Graffito 66

When Eyes are Smiling

This Graffito could, I suppose, have been called Ken, Johnno and Brian but I resisted the temptation. Nonetheless, our detailed involvement with the revolution in bank marketing from the mid-seventies to the present day has been in the service of these three heroes and their fellow travelling managers. Each came to us from a different starting point. Ken was given a six-month contemplation phase by Derek and Philip to design the onslaught. Johnno heard word of Ken's activities within the cartel and convinced Peter in Sydney to copycat Ken and in time to bring it all back to London. Brian came obliquely from the Dublin professional connection again as a stalking horse for the mother country where innovation was perceived as far too tricky on this scale...

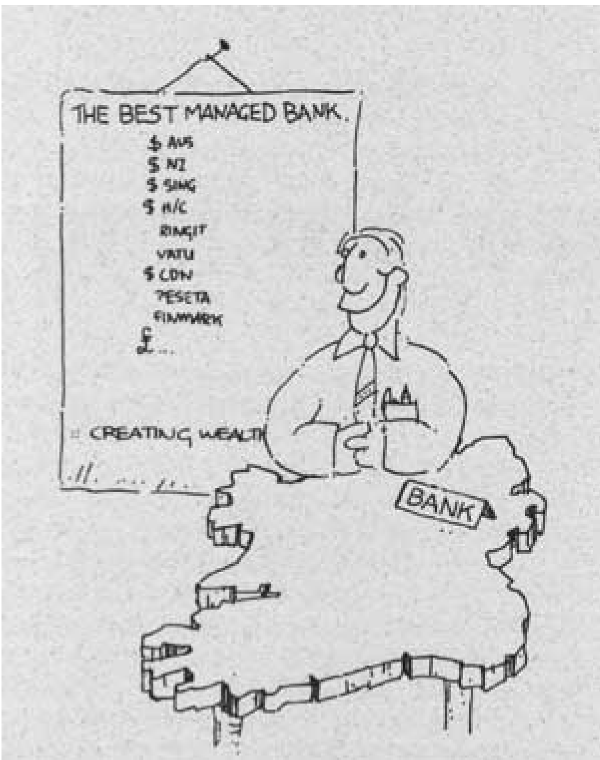
But I ramble. Banking was deregulated in the early 1970s by Lord Barber at the Exchequer, who later went on to be Chairman of Standard Chartered. The entry of the international banks was a horrifying rout. Half the corporate market fell within ten years. Simultaneously, Building Societies were taking away at least 60 per cent of the consumer deposits market in the High Street banks that paid derisory rates of interest and closed on Saturdays.

Furthermore, my brother and sister have both been bankers since the later 1950s, now in Canada, and they gave me incomparable insights at the branch level in corporate and personal banking. All of which meant that when John approached me on behalf of Derek then Ken, the marketer within me was curious but also, of course, enthusiastic to help. Ken wanted nothing less than to lead his domestic bank to number one in the UK market. An operational researcher with business development and branch banking experience, he resolved to develop by action learning all 2,000 branch managers across the land. They needed to learn marketing and selling. Who better to tutor them than the 70 area marketing managers? Once they knew how, the branch managers could cascade the whole learning experience down to other staff through customer service training. We created the tools to do the job and by 1984 had transferred it all, together with two members of our faculty, into the bankers' training centre to run it on a countrywide basis.

Perhaps Ken's most inspired idea was the development of Area Support Teams, mobile sales commandos. They were inspired for three reasons. First, they encouraged branch managers to prepare plans of how they could use them on a competitive basis since they could not be everywhere. Second, the mid-20s bankers who joined them were acculturated with a vengeance into the arts and science of meeting customers and influencing them. Third, the demonstration effect within branches as they swept in not instead of but as well as the branch staff was vitally significant. They showed how daring a bank salesman could be and survive.

