

COMBUSTIBLE NETWORKS

YEAR ONE

HALLETT GERMAN

Combustible Networks - Year1

An Incomplete Work

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Image Credit

Christopher Macsurak

Preface

Silently, this story has sat on the shelf since April 2002. Once completed, it would have covered the fifteen-year career of one IT staffer. It was an ambitious undertaking. Somewhere along the way, I halted further progress to focus on other activities. However, now seems an appropriate time to make this unique incomplete work publically accessible. Much of the original wording was kept. Comments are provided throughout the book on the author’s intent and planned direction.

Hoping that you enjoy this offering.

H.G.

[This book went through three different beginnings. The first approach was leaving/finding the journal in the time capsule. The second approach is the Prologue below. The third approach is covered in Chapter 1 – the “Corporate Disobedience” Chapter about Year 5. This probably would have been in the final version. Whether the same characters below would show up in the epilogue was never decided.]

Prologue

Minutes from the Society for the Preservation of Corporate Life

Attending:
Charles T. Parker
Luisa Jackson
Johnny Van
Yorsa Kaufmann

Topics:

1. Declining attendance at our meeting.
2. Recent finds.

Discussion:

1. Attendance has been slowly going down. We started the year with fifteen members and are now down to our core four. Society members, what are we doing wrong? We surveyed past members and the main theme was that there was no interest in preserving past corporate artifacts.
2. Luisa Jackson was the highlight of the meeting with her dramatic reading of selections from two journals from the Harvey Corporation. Research showed that the Harvey Corporation is still in operation. Prudence Harvey III (Johnny and Tilly Harvey's daughter) is ably running the company. She is reportedly working on a mega-merger with Mountainside Consulting. The merger will result in the largest inter-planetary computer consulting company ever.

Next Meeting: CEO Bonuses: A Fifty Year Study.

[Chapters 1-11 was part of Section 1. It had the following section title "Year 1: Three Managers in One Year, My First Year. Each chapter was to contrast a day in the life of an IT worker and their CEO. If writing this today, I might have made this character a CIO instead of a CEO. Both tales take place sometime in the future.]

Chapter 1 – Year 15. Month 9, Day 22: Corporate Disobedience

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From Corporate Disobedience Chapter 51:

Corporate Headquarters Room 302

It was the first time ever that I stood in silent protest during a staff meeting. Typically, I would not resort to such extremes in public. However, I have had enough. Our company, the Harvey Corporation, was a few steps away from financial disaster. Up to that moment, my co-workers could do was get into ferocious arguments about which electronic messaging system should be used. The ironic part that was both were proprietary electronic messaging systems and already well out of date. It was a decision that would make little difference even if the company were financially stable.

It did not matter what happened to me after my unexpected behavior. For a brief shining moment, I felt free from the rules of corporate life. I had momentarily gotten the company to

consider something other than to follow the self-destructive path that it had chosen. I was still smiling as I felt some unhappy meeting facilitator tried to push me back in a chair. Other meeting attendees frantically were calling security so they can resume their meeting of little importance. Lewis kept staring at me and commented that he did not realize my body was in such good shape. Sexist pig! I do not remember being removed from the meeting room or if I put up a struggle. I just recall a sense of accomplishment worth the cost and a sense of peace from knowing that my brief corporate career was at an end.

I am sure that my husband, James Ford would soon be mulling over the possibilities of divorce or institutionalizing me for a lengthy period. No doubt, my children Tina, age 9, and Bryant age 17 would be ashamed of me and forget the earlier days of relative bliss. I could see my parents carefully thinking over their statements for the six P.M. news. The world would be thinking, "What went wrong? I would have responded, "I never stopped caring." After a long pause, I would point to a large document with well-worn pages and a victim of many rewrites. It was titled, "Corporate Disobedience: 15 Years of Silent Protest"

CEO's Journal Corporate Headquarters CEO's Office

Tail of a Rabid Dog! What a crappy week! It is getting near that time again – the public release of our quarterly earnings. That event brings the snakes come out of the woodwork. The worst of the lot is that viper Dixon. Of all the analysts following the company, he will stop at nothing to get a jump on what our earnings will be. His works for the well-known financial analyst firm of Boyle, Hooks, and Danbert. He is a powerful foe with his brilliant mind and no ethical sense. Fortunately, we can usually find his leaks in the company before they do any serious damage. The last one was an employee in Finance. Too bad that he turned out to be some zitface. It was a family guy that placed the need for college tuition over company loyalty. We caught him during one of his regular meetings with Dixon. That was the end of him. He was fired for his traitorous actions and things went downhill for him from there. Six months later, he was rumored to be in jail for robbery or working as a towel boy at a fitness center. It does not matter his end-result. He deserved whatever happened to him.

