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I N T E R O F F I C E M E M O R A N D U M

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Subject: DOERS AND ANALYZERS

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When I was a sailor, I spent the last fifteen months of World War II in school, training to be an electronic technician. I did fairly well and from this, I received a Second Class Petty Officer's rating, and was sent to sea. Fortunately, the war had just ended. I never wore the two red stripes that came with this rating because in the Navy there were clearly two classes of people--those who had been to sea, and those who had not. The idea of a Second Class Petty Officer having this rating while never having been to sea lumped him with those who were the overhead, rule makers and complainers, not with the doers.

I was not one of the overhead people. I spent fifteen months learning to win the war with electronics. However, I very clearly learned the feeling of difference between those who complained and those who did not. Those who went to sea took responsibility, did things, and often made mistakes. Those who stayed at desks in the States made rules, generated red tape, and criticized those who took responsibility and did things.

Those who criticize, complain and analyze after the fact are inherently more interesting people. They generate more interesting reading, understand things so well, and never make mistakes.

In times of emergency, any organization--whether it be the military, a country, or a company--often puts the doers forth and gets them to do things with success. However, little by little, red tape, the complainers, analysts, and those who give lectures on systems engineering but do not have systems responsibility, end up dominating the situation. If there is not a war or an emergency soon enough, the organization never recovers. This is what happened to Russia, and probably to NASA.

It is important for an organization to define the heroes: those who do things and make mistakes; or those who analyze, criticize, complain, make red tape and never make mistakes. The normal tendency of any social organization is to always make heroes of those who, when something goes wrong, can dig up all the nay sayers who said it should never have been done. The result, of course, is that nothing ever gets done. There is always analysis and lectures on how to get things done, but never anyone to take complete responsibility.

In our business, the equivalent of a doer is one who is a systems person; one who grasps the whole project, all the way from concept through customer satisfaction, payment and the ensuing profit. This kind of person thrives on grasping complex problems and figuring out the details later. A person who takes chances thrives on this. Because they do so much, they know there will be mistakes and yet, the satisfaction comes in the accomplishment of the task.

The person who is a systems person by experience, training or birth thrives in a loose organization. They particularly thrive with poor management, because from this they have great freedom to operate. Often they have great choices of resources and can find people who would love to work with someone who knows what they want to do and will take responsibility for it.

The non-systems person is always frustrated and cannot get things done, because the organization is not perfect. Since the organization is never perfect, they are always safe. They never get anything done, and they can always document why it was impossible to do so.

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