Ken's ambition to become the number one bank was achieved with us making our invited contribution. He moved on later to an American bank in Europe and later still into the Building Society movement and we have been pleased to help him in both those environments, first in Amsterdam and now in Yorkshire. He had led the campaign, however, for his major UK cleaning bank from within the marketing department, a modest but growing head office staff department. Word reached down under to Australia's first bank via the Head of Staff Training, who sold it to the Head of Retail Banking, a devotee of Gilbert and Sullivan with Pirates of Penzance a particular speciality I recall. Johnno and Peter; the retail banker down under, were at one on the need for something rather like what we had down up over in the UK.

There was a difference, however. The down under bank had a powerful planning process in operation that was well down the track in influencing new product development and state and branch sales with their profit targets. So our customer focus in Australia was able to be similar to that pursued with Peter in photosystems. We asked the learners to review the plans and make proposals on how they could be better accomplished. Even more importantly, how could they be carried forward to improve branch performances? This initially required the creation of marketing planning awareness at all levels down to branches using the model already conceived in the UK. Our text on marketing was rewritten as it had not been for Belgium and bank-specific examples were incorporated. It was an outstanding success with action learning workshops in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide for all state and regional managers over a six-month cycle, with cascade programmes thereafter. In 1984, it was also extended to New Zealand, reaching in grand total some 2,000 branches.



Word from down under was sufficiently good for the European Division of the same bank, led by David and Peter, to take up our approach. Forty-eight London-based managers responsible for operations from Finland to North Africa worked for six months both on absorbing the nature of marketing processes on the European scene and also labouring on ten key Issues from the corporate strategy. This was the first occasion that we reached into the total strategic document within banking to drive our programme forward. We had begun with an invitation from Ken and his Marketing Department, we had moved down under to work with the Training Division but we returned to Europe talking with the Chairman and General Manager. Which was excellent preparation when the call came from Dublin to assist in the marketing orientation of an entire bank's UK operations, across four divisions from industrial finance to international banking via domestic and corporate finance. We were ready and so, of course, was the General Manager who sported great intellectual curiosity in top management processes. It was to be our largest programme to date, lasting four years from the top team to the branches, and 500 beyond that in customer service training programmes, again on the cascade model.

As with James, profits have leapt during our involvement and the top team that has put on the winning runs has stayed together by and large. But I return to the beginning to tell the tale.

Back in Ireland, the parent bank holds a dominent position in the marketplace. In Britain, however, matters were very different. It was less than 20th in size among a cast of 700. Growth in Britain has always been the logical first step for an Irish enterprise that finds its home market too small or saturated and each of the major technical transaction-based divisions had in turn expanded to the UK mainland. They were doing well. However, in the strategic planning deliberations at the top everyone was talking customer and market orientation. In fairness, nobody, least of all I, was very clear what it really meant but it was resolved to the British mainland as a laboratory to find out. There were heaps of evocative Irish names within enterprise on both sides of the water - Declans, Finbarrs, Nialls and Seans - but our client was Brian.

Brian was initially cast in the role of Group General Manager for Britain, while the four existing businesses continued to report back to Dublin. He had status but no line authority. He was invited to co-ordinate the work of the divisions on British mainland and make them market-oriented. And a friendly friend of a friend in Dublin, the self same who had introduced us via Bailey's Irish Cream to James commended us to Dermot and he to Brian.

What became and still is for IMCB its biggest ever action learning programme started with conversations in the Pinners Hall in the City. Our proposition was not that Brian should lobby for line authority yet awhile; we never suggested that. We suggested rather he should seek to captivate everyone's imagination with a vision of the future marketplace in which they could all prosper together. We emphasised how fortunate we believed he was, as Ken had been before, to have an opportunity to discuss and plan before being embroiled in the month by month activity. He had already reached that conclusion too.

The vehicle to capture the imagination was, accordingly, seen to be the development of a marketing strategy and plan. In Dublin it was well done and from the centre. My colleagues and I suggested otherwise to Brian and his organisational and development background played a key role in the notion. Mainland Britain was divided into ten geographical areas and in each area all the Bank's branch and unit managers were invited to join over a nine-month cycle. Their goal was to analyse the marketplace in their area for all financial services, and their own competitive strengths and weaknesses. Then they were invited to propose what should be done. Finally, they were under starter's order to do it.

