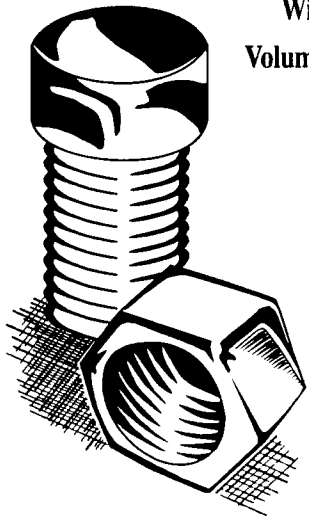


Simple Tools

Business
Strategies
for the
21st Century

Winter 1995
Volume 6, No. 1



Technology and Tenderness

The billboard says, "Technology and Tenderness." It is an advertisement for a hospital, touting the latest in bells and whistles, plus caring thrown in for good measure.

In this fast-changing technological work world, are we losing our sense of tenderness?

I would hope not. Are we driving the technology, or are we passengers? Are we so caught up in *what* we are doing that we forget *who* we are and *why* we are doing what we do? If we are, technology is overshadowing tenderness.

Technology is no panacea. You can have the best equipment in your industry and still lose market share. One slip-up in handling a

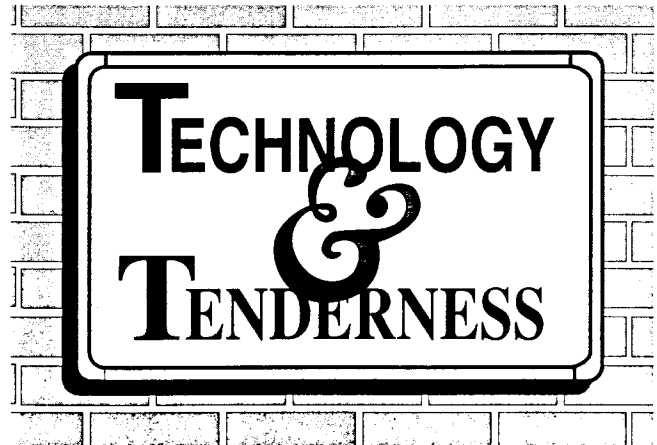
customer request or complaint can still lose an account. The human tenderness demonstrated by a company's staff, not processing-chip speed, is what builds relationships.

While our equipment can be computer controlled, our customers cannot. Oh, we think we can wield such control from time to time. We install automated voice attendants who make brilliant comments to our customers like, "Press 1 if you're standing. Press 2 if you're naked." So much for caring about our customers.

Now, I'm not suggesting we do away with these systems, but I am recommending that we remember to keep tenderness at the forefront with technology. For example, I believe

one of the caller's first options in an automated attendant system should be, "If you want to speak to a *real* person, press zero."

When your customer chooses to talk to that "real person," make sure the *real* part is truthful. An answering service doth not



constitute a real person. You need someone who knows enough about the workings of your organization that he or she can answer basic questions and determine who knows the answers to not-so-basic questions.

For years, I've observed that we take the lowest paid, least trained people and put them on the phone with customers. Wouldn't it be better to pay knowledgeable employees, who also have a strong dose of tenderness, to deal with customers? Then "wow" them with your organization's technological know-how. The combination of technology and tenderness is a sure win. The presence of one without the other can lead to a certain loss.