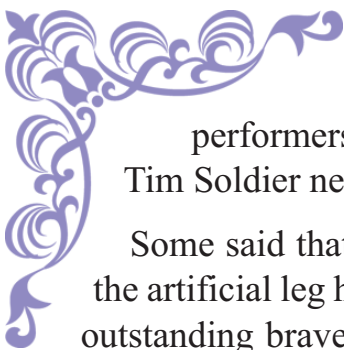


A Fiscal Fairy Tale

*Little Tim
Soldier*

By Tom Brown

The Sales Department was composed of 25 loyal, devoted men and women whose job was to sell all the goods made within the provinces of the King. Whether grown in a field or made in a factory, these goods were conveyed exclusively to customers by these representatives. Each year, about September, a tally was made of how well each salesperson performed. Big prizes were



awarded to the top performers; but year in, year out, Tim Soldier never won.

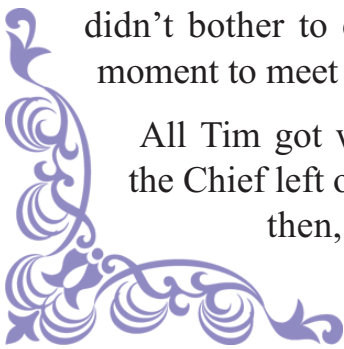
Some said that Tim was hampered by the artificial leg he wore, the result of the outstanding bravery Tim displayed when he was in the King's militia and had to fight off a swarm of amazingly large rats. Others said Tim just wasn't charismatic enough to

Would he be sacked due to poor performance? Would he be demoted to a lesser territory?

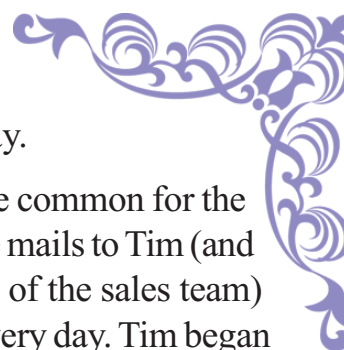
land the big orders. Still others argued that Tim was wonderful at selling — he just wasn't good at closing his sales pitch to customers with a handshake.

When The King assigned a new Chief of Sales and Marketing, Tim was worried. Would he be summarily sacked due to poor performance? Would he be demoted to a lesser territory? Would he be asked to “come inside,” assigned to a desk at headquarters and not allowed to make sales calls? As with everyone else in Sales, Tim didn't know what to think.

For weeks after the new Chief of Sales arrived, Tim had nothing to worry about, for absolutely nothing happened. He didn't even see his new supervisor, and the new Chief didn't bother to call Tim or set aside a moment to meet with him.



All Tim got were voice mails. First, the Chief left only one or two per day; then, as weeks went by, he



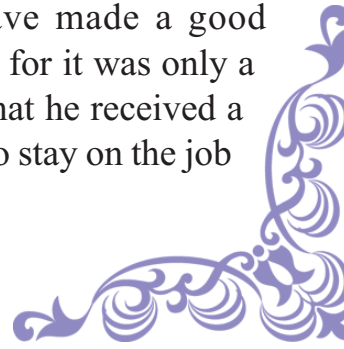
began to leave seven or eight voice mails per day.

In time, it became quite common for the Sales Chief to send voice mails to Tim (and to all the other members of the sales team) a dozen or more times every day. Tim began to sag under the burden of taking down the Chief's multiple messages of instructions each morning, and noticed that one reason he wasn't increasing his sales success rate was that it was almost lunch time before he could leave the office.

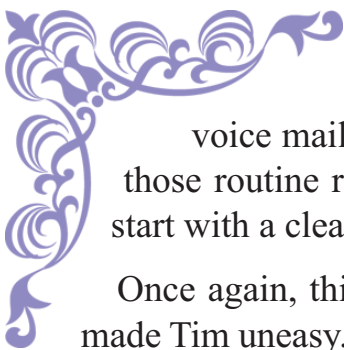
So he decided enough was enough; he would have to meet his new boss to explain that all the telephoned instructions were not having a positive effect. He would do it the very next morning!

But when Tim got home, he felt odd. He called his work number to see if there were any new messages.

Tim heard his name and the familiar voice of the Chief immediately: “Tim, I've noticed that you're not making as many sales calls with your assigned customers. Please start reporting to work at 4:00 A.M. from now on so you can get your office work done and be on the road to meet customers by mid-morning.”



