

THE BEST BOSS I EVER HAD

In the early 1980's I had the pleasure of working for Alan McDonald, then the president of Stouffer Foods. Leading a fast-growing company, every month or so Alan would have breakfast in his office with the most recent batch of new employees. A meet and greet kind of event. But more importantly, it was how each of us was introduced to a very clear set of guidelines for decision-making, without which the phenomenal success of that period would not have been possible.

After we exchanged names of spouses and children, and talked about personal aspirations, Alan brought the meeting to a close with a very simple conversation. He said "Each of you will be making decisions on a daily, on even an hourly basis that will impact the future of this company. I won't even be aware of most of them, much less be able to participate in them. It is important that each of you understand completely how decisions are to be made. There is one person given ultimate responsibility for safety, one for quality, one for delivery, and one for cost, yet each of you will impact all four of those objectives. Our decisions must be aligned. There is one and only one top priority: safety. There is one and only one second priority: quality. There is one and only one 3rd priority: delivery. There is one and only one 4th priority: cost. All four are critical to the future of our company, but they are not equal. It is up to you to develop and execute plans that accomplish all four; when you cannot do so, you now know the decision rules."

In the five years I worked for Stouffer's, we had many heated discussions about specific situations, but we never argued about decision-making priority or responsibility. I made the call on delivery, but only after

safety and quality were protected. On many occasions I worked with the quality manager to discuss early release of product for shipment (before all bacteria and other test results were in) to meet delivery objectives, but he had the final call on whether any early release would occur. We both knew that. If he allowed early shipment, we both knew it was my responsibility to ensure we could recall 100% of the product with none of it having reached customers, should a problematic test result arise. We both knew it and agreed with it. No mystery about roles. No mystery about priorities.

Our team of bright aggressive folks in our 20's accomplished great things for that company. We worked long and hard making it all happen. Discussions on what was the best decision for safety, for quality, for delivery, or for cost were frequent, but we didn't waste a minute arguing priorities or roles. It's easy to follow a roadmap that is that clear.

CONGRATULATIONS

... to Todd Fierro and Eclipse Aviation. Todd recently joined the Eclipse executive team as VP-Manufacturing. Eclipse, located in Albuquerque NM, is a leader in the newly evolving microjet industry. Todd's experience matched the company's need for a successful leader with high volume complex production experience.

MARCH MADNESS

Sixty-five college basketball teams will be thrilled that they are invited to "the dance." Sixty-four will go home, having lost their last game of the year. A pretty clear example of the importance of knowing how to Finish Strong.™