- *Try a Lot of Stuff and Keep What Works:* High levels of action and experimentation—often unplanned and undirected—that produce new and unexpected paths of progress and enables visionary companies to mimic the biological evolution of species (stimulates progress).
- *Home-grown Management:* Promotion from within, bringing to senior levels only those who've spent significant time steeped in the core ideology of the company (preserves the core).
- *Good Enough Never Is:* A continual process of relentless self-improvement with the aim of doing better and better, forever into the future (stimulates progress).

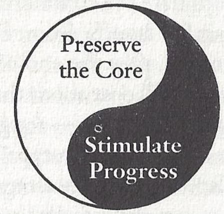
We will provide examples, anecdotes, and systematic evidence to support and illustrate each of these methods. As you read each of these chapters, we encourage you to use our overall framework as a guide for diagnosing your own organization:

- Has it made the shift in perspective from time telling to *clock building*?
- Does it reject the "Tyranny of the OR" and embrace the "*Genius of the AND*"?
- Does it have a *core ideology*—core values and purpose beyond just making money?
- Does it have a *drive for progress*—an almost primal urge for change and forward movement in all that is not part of the core ideology?
- Does it *preserve the core and stimulate progress* through tangible practices, such as Big Hairy Audacious Goals, home-grown management, and the others described throughout the remainder of this book?
- Is the organization in *alignment*, so that people receive a consistent set of signals to reinforce behavior that supports the core ideology and achieves desired progress?

When you finish reading the next six chapters, you should have a sizable mental list of specific, tangible things that might make sense for you to implement in your own organization to make it more visionary. It doesn't matter whether you're a CEO, manager, individual contributor, or entrepreneur. You can put these ideas to work.

chapter 5

BIG HAIRY AUDACIOUS GOALS



Far better to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory, nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1899[1]

We worked furiously [to realize our goals]. Because we didn't have fear, we could do something drastic.

MASARU IBUKA, FOUNDER, SONY CORPORATION, 1991[2]

Of all the things I've done, the most vital is coordinating the talents of those who work for us and pointing them toward a certain goal.

WALTER ELIAS DISNEY, FOUNDER, WALT DISNEY COMPANY, 1954[3]

Put yourself in the shoes of Boeing's management team in 1952. Your engineers have the idea to build a large jet aircraft for the commercial market. Your company has virtually no presence in the commercial market and your earlier commercial attempts have been failures.

You've been building aircraft primarily for the military (B-17 Flying Fortress, B-29 Superfortress, B-52 jet bomber) and four-fifths of your business comes from one customer—the Air Force.[4] Furthermore, your sales force reports that commercial airlines in both the United States and Europe have expressed little interest in the idea of a commercial jet from Boeing. The airlines have an anti-Boeing bias—a "they build great bombers, period" attitude. No other aircraft company has proved that there is a commercial market for jet aircraft. Rival Douglas Aircraft believes that propeller-driven planes will continue to dominate the commercial market. Your company still has memories of the painful layoffs from fifty-one thousand employees down to seventy-five hundred after the end of World War II.[5] And, for the clincher, you estimate that it will cost about three times your average annual after-tax profit for the past five years—roughly a quarter of your entire corporate net worth—to develop a prototype for the jet.[6] (Fortunately, you believe that you could also offer this jet aircraft to the military as a fueling plane for the military, but you still need to gamble the $15 million of your own money to develop the prototype.)[7]

What should you do?

If you're Boeing's management, you defy the odds and commit to the audacious goal of establishing yourself as a major player in the commercial aircraft industry. You build the jet. You call it the 707. And you bring the commercial world into the jet age.

In contrast, Douglas Aircraft (later to become McDonnell-Douglas, Boeing's comparison counterpart in our study) made the explicit decision to stick with piston propellers and take a cautious wait-and-see approach to commercial jet aircraft.[3] Douglas waited and saw Boeing fly right past and seize dominant control of the commercial market. Even as late as 1957—the year, according to *Business Week*, that the airlines "fell all over each other in their rush to replace piston planes"[9]—Douglas *still* did not have a jet ready for market. Finally, in 1958, Douglas introduced the DC-8, but never caught up to Boeing.

Perhaps you're thinking, "But might Boeing have just been lucky? Boeing looks smart in retrospect, but it could just as easily have been wrong." Good point. And we would be inclined to agree, except for one thing: Boeing has a long and consistent history of committing itself to big, audacious challenges. Looking as far back as the early 1930s, we see this bold commitment behavior at Boeing when it set the goal of becoming a major force in the military aircraft market and gambled its future on the P-26 military plane and then "bet the pot" on the B-17 Flying Fortress.[10]

Nor did this pattern end in the 1950s with the 707. During the development of the 727 in the early 1960s, Boeing turned the demands of a potential customer (Eastern Airlines) into a clear, precise—and nearly impossible—challenge for its engineers: Build a jet that could land on runway 4-22 at La Guardia Airport (only 4,860 feet long—much too short for any existing passenger jet) *and* be able to fly nonstop from New York to Miami *and* be wide enough for six-abreast seating *and* have a capacity of 131 passengers *and* meet Boeing's high standards of indestructibility. Boeing's engineers made a significant breakthrough—the 727—largely because they were *given no other choice.*[11]

In contrast, Douglas Aircraft was slow to respond and didn't introduce the DC-9 until two years after the 727, putting it even further behind Boeing in the commercial jet market. And by then, Boeing had an even better short-range jet, the 737, in development. Theoretically, Douglas could have risen to the Eastern Airlines challenge just as quickly as Boeing, but it didn't. (As an aside, Boeing's original market-size estimate for the 727 was three hundred airplanes. It eventually sold over eighteen hundred, and the 727 became the short-range workhorse for the airline industry.)

In 1965, Boeing made one of the boldest moves in business history: the decision to go forward with the 747 jumbo jet, a decision that nearly killed the company. At the decisive board of directors meeting, Boeing Chairman William Allen responded to the comment by a board member that "if the [747] program isn't panning out, we can always back out."

"Back out?" stiffened Allen. "If the Boeing Company says we will build this airplane, we will build it even if it takes the resources of the entire company!"

