

Tom Peters' Manifestos 2002: The BRAWL WITH NO RULES Series

Education and 3rd Millennium Work:

We've Got It Dangerously
Wrong

Tom Peters

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“We are in a brawl with no rules.”

– Paul Allaire, former CEO, Xerox

MANIFESTO. The word suggests a pointed view. (Rodale’s *Synonym Finder*: Manifesto ... Proclamation. Declaration. Pronunciamento. Broadcast. Airing. Broadside.) And “Pointed View” is precisely the idea of this series of “booklets” – in what we call **The BRAWL WITH NO RULES Series**. Each booklet is an expanded chapter of my cornerstone day-long seminars. But I have chosen these topics for two particular reasons. First, I think they (1) are important and (2) present enormous opportunities and (3) are grossly neglected by most organizations. Second, I have a Radical Point of View about each one; you will find no half-way suggestions here!

Preface

I caught a lucky break. As I was writing this, Wally simultaneously arrived.

We're a dog family, and our Golden Retriever, Lego, died this summer. So, on July 12, 2001, Wally, a spunky Australian Shepherd, entered our lives.

Truth is, my productivity has been cut at least 50% since Energy Ball (a/k/a Wally) moved in. He is a consummate entertainer, though I doubt he's aware of it.

Scratch the above. My productivity has increased ... from observing Wally. Aussies are a "smart breed." And Wally fits that bill. But his real "contribution" (other than enhancing my life markedly) has been the privilege of observing him.

Let me tell you two things. (1) Wally is a Learning Machine. (2) He loves it (learning, that is), or at least he loves to show off his new learning. (I call it the Ecstasy Factor.) For instance, Wally just mastered leaping onto the bed. (You disapprove. Oh well.) But rather than enjoying the "bed privilege," he has spent the last few hours – including wee hours – jumping off and on the bed to celebrate his newfound skill/learning.

So why am I telling you this? BECAUSE IT'S THE ESSENCE OF THE "EDUCATION" ISSUE. Education, or, rather, learning, is neither dry nor dreary nor dull nor an unnatural act ... except in the classroom. Watch a preschool kid. Age 2 months. Two years. HE/SHE IS A PURE, UNADULTERATED LEARNING MACHINE. And, like Wally-the-Aussie, he/she revels in those new learnings. Many of which are not quite as trivial as mastering the bed leap. Wee kids aim to control their environments. The most effective way to do that is to learn to speak. So ... almost all do. Damn quickly. From a base of zero to several hundred ... very useful ... words in amazingly short order. They love the learning. They love the mastery. And they love the utility of what they are learning. (Language lets you get your way. Just as, 16 years later the hesitant and lackadaisical classroom student effortlessly masters a complex, intricate, and voluminous playbook as a star high school quarterback.)

Fact: The only thing that screws up learning is the classroom. Inherited in America, over 100 years ago, from Bismarck, it is perfect. Designed perfectly to kill all interest in the subject matter at hand.

But we keep our shrines to Bismarck alive. Not only are classrooms radical anti-learning contexts, but also we have more in store. The implicit motto of the School Reform Movement is, "You think it's bad now, just wait! Just wait until 'teach to test' occupies *all* our time!"

It's a tragedy. The world is doing backflips. In the words of one astute Japanese researcher, we're entering the "Age of Creation Intensification." (In my world, business, that means that the likes of Microsoft and Enron and Celera Genomics rule ... through cleverness and derring-do and the resultant accumulation of Intellectual Capital.) And yet the school reformers continue to

“prepare” kids to be docile and “master” rote learning. (Hey, it reaches all the way to the hallowed Ivy Leagues. The new president of Princeton University, Shirley Tilghman, said, “I would like to think we could attract more students with green hair. We will take pink and blue and orange hair, too.” That is, the Ivies could greatly benefit from a few more “off-trackers,” as opposed to premature “fast-trackers,” grooved since their parents sent them to pre-pre-preschool counseling – counseling in docility? – at age 18 months. No shit.)

We know how to “do it.” To engage kids. To make “it” matter. Well, maybe that’s wrong. “Engaged kid” is a tautology. (Just watch ’em at recess or lacrosse practice. Whoops, I plumb forgot we’re zapping recess these days – teenage boys have simply got to learn to work off that hormonal surge practicing synonym matching for the Pre-Pre-Pre-SATs.) I recall a quote from a Notre Dame football coach. It went something like this: “I’m frequently asked, ‘How do you motivate these kids?’ I reply, ‘I don’t. They arrive motivated. I try my damndest not to demotivate them.’ ” (The business version of that is a legendary remark from the legendary Peter Drucker: “So much of what we call ‘management’ consists of making it difficult for people to work.”) So I’ll start again: We do know the essence of a True Learning Environment. It’s one that Engages Active & Energetic Kids in Stuff They Care About. Stokes their natural & energetic tendency to be ALMs ... Amazing Learning Machines ... rather than banks that natural tendency.

Read on. I’m just warming up. (And thanks, Wally.)

Education Reform and 3rd Millennium Work: WE'VE GOT IT DANGEROUSLY WRONG

My tendency is to let 'er rip. To let it all hang out. To declare the degree to which I believe the quote "school reform" movement is stupid. Sickeningly stupid. Counterproductive.

Hint: I think it is. But before I say that, I want to make my contextual case ... a case that is based on the obvious (to most of us) Wild New Reality of the Wild New World of Work.

In short, the New World of Work begs for creativity and spontaneity and flexibility ... and the "School Reform" movement gives us more ... and more ... and more ... of what we've had for the last 100+ years. That is ... regimentation ... standardization ... brutalizing boredom in places designed by the devil, called classrooms. Otto von Bismarck lives! The Prussian Model Rules! (Alas.)

1. Work Will Never Be the Same!

Go back to 1970. I did. Or at least, I chatted with a fellow from the London docks, who'd been there in 1970. As a militant union organizer. When a timber ship pulled up to those docks, circa 1970, it took 108 guys some five days to unload it. Five hundred and forty man days. Then something happened. Summarizable in one word. *Containerization*. And in the year 2000? Same ship. Same dock. Eight people. One day. That is: 540 man days ... to eight man days. Or, more precisely, a 98.5 percent reduction in "manpower required" – blue collar variety.

But it's not 1970. It's 2001. And the game is being replayed. With even more vigor. Ninety percent of us work at white collar jobs, even those of us in "manufacturing" companies. And the long-delayed White Collar Revolution is now upon us. Big Time! *All the new "software stuff" ... Enterprise Resource Planning systems ... Web-based Application Service Providers ... are nothing more ... and nothing less ... than "forklifts for the mind."* They will do as much "damage" to the traditional world of white collar work as the forklifts and robots and containers did to traditional blue collar work.

Yes. A humongous White Collar Revolution. And, in my considered view, at least 90 percent of white collar jobs are in jeopardy in just the next 10 to 15 years. If the new "white collar software" doesn't overtake us ... outsourcing will; this time we are shipping offshore the white collar jobs ... claims processing for Aetna to Ghana ... every-damn-thing-you-can-imagine-sophisticated-or-unsophisticated to India. (Hyderabad and Bangalore are, combined, the number two software center in the world ... behind Silicon Valley.)

Dan Sullivan is a consultant and executive coach. He summarizes it brilliantly (tragically, pathetically): "A bureaucrat is an expensive microchip." If you know anything at all about

Artificial Intelligence (other than seeing the movie), you'll know that, via "expert systems," it is possible to encompass about 75 percent of what we degreed white collar types do in 40 or 50 well-crafted "decision rules." (Hey, you can't have it both ways. You laugh at Dilbert world, a world where so much of work is rote bullshit; so you're not then allowed to complain when a talented computer programmer captures the useful part, embeds it in silicon, and sells it for \$149.95 – no health benefits included – to your company.)

Pricked dot-com bubble notwithstanding, this really is a revolution.

Which means we have to change.

Again.

Yes ... AGAIN.

Great-great-great-great-granddaddy did. He used to pull the plow. Then we put the oxen and the donkey before the plow, and he stood behind it. (Revolution.) And then the cotton gin came along. And a dozen dozen dozen industrial accoutrements. And it was the age of the Industrial Revolution. And great-great-great-granddaddy ... moved off the farm ... and into the factory. And that worked for a while. A few generations. And then the factory, slowly but surely, became automated. And ... granddad ... or dad ... moved into the newest "factory" ... the "White Collar Factory" ... the tall towers, caging millions of cubicle slaves from Colombo (Sri Lanka) to Kuala Lumpur to Hong Kong to Shanghai to Los Angeles to Miami to Frankfurt to San Francisco. And then that "age" came to an end ... or, rather, is *coming* to an end. That is, the new white collar tools revolution. In which the new "software tools" take the drudge and dreary work out of white collar forms processing. Which means that those of us who are supplanted by the new tools that do the rote work (forklifts for the mind, remember) must learn new tricks. Fast.

Or else ...

It's a new story. And it's the oldest game (and story) in town.

2. Welcome to a (New) Age of Self-determination!

American Express exec Anne Busquet claims that what it's about is not the Age of the Internet. Instead it's ... the Age of Customer Control. Once I discover I can manage my 401K ... at 2 a.m. ... from a hotel room in Istanbul ... life will never be the same. I demand nothing less than Instant Gratification from ... insurers ... and automakers ... and anybody else you can name. It is truly "the Age of the Never Satisfied Customer," as Silicon Valley marketing guru Regis McKenna puts it. These new tools ... enabled by the ubiquitous Internet ... are putting control in your hands and mine. (And taking it away from forms-processing petty bureaucrats ... of which you are perhaps one in your day job. Whoops.)

And the implications are ... awe-inspiring. In *The Control Revolution*, author Andrew Shapiro defines the basic idea: “The control revolution. The potentially monumental shift in control from institutions to individuals made possible by new technology such as the Internet.” “[The Web] enables total transparency,” write Swedish business-strategy professors Kjell Nordström and Jonas Ridderstråle, in *Funky Business*. “*People with access to relevant information are beginning to challenge any type of authority. The stupid, loyal and humble customer, employee, and citizen is dead.*”

I’ll be the first to admit that there’s a lot of hype – and that’s an understatement! – around the Internet. But I also happen to believe that the change it portends is as fundamental as the most radical of those who produce scenarios like those above suggest. Basic message: We are, among other things, on the cusp of a “People’s [customers/patients/citizens/etc.] Revolution.” Yes ... the people ... will ... rule.

