

## **QBQ! (The Question Behind the Question) QuickNote #11**

### ***"When will they improve things around here?"***

Could things be better at your organization? Does your organization have *problems*? Actually, most don't have *problems*. They have "opportunities," "issues," and "situations"! Do you ever want to say, "*Hey boss, come over to my world, I'm surrounded by challenge!!!*"

Years ago I was driving to a sales call. I had just bought my first car phone - for \$950! Hard to believe, isn't it? And that's back when car phones were actually *attached* to cars! The air time charges took some getting used to, but I was happy to have it that day because I was lost. I dialed the company's number and I'll never forget the woman who answered. Her name was Stephanie. With both joy and warmth in her voice (on a Monday morning, no less), Stephanie asked if I would hold. "*No problem,*" I said. After a minute of expensive air time had passed, I was about to hang up when she came back on and said, "*Mr. Miller, are you still there?*" "*Yes I am,*" I responded, and then came the words I've never forgotten. "*I'm so thankful you held for me!*" Her voice was sincere and positive. "*No problem,*" I said. As she gave me directions I was thinking about her earlier choice of words. *Thankful*? She said she was thankful I had held for her, and I could tell that she was. And, by acknowledging my patience and thanking me as she did, she made me feel as if I had a 20-inch sign around my neck that said, "*I'm special! I'm important!*" So when I arrived at her building minutes later, I couldn't wait to meet her and I was not disappointed. She was everything I had imagined: Friendly, upbeat, and energetic. After getting settled into the lobby, I walked to the reception counter, leaned across, and spoke quietly. "*Stephanie, if this organization isn't careful, somebody is going to steal you away.*" She smiled, looked left and then right, and said in a soft voice, "*Someone already did. Today's my last day!*"

The economy is tough, the stock market is sick, corporate layoffs and scandals are everywhere. Recently, I asked a group of eighty people from twenty firms, "*How many of you know someone who has been laid off?*" Every single person raised a hand. So maybe my personal favorite "meeting theme" doesn't work right now. I don't know, but I'll take the risk - here it is:

*"Believe or Leave!"*

There. I said it. And I said it because I still believe it. I hope it doesn't sound harsh. But in good times or bad, organizations still need people like Stephanie. People like *you*. Maybe more than ever. *Certainly* more than ever. But wherever we *choose* to be we need to have BELIEF - in self, colleagues, our products and services and the value they add to our customers' lives, and *the institution I represent*.

Stephanie's BELIEF had cracked. So she made a *choice*. It was *her choice* and the right one for *her*. How about you? How's your BELIEF doing nowadays?

Here's a test to measure your own BELIEF in the organization *you* represent:

*Do the things I say about my organization while at work match what I say about my organization at home that night?*

Go ahead and read that question again. What's the answer? "Yes" or "No"? If I say positive things at work and negative things at home, I probably have a crack in *my* BELIEF in the very institution I have *chosen* to be the ambassador for each day. And if that's true, who am I failing? Everyone from customers to colleagues to family to myself. There certainly is a better question than "*When will they improve things around here?*" Naturally, it's a QBQ!

*"How can I best use my gifts, talents, and skills in today's world?"*

Practicing personal accountability means answering that question honestly. If the answer means staying *right where you are*, then attack the *problems* with an attitude of BELIEF. But if it means a change of address for you, then take with you your BELIEF - *and* your cell phone just in case you need directions.

**John G. Miller**  
author of the *QBQ!* book.