Indeed, as it had with the P-26, B-17, 707, and 727, Boeing became irreversibly committed to the 747—financially, psychologically, publicly. During the 747 development, a Boeing visitor commented, "You know, Mr. Allen, [Boeing has] a lot riding on that plane. What would you do if the first airplane crashed on takeoff?" After a long pause, Allen replied, "I'd rather talk about something pleasant—like a nuclear war."[12]

Again, as with the DC-8 and DC-9, rival McDonnell Douglas was slow to commit to a jumbo jet project and fell into yet another round of catch-up with Boeing. The DC-10, McDonnell Douglas's response, never attained the same market position as the 747.

BHAGS: A POWERFUL MECHANISM TO STIMULATE PROGRESS

Boeing Corporation is an excellent example of how highly visionary companies often use bold missions—or what we prefer to call BHAGs (pronounced *bee-hags*, short for "Big Hairy Audacious Goals")—as a particularly powerful mechanism to stimulate progress. A BHAG is not the only powerful mechanism for stimulating progress, nor do all the visionary companies use it extensively (some, like 3M and HP, prefer to rely primarily on other mechanisms to stimulate progress, as we'll discuss in later chapters). Nonetheless, we found more evidence of this powerful mechanism in the visionary companies and less evidence of it in the comparison companies in fourteen out of eighteen cases. In three cases we found the visionary company and comparison company to be indistinguishable from each other with respect to BHAGs. In one case, we found more evidence for the use of BHAGs in the comparison company. (See Table A.5 in Appendix 3.)

All companies have goals. But there is a difference between merely having a goal and becoming committed to a huge, daunting challenge—like a big mountain to climb. Think of the moon mission in the 1960s. President Kennedy and his advisers could have gone off into a conference room and drafted something like "Let's beef up our space program," or some other such vacuous statement. The most optimistic scientific assessment of the moon mission's chances for success in 1961 was fifty-fifty and most experts were, in fact, more pessimistic.[13] Yet, nonetheless, Congress agreed (to the tune of an immediate $549 million and billions more in the following five years) with Kennedy's proclamation on May 25, 1961, "that this Nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth."[14] Given the odds, such a bold commitment was, at the time, outrageous. But that's part of what made it such a powerful mechanism for getting the United States, still groggy from the 1950s and the Eisenhower era, moving vigorously forward.

A Clear—and Compelling—Goal

Like the moon mission, a true BHAG is clear and compelling and serves as a unifying focal point of effort—often creating immense team spirit. It has a clear finish line, so the organization can know when it has achieved the goal; people like to shoot for finish lines.

> **A BHAG** engages people—it reaches out and grabs them in the gut. It is tangible, energizing, highly focused. People "get it" right away; it takes little or no explanation.

The moon mission didn't need a committee to spend endless hours wordsmithing the goal into a verbose, meaningless, impossible-to-remember "mission statement." No, the goal itself—the mountain to climb—was so easy to grasp, so compelling in its own right, that it could be said one hundred different ways, yet easily understood by everyone. When an expedition sets out to climb Mount Everest, it doesn't need a three-page, convoluted "mission statement" to explain what Mount Everest is. Think about your own organization. Do you have verbose statements floating around, yet no stimulating bold goals with the compelling clarity of the moon mission, climbing Mount Everest, or the corporate BHAGs in this chapter? Most corporate statements we've seen do little to provoke forward movement (although some do help to preserve the core). To stimulate progress, however, we encourage you to think beyond the traditional corporate statement and consider the powerful mechanism of a BHAG.

Reflecting on the challenges facing a company like General Electric, CEO Jack Welch stated that the first step—before all other steps—is for the company to "define its destiny in broad but clear terms. You need an overarching message, something big, but simple and understandable."[15] Like what? GE came up with the following: "To become #1 or #2 in every market we serve and revolutionize this company to have the speed and agility of a small enterprise."[16] Employees throughout GE fully understood—and remembered—the BHAG. Now compare the compelling clarity of GE's BHAG with the difficult-to-understand, hard-to-remember "vision statement" articulated by Westinghouse in 1989:

General Electric[17]	Westinghouse[18]
Become #1 or #2 in every market we serve and revolutionize this company to have the speed and agility of a small enterprise.	Total Quality Market Leadership Technology Driven Global Focused Growth Diversified

The point here is not that GE had the "right" goal and Westinghouse had the "wrong" goal. The point is that GE's goal was clear, compelling, and more likely to stimulate progress, like the moon mission. Whether a company has the right BHAG or whether the BHAG gets people going in the right direction are not irrelevant questions, but they miss the essential point. Indeed, the *essential* point of a BHAG is better captured in such questions as: "Does it stimulate forward progress? Does it create momentum? Does it get people going? Does it get people's juices flowing? Do they find it stimulating, exciting, adventurous? Are they willing to throw their creative talents and human energies into it?" (NOTE: This doesn't mean that a visionary company pursues *any* random BHAG that occurs to it. An equally important question is, "Does it fit with our core ideology?" More on this at the end of the chapter.)

Take, for example, the case of Philip Morris versus R.J. Reynolds. In 1961, R.J. Reynolds had the largest market share (almost 35 percent), greatest size, and highest profitability in the tobacco industry. Philip Morris, on the other hand, was a sixth-place also-ran with less than 10 percent market share.[19] But Philip Morris had two things going for it that R.J. Reynolds didn't. First, and certainly not to be discounted, Philip Morris had recently repositioned a little-known women's cigarette called Marlboro as a general market cigarette with a cowboy mascot that would prove to be a huge success. And second, Philip Morris had *something to shoot for.*

Coming from behind, Philip Morris set the audacious goal for itself of becoming the General Motors of the tobacco industry.[20] (Back in the 1960s, becoming "the General Motors of the industry" meant becoming the dominant worldwide player.) Philip Morris then committed itself to this goal and rose from sixth to fifth, from fifth to fourth, and so on until it blasted longtime leader R.J. Reynolds out of first place. During this same time period, R.J. Reynolds displayed a stodgy, good-old-boy, clubby atmosphere and no clear, driving ambition for itself other than to attain a good return for shareholders.