For example, writing in the *Institute for Human Resource Information Management Journal*, John Pask says, “HR Employee Self-Service” will become the order of the new day. Again: ESS.

Employee Self-Service. Another HR professional, writing in *IHRIM.link*, says we are in the new era of ... B2E. That is the age of Web-centric Business-to-Employee relationships. It’s a new world ... where the employee grasps the reins in what was heretofore – cries of “Empower Now” and “people are our principal asset” notwithstanding – a top-down one-way “relationship.”

“Systems supporting one-to-one employee relationships will add competitive advantage,” *IHRIM.link* adds in its March 2001 publication. “Employees expect far more access and control over their own information.” And more. Headline, *New York Times*, December 2000: “Managing Benefits: Let Workers Do It.” Among those cited by the last-to-get-it *Times* are eBenX and Vivius, of Minneapolis. Such firms provide Websites that allow employees to ... micro-manage their entire benefits package.

I make these points not to attempt to explain a new world order of organizations. (I’ve done that as extensively as I know how in other places.) But to explain a revised world of work in which employees will ... be independent ... run their own lives ... and take charge. Thence ... the point of this essay ... “education” must necessarily support those-who-would-take-charge-of-their-lives. (Right?) The “Internet Age stuff” has been significantly discounted in recent months. Incorrectly so ... wildly incorrectly so, as I see it ... by “conventional media.” Truth is, “this thing” ... an age defined by the possibilities of New Information Technology ... is just in its infancy.

One of the primary chroniclers of “all this,” *Red Herring* magazine, describes the new employee ... embedded in the new “supply chain.” “When Joe Employee at Company X launches his browser,” *Red Herring* commented in September 2000, “he’s taken to Company X’s personalized home page. He can interact with the entire scope of Company X’s world – customers, other employees, distributors, suppliers, manufacturers, consultants. The browser – that is, the portal – resembles a My Yahoo for Company X and hooks into every network associated with Company X. The real trick is that Joe Employee, business partners, and customers don’t have to be in the office. They can log on from their own cell phone, Palm Pilot, pager, or home office system.”

The meaning of all this: We have come a long ... long ... long ... long ... way from the employee-as-cypher in the Ford Motor Company factory, circa 1916.

The employee quarterback her or his work life. Controls her or his benefits. The employee is “CEO” of his or her workspace. That is the New World Order.

Believe it.

What fascinates me, as a rapidly aging observer of “all this,” is the pervasiveness of it. Take America’s biggest industry. Health care. We’re all pissed off at the HMOs. Everybody, in fact, is at everybody else’s throat. And yet what’s really happening is a belated patient-led revolt. The patient, in amazingly short order ... *will* be in charge! “A seismic shift is underway in health care,” write Deloitte Research staffers. “The Internet is delivering vast knowledge and new choices to consumers – raising their expectations and, in many cases, handing them the controls. [Health care] consumers are driving radical, fundamental change.” “We expect consumers,” add Dean Coddington et al. in *Beyond Managed Care*, “to move into a position of dominance during the early years of the new century.” The Institute for the Future says that consumers are serious. And, yes, it *is* yet another revolution. They – we! – want (1) choice, (2) control, (3) shared medical decision-making, (4) excellent customer service, (5) access to all medical information, and (6) brands we can trust.

Again: Why this apparent detour in a “manifesto” on education? And again: because the worm has turned. People – they, we – are no longer growing up to become personality-less (from 9 to 5), interchangeable parts on Henry Ford’s production line. We are taking firm charge of our lives. Finances. Health care. Education. Careers. (There’s no choice, given the Web-led white collar tsunami depicted at the outset of this paper.)

Maternal Mother Ford or GM or AT&T will no longer provide generations of Smiths or Joneses or Peterses 40 years of guaranteed employment – in return for our promise of appropriate obeisance to our benign & all-knowing masters and signers of paychecks. The – in retrospect, brief – Age of Big Co. Dependency is quickly coming to a close. Is education ready to help prepare the alternative, the empowered individual? What a joke.

It is, of course, no joke at all. And it’s getting worse. Much worse ... with the passage of every piece of “reform”-minded legislation in Montpelier or Albany or, God help us all, Washington.

The sages who produced the extraordinary *The Cluetrain Manifesto* explain that corporate resistance to this New Age of Self-Determination is celestially high (and that’s an understatement). The reason? “It all goes back to fear of losing control,” the authors write. Indeed. “They”

– “the professionals” – “the experts” – will mommy us. Have mommied us, for well over a century. Case: Kids and their parents are getting more information about the colleges they wish to attend over the Web. And yet there is resistance. Not from the kids. Not from the parents. But from ... no surprise ... the “professional” career counselors. “Surfing the Net is the New Route to College,” a headline begins in *USA Today* in late 2000. “But counselors fear some students will pick schools without guidance.” That is, will pick schools without paying incredibly large fees to counselors. Doctors are fighting back. Companies are fighting back. Educational counselors are fighting back. How dare “we” take charge of our lives! After all, these spoiled adult brats, with the stratospheric SATs, spent years and years sitting quietly in “advanced” classrooms so that they could subsequently sport long combinations of letters after their names. (I.A.E.C.C., International Association of Esteemed Career Counselors, no doubt, with an annual February meeting, no doubt, in Orlando at Disney World – where one stays in a fake “Venetian” hotel, is conspicuously on one’s cell to one’s “can’t live without you” clients, and celebrates the Great American Love of Certified Experts.) I.A.E.C.C. so appended to their names, these Lettered Ones – and they alone – are then fit to guide little Samantha through her application to one of Manhattan’s finest pre-pre-preschools – and assure that at 18 months Samantha will get the best psychological profiling that scads of money – paid to other learned lettered “counselors” – can buy.

3. We Take Charge II: Brand You Rules!

I declaim these days on what I call the “New World of Work.” And I talk about the New Employee who will rule that world. My name for her or him ... or me? Brand You. (I wrote an entire book on the topic, *The Brand You50*.) ***“If there is nothing very special about your work,” Michael Goldhaber wrote in Wired, “no matter how hard you apply yourself, you won’t get noticed, and that increasingly means you won’t get paid much, either.”***

I call the Goldhaber quote the Ultimate Tough Love Declaration for Adults. The age of George Babbitt and Babbittry is dead. (Or at least dying. Fast.) The age of the blue collar automaton hanging out in that Ford or U.S. Steel factory, then spending a couple of hours at the pub, then going home and sleeping it off ... and then robotically returning to work ... is dead. Long dead.

It’s a revolution. A tsunami. Whatever superlatives you use understate the case. “By 2010, full-time workers will be in the minority” in the United States ... according to an MIT study released in August 2000. And then there is the simply amazing – and ever so meticulously researched – *Free Agent Nation*, by Daniel Pink. The statistics are revealing. And stunning. Already, fewer

than one in ten of us works for a Fortune 500 company. The private sector firm that employs the largest number of us? AT&T? Hardly, these days. General Motors? Hardly, these days. Try, instead ... Manpower, Inc. Freelancers and independent contractors already number between 16,000,000 and 25,000,000 of us, according to Pink. Temps run about 3,000,000. And temps these days are a lot more than “Kelly Girls.” Try: temp project managers. Temp lawyers. Temp molecular biologists. And ... temp ... CEOs. (No kidding.)

And then Pink reports that there are another 12,000,000 to 27,000,000 of us who work in micro-businesses, with less than four employees. Add it all up and already, Pink asserts, between 31,000,000 and 55,000,000 Americans are working in very non-traditional roles. “Free agency is the *real* new economy,” Pink proclaims. He calls it – and I for one love this description – the switch from “Taylorism to tailorism.” Perhaps a little too cute for you. But not for me. Taylor – that is, Frederick – was the time and motion guy ... who saw one human being as completely interchangeable with any other ... as long as you followed his (Very Precise) Rules – the so-called “one best way” – for executing any job. (Talk about brainless. The schools get it. That’s what they still train for ... circa 2001. More later. Much more later.) But now we have, per Pink, the new “Tailor”ism. That is, each of us will perform – in Tom Peters’ terms, the Brand You model – as *de facto* or *de jure* independent individuals, forging our way, via the uniqueness of the individual services we provide. Sometimes for a big company, sometimes for a temporary project team.

“The fundamental unit of [the new] economy,” write Thomas Malone and Robert Laubacher in the *Harvard Business Review*, “is not the corporation, but the individual. Tasks aren’t assigned and controlled through a stable chain of management, but rather are carried out autonomously by independent contractors – *e-lancers* – [who] join together into fluid and temporary networks to produce and sell goods and services. When the job is done ... the network dissolves, and its members become independent agents again, circulating through the economy, seeking the next assignment.” That’s a lovely statement. One that I support. Wholeheartedly. But ... *do you get it?* Get how big a shift this is? People – the majority of us, in the high-wage nations – will essentially sell our services based on our Unique Skill Set, not some interchangeable skill as a steel worker ... or HR “Benefits Professional.” “We have entered an era,” write Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Barbara Schneider in *Becoming Adult*, “in which work has become a personal choice. Rather than drawing one’s identity from the job, a job is now more and more perceived as an extension and a fulfillment of individual potential, and therein lies its main value.”

But Tom Peters is not any longer, as some of his event marketing sponsors have proclaimed, the “best selling business author.” It’s clear who is. Scott Adams. Father of Dilbert. The world of white collar work ... Dilbert tells us ... sucks. (Excuse the strong language. Alas, it’s merited.) His boss is stupid. His company is stupid. His job is stupid. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

I laugh at the Dilbert stuff. It’s hilarious. And all too true. (Most of us agree with that. That’s why it sells so damn well.) But what I think Dilbert chronicles – with cynicism that is all too often appropriate – is the dying days of the old white collar world. The white collar world before the new software came and started doing the stupid work. Survivors will do more than stand around the water cooler ... bitching about the stupidity of it all. Survivors will learn new tricks. As we put it: *Distinct ... or extinct*. And I don’t think that’s too big a stretch.

Distinct ... or Extinct.

