

### Chapter 3 Kickoff

It was only January 5<sup>th</sup> but the holidays might well have been months ago as the InUnison sales force assembled in Salon 2 of the Hotel Sofitel in Redwood Shores. The slate was wiped clean and the sales reps and SEs anxiously awaited any news befitting their high expectations.

The audience stood, applauding their beloved CEO, Bill Engler. For a very few, the cheering was sincere and heartfelt in appreciation for his success in building a growing concern but for most, the applause was because of his support for a generous sales compensation plan.

"Everyone in this room is to be commended," Engler said. "Because of you, we exceeded our plan, much to the pleasant surprise of the board. I, of course, had no doubts about your ability to blow out your Numbers.

"While I'm very satisfied with your financial performance, I'm equally pleased with *how* you've achieved them. You've upheld InUnison's standards for dealing with customers: honesty, integrity and partnership for success."

"Why does he have to say that every freaking time?" Murphy asked rhetorically.

"He really means it, that's why," someone near him replied.

"Idealist child," someone else commented.

He paused to allow the group to applaud themselves.

"And now, it is my great pleasure to introduce our VP of Sales, Niles O'Rourke, who turned our motley sales band into an industry juggernaut, I dare say, the best in the business..."

"This is such bullshit," Gatto said, clapping only enough to seem enthused. He didn't want to reveal his short-timer attitude yet. "We always come to this same lame hotel, with their worn-out wall coverings and crummy chairs so that we can listen to managers tell us what we already know."

"That being?" Joe Phillipson, Denver sales rep, asked.

"That, gee, our Numbers are going up while our compensation stays the same at best. Oh, and that our Business Development and Marketing departments have sales as their top priority. Total bullshit."

"Yeah, but I won't mind as long as O'Rourke leaves my territory alone. I've got a target rich environment for our integration engine and ..."

*Yo, Joe, I really couldn't care less about your "environment",* Gatto thought.

Niles O'Rourke ascended the stage to continued applause from the team. He has been InUnison Software's VP of Sales since the last kickoff meeting, blew out his Number for the year and was the company hero, putting them on the revenue track for a public stock offering later in the year, or so they all expected.

Across the room and in front, the new sales team of Wayne Angelis and Porter Mitchell were taking in this scene, each having very different reactions. Wayne smirked a bit at the rah-rah environment. *All sales kickoffs are the same*, he thought. Wayne had been in the business long enough, and become enough of a cynic, to know that this display was meant to fire up the new hires and impress them with the team's "go-go culture".

Porter, being new to the sales game, was simply bewildered. It was already quite a shock to move from the static world of Hayworth and Steelcase cubicles to the pressures and dynamics of sales in a fast growth software startup. When Porter entered his hotel room, he found his roommate, Sean Murphy, behind the television working with pliers in order to hack into the Sofitel's TV system so he could get free movies. Sean then helped himself to the in-room liquor, carefully prying off the vodka and gin bottle caps and emptying the contents into glasses so that he could refill the bottles with water and return them to their rightful places in the cabinet. He hadn't detected Sean's criminal mind while working on the SecNat project and he hoped he wasn't expected to adopt these kinds of skills himself.

Wayne sensed his new partner's nervousness.

"Hey, Porter, don't get too overwhelmed. All sales meetings are like this. The idea is that we get all energized and leave ready to take on the world."

"Does it work?"

"Nope. Reality will set in as soon as we get our Numbers."

"So, why do it?"

"Beats me. Some motivational consultant is counting his millions on a beach somewhere, laughing about how he sold this so-called motivational drivel to sales managers all over the world."

They turned back to the stage as O'Rourke raised his hands to settle the troops.

"Thank you all for the enthusiastic greeting, but it's all of you who deserve the credit for our tremendous year! Give yourselves another round of applause!"

Salon 2 erupted in cheers and the sales team rose to their feet again, giving each other high-fives. They all shared in the past year of success, with all but one district team – Grim Reaper in Atlanta, of course – qualifying for the first 100% Club trip at InUnison, the reward trip for sales overachievers. They would find out later where the trip would be, but rumor placed it at a Caribbean beach or resort, in short, a perfect place for the over-eating, over-drinking, over-carousing, and playing politics with the sales management on the golf course.

"Great, *another* helping of bullshit please," Gatto murmured. "Just give me my Number and shut the hell up."

"Why can't you bask in the collective adulation?" Joe teased, while trying to outdo the next guy in enthusiasm.

