



(U) Letters to the Editor: Views on the 'Corporatization' of NSA

FROM: the editor
Unknown
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(U) Last week we posted some opinions from [REDACTED] on the "corporatization" of NSA (see the [article](#)) and received an unprecedented amount of feedback. Many readers posted their thoughts on the [SID today blog](#), but we also received a number of letters to the editor. Here are some representative comments:

Comment:

(U) Spot on! Too many think it's more important to "get ahead" than "get things done!"

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(U//FOUO) As much as I respect [REDACTED], he's way off on his assessment about the "corporatization" of NSA. One only has to look at TRAILBLAZER and CMM to understand why we need to have better business practices. Yes, we produce "unique" products -- so does every organization. The goal is to produce it in the most efficient manner possible.

(U) He is right about style or substance. That is a neverending battle at this agency.

-- Anonymous

Comment:

(U) A thanks goes out to the Curmudgeon! Straight-shooters are rare and we need more of them. We run around asking why things don't work, much of the time it is the lack of courage and corporate think that keep good ideas from being heard. We don't want to be seen as fighting the powers or one that rocks the boat. God help you if you're labeled a loose cannon. Many organizations dissuaded their people from speaking up by punishing those that do. This is a travesty, and should be put down!

(U) We hurt ourselves by not hearing alternatives or opposite points of view. Who knows who is right or wrong until we try it and see the differences? We need to think outside of the opinions of one leader or one technical expert. It is the diversity of experiences and talents that paint the tapestry of our business. We must encourage dissent and alternative views, or we are bound for failure.

(U) The interworkings of this agency are rife with political correctness -- some appropriate, and some not. We need to encourage more views in our considerations; those views need to be brought up with all the recommendations, not just what was decided by one person. Management needs to promote and encourage alternative thinking, not just the corporate line. We should get back to the basics, focus on what we do best, work with others, and do our jobs better than anyone else.

(U) Our competition is the enemy and we owe it to the people of our great country to remain the leaders in this vital field of excellence.

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(U//FOUO) [REDACTED] is spot on with his words about turning us corporate instead of realizing

we are a DOD unit!! You cannot translate corporate strategy into a DOD unit! See Demings TQL/TQM or whatever. Bravo Zulu, [REDACTED]

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(U) This is a great article. And the author isn't alone. I've been a language analyst in the Agency for 25 years, and I don't like the idea of modeling ourselves after the corporate world either. The main concern of corporations is to sell the most products (or services) at the least cost to the corporation, therefore retaining the most profit. Sure, if you can make a quality product and do the same, fine, but it's better if you can get by with selling cheap quality that wears out or breaks so they buy more, even better. It's all about the "bottom line" and the bottom line is the profit...

(U//FOUO) Our goals should be providing the best product or service to our customer (the warfighter, the national-level decision-maker, etc.) to protect and serve the American people. Yes, we must try to do it with the money allotted to us, but not at the sacrifice of quality, or the values and ideals that we as Americans hold dear.

(U) And I agree with the author on motto that we are here to do our best job (of protecting and serving the American people), not to spend our time trying to get ourselves promoted and get that executive parking space.

(U//FOUO) All aspects of SIGINT production and support are valuable, not just sitting in the upper manager's chair. As my late Dad, a WWII veteran and 30+ year DOD civilian, always said, "A job worth doing is a job worth doing well." And I'm sorry, but "transformation" isn't my job... my job is to safeguard the American people and their way of life. If I have to "transform" to accomplish that in the best way in the 21st century, that's fine... but "transformation" is not the end goal in and of itself. And neither is achieving "corporateness." Sometimes I think we at the Agency, especially the upper layers of management, are starting to lose sight of that.

-- Anonymous

Comment:

(U) Wonderful and to the point. Too much is spent on hype and pointless nonsense versus what ultimate effect did it/you have.

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(U//FOUO) [REDACTED] said it all! He said it with a sense of humor which I hope I still have after my last years (9, but who's counting) in SIGINT are over. The only sad thing about [REDACTED] words are that while they may be read by those who espouse the "corporate view," they will never really be "heard" or heeded. I don't think those that "do the corporate-thing" believe that they are doing anything harmful to NSA, and by extension national security. I have often mourned the NSA that I joined in 1982... if anyone knows where it went, please send me a map.

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(S) I would quibble with the author's assertion that NSA doesn't face competition from other intelligence agencies. Granted, the other agencies use different methods [for example, imagery intelligence (IMINT) or human resources intelligence (HUMINT)] but all of those agencies in the Intelligence Community invariably work off the same set of requirements (for example, the status of Iran's nuclear program). In that sense, the IC is competing within itself to meet information needs tasked by the policy maker and war fighter.

-- [REDACTED]

Comment:

(U//FOUO) I laughed and cried; it became a part of me. But seriously, [REDACTED] hit the nail on the head for me. We spend so much time in this agency talking about unique product, as if it's the greatest cleanser or whitener to hit the market, that we forget that as a government agency we are not in a "for profit" business... Our job, first and foremost, is to get intelligence out to the people who need it, period. Words such as "actionable" or slogans like "Ahead with SIGINT that counts" don't really mean anything.

-- [REDACTED]

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