Because of a variety of events, we are starting to lose the confidence and trust of our employees. We have two rounds of Reduction of Force and suddenly the remaining employees act ungrateful for keeping their jobs. After all, it is just the cost of doing business. If you have declining revenues and increased costs, you are reluctantly forced to do something drastic to meet your financial targets. It is always an ongoing balancing act trying to keep stockholders, institutional investors, analysts, government watchdog bureaus, customers, and employees happy (in that order). The financial target of one group may be in conflict with another's. In addition, many in the financial world are nervous with our declining sales targets. Unfortunately, it has been more expensive to gain market share in some of the outreaching galaxies. Folks there seem suspicious of outsiders. The funny part is that everyone on those worlds used to be an outsider.

Yet, one desperate act has stayed with me today. Out of the blue, one promising manager stands up in silent protest during a staff meeting. Her name is Jenny Eden Ford. One crazy act and fifteen years of good work and a solid team player has shot to hell. That is too bad. I was impressed when we first met early in her career. I think that we have the best employees on this planet and she was representative of our staff.

I want to tell all those depending on or working for our company's success to have patience. We are just going through a few bad patches. A few more quarters with some of our new data center support offerings and we will be back again in Big Profit Alley! I would add that we also want our stock earnings to be healthy and grow. Especially for those that have sizable stock options. Such as myself, CEO, Johnny Harvey.

Chapter 2 – Year 0 Month 1 Day 1: “I was Young and Eager Once, Once.”

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From Corporate Disobedience Chapter 1:

October

Cubicle HQab012a, Field Office

It was 5 a.m. when I arrived at the Harvey Corporation for my first day of work. I had with me that first box of essential items – personal pictures/posters, technical books, e-mail addresses, software files. For three weeks, I have been waiting to start work. It is for one of the largest companies in fast-growing Rain County and a top 25 company in the world. Soon, I would be working as a support analyst in their third-level Internet infrastructure support group. My organization-to-be includes 25 other analysts of various ages and musical tastes. I had met most of them during my previous two interviews. Now it is 5:15 a.m. and I am still waiting by the entrance. Still, I have no access to my cubicle and no e-mail access. I am so anxious to send that first series of e-mails to my friends and families with my new contact information.

Around 5:30, one of my co-workers, the Oldster, strolled in. He had been in the Internet application organization from the beginning. He seemed to know everyone and something about all of the company application environments. He recognized me and immediately was taken aback. Then he recovered and said something like it had been a long time since he had seen an enthusiastic, young woman first thing in the morning. I gave him a fake punch and we headed upstairs. Oldster used his all-important badge access to let me through the lobby doors to the office entrance, and then he showed me to my cubicle.

Finally, I had a desk at the company. However, my cubicle was not such a welcoming space. In fact, it was just the opposite. Apparently, my new corporate work area was the organization's dumping grounds. On and around my desk were boxes of empty file folders and various office supplies, computer manuals that were faded beyond legibility, HR policies from five years before, six generations of company policy manuals. And of course, none of this mess was current. In addition, there were many other “ancient” artifacts that I would rather not describe. Later, I found out that the organization's staff was always too busy to have time to clean up a new employee's office. The only thing that the staff did was leave some basic manuals (such as how to send e-mail, using the company's communications and computing systems.) Happily, a fresh tablet was provided. On reflection, if I knew that earlier, then maybe my expectations would have been different.

It did not matter how much crap there was around my desk. I did not mind that the office walls were only five feet high. It was my office. I found a trash receptacle nearby and threw out the more outdated and useless piles. Slowly, things were shaping up. Everything in my first box of essential items had been unpacked and found a place. Other members of my organization

came in and we had short conversations. Superficial words like “welcome aboard” and the like. I joined in breakfast with a few of them. Afterwards, I walked over to orientation.