What has been described so far is, of course, the fraction learning sequence. Ten sets of were comrades in adversity. Should help be given? Should any guidelines be set out? To both these questions Brian speedily answered "yes". None of the managers had ever been invited so to proceed hitherto and, provided they were given a clean sheet to seek and find and propose what they wished, it was agreed to be sensible to provide a "sketch statement of corporate goals". It ran to some ten pages and was by no stretch of the imagination a plan. Having read it, nobody knew what to do or when.

Second, Brian resolved that in order to become marketing planners, all the managers concerned should be taught the rudiments of marketing on a crash course but one deliberately tailored to get the planning process going.

The start-up sessions held at Buckingham are still clear in my memory. Bankers from all areas, whether selling high-flying international services or loans for purchasing yachts and industrial premises or current accounts, came together in the ten sets first to learn what one another did and then to learn what marketing meant for financial services. Who were the customers and how could the bank in Britain be organised and managed to give appropriate services to them?

The outcomes of their deliberations are, of course, now history. There are now high net worth individuals, small and large corporates, professional advisers and so forth. The technology and transaction-based divisions often offered services of benefit to a single individual but via several sales contact points. On occasion, two divisions were in competition for the same customer, offering different terms. Such matters are, of course, discernible from on high and are common to almost all competitors and enterprises. The strength of Brian's approach was to get his managers to learn together and seek to resolve among themselves how they could make good sense of it all for their customers at the right profit for the bank's shareholders. No easy matter but a vital one in a service organisation operating through 70 branches and 1,200 staff scattered all over the country from

Edinburgh to Bristol.

It is a pleasure to tell how well it all came out. Not because there were no horrendous problems at times. Not everyone wanted to face the future or their customers in the way that began to emerge for Brian. Reorganisation and central marketing development of new products posed challenges. Newcomers arriving when the momentum was at its highest found difficulty catching up. Middle and senior managers who found their subordinates and colleagues distracted from day to day operations complained, most particularly if they were not involved in the cross-divisional mentoring roles created. A major industrial relations dispute rocked the bank just when sets were starting up and every reason was given why we should not persevere.

Mainland Britain, however, achieved its goals via action learning. It showed how a bank could be customer and market oriented and it did not do it by telling its managers what they should do but helping them work it out for themselves. The ten plans were consolidated and translated in a top-level corporate marketing plan that had legs. When one read it, one knew what was to happen next and what was expected of each individual.

Back in Dublin, eyes are smiling, but in Britain there is a broad grin, and a lot of excitement; even on the faces of the 17 managers currently on our MBA in financial services management in-company and the 10 on the Executive Diploma in Marketmg and Selling Bank Services.

Graffito 67

MARSELPLAN Brokers

It is appropriate that I should follow on from Smiling Eyes to MARSELPLAN because it was the application internally within IMCB of what Brian had taught us. We met at my house at Milton Malsor, an old Domesday Manor I had thoroughly enjoyed restoring, to look forward to 1990 for IMCB and the publishing house together in autumn 1985. The we included two of my publishing house partners, Judith and Barrie.

It was to be our first major attempt as a small enterprise to apply the professional procedures of corporate marketing planning in a thoroughly professional way. We had produced two earlier documents in 1975 and 1977, the latter focusing on Orwell's horrifying *1984.* They were Ansoff matrix-based, effectively exploring product and market vectors, albeit not customer-focused in the way the Irish had become. This latter point was to be of great personal significance as MARSELPLAN unfurled. For Barrie, apart from Ansoff's influence, the publishing financial goal of £1 million had been particularly memorable for 1984. As 1984 dawned, he circulated all the senior partners with a broadside; let's go for £10 million by 1990. And he reworked our entire corporate strategy on the basis of the Boston Consulting Group's cash management matrix.

