Is the IT Department still in charge?
By Paperitalo Staff

As most of you know, I engage in a number of activities in our beloved pulp and paper industry. In one endeavor, I operate a small manufacturers' rep business.

One of the principals I represent offers high volume, low unit price products. Each Monday, without fail, they send me a report on who ordered this product the previous week. When I say "who ordered" let me clarify, as that is where the problem lies. Their report list locations and addresses. There is no contact information, i.e., not a clue as to the individual that ordered the product or their telephone number. There are columns on the form for this information, but it is always blank.

I called them up. They agree that the columns exist on the form. They agree that it would be nice if I knew who the human being was that actually placed the order. Then things break down. The IT department is too busy to change the way they do things in order fill in these two vital columns. Might I ask what the #@$?#@ they are too busy doing? Personal contact is vital in sales, perhaps the most important thing.

Case 2. Another organization with which I am familiar has the most inane and impossible website. It is difficult to find things and things that actually are there and were formerly visible are now hidden (you can find them if you were anal enough to have originally saved the exact URL of the page—in other words the pages still exist, there is just no way to get to them from the website). The "new" website that is going to fix all these problems is at least a year behind its promised launch date as we speak. The so-called managers of this task have lost all their credibility.

Now, folks, and this is no advertisement, just a demonstration (and some ammunition you may use to awaken the prima donnas in your own IT department), but little old Jim runs a few websites himself. They are: www.taii.com, www.globalpapermoney.org and www.nipimpressions.com. The oldest domain name among the bunch (although it has been through many redesigns) is

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www.taii.com , which we started in 1995. The newest is less than 6 months old. Some sites I designed myself, some were designed by professionals. It is just no big deal to do a website these days. By the way, I also have time to make sales calls, do consulting projects, write and keep my invoice printer spinning. If the day is going well, I have been known to even have time to take a nap around lunch time. In other words, I am not having to work day and night in order to keep these websites and everything else I do current.

The IT department is a tool and a means to an end, not the other way around.

So is your IT department still telling you what to do? Tell them what to do—it is so 1980's for them to be dictating what reports and data you can receive.

Hopefully, your safety records are being kept accurately and neatly, but it would worthwhile for you to check. These records are no matter to be joked around about. Be safe and we will talk next week. ##

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