In our training programs on the Brand You topic, the most popular exercise has been the one that tasks a 48-year-old finance professional, making \$57,500.00 a year, to construct a 1/8-page or 1/4-page ad for Brand You for the local *Yellow Pages*. “You are the storyteller of your own life,” writes the brilliant fiction writer, Isabel Allende, “and you can create your own legend or not.” In a world where one does not thrive – or perhaps even survive, per Michael Goldhaber – as a white collar cypher, one needs to stand out. Be distinct. Create one’s own legend. (Per Ms. Allende.) Have a *Yellow Pages* ad that makes one stand up and look a second time. Or some such.

In late 1999, I released a series of three books on the New World of Work. *The Brand You50* was the first. The second was called: *The Project50*. We were on a quest. A quest for the ... nugget. The essence of what makes this New Worker (no longer a cubicle slave or white collar cypher) “saleable.” And our conclusion was that the essence of Brand You was projects with zip and zing and zest. Or, per our favorite term: *the WOW Project*.

A WOW Project is a baseball game for Barry Bonds or Mark McGwire. A symphonic performance for Yo-Yo Ma. An Olympic trial for those who will go to Beijing in 2008. A surgical procedure, from hangnail to open-heart work, at the local hospital. Projects ... that Make A Difference. I gave a seminar in Sydney, Australia, a couple of years ago. Businessman Phil Daniels attended. Said he’d had a successful career based on a very simple philosophy: “*Reward excellent failures. Punish mediocre successes.*”

I love that. Love that. How ... awesome. I think it’s probably a pretty good prescription for life. In 1650. Or 1950. And I *know* it’s the *only* prescription for survival-success in 2001. The job done “adequately” will no longer ensure the survival of that \$87,500 a year white collar “cubicle slave.” The job has got to stand out. Have distinction. Add value. (Your own equivalent, in HR or Finance or Engineering, of the Yo-Yo Ma or Barry Bonds performance. Right?) “Every project we take on,” says Stewart Hornery, CEO of the Australian-based development company, Lend Lease, “starts with a question: How can we do what’s never been done before?” Again: I love it.

How can we do what has never been done before?

So I urge participants in my seminars to evaluate the project they’re working on right now. (Or the series of projects that their unit is working on, if they’re a boss.) Evaluate it ... quantitatively. Give it a score, on a scale of one (ho hum) to ten (Wow!). A score of “one” is ... “another day’s work/pays the rent.” A score of, say, four is ... “of value.” A score of seven, for example ... and we’re moving up the charts pretty quickly ... is “Pretty Damn Cool/Definitely Subversive.” (Or

some such.) And the Perfect 10: “*WE AIM TO CHANGE THE WORLD.*” Of all the folks who traverse the corridors of Silicon Valley, there’s none I admire more than Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. The real revolutionary who brought computing to the individual! One of the things I love about Steve, no longer the boy he used to be, except in spirit, is his ability ... in his mid-forties ... to effortlessly use terms like Insanely Great. Love that. Better than my Wow, perhaps. So ... is that Project in HR ... or Finance ... or Logistics ... or the Pharmaceutical Lab ... *Insanely Great?*

(You don’t suppose that Steve’s comfort with such colorful language stems at all from the absence of the burden of a college degree? Hmmm.)

Fact: All this relates ever so clearly to education. E.g., language that soars and challenges to greatness ... or the absence thereof. *Education, as I’ll say subsequently as clearly as I can, ought to be about giving people the spirit and spunk and spark to pursue WOW Projects throughout their professional (and, for that matter, personal) lives.* One of Nintendo’s top game designers came to the CEO, querying him about the parameters of his next project. Hiroshi Yamauchi responded, “*Build something great!*” An ad copywriter came to the legendary ad man, David Ogilvy, and asked how the ad he was working on should turn out. Ogilvy responded, in a word: “*Immortal.*” The great choreographer Sergei Diaghilev asked of his dancers ... “*Astonish me!*” Love those terms. Build something great. Immortal. Astonish me. *Astonish me. Build something great. Immortal. That’s what life – lived to the hilt – is all about.* That’s the spirit of inquiry and engagement and performance our schools should aim to inculcate. Consider again the natural state of affairs for the six-month-old. The Ultimate Explorer. “Education” for her or him is an incredible series of astonishing research projects: Put your hand on a burner. Get burned. Pick up a very elementary lesson in physics. (And more, if his mother-the-attorney sues the producer.) Right? Look again at my 10-week-old dog. Exploring. Learning. Interested. Engaged. Involved. Curious people. (And animals.) That’s “education” ... in the truest and fullest sense of the word. And absolutely, positively the antithesis of the desiccated way our educational system is set up and works.

(Watch a six-month-old kid closely for an evening. Visit a typical sixth grade classroom for a half day. Why is the content and context so different? And isn’t it interesting that the most innovative enterprises – such as IDEO Product Design – more resemble the world of the six-month-old than the classroom of the 12-year-old?)

Brain work. Brain ware. It was 11 September 2000. (No, not 9/11/01.) I read the headline. I was stunned. Hewlett-Packard, one of the best manufacturing companies on earth, offered \$18,000,000,000 for PricewaterhouseCoopers consulting business.

So what’s the point? How does it relate here? Hewlett-Packard is a “manufacturer,” as I said. Damn good, as I said (extraordinary, in fact). But HP’s leadership had “decided” – as have the likes of GE and IBM – that the company can’t be profitable by simply making “extremely great manufacturing products.” That is, they’ve got to add “intellectual capital” ... increasingly the source of economic value in the fully developed economies. (And, very rapidly, the not so fully developed economies, as well.)

Consultants. The butt of joke after joke in times not so long past. But now the Ultimate Lumpy Object Maker – Hewlett-Packard – was offering \$18,000,000,000 for the services of 31,000 consultants. Consultants who would add imagination (that’s all consultants sell) to the lumpy object. (The deal fell through, because of stock market wobbles. No matter. The offer clearly signaled HP’s new strategic intent.)

The worm has turned. The imagineers have won. Those who Add Value through the Creation of Intellectual Capital are the new winners. Like Bill Gates and his thousands upon thousands of software designers, aiming to “astonish” the world’s richest man with “something great.” They are not people who make lumps. They are people who create billions of dollars of value ... through the pure exercise of imagination.

A Gatesian software design team at work resembles a football team progressing through a season or a theater company preparing for opening night far more than that sixth grade classroom. Eh? (And isn’t there a message here?)

“Be all that you can be.” Fabulous idea. Fabulous ad. Worked brilliantly. For the U.S. Army. For almost two decades. And then it aged, and in 2000 the Army changed the tag line to: “*I AM AN ARMY OF ONE.*” An army of one ... an astonishingly well-equipped purveyor of intellectual capital. (What else could you call these Astonishingly Smart Weapons that the New Soldier wields?)

An army of one. An independent force. A Brand You. Call it hokey. (Some have.) But it is the big shift. For Private First Class Joan J. Jones. Or for that white collar worker Michael Goldhaber talked about. (Distinct or extinct, remember.) In fact, in this new world order, 99 percent of the sailors on board our aircraft carriers have become white collar workers. (The Navy, I recently read, has even started to subcontract the scraping and painting jobs that once were the essence of the sailor’s repetitive, Model T life.)

Racing down the hallways of Chicago’s massive O’Hare International Airport, I passed a couple of *Wall Street Journal* ads that made me chuckle. (And think.) They read like this: “Adventures in Capitalism: The (*I work for a company called me*) Street Journal.” “Adventures in Capitalism: The (*rise up and flee your cubicle*) Street Journal.” That’s the theme. Better stated ... *the* theme. And is the world of education ready? (Ho. Ho. Ho.)

It was an HP banner ad. It caught my attention even more than those *Wall Street Journal* ads. It read this way: “Invent. Re-invent. Repeat.” That *is* – as I see it – *the* mantra for the year 2001 and beyond. Take charge of your life. Create the Legend of You. (Brand You, per me.) The New York Jets ran into early season trouble a couple of years ago. Their extraordinary coach, Bill Parcells, posted the following bulletin in their locker room: ***BLAME NOBODY!***

EXPECT NOTHING! DO SOMETHING!

(Back to the Ford Model T plant. Can you imagine these slogans on the wall: *Be An Army of One. BLAME NOBODY! EXPECT NOTHING! DO SOMETHING! Astonish Me!*)

It’s a brand new ball game and a brand new Army. And education had damn well better be prepared to become full partners with it. (It isn’t.) (Understatement.)

4. EduK80 (Education, K-80)

I repeat: It's a brand new ball game. Peter Drucker's ancestors were printers. ("Drucker" is "printer" in Dutch.) Drucker observed to *Business2.0* that printing technology didn't change between 1500 and 1750. His ancestors, then, "didn't have to learn anything new for two hundred and fifty years." That was then. This is now.

Two-and-a-half centuries. Fifteen generations. No need to learn anything new. And 2001: Damn near everything changes. Every half dozen years. Computer researcher and entrepreneur Ray Kurzweil says that major "paradigm shifts" took thousands of years prior to the year 1000. Such massive transformations take about 10 years today. And according to Kurzweil's models, the speed of change will be essentially infinite in 30 or 40 years. (Easily within the productive lifespan of today's students.)

The implications for workers ... from the world of pharmaceuticals to the world of hospitality to the U.S. Army: enormous.

"The average knowledge worker," Mr. Drucker continued in the previously referenced interview, "will outlive the average employing organization. This is the first time in history that this has happened. So the center of gravity of higher education is already shifting from the education of the young to the continuing education of adults." ***More Drucker:***

"Knowledge becomes obsolete incredibly fast. The continuing professional education of adults is the No.1 industry in the next 30 years ... [mostly] on line."

Education for life. We've been giving it lip service for several years. But the likes of the Internet are now changing the poster: IT'S NOW.

But it's more than training-programs-until-the-end-of-your-days. It's about preparing for perpetual learning. Future professional life will consist of a half dozen different careers, according to the highly regarded British management guru, Charles Handy. How do you prepare for that? What kind of mindset, burned in very early, will lead you to embrace such a life? And yet our schools – and, alas, even much of our corporate education – often seems to be more attuned toward Drucker's printer ancestors, or at least Henry Ford's plants.

People – "they," "we," "me" – are going to start thinking about education-training-career-growth in an entirely new fashion. Education and re-education are what we do. Recall that HP banner ad:

INVENT. RE-INVENT. REPEAT.

(Some have said that we're going to have to re-invent the idea of identity – who we are. And the nature of purposefulness. Again: Wouldn't it be nice if this started at the outset of the formal

educational process? Wouldn't it be glorious if the schools were full-scale partners with their Clients – students – in this journey-adventure? And: Are SATs really relevant?)