At our 1985 Think Tank, the year 1990 was adopted as our five-year planning horizon and the autumn meetings already mentioned set the detailed process into action. As well as the five partners who own the publishing house, we involved our senior accountant and marketing services manager Judith, a greatly talented information and intelligence practitioner as well as teacher, who had masterminded our earlier customer service subscription and marketing intelligence activities, took on the process responsibility.

She read with great care and attention the resources which our senior marketing faculty at IMCB, formerly of SM, had produced for the Irish. She determined that it was good for us. Neither Ansoff nor Boston would do on their own.

Our businesses both in publishing and at IMCB much in common. They are concerned with increasing managerial effectiveness. The publishing house does so by gathering in the fruits of scholarship as written down in learned papers, moderating the quality of the contributions via a refereeing and editorial role, then marketing that scholarship back to the very population that helped create it in the place. Most frequently it does so through librarians who, of course, hold the knowledge inventories worldwide for easy access.

The Business School performs the same role as the librarian when making knowledge resources available to practising managers. Frequently they are management development managers or training managers who act as gatekeepers just as editors a publishers do for the printed word.

These facts are obvious once stated. But for nearly 20 years we had not followed them deliberately to their appropriate conclusion. We needed to modify customer behaviour pattern both of librarians and management development managers as brokers en route to end consumers who were either scholars for learned journals or line managers. We also were very much minded to assist both brokers en route to our key customers groups to be more effective managers themselves within their broker role as well. This meant we needed to understand for the librarian how he influenced line general managers, marketing and production management, financial accountants and academics of similar persuasions, in deciding whether to subscribe to a journal in the first place and continue in the second place and thereafter.

Not all libraries are, of course, the same; nor are all librarians. Additionally, we needed to understand how our journals or our action learning programmes on library management and information sciences could assist librarians to be better managers or practitioners. These two roles, since MARSELPLAN, we call brokers and learners.

Similarly, the management development manager has an important role in knowing what is available for line managers. He may well administer the budget and occasion either personally tutor or buy in from sub-contractors in-house tutorials or programmes. What role does he play in deciding and how does that interact with the line managers who are to be made more effective? Equally, as with the librarian, he will be a self-learner taking journals to improve his knowledge in being a better management development manager and also taking action learning programmes for that purpose himself.

I had lectured for many years on these matters and had written many learned words on them, but I must hereby confirm that I never really realised what it meant in our business until Judith got going. I learnt by being rebuked politely in her New Year's message to me in 1986. She told me I was product and market oriented as, of course, were the distinguished Ansoff and Boston Group. She was determined, and I now believe she was right, that we should begin with our customers, with the people who would say yes or no to purchasing either journals or action learning programmes.

MARSELPLAN's next step was, ironically, to analyse where we were. All our products were reviewed to see what learners and brokers we went to and where. After extensive debates and a sufficient modicum of intellectualising, we concluded that we were selling into four groups of customers, which we now call market missions. First, we deliver benefits to general managers and senior executives in the execution of their roles at work, both as learners themselves and as brokers for others who work for them. This was the Business School's major market worldwide but MCB University Press also had a major group of services on offer.

Second, we delivered benefits to management development and human resource professionals. Here was the other way round with a wide range of self-learner serials and publications available from MCB University Press but not much of a focused offering from IMCB, except in the broker mode.

We delivered substantial benefits to marketing and logistics professionals. The publishing company provided a wide range of journals for the marketer as a self-learner. The Business School offered few programmes of action learning to marketers as learners or indeed as brokers. It did, however, offer to general managers and senior executives the wherewithal to reorient enterprises from top to bottom towards markets and customers (*vide* MARSELPLAN).
Fourth, we offered benefits to librarians most massively through MCB University Press, where some two-thirds of all publications were delivered to librarians and orders placed by them in a broking role. A few journals helped them as learners but IMCB offered no programmes of action learning to them as learners and librarians did not seem to act as learning brokers for others.

From the analysis of our existing product/market position, we could see very substantial scope indeed for synergy at least at a conceptual if not an operational level. Librarians could be offered the chance to learn how to manage libraries better, an idea close to my heart since my work in the mid-seventies with Christine Oldman, leading to our book together called *Developing the Librarian as a Manager.* We have since come to work with ASLIB and evolved a strategy for acquisitions in the field of library management.