Officially, I was supposed to show up at the office at 8:45 and go straight to the orientation room. As I said earlier, I could not wait to get started. The all-day orientation covered topics of future importance such as vacation policies, health insurance, ethical behavior, and company history. Each speaker loved their subject and did not care if the new employees understood the topic or not. Here is what I captured about the company history:

Tommy Harvey ran an all-hours gambling establishment while still in his 30s. But this activity was not appealing to his driving nature. He wanted to start and grow a legitimate business. As a visionary, he grasped technical issues quickly. He saw that there was money to be in computers and more importantly computer infrastructure support and consulting. He sold the gambling place and learned as much as he could about this new field. This included breaking into computer manufacturers, data center, and stealing competitor documents.

Soon he was open for business with support contract prices one-third less than the existing computer manufacturers and data centers. He hired young men and later women who he could mold in his own image – driven to succeed at any cost. These would be employees who would be responsive to the customers while the same time looking for opportunities to expand Harvey’s consulting income. The goal was to make it so their business customers could not run without the Harvey Corporation. The approach worked. Income came rolling in. The customer list grew to twenty-five states after ten years. Twenty years later, the business expanded to have revenues from all fifty states, fifteen countries, and ten galaxies. The company was at the top of its game with its 100,000 employees and partnerships with the top computing and networking companies. Soon they reached the coveted goal of successfully charging a premium for their services. Harvey’s was listed in White Collar Magazine as the top company to work. This was no doubt due to generous benefits like 1-month vacation on starting, and bonuses every two months.

But there could be holes in the company structure as well. The organization chart had many executives and great redundancy. In addition, all of the new employees seem to come from the same mold – to make their name regardless of the cost. Did I really want to be here in five or ten years???

Finally, the all day orientation is over and I can go home. I left with my new company badge and accounts/passwords. I had knowledge burnout for one day and was far too tired to think any more about it.

CEO’s Journal

Corporate Headquarters CEO’s Office

Whenever I need inspiration, I look at great-granddad’s picture. I wonder what Tommy Harvey would say about his organizational creation today. He died while the company had just celebrated its eight birthday. After that, his children, Joseph, Maxwell, and Prudence ran the business.

Rather than initiating a power struggle, they decided to work together and split their responsibilities. Maxwell was a natural with finances and operations. Joseph loved the technical and building services to meet customer needs. Prudence focused on growing the company. Together they expanded the company from a regional to a national and then to an international and interplanetary company. Their children continued to build on their success. My father, Phillip and his cousin Joseph Jr bought partial ownership of several computer networking and

data center companies and served on their board of directors. They had the manufacturers and networking companies plus their customers eating out of their hands.

I have tried to continue that proud tradition with my brother Phillip Jr and sister Prudence II. Even though the revenue and net income are as high as ever, I have my worries. Where do I begin? Perhaps with our sales people and consultants get poached by the 40X Corporation among others. Some top customers are complaining they are not getting the service they paid for. Different regions are providing non-uniform levels of service. Too many VPs are interested in only extending their empires and not about the company as a whole. Employee turnover has gone up five percent this year.

But there is always one thing that is guaranteed to cheer me up. That is Tilly James, my true love and CEO of Utrewo Software currently out of town visiting her folks. She is lively, bright, charming, and tender simultaneously. Tilly's twin sister and COO of Belaunch.com, Kerana, loves spending nights overpowering her male sexual conquests. She is very aggressive, ruthless, and rules through fear. Back to talking about me... My fear is spending a lot of time at home.

Why is home such a hellhole for me? I had married the wrong woman. There was a time that I was young and bowed to my family's wishes rather than setting those wishes. In their own way, my mother and father had meant the best when pushing me into marriage. So, after a very public ceremony, we retreated into a very private and awkward time together. It has been hours of obvious incompatibility ever since. We decided to allow ourselves a small measure of happiness. She spends time with her discreet partners. And quietly, I do the same. It works well. Thank goodness there are no kids. I thought often about divorce. However, it would be financially messy and Tanya would end up with some of my company shares. That is unacceptable. This company is my major energy focus. Fortunately, Tanya is comfortable with our arrangement and has no plans to divorce.

I pass the lonely hours writing mysteries. Right now, I am writing one about a CEO that is a after-hours corporate detective. It is time to mull things over with Tony Jameson. He is an old college chum and it always helped me see new possibilities that I did not see before.

[So what happens to Jenny and Johnny? Find out by downloading the rest of the story at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/308413> Other works by the author can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/hallettgermanfiction/> including the Amazi Chronicles, Corporate Intent, and Olivia Plymouth series and Ghosts vs. Robots!]