Of course, Philip Morris had it easier than R.J. Reynolds: It's much more motivating to come from behind and topple industry giants—like David versus Goliath—than to simply hang on to number one. It's *exciting* to battle Goliath! It's even more exciting to beat him. But the fact remains that of the five also-ran tobacco companies in the 1960s, only one—Philip Morris—set and attained the ambitious goal of knocking Goliath on his rear and becoming the GM of the industry. To seriously entertain such ambitions as the distant sixth-place player in an industry dominated by entrenched players does not suggest timidity. Indeed, following the rational models of strategic planning, it would suggest arrogant stupidity, not farsighted wisdom. We've sometimes used the Philip Morris situation (disguised so as to not give away the punch line) with MBA students well schooled in strategic planning. Almost none of them think the company should go for the big cigar; as one student put it, "They don't have the right strategic assets and competencies; they should stick to their niche." Certainly, Philip Morris could have been wrong, long forgotten, and we wouldn't be writing about it in this book. But, equally certain, had Philip Morris timidly held to its industry niche and not challenged Goliath, we wouldn't be writing about them in this book, either.

AS in the Philip Morris case, BHAGs are bold, falling in the gray area where reason and prudence might say "This is unreasonable," but the drive for progress says, "We believe we can do it nonetheless." Again, these aren't just "goals"; these are *Big Hairy Audacious Goals.*

Another example, in 1907, Henry Ford, a forty-three-year-old businessman, stimulated his company forward with an astounding BHAG: "To democratize the automobile." Ford proclaimed:

> [To] build a motor car for the great multitude. . . . It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one—and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces. . . . everybody will be able to afford one, and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted.[21]

At the time of this BHAG, Ford was merely one of over thirty companies all clamoring for a slice of the emerging automobile market. No company had yet established itself as a clear leader in the chaos of the young industry, and Ford had only about 15 percent of the market. This outrageous ambition inspired the entire Ford design team to work at a ferocious pace till ten or eleven every night.[22] At one point, Charles Sorenson, a member of that team, remembered, "Mr. Ford and I [once] worked about forty-two hours without letup."[23]

During this period of time, General Motors (Ford's comparison in the study) watched its market share erode from 20 to 10 percent while Ford rose to the number one position in the industry.

Ironically, however, once Ford had achieved its big hairy goal of democratizing the automobile, it didn't set a new BHAG, became complacent, and watched GM set and achieve the equally audacious goal of overcoming Ford. We should emphasize here that *a BHAG only helps an organization as long as it has not yet been achieved.* Ford suffered from what we call the "we've arrived" syndrome—a complacent lethargy that can arise once a company has achieved one BHAG and does not replace it with another. (As an aside, if your organization has a BHAG, you might want to think about what's next before you complete the current one. Also, if you find your organization is in a state of malaise, you might ask yourself if you once had a BHAG—either implicit or explicit—that you've attained and not replaced with a new one.)

Let's look at another example of audacity in a young, small company. In the late 1950s, Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo (a relatively small company, largely unknown outside of its home country) took the costly step of discarding its original name in favor of a new one: Sony Corporation. The company's bank objected to the idea: "It's taken you ten years since the company's founding to make the name Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo widely known in the trade. After all this time, what do you mean by proposing such a nonsensical change?" Sony's Akio Morita responded simply that it would enable the company to expand worldwide, whereas the prior name could not be easily pronounced in foreign lands.[24]

You're probably thinking that such a move does not represent something particularly audacious; after all, most small to midsize companies eventually look to overseas markets. And it's not *that* big of a deal to change a corporate name from Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo to Sony. But look closely at the *reason* Akio Morita gave for this move, for therein lies an immense BHAG:

> Although our company was still small and we saw Japan as quite a large and potentially active market . . . it became obvious to me that if we did not set our sights on marketing abroad, we would not grow into the kind of company Ibuka and I had envisioned. We wanted to change the image [around the world] of Japanese products as poor in quality.[25]

In the 1950s, "Made in Japan" meant "cheap, junky, poor quality." In reading through materials on the company, we concluded that Sony not only wanted to be successful in its own right, but to become *the* company best known for changing the image of Japanese consumer products as being poor quality.[26] Having less than a thousand employees and no overseas presence to speak of, this was a nontrivial ambition.

This isn't the first example of a BHAG in Sony's history. In 1952, for example, it sent its limited engineering staff in pursuit of a seemingly impossible goal: to make a "pocketable" radio—a radio that could fit in a shirt pocket and could thereby become a pervasive product worldwide.[27] In the 1990s, we take such miniaturization for granted, but in the early 1950s radios depended on vacuum tubes. To build such a miniature radio required long periods of painstaking trial and error and significant innovation. No company in the world had yet successfully applied transistor technology to a consumer radio.[28]

"Let's work on a transistor radio, whatever the difficulties we may face," proclaimed Masaru Ibuka. "I am sure we can produce transistors for radio."

When Ibuka told an outside adviser about the bold idea, the adviser responded: "Transistor radio? Are you sure? Even in America transistors are used only for defense purposes where money is no object. Even if you come out with a consumer product using transistors, who could afford to buy such a machine with such expensive devices?"

"That's what people think," responded Ibuka. "People are saying that transistors won't be commercially viable. . . . This will make the business all the more interesting."[29] In fact, Sony engineers *reveled* in the idea of doing something deemed by outsiders as foolhardy—perhaps even impossible—for such a small company. Sony made the pocketable radio and fulfilled its dream of creating a product that became pervasive worldwide. (As an outgrowth of this effort, one of Sony's scientists made breakthroughs in the development of transistors that eventually led to a Nobel Prize.)[30]

Wal-Mart has had a similar pattern of audacious BHAGs, beginning as far back as Sam Walton's first five-and-dime store in 1945, for which his first goal was to "make my little Newport store the best, most profitable variety store in Arkansas within five years."[31] To achieve this goal required more than tripling the sales volume from $72,000 per year to $250,000 per year. The store attained this goal, becoming the biggest, most profitable store in Arkansas *and* in the surrounding five states.[32]

Walton continued to set similarly audacious goals for his organization, decade after decade. In 1977, he set the Big Hairy Audacious Goal of becoming a $1 billion company in four years (a more than doubling of the company's size).[33] Wal-Mart didn't stop there, however, continuing to set bold new targets for itself. In 1990, for example, Sam Walton set a new target: to double the number of stores and increase the sales volume per square foot by 60 percent by the year 2000.[34] After publishing this example in an article, we received the following letter from a proud Wal-Mart director:

> January 10, 1992
>
> You are correct that Sam Walton articulated a target to double the number of stores and increase the dollar volume per square foot by 60% by the fiscal year 2000.
>
> The more important point—and what was missed—is that he did set a specific target of $125 billion! At the time, the largest retailer in the world had reached $30 billion. For the year ending January 1991, Wal-Mart reached $32.6 billion and became the largest retailer in the United States and the world. The only corporation anywhere which has attained a volume approaching $125 billion is General Motors.

