

Editor:

WHO AUDITS THE AUDITORS?

The letter from Ken Hodor in MEASURE (April) recommending more stories on the "HP Way" struck a raw nerve in me. I, too, feel a slow but relentless move away from the HP Way. Actually I had planned to write the editor to suggest a monthly column entitled "STALKING THE ELUSIVE HP WAY". Then, in a coincidental memo, retiring (but not shy) Dean Abramson of NMD, Santa Rosa suggested that we should begin to accumulate incidents of NON-HP WAY, just to report on how bad things are getting, and in a small way, to sound the alarm. Maybe we could be considered "anti-bureaucracy freedom fighters". So here is my first vote for the Non-HP Way.

It seems to me that an auditing mentality is slowly taking over our fine company. Now, please understand that I have nothing against auditors personally. I know there are many legal and business reasons for keeping our books straight.

What I decry is that insidious auditing mentality which puts a sort of police-state mind-set into our operating divisions and then takes on a life of its own. It forgets that the job of every department of any division is to help get orders. Let me give a couple of examples.

1) How much time does this company waste with computer pass words. Why do we need two pass words to get into every computer transaction? When you think of it, why do we need even one, assuming we personally don't want one? I know the standard answers, but why be paranoid and assume the worst?

2) Several years ago, as we approached the end of the fiscal year, we had found just enough remaining budget to print half of an important customer catalog. We wanted to use that \$10,000 and combine it with another \$10K from the new fiscal year to make up the \$20K print run. But our swell accounting rules state that you must have all catalogs delivered into HP before you can pay any of it. The catch 22 was that by the time we could get the printing finished in November, the fiscal year was over and the first \$10K would be gone.

Appeals to higher levels got referred back to "good accounting practice". Even though we'd lose an important customer merchandising tool. That's the auditing mentality in action, I claim. Incidentally, anyone who knows me, knows that I took other action (yes, it was legal) to get the job done. And the field sales force loved the catalogs.

3) A simple check disbursement request now requires not just a vendor name and address, but a phone number. I presume the phone number is to be used to check our honesty. But, if we don't have a vendor number, it may take time and money for several other calls to get the right number. I don't know about other departments, but marketing time is precious.

So, why can't we start with the HP Way premise that assumes that employees are honest and are trying to do a proper job. Who's going to jeopardize their job by cheating on petty cash? Notice I'm not saying that good accounting practice doesn't call for random inspections and accounting cross checks. But the auditing mentality which puts ponderous procedures in the way of all our daily activity should be decried by all people who

wish to preserve what's left of the HP Way.

So that's why I'd like an audit of the auditors, to see if they can figure out ways to help us get orders.

Incidentally, Ken Hodor has since left the company. I don't like that solution.