

Chapter 2

“**R**yan!” Tom shouted when he returned to his office. “What’s the situation with MacroZip?”

“I called their warehouse manager. He told me we messed up MacroZip’s shipment to Single, the hot-selling mobile gaming device company, which was due on Friday. The shipment didn’t show up until this morning,” Ryan said, shuffling into Tom’s office.

“Why? What the hell happened?”

“I don’t know exactly. I’m trying to find out. I can’t find the dispatcher in charge, so I haven’t tracked down who handled the shipment yet.”

“Well, stay on it,” Tom said. “What else did the warehouse manager say?”

“The guys at MacroZip are really ticked off. They trusted us. MacroZip was already in trouble with Single. Apparently, another trucking company had frequently delivered late to Single. To fix that problem, MacroZip moved the bulk of their local trucking business to us. Until this weekend, we’d eliminated the late-delivery problem. But because we hadn’t delivered the parts until this morning, Single had to shut down their factory on Sunday. It was the final straw for Single. They notified MacroZip of their intent to find another supplier of electronic parts, and MacroZip is blaming us for everything. From MacroZip’s perspective, we blew it when they had needed us to come through the most. They feel like we lied to them—like we misled them. Now they don’t know why they ever trusted us.”

“Did we mislead them?”

“No . . . not intentionally . . .” Ryan stammered, trying to find the right words. “Quality is how we’ve distinguished ourselves from the competition, right? It’s how we won all that business at MacroZip in the

first place. Our mantra has always been “Excellence Delivers Victory!” You know—Hank’s thing. It’s right there on your wall.” Ryan pointed to the motivational picture hanging behind Tom’s chair with those very words. “Everything we communicate to our customers drives home that point. So did we mislead them? No. Our performance has been great—at least up ’til now. Going forward, though, we may have to mislead people.”

“Why?”

“How am I supposed to talk with our customers given what’s happened? If excellence delivers victory, what do screw-ups deliver?”

“I hear ya,” Tom winced, and then quickly turned serious. “But Ryan, we need to fix this situation right now. Your job is on the line, and so is mine. When am I scheduled to meet with Gary Howard?”

“I’ve set up a call between you and Gary at 2:00 today. He’s stuck in a meeting until then.”

“Fine. In the meantime, go buy the MacroZip warehouse manager some lunch. Try mending the fence as best you can.”

“Consider it done,” Ryan said, as he walked out of Tom’s office.