

OPINION

FOR MEASURE

COMMON COURTESY

Am I just getting more demanding or crotchety in my old age or does it just seem like we're losing some of the common courtesy that has made this a great company to work for?

Does everyone realize we should try to answer our own phones? Most people won't call you if they don't need to speak to you, and I have always felt that getting a secretary to screen your calls is pretty unfriendly and arrogant. (Sometimes when someone asks, "May I ask who is calling?", I like to say 'No', just for the pleasure of the effect. Try it.) Just preventing callbacks two or three times makes it more efficient. I figure if John Young can answer his own phone much of his time, so can we.

When we are in a meeting or away from the desk, can't we try to return phone calls as soon as possible and hopefully the same day? We should try hard to answer comgrams or HP desk messages in one to two days. We try to answer memos by the author-requested date for sure, and hopefully no later than a week.

And if we can't meet these ideals, we get back with a message that says "We're working on it." Or at least have someone else get back. If you don't intend to do anything about the request, for heaven's sake send a "can't do" or "won't do" acknowledgement.

I know everyone is really busy. And one or two weeks of travel or vacation can really stack up the telephone pink slips and the old in-basket. So, we've always got to put all that stuff into a priority list. Along with working off the priorities one by one, try getting off some HP desk notes with "I'm working on your question, more Friday."

Next subject - Are we letting the tensions of this massive reorganization get to us in dealing with each other? A recent case came to my attention of a top-manager in a new employee briefing who belittled a young questioner for asking a "poor" question. Well, I certainly hope we keep that man away from customers because they've been known to ask questions which may seem to us to be un-informed. I know we need tough-mindedness, but let's temper it with sensitivity to people.

We need common-courtesy and a sense of humor. Believe me, in the competitive environment of the remainder of this century, we're going to need every bit of teamwork we can find. Rudeness has no place at HP - certainly not with customers, and not with each other.

So, let's go people. We've got some interesting years ahead. But let's have some fun getting there, and try to cut frustrations and ulcers at the same time. Let's make this a friendly company again.