"I don't need no stinking adulation," Gatto said, in his best outlaw voice. "Except from O'Rourke's administrative assistant. I'm counting on a close encounter with Suzy tonight after the tequila shots. She does this thing when she's drunk..."

"I don't want to know, Tom."

O'Rourke continued to review the past year's glories, highlighting key deals, embarrassing the reps who were responsible and sometimes acknowledging the technical talent needed to win the deal.

He motioned for quiet and moved closer to the audience as the room calmed down.

"InUnison cannot sit on its laurels. Let's move to the coming year and our plan to continue our explosive growth."

The room was now silent as they knew what was coming, The Mother of All Numbers: the revenue goal for the company. The Number from which all of their Numbers would be derived. It was expected to be some magnitude larger than the previous year so as to impress the IPO market.

O'Rourke, wearing a wireless microphone so that he could pace across the full area of the stage, milked the pause for full suspenseful effect before advancing to his 1998 Plan slide on his presentation. He scanned the room as he drifted across the stage. *Yes, I have them now. It's time to lower the boom...*

A cell phone rang. Not a typical warble, no, it was a loud rendition of the William Tell Overture. About a dozen people in the back of the room reached for their phones, praying it wasn't theirs. It was, of course, Gary Reaper's phone and he frantically tried to turn it off amid the snickers around him.

"Gary!" O'Rourke shouted. "I guess you missed the message banning cell phones and pagers from the room? That'll be fifty bucks, pal." *I should take that phone and shove it up your ass.*

He walked the stage some more, hoping to rebuild the suspense. Once he saw everyone's eyes on him, he advanced his slide.

"Our revenue goal for 1998 is \$70 million dollars..."

The audience gasped. The Number was worse than they could have fathomed: four times that of the previous year. Porter looked around at all the stunned faces.

"The Number is much higher than expected," Wayne whispered. "That means, one; the territories will shrink as the company attempts to hire an army of new sales teams, or two; territories don't shrink but individual Numbers go up even more than the revenue increase."

O'Rourke continued.

"In order to achieve this aggressive – but certainly attainable – goal, we will be equally aggressive on the recruiting front..."

There were hushed, but clearly audible "oh shits" from several in the crowd. This revelation would mean tough battles in the breakout sessions to retain choice territories.

"...and we have a few new faces already. For instance I'd like to introduce Wayne Angelis, a software sales star from New York. Let's give him a warm InUnison welcome! Stand up Wayne!"

While polite applause rippled through the room, Gatto smirked to himself. *Angelis. I'll be getting out while the getting is good.*

"So, a bit of competition, eh, Tommy?" Phillipson asked, assuming Gatto cared.

"No, knucklehead, it means he works for me," Gatto bluffed. "Besides, who are you to talk? See that tall blonde hard body by the door? She's going to cover the cable and media companies in Denver. Didn't you know?"

Gatto was pulling his chain – she was one of the hotel staff he'd been trying to hit on – but Phillipson was so gullible that Gatto couldn't resist.

As he could have predicted, Phillipson's eyes grew huge and he was blubbering about how unfair it was.

"I'm scratching out an existence in Denver and they're going to bring in this tart..."

Gatto salted the wound a bit more.

"So much for the target-rich environment, eh pal?"

Across the room, Wayne shook his head.

"Well, Porter, I hope you have some good shoes, because we're going to have to pound the pavement long and hard. Our Number is going to be aggressive."

"Oh, before I forget," Porter whispered to Wayne, "I got a call from my old manager at the bank. He's starting, today as a matter of fact, with Azalea Financial. According to the message, he's going to be doing almost the exact same thing as our old project. He wants to talk to us as soon as possible."

Wayne thought for a minute. "They're located down by South Street Seaport. Manhattan. That's not my territory. We need to talk to Gatto about it."

"You mean we can't work it?"

"It means *I* can't work it. You can. Remember, Young said you'd have to support me and Gatto." *Great, first day on the job and I'm already going to have to share Porter with the enemy.*

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"Norm, are you all set up in your office?"

"Yes, Sam. Connie was extremely helpful with that. You've got a great admin. I'm going to get spoiled."

“Don’t get too used to it. I don’t share her very much. Usually only when Gibson’s assistant is off or something. Anyway, I guess I need to do the honorable thing and introduce you to Stewart Miller in IT.”

Racker dialed Miller’s number and got the usual voice mail greeting.

“There are two certainties about our CIO: he’ll never be at his phone and will never return the messages. That was my fourth attempt since yesterday and I’m out of patience. Follow me.

