

# Chapter 2

## The Power of Positive Thinking

His first days with The Company were full of new experiences for Stanley, and sometimes these were not pleasant experiences. Like most new hires, Stanley had lots of book knowledge, but precious little understanding of the ways of the corporate world generally, and of The Company particularly.

“Where in the hell is he?” Ben Franklyn’s bellow reverberated through the building. Stanley’s first impulse was to answer back, “Over here,” but he caught himself. He knew Ben was referring to him, and he knew that everybody else a hundred yards in each direction knew it too. But for the life of him, he couldn’t figure out what he’d done wrong.

A minute or two later, Ben Franklyn came into Stanley’s office, where Stanley had been sitting all along. (Ben could have found him without all the bellowing, but then Ben liked to bellow.)

“What in the hell have you been doing in B Building?”

“Nothing, since the crew finished installing those overhead pipes,” replied Stanley. “Is there a problem?”

“Let’s take a walk over to B; I want to show you something.” Stanley tagged along after Ben, totally confused. There was certainly nothing wrong with the overhead pipes, so what could it be?

Ben, pointing above, growled, “What is that stuff?” Ben knew, of course, but that wasn’t the point.

“You’ve never seen Insuban?” said Stanley innocently. “Insulating material. The specs called for those pipes to be insulated, so I ordered the best stuff I could find.”

Ben is just about purple. “Insuban?” he fumed. “*Expandrium!* Ex-pan-dri-um! That’s what *we* make!”

“For insulation?”

“Damn right, for insulation and a lot of other things you’ve never thought of. And we *will* use it. If *we* don’t use it, then who the hell else will?”

“Well, we can’t take it down now,” said Stanley. “There’s a lot of money up there. I guess it’s too late.”

“Oh no, it isn’t. Get yourself some Expandrium paint and have somebody go up there and cover that stuff up. Now! Right away! Before somebody sees it!”

“So, I had it taken care of,” Stanley is telling me later, “but how come Franklyn’s getting so excited about something like that? Who the hell is ever going to look at what’s on those pipes? And who in the world would care?”

Stanley, in reliving the story, is getting heated up all over again. “Whoever heard of insulating anything with Expandrium anyhow? Man, I’m an engineer, not a salesman! That’s not the kind of thing I’m supposed to worry about!”

Scarcely a few weeks had passed when Ted Shelby, one of Mr. Marsh's staff assistants, announced that the CEO himself would be touring the now-finished project that week. Stanley, as Assistant Plant Engineer, would accompany the touring party to provide "technical backup," to answer questions that might arise on details of the new construction. The occasion was to mark the official opening of the B Building facility and, incidentally, give Mr. Marsh an opportunity to impress upon members of the Board of Directors that The Company was indeed a dynamic, world-class organization.

So it is that Mr. Marsh and the board members, along with Ted and Stanley, all properly outfitted in hardhats and safety glasses, are clambering along the elevated catwalk that runs the length of the building. "Good view of the entire show from here, Ted," comments one of the influential board members. "Say," he says, pointing to Stanley's disguised overhead pipes, which are right in front of his nose, "Isn't that Expandrium insulation? I don't believe I've seen that application before."

Stanley, seizing the moment, cuts in politely, "Well, sir, it's always been our material of choice in The Company. Fact is, we're finding new uses for Expandrium almost every day. We see it this way – when your own outfit makes the best product, you go with it."

Mr. Marsh could be seen nodding vigorously at Stanley's explanation. And later, just after the group breaks up, but before Stanley is out of earshot, Marsh turns to Ted and says: "Good show, Ted. You know, I wish more of our people would understand, like young what's-his-name there does, that every one of us is a salesman for The Company."

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are some ways in which this story illustrates impression management?
2. What are some ways this story illustrates socialization?
3. In reliving the story, why does Stanley say, "I am an engineer, not a salesperson, I am not supposed to worry about that sort of thing anyway"?
4. Do you agree with Mr. Marsh's statement that "I wish more people would realize that we are all salespeople for the company"? In other words, are all employees of a given organization salespeople for the organization? Why or Why not?
5. Can you recall any significant socialization experiences? (It may have been an instance where you made a "mistake" of some sort and learned from it by figuring out the reasons for peoples' reactions, rather than by someone explaining the reasons to you.)