

# Mission Ready

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## Stay in the Driver's Seat

Very often, the business community can learn a great deal from an organization that, while it may be managed something like a business, is not an actual business, itself. Every manager, for example, can learn a lot from the way the FBI handles very critical deadlines. Despite all impressions to the contrary—and despite the occasional apparent helplessness of their situation—the FBI remains in the driver's seat.

For example: consider a kidnapping case. It is difficult to imagine a more helpless position than being on the receiving end of a phone call from a kidnapper who has possession of your loved one. He seems to hold all the cards; every order must be obeyed; you must scramble to keep pace with his demands. Though evil, the kidnapper is surely in a God-like position.

“Not at all,” says former FBI agent Mark Llewellyn. “The FBI takes control from Day One, only the bad guys don't know it.”

“We manipulate the would-be ma-

nipulators,” he explains. The parents are taught, through actual rehearsals, what to say. They are taught to negotiate. With an agent sitting silently beside them, the parents are taught to: a) ask for more time to liquidate their assets, b) ask for proof of life, such as a photo of the victim holding a current newspaper, c) express fear of the drop site, and ask for a new place to bring the ransom d) and even offer to add more money to the ransom, in exchange for these considerations. The kidnapper, who is almost always motivated by greed, finds that he has unwittingly granted more time. And usually, he is captured because of it.

We are very definitely not comparing our customers, or managers, to kidnappers, but certainly their demands can be presented as equally non-negotiable. The net result is, we feel ourselves in harness, rather than in the driver's seat, striving to meet the customer's demands. The FBI's example of reverse-manipulation should give us confidence. Rather than scrambling to meet the demands of others, we can probe, through questioning and through polite requests, for more resources and for more time to do a better job.