

A man is flying in hot air balloon and realises he is lost. He reduces height and spots a man down below. He lowers the balloon further and shouts: 'Excuse me, can you tell me where I am?' The man below says: 'Yes you are in hot air balloon, hovering 30 feet above this field.' You must work in information technology', says the balloonist. 'I do', replies the man. 'How did you know?' 'Well', says the balloonist, 'everything you have told me is technically correct, but it's no bloody use to anyone.' The man below says: 'You must work in business.' 'I do', replies the balloonist 'but how did you know?' 'Well', says the man, 'you don't know where the hell you are, or where the hell you are going, but you expect me to be able to help. You're in the same position you were before we met, but now it is my fault.'

Signor E. Segre  
Via G. Pacini 72  
20131 MILANO,  
ITALIA

Amsterdam, 15<sup>th</sup> December 98

Dear Enrico, the above joke has been recently printed in a Dutch newspaper. The paper informed their readers that they had copied it from Internet. For me it was "old news", because I heard the same joke about 10 years ago, however the balloonist was not a businessman but a banker, because he had the characteristics of a banker: He had no sense of direction and he was a man without his feet firmly on the ground. The story is the metaphor for the increased complexities in the US surrounding world with which management has difficulties to cope with and so often they are not equipped to deal with the intricacies of the continuously changing environment.



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a quote of John Maynard Keynes, which he observed  
in 1936 struck me: "The ideas of economists  
are more powerful than is commonly understood.  
Indeed the world is ruled by little else.

Practical men, who believe themselves to be  
quite exempt from any intellectual influences,  
are usually the slaves of some defunct econo-  
mist." end of quote

In today's world it is still a truism. But  
not only the ideas of economists are powerful  
but also those of the high priests of the infor-  
mation technology who enslave the decision-  
makers in the business world, because they lack  
the brains to understand what is going on. For  
instance Volkswagen and Procter & Gamble lost  
huge amounts in financial derivatives because the  
clauses were not understood by management.  
Just recently Barclays Bank has incurred  
enormous losses and are about to be taken  
over. The investment bank Baring Brothers was  
brought down by a dealer (Nick Leeson)

The other day I read that the inception of  
the information technology is: letter writing.

Then you got the invention of PRINTING and  
thereafter the big leap forward: the Computer.  
In this letter to you I apply the oldest and  
the newest, most modern form of JT as you  
noticed,



Thus far it was only an introduction; the real letter starts here.

Thank you for your season greetings! Your observation is right, I write less than I wish to do. Living in Amsterdam you can easily be depressed by so many distractions. Living downtown, it appears that we have more friends than we thought we would have. They all wish to come to see us; have a drink, going to the zoo etc. etc. I am not complaining but explaining why I write less than I used to do. Moreover, we spend much more time on our parents. As they get older they require more attention from us. Vera's mother, for instance, is losing her memory and we are experiencing it as she is dying while still alive. My parents are ~~too~~ reasonably well for their ages (81 and 83), although my mother was diagnosed last August with malignant tumor. It has been taken away through an operation and she has recovered.



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and of course we are going more often to  
concerts, opera's, museum etc. It is the first  
time in our lives that we live down-town  
and everything is in walking distance.  
We are all in good shape. Floris, as  
a fiscal lawyer with Moret, Ernst & Young  
has now two years of working experience.  
The work load is huge. It is not an exception  
that he works 3 evenings in a week until  
23.00 hours. Crazy! if you ask me.

Reinoud, successfully finished his education  
on "International Management" on a private  
institution. However, he expressed the desire  
to graduate at a university. Thus he en-  
rolled in the Rotterdam University.

Today, amazingly it is about 11° Celsius,  
and raining. We long for bright and  
sunny weather. Italy thus! We  
decided to stay at home at the year end  
No winter sport, No Curacao.

We sincerely hope that you and Maria are  
in a good health and that the good health  
will throughout 1999. Merry Christmas  
Pover toire la famille from Vera & Adriano