

Update Bulletin

StoreNext Introduces ISS45 “Espresso”

January 22, 2004

So I’m at my desk minding my own business – and maybe a little bit of yours – when the phone goes off. Even the ring sounded just a little anxious. There was bound to be trouble afoot.

It was StoreNext CEO Ray Carlin on the line and I didn’t even get to say hi. “You won’t believe what just happened,” he started. “There was this ... this ... this ... *guy* who just sort of ... *materialized* in my office and pulled a pack of scribbles out of a briefcase that looked like a DC-3. Strange guy, I mean really *strange!* So he throws them on my desk and I’m not even sure which side of the paper is up, you know, and it’s something about *coffee*. And then he starts saying odd things, like he’s giving me advice in some kind of strange code, with talk about camels and how Saddam Hussein dots his ‘i’s with little hearts, stuff like that. Meanwhile I’m trying not to be too rude and stare at how he’s dressed...”

Oh-oh. This was not good. “Uh – Ray, just a second, let me just take a wild guess here – maybe snakeskin tights? Possibly orange?”

“Close! Close! Well, not really close, but in the ballpark of the improbable, I guess. Lavender corduroy with silvery tinsel or something. Don’t tell me you know this guy?”

“And just perhaps see-through acrylic shoes?”

“No, nothing like that – I’d have remembered that. No, these were just plain black leather ... heels. Decorated with padlocks. Oh – and with feathers.”

“Ray, you appear to have just encountered Bernard. That’s *Ber-nard*, I mean. He’s our marketing consultant. Or, rather, he *was* our marketing consultant until he took his chartreuse.com company public and then – oh, never mind – it’s a long story. Long.”

“Fine, but Tony, besides all that he starts moving around all the furniture and then – I can’t believe this – he steals my desk lamp! Gone! Something about *feng shui* and the ‘flying star’ being auspicious. And then I turn around and he’s vanished, no good-bye, no nothing, like he was never here. Look, this is just not my way. Help me get rid of this guy forever, OK?”

“Uh ... you can’t.”

“What do you mean, ‘I can’t.’ Please don’t tell me that HR laws have gone so nuts that a CEO can’t even fire a consultant who shows up unannounced like a bearded elf in purple pants and spike heels and steals my favorite desk lamp.”

“The problem is we don’t really actually pay him, so it’s really hard to – you know – in point of fact – fire the guy. He’s got this kind of service-after-the-sale thing and can’t stay away from anything once he’s started. But you should know, Ray, he’s had some damned good ideas. Fact is, StoreNext wouldn’t really be StoreNext without Bernard. A lot of our best stuff was from him. You know, after he did ISS45 Express a few years back, IBM tried to hire him.”

“IBM? Really, no kidding. What’s Bruce think?”

“Uh ... to tell you the truth, Ray, I try and keep them apart. I think if Bernard came within a city block Bruce would bolo-punch him into Wisconsin. It’s kind of a restraining order thing.”

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“Well, feng shui or no feng shui, I’m going out to find myself a new desk lamp before I go blind here. Look: if you can make heads or tails of this stuff, I’ll put it in the FedEx. You know, I’ll give him one thing – he’s got really, really nice stationery.”

“OK. Hey, before you go, what was that about coffee? Coffee?”

“Yeah, right here at the top, a title. It says ‘Espresso’. You figure it out.”

“You sure it doesn’t say ‘Express’ Ray? Sometimes his writing’s a little ...”

“E – S – P – R – E – S – S – O. Bright blue ink, like this guy still uses a fountain pen. Even in this stupid dark office you can see that.”

* * * * *

The FedEx arrived at 9:55 as usual. Now I’m tough to shock anymore. But this – when I deciphered the figures it was like all the decimal points had moved dangerously to the left. These numbers couldn’t be real! But there it was, bullets, notes, little graphs, charts – all the unmistakable trappings of a Bernard job written out in longhand. Including that ‘Espresso’ thing again. I didn’t get it, but I kept slogging through his strange paragraphs, putting his numbers into spreadsheets, running database queries, talking to Finance. And by the end I had to admit it all fit together – amazing. Except for the ‘Espresso’ part. What on Earth?

And then the next day at 9:55 another FedEx envelope showed up. This time it was just a menu. From Starbucks. And in florid script up in one corner was “This should help – B.”

The menu said “Espresso.” Then it said “Cappuccino – espresso with frothed milk; Café Latte – espresso with steamed milk; Café Latte Brevé – espresso with steamed half-and-half; Café Mocha – espresso with chocolate; Café Latte Skinny – espresso with steamed skim milk; Milky Way – espresso with caramel syrup and chocolate and steamed milk ...” and on and on and on until you finally get to “Café half-caf twisted skinny Rasmitazz Milky Way dry – espresso half decaf, half caffeinated espresso with just the foam of steamed skim milk and raspberry and caramel syrup with chocolate, twist of lemon and peanuts. (Sprinkles optional.)”

And at the bottom again from Bernard: “*The fundamental, the tone that sets the chord,*” it started off. Whoa boy. “*All begins with the beginning. And the beginning is called Espresso, and all is added to Espresso to make the totality. Espresso is small, but Espresso is powerful. And Espresso will smite thine enemies.*”

So that’s the story – minus the feng shui ¹ – of how ISS45 Espresso and MB 1200 came to be. A nice round number, just as dramatic as 1000 and 1100 if memory serves, and you’ll really like what it says.

To Your Success,

Tony
Antony van Leventer

1 If you insist. Bernard forwards this from a certain Mr. Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting of Kuala Lumpur: “The prosperity star flies into the south bringing good money luck but there is a dark signal that there will be cut-throat competition. Enhance business chi and wealth luck with 6 smooth crystal balls or a citrine gem tree with 9 golden coins. Display a mountain and a standing Kwan Kung at the back of your working desk to give you solid support and an edge in your negotiations. Be careful of windows: use still water to capture the bad chi and control the troubles they display. Now is the essential time to keep your lights dim.”