Tim blanched at the thought of being at work so early, but it could only boost his productivity. So he awakened that much earlier from then on. The effect of Tim's new regimen must have made a good impression on his boss, for it was only a couple of weeks later that he received a voice mail asking him to stay on the job till 7:00 P.M. each day.



“That way,” the voice mail urged, “you can get all those routine reports done so you can start with a clean desk each morning!”

Once again, this new work imperative made Tim uneasy. But Tim was a trouper: he always tried to see the management wisdom in new directives from his boss.

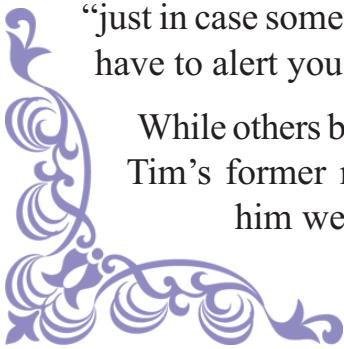
Given his new work hours, it made some sense for Tim to do what the next big voice mail commanded: pick up a new company laptop computer so that any reports not done by 7:00 P.M. could be taken home and filed by modem.

“Hey, that’s great,” thought Tim, “now I can have a snack when I work on my reports!”

Before long, however, voice mails were complemented by an array of e-mails — mostly from the Sales Chief, but some from other higher-ups in the kingdom. Occasionally, Tim would even get an e-mail from the King. Tim felt proud of this until he noticed that the King always misspelled his name as “Tim Solder” on the address line of the e-mail.

Most e-mails Tim received concerned new policies or procedures implemented by his Chief of Sales or another executive. One night, just before retiring, he read an e-mail from the Chief suggesting that Tim wake every three hours and call in for voice mails: “just in case something major breaks and I have to alert you.”

While others buckled at the suggestion, Tim’s former military training served him well. “Hey, this is just like



being on Night Watch at the front gate of the Fort!

“Well, sort of...”

One day, Tim was flagged with a five-star e-mail (*very important!*) and a one-star voice mail (*very important!*). Both messages said the same thing.

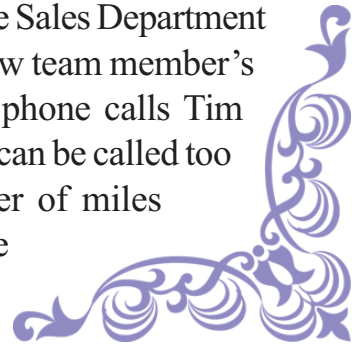
Tim was asked, along with all other employees in the kingdom, to cut costs “no matter what.” The Chief asked Tim if he

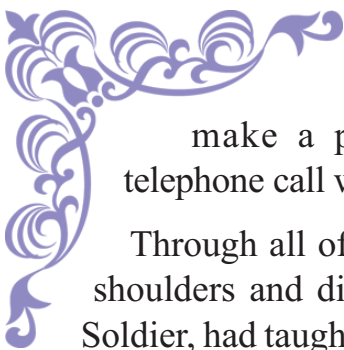
*Tim shrugged his shoulders and did what his father, Tom Soldier, had taught him so well:
“Son, just do it!”*

really needed to print all his e-mails on a printer; the Chief suggested Tim just commit each message to memory.

Soon thereafter, Tim was cautioned that recent measurements of employee productivity indicated that although his sales successes were increasing dramatically, he should be mindful not to spend *too* much time with customers. “Just get the order and get going!” was the suggested performance guideline.

Tim learned that his superiors were also starting to count the number of e-mails he sent, especially within the Sales Department (“Don’t waste your fellow team member’s time!”), the number of phone calls Tim made (“Even customers can be called too often.”), and the number of miles Tim logged driving to see





his customers (“Don’t make a personal call when a telephone call will do!”).

Through all of this, Tim shrugged his shoulders and did what his father, Tom Soldier, had taught him so well: “Son, just do it!” Tim never knew where the phrase came from, but it struck him as the most eloquent common sense.