Journals were thin within the general managers and senior executives mission and 1988 saw the launch of *Top Management Digest.* Learner programmes of action learning were non-existent in the management development and human resources professionals mission and a very successful Master of Philosophy programme was launched in 1986, followed by joint ventures with the Institutes of Personnel Management in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong for the Master in Human Resources Management.

The Team Management Resources created by Margerison and McCann were targeted onwards from the management development and human resource professionals to general managers and senior executives and to marketing directors, with the benefits spelt out for those customers in the context of their own teams. Our strategy in marketing and selling the MBA programme, which had spent much time with the brokers who were management development and human resource professionals, now focused much more on general managers and senior executives as brokers. Our DBA programme for Chief Executive Officers focused on them as self-learners too.

A number of fascinating decisions followed the planned focusing of our efforts in this way. Some customers responded well to journals but not to programmes. Librarians were in this category for their self-learning work. So too were head teachers and hospital general managers, who subscribed enthusiastically to the journals, *International Journal of Educational Management* and *Health Care Management,* but less so to IMCB 's programme proposals. Marketing professionals on the other hand responded better, as did industrial general managers, to programmes of action learning rather than journals. The appetite of management development and human resource professionals for good journals and resources is almost insatiable but their broking and self-learning use of programmes less so.

These comments are meant to indicate that, although we could obviously see great synergy for our activities across missions, there were different levels of receptivity for the two basic services that needed the fullest understanding. Nonetheless, we believed and still do, that our four customer/market missions are robust and strategic analysis and plans take place therein. Operational plans and budgets break down very swiftly thereafter into publishing and action learning programmes with differentiated sales and delivery Systems.

MARSELPLAN accordingly gave us customer focus, and four market missions, with learners and brokers in each. It went further and gave us a geographical pattern of sales operations initially; and subsequently a second front for strategic planning in the Asia Pacific.

Sales within the four market missions were all over the world in 1985. Two-thirds of all MCB University Press sales were typically made outside the UK, and in qualification programmes over half of sales were too. Although considerable volumes were achieved in the US for the publishing they were a very small share of that vast potential. We had previously resolved not to go for the North American market except on an agency basis and we held with that policy. However, we had no such inhibition in a marketplace where share was second only to the UK, i.e. Australia. Nor were we daunted by the SE Asian markets. We resolved to focus our activities though Regional Offices, the first in Brisbane and second in Singapore. These both opened in 1987. They cater for all market missions and publishing and action learning programmes. We have read and re-read our textbooks on international marketing and, particularly because of opportunities to teach on IMCB programmes we have maintained a massive flow of senior managers into these two regions. Full-time partners from the UK team are in residence in both regions, integrating the local sales plan and developing the appropriate patterns of delegated autonomy that such distances and such different marketplaces inevitably require.

Our strategy is to be multinational rather than simply exporting what has been produced for the UK market. We do that naturally. In our management programmes by action learning, this is readily achievable and naturally calls for the programmes to be run on the spot, as described in Graffiti 63 and 64. MARSELPLAN originally envisaged that the regions would be sales regions selecting what was most suitable from the products and services created in the UK. However, our senior colleagues in place in SE Asia and Australia very soon showed the error of such an approach in IMCB and later we took the same lesson to our publishing activities with new serials developed from the Asia Pacific context for worldwide sales. A wholly owned subsidiary was established in Hong Kong to publish, market and perhaps to print and dispatch in due course.

MARSELPLAN by the way stands for MARketing and SELling PLAN.

Graffito 68
This Year I is a Salesperson

We came to believe the correct way to provide way to provide management education was on a benefit basis directly derived from the customer's own curriculum, not the academy's lexicon. We had, in fact, little choice because nobody was calling us asking for our services. Where to start?