I have been a director of Wal-Mart Stores since 1980 and have complete confidence that the target set by Sam Walton will be attained. If someone thought his original target set in 1977 was audacious, he or she must be frightened by the present target.

Sincerely,
Robert Kahn
Certified Management Consultant &
Wal-Mart Director

Now, *that's* a BHAG!

Commitment and Risk

It's not just the presence of a goal that stimulates progress, it is also the level of commitment to the goal. Indeed, *a goal cannot be classified as a BHAG without a high level of commitment to the goal.* Doing the 747, for example, would be a nice goal, maybe even an audacious goal. But the commitment to "build this airplane even if it takes the resources of the entire company!" turns it into a full-fledged BHAG. And, in fact, Boeing suffered terribly in the early 1970s as sales of the "Big Bird" grew more slowly than expected. During the three-year period from 1969 to 1971, Boeing laid off a total of eighty-six thousand people, roughly 60 percent of its workforce.[35] During those difficult days, someone placed a billboard near Interstate 5 in Seattle which read:

> Will the last person leaving Seattle please turn out the lights?

We all know now that the 747 became the flagship jumbo jet of the airline industry, but the decision looks much different from the perspective of the late 1960s. Yet—and this is the key point—Boeing was willing to make the bold move in the face of the risks. As in Boeing's case, the risks do not always come without pain. Staying in the comfort zone does little to stimulate progress.

We see a similar pattern at Walt Disney Company, which has stimulated progress throughout its history by making bold—and often risky—commitments to audacious projects. In 1934, Walt Disney aimed to do something never before done in the movie industry: create a successful full-length animated feature film. In creating *Snow White*, Disney invested most of the company's resources and defied those in the industry that called it "Disney's Folly." After all, who would want to see a full-length feature cartoon? Two decades later, after a string of full-length animated films, including *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, and *Bambi*, Disney made yet another risky commitment to one of "Walt's screwy ideas": to build a radically new kind of amusement park, later to become known to all of us as Disneyland. In the 1960s, Disney repeated the process again, with a commitment to fulfill Walt's dying dream: EPCOT center in Florida.[36] Walt's brother, Roy, carried the commitment through, according to Michael Eisner:

> He virtually gave his life to fulfill his brother's dream of building Walt Disney World. He gave up his much deserved retirement, infused the park throughout with Disney quality, and saw the project through to completion, personally cutting the ribbon on opening day. He died within two months of that momentous event.[37]

Columbia Pictures, in contrast, did very little that was bold, visionary, or risky. It produced B-grade movies during the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1950s and 1960s, it made some good films, but was apparently unwilling to make committing moves into the future. While Disney was pushing forward into EPCOT, Columbia was being run by people who saw themselves "first, last, and always . . . as investors, not managers."[38] And whereas Columbia was eventually acquired in the early 1980s, Disney came roaring back after it defeated a set of hostile raiders and pursued new bold adventures, such as Japan Disney and EuroDisney.

IBM, like Disney, pulled ahead of rival Burroughs at critical junctures in its history via the mechanism of tangible—and, at times, risky—commitments to audacious goals. In particular, we point to IBM's BHAG to reshape the computer industry in the early 1960s. To attain this BHAG, IBM put itself at risk by making an all-or-nothing investment in a new computer called the IBM 360. At the time, the 360 was the largest privately financed commercial project ever undertaken; it required more resources than the United States spent on the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb. *Fortune* magazine called the 360 "IBM's $5,000,000,000 gamble . . . perhaps the riskiest business judgment of recent times." During the 360 introduction, IBM built up nearly *$600 million* of work-in-process inventory and almost needed emergency loans to meet payroll.

Furthermore, the 360 would make obsolete most of IBM's existing product lines. Upon public announcement of the 360, demand for IBM's existing products dried up and the company found itself committed to a long leap across a deep canyon with no going back. If the 360 failed, then, well, it wouldn't be a pretty sight. Wrote *Fortune*, "It was roughly as though General Motors had decided to scrap its existing makes and models and offer in their place one new line of cars covering the entire spectrum of demand, with a radically redesigned engine and an exotic fuel."[39] Tom Watson, Jr., wrote:

> There wasn't going to be much room for error. It was the biggest, riskiest decision I ever made, and I agonized about it for weeks, but deep down I believed there was nothing IBM couldn't do.[40]

Ironically, Burroughs (IBM's comparison in the study) had a technological lead over IBM in computers. However, when the time came to make a bold commitment to computers, Burroughs took the conservative approach, choosing instead to concentrate on older lines of accounting machines. Like Douglas Aircraft relative to Boeing, Burroughs then watched as IBM seized control of the market. In describing this phase in Burroughs' history, Ray MacDonald (Burroughs' president at the time), explained, "From 1964 to 1966 our major effort was to bring profitability up. The restraints on our computer program were temporary and were caused only by the fact that we needed to immediately improve earnings."[41]

Again, as discussed in the chapter on core ideology, we see that highly visionary behavior occurs when the company does not view business as ultimately about maximizing profitability. IBM had to be number one and go for the 360 not just to make money, but *because it was IBM*. But, of course, IBM wasn't always *IBM*.

Back in 1924, the Computing Tabulating Recording Company (CTR) was not much more than any of a hundred other fairly average midsize companies trying to make a go of it. In fact, it had been nearly bankrupt three years prior and only survived the 1921 recession through heavy borrowing.[42] It primarily sold time clocks and weighing scales, and only had fifty-two salesmen who met quota.[43] But Thomas J. Watson, Sr., had no interest in seeing CTR remain an average company. He wanted the company to raise its sights, to become more—much more—than the dreary little Computing Tabulating Recording Company. He wanted it to embark on the path of becoming a truly great company of global stature, so he changed the company's name. Today we think nothing of the name "International Business Machines"; but back in 1924, it seemed almost ludicrous. In the words of Thomas J. Watson, Jr.:

> Father came home from work, gave mother a hug, and proudly announced that the Computing Tabulating Recording Company, henceforth would be known by the grand name International Business Machines. I stood in the doorway of the living room thinking, "*That* little outfit?" Dad must have had in mind the IBM of the future. The one he actually ran was still full of cigar-chomping guys selling coffee grinders and butcher scales.[44]

A name change per se isn't particularly audacious. But proclaiming itself to be *the* International Business Machines Corporation in 1924—and to *mean* it—represents sheer audacity. (For the record, Burroughs remained the "Burroughs Adding Machine Company" until 1953. We doubt that this name had the same impact on Burroughs employees' sense of their future as the name International Business Machines had over at IBM.)

