

Business as Usual in The Valley



*by Stuart R. Gold,
Vice President,
Corporate Strategic
Programs for Ariba*

Since my column last March a lot has changed in our world.

Steve Young left the 49ers.

A new president will soon be living in the White House.

Oh yes, and the stock market took a dive.

The latter has shaken things up a bit in the Silicon Valley. High tech workers with money in escrow for a new home had to walk away from their deposits. Dreams of exotic vacations took a raincheck. For some, retirement plans were put on hold.

But, for many of us, this market correction – the calming of the dot-com industry – comes as a relief. It has validated the true leaders in the marketplace, and washed out those without a strong product, business plan or initiative.

I'll put it simply: You can put lipstick on a pig. Even a little eyeshadow. But a pig is still a pig.

At the end of the day – or year, or whenever this wild ride settles down – the steadfast, smart companies are going to survive.

The pigs with lipstick are not.

At Ariba we aren't just surviving. We're thriving. As the leading business-to-business eCommerce platform provider, our customers now include more than 20 of the Fortune 100. Our employees have grown from about 300 to 1,500 just this year.

While Ariba continues to grow vigorously, every employee has been put to the test.

From the beginning, we've said that the reason we're here is because we believe in our product, our company, and our partners. We're not here to get rich quick. We're here to build a solid business, a model of excellence in our growing business to business field.

All of that was easily said when the money was there. But did we really mean it?

The answer is, without a doubt.

NASDAQ or no NASDAQ, Ariba carries on at its usual pace. Executives work their typical 90 hours, crossing the globe for meetings, sleeping on airplanes, and eating out of vending machines.

No one complains that they can't do particular assignments because they aren't in their job description.

No one stops checking their e-mail before they go to bed and when they wake in the morning.

Our commitment can not be questioned as just lip service. Of course, everybody hopes the NASDAQ rebounds and soars beyond. But our motivation goes further than the price of a stock. We're devoting ourselves to creating something that gives us purpose and meaning.

Simply put, we aren't the pigs with lipstick. 