from real organizations. No names or other identifying information is included.

Many companies are now spending time and energy isolating and correcting the root causes of data problems. They have apparently tired of continuously applying quick fixes or patches. Patches are temporary and can become costly. One needs to find and fix the real cause.

Underwater archaeologist Robert D. ("Bob") Ballard said that he "followed the debris" to find The Titanic. I understand what he means. This is the same method that I use to find computer problems.

Some years ago, I was the Project Leader for the Consumer Loan system at a major bank. One night the main update program stopped because the "next payment due date" field on one loan was in the past, not the future like it was supposed to be. The team had to apply a patch to meet production deadlines, but we started looking for the cause the next day.

We made a list of all programs that updated this field. We also noted that the loan's payments were due on the first of the month, and that the program had stopped during the Late Charge Calculation on the 10th of the month. But we weren't able to find the root cause right away. We had to continue with other work, but kept this one in our minds.



A few months later, the program stopped again. It had run into a similar problem involving payment dates and calculations, but this time it was a loan in a town where a layoff had recently occurred. A couple of people who had worked on the system before us remembered seeing the problem, but said it quit happening after awhile. We made a note of the time period when the previous group was supporting the system.

More Months passed. Our bank acquired a smaller institution, and we were assigned to convert their system to ours. During testing, I assigned a team member to process some of the loans from the merged bank. Suddenly she came in screaming, "It did it!" We were able to reproduce the same problem that we had seen in production, but in the test system. We just had to find why.

We checked the loan data and determined that we needed to set the system for month-end processing. Then we ran the process for the last night of the month and checked the loan data. The date for the next payment had not moved as it should have.

We had finally isolated the problem. The code in the main update program was written so that any loan with a payment date on the first of the month never went through the "delinquency check" code, and therefore the field did not change.

Yes, it took some time. However, in the end we were able to find a permanent solution. By "following the debris", the system led us to the root cause.

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www.martybucella.com



Facebook For Dogs

It's a Tool, Silly!

IT (Information Technology) is really interesting, neat, cool, fascinating, enthralling, engaging... It is the neatest thing since sliced bread, at least to us!

However, as tech specialists, we have to remind ourselves that IT is just a tool for our clients. It's a Tool, Silly! This is what we tell ourselves here when we get too wrapped up in the technology.

We understand that IT is a *tool* that our clients use to do their work and to run their business. Just like a person does not buy a drill to buy a drill, they buy a drill because they want a hole!

Even though we love servers, Intel Xeon Eight Core processors, Gigabytes of memory, Terebytes of disk space, as much bandwidth as we can get, NASs, SANs, WANs, LANs, VLANs, RAIDs, virtualization, etc., we know that what you *really* want is to communicate with your clients, sell your products, build your buildings, produce your products, run reports, pay your people, and execute your mission!!



March 2011



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Inquiring Minds...

— Bob Jenner

Give yourself the “Gift of the Green” this Saint Patrick’s Day!

Did you ever stop to think how much energy is consumed and heat created by leaving your computer at home on all the time? For the average desktop computer, it’s about the same amount of energy as a three way light bulb on the highest setting, or about 150 watts. You don’t leave high wattage lights on all day do you? Here are some other pointers you can use to keep your computer energy usage down and put more “Green” in your pocket!

Look for the “Energy Star” label. Energy Star Certified computers (as well as other appliances) offer considerable energy savings. Some can even qualify for rebates from your local electrical company!

Consider using a laptop as your primary computer. Laptops typically consume less than one third of the power that a desktop does, even with an external monitor attached.

If you haven’t already, switch to an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) monitor. LCD monitors use 30% to 50% less energy, and they also easier on your eyes than the older CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) monitors.

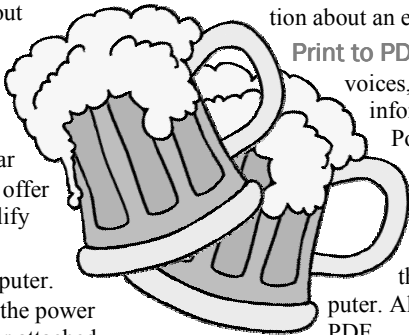
Configure “Power Savings” mode on your monitor and on your computer. Many monitors have a power savings mode that put the monitor to “sleep” after a period of inactivity. Most computer operating systems do this as well, including Microsoft Windows XP, Vista and Windows 7 (go to Control Panel / Power Options).

Don’t use highly graphic Screen Savers. Contrary to popular opinion, screen savers do not save any energy and can actually stop some systems from entering their power saving sleep mode.

Purchase a “pre-built” computer instead of a “hand built” one. Pre-built systems from HP, Lenovo or Dell are more energy efficient because they have been designed as a unit. The power supplies and fans are all designed for the correct amount of airflow and limited noise.

Recycle your old computers! Because computers can contain toxic materials like lead or mercury (now called e-waste), it’s no longer legal to throw them into the local dumpster. If you have old computer systems, monitors, printers, phone systems and other electronics that you need to get rid of, give us a call. One of our engineers can pick up small items the next time we stop by,

or if you have a lot of equipment to get rid of, we can schedule a pickup with one of our electronics recycling vendors for a small fee. Many cities have electronics recycling “round-ups” a couple of times a year for free. Check with your local chamber of commerce for more information about an e-waste event near you.



Print to PDF for electronic filing. Many people print emails, invoices, and receipts in order to keep a record of important information. Instead, consider “printing” to PDF (Adobe Portable Document Format) files. This will save paper and allow easy access to the documents. There are a number of free PDF “printer” systems available, from PrimoPDF (www.primopdf.com), BullZip PDF (www.bullzip.com) and many others. You just install the software and it creates a virtual printer on your computer. Almost anything you can print to paper, you can print to PDF.

This is just a short list of things you can do to help keep the “green” in your pocket this Saint Patrick’s day. Who knows, maybe you will save enough to buy some corned beef & cabbage, and a green beer for you and a friend!

Don’t Rely On Luck!

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