Institutions will no longer cosset us. Forget 41 years, like my Dad, at the Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. We must therefore be in charge. Frankly, we probably must be in charge by about the age of ten. And damn sure by the age of 15.

“It’s a whole new ball game.” That’s about the most hackneyed phrase around. That doesn’t mean that it’s not correct. My point: *IT’S A BRAND NEW BALL GAME*. Education-wise. And everything-wise, that is.

It demands a lot of “stuff” – taking new courses, all the time, forever. And it demands, so much more, a new attitude. My friend Stan Davis, along with Christopher Meyer, wrote a magnificent book in Y2000, called *futureWEALTH*. The basic proposition: *“You must realize that how you invest your human capital matters as much as how you invest your financial capital. Its rate of return determines your future options. Take a job for what it teaches you ... rather than for what it pays. Instead of a potential employer’s asking, ‘Where do you see yourself in five years?’ you’ll ask, ‘If I invest my mental assets with you for five years, how much will they appreciate? How much will my portfolio of [career] options grow?’ ”*

I love that. I’m trained in business. Trained in finance. I realize that this is a cold, calculating sort of proposition. But it’s entirely right. It’s *our* future. It’s *our* “capital” – human capital! – that’s being invested. Please reread the Davis and Meyer quote above. Subtext: Professional life is one long, varied learning adventure. Pick your mates well. Pick your “Gigs” (Wow projects, per me) well. Invest of yourself. BLAME NOBODY. EXPECT NOTHING. DO SOMETHING [GREAT]. ASTONISH [YOURSELF]. BE AN ARMY OF ONE. (No more institutional cossetting. It is over.)

5. Why Does Business Abhor Training?

26.3.

I kid you not: 26.3.

I spoke to the American Society for Training & Development a while back. And what I discovered was ... 26.3. That is, “Employees” at the “average company” undergo 26.3 ... *hours* ... of training ... each year.

I wanted to barf.

I was getting ready to do my ASTD speech. It was a couple of months away. I kept a log. That log covered three weeks in May 2001. And here is the way it worked out. I was “at work” for 41 hours. (The speeches I gave.) The “training & prep” for those speeches numbered 187 hours. And then there was the “usual bullshit” (we all have it) ... that absorbed some 17 hours.

26.3.

Twenty-six+ hours a year. Using the normal standards, that’s about one percent of the year. Devoted to training. Officially devoted to getting better.

But in my case, I spent 187 hours on “preparing” and 41 hours on “work.” That is, my percentage of “training to work” was 367 percent, as compared to 1 percent for the average worker.

Something is wrong here. Something is stupid here. Big Time Stupid.

“Training.” It’s something that people/workers “hate” ... except to the degree it’s seen, in effect, as “time off.” (Probably – 99% probably – because of their charming memories of “school.”) But ... think about it: Divas do it. Violinists do it. Sprinters do it. Golfers do it. Pilots do it. Soldiers do it. Surgeons do it. Cops do it. Astronauts do it.

So why don’t “we” ... businesspeople ... do it?

My “T/D” ratio (training-to-doing) is well over 1.0. In fact, it’s close to 4.0. On the other hand, the T/D ratio for the “average worker” is much more like ... 0.01. (And consider an NFL player. Thousands of hours training, including off-season weights training, etc. And he “works” ... for \$3,000,000 ... 8 hours a year. Sixteen games in the regular season. Thirty minutes a game for an offensive or defensive player.)

I could only reach one conclusion from all this. “We” are *not* serious!

I give speeches. I get paid a lot of money for it. (I’m lucky.) (Lucky as hell.) But I don’t think of myself as any different ... in the best and somewhat arrogant sense of the word ... from Tiger Woods ... or Yo-Yo Ma. My “performance,” the essence of my “Brand You persona,” is the result of a lot of learning, a lot of practice. A lot of continual learning, a lot of continual practice. A lot of risk taking. A lot of trying new stuff. A lot of ... TRAINING. Or, perhaps, EDUCATION. I don’t give a damn what you call it. But I spend a lot more time “getting ready” than I spend “doing.” And most business people don’t. Which is why they well may be ... let’s face it ... chopped-liver-on-the-information-kill highway. Replaceable ... no bullshit ... by a \$149.95 microprocessor.

I’m adamant about this. I’m insane about this. I want a new world order. “Human resources.” It ought to be the biggest deal in town. (Right?) (That’s brainless. Of course ... right!) When I speak to human resources folks, I tell them ... in no uncertain terms ... YOU, not “marketing,” “OWN” the “brand promise”! (If you wish.)

If only they'd see it that way.

Please.

The “people thing” (better yet, THE TALENT THING) in the Age of Intellectual Capital ... is the Only Thing. (Right?) (Only an idiot would disagree. Right?)

I ran into a fabulous group ... the International Association for Human Resource Information Management. They had lots of things to say. Almost all of them were incredibly sensible. Cool. Wild. Audacious. (Remind me to tell you about BHAGs soon.) (Big Hairy Audacious Goals. There, I've given it away.) My friends at IHRIM suggested that we change the role of the Manager HRIS (Manager of Human Resources Information Systems) to ... Manager of Human Capital Assets. Or: Manager of Employee Marketing.

I love words. I love the signification thereof. I love that. Love those terms. Not the “HR Guy.”

But the “Manager of Human Capital Assets.” Wow!

Yes, that's the word. Wow!

And the implications for education? Well ... you guessed it ... enormous. (If “workers” are now highly sought after ... for their creativity ... by Managers of Human Capital Assets.) And are we ready? Be serious. We don't get it. Don't get it at all. Everything we are doing ... in “education reform” ... blatantly thumbs its nose at everything I've presented in this paper and argument.

6. Independence Rules. (Redux.)

“This” is not “all about people.” This is not about “they.” This is not about “them.” This is not about “preparing the new workforce.” This is about ... “me.” No ... not the “me generation” but something more important ... and, I think, more profound. That is, an age where the individual counts ... once again.

When I give my seminars, at this point I say to my participants: “If you are from HR, close your ears.” Then I ask the rest of the audience to “take the pledge”: *“I will never ... ever ... again ... pay any attention ... the slightest attention ... to a STANDARDIZED ... measurement scheme for human resource evaluation.”*

It's simple. Very simple.

One size never fits all. One size fits one.

Consider the National Football League. Can you imagine a coach using a “Standardized Measurement Instrument” to evaluate his 48 active-duty roster players? (Of course you can't. It's stupid. But then why is it “not stupid” ... in business?)

Forty-eight players. Forty-eight players are 48 projects. They are 48 ... totally different ... individuals ... on 48 totally different growth & performance trajectories ... who need to be evaluated by 48 ... totally different ... success measures.

Your kid, Angela, age 11, gets Ms. Jones for 5th grade. You're ecstatic. Angela didn't get Mr. Smith. Why are you ecstatic with Ms. Jones? You are ecstatic because Ms. Jones is "one of them" ... one of those marvelous teachers who understands that all six billion people on this earth are totally unique ... developing in Totally Unique Ways. She treats each of her 19 charges in her classroom as ... TUIs ... Totally Unique Individuals. Growing in a way that has nothing to do with the way that any other individual is growing.

That's the real world. It's not about standardization. It's not about test scores. It's about passions, interests, motivation, uniqueness.

I spoke recently to several hundred senior researchers at one of our large pharmaceutical companies. I was a bit overwhelmed. The IQ points per square foot were, well, staggering. And yet the pharmaceutical companies are under threat. There have never been so many opportunities. And yet, in a way, the very strengths of yesteryear – a very meticulous approach to creating very occasional "blockbusters" – are perhaps turning into weaknesses in the age of many drug targets – "minibusters" as some call them. I stood before the group. (Quaking a bit, as I said.) And then a thought flashed through my mind. "Which one of you," I queried spontaneously, "will wake up one December morning in Stockholm ... and proceed to the ceremony to receive your Nobel Prize in chemistry or medicine?"

"I don't know who it'll be," I continued. "Or if it'll be any of you. But I do know the attributes of those who will make it – from here or elsewhere. It ain't about the science! It's never about the science! *It's always about the passion for the idea and the true grit to stick with it when under frontal attack from your 'betters.'* " That's the reality ... that shapes winners ... from the football field ... to the labs that lead to the stage on which the Nobel ceremony takes place.

I love it. That is, this quote from the extraordinary photographer, Diane Arbus: "Learn not to be careful." The careful ones may lead quite lovely lives. Be great family members. Be great parents. But they rarely make a difference. It's "the cracked ones that let in the light," read a psychiatrist's bumper sticker that I came across. "Our business," said the great ad man David Ogilvy, "needs a massive transfusion of talent, and talent, I believe, is most likely to be found among non-conformists, dissenters, and rebels."

It is an age where in the short space of 20 or 30 or 40 years we will reinvent – literally! – everything. And those whose names go next to the reinvention list, or make it to the Hall of Fame ... in Stockholm or in the history books or on the Forbes 400 list of wealthiest individuals ... will clearly have been the non-conformists, the dissenters, and the rebels ... the ones who dared not to be careful.

And the schools' contribution to this?

(Gulp.)

I had the privilege a couple of years ago of speaking to the NAESP's annual conference. (NAESP = National Association of Elementary School Principals.) I told the collected group I thought they were the most important 5,000 people in the U.S. And I meant it. Having finished with the flattery, I felt I had the license to raise a little hell. I suggested a simple exercise: "Go to your daughter's 10th grade history book. Pull out 50 names at random. Throw out the bums ... the or Hitlers. Keep the positive among them.

"And what were the attributes of those who made this Ultimate Hall of Fame ... one of four or five hundred people singled out as the flag-bearers of political and artistic and scientific and social history?" I provided my own list of winners' traits: *Committed! Determined to make a difference! Focused! Passionate! Irrational about their life's project! Ahead of their time/ paradigm busters! Impatient/action obsessed! Made lots of people mad! Flouted the chain of command! Creative/quirky/peculiar/rebellious/irreverent! Masters of improv/thrive on chaos/exploit chaos! Believe that it's better to ask forgiveness after the fact than permission ahead of time. Bone honest! Flawed as the dickens! "In touch" with their followers' deepest aspirations. Damn good at what they do!*

And then – in the gentlest voice that I could muster – I raised a question. Namely, "Are those attributes on my list [and by now, a couple of years later, I've confirmed it with hundreds of other groups from all around the world] the attributes of the 'culture' of the average elementary school?" (A bad joke, eh?) "Why," I said, "are these the people that we ask our children to read about – the Newtons and Einsteins and Steinems and de Gaulles and Churchills and Roosevelts and Jeffersons and Washingtons and Adams and Picassos – and yet their 'success secrets' are anathema in the classroom?" (Incidentally, this is not just a knock on the school system. I use this same example with my corporate clients. Because traditional corporate cultures are about as far away from this as are the cultures of the schoolroom. For shame.)

