

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR Herbert Sherman

And now for something completely different! Those immortal words, handed down to us from the British television series *Monty Pythons' Flying Circus*, have become part of street nomenclature indicating a change in venue or perhaps a more adroit sophomoric expression. This phrase is also an excellent characterization of the second issue of *The CASE Journal*.

At first glance, readers may be struck by the variance of topics and settings of these cases. Two of the cases deal with small businesses (one in an Arabic nation), two other cases involve large multinational corporations, and the fifth case pertains to a small religious organization. Furthermore, there are no invited or competitive articles (at least one should be forthcoming in our next edition). This issue of the journal, unlike its predecessor, lacks the heavy emphasis on technology management (although certainly technology plays a role in several of the cases) and does not include what would most commonly be called a traditional business policy case. Readers will find, however, that themes do emerge that do to a certain extent integrate these cases.

The first case by Kermit W. Kuehn, American University of Sharjah, entitled "Ascom Marketing and Publishing: Entrepreneurship in the United Arab Emirates" is a non-US business case that allows the instructor to explore with his/her students: (1) the entrepreneur – his defining characteristics, motives and decisions; (2) a legal and cultural context that is quite unlike the US environment; and (3) a strategic decision that could make or break a small company. Based on key person interviews and company documents, the case allows a student a behind-the-scenes look at an Indian (from India) entrepreneur, as he moves from an employee of a multinational to an business owner, taking the company through startup and key transition phases, ultimately focusing on a strategic decision that nearly bankrupts the business.

Donald L. Lester from Arkansas State University also deals with a small business enterprise, however one from the United States, in his case entitled "AAA Construction: A Family Business in Crisis." AAA is a family firm where family and business were inseparable. The case focuses upon succession issues and asks the question whether blood is thicker than water. The owners, Jack and Joyce Hudson, had no sons, and their daughters were not interested in a long-term involvement with the company. This left their grandson David Robbins as the only logical choice to take the company into the next millennium. What the Hudsons would have to decide at this critical juncture in 1998 was if grandson David was capable of bringing the company through this period of bad cash flow into a more stable cash position.

The third case, "Pastor Karl at the Whitney Avenue Congregational Church" by David O'Connell, St. Ambrose University, also deals with leadership succession and change since Pastor Karl is the new pastor at Whitney Avenue Congregational Church. As Karl tries to initiate changes that he feels will make a difference for his congregation, such as childcare during Sunday services and a more contemporary worship style, he is surprised by the level of resistance by church members. In fact, three of the key members of the congregation

confront Karl as to whether he is planning to alter the church's current governance and decision-making processes; a congregational approach (a democratic process). Karl plans to attend the next church council meeting, where he does not yet have a vote, which he finds rather strange, since he is the pastor. As he ponders the upcoming meeting, he wonders what steps to take in order to bring about effective change at Whitney Avenue Congregational Church.

Diana Ross, Kent Royalty, and Karl Kampschroeder of St. Mary's University "At the Heart of Controversy: Genentech Markets a Genetically Engineered Drug" has a different look and format than a traditional case and it times takes on the demeanor of a newspaper expose. Genentech developed TPA, the first genetically engineered drug that could be used in clot-dissolving therapy for heart attack, and marketed it as Activase. Public outrage focused on the disparity between the drug's \$10 direct manufacturing cost and the \$2200 a dose price, raising immediate concerns about its affordability and therefore availability to those who needed it. Students are left to ponder several issues: considerations and implications of pricing policies, the consequences of regulation (FDA approval), concerns about related-party events (Genentech's multi-faceted relationship to the 'independent' research organization whose study was the basis for FDA-approval of TPA, as well as to the research providing support for the drug), the ethics of refusing to participate in one research trial and the direct funding of another, and considerations and implications of increasing the drug's availability through altering the drug's price and broadening its administration (from in-hospital to also include administration by paramedics).

In "Everquest®: Entertainment or Addiction?", Judith W. Spain of Eastern Kentucky University and Gina Vega of Merrimack College shift us from an unaffordable drug that may save lives to affordable on-line interactive game that may have contributed to ending lives. Everquest® is an interactive on-line multiplayer role-playing game where a player creates a character who has adventures throughout the land of Norrath. Having observed players of interactive on-line games such as War Craft®, and having played these games myself, I can attest to the highly addictive nature of these types of games as one's game character becomes more powerful and wealthy and as the complexity of the game increases. Just this past winter my son spent his entire Christmas break from college playing War Craft®. Yet addiction is not the issue in and of itself – it is proposed in this case that this addiction has lead on-line gamers to commit suicide. The case posits the question, what is the responsibility of a firm that produces a product that is so addictive that it's use has led to the death of several players? What is the responsibility of the firm and what actions should the firm take to reduce its liability and demonstrate proper due diligence?

I must again thank the talents of the case writers, the reviewers, and my associate editors whose invaluable work and esprit de corps have made my task as editor both an easy and pleasurable one. A special thanks must go to Alan Eisner whose technical wherewithal has transformed this e-journal from a dream into a living reality.