“Connie, I’m going down to the tenth floor to seek out Stewart Miller. I want to introduce Norm around down there. Hopefully this won’t take long.”

“Sure thing. Happy hunting.”

He and Norm got off the car on the tenth floor and Sam was startled to see windows the entire length of the elevator lobby, through which he could see banks of equipment. They could feel a low, mechanical rumble as they watched numerous operators huddling over consoles and others yanking stacks of paper off of printers.

“Jesus, it really *is* a glass house,” Racker said. “I thought that was an urban legend. Figures Miller would set things up this way; show off his manhood.”

There were doors at either end of the lobby, both with security card readers. Racker took his company access card out and swiped it through one of the readers. The red light flashed, signaling that his access was denied. He tried a couple more times without success. He then walked to the other end of the lobby and tried that door. No luck.

There was a phone on the wall by the first door so Sam went back to that end of the lobby. There were no instructions about any extension to call so he simply picked up the receiver. It immediately rang someone.

“Raised floor. How can I help you?” said the receptionist, Becky Sharpe.

“Sam Racker to see Stewart Miller.”

“Are you authorized for this floor?”

“I should be. I’m the Controller.”

“I’m sorry, what company was that?”

“*This* company, Azalea, I’m the CON-TROLL-HER.”

“Ken Treller?”

*Stay calm; this is some low level receptionist.* “Sam Racker. I sign your paycheck,” Racker said, hoping she would get the joke.

“Very funny. The computer signs my paycheck.”

“Today is payday. Do you have your check yet?”

“Yes.”

“Whose name is in the signature?”

“Can’t read it. Bad handwriting.”

“LISTEN! You get out here and let me in, NOW!”

Sharpe didn't appreciate being yelled at and punched her mute button. "Hey, Herb," she called out to her Shift Supervisor. "There's someone out front who thinks he's some big shot and can wander in here like he owns the place. Should I call Security?"

"Who is he?"

"Sam Racker. He claims to sign my paycheck but I don't see where —"

"YOU IDIOT! That *is* our Controller and future CFO! He sure as hell *does* sign our paychecks!" Herb Putnam sprinted for the door, ignoring Sharpe's question, "What's a 'controller?'"

"Mister Racker, Herb Putnam, Shift Supervisor. Sorry for the misunderstanding. Becky, well, she takes the security thing pretty seriously."

"I understand. We're here to see Stewart Miller. Can you show me to his office?"

"Sure it's right outside my cubicle. It's quicker if we cut through the datacenter."

"Herb, this is Norm Johnson," he said, introducing Norm as they walked. "He is our new Director of Financial Information. He's going to help sort out the confusion with our financials. I'm counting on some help from you folks, of course."

"Oh you know we're here to help, Mr. Racker." *Does Miller know about this new guy?* Putnam wondered. He led Racker and Johnson through the maze of machinery, pointing out a few things along the way, such as the dozens of StorageTek disk drives and automated tape vaults. Herb was especially proud of the ultra-high speed printers, claiming to run enough paper per day to stretch from New York to Los Angeles. Herb was disappointed that neither Sam nor Norm was impressed.

Racker hadn't noticed the noise of the machine room until he was startled by the silence of the office area. There were rows and rows of cubicles with offices and the odd conference room lining the outside of the floor. They came upon cubicle "10R9" which stood for tenth floor, aisle R, cubicle 9. This was Herb's home for the few minutes a day when he was away from the supervisor's console. It was close to the corner of the floor, where, of course, Stewart Miller's office was located. Miller was out of the office.

"He's around," Herb said. "He was there right before you came down. Heard his phone ringing."

*No kidding. He saw that it was me calling and scrambled.*

"You want me to page him?"

"Please. I'll wait in his office," Racker said.

Herb left them to return to his cubicle and wait for Miller to answer the page.

Racker and Johnson stepped into Miller's office, which was on the Water Street side of the building and looked out towards the heart of the financial district. All of the office's walls were covered by custom-built shelves populated with coffee mugs, all from computer software, hardware and services vendors. *I guess everyone needs a bobby*, Racker thought. He chuckled at what a waste it was that the mug collection obscured a decent view.

Behind the desk, hanging on a hook driven into the shelving, was a samurai sword. On the credenza below were the usual family pictures but also a large picture of Miller, wearing some tourist version of a samurai outfit and holding the sword with both hands above his head.

"So, this is the office of our problem child. Supposedly, he uses that samurai sword on uncooperative vendors."