Why?

Why?

Why ... I say again ... are these the traits of famous people who we point out to our kids ... worthy of emulation ... but do the pointing out in a context which tells them ... precisely ... routinely ... NOT TO DO ANY OF THIS KIND OF STUFF!?

Why?

Why?

Why?

7. Losing the War to Bismarck

I'm not making this up ...

“My wife and I went to a [kindergarten] parent-teacher conference,” writes Jordan Ayan in his brilliant book on creativity, Aha!, “and were informed that our budding refrigerator artist would be receiving a grade of Unsatisfactory in art. We were shocked. How could any child – let alone our child – receive a poor grade in art at such a young age? His teacher informed us that he had refused to color within the lines, which was a state requirement for demonstrating ‘grade level motor skills.’ ”

Aargh ...

Gordon MacKenzie spent a three-decade career in the creative department at Hallmark. Left because he felt the company was getting a bit stodgy. And wrote a brilliant book on the topic of keeping enterprises energetic: *Orbiting the Giant Hairball: A Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace*.

Wonderful!

Some of the stuff that's inside is not so wonderful. MacKenzie, following his “retirement,” spent a lot of time in the school system, coaching and commenting. At one point, he recalls a typical visit to an American elementary school at the turn of the century: “How many artists are there in the room? Would you please raise your hands. FIRST GRADE: En masse, the children leapt from their chairs, arms waving. ... Every child was an artist! SECOND GRADE: About half the kids raised their hands, shoulder high, no higher. [Their] hands were still. THIRD GRADE: At best, 10 kids out of 30 would raise a hand. Tentatively. Self-consciously. ... By the time I reached SIXTH GRADE, no more than one or two kids raised their hands, and then ever-so-slightly ... betraying a fear of being identified by the group as a ‘closet artist.’ The point is:

Every school I visited was participating in the systematic suppression of creative genius.”

Strong language. Sad language. Tragic language.

(Especially if you buy at all into the argument about tomorrow's workplace that I've made in the preceding pages.)

“The main crisis in schools today is irrelevance,” writes Dan Pink in *Free Agent Nation*. Pink's book is the best so far – and likely to be the best in a long while – chronicling the new world of work. Where we are, recall, Brand You ... virtually all of us. On our own. Aiming to forge our way in a more-chaotic-than-in-several-hundred-years-situation.

Irrelevance. The school system is irrelevant relative to these new needs. David Ogilvy says we need the odd ducks. And yet Jordan Ayan's kindergarten wunderkind, Christopher, is given a grade of Unsatisfactory in art ... for refusing to color within the lines. And the notion of an artistic bent ... at the very basis of the creation of economic value in the year 2001 ... is openly scorned in the schools that Gordon MacKenzie visited.

Amen: ***The main crisis
in schools today is
irrelevance.***

And the problem is ...

And the problems are ... Bismarck and Henry Ford. The leading lights of what has become today's education system were mesmerized, over a century ago, by the hyper-disciplined educational approach taken by the Germans under Chancellor Bismarck. Henry Ford, among (many) prominent others, admired it.

John Taylor Gatto is a different breed. A man who thinks for himself. One of those Ogilvy-ian oddballs, non-conformists, dissenters. And yet somehow or other he was named New York City Teacher of the Year three times in a row. And once named New York State Teacher of the Year. In 2001, John Taylor Gatto gave us a gift ... an amazing book ... *A Different Kind of Teacher*.

Among (many) other things, Gatto traces the history of the tragically narrow educational views which dominate America to this day, including our so-called reform movement: “Schools were designed by Horace Mann, E.L. Thorndike, and others to be instruments of the scientific management of a mass population. Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulas, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled. To a very great extent, schools succeed in doing this. But in a society that is increasingly fragmented, in which the only genuinely successful people are independent, self-reliant, confident, and individualistic, the products of school and ‘schooling’ are irrelevant.”

There we go again. That powerful word ... *irrelevant*.

“Our education system is a second-rate, factory-style organization,” writes the annoying (he gets it right!) futurist, Alvin Toffler, “pumping out obsolete information in obsolete ways. [The schools] are simply not connected to the future of the kids they’re responsible for.” Again, a damning statement.

Irrelevant. Second-rate. And don’t you dare ... color outside that box. You could end up being ... God help us ... another Bill Gates. Another John Adams. Another Alexander Hamilton.

(“It is a glory to have broken such infamous orders.” Those were the striking words of John Adams, in a communication to Congress. The occasion was his decision to ignore Congress’s orders and negotiate peace with Britain, ending the Revolutionary War, against the expressed wishes of our staunch ally, France. Hmmm. Let’s now think about Jordan Ayan’s kindergarten kid.)

I decry the problems of the school system ... because I think, as did Gordon MacKenzie quoted above, that it is a thinly disguised (Bismarckian and Fordian-driven) conspiracy to smash creativity. That bothers me. Would bother me. At any point in history. But it’s not “any point in history.” It’s an inflection point, a Special Point in History. A short period of time where we’re reinventing everything. Economics and commerce. Organizations in general. Politics. Health care. That is ... we seem to be reinventing everything ... except the school system ... which should ... in theory ... underpin the rest.

I’m sorry. I’m very emotional about this topic. **THIS PAMPHLET – IN THE SPIRIT OF ANOTHER TOM, TOM PAINE – IS WRITTEN IN A RAGE. A RAGE AGAINST THE KNOWING MALEVOLENCE OF THE DESIGNERS OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM. HOW COULD SO MANY CREDENTIALLED PEOPLE BE SO COLLECTIVELY STUPID?**

8. “Education” Needs that “White Collar Revolution”

Remember: 108 people, five days. Eight people, one day. A 98 1/2 percent reduction in blue collar manpower ... courtesy containerization ... dockside. And now the same thing ... *the very, exact same thing* ... is happening in the white collar world of ... engineering and logistics and purchasing and human resources and finance. Those that survive ... my Brand Yous! ... will be self-reliant in the best sense of the Emersonian, Franklinian way.

No, Franklin & Emerson were not the “paradigms” of the Industrial Revolution. The great philanthropist and businessman, John D. Rockefeller, was interested in education. Created the

General Education Board. And this was the goal of those “educators,” circa 1906: *“In our dreams people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands. ... The task is simple. We will organize children and teach them in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way.”*

There’s only one response to that: **Good God!**

(And is the school reform movement ... focused on standardization and certification and constant testing and filling in the blanks and teaching to test ... circa 2001 ... any damn better than J.D. Rockefeller’s “vision” of “perfect docility”? Fact is, I don’t think so. I think it’s worse. Maybe there was some justification in Rockefeller’s time, as we left the farms, went to the factories, and became “cyphers” in Henry Ford’s ... and Rockefeller’s ... schemes. But it doesn’t work ... doesn’t work at all ... is hopelessly counterproductive ... as well as sickening ... in the world of Microsoft’s Bill Gates and Apple’s Steve Jobs and Oracle’s Larry Ellison and Celera Genomics’ Craig Venter, the entrepreneurs and pioneers who are reinventing the world.)

I wish I could find the citation, but I can’t. It was a report from the Manhattan Institute, perhaps a dozen years ago. It observed, as I recall, that the New York City schools’ bureaucracy included a superstructure of about 6,000 people. The New York City parochial schools’ “bureaucracy” ... educating one quarter as many students as the public school bureaucracy ... *and really educating them* ... was overseen by a “hierarchy” “bureaucracy” “superstructure” ... of 25. Assuming I’ve got the numbers right, and I’m pretty damn certain I do, you’ll find that the administrators per student ratio in the public school system ran about 60 times greater – *sixty times!* – than that in the parochial school system. In 1990, *Education Update* reported that Milwaukee was spending \$6,951 per student on public education. “Central administration” absorbed \$3,481 of those dollars. And after you factored out the local administrative component, all of \$1,647 per student went into “instruction.”

How sick. How pathetic. (The “white collar revolution” needs to start in the school “system,” eh?)

9. An Unnatural Way to “Learn”

It’s wrong. Dead wrong. Backwards. Exactly backwards. Preposterously backwards. And we know it. We know how to do “it.” Know how to educate kids. And for over 100 years we’ve been doing it wrong. Perversely so. By design. And now we have yet another ... one of ever so many ... “school reform movements” ... doing it ... purposefully ... wrong ... all wrong ... again.

“The time bomb in every classroom,” writes education thought leader Frank Smith in Insult to Intelligence, “is that students learn exactly what they are taught.” “What [standardized tests] actually measure,” writes John Taylor Gatto in *A Different Kind of Teacher*, “is the tractability of the student, and this they do quite accurately. Is it a value to know who is docile and who is not? You tell me.” Gatto continues:

“School teachers aren’t allowed to do what they think best for each student. Harnessed to a collectivized regimen, they soon give up thinking seriously about students as one-of-a-kind individuals, regardless of what they may wish were true.”

Smith is right. Gatto is right. They’ve pegged it. And everything we’re doing to “make ‘it’ better” ... in 2001 ... is only making it worse.

It’s awful. Pathetic. The more I think about it the more I want to ... SCREAM. “The best evidence that our schools are set up to ‘school’ and not be useful educationally lies in the look of the rooms where we confine kids,” writes Mr. Gatto (remember, New York City Teacher of the Year ... three times running). *“Rooms with no clocks or mirrors, no telephones, no fax machines, no stamps, no envelopes, no maps, no directories, no private space in which to think, no conference tables on which to confer. Rooms in which there isn’t any real way to contact the outside world where life is going on.”*

The school system ... that is ... is purposefully abnormal. “Every time I pass a jailhouse or a school,” wrote the prickly *Newsday* columnist Jimmy Breslin in July 2001, “I feel sorry for the people inside.” (Breslin – July 11, 2001 – critiquing “summer school” in New York. His basic argument ... irrefutable, no? ... “If they haven’t learned in the winter, what are they going to remember from days when they should be swimming?”) (Way to go ... as usual ... Brother Jimmy.)