Even highly conservative Procter & Gamble has periodically used bold BHAGs. In 1919, for example, P&G set the goal to reach a point where it could provide steady employment for its workers by revolutionizing the distribution system, bypassing wholesalers, and going straight to retailers. (Wholesalers ordered large quantities and then, like a snake digesting a large meal, would lie dormant for months, thus forcing P&G into hire-and-fire swings of high and slack demand.) According to Oscar Schisgall in *Eyes on Tomorrow: The Evolution of Procter & Gamble*, the internal debate on the goal went as follows:[45]

> "We would need to increase the number of accounts from 20,000 to over 400,000," complained the accountants. "Do you realize what that will do to our accounting costs?"
>
> "We'd have to open hundreds of warehouses around the country," the distribution team pointed out. "We'd have to hire trucking companies all over the United States to deliver to the retail stores."
>
> "Will the wholesalers become so furious when their P&G business is taken away that they'll start to boycott and refuse to sell anything to stores that deal directly with P&G?" asked some managers. "That could ruin us."
>
> "How can P&G possibly build a sales staff large enough to visit every little grocery store in America?" asked the sales people. "The sales division would have to be bigger than the U.S. Army!"

Richard Deupree, P&G president at the time, believed in P&G's ability to overcome the odds, and he saw the goal of steady employment as worth its risks. (His confidence was partly based on a successful experimental effort to go directly to retailers in New England.) P&G went forward with the idea and figured out how to make it work. By 1923, P&G had achieved its goal. A newspaper article announced:

> On August 1, 1923, a statement of more than usual interest to the world of labor and industry was announced by Procter & Gamble Company. This was a guarantee of steady employment to the employees of the company in plants and offices located in thirty cities in the United States. This epoch-making announcement meant that for the first time in American industry, the thousands of employees of one of the country's largest corporations were assured of steady employment the year round, regardless of seasonal depressions in business.[46]

In describing such commitments, Deupree explained:

> We like to try the impractical and impossible and prove it to be both practical and possible—if it's the right thing to do in the first place. . . . You do something you think is right. If it clicks, you give it a ride. If you hit, mortgage the farm and go for broke.[47]

Colgate, in contrast, showed much less self-initiative than P&G throughout its history in launching new, audacious, or innovative projects. As with the path straight to retailers, Colgate found itself time and again one step behind P&G, in a reactive follow-the-leader mode. (We will more thoroughly discuss the P&G/Colgate contrast in later chapters.)

The "Hubris Factor"

One of our research assistants observed that highly visionary companies seem to have self-confidence bordering on hubris (the dictionary defines *hubris* as "overbearing pride, confidence, or arrogance"). We came to call this the "hubris factor." In mythological terms, you might think of it as taunting the gods.

To set Big Hairy Audacious Goals requires a certain level of unreasonable confidence. It's not reasonable to commit to the Boeing 707 or 747. The IBM 360 was not prudent, nor was it humble for a midsize butcher-scale seller to proclaim itself to be the International Business Machines Corporation. It's not cautious to create Disneyland. It's not modest to declare, "We will democratize the automobile." It was almost foolhardy for Philip Morris—as the runt child of the tobacco industry—to take on R.J. Reynolds. It's almost absurd to proclaim as a small company the goal of

becoming *the* company that changes the worldwide image of Japanese products as being of poor quality.

Therein lies one of the maddening paradoxes behind the visionary companies.

> **THE** BHAGs looked more audacious to *outsiders* than to insiders. The visionary companies didn't see their audacity as taunting the gods. It simply never occurred to them that they couldn't do what they set out to do.

Let's make an analogy to mountain climbing. Imagine watching a rock climber scale a cliff without a rope; if she falls, she dies. To the uninformed spectator, the climber looks bold and risk-seeking, if not foolhardy. But suppose that climber is on a climb that *to her* appears eminently doable, well within her range of ability. From the climber's perspective, she has no doubts that, with proper training and concentration, she can make the climb. To her, the climb is not too risky. It *does* stimulate her to know that if she falls, she dies; but she has confidence in her ability. The highly visionary companies in setting bold BHAGs are much like that climber.

THE GOAL, NOT THE LEADER (CLOCK BUILDING, NOT TIME TELLING)

We wish to emphasize that the key mechanism at work here is not charismatic leadership. Returning to the moon mission example, we cannot deny that John F. Kennedy had a charismatic leadership style, nor can we deny that he deserves much of the credit for seriously proposing the imaginative and bold goal of going to the moon and back before the end of the decade. Nonetheless, Kennedy's leadership style was not the primary mechanism at work for stimulating progress. Kennedy died in 1963; he was no longer present to urge, prod, inspire—to "lead" to the moon. After Kennedy's death, did the moon mission become any less inspiring? Did it grind to a halt? Did going to the moon cease to provide a sense of national momentum? Of course not! The beauty of the moon mission, once launched, was its ability to stimulate progress regardless of whoever happened to be president. Was it any less exciting to land on the moon with Richard Nixon in office than John F. Kennedy? No. The *goal itself* became the motivating mechanism.

Let's return for a moment to our letter from Robert Kahn, the Wal-

Mart director. He wrote the letter on January 10, 1992—the same time that Sam Walton was in the final months of his battle with bone cancer, which ended his life on April 5, 1992. Nonetheless, even with Walton's rapidly deteriorating health, Kahn expressed "complete confidence" that Wal-Mart would meet the goal. Whether Wal-Mart will become a $125 billion company by the year 2000 remains to be seen as we write these words, but the goal still exists—pulling the company forward like a magnet—even without the charismatic leadership of Sam Walton. By setting such an audacious BHAG, Walton left behind a powerful mechanism for stimulating progress. The goal transcended the leader.

