Refounding—a climate in which

Business has no time for Dullsville

Dear Mr. Hill:

A college senior at a recent Chicago-area vocational seminar put into three words an attitude which each of you six students writing these open letters with me also has expressed. "Business," he said, "is Dullsville."

It is one of your letters, you wrote that, in business, "competence is clouded by acute boredom." Mark Dibick of Cornell spoke of business as "the sponsor of creativity." "Business lacks glamour," wrote Bob Byman of the University of Illinois. To Ed Kokalas at Michigan State, business wants "the square peg for the square hole."

Lyny Warner at the University of Texas felt that business looks "boring" and "unimaginative" to students. And, from the University of Southern California, Tom Fehn wrote this about the businessman: "His distinguishing mark is sameness."

There is no denying that dull executives and dull companies do exist. This does not prove, however, that business and businessmen are dull, any more than the acorn which hit Chicken Little proved the sky was falling.

In reality, no top-notch company today could afford to waste time or people in Dullsville even if wanted to.

You can find the excitement and challenge of business in countless examples. But in this letter I'd like to go into some detail with all six of you. I call it refounding. Refounding is a corporate process in which the fears and challenges are forceful and far reaching. You will find it in all kinds of alert American companies today. There is no more personally rewarding experience in business than taking part in refounding.

What is refounding? What is so remarkable and exciting about it? Refounding essentially is the forming of a whole new business right inside a corporation which already is established. It is a more complex matter than ordinary growth; it can demand more sophisticated effort than the original founding.

You "refound" when your company makes its first entry into a market which is new to it (a lumber company comes up with a facial tissue), or when you develop a product or service which creates its own new market (an industrial electronics company designs a computer for the home). You refound, in short, when your company sets out to fill a need which is distinctly different from the one for which it was founded.

You start by selecting a group of your best men to do the job. Doing the job calls for changes—changes in established research techniques, production methods, financial policies, marketing procedures; changes in business functions which may continue to serve your old business admirably, but just would not stand the strains of the new fields, new products, and new problems of refounding.

Refounding calls for that combination of determination, skill, flair, and vision which has been called "the founder's touch." It offers a founder's sort of adventure. No books have been written to guide you. No directives from topside are offered for you to lean on. You must feel and think your way through the uncharted.

Incidentally, your efforts and objectives often affect the whole organization because, through all the experiments, failures, false starts, sudden set-backs, and snow-balling expenses, the regular business must continue to thrive.

My own most direct knowledge of refounding naturally comes from Motorola. We were founded in 1928. The company's development of the first mass-produced car radio got us through the depression—and led to our corporate name.

We still make radios and other consumer electronic products. But we also make semiconductor products, control systems, industrial and hospital communications systems, automotive electronics hardware, and aerospace equipment. These may sound like brothers to a radio, but they're more like seventh cousins. To bring each new product group on stream called for changes in the way we thought and worked—from basic research right on through to shipping. Whether it was our first police communications system or our first involvement in semiconductors, it called for refounding.

Refounding in any company tests and retests the professional capabilities and the spirit to succeed of the men who are involved. There is no room for gray-flannel yes-men. Refounding calls for men who can grow with the challenge—the men who will determine the future of that company.

The men of your own generation will accomplish more refounding faster than any other generation. This is because new technological discoveries and new consumer needs are multiplying—and each one of these can spark a refounding.

It is generally the younger men—the restless ones, the bright ones—who set the pace in refounding, for refounding calls for fresh thinking, for vision, for creativity. Dull men or dull thinking will fail. If a business cannot afford to fail, it cannot afford to be dull.

If you want this kind of excitement and challenge, then, look for a company that is searching new horizons. You will find companies like that in every industry—and you will not find them dull. Both men and companies flourish in the climate of refounding.

Robert W. Galvin Chairman, Motorola Inc.

If you think business is Dullsville . . .

Mr. Robert W. Galvin, Chairman of Motorola Inc. would like the opportunity of discussing your comments directly. Address him at 13401 West Grand Avenue, Franklin Park, Illinois 60131.

This twelfth in a series of open letters between Mr. Galvin and students also appears in 28 other student newspapers across the country.