

9 Friendship Under Pressure

Rooster Leghorn, Head of Production at Seasonal Products Limited, was sitting in his office staring gloomily at the production chart in front of him. Glitch stars were scattered all over the thing. They'd started out as a purely logistics company bringing components together from suppliers and providing kits and parts to their customers. More and more these days they were actually fabricating the end-products. Indeed, Seasonal Products have become world class. Thanks to their interaction with their suppliers they are not only able to plan precisely and deliver just in time at highly competitive rates but also to develop an innovative capability to come out with some really futuristic, market-beating products such as their unique chocolate dinner service, greeting cards, gift wrap and ribbon.

Rooster's main headache was Springtime Gifts & Events Limited, one of his biggest customers and by far the most difficult to deal with.

CEO at Springtime, Peter Leveret's, outfit seems to operate in a permanent party culture. The salesmen led by Hartley Hare are constantly hopping from one business lunch to the next. His team seem to have the authority to put orders directly into Seasonal and collect them without going through their purchasing people and, this causes problems when it comes to payment. What makes matters worse is Springtime's operations department who also take it on themselves to bypass their purchasing people, and often in conflict with their salesmen, place their own orders. The result is chaos in Springtime with their purchasing department trying to rectify the situation with last minute top up orders or cancellations. Inevitably Seasonal have to charge them and this is making Springtime's Mrs. Cottontail, Head of Purchasing even more grumpy.

If only Rooster's boss could persuade his old friend Peter Leveret, to get a grip on his organisation. If only we could hold a monthly meeting, where we could discuss the progress on current orders and plans for future orders. We could also talk about marketing initiatives, where we could tell them about new ideas coming out of R&D and get feedback about what their customers want. This might prompt Springtime to straighten out their lines of communication and make them realise the impact on costs.

It would be so good if there was a contract in place rather than our longstanding handshake arrangement. Even better, if we could formally review our joint performance regularly not only would we learn to do things more efficiently but also, we could jointly improve the profitability of our relationship through increased market share.

At this moment, Penny Hen, Order Processing Supervisor, rushed into his office with a sheaf of papers in hand and shrieked, *"They want 5000 chocolate robots by Friday! They know there's a three month lead time on these we have to get the circuits from China. We told Hartley only last week."*

Rooster groaned and held his head in his hands.



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