


# Executive Briefing



*"We have only to awaken a part of us that, occasionally, takes a nap, because we allow ourselves to grow accustomed to business as usual."*

## How To Do Business as *Unusual*

Remember the last time you were pleasantly surprised by something a business did -- maybe a business you patronize frequently?

One thing a great company must do to become and stay great is by astonishing its customers with excellent products, services, and ideas -- with excellent people.

A great lesson in astonishing the customer belongs to Fred Smith, the founder of Federal Express, or, as we know it today, FedEx.

Smith studied at Yale in 1965 when he wrote an economics paper exploring the idea of a delivery system using a fleet of private planes and a central hub. Even back then, he saw that computers would become a routine part of business. But an integral part of the success of computers would be ensuring their dependability. How would businesses get parts to repair them quickly -- say in Waco, Texas?

At that time, no method existed to get packages around the country quickly. Smith's Yale paper proposing the speedy delivery system almost earned him a failing grade. He was told that the concept must be feasible to succeed.

American business is fortunate that Smith saw what could be, instead of what existed. He completed a tour with the Marines in Vietnam and returned home in 1971. He saw that his prediction about computers had indeed come true. They were as necessary as a canvas is to an artist. He also saw no delivery system that could keep up.

Only two years later, Smith launched FedEx with his own money. He used a then-unheard-of delivery system of planes and trucks to get materials around the country. The company endured a 26-month loss before breaking even. But...by the turn of the century, Federal Express registered a worth of \$16 billion,

and owned almost 600 planes and 40,000 trucks.

Now, we can't all be Fred Smith. But all of us possess the capacity to use our vision gene to see what's needed, to fix a problem, and to satisfy a customer. We have only to awaken a part of us that, occasionally, takes a nap, because we allow ourselves to grow accustomed to business as usual.

Today, let's do business as unusual.

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imagine great people