

HARD BALL

By James Collins

My eldest daughter Patricia was between sophomore and junior year in college when she got the summer job at Data General. In 1983 the government, foreign organizations, and many major companies were customers. Data General was one of the major suppliers of computer hardware, and services worldwide. Patricia went to the Manchester office, and they assigned her to Accounts Receivable to collect a bill from the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Her manager told Patricia this bill from the New York Police Department was a major outstanding account and Data General had been unable to get payments from them on regular basis. At that time, NYPD was in arrears for over \$600 thousand. The manager also indicated they did not expect Patricia would obtain any results, but they wanted to keep putting pressure on NYPD to pay them and any money she obtained from them would be a blessing.

Patricia went to work. She contacted the New York Police Department (NYPD) and advised them they were in arrears of rental fees. She intended to badger them to obtain payment. Initially all she obtained was a run around.

Finally, Patricia got in contact with a Police Captain in charge of accounts payable for the NYPD. He had a standard routine presentation. The Captain indicated that they knew they owed the money, but the Police always had trouble with their budgets. Either the New York City budget was inadequate or New York State had the money but neglected to forward it to New York City. In either case, the police did not have the money, and at present, the city was unable to come up with the funds.

Patricia told the Captain that NYPD owed Data General \$600 thousand. She further informed him, "This is Monday. I expect to have the payments on your account in this office by Thursday. If it is not here by close of business on Thursday I will have your computer shut down."

The police captain blustered, "That's impossible! You cannot shut this computer down! We are the police of the City of New York and this computer is critical to our day-to-day operation. It is critical for identifying fingerprints and felons, handle parking tickets, process criminal court cases, and initiate many other critical processes. You cannot shut us down! We are the police! We will come and arrest you for interfering with police business in the city of New York!"

Patricia replied, "We are in Manchester, New Hampshire, and you have no jurisdiction in this state. You cannot arrest me. I am here. You are there. However, I control the ON/OFF switch. You owe us a lot of money. You are the one violating the law."

Patricia lowered her voice to a soft register and slowly told the captain, "We expect payment. Now understand our position. This is Monday. We expect the \$600 thousand that you owe by Thursday. If we

do not receive it by Thursday night, on Friday we will terminate the computer service with the city and officially shut you down.”

The captain, sounding frustrated, hollered in a loud voice “You can't do that to the police! We are a key organization in New York City! We cannot be intimidated!

Calmly, Patricia said, “Thursday morning send the money. We must have it by Thursday night or Friday you will be shut down.” Patricia politely thanked him for his time and hung up the phone.

On Thursday, at noon, in Manchester, New Hampshire a check from the city of New York for the full \$600 thousand arrived. To say the very least, management of Data General was ecstatic. They took Patricia into the conference room with all the senior officers and asked her, “How did you manage to accomplish this? Our people have been trying to work with this organization for three years. We always have problems with them. We have never been able to get them up to date with their payments. They always pay in dribs and drabs. How did you manage to get them to respond?”

Patricia's response was, “My family is from New York and several still reside there. This is the only way you can deal with New Yorkers. You cannot show any weakness. If you find they have a weakness you must exploited it. You must apply pressure them. You cannot back down. You have to play hardball.

For the rest of the summer, management gave Patricia all their difficult New York accounts 1052 in total.

Patricia responded, “I cannot even contact that many accounts in the time I have left.”

Their response was, “We do not care what you do. Whichever one you contact and get money from is a blessing. Our people can't handle those New Yorkers and you obviously can.”

Patricia responded, “After dealing with my father for nearly twenty years, the NYPD was a piece of cake.”

THE END