One section of wall displayed numerous plaques and other mementos. As he examined them from top to bottom, he realized it was a professional chronology: Marine Corps, late 60's Vietnam – Connie had described his jar head crew cut as so perfect that you could practice putting on it – Piscataway Tech, IBM COBOL Training. Sam quickly scanned some of the other frames.

"Look at this, Norm; no bachelor's degree, classic internal career path. I'll bet he started out mounting tapes for a living."

Racker and Johnson sat down at the conference table in the corner to wait for Miller. *ComputerWorld* and *CIO* magazines were strewn on the table.

"He certainly has the IBM world nailed here, doesn't he?" Norm noted. There weren't any of the newer trade rags like *Wired*, *Industry Standard* or journals covering the emerging use of the Java computer language exploding on Internet applications. Sam leafed through a few of them before his impatience returned.

"Herb," Racker called out, "Any sign of your boss?"

"No, sorry, Mr. Racker."

"Can you come in here, please?"

Putnam walked just inside the door, nervously awaiting some directive. He wasn't comfortable being in Miller's office without being invited by Miller himself.

"Come on over and sit down. I'm still new here and I haven't met too many people. So, tell me about yourself. How long have you been with Azalea?"

Herb settled into the chair opposite Sam Racker. "Almost six years. I started out as a programmer analyst and moved into Computer Operations after a couple of years."

"Why the change?"

"I was a systems operator in the Navy and decided I liked that better than programming."

“After several years in Operations you must know a lot about what goes on here. Perhaps you can help educate me. I’m trying to make some sense out of our financial systems. For instance, this Oracle Financials implementation seems to be a little out of whack. What’s your take on it?”

Herb recoiled at the question. *Talk about a live grenade! This might be a career defining situation here.* He decided to play dumb. “I’m not sure what you’re asking. It’s certainly late, no question about that, but if you’re asking me why, I really can’t say. I’m not involved in the project yet. I deal with code *after* it goes production.” *Development is not my job, thank God!*

Sam leaned back, strumming his right fingers on his chin. *Herb deflected that question quickly.* “I see. But certainly you’re aware of something as radical as bringing Oracle and PeopleSoft in. Must be quite a challenge for the folks in IT.”

“That it is,” Herb said. *It’s definitely a challenge to stay the hell away from those subversive projects.*

Racker tried to ferret out a little more information. “Well, what I mean is, it must be quite a culture shock to see radical new equipment, like Sun servers, and packaged software come into this datacenter. How do you think people are handling it?”

*Like ants handle Raid.* “Uh, pretty well. There’s a bunch of training going on for the new teams.”

Racker gave him several more chances to go on, but it became clear that Herb wasn’t going to volunteer much. The interrogation ended when Herb’s pager went off. He looked at the number and recognized it as the main control desk. *Thank God.* “This is the Control Desk. I think I better return it.”

Racker nodded his approval and leaned back in his chair pondering the slivers of information while Putnam called the control desk from Miller’s phone.

“Control Desk.”

“This is Herb. Did you page me?” He heard the console operator say “It’s Herb” and then a shuffling of the receiver.

“Is he still there?”

“Who? I’m in Miller’s office with Sam Racker.”

“Shhhhhh. Just answer yes or no.”

“Who is this? I don’t have time for...”

“Shut up! This is Stewart. DON’T say my name. Answer yes or no. Is Racker still in my office?”

“Yes.”

“Tell him you have to go.”

“But —”

“NO BUT’S! Tell him you have a production problem and you’re sorry and all that. Then he’ll leave.”

”But –”

“I SAID...”

“I got it!” *I hate you Stewart.* Herb hung up and turned to Sam. “Mr. Racker, uh, I’m terribly sorry but there’s a production problem that needs my attention. I need to get back to the datacenter.”

“I understand. Thanks for your time. I’ll find my way out. Oh, one other thing. Can you give me Miller’s pager number?”

Putnam froze. *What do I do?* Miller had fired the last guy who gave the pager number out without asking, but he realized that Racker would soon be his boss’ boss. It mattered.

Racker saw the panic on Putnam’s face. He got up, crossed the room and put his hand on the shoulder of a nearly paralyzed Herb Putnam and said, “Herb, I won’t tell him where I got it.” Mildly relieved, Herb wrote it out for Racker.

“It was a pleasure meeting you,” Herb said and fled the office.

Sam looked around for some note paper, finding it on Miller’s desk. He wrote a quick note to Miller, asking him to stop by his office to meet Norm Johnson.