“It is absurd and anti-life to be compelled to sit in confinement with people of exactly the same age and social class,” writes John Taylor Gatto, as usual ... exactly on the mark. “This ... cuts children off from the immense diversity of life and the synergy of variety. ... It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong every day of your natural youth in an institution that allows you no privacy. ... In centuries past, children and adolescents would spend their time in real work, real charity, real adventures, and in the search for mentors who might teach them what they really wanted to learn.”

I’ll say more later ... though I happen to agree with damn near every semi-colon and comma that Mr. Gatto has written. Incidentally (not so incidentally), there is nothing “lightweight” about this. It’s not “do your own thing.” It’s ... instead ... *become purposeful ... pursue your dreams ... do the stuff that makes a difference to you.* (Thank you, thank you, thank you ... John Taylor Gatto.)

*(I was supposed to be on vacation. It was summer. On Martha’s Vineyard. 2001. And then I read John Taylor Gatto. And Ted Sizer. And Frank Smith. And George Leonard. And a dozen others. And I became itchy. Antsy. Not nice to be around. I became angry. Furious. Furious that we knew how to educate kids. And that we don’t do it. Perversely. The school system stinks. It’s a conspiracy. It’s an anti-education conspiracy. At exactly the wrong moment. I’m on a rant. I’m on a tear. I’m annoying people at cocktail parties and dinner parties. Damn near terrifying people who I collar on the street. I kind of knew it. I’d read it a little bit before. But it’s all come home to roost in these last few weeks. I’m so damn ... !!XXX###*** ... mad that I can’t see straight. How could we be so stupid? About such an important subject? So ... bloody ... damn ... stupid!?)*

Let's look at what "they" say. "They" ... those who "get it." Frank Smith, *Insult to Intelligence*: "I discovered the brutally simple motivation behind the development and imposition of all systematic instructional programs and tests – a lack of trust that teachers can teach and that children can learn."

(Amen.)

"It is an inescapable reality," writes Coalition of Essential Schools creator Ted Sizer, "that students learn at different rates in different ways. That creates the need for a schedule of sensitivity that only the teachers close to the students can devise – not some theory-driven, central-office, computer-managed schedule."

One more time ... John Taylor Gatto in ... *A Different Kind of Teacher*. Schools, he says, create "Kafka-like rituals": "enforce sensory deprivation on classes of children held in featureless rooms ... sort children into rigid categories by the use of fantastic measures like age-grading, or standardized test scores ... train children to drop whatever they are occupied with and to move as a body from room to room at the sound of a bell, buzzer, horn or klaxon ... keep children under constant surveillance, depriving them of private time and space ... assign children numbers constantly, feigning the ability to discriminate qualities quantitatively ... insist that every moment of time be filled with low-level abstractions ... forbid children their own discoveries, pretending to possess some vital secret which children must surrender their active learning time to acquire."

**PLEASE DO ME ONE-AND-ONLY-ONE FAVOR:
REREAD THE PRIOR PARAGRAPH. ALOUD. TO
THE FIRST PERSON YOU CORNER TODAY.** (This is important.)

More Gatto: "[One factor contributing to widespread teacher dissatisfaction] is the extremely shallow nature of intellectual enterprise in schools. Ideas are broken into fragments called 'subjects,' subjects into 'units,' units into 'sequences,' sequences into 'lessons,' lessons into 'homework,' and all these pre-fabricated pieces make a classroom teacherproof."

(Oh Lord. Save me. But nothing ... nothing ... will Save the Children.)

The logic is clear. Frightening. Coalition of Essential Schools' Ted Sizer captures it ... frighteningly ... and I use that word ... frighteningly ... with care: "*If we spend more than a day on the Bill of Rights, we can't get to Grover Cleveland by Valentine's Day.*"

Oh Lord, save me. But He won't. (Neither will George Bush, president 41. Nor Bill Clinton, president 42. Nor George Bush-the-Younger, president 43.) (Oh, Lord, Save Me.)

"We interrupt classes with public address system announcements," Ted Sizer continues, "utterly forgetting that Hamlet's soliloquy may lose something from the interjection of information about where the cheerleaders should meet after school." More Sizer: "We parade adolescents in groups before teachers for snippets of time. Any one teacher will usually see more than 100 students,

and often more than 160 in a day. Such a system denies teachers the chance to know many students well ... to know how a particular student's mind works."

Frank Smith, more from *Insult to Intelligence*, consistent withSizer (et al.) (et al.) (et al.): "The myth is that learning can be guaranteed if instruction is delivered systematically, one small piece at a time, with frequent tests to ensure that students and teachers stay on task."

We get it wrong. All wrong. Backwards. Completely backwards. Tragically ... perversely ... backwards. "A substantial amount of testimony exists from highly regarded scientists," writes John Taylor Gatto in *A Different Kind of Teacher*, "like [Nobel Laureate] Richard Feynman, "scientific discovery is negatively related to the procedures of school science classes." In *The Unschooled Mind*, Harvard education professor Howard Gardner adds to that theme. He reflects upon studies from MIT and Johns Hopkins University: "Students who receive honor grades in college-level physics courses are frequently unable to solve basic problems encountered in a form slightly different from that on which they have been formally instructed and tested."

PLEASE REREAD THAT ONE, TOO.

Oh, God. (Help us.)

Novelist David Lodge wrote a marvelous book called *Thinks ...*. At one point he provides an exchange between a renowned scientist ("Messenger") and an English professor, "Helen." It goes like this:

Messenger: "The mind is a machine, but a *virtual* machine. A system of systems."

Helen: "Perhaps it isn't a system at all."

Messenger: "Oh, but it is. If you're a scientist, you have to start with that assumption."

Helen: "I suspect that's why I dropped science at school as soon as they let me."

Messenger: "*No, you dropped it, I would guess, because it was doled out to you in spoonfuls of distilled boredom.*"

Makes you weep. Eh? Makes *me* weep.

10. Higgins Knew!

Andrew Higgins won the war. Well, that's a gross exaggeration, but he played a part. A big part. And his secret to success ... staying as far away as he could from "education" ... and from Engineering Graduates.

Stephen Ambrose reports in *Fast Company*: "Andrew Higgins, who built landing craft in World War II, refused to hire graduates of engineering schools. ... *He believed that they only teach you what you can't do in engineering school.* ... He started off with 20 employees. By the middle of

the war, he had 30,000 working for him. He turned out 20,000 landing craft. Dwight D. Eisenhower told me, ‘Andrew Higgins won the war for us. He did it without engineers.’ ”

I gave a speech to an incredibly sophisticated company whose product was systems engineering. They worked with the most complex systems in defense departments around the world. The Big Boss, with 6,000 underlings, said that he’d discovered a secret, quite a while ago, about the most effective project managers: “I hired the AV (audio visual) guys. Not the ones with degrees. The ones who knew how to use duct tape. The ones who knew how to fix things on the fly, when it mattered, when the chips were down. The ‘formal education’ test was useless. The ‘do-it-on-the-fly, without raising a bead of sweat test’ was all-important.”

Love that.

So why have I included this short section? I’ve included it because it gets to the ... ABSOLUTE HEART ... of “education.” Education is not about remembering all the kings and queens and princes and princesses of England. Or the emperors of China. Education is about the ability to learn-on-the-fly. And *appetite* (PERHAPS MY FAVORITE WORD) for “picking stuff up on the fly.” That’s “education.” That’s “learning.” And that ... I contend ... is what leads to NOBEL LAUREATES, anointment thereof ... as well as Excellence in Systems Project Management.

11. Doing Stuff that Matters

I am at my house in Martha’s Vineyard as I write this. It is the 17th of July 2001. Five days ago ... to be precise, as I mentioned in the Preface, my wife and I added a “child” to our family. Our human kids are ages 16 and 19. The rest of our family is dogs. Hummer ... age five. Rosie ... age eight. And now ... Wally ... age 10 weeks. I have seldom had so much fun as watching Wally. Watching Wally ... “educate himself.” Watching Wally ... “learn.” The way that God’s creatures (and I’m not religious ... so you’re welcome to do a lower case “g” on the God) learn their way around is ... amazing ... *IF YOU OPEN YOUR EYES*. Wally has found his way to the front door. Wally has learned how to deal with Hummer, his fellow Australian Shepherd, who is willing to accept him ... and Rosie, the Border Collie, who is not willing to accept him at all. He learns. He learns by the minute. (*He learns by the second.*) He learns. And learns. And learns. It’s all-important to him. *Damned important to him*. His “survival” in “the family” depends on his capacity to “learn” ... posthaste.

Learning isn’t difficult. Wrong. Learning *is* difficult. But learning is natural. Learning is as normal as hell. Learning is easy. For my Australian Shepherd ... Wally. And for your George. Or Jane. Learning is “what we do.” We do it ... at seven. We do it ... at 77. The only people who have made learning hard are ... “the teachers” ... “the school system.”

Oh, God. I’m so pissed off. So ... so ... so ... pissed off. So incredibly annoyed that we have made “learning” and “education” so damn, bloody difficult. So “rote-ish.” So divorced from ... “need to know-learn.”

I love George Leonard. (Read his stuff. Please.) Well, don't read it all, unless you want to. But at least do read George Leonard's *Education and Ecstasy*. A book from over 30 years ago. 1968.

“Education,” Leonard writes, “at best, is **ecstatic**. At its best, its most unfettered, the moment of learning is a moment of

delight. This essential and obvious truth is demonstrated for us every day by the baby and the preschool child. [And, per Tom Peters: the 10-week-old Australian Shepherd.] When joy is absent, the effectiveness of the learning process falls and falls until the human being is operating hesitantly, grudgingly, fearfully.”

Oh, dear.

Oh, My God.

I'm 58. I just finished reading every-damn-single-word of David McCullough's best selling work, *John Adams*. I loved it. Loved it because my education in history is not what it ought to be.

I love learning.

I love learning. I love, love, love, love, love, learning. I think my mother taught it to me. If so (and I'm pretty sure it is so) ... God bless you, Evelyn Snow Peters. I love to learn. I love new stuff.

And what I've learned ... and am learning ... is that I'm not as “weird” “cool” as I thought ...

