

Too Big for My Britches

Prior to '77 we were rockin' along. We were slowly growing, and always profitable. Then we bought Missouri Life, and began losing money month after month. Almost every entry in the minute book reflects this frustration. In fact at the March, 1979 meeting Derry suggested finding a broker (PDF - [to-big-for-my-britches.pdf](#)) who'd sell our whole company!

I continued to wheel and deal, successfully bidding on M-U in September, 1980; doing the Chrysler deal, moving my office to the Missouri Life Building and charging the company rent for a building I personally owned. And while Derry and the other board members were in the loop, I was moving fast; often getting deals done prior to telling them. All that probably would have been okay had the company been hugely profitable, but it wasn't. We were struggling. And, we weren't getting any help from a sluggish national economy.

So, I got my hands slapped. A summary of these frustrations (PDF- [Derry-summary-part1.pdf](#)) was sent to each Board member and included things like employee duties and pay; the new Mizzou deal; the Chrysler deal (see my previous Chrysler blog entry); the rent for our building, and finally a summary of what Derry thought needed to be done about all this. He wasn't after blood, but he wanted changes; he wanted to be consulted before deals were done and he wanted to be involved. Derry's plan was considered at the April, 1981 meeting and approved. It was the five others against me. I submitted.

Was I wrong? Yes. Was I prideful? Yep. As the leader of this venture did I deceive the other shareholders? Could have. Did I do so purposefully? Absolutely not. Was this hard for me? Yes, but I knew they loved me. What did I learn? That I was under authority and needed to submit to that authority. Have I followed that spirit going forward? Most of the time, but not always. What else did I learn? Being under authority has its purpose and submission is empowering, is cathartic, and freeing.

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