

# One small silver lining of moving Boeing headquarters to Chicago

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In 2001, Boeing moved their corporate headquarters from Seattle to Chicago. This resulted in much wailing and consternation in Seattle, where Boeing had been since its founding in 1915. But every cloud has a silver lining. Seattle is the home of Boeing's passenger jet division, and the presence of corporate executives had added an extra layer of management annoyance to the already-stressful job of building airplanes. As the story goes, one of the Corporate Vice Presidents from some other division of Boeing had an office that overlooked Boeing Field, giving him a vantage point from which to watch each airplane take off as it was delivered to the customer. Since he was a Corporate Vice President, he had access to the delivery schedule, so when the schedule said that an airplane was supposed to be delivered to XYZ Airlines today and he didn't see a plane take off, he knew something was wrong. And each time a plane didn't take off when it was supposed to, he called the guy responsible for passenger jet manufacturing to remind him that there was supposed to be a delivery today, and that the plane was late, and demand an explanation. Like that guy didn't already know that the plane was late. In fact, he's probably know this for the past several weeks if not months. He's been in countless meetings to figure out why the plane was late. He's been busting heads to get the plane back on schedule. He's been studying GANTT charts and PERT charts while sitting on the toilet. He'd even study Snellen charts if he thought it would help. He's the last person on the planet you need to remind that the plane is late. Imagine what it must be like to be that guy, and to have a Corporate Vice President call you and say, "Your plane is late." And then to have to spend time explaining why the plane is late, time that you should be spending *finishing an airplane that is late*. At least, now that all the Corporate Vice Presidents for other divisions have moved to Chicago, the passenger jet manufacturing guy doesn't have to take those annoying phone calls. I tell this story as a long response to [Chad's comment](#) that he didn't see what was wrong with that manager's email to everybody who has more than one bug. The people with more than one bug *sure as heck know* that they have more than one bug. As a deadline looms, everybody lives in the bug database. You know exactly how many issues are assigned to you, and you set up notifications so you are alerted the moment anybody assigns a new bug to you. Your manager (and probably your manager's manager) talk to you every day about your bug count and are always asking you what they can do to help. (The sentence "If you need help, then ask your manager" therefore gets things

backwards: Your manager has been *asking you* if you need help.) The message from the senior manager was like the message from the Boeing Corporate Vice President: Reminding somebody already under a lot of stress that they are under a lot of stress.

**Clarification:** I think everybody is missing the part of the story where I say that the Corporate Vice President is from a *different division* of the company. He is nowhere in the chain of command in the passenger jet division. He's just a nosy outsider. Why should the passenger jet production manager send regular project updates to the CVP of the Space Launch and Exploration division? Everybody inside the passenger jet division who needs to know about the revised plane delivery schedule already knows about the problem.

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