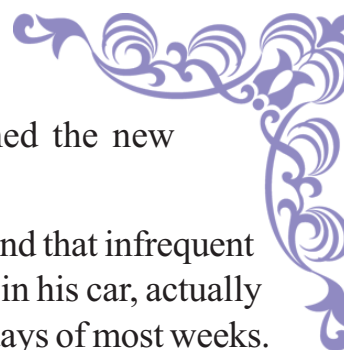
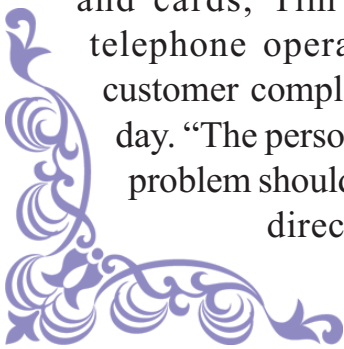
What really changed Tim’s work life, however, was when the the Chief sent him

Tim found that kingdom telephone operators routinely routed customer complaints to him 24 hours a day.

to a training seminar so that he not only could sell a wide range of the kingdom’s products but also could repair almost half of them.

Tim Soldier’s new business cards came to him embossed with the imprimatur “Sales *and* Service!” Upon seeing that, all the weeks of rigorous training seemed worthwhile. “Now I can do so much more for my customers!” The Chief of Sales and Marketing could not have agreed more.

Within a week of receiving his new title and cards, Tim found that kingdom telephone operators routinely routed customer complaints to him 24 hours a day. “The person who is going to fix the problem should hear about the problem directly from the customer who has the problem,”



was how the voice mail from the Chief explained the new procedure.

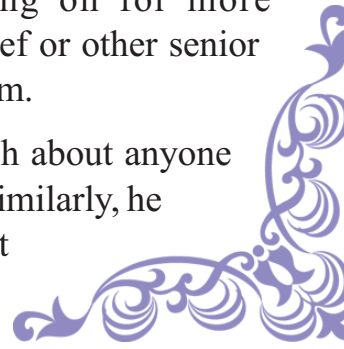
Tim was surprised to find that infrequent catnaps, on his couch or in his car, actually seemed to suffice most days of most weeks. “Huh!” he said to himself sleepily one afternoon, “And I always thought I needed a full eight hours of sleep each day! This is easy, and I’m being so much more, umm, er, well, *productive!*”

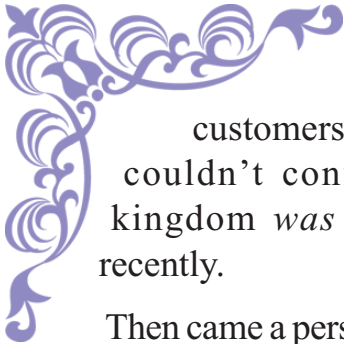
What Tim *did* find difficult was the e-mail that came one afternoon dictating that, from then on, Tim would be expected to make sales calls *and* repair calls simultaneously. “This will save the kingdom substantial money!” said his boss, matter-of-factly. If Tim could fix a machine on the fifth floor of a customer and then run down to close a new contract with someone else on the second floor — well, that would (“obviously!”) be the best use of Tim’s time.

In time, Tim found that he had no time. He sped between sales jobs and service jobs, barely pausing to say, “Hello, how are you?” to any customer for fear that the answer might delay him from making his very well appointed rounds.

Tim found himself doing only three things on any given day: patching up things he had sold weeks or months before, scratching out the quickest and easiest of new sales contracts, and logging on for more directions from the Chief or other senior managers in the kingdom.

Tim didn’t know much about anyone he worked with or for. Similarly, he was ordered to cut short





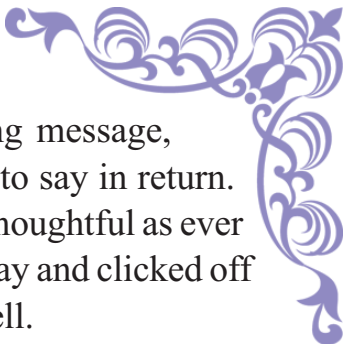
conversations with customers to the point where he couldn't confirm firsthand if the kingdom *was* having nice weather recently.

Then came a personal call from the Chief, which completely surprised Tim. It was a real voice on the line, although Tim could not connect it with a face. The rarity of actually talking with his boss in real time made Tim speak with hesitance:

"Uh... umm... hi!"

The call took only 99 seconds, but Tim had to smile when he heard these closing words from his boss: "Tim, you're doing a wonderful job. Simply magnificent! It's people like you who are making this company greaaaaat!"

"Simply magnificent!" echoed in his ear.



Tim, struck by the moment and the moving message, was perplexed by what to say in return. However, the Chief — thoughtful as ever — anticipated Tim's delay and clicked off without a formal farewell.

"Makes sense," Tim reasoned.

"Think how many more calls the Chief can make that way!"



The End



Illustration and layout by Mac Thornton

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