He and Norm returned to his floor. “Connie, this is the pager for Stewart Miller. Please keep paging him every ten or fifteen minutes until he calls back. Try using different numbers if he doesn’t reply. You still have your cell phone, right?”

“Sure, Sammy. What do I do when, well, if, he calls back?”

“Tell him I want to introduce our new Director of Financial Information so we can get going on some reporting work.” He started to go into his office but spun around, tossing his ID badge onto Connie’s desk. “Oh, and figure out how I can get that badge enabled to enter the datacenter.”

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The InUnison meeting broke up just in time for a reception with open bar and hors d’oeuvres. This was a time to mingle, collect inside information, and get warmed up for the evening of serious drinking at the hotel bar.

Even within the frugal InUnison budget, the hotel provided a sizable spread of food spanning three or four tables. Being in California, though, the dishes were usually inscrutable to the out-of-towners. It would start with a couple of salad choices, move to a fish or chicken dish – all dusted with unrecognizable spices or simply soaking up a witches brew of marinade – and finishing with a bowl of soup from a large cauldron. It was a juggling act to keep it all together.

“What is this?” Porter asked his roommate Sean, gazing at a greenish, guacamole-type dip. “I didn’t recognize anything but the salad at lunch either.”

“Same crap every time.” Sean replied, as he gingerly spooned through some fishy smelling salad. “You’d think they could at least put out some marinated shrimp or something.”

“People really survive on this stuff?” Porter was looking down the line to see the West Coast folks eagerly loading up on some sort of soybean concoction.

Sean sighed. “They think we should all be vegans or something. We have to put up with it for a few days but it’s become a tradition on the last night of these meetings for us serious eaters to head up to Gulliver’s in Burlingame for the Full Bone Cut of prime rib. Biggest slab of bloody cow I’ve ever seen. But it would be frowned upon for us to disappear on the first day.”

“Well, given your criminal habits, can’t you rustle up something from the kitchen?”

Sean laughed. “You know, I might have to work out a way to scam room service, maybe try to have it sent to a different room and then intercept it or something...”

Around eight o’clock, the crowd started to assemble in the sizable lounge at the Sofitel. It didn’t take long for the industry-standard shots of tequila to show up. Reps who had been with other software companies would relate stories of the quantities of agave consumed at their meetings, always casting InUnison as not up to snuff.

Reaper could be counted on to regale anyone who would listen about his glory days at Sybase. They were about the only glory days in Gary’s life.

“Yeah, when I was at Sybase, that dude with the Greek last name – what the hell was his name? – he wouldn’t let up on us. Tray after tray after tray of shot glasses... We got kicked out of so many bars ...”

“Oh, and *how* many shots was that, Gary?” Phillipson, while no superstar drinker himself, had heard this story at every meeting since joining the company. It was definitely old. The number had grown from 10 to 100 in one year.

“A SHITLOAD! I’m telling ya!” Reaper slurred.

Egging him on a little further was Gatto.

“So, Grim, how’d you end up at InUnison? You were doing pretty well there at Sybase weren’t you? Why leave a good thing?” Gatto already knew the answer and he considered it sport to bait Reaper at almost every meeting. He also knew Gary hated the nickname “Grim Reaper”. But Reaper was too involved in his story and tipsy to notice, disappointing his tormenter.

“Hey, we had a huge, I mean HUGE deal brewing at AT&T. Business Development fucked it up. I left because I got tired of them screwing up my deals. BD and those incompetent marketing people.”

“But you’re always going on about ‘At Sybase we did this’ and ‘At Sybase we did that,’” Gatto said, continuing to draw Reaper to the ledge. “You always make it sound like they were the standard for how to run a software business.”

Reaper started to look sadly at his empty tequila shot glass. “They were when I started there. Then things went to hell.” Gary was almost ready to start sobbing now. He was sure that he’d never see that kind of success ever again.

Gustavson, always the champion of the little guy, knew Gatto had blood in the water and interceded. He’d seen Gatto reduce people to tears with his merciless rundowns before. The Swede could talk trash with the best of them but never with malice.

“Hey, Gatto, you’re always bragging about Sun. Why can’t Gary brag about Sybase?”

“That’s because Sun really was and *is* a good organization. We could do no wrong at Sun. Of course you wouldn’t know a good organization if it fell on you.”

“Yeah, and your shit doesn’t smell, does it?” Gustavson said.

“Great comeback, moron.” Gatto was already feeling the alcohol. Pretty soon he’d believe he could take on the whole bar.

