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*But we are a customer business just the same.*

*There is only one path to success in any business and that is to know your customer, his requirements, and his unwritten desires.*

To get your courage up, first think of the abuser's own personal interest in the matter: He needs the job. You need the performance.

■ Do you believe that an error-free product is possible?

It is possible only if we methodically get at the cause of a failure and permanently put it to bed.

■ Do you shoot for perfection the first time through?

Because we have "time" to redo a second time, we may be getting lax in doing it right the first time.

A word about sloppiness. Innovation is a messy process, full of intuitive groping, scribbles on the backs of envelopes, plans gone awry, and abandoned directions. It is a necessary untidiness and we would be foolish to suppress it.

But when inquiry leads to conviction, proposal to program, it is time for attention to detail to reassert itself, to clean up the mess. Don't send your clutter downstream into the process.

■ Do you know what your customer needs?

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My remarks are intended to generate self-examination.

I challenge you to ask yourself, "Where does my company stand in the cycle? Is it headed for danger? Am I truly being a leader?"