Everybody ... **loves learning.**

Gets ... *excited* ... about learning. My little dog, 10 weeks old, Wally ... gets ... *excited* ... about picking up new skills. (And so do I ... age 58. I read the McCullough book. And that led me to a couple of Jeffersonian books. Which led me to a couple of, God knows why, Rooseveltian books. Whatever ... *I LOVE TO LEARN.*)

Back to George Leonard: *EDUCATION, AT BEST, IS ECSTATIC.*

“Children learn what makes sense to them,” writes

Frank Smith in *Insult to Intelligence*. “They learn through the sense of things they want to understand.” (If it’s important ... I’ll learn it. If it’s not ... I won’t. WHAT’S SO SURPRISING ABOUT THAT?) Smith goes on to say that young children ... *on the make* ... attempting to learn new stuff ... like my New Dog Wally ... are ...

“informavores” who ... “eat up new knowledge.”

Oh. I love that. Love it. Love the idea. Informavores. Eat up New Knowledge.

Oh, bless you, Mr. Smith.

Informavores.

Eat up New Knowledge.

I’ve learned it. I’m 58. I’m new to this. New to this school thing. It’s the biggest secret of all. We do not ... ever ... need to teach children how to ... learn. Children know how to learn. It’s in the genes.

I remember again the interview with the football coach from Notre Dame whose wonderful response to “How do you motivate your players?” was something like “I don’t ‘motivate’ my players. What I work like hell to do is ... not ... de-motivate them. They come with ‘motivation.’ It’s just that I try like the dickens not to turn them off.”

I probably butchered the quote. But I haven’t butchered the idea. The man is right. My dog ... Wally ... is motivated-as-hell ... to learn ... at an incredible speed. And so is the five-year-old.

And so is the 78-year-old. What we have to work like hell to do ... is not to ... de-motivate people ... from learning. (And what do our schools do: *DE-MOTIVATE PEOPLE.*) (OUR SCHOOLS, I HAVE SADLY CONCLUDED, H-A-T-E “Learning.”)

I’m new to this game. But I’m hardly the first. Howard Gardner, in *The Unschooled Mind*, says, “During the first years of life, youngsters all over the world master a breathtaking array of competences with little formal tutelage.” (Amen.) My friend (I’ve never met him), John Taylor Gatto, goes in the same direction: “Schooling takes place in an environment controlled by others. True ‘education’ describes efforts largely self-initiated for the purpose of taking charge of your life wisely and living in a world you understand. The ‘educated state’ is a complex tapestry woven of broad experience, grueling commitments and substantial risk taking.”

“We underrate our brains and our intelligence,” writes Frank Smith in *Insult to Intelligence*. “Formal education has become such a complicated, self-conscious, and over-regulated activity that learning is widely regarded as something difficult that the brain would rather not do. ... Such a belief is probably well-founded if the teachers are referring to their efforts to keep the children moving through the instructional sequences that are prescribed as ‘learning activities’ in schools.

**... We are all capable
of huge and
unsuspected learning
accomplishments
without effort.”**

“Each of us,” Gatto continues,

“has a design problem to solve: *to create from the raw material around us the curriculum for a good life. It isn’t easy and it isn’t the same for any two people.*”

I’m naïve. I’m not “one of them.” I’m not a “professional” teacher. But all of this seems ... so bloody obvious ... to me. Take the words of Mary Foley, a home schooling mother of four, from Cape Cod: “*If we are not free to educate our children, our liberty is an illusion. I do not have a ‘curriculum.’ The state does not have the power to standardize children. My method has been successful enough to produce a daughter who is a member of the National Honor Society and twin sons who ... tested in the top one percent on a national placement test for two consecutive years. The priorities of our ‘curriculum’ are daydreaming, natural and social sciences, self-discipline, respect of self and others, and making mistakes.*”

Could there be a better educational “curriculum”?

Learning. Learning happens when “it” ... “matters.” “I want to give you a yardstick,” writes John Taylor Gatto in *A Different Kind of Teacher*, “a gold standard, by which to measure good schooling. *The Shelter Institute* in Bath, Maine ... will teach you how to build a three thousand square-foot multi-level Cape Cod home in three weeks’ time, whatever your age. If you stay another week, it will show you how to make your own posts and beams; you’ll actually cut them out and set them up. You’ll learn wiring, plumbing, insulation, the works. *Twenty thousand people have learned to build a house there for about the cost of one month’s tuition in public school.*”

Learning. Learning happens. Learning happens fast. Insanely fast. It happens insanely fast ... WHEN IT MATTERS.

“Learning,” says Frank Smith in *Insult to Intelligence*, “is never divorced from feelings.”

Amen.

Smith goes on to provide us with what he labels “The Learners’ Manifesto”:

The brain is always learning.
Learning does not require coercion.
Learning must be meaningful.
Learning is incidental.
Learning is collaborative.
The consequences of worthwhile learning are obvious.
Learning always involves feelings.
Learning must be free of risk.

Learning. Education. It’s so damn simple. We learn ... like hell ... when we want to learn. And don’t learn a damn thing ... despite the “consequences” ... if it isn’t interesting ... and exciting ... and ... *RELEVANT*.

(I have the God-given gift of a terrific memory. The most trivial business statistics stick like super glue. But I’m always at least as amazed at the stuff I can’t remember. The fact is, if it ain’t salient, it doesn’t stick. If it is, it does.)

“From the first grade to the twelfth,” says writer and critic Walter Karp, “from one coast to the other, instruction in America’s classrooms is almost entirely dogmatic. Answers are ‘right’ and answers are ‘wrong,’ but mostly answers are short.”

And thence not relevant.

Tragic.

In *Insult to Intelligence*, author Frank Smith quotes Richard Paul, Director of the Center for Critical Thinking. “We need to shift the focus of learning,” says Dr. Paul, “from simply teaching students to have the ‘right answer’ to teaching them the process by which educated people pursue right answers.” As James Coleman put it, back in 1974, “We need to develop in youth the capabilities for engaging in intense concentrated involvement in an activity.”

Stop.

Re-read what James Coleman said: “... ***capabilities for engaging intense concentrated involvement in an activity.***” That’s how you become a chess champion. A medalist sprinter. That’s how you become a great operatic performer. Or a prima ballerina. Or a great heart surgeon. Or ... whatever. “Capabilities for engaging in intense concentrated involvement in an activity.”

How much I love that. *HOW MUCH THAT IS AT ODDS ... TOTALLY AND PERVERSELY AT ODDS ... WITH THE “EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE” AS IT IS PRESENTED TODAY.*

(Right?)

Engagement.

Period.

“While not every child will develop interests as fascinating as Darwin’s,” write Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Barbara Schneider, in their extraordinary book, *Becoming Adult*, “without the enthusiasm that leads to intense, concentrated activity, a child will likely lack the perseverance ... needed to face the future successfully. We may not know what jobs will be available to young people ten years from now. But to the extent that teenagers have had experiences that demand discipline, require skillful use of mind and body, and give them a sense of responsibility and involvement with useful goals, we might expect the youth of today to be ready to face the challenges of tomorrow.”

I hang on every word! Every word in that quote rings true. (That’s why I expended the first 50 percent of this paper on new contextual requirements for career survival.) Look again:

But to the extent that teenagers have had experiences that demand discipline, require the

*skillful use of mind and body,
and give them a sense of
responsibility and involvement
with useful goals, we might
expect the youth of today to be
ready to face the challenges of
tomorrow.*

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider go on: “Growing up to be a happy adult gets more difficult as occupational roles become more and more vague and ephemeral. Young people can no longer count on a predictable future and cannot expect that a set of skills learned in school will be sufficient to ensure a comfortable career. *For this reason, we need to take a long look at the conditions that prepare youth for a changing, uncertain future.*”

It is the ability to learn. The enthusiasm to develop an enthusiasm. Call it what you will. It is the essence of education. Truth be known, always has been. Truth be known ... perhaps wasn't ... in the ... in retrospect ... VERY SHORT ERA ... dominated by the Rockefellers and the Fords ... and the Bismarcks ... and Big Companies ... and jobs-for-life.

Harvard education professor Howard Gardner talks about the importance of “apprenticeships and projects.” Love both of those words! **Apprenticeship. Project.** That's what (real) life (especially in the new economy) is all about. Whether it's an aspiration to go to the Olympics. Or to be elected to the local school board. Or to do an extraordinary thing with the IS project which confronts us in the Finance Department ... in the XYZ Division of the ABC Corporation. *Apprenticeships. Learning opportunities. Projects. Punctuation marks that define what we have learned ... and how we applied it ... to something we care about ... care about a lot ... and that will Mark Us ... will form the Essence of ... Brand You.*

Learning to learn. Roger Schank, in *The Connoisseur's Guide to the Mind*, says, “Actual content may not be the issue at all, since we are really trying to impart the idea that one can deal with new areas of knowledge if one knows how to learn, how to find out about what is known, and

how to abandon old ideas when they are worn out. ***This means teaching ways of developing good questions rather than memorizing known answers, an idea that traditional school systems simply don't cotton to at all, and that traditional testing methods are unprepared to handle.***

John Taylor Gatto called his a Lab School. One of the chapters in his marvelous book, *A Different Kind of Teacher*, is written by a former student, 13-year old Jamaal Watson. Mr. Watson describes life in Gatto's "school." There were five big ideas. (1) Independent study. A day out of the school building, chasing "one big idea." (2) An apprenticeship. To somebody. Somewhere. (3) Community service. One day a week. (4) Teaming up with parents, yours or somebody else's, for what Gatto calls the Family Teamwork Curriculum. And (5), a little dose of classwork.

My friend and perhaps America's most brilliant educator (along with Gatto), Dennis Littky, has done "it" a half dozen times in his career. Now he's doing "it" in Providence, Rhode Island, with something called the Met School. The two insider terms that define it are ... EBI ...

Education by Interest

... and LBI ...

Learning by Internship.

Littky and friends have done this most recent thing, the Providence thing, in what was an inner city school. Their first graduates rolled out the end of their internship programs just a year ago. While their test scores, given the learning deficit with which they started, did not turn the world

upside-down, there was a much better measure: ***100 percent***
of the kids were accepted to college. They worked, while at The Met, on projects. They described

and reported on those projects to their peers and various demanding outsiders. They were evaluated on the basis of their projects. Their projects were based on internships that they had acquired themselves. “When they tell the stories of their projects,” Littky says, “they are irresistible to [college] admissions officers!” And, indeed, they were.

