

The Spirit of Innovation - One Man's Journey

EPISODE 4: The Hardest Lesson is the American Dream

The American dream, work hard, work honest, get results and be successful. A look at the real world and how it changed one man's journey.

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, May 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The mid-1980s was a time young people consistently heard of the American dream. Work hard, work honest, get results and become successful. Our role models were the top executives in big companies. And we put these people on pedestals.



Episode 4. Designing the Pizza Hut Point of Sale computer system

The year was 1984. [Cruz](#) was hired by an unknown company to design a new point-of-sale (POS) computer system. Norand had been trying to design POS systems for national brand restaurants without success. Now they had an opportunity with Pizza Hut.

“

I was fully committed to the success of the company thinking that I would be able to share in that success. I was painfully wrong.”

John F Cruz

In two years, Cruz designed a PHI POS system that PepsiCo, owner of Pizza Hut, purchased for \$40 million. The Wall Street Journal reported it as the largest POS system ever purchased. Cruz believed now the American dream was his.

However, in the following weeks Cruz was fired and given two months of pay amounting to \$4333. What went

wrong?

In the 1980s, job announcement filled pages in newspapers. Cruz was flown to Dallas Fort Worth for programming software for laser guided missiles for Hughes, Systems and Technology Division. Not his direction. He was also interviewed by Andy Meyer, a polished, soft-spoken

professional who knew the language of business. Cruz was offered the job a Project Specialist for \$26,000 per year. He was given tremendous responsibility and freedom to take initiative. It wasn't long after he started, did his hardest lessons surface.

Lesson 1: Cruz was invited into his first executive level meeting with all three companies, PepsiCo, Pizza Hut and Norand. Surprisingly, the discussion of the first 20 minutes was off-colored comments about the secretaries. Cruz left that meeting realizing business executives are just like anyone else in any other job. The pedestal was gone.

Lesson 2: Following were numerous meetings in Wichita at PHI HQ and many nights sitting in Pizza Hut restaurants observing operations. Soon Cruz had finished the detailed functional specifications of the new PHI POS system. Then it happened. One day, the senior engineering manager leans over the walls of Cruz's cubical and tells Cruz, "slow down, you're making the rest of us look bad". Cruz looked up from his work with a puzzled look and watch the man walked away.

Cruz didn't give it much thought, but should have. Cruz heard the same comments by two other employees. There was a growing resentment towards Cruz. He was being distanced. Many of Cruz's high school friends were hard working laborers.

Cruz thought professional workers in offices work harder. He was wrong.

Lesson 3: Part of Cruz's responsibilities included writing volumes of documents how to implement the rollout of the new POS system across the country. This included manager and employee training manuals. Typing was typically done by the secretaries. But Cruz was informed the secretary was the wife of one of the managers. Her job was to collect an extra paycheck. He didn't know this. So that manager dumped all the typing back on Cruz. Cruz worked after hours and came in alone on weekends because these documents needed to be typed.

Lesson 4: The new POS system was installed in a Pilot test store in Colorado Springs. It was successful. Another successful extended Pilot rollout took place in Altoona PA in seven stores. Shortly thereafter the news came, Pizza Hut and PepsiCo was impressed and offered Norand a whopping \$40 million to install the new system in all PHI restaurants. A time to celebrate.

Cruz was flown to Iowa to meet with his Pizza Hut counterparts at Norand HQ. He was expecting good news. What would be his bonus? Cruz was called out in the middle of his meeting to report to Human Resources. Cruz sat in front of Norand's HR Director Roy. He was a big black man who looked at Cruz without any expression. "You have two weeks left" he informed Cruz.

Norand let Cruz go without any financial reward from the \$40 million sale from the system he designed. On the plane ride back to Colorado, Cruz realized the hardest lesson of all. He had only been working hard to make other people rich. And even more offensive, these people didn't like or respect him. This set Cruz into a direction of entrepreneurship.

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