

## A note from us

Spring is really in the air and our thoughts are on change and growth – in the yard as new blooms appear, in the closet as we change clothes for one season to clothes of the new season (our own growth around the waste may impact the change too), and in business as we reflect on how the year has gone so far.

As you pull out your spring and summer clothes and create that annual pile of stuff to get rid of, please keep in mind those in your community who would love to have what you no longer need. There are homeless shelters, women's shelter's, and teen shelters that will appreciate your gently worn clothing, especially clothes appropriate for work. Please share your bounty with them.

Give some thought to how the competition is doing and where you stand in comparison. Are you still ahead of them? By how much? What changes are going on with your target market? What's happening in society that could impact you?

Time to wake up from that long winter's nap and get going before your rivals speed past you.

What's that? They're already gaining? This issue arrived in your mailbox just in time...

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Winnie". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a simple horizontal line.

Winnie Anderson

Is your brand in trouble?

It's no secret that American auto makers have been in trouble for years. Yet the recent news that Toyota sold more cars in the first quarter of 2007 appears to have been a surprise to General Motors.

Here are 3 key reasons Detroit has suffered for so many years. Watch for these symptoms in your own company and take action to prevent spiraling downward.

They refused to pay attention to external news

We each work hard all day and the last thing we want to do is think deep thoughts at night, yet you ignore the news at your own peril. GM and the other American car manufacturers apparently didn't learn their lesson in the 1970s and again were caught not paying attention to news reports. They ignored stories about the aging population and the continuing rise in healthcare costs. They ignored stories of trouble in the Middle East and how that would impact oil prices and consumer's auto choices. They ignored stories that signaled a change in consumer behavior and a move toward environmentally friendlier products.

Important research data that impacts your company and its offerings is all around you for free or very low cost. You can tune into it every day at 6pm or 11pm, or pick it up at the coffee shop for 50 cents.

Refused to pay attention to the internal news

In the Tony Award winning musical *The Wiz*, Evillene, the Wicked Witch of the West, sang a song with the line "Don't nobody bring me no bad news." Most of Corporate America sings that same song every day.

Do you or other leaders in your organization refer to those who bring you bad news as "negative" or tell them they're not "team players"? As leaders rise in an organization it gets harder to hear information contrary to our own opinions. As much as we want to think every idea we have is brilliant, that's just not true. We need to hear the honest opinions of staffers and if they have important negative information to share they need to believe they won't be punished for bringing it to light.

Refused to face facts

As Detroit faced lower sales volume and increased overhead costs, changes weren't made in how the businesses were run. That led profit margins to shrink.

If your company has a “this is the way we’ve always done it” mentality, you are creating a rigid environment rather than a flexible one that would allow the business to make changes as quickly as needed.

Another danger sign is not investigating return rates or complaints. That information can provide you with a goldmine of data that could lead to modifying your offerings to do a better job of pleasing the customer.

Your next step(s): Start plugging in to the local and world news. Investigate how you can create a more open culture in the organization. Head over to [http://www.abiah.com/brand\\_test/intro.html](http://www.abiah.com/brand_test/intro.html) and take our Brand Assessment Test to get a picture of how your brand is doing.



## About Abiah

Abiah is an award winning brand strategy and full service marketing firm that helps mid-sized businesses uncover and leverage what makes them unique to become the recognized leader in their market segment. Find out more about them and take the Brand Alignment test at [www.abiah.com](http://www.abiah.com) or call them at 866-982-2424.