

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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We Can Learn A Lot About Being Frugal From Our Founding Fathers

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Happy Fourth of July. Recently I was in Philadelphia doing a customer installation and took the opportunity to go out a few days ahead to visit the historic sights. If you ever get a chance to do this, I strongly recommend it as you can't help but be touched by the vision and determination that our founding fathers had. Not only did Philadelphia serve as the center of government during the revolution but once again served as the center of government when the capital was moved from New York to Philadelphia while Washington DC was being built from 1790 to 1800. One of the things that was obvious everywhere is how frugal our founding fathers were. Something that seems to have been lost in translation over the years as our current government has no problem spending money. We were touring the original capital building and the guide pointed out how three years after construction they had to knock out the wall and expand the building to accommodate more desks. You see, each state had its own table for its delegates and the chamber for both the house and the chamber for the senate only held a total of thirteen desks



required for the original 13 colonies. In 1793, three more states were added and therefore the chambers had to be expanded to handle the state expansion. My first impression of Independence Hall was how small it is but there again, "Want Not, Have Not,...Waste Not" was an obvious theme. The senate chamber located on the second floor were a little more glamorous than the house Chamber located on the 1st floor and you can say they were both very simple in design and ornamentation. The second floor also contained multiple conference rooms and a self-contained business office with its own printing press. During the colonial times, Ben Franklin was a great statesman and educator. He was already retired having made his fortune and turned to community service. Many of our founding fathers were just that, successful businessmen who now turned to community service. There was no such thing as career politicians. By the time



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Philadelphia had become the capital, Franklin had passed but you see the influence he had not only on American history but also education, various philanthropic ventures, sciences, the advancement of mankind during his lifetime. His famous quote, "A penny saved is a penny earned" was highly regarded by the way this government did business. His grave is within eye-sight of Independence Hall. One of the wonderful things about the historic district of Philadelphia is that everything is within walking distance. ■



Business Has Never Been Better

I feel very fortunate as business has never been better. This year we have scheduled installations taking place all over the country. I still hear the horror stories about business and how bad the economy is. There seems to be a common thread,....we are hiring no one this year and need to do more with existing staffing. A few weeks ago I was approached by a small city government that is an existing client. Unfortunately, this city government was faced with falling tax revenues and there was even a chance they may be laying off 26 city workers. The reason this account called was to check on the replacement cost of their current IVR solution that we provided nine years ago. There were no issues with the unit other than the age but this account was concerned as if they cut back personnel, it was going to become more important in their customer service functions. One of the things I am always interested in is the ROI of our solution. I ran the numbers real quick on their initial

acquisition for the four line system they had and found out it had cost them 21 cents an hour to provide their self-service functions in their utility billing and tax departments. **Can you imagine replacing four live representatives 24/7 for a cost of 21 cents per hour?** I guess I do see why we are so busy. ■

Happy Birthday IBM

IBM had two big anniversaries in June. The company turned 100 years old and the IBM AS400 turned 23. I remember very distinctly the AS400 announcement which I helped with. I was at the time the President of the Columbus IBM user group and also the director/founder of the "Columbus & Greater Ohio 3X Conference". This was a regional mini common marketed to a five state region. My database of IBM shops was better than the local IBM office so I helped with promotion of the event. Anyway the event was held at the Ohio Theater downtown. This is a very ornate old-time theater which has a large pipe organ that rises out of the bottom of the stage floor. Now to make this system announcement even more momentous, the AS400 towers were on this rising platform next to the organ and they used dry ice to create a smoky fog. Perhaps there should have been a test run but too much dry ice was used and the theater had to be evacuated from IBM customers coughing and being overcome with the dry ice. Twenty three years later I still laugh when I think about it. It was quite a show and one might say we have been in that fog ever since. ■

