

“WRITE THIS NUMBER DOWN”

A global manufacturer was restructuring. Morale was shaky. The field force was concerned and felt disconnected from the executives at corporate headquarters. Did they care? Could these corporate “representatives” be counted on?

This speech was created for the newly named, Deputy General Manager. He had a quick smile and an unruly shock of hair. Both went perfectly with perpetually ruffled suits that never covered his impressive paunch. He was a country boy who grew up in business. Even though he held the company’s most senior U.S. management position, he preferred plain and direct, to fancy and erudite.

The audience was surprised, engaged, and in the end gave him a standing ovation. Most important, they believed him and communication between field to corporate improved. The presentation worked.

Stand up, please. That's right, all of you, come on and stand up. Let's take a seventh inning stretch right now. Yeah, that's great.

(The audience rises.)

Okay, shake it out....get the pumps pumping and the blood flowing.

(Mimic what the audience should do.)

Feel better? Good. Okay, take a seat.

(The audience is seated.)

You are Mazda. That's right. I said you are Mazda.

No matter how you slice it, we're only as good as you are and you're only as good as the dealers are. That's what I need to speak with you about today.

You represent Mazda to the dealers and the customers and we rely on you to take care of things on a day-to-day basis. That means that you manage this business as much as any one of us speaking here today.

All the managers and directors and vice presidents in the world can't make this business work without your enthusiasm and ambition and your full support. And I'll tell you something that might surprise you, we know that.

We're four to six thousand miles away from most of you, but if anybody's got a notion that "...corporate's way away from me and doesn't give a damn how I do...." I'm here to tell you it isn't so.

A lot of us have worked together. You know I'm more than just another pretty face. I've been wholesaling for almost twenty-five years and I want to share something with you.

In all the years I've been in this business I have never worked for a company more committed to producing quality products and providing top notch customer service than ours. And I wouldn't be very happy if it was any other way.

Whatever it takes to get the job done, is what I'm going to do. That's the same attitude I look for in the people I work with.

Now, I've mellowed over the years. I used to have a lot of opinions and I used to be convinced of a lot of things that I'm not so sure about anymore. But I am sure about this; this organization relies on your skills and input every day. We move forward on your enthusiasm and your desire to get the job done.

How well you do your job determines our success.

In business school, professors call this "participation in depth." In plain English what this means is, we are all driving this bus.

What's that mean to you?

It means use your common sense in your day-to-day activities with dealers and customers and relationships with corporate.

We are equipping you with the best tools and training all of us can develop.

Make them work. And if they don't work, experiment, innovate, and initiate.

The extraordinarily high level of competition, calls out loud and clear for fresh ways of thinking and doing.

As a field person you know what the problems are on a daily basis. And if you find a problem, fix it right there and then. Don't wait 'til it festers into something that's going to take an act of Congress -- or a damn lawyer to correct.

Use your common sense. Act on it.

If there was ever a time in our business that called for action and innovation, this is it.

We're going to try to do a lot better job communicating. We want you to do the same.

With the consolidation of six regions, when we speak to the factory, we want to speak with one voice. All of us.

This makes it imperative that you let us know what's going on. Analyze it and tell it like it is. And if a visitor comes to ride with you, show enough courtesy to say the same things to him, as you say to us.

We need to get to the point where we're fixing stuff before it breaks. In fact, every one of today's speakers is working on doing exactly that. Which is one of the reasons why our competitive position is excellent.

Another reason is the major bucks we've put on the line strengthening every aspect of our operation. Also our product planning approach is the most innovative in the industry. And finally, we're sharing resources so that every area has access to our full support capabilities.

Sure, there's going to be bumps in the road. But we've got a hands-on management team. Whatever needs to be done, these people will do.

Okay, get your pencils and paper ready. You're going to need them in a minute.

I said that you are the organization. Your responsibility is to communicate. So is mine. I've always had an open door policy...and as a result I've always had an office full of people.

But given the size of the country I guess I'm going to have an open phone policy as well.

Communicating is a two way street, or a three way street if need be. The communication channel generally goes from field to region and from region to corporate and back the same way.

Since it takes us four months for the factory to respond to a production order situation, our communications have to be fast and accurate.

So if you've got a problem and can't get it resolved through your supervisor, I want you to pick up a phone or drop me a note.

Okay, got your pencils ready? You all have my office number. Can't get me there? Here's my home phone number. Write it down. It's XXX-XXX-XXXX. Schneider, I'll give it to you again: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

I'm not always in there, but I've got voice mail and I will return the call. Or simply leave me a message.

Whatever it takes, that's what I'll do. Count on it. We're all in this together. We all drive the bus. We'll make this company work...together.

Thank you.