Most hopefully, we wanted introductions and to this day still do. As all who work in service industries know there is no more effective manner to build business. Its drawback is that it can only proceed at the pace at which introductions either come of their own volition or can be stimulated. So, perforce, we resolved to solicit through the columns of newspapers and our own journals within MCB University Press.

Our analysis of responses to advertising in the UK, Africa and the Far East where we do so extensively is that three categories of individual contact us. First, the manager who is genuinely looking to develop himself and wants details of what we offer to compare with other available programmes. Second, we encounter brokers who are collecting details for their own information associated with a decision to recommend formally that a programme be taken. Third, we have individuals who are not decision or brokers at all although they at first sight seem to be. They are in fact information or rather data gatherers. They have plenty of time on their hands at work and feel better having acquired a further bit of data about management development. This latter category, as I have said, have ample time and are intensely curious. They have made a long time habit of thus collecting data and are extremely knowledgeable.

All salesmen know that, without being offensive to the third category, it is vital to spend as little time as possible with them and as much time as possible with the first two. They, however, both have their own associated difficulties. The free-standing manager who wants to do an MBA, for example, sometimes finds IMCB's specific requirements that the firm must be the laboratory and the company employing him must sponsor his studies difficult to live with. He may be wanting to take his MBA in order to advance his career outside the firm rather than inside. Furthermore, since he thought of it himself, he has a major initial selling job to accomplish within his own organisation too. If we convince him we are best, he must then convince the management development manager it is the best idea too as well as his line boss who is needed to provide the project topic and to lend support for 18 months of intensive studies. We - not so jokingly - say that, if a candidate cannot win that debate within his own enterprise, then he is not of the calibre we want anyway. We are also adamant that we are not in the business of developing job-hoppers as an immediate consequence of our action learning study programmes. Their whole purpose is to enable management to move on with and from their studies to apply the ideas and live with the uneven and perhaps unpalatable consequences of the decisions which arise during such progress.

Most management development managers, either in playing their role in offering a verdict to the individual manager or acting as a broker for any business school, have already quite properly made up their minds. I am reminded in particular of one individual in Stevenage who had just succeeded in convincing his directors after four years to sponsor three managers on a distance learning MBA and up came our potential candidate. No chance. Actually all the energy went into switch-selling him to distance learning from within the organisation. The same fate, of course, awaits the deviant manager once IMCB has convinced the powers that are to work with us on an in-company basis.

I have touched upon what in marketing teaching we call the DMU, the decision making unit, within any enterprise It is seldom the case that a decision can be made by a single individual. The nearest one seems to get to this is when the chief executive espouses our notion of management development, offered to increase his bottom-line profit first with all other benefits to the individual second. In such circumstances, when we have reached to the heart and the mind of the man where the buck stops, almost not quite anything can be accomplished. I say almost because even the most dominant CEO will rely on a team of colleagues and a corpus of administrative support services to carry his decisions forward. They always have the opportunity to explain why his ideas cannot be acted upon directly, rather delayed until they may be lost from sight with some new notion rushing in upon them which can be similarly handled. We met such an outcome on several occasions when we were convinced we had made the sale to CEOs as brokers for their talented rising managers.

Our answer emerged best in Australia and was nothing more nor less than a steering committee approach. There is no precedent for the selling of In-company management development to the CEO as we do it from IMCB. There is no structure to handle the delivery. So, my Australian colleagues concluded, we must assist the CEO to create one for the purpose. It is the taskforce model of course and its membership needs to reflect all the key political and operational factions who will be affected. It is to them that ownership on a collegiate basis must be passed. The shared ownership in a steering committee within a customer organisation has time and again proved its robustness to shocks, tremors and changes of management, even the passage elsewhere of the original customer The steering committee continues to sell the process throughout the organisation, again and again, as each group of doubting Thomases is encountered. Nothing IMCB could do could ever accomplish so much, nor has it.

Thus far, I have made observations on the selling context and the factors that seem to make for success or failure. I should now like to turn to the individual sales skills of faculty members. In the large, they are non-existent. The worst I ever encountered was a so called professional marketer who undertook umpteen visits and wrote reports on every one but never seemed to ask for an order.