“Who’s calling who a moron, you Jersey Dago?” There was certainly no love lost between Gustavson and Gatto. But Gustavson had about five inches and fifty pounds on Gatto. “If I had New York, I’d have tripled your production.”

Gatto pushed his chest out to meet Gustavson’s, though his chest met at The Swede’s lower rib cage. “Well, for your information, I happened to *live* in Jersey for a while, I’m not *from* Jersey.”

Knowing he had nothing to lose by making up a legend, he went further. “Anyway, now I’ll finally get the resources to do the job in New York properly. That’s why they’re bringing in Angelis and Mitchell to work under me.”

Gustavson sprayed his tequila in Gatto’s face.

“You can’t be serious! You can’t manage yourself let alone a team! Right, they bring in a serious player with a background in startups, some of which he practically started himself, and he’s going to work for you. You’d best lay off of the sauce, my friend. Let’s see, I seem to recall you losing UBS to me because they had no confidence that you could deal with a long, very technically involved sales cycle.”

That ripped an old wound wide open since UBS Warburg had in fact pretty much chewed Gatto up and spit him out as not worthy of dealing with them. He tried to close them on a multi-million dollar deal at the second meeting and they literally laughed him out of the conference room. Financial services companies such as UBS Warburg were always at the

forefront of technology and often had to build leading edge software internally before it was available commercially. Since they knew the technology cold, their evaluation criteria was some of the most brutal in the industry. But if you passed the test, it was usually worth millions.

Gatto couldn't back down now. He'd crossed the point of no return in the story, so why not go all the way?

Keeping a straight face, he continued.

"Yes, Number *Two*," he said, waving two fingers in the Swede's face. "I got the word from Presby himself. He's going to let Angelis in on it at the breakouts. Oh, and you can get used to being number *TWO* for a while," Gatto said, waving the two fingers in The Swede's face again. "As for UBS, you can have those elitist bastards and their fifty page RFIs. I closed six deals in the time it took them to decide which stall to take a dump in."

Even Gustavson had to laugh at this bit of hysterical hyperbole, as no one was buying it.

"Hey, back off, pal!" The Swede said, shoving Gatto out of his personal space. "Your hair is dripping grease on me. Even you know that one UBS Warburg is worth a dozen of the no-name accounts you conned into buying software from us."

Wayne was at the other end of the bar chatting with Ken Presby when he noticed that Gatto and Gustavson were glancing down at him. He saw how animated the conversation had become and figured that they were simply conspiring about territories.

It was a schmoozing kind of chat that Wayne was having with Presby, though he had hoped he'd get some confirmation about his territory. He wanted to lobby, again, for at least a few named accounts in Manhattan – like Azalea – but really didn't want to get into any kind of pissing match with Gatto. Presby, like most savvy sales managers, wasn't going to get sucked into any kind of serious discussion in public. It might have seemed as if no one was paying attention to them, but all eyes and ears from the East team were alert to any clue to come from Presby.

"... Anyway, Wayne, we're damn glad to have you. You are going to fit in fine here." Presby put on his best fatherly face.

"Well, I appreciate the vote of confidence, Ken. I'm particularly happy to be working with Porter. He certainly knows the technology."

Presby wasn't showing any recognition about Porter.

"He's that pale, slim guy with the unruly brown hair at the far table. You remember; SE from Security National Bank. He's been working with our products for over a year. You interviewed him the same day you met with me."

"Oh, right. I'm not thinking clearly. His company used our stuff? Security National? Hmmm, must not have been a big deal. Don't recall the name. Who sold it?"

“I suppose Gatto did.”

“No, wait. Security National, they were an early adopter. I’m told that we pretty much gave them everything for free. No wonder I didn’t remember. It was done before I joined the company and was never on a forecast. Either way, Gatto wouldn’t have dealt with them. His deals always are obscure. He doesn’t have a clue about strategic relationship selling. Always takes the short cut...” Presby caught himself as he was about to start really dissing Gatto. His eyes scanned the groups nearby to see if anyone had been listening in.

Wayne certainly took note. He wondered about what the relationship was between those two; Gatto may have sold to nondescript accounts, but he was still number one in the company.

Just then, Gary Reaper rudely stepped in front of Wayne to talk to Presby. Wayne took the opportunity to wander down to the end of the bar where Gatto and Gustavson were still jousting. He figured he’d better get the reintroduction over with.

“Tom Gatto, how have you been?” Wayne said, extending his hand in greeting.

