



## *The Will to Make a Difference* by Debbe Kennedy

In recent years, we have all watched once-promising careers go up in smoke. Business life has been changed in ways once unimagined, since the advent of the global marketplace, a fragile economy, outsourcing, off-shoring, layoffs, and the uncertainties of war and terror. Many of us have found ourselves in a funk. In some cases, our *will* to contribute *more with less* has been paralyzed. For others it has been a walk into total darkness. No hope. No sense of purpose. No energy to get up for it all again. How do you make a difference under these conditions?

Once in a great while someone passes through our lives, shedding a new perspective on our capacity to rise up in the face of adversity. They seem to help everyone they touch see their own difficulties from a different perspective. So it is with Bill Tipton. His story is about one man's determination to reinvent himself against all odds. It is one with many fingerprints, emerging from deep within the Hewlett-Packard culture, where a cast of dedicated employees, including Bill, manifested HP's belief that *everything is possible*.

Bill's first years at HP as a customer support engineer were spent building skills and confidence. Then without warning, his life changed drastically. Pains in his stomach landed him in the emergency room. For three months he was in a coma. His wife, Kathy, was encouraged to pull the plug. She refused. Miraculously, he recovered. At the end of seven months, he came home from the hospital unable to walk and totally blind.

When I met Bill, he had one dream: returning to work at HP. By then, he was walking with the aid of two canes and working to recast his life and work as a blind person. This meant learning Braille in short order and expanding his portfolio of skills to land a new job at HP. Bill's pioneering spirit was published in a story on HP's Intranet, reaching employees working in over sixty countries. People were touched. Letters of gratitude and support arrived from all over the world. Bill became a new friend to some. Others cheered across the distance—and just the right ones in HP's family showed up to help Bill fulfill his dream. One day his new business card in Braille arrived in the mail bearing his new title: HP Services Tools Integration Specialist.

In each of us, there is an inner strength. It is that gift we often discover by chance

and rarely use to its fullest. It is the one that helps us enlist others in our cause. Bill Tipton's example offers a lesson about the *will* to make a difference. His own words say it best, "The future looks bright. We all need to be adaptable and willing to reinvent ourselves to maximize the value we bring to our organizations. This means building new skills, embracing changes and asking every day, *what can I do to contribute my best?*"

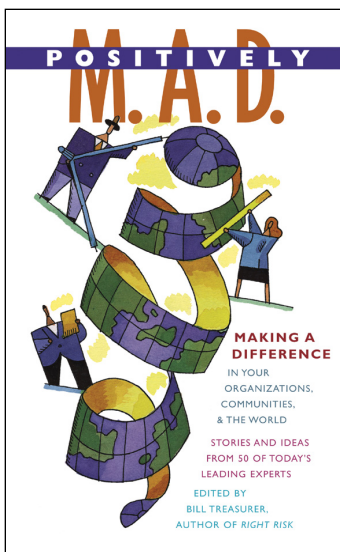


## TIPS

- **Re-ignite the *will* to make a difference.** Use times of adversity as a gift to re-group, re-evaluate, re-create, re-organize, re-consider possibilities, re-invent and re-dedicate yourself to overcome obstacles.
- **Repackage yourself.** Use trying times to take a deep look inside your organization. Imagine ways you can re-invent how you present your products or services.
- **Upgrade your skills.** Expand your portfolio of skills. Add new knowledge to your tool bag. Focus on increasing your value and confidence.



Debbe Kennedy is president of Leadership Solutions Companies and the Global Dialogue Center. She is also the author of numerous books, including *Action Dialogues* (Berrett-Koehler, 2000) and the *Diversity Breakthrough! Action Series* (Berrett-Koehler, 2000). Learn more: [www.globaldialoguecenter.com](http://www.globaldialoguecenter.com)  
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