



# CUTTINGS

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

## WHERE RADICAL IS ROUTINE

**GE** is rarely out of the business press. Often it is the leadership style and practices of CEO Jack Welsh that get the headlines, but even in Jack's empire, the GE plant at Durham, North Carolina is in a league of its own.

The plant makes the engines for the Boeing 777. 170 employees and one boss make up the workforce (yes, ONE boss—everyone reports directly to the plant manager). There are nine teams who produce the engines, each being responsible for the total production from start to finish. Their only directive: the date the engine is to be delivered. All other decisions: who does what, training, vacations, workflow, performance improvement, discipline, recruitment... are all team based

There are only three grades of technician, based on skill level, and each has its own fixed wage rate, so everyone knows who earns what. There is no time clock, and of course each team member has an email

address, Internet, voice mail, and a shared desk. The plant manager sits in the middle of the production floor, some 20 feet away from the engines manufactured in her (yes, her) plant.

What about quality control where each engine has 10,000 parts and when you have tolerances of less than the width of a human hair in seals measuring a metre across? It is certainly a living example of motivation by personal satisfaction in a good job not money.

And there are a number of other 'motivators' not present: no offices, no gym, no windows, no well-stocked break-rooms, canteen meals are served in Styrofoam containers, there are no stock options, the only way to get a pay rise is to do sufficient study and training to become a tech-2 or tech-3. Yet staff turnover is less than 5%.

The people at GE/Durham don't think that their job is to make jet engines, they think that their job is to make jet engines *better*. A quote from a team member: "I had never worked in this kind of environment before.

The workforce is highly skilled and highly motivated—and highly demanding as well."

So to get hired at GE/Durham, there is a full day of interviews, group activities and presentations. Recently the plant manager, Paula Sims decided to retire, and two candidates for her job were subjected to a full day of interviewing and screening by the technicians at the plant. Robert McEwan who supervises the plant for GE summed up the feedback from the teams as "10 times better than what I got from my peers."

But an article about GE cannot be complete without a mention of Jack Welsh, who is due to retire on 31 December, 2000. Jack was recently voted manager of the century by Fortune magazine. The above story highlights the difference between what we normally term 'managing' and the real job of providing the environment to be able to excel.

*Fast Company, October 1999*  
*The Ultimate Manager, Fortune, November 1999*

## MORE QUESTIONS

**Q**uestions seem to be the current node for writers and thinkers. You will recall that the value of questioning and asking the right questions has been a theme in **Cuttings** for the last couple of issues.

The latest find in this area comes from John Adams in his new book 'Thinking Today as if Tomorrow Mattered'. John poses a number of challenges for those of us who are concerned with the thinking and direction of companies, organisations and society in general.

At the end of each chapter are questions for reflection, dialogue, contemplation and action. Several

hundred questions are posed throughout the book, all challenging us to do something to create a more sustainable thinking and acting process if we are to pass on any quality of life to future generations.

The questions were distilled from over 1000 generated from a conference that John gave a keynote speech in his role of chair of the sustainable development task force at the World Business Association.

Get the book for the questions alone!

*Thinking Today as if Tomorrow Mattered,*  
*John Adams, Eartheart Enterprises, 2000*  
*ISBN 0-9672859-0-9*  
[www.eartheart-ent.com](http://www.eartheart-ent.com)

## GREETINGS

This is the last issue of **Cuttings** this year, and this century. This is also the first issue to be published primarily on my website—another 'new direction'.

So I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued encouragement and support throughout the years that I have been compiling these ideas.

Also at this time of the year, each of us in our own way celebrates with families and friends. To all of you, my very best wishes, and my hopes for a new millennium that brings more understanding and compassion into the worlds we live and work in.