Gatto shifted his newly refilled beer glass to his left hand to accept the handshake, spilling some on Wayne’s shoes.

“Oh, sorry ‘bout that. Fine, Wayne. Get anyone fired lately?” Gatto said.

*Already playing head games, are we?* Wayne sighed to himself.

“Actually, no.”

“Still poaching accounts?” Gatto asked.

“I believe I should be asking you that question, Tom.”

“Well, it’ll be nice to be on the same ‘team’ again. I could use some help in Manhattan. You *do* know that you’re working for me?” Gatto said, winking at The Swede and swaying into the bar.

“I see you haven’t lost your sense of humor.”

“I wasn’t joking.”

Gustavson had heard enough and came to Wayne’s defense.

“I’m Bill Gustavson, Wayne. Welcome! And don’t listen to this drunk. His Attention Deficit Disorder precludes him ever really getting a big account.”

Gatto didn’t appreciate his intervention.

“F’ you. Isn’t it time for your beauty sleep?”

“Actually, it is. I need my rest so I can continue to kick your ass tomorrow. See you guys in the morning. The first session is BD, right? It’ll be content-free as usual.” Gustavson downed the rest of his Anchor Steam and left the glass on the bar.

Wayne decided to cut his losses. He wasn't going to get anywhere with Gatto in his current state of inebriation and bad attitude, the latter of which had been aggravated by Gustavson.

"I'm going to turn in as well. It was nice to get, uh, reacquainted, Tom." Wayne said, extending his hand. "I'm sure we'll be able to work together well, just like old times."

"Sure thing." Spurning Wayne's hand, Gatto waved his glass at him instead and turned away.

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Out at the edge of the lounge, the SEs congregated among the sofas and armchairs, filling the coffee table with empty beer bottles and drink glasses. The conversation was becoming more animated as the number of glasses increased. The standard religious arguments about Microsoft versus the true egalitarian nature of the software business were hashed out for the umpteenth time.

"Listen, someone ought to sue the Redmond boys and break them up. They are sucking in all the oxygen, strangling the industry."

"Please. What are you, some kind of retro-Commie? Maybe you missed it but the Berlin Wall came down a few years back. Gates has simply built an aggressive company. Government doesn't have a right to blow up companies because someone thinks that they are too successful. Sure, they seem to use tactics which should be reigned in, but blow up the company? I suppose you support the death penalty for jaywalking."

Sean Murphy spoke up. "Oh, guys, I just realized that I haven't properly introduced my roommate! This is Porter Mitchell from New York. He's been using our stuff for quite a while now so you won't be able to snow him with any technical or marketing BS."

Each of the eight SEs took his or her turn shaking Porter's hand and welcoming him.

"So, you must know Tom Gatto. How much money did he shake you guys down for?" asked Mark Maskowitz, the SE for Washington, DC.

"Never met him until this meeting. We were an early adopter before he even came on board. I started working with InUnison on version 0.8. Since we were plugged in directly to support and got the software for free, I guess he didn't see the point in spending time with us."

"Of course he wouldn't. Unless it lined his pockets, he wouldn't give you the time of day," Mark said. "We lost two good SEs in New York because they couldn't stand to work with the prick. I ended up shuttling back and forth from DC."

"I was part of the Gatto Shuttle as well," Sean said, referring to the fact that he was also a shuttle flight away in Boston. "He wants you to demo the same thing over and over, never really wants us to engage with the

prospect; always says ‘no’ to a proof-of-concept or managed evaluation. Takes all the fun out of the job.”

“Of course, he doesn’t have a problem engaging if the prospect is female. Hi, I’m Julia Berkowski, Atlanta SE.”

Julia, one of the most respected SEs at InUnison, had a software product engineering background, was an excellent communicator and had a wicked competitive streak which served her well in the sales environment.

She dreaded these sales events, though. A tall, slim yet buxom strawberry blonde, she had to fend off the sex fiends of the company but took full advantage of her sex appeal with the white males who still dominated IT management. At some point during every sales meeting, some tequila-buzzed rep would wander by and “chat” with her. The attempt to pick her up might not be blatant or overt but she knew the rep wasn’t really interested in her latest demo techniques.

That sex appeal had not translated into any lasting relationships, though. Julia hadn’t had a serious relationship for over three years, during which her suitors were all computer nerds who thought she was one of them and the last thing she wanted was a one-dimensional partner. Others, intimidated by Julia’s strong conservative opinions and intelligence on a wide range of subjects, moved on.

