



## Executive Summary: Linda Kaplan Thaler

### WorkMatters Leadership Conference

#### *Leadership That Inspires*

May 8, 2009

We are a billion dollar company now, but we never dreamed of being so big. We started with such little space that we kept our files in a bathtub with a sign: “Do not turn on water.” We didn’t have a vision statement etched in limestone; we simply wanted to do things differently. Instead of conquering by fear and intimidation, we used flowers and chocolate. By being a little nicer, by extending more nurture and care, we believed that we would be more successful. In the end, the small things gave us the edge.

In America, everything has to be big. We are told, “See the forest, not the trees,” and “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” We take big loans for big homes and plan for big growth. Well, where has thinking big landed us? With big foreclosures, big bailouts, and big bankruptcies. If there had been anybody looking at the small print, then maybe we wouldn’t be in the mess we’re in. Think of small things as seeds being planted. Although you don’t know when, they’ll eventually bloom.

At times, our problems appear so big and so insurmountable that we get paralyzed. If you can’t solve a problem, then find an easier one to solve. When you chop your problem into manageable bits, then there’s nothing you can’t solve.

“If you think small things don’t make a difference, try spending the night in a room with a mosquito.” ~The Dalai Lama

#### Action Plan:

- ✓ This week, send flowers to your best customer, chocolates to your second most valuable customer, and a handwritten note to three others.
  
- ✓ Assign your team to gather all messages, even general information requests, to which they’ve not yet replied. Mandate one hour of companywide email responses to those messages.