The goal also transcended the leader at Boeing. Certainly, William Allen played a key role in getting the company committed to the 747, but the goal itself became the stimulus for vigorous movement, not William Allen. In fact, T. A. Wilson, William Allen's successor, became Boeing's president and chief executive officer in 1968, with the 747 still in development and the company yet to face the nearly fatal task of surviving the initial slow sales of the big bird. Boeing did not grind to a halt or become lethargic after Allen's retirement, not with the very survival of the company at stake, and certainly not with the most amazing commercial airplane in history yet to be born. Keep in mind that Boeing used this mechanism for stimulating progress long before William Allen (the P-26, the B-17, and others) and long after the tenure of William Allen (the completion of the 747, and then the 757 and 767). The repeated commitment to BHAGs has been a key mechanism—part of the "ticking clock"—at Boeing through (so far) six generations of leadership.

In contrast, McDonnell Douglas' lack of forward progress relative to Boeing can be traced in large part to the personal leadership style of James McDonnell. *Business Week* ran an article on McDonnell Douglas in 1978 entitled "Where Management Style Sets Strategy," wherein it detailed how "Mr. Mac's" style of "measuring every risk carefully, being highly conservative . . . produce[s] a strategy without debating it around the table."[48] At Boeing, audacious commitments to bold, daring projects became a *characteristic of the institution*—regardless of the leader in charge. At McDonnell Douglas, the risk-averse, stick-in-the-mud approach to commercial aircraft was a characteristic of the individual leader in charge. Again, we see clock building at Boeing and time telling at McDonnell Douglas (and not even good time telling, at that).

Sony also made the use of BHAGs an institutionalized habit—*a way of life*. Nick Lyons, who delved into the inner workings of Sony's management processes for his book *The Sony Vision*, wrote: "Target. A word I heard repeated over and over—in English—[inside Sony]."[49] Dr. Makoto Kikuchi, Sony's director of research in the mid-1970s, described to Lyons the importance of this embedded process (paraphrased):

> Though it is widely rumored that Sony spends a vastly greater proportion of gross sales on research than other firms, this is simply not so. . . . The difference between our efforts and those of other Japanese companies lies not in the level of technology, or the quality of the engineers, or even in the amount of money budgeted for development (about 5% of sales). The main difference lies in . . . the establishment of mission-oriented research and proper *targets*. Many other companies give their researchers *full* freedom. We don't; we find an aim, a very real and clear *target* and then establish the necessary task forces to get the job done. Ibuka taught us that, once the commitment to go ahead is made, *never* give up. This pervades all the research and development work at Sony.[50]

BHAGs and the "Postheroic Leader Stall"

Corporations regularly face the dilemma of how to maintain momentum after the departure of highly energetic leaders (often founders). We saw this "postheroic leader stall" at a number of comparison companies in our study: Burroughs (after Boyer), Chase Manhattan (after Rockefeller), Columbia (after Cohn), Howard Johnson (after Johnson, Sr.), Melville (after Melville), TI (after Haggarty), Westinghouse (after George Westinghouse), and Zenith (after MacDonald). We didn't see this pattern as much in the visionary companies—only two clear cases stand out: Walt Disney (after Walt Disney) and Ford Motor (after Henry Ford, Sr.). The visionary companies offer a partial solution: Create BHAGs that take a life of their own and thereby act as a stimulus through multiple generations of leadership. (If you are a soon-to-retire chief executive, we encourage you to take a hard look at this lesson. Does your company have a BHAG to which it is committed and that will provide momentum long after you're gone? And, even more important, *does it have the ability to continually set bold new goals for itself long into the future?*)

In examining Citicorp, for example, we noticed that the company continually used bold, audacious goals to move itself forward through multiple generations of leadership. In the 1890s, City Bank (as Citicorp was then named) was an unspectacular regional bank with only a president, a cashier, and a handful of employees. Yet president James Stillman set the almost ludicrous (but certainly stimulating) aim "to become a great national bank."[51] A financial journalist wrote in 1891:

> [He] dreams of a great national bank, and thinks he can make one of the City Bank. It is what he is trying to do, it is what occupies his mind, and animates his actions. He is running his bank not toward

dividends, but towards an ideal . . . to make it great in domestic and in international finance: that is the dream of James Stillman."[52]

Although we can certainly trace the conception of this BHAG to Stillman himself, it took a life of its own and propelled the company forward long into future generations. Frank Vanderlip, Stillman's successor as president, wrote in 1915 (a quarter of a century after Stillman's "dream" and six years after Stillman moved to Paris in retirement):

> I am perfectly confident that it is open to us to become the most powerful, the most serviceable, the most far-reaching world financial institution that has ever been.[53]

A bold goal indeed, especially for a bank that a year earlier had only "eight vice presidents, ten junior officers, and fewer than five hundred other employees . . . at a single location on Wall Street."[54] Then, in the next generation, Charles Mitchell echoed the same go-forward tune in a 1922 speech to employees: "We are on our way to bigger things. The National City Bank's future is brighter than it has ever been. . . . We are getting ready now to go full speed ahead."[55] Going "full speed ahead"—in pursuit of the great ambitions first dreamed in the late 1880s—City Bank grew from $352 million total assets in 1914 to $2.6 billion of assets in 1929, an average annual growth rate of over 35 percent.

City Bank, like most banks, struggled through the 1930s, but after World War II it flew forward—through five further generations of leadership—with heightened energy toward Stillman and Vanderlip's ambition of becoming "the most far reaching financial institution there has ever been." George Moore (president from 1959 to 1967) sounded a lot like his predecessors of half a century earlier when he said:

> Around 1960 . . . [we decided that] we would seek to perform every useful financial service, anywhere in the world.[56]

Note the consistency across the generations. Yes, each generation had a chief executive. And yes, the original Citicorp dream traces back to an original architect. But the goal itself transcended that architect, and the predisposition to go for the audacious became an embedded pattern in the institution.

Chase Manhattan (Citicorp's comparison in the study) had similar ambitions and, in fact, the two banks vied with each other as fierce rivals. Throughout the twentieth century, Citicorp and Chase were evenly matched, racing side by side. During the 1960s, the two banks battled with

each other for end-of-year first-place honors in terms of assets and from 1954 to 1969 they ran almost dead even.[57] Not until 1968, in fact, did Citicorp pull ahead of Chase for good, eventually reaching twice the size of Chase. We acknowledge that Citicorp stumbled in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But so did Chase, and they had a lot of company, as a number of commercial banks had hard times in the 1980s.