*Geof Cox*

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# Snippets

*A collection of thought provokers and quotations*

- ✂ "The twentieth century was the age of the machine; the twenty-first century will be the age of people" *Rosabeth Moss Kanter*
- ✂ "To achieve maximum effectiveness, knowledge must be systematically accumulated, shared and purposefully deployed in building core competencies of the firm. It will mean, for example, providing frontline workers with instant access to important information about customers so that their needs can be satisfied and their problems solved quickly." *Tony Hope, INSEAD*
- ✂ "Ignoring people development is not an option for any business. If you want to bring the best out in people you must invest in them, believe in them and trust them to respond." *Jean Tomlin, Prudential*
- ✂ "The one thing we don't want people to do when they get stuck is put their heads down and work harder." *Tom Kelley, IDEO*
- ✂ "A bend in the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the turn." *Chris Paine, AppNet LA*
- ✂ "Top management has to give up its monopoly on strategy. Even in Silicon Valley, the senior vice-president running the last great thing is never going to be the person who invents the next great thing." *Professor Gary Hamel*
- ✂ "We are able to demonstrate a link between the way people feel about their work and the amount customers are prepared to spend in the stores." *Paul Westgarth, Wickes*
- ✂ Effective leaders have the courage to say what they are thinking—and that usually turns out to be what everyone is thinking." *Bill Isaacs*
- ✂ The whole purpose of leadership is having power *with* people—not lording it over them

## The Practice

Roger Harrison heard recently from someone who returned from India. Her group met with the Dalai Lama for several days. The meetings focused on dialoguing what they believed were the 5 most important questions to be considered moving into the new millennium.

The group were asked to come up with five questions before meeting with the Dalai Lama. They asked:

- \* How do we address the widening gap between rich and poor?
- \* How do we protect the earth
- \* How do we educate our children?
- \* How do we help Tibet and other oppressed countries/peoples?
- \* How do we bring spirituality - deep caring for each other - through all disciplines?

The Dalai Lama said all the questions fall under the last one. If we have true compassion, our children will be educated, we will care for the earth, and for those who "have not".

He asked the group: Do you think loving on the planet is increasing or staying the same?

His own response was, "My experience leads me to believe that love IS increasing."

He shared a practice with the group that will increase loving and compassion in the world, and asked everyone attending to go home and share it with as many people as possible.

1. Spend 5 minutes at the beginning of each day remembering we all want the same thing (to be happy and loved) and we are all connected.
2. Spend 5 minutes cherishing yourself and others. Let go of judgements. Breathe in cherishing yourself, and breathe out cherishing others. If the faces of people you are having difficulty with appear, cherish them as well.
3. During the day extend that attitude to everyone you meet - we are all the same, and I cherish myself and you (do it with the grocery store clerk, the client, your family, co-workers, etc.).
4. Stay in the practice, no matter what happens.

## In order to improve customer service...

I recall receiving a letter from my bank a couple of years ago which stated: "In order to improve customer service, we are closing your local branch."

Since then we have been inundated with similar 'improvements' to service. Take the call centre: we dial a (sometimes premium rate) number and then key in information and a series of choices in order to be kept on hold listening to banal music or advertisements—all at the caller's expense. And this is in the interests of 'improving customer service.'

If companies need to re-think their customer service strategy. Recent surveys may help. Sixty percent of Druid survey respondents said the most frustrating thing was being kept on hold. A BT survey found that voicemail irritates customers so much that seven out of ten hang up when they hear a voicemail announcement.

Workers in call centres are among the most stressed employees in work. Customers are also stressed (there may be a connection here!) Anyone for customer service?

*TMI Tempus Issue 21*

### MORE INFORMATION

*Cuttings* is published on the New Directions web-site (address below), where you will find downloadable copies of recent issues and articles, plus connections to source material and reference books. Also on the site you will find information on the international network of consultants and trainers who distribute *Cuttings* and who work together to research, design and provide world-wide consulting and training in management, organisation and individual development across cultures, sectors, subjects, and languages.

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To discuss any ideas or needs that you have and to access the network, please call me direct:

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