BRIGHT IDEAS
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DECEMBER 16, 1983

WHEN THE BRIGHT IDEAS PROGRAM WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 1982, WE THOUGHT OF IT AS JUST A ONE-TIME EVENT -- A LITTLE PROJECT TO GET EVERYONE THINKING VERY SERIOUSLY ABOUT THEIR WORK FOR A FEW WEEKS.

BUT THE RESPONSE QUICKLY SHOWED THAT SOMETHING MUCH DEEPER HAD BEEN GENERATED. THE IDEAS YOU'VE JUST SEEN WERE ONLY THREE OUT OF MORE THAN 13,000 BRIGHT IDEAS THAT CAME IN -- A BLIZZARD OF CREATIVE SUGGESTIONS FROM EVERY PART OF THE COMPANY, TOUCHING ON EVERY ASPECT OF THE BUSINESS. MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN THAT, THOUGH, WAS THE WIDESPREAD AND INTENSE DESIRE TO BE A PART OF MAKING CONTROL DATA A BETTER -- A MORE EFFICIENT -- A MORE PROFITABLE COMPANY.

IN THE END, IT JUST MADE YOU PROUD TO BE PART OF CONTROL DATA BECAUSE IT CONFIRMED ONE OF THE COMPANY'S MOST BASIC ASSUMPTIONS: THAT THOSE OF US WHO WORK HERE CARE VERY DEEPLY ABOUT WHAT WE DO -- CARE ENOUGH TO WANT TO DO IT BETTER. THIS IS AN ATTITUDE YOU CAN'T BUY AND YOU CAN'T TEACH, BUT IF IT'S THERE -- IF PEOPLE WANT TO CONTRIBUTE, BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES, AND AREN'T AFRAID TO TAKE A CHANCE -- THEN SUCCESS IF INEVITABLE.
CERTAINLY CONTROL DATA WAS FOUNDED ON THOSE PRINCIPLES. CREATIVITY AND RISK-TAKING GO HAND IN HAND, AND ITS HISTORY IS FULL OF BOTH. IN TOUGH TIMES IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE STRENGTH OF IDEAS THAT HAS PULLED US THROUGH, AND IN GOOD TIMES WE'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO PLANT THE SEEDS FOR MORE IDEAS.

SO THE BRIGHT IDEAS PROGRAM FITS RIGHT INTO CONTROL DATA'S HERITAGE AND HAS BECOME PART OF OUR HISTORY. AND IT ONLY SEEMED REASONABLE TO DO IT AGAIN -- WHICH WE WILL THIS YEAR.

IF THE PROGRAM COULD GENERATE 13,000 IDEAS AND A MILLION DOLLARS IN SAVINGS THE FIRST TIME AROUND, THIS YEAR WE SHOULD DO EVEN BETTER. ONCE AGAIN WE'RE CALLING ON EACH OF YOU AS INDIVIDUALS, TO STEP FORWARD AND SUGGEST HOW YOU THINK YOUR JOB CAN BE DONE BETTER. IS THERE A FORM THAT'S TOO LONG, A PROCESS THAT COULD BE STREAMLINED, A NEW SALES TECHNIQUE YOU CAN TRY? EVERYONE WHO'S EVER HAD A JOB HAS FIGURED OUT A WAY TO IMPROVE IT. SOME OF YOU HAVE FIGURED OUT SIX OR EIGHT WAYS. THE PURPOSE OF BRIGHT IDEAS IS TO GET ALL THOSE THOUGHTS DOWN ON PAPER, AND MAKE A COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE IMPROVEMENTS.

OVER THE YEARS, CONTROL DATA HAS HAD MORE THAN IT'S SHARE OF QUANTUM LEAPS -- IN TECHNOLOGY, IN STRATEGY, IN BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY -- AND THOSE, TOO, ARE THE RESULT OF ALL THE SMALLER STEPS THAT WENT BEFORE. THE GREAT LEAPS OF CREATIVITY ALMOST ALWAYS OCCUR IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DAY-TO-DAY INNOVATION. A LITTLE IMPROVEMENT HERE, A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VIEW OF SOMETHING THERE. A CULTURE OF ENTHUSIASM AND CREATIVITY.
AS TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER EVEN SEEMINGLY MUNDANE IDEAS REALLY MATTER, IT'S WELL TO REMEMBER THAT IT'S ALWAYS THE LITTLE THINGS THAT ARE THE UNDOING OF GREAT UNDERTAKINGS.

IT'S ALMOST AXIOMATIC THAT AFTER A SPACE SHUTTLE LAUNCH IS DELAYED, IT'S DISCOVERED THAT THE CAUSE WAS SOME DOLLAR-AND-FIFTY-NINE CENT PART THAT GOT OVERLOOKED. SO BRIGHT IDEAS IS ENCOURAGING EVERY ONE TO THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS. THE LITTLE THINGS AS WELL AS THE BIG ONES. AND I CAN TELL YOU THAT ALL OF YOUR IDEAS WILL BE HEARD. WE KNOW THAT CREATIVITY IS HARDER TO MAINTAIN THE LARGER A COMPANY GETS. FORMS, REPORTS, AND STRUCTURE AREN'T NORMALLY CONDUCIVE TO EXPRESSING NEW IDEAS. AND IN A BIG COMPANY THERE'S A TENDENCY TO THINK THINGS DON'T MATTER, THAT NO ONE WILL NOTICE AND NOTHING WILL HAPPEN. BUT, BELIEVE ME, THAT'S NOT SO. CONTROL DATA NEEDS YOUR IDEAS -- EVERY ONE OF THEM.

SO THAT'S WHAT BRIGHT IDEAS IS ALL ABOUT. DURING THIS YEAR'S BRIGHT IDEAS PROGRAM, AND FOR THAT MATTER LONG AFTER THAT, I LOOK FORWARD TO MORE GOOD IDEAS FROM EACH OF YOU.