Yet, even with their similarities, there was a significant difference between Citicorp and Chase in the tone and strategies supporting their ambitious goals—a difference that perhaps explains in part their different trajectories after 1968. David Rockefeller became president of Chase in 1960, and the goal to beat Citibank was viewed more as *Rockefeller's* goal than Chase's goal.

The Citicorp chief executives, unlike those at Chase, used primarily organizational (clock-building) strategies in their stewardship of the bank toward its goals. Stillman concentrated on management succession and organization structure. Vanderlip commented that "the one limitation that I can see, lies in the quality of management" and he put most of his effort into organization design and initiated a management development program.[58] George Moore focused first and foremost on making "Citicorp an institution" built largely around procedures for finding, training, and promoting personnel. "Without the capable people these procedures developed," he wrote, "none of our goals would have been attainable."[59] Chase, in contrast, concentrated primarily on market and product strategies (time telling) rather than clock-building strategies.

Like Boeing and Citicorp, Motorola presents an excellent example of BHAGs as part of a multigenerational ticking clock. Founder Paul Galvin often used BHAGs to push his engineers to do the impossible. When Motorola moved into the television market in the late 1940s, for example, Galvin set a challenging BHAG for the television group: to profitably sell one hundred thousand TVs in the first year at a price of $179.95.

"Our new plant hasn't nearly the capacity for that kind of production," exclaimed one of his managers. "We'll never sell that quantity; that would make our industry position third or fourth, and the best we've ever been in home radio is seventh or eighth," complained another. "We're not even sure we can break $200 [in cost]," said a production engineer.

"We'll sell them," Galvin responded. "I don't want to see any more cost sheets until you provide me with a profit at that price and that volume. We'll work ourselves into it."[60]

Motorola did indeed rise to fourth in the television industry within the year. But even more important, Galvin instilled an *institutional* drive for progress that resulted in a repeating pattern of BHAGs within the company.

In grooming his son for the CEO job, he continually emphasized the importance of "keeping the company moving" and that vigorous movement in *any* direction is better than sitting still; always have something to shoot for, he advised.[61]

Decades after his death in 1959, Galvin's company still uses BHAGs, including the goal of becoming a major force in advanced electronics, the goal of attaining six-sigma quality performance and the goal of winning the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award. Galvin's son and successor used the word "renewal" to capture the idea of continual transformations, often (although not exclusively) attained through commitments to audacious projects. Bob Galvin then passed along to the next generation of leadership the imperative that "at times we must engage in an act of faith that key things are doable that are not provable."[62]

The same little company that began life doing B-battery eliminator repairs for Sears radios and making jerry-built car radios has continually propelled itself forward via bold goals and reinvented itself over and over again, far beyond the life of its founder. That same little company has moved far from radios and TVs. That same company eventually created the powerful M68000 microprocessors that Apple Computer selected as the brains of the Macintosh Computer on which we're writing this book. And, as we write these very words, that same company moves forward with the biggest BHAG of its life to date: the task of launching Iridium, a $3.4 billion commercial gamble taken in joint venture with other companies to create a worldwide satellite system that would allow phone calls between any two points on earth.[63]

Zenith, like Motorola, did have a few BHAGs in its early history: the goal to make FM radio a pervasive reality, early commitment to be a major player in televisions, and an expensive bet on pay TV. But—and this is the crucial point—Zenith, unlike Motorola, did not display an *organizational* propensity for setting bold, audacious goals after the death of its founder in 1958. By the early 1970s, "innate cautiousness" pervaded Zenith, as described by its controller in 1974:

> It's hard to explain why a decision is made *not* to do something. There are a number of reasons behind it—including innate cautiousness. For one thing, we've always had our hands full with [our current markets] and we've always tended to stick with what appeared to be the biggest payoff and what we knew how to do best. . . . We didn't feel we could compete . . . in those [new] markets unless we were willing to sacrifice some of our margin, and we were unwilling to do that. We are basically a U.S. company and likely to stay that way.[64]

Zenith chief executive John Nevin echoed the same view in talking about the company's slow move into new technologies, like solid-state electronics: "I think you also have to say that Zenith has been more cautious than some of its competitors in bringing innovations to market. . . . We are now involved in an extraordinary effort to bring [solid-state] to market, but we are in doubt as to whether it will come to fruition."

Zenith's Commander McDonald, unlike Motorola's Paul Galvin, did not leave behind a company with the ability to continually reinvent itself with bold goals. Commander McDonald was a great leader—a great time teller—but he died a long time ago. Paul Galvin's company, on the other hand, lives and thrives thirty-five years after his death. Galvin built a clock.

GUIDELINES FOR CEOS, MANAGERS, AND ENTREPRENEURS

Although we've written this chapter primarily from a corporate perspective, BHAGs can be applied to stimulate progress at any level of an organization. Individual product line managers at P&G frequently set BHAGs for their brands. Nordstrom systematically sets BHAGs all up and down the company—from regions, to stores, to departments, to individual salespeople. 3M product champions thrive on overcoming all odds, skeptics, and naysayers to prove that their quirky inventions can make it in the market. An organization can have any number of BHAGs. It does not need to limit itself to only one BHAG at a time; Sony and Boeing, for instance, usually pursued multiple BHAGs simultaneously, often at different levels of the corporation.

BHAGs are particularly well suited to entrepreneurs and small companies. Recall Sam Walton and his goal to make his first dime store the most successful in Arkansas within five years. Recall Sony's goal to make a "pocketable radio" in its early years. Or Tom Watson, Sr.'s goal to transform his tiny time-building company into International Business Machines Corporation. Indeed, most entrepreneurs have a built-in BHAG: To just get off the ground and reach a point where survival is no longer in question is huge and audacious for most start-ups.

We've covered most of the key points about BHAGs as we've moved through the text of this chapter. Here are a few key take-away points you might want to keep in mind as you consider BHAGs for your own organization:

- A BHAG should be so clear and compelling that it requires little or no explanation. Remember, a BHAG is a *goal*—like climbing a mountain or going to moon—not a "statement." If it doesn't get people's juices going, then it's just not a BHAG.

- A BHAG should fall well outside the comfort zone. People in the organization should have reason to believe they can pull it off, yet it should require heroic effort and perhaps even a little luck—as with the IBM 360 and Boeing 707.
- A BHAG should be so bold and exciting *in its own right* that it would continue to stimulate progress even if the organization's leaders disappeared before it had been completed—as happened at Citibank and Wal-Mart.
- A BHAG has the inherent danger that, once achieved, an organization can stall and drift in the "we've arrived" syndrome, as happened at Ford in the 1920s. A company should be prepared to prevent this by having follow-on BHAGs. It should also complement BHAGs with the other methods of stimulating progress.
- Finally, and most important of all, a BHAG should be consistent with a company's core ideology.

