

# The Vote Recorder

Early in his career, Thomas Edison invented a vote-recording machine for use in legislative chambers. By moving a switch to the right or left, an official could vote for or against a proposal without leaving his desk. The machine would replace the tedious business of marking and counting ballots.

Elated with the prospects, Edison obtained a patent – his first – and headed for Washington. Eagerly, he demonstrated his machine to the chairman of Congressional Committees. This gentleman, while complimenting Edison on his ingenuity, promptly turned it down. “Filibustering and delay in the tabulation of votes are often the only means we have for defeating bad or improper legislation,” he told Edison.

The young inventor was stunned. The invention was good; he knew it and the chairman knew it. Still, it wasn’t wanted.

Said Edison later: “There and then I made a vow that I would never again invent anything which was not wanted.”

That’s a good principle for all of us to follow. No rule for success is more fundamental than giving the customers what they really want, not what we think they *ought* to want.

--Beecher Hunter