The biggest problem for the faculty member is that he is diffident towards the customer. Generations of scholars have shown how to indulge their interests. Curricula the world over reflect the pet ideas of the tutors and seldom the real concerns of the students. With such an attitude, how can we expect faculty members to relish the field situation where we must listen to each due and our offerings to suit the customer's specifics.

How could we get faculty to realise that independent educational service selling in the market alongside heavily subsidised state services justify its price differential by design and service leadership and value for money to an extent unrealised, rather than cutting the price and to gain an adequate return on the capital employed. The old adage that a poor salesman cuts his price at the first hint of a query as opposed to making a concessionary cut to close the sale with a compensating variation of the terms of trade, is as apparent as ever.

We ran several faculty seminars on selling seminars on selling skills and adopted a pattern of paired calling on customers to enable feedback on meetings to take place. Eventually we adopted the strategy of a kerbside sales director who took it upon himself, working with faculty who are willing to be helped, to talk through the situation before and after.

Sales support aids were developed of course. We invested a fortune in the creation of brochures. "A brochure a day keeps the bailiff away", quips one of our less-than-natural salesmen. Video tapes were created again to support the sales situation. I shall never forget the trigger for me to push through our video tape for use in our Far East Region. It was a tape recording secretly made of an open presentation to 120 local managers in Singapore. What was brutally apparent was that all the proper responses to the sales objections that had been so sensibly worked through were lost on the day. Not only that but incorrect information was provided that stored up difficulties for later.

Eventually, in autumn 1987, an Academic Resource Illustrator (ARI) was created to demonstrate the content of programmes along with the video tape, the whole in a very smart pilot's case format. Regional partners' meetings were convened in Singapore and Brisbane twice yearly. At Buckingham in the UK four times each year key faculty days were held to induct new members as well.

After five years, we had reached the astonishing conclusion that excellent salesmen were born not made but that all of us can be mightily improved by understanding that process of selling better, guided by practice and success to build confidence. We also concluded that hard selling was totally inappropriate but reference selling and recommendations were what was needed. Ironically, this last conclusion was only reached from our detailed contact with bankers, as was our approach to MARSELPLAN described in Graffito 67.

What we sell from IMCB to line managers is a personal service that can only succeed on the basis of an effective relationship. The same can be said of all but the mass markets in banking.

It is probably appropriate to end this Graffito with the longest saga of selling in which I have ever been engaged, although happily the sale is now safely in bag. It began in 1983 when a senior personnel manager from a division within the enterprise saw details of our launch in April. A discussion session was arranged in Buckingham and he was accompanied by another colleague who was fascinated. They went back to Reading and wrote a glowing report for their files, kindly sending me one too. I put them in my "Likely Customers File" and brought them forward six monthly. I made no less than eight visits to their offices which were going through the most far-reaching re-organisation. Then I discovered by chance that one of the directors of the parent company was a fellow countryman of one of my oldest customers. That seemed good for a visit and so it was arranged, after eight months' effort.
That visit led to a good atmosphere, the Group Director overseeing human resources being present. I called in again to see where matters were. I was discussing how mid-career managers could be best developed and getting an invitation to meet next the divisional boards for further discussions when one of the personnel managers remarked that their biggest problem was the loss of good graduate trainees.

Funny thing, I said, we have just introduced our new service to help recruit better ones and also keep them, with a top firm of chartered accountants in the UK. That was what I sold, and the programme began in April 1988 - five years after the first contact. I am reliably informed that persistence is a key characteristic of a salesperson, don't you know?

Howeyer, I saw more than that in the sale I made. The senior personnel officers at Group level I had been talking to were brokers for the general management processes. While I talked, a goodly number of divisional managers had started going off to INSEAD on a programme we offered just as well. When it came to graduate trainees, however, the personnel and recruitment staff are not brokers at all. They are their own masters. The same point was made to me 11,000 miles down under at Hamilton, New Zealand, by the Group Management Training Manager for Anchor Butter six months later.