

Outlook

The Far Side of Complexity

I want to share a quote that absolutely reminds me of how the team at Glenair approaches its work. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said, *"I would not give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity."*

What Holmes meant—and what I see reflected every day at Glenair—is that simple answers at the onset of a challenge rarely if ever lead to success. I'm talking about quick fixes and surface-level solutions that might look appealing, but don't take into consideration the true complexity of an issue. Half of the wisdom here is simply accepting that efforts that don't address deeper issues will invariably leave the problem unresolved (or lead to new, unforeseen concerns). But the other half of the wisdom is realizing that when we truly tackle an issue in all its complexity, we can end up in a place—on the far side of the challenge—where our day-to-day life becomes amazingly simple.

Let's look at an example that is near and dear to all our hearts, our Same-Day Delivery Program. I think everyone would agree that our 30-year project of building out our massive raw material, component part, and finished-goods inventory position has been instrumental in establishing Glenair as a trusted, reliable partner in the high-reliability interconnect industry. Further, that our business lives have become—as a result of successfully tackling this complex project—incredibly simple. To accept that this is so, imagine how difficult competing in our industry would be without the ability to meet customer requirements as quickly and reliably as we do from stock.

Have you seen the Tom Hanks movie *Castaway*? It is a perfect analogy of Holmes' wisdom. Chuck Noland (Hanks) is a castaway trapped inside the calm waters of an island lagoon faced with the challenge of escaping through the massive, breaking waves of the outer reef. In his first attempt, he builds a crude raft and paddles straight at the waves. But they prove too strong for him. His raft is destroyed, and Noland is thrown back to shore, hurt and sickened. Do you then recall his laborious planning and building of a new raft? The careful marshalling of materials? The timing of his launch to coincide with the change in direction of the trade winds? And of course, the moment he overcomes the massive waves and looks back at the island from the calm waters beyond the reef?

Noland lived a simple, safe life in his lagoon. But he didn't give a fig for it. Instead, he was driven to understand the complexities of his dilemma, master them, and deliver himself from his island prison. The moment where he looks back at the island from the relative calm of the open sea is exactly where we want to be at Glenair: looking back at our most complex problems, enjoying calm, smooth sailing earned from a job well done. Thanks to everyone on the team for getting us to, and keeping us on, the far side of complexity.

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