Preserve the Core and Stimulate Progress

BHAGs alone do not make a visionary company. Indeed, progress alone—no matter what the mechanism used to stimulate progress—does not make a visionary company. *A company should be careful to preserve its core while pursuing BHAGs.*

For example, the 747 was an incredibly risky venture but along the way, Boeing maintained its core value of product safety and applied the most conservative safety standards, testing, and analysis ever to a commercial aircraft. No matter what the financial pressures, Walt Disney preserved its core value of fanatical attention to detail while working on *Snow White*, Disneyland, and Disney World. Merck, in keeping with its core value of imagination, sought preeminence primarily by creating new breakthrough innovations, not by creating me-too products. Jack Welch at GE made it clear that attaining number one or number two in a market at the expense of integrity would be unacceptable. Citicorp continually reinforced its belief in meritocracy and internal entrepreneurship throughout its expansive quest to become the "most far-reaching world financial institution that has ever been." Motorola never abandoned its basic belief in the dignity of and respect for the individual throughout all of its big, hairy, self-selected challenges.

Furthermore, the visionary companies didn't launch blindly toward any random BHAG, but only toward those that reinforced their core ideologies and reflected their self-concept. Notice the link between core and BHAG in the following list:

Core to Preserve		BHAG(s) to Stimulate Progress
Being on the leading edge of aviation; being pioneers; risk-taking	(Boeing) ⟷	Bet the pot on the B-17, 707, 747.
Seek superiority in all we undertake; Spend a lot of time making customers happy.	(IBM) ⟷	Commit to a $5 billion gamble on the 360; meet the emerging needs of our customers.
We are *about* cars—especially cars for the average person.	(Ford) ⟷	"Democratize the automobile."
Tapping the "latent creative power within us"; self-renewal; continual improvement; honorably serve the community via great products.	(Motorola) ⟷	Invent a way to sell 100,000 TVs at $179.95; Attain six-sigma quality; win the Baldridge Award; launch Iridium.
Winning—being the best and beating others; Personal freedom of choice is worth defending.	(Philip Morris) ⟷	Slay Goliath and become the front-runner in the tobacco industry, despite the social forces against smoking.
Elevation of the Japanese culture and national status; being a pioneer, doing the impossible.	(Sony) ⟷	Change the worldwide image of Japanese products as poor quality; create a pocketable transistor radio.
"Bring happiness to millions"; fanatical attention to detail; creativity, dreams, imagination.	(Disney) ⟷	Build Disneyland—and build it to *our* image, not industry standards.
Preserving and improving human life; medicine is for the patient, not for the profits; imagination and innovation.	(Merck) ⟷	Become the preeminent drug maker worldwide, via massive R&D and new products that cure disease.

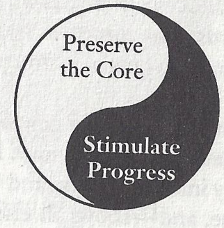
Revolutionizing the railroad business would certainly have been a BHAG for Ford in 1909; but Ford wasn't *about* railroads, it was about cars. Creating the cheapest radios in history, regardless of quality or innovation, would certainly have been a BHAG for Sony in 1950, but it wouldn't have fit with Sony's self-image as pioneers of innovation and key players in the task of elevating Japan's status in the world. Reinventing itself entirely away from the tobacco industry after the Surgeon General's reports would certainly have been a BHAG for Philip Morris in the 1960s, but how would it have fit with the company's self-conception as the defiant, fiercely independent, free-thinking, free-choosing, individualistic Marlboro cowboy? It wouldn't.

Yes, any BHAG exciting to people inside your company would stimulate change and movement. But the BHAGs should also be a powerful statement about the company's ideology. In fact, BHAGs can help to reinforce one of the key sets of mechanisms for preserving the core ideology: a cult-like culture, the subject of our next chapter. To defy the odds, to take on big hairy challenges—especially if rooted in an ideology—does much to make people feel that they belong to something special, elite, different, better.

We return once again to a key aspect of a visionary company: the powerful interplay between core ideology and the drive for progress which exist together like the yin and yang of Chinese dualistic philosophy. Each element complements and reinforces the other. Indeed, the core ideology enables progress by providing a base of continuity from which a visionary company can launch the corporate equivalent of the moon mission; likewise, progress enables the core ideology, for without change and movement forward, the company will eventually cease to be viable. Again, it's not *either* core *or* progress. It's not even a nice balance between core and progress but rather two powerful elements, inextricably linked and both working at full force to the ultimate benefit of the institution. A GE employee eloquently described the dynamic interplay between core and progress while discussing the company's BHAG to "become #1 or #2 in every market we serve and revolutionize this company to have the speed and agility of a small enterprise":

> "GE . . . We bring good things to life." Most wouldn't admit it, but everyone at GE gets chills when they hear that jingle. The simple, corny phrase captures how they feel about the company. . . . It means jobs and growth for the economy, quality and service for the customer, benefits and training for the employee, and challenge and satisfaction for the individual. It means integrity, honesty, and loyalty at all levels. *And without this reservoir of values and commitment, Welch could not have pulled off his revolution.* [emphasis hers][65]

chapter 6 CULT-LIKE CULTURES



> Now, I want you to raise your right hand—and remember what we say at Wal-Mart, that a promise we make is a promise we keep—and I want you to repeat after me: From this day forward, I solemnly promise and declare that every time a customer comes within ten feet of me, I will smile, look him in the eye, and greet him. So help me Sam.
>
> SAM WALTON, TO OVER ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND WAL-MART ASSOCIATES VIA TV SATELLITE LINK-UP, MID-1980S[1]

> IBM is really good at motivating its people; I see that through Anne. [She] might be brainwashed by some people's standards, but it's a good brainwashing. They really do instill a loyalty and drive to work.
>
> SPOUSE OF IBM EMPLOYEE, 1985[2]

"So why do you want to work at Nordstrom?" the interviewer asks.

"Because my friend, Laura, tells me it's the best place she's ever worked," Robert responds. "She gushes about the excitement of working