As long as she was with the other SEs, though, she had a protective buffer around her. She was one of the guys with them, though they tended to think they were all her older brothers.

“So it sounds like you have more experience with the product than the rest of us put together. Beware; you’ll be getting calls for help.”

“I’d be happy to help out however I can. But you guys are going to have to give me some Sales 101 in return.”

“Julia, don’t you think your sales partner could give Porter some tips?” Sean knew this would get a rise from Julia.

“Oh, sure. Grim Reaper’s Rule Number One: drop trou at the first meeting and beg for the business. Rule Number Two: when rule one fails as usual, offer your SE for long engagements in pointless projects that the prospect doesn’t want or need.”

Julia seethed at having to deal with the arrogant yet clueless Gary Reaper on a daily basis. She longed for the opportunity to really have an impact on a big deal. She was simply unlucky to live in the same geography as Reaper, forced to chase after prospects that had no use for integration software.

“I’m always the one to have the rejection conversation with the customer, along the lines of, ‘I really don’t know why Gary keeps bothering us. We keep telling him we aren’t interested. You’re very capable though, would you like a job here?’”

Everyone laughed, knowing it was true. It was especially funny to have a woman talking about a rep dropping his trousers to get the business.

Ron Defazio, SE in Los Angeles, introduced himself and offered some alternative advice.

“My Rule One: make sure your rep feeds you and picks up the check.”

Sean interrupted, “Of course, Ron, being a California surfer dude is a pretty cheap date for a rep. ‘Oh, could I have some fruit pizza please with a side of tofu?’ Yuk!”

“Well, my body is my temple,” Ron said while caressing his ripped abs. “I take care of it instead of hooking up to an IV of cholesterol like you heathens.”

“I know Wiley worships your body, Ron.”

Wiley Nelson, SE in Chicago, piled on using his best lisp. “Ooooo, big boy, be my roommate sometime so I can worship that body toooo?” This broke the whole team up as Wiley was about 6 feet 5, 260 pounds, practically a twin of his sales partner Gustavson.

“This is where I get off the bus.” Julia loved these guys, but when the conversation degenerated to this level, it was time to call it a night. “Don’t stay up too late. Don’t want anyone sleeping through my presentation tomorrow.”

“Don’t forget to say goodnight to Gatto, Julia.”

“I’ll be sure to give him your room number, Sean.”

“Hey, where’s the Youngster?” Wiley asked. “Shouldn’t he be buying these drinks?”

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“So, what good news do you have for me?” Young asked O’Rourke, after being summoned to the bar.

“I wanted you to know that we have to hire about five SEs in the next two quarters.”

“And where are these SEs going to be located?”

“Oh, not sure, maybe another in DC, Chicago; open offices in Dallas, St. Louis... We already have some reps ready to sign.”

“Isn’t that going to reignite territory battles?”

“No, I’m working hard to be sure everyone has set territories for the year. These are mostly new locations that weren’t being worked.”

This was a very depressing aspect of Young’s job. O’Rourke always treated the technical side of the team as an afterthought even though the reps craved access to quality technical talent – dedicated to them, of course. When his hiring lagged the sales rep hiring, he felt tremendous pain.

“Shit, Niles, when was this decided? You know it takes twice as long to find SEs as reps, and then it takes a quarter for them to be proficient. In the meantime, my guys, and me of course, get run ragged.” He’d made the argument for as long as he’d been an SE manager, and as usual, his VP didn’t care. “Speaking of getting run ragged; you realize that we are going to have to add another SE manager to the mix. It’s not so bad right now as

we are one to one, SE to rep, but you add five or six more and I'm going to be doing nothing but playing traffic cop and wet nurse. My first choice would be Chicago to cover the Central Area."

O'Rourke gave Young that humoring kind of smile for which he was famous. It made the recipient feel like O'Rourke cared, but the effect wore off quickly.

"I'll take it under advisement. Youngster, I know you can meet the challenge. Where's your drink?"

Young decided that he needed something stiffer than a chardonnay.

"What single malts do you have?" he asked the bartender.

"Hey, where's this Kenneth Presby guy from room 847?" the Bartender called out, ignoring Young. It was closing time and he needed someone to pay up or sign out.

*Shit. They did it to me again,* Presby thought. He tried to hide his room number but at every sales meeting and company event, someone found out and started the tab on his room bill. *What would it be this time, four figures?*

"I'm Presby. Give me the damn bill." He made a show of snatching the bill and looking disgusted but it would be bad form to bitch too much.