Love that. LBI. Learning By Internship. EBI. Education By Interest. (Which Littky’s folks dismissively contrast to EBF ... “Education By Fiat.”) “If we are to configure an education ... for the world of tomorrow,” writes Harvard education professor Howard Gardner, “we need to take the lessons of the museum and the relationship of the apprenticeship extremely seriously ... to think of the ways in which the strengths of a museum atmosphere, of apprenticeship learning, and of engaging projects can pervade all education environments.”

Why not?

What else?

Internships.

Apprenticeships.

Projects.

That is ... after all ... life. Especially, life in these new, extraordinary days.
(Recall: All New Work = Project Work. The “software” will do the rest.)

(Addenda: The Met is not for the faint of heart. Projects and self-developed apprenticeships are demanding. As are the frequent reports thereon. I’ve had the privilege of spending a bit of time with Littky’s kids. They are engaged and articulate and self-assured in ways I’m unused to seeing in the classroom.)

Professor Gardner has offered us much more than this. Perhaps his grandest claim to fame is the development of M.I. That is, Multiple Intelligences. His three decades of meticulous research have led to his claim that there are at least seven discernible, different, and equally important varieties of intelligence: *linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, inter-personal, and intra-personal*. What’s especially important about this characterization is that the school system ... yet another one of its major warts ... has focused on one, perhaps two at the most, of these seven: Linguistic and logical-mathematical rule the roost. The others ... spatial, musical, etc. ... have been second string. (Second string, that is, until you “graduate” from school and actually go out and attempt to conquer the world. At which point the other five ... led by inter-personal and intra-personal, in the world of business, for example ... Rule the Real Roost.)

We get it wrong. We get it so wrong. We get it so pathetically wrong. We get it backwards. We get it ass-backwards. It’s pathetic, stupid, dumb. WHY MUST BISMARCK RULE THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE YEAR 2001? THAT’S MY QUESTION.

I love the book. Christopher Phillips. *Socrates Café*. **“Questions. Questions. Questions. They disturb. They provoke. They exhilarate. They intimidate.** They make you feel a little bit like you’ve at least temporarily lost your marbles. So much so that at times I’m positive that the ground is shaking and shifting under our feet. *Welcome to Socrates Café.*” Phillips’ book is not a book about school. Or rather it is about *real* school: life. About exploration. About learning. About learning forever. Which is all about ... that thing which is, alas, anathema in the schoolroom ... *QUESTIONS!*

(Socrates Café is a gathering, now a collection of gatherings, around the United States, where people get together, following the rules of Socratic dialogue, to examine the trivial and the mundane, with extraordinary learning and growth experiences the outcome for many of the participants.)

I wrote about leadership a while back. I’d been writing about it, truth be known, for over 20 years. And then it came to me. Something that bordered on an “epiphany.” That is: Leadership is about *love! Love: Passion. Enthusiasm. Appetite for life. Engagement. Commitment. Great causes and a determination to make a damn difference. Shared adventures. Bizarre failures. Growth. Insatiable appetite for change.* Or ... in the words of Christopher Phillips, I suppose ... questions & questions & questions & more questions. A learning experience ... an adventure ... and a journey. Nothing that you can “get right.” Fill-in-the-blanks it ain’t.

My friend, the management guru Karl Weick, says, in a related vein, that the most important thing a leader can say in these turbulent times is:

“I don’t know.”

“I don’t know” is the ultimate license to one’s followers to explore ... ask open-ended questions ... create novel frameworks for viewing the world ... take risks ... and figure it out for themselves.

Alas (as usual), the classroom rarely works that way. Teachers are seen as “experts” who “have the answers,” and want the students to mimic those answers. Posthaste.

Frederick Taylor. Damn his eyes. The man who gave us the “one best way” of doing things. For a world where there was, perhaps, one best way of swinging a pick at a coal face. But it’s been a long journey from the coal pits of Pennsylvania to the project studios in Redmond, Washington, where Bill Gates’s programmers and designers try to invent a new best way for today, to be superseded by dawn tomorrow. Yet, Mr. Taylor still rules the “modern” classroom, with, of course Chancellor Bismarck nodding stern approval in the background.

Gary Hamel is arguably our leading business strategist. He used to write about “only the hard stuff” ... doing strategy By The Numbers. Worked moderately well in a static world, where the same two friendly oligopolists ruled a particular marketplace. But statics are yesterday. Today, it’s dynamics, for sure. And many an oligopolist, even IBM and AT&T and Sears, have had their eyes blackened by upstarts such as Microsoft, MCI, and Wal*Mart. The all-new-for-the-Millennium Mr. Hamel now says success ... in an uncertain ... chaotic ... ambiguous world is all about ... “creating a cause, not a business.” Businesses that make their mark are on missions to “dent the universe,” in the inspiring and challenging words of Apple and Pixar chief Steve Jobs. What is it that launches you toward a Nobel Prize? I think it’s captured, almost perfectly and certainly very succinctly, by the renowned conductor of the Boston Philharmonic (and one of today’s leading management gurus), Ben Zander. “I am,” Zander declares, “a dispenser of enthusiasm.”

Ah, enthusiast inducing enthusiasts to aim to dent the universe. It’s the nature of the great new computer or great symphonic performance, or the special chemistry of the team that makes it to the Super Bowl or discovers the Double Helix.

Amen.

And what does this have to do with classroom education ... today? Absolutely, positively nothing. And therein lies the problem.

12. Naïve Tom’s EDU3: Manifesto for Education in the 3rd Millennium

I am not an expert. This is not the rant of an expert. This is the rant of a concerned citizen. Of a business analyst. Of someone who is looking as intensely as I can at the new world of enterprise. At the new world of careers. And yet education is all wrapped up in that. (Obviously.) (Not so obviously, if you look at the Misguided Goals of the Education Reform Movement ... as it is misleadingly called.)

What follows is mine. My Manifesto. These are the things, in the last several years, and particularly recently as my study has intensified, that I’ve learned. It goes like this.

1. ***Learning is a normal state.*** Learning is what we humans do. Learning is normal. Learning is normal for my new puppy, age 10 weeks. Learning is normal for the 10-week-old kid. (Understatement.) Learning is normal at 58. (For me.) And learning is normal at 92. (For my mom, who’s that age.)
2. ***Children are learnavores.*** It’s not just that learning is “normal.” Children are learning machines. Their appetite for learning new stuff that matters is insatiable.

3. ***Prodigious feats of learning are common as dirt.*** You don't think learning is normal? That the appetite for it is insatiable? Well, you've got a point ... if you're considering the classroom. But it's normal as hell ... starting at 2:45 p.m. ... on the football field. At band practice. Look at that 16-year-old junior quarterback. Has a tough time staying awake during English class. But can learn 37 plays ... in an hour and a half ... when he hits the football practice field. (Why? It matters. It's salient. He's engaged.)
4. ***We learn at different rates.*** Learning is idiosyncratic. Learning for Tom Peters is not the same as learning for Joe Smith. Age 58. Age 28. Age 28 months. Age eight months. Age eight weeks. Sadly, the school systems don't get that. Aren't designed for it. Ignore it. Dismiss it. Dismiss those that don't "learn at the same rate" as everybody else. (Pathetic.)
5. ***We learn in different ways.*** It's in part M.I. ... Multiple Intelligences, per Howard Gardner. And a lot more. All of the cognitive research says that different people learn in different ways. Boys learn in different ways than girls. Some people learn pictorially. Some people learn abstractly. Whatever. However. Again ... *the* problem ... is the school system doesn't buy this act. (Pathetic.)
6. ***Boys and girls learn [very] differently.*** We put people of the same age together, the same sex together. We assume that a seven-year-old is a seven-year-old is a seven-year-old. Male or female. Fact: Girls and boys learn in dramatically different ways. The evidence is there. It's extensive. Why in the hell doesn't the school system pay any attention ... whatsoever ... to it? (Pathetic.)
7. ***In a class of 25, there are 25 different learning trajectories, or journeys-in-progress.*** The great teachers get it. The teachers that "play it by the book" don't get it at all. We talked about it before. Each kid – just as each football player on the National Football League franchise team – is a totally unique case ... proceeding from a different place to a different place at a different pace.
8. ***Learning in 40-minute blocks is bullshit.*** That's the right word: bullshit. You don't learn in 40-minute blocks. Period. The research is clear. Common sense is clear. Every damned idiot understands it. Except for the idiots who run the school system. (Pathetic.)
9. ***"Learning" for tests is the ultimate oxymoron.*** You don't "learn for tests" in the "real world." You acquire new skills. You practice those skills, perhaps in simulations with peers in training sessions. Then you try the new thing out in the real world. The real world. You screw up. You adjust. You screw up again. You adjust a little bit more. (Footballers have an elaborate language for all this. First, they look at diagrams. Then they walk through a new play, without pads. Then they simulate, with the defense, say, playing easy. Then they run at full speed with pads. Often, in the game itself, they'll try something new in a low risk setting, perhaps when they're well ahead or behind.) And fill-in-the-blanks-tests? Totally, utterly, completely abnormal, nothing to do with the real world. At all.

10. ***There are numerous rigorous evaluation schemes, of which standardized testing is but one – and abnormal, by “real world” standards.*** I’m a performance fanatic. I’m an accountability fanatic. Don’t get me wrong. I’m no softie. No softie in my business practices. No softie in my life. I demand ... performance. From myself. From others. And I demand that I and others learn new stuff, all the time. And use that new stuff. Which doesn’t mean that I demand “test-taking performance.” Which is only one variety of evaluative performance ... and virtually irrelevant. In the real world. In Dennis Littky’s world ... LBI ... Learning By Internship ... the accountability is sky-high ... higher than I’ve ever seen it before. Accountability? Damn right. According to the Rule of SAT tests? Not hardly. (But, boy, can his kids ever explain what they’ve been up to and why and what they’ve learned!)
11. ***We learn most/fastest/most completely when we are passionate about what we are learning and it matters to us.*** Salience rules! We learn when it matters. Watch a two-month-old. A two-year-old. A three-year-old. A ten-week-old dog. They learn like hell. Because it’s important. It’s important to find the food. It’s important to find the front door. When it’s “important” and we care ... we learn like maniacs. *Without formal instruction, 98% of the time.* When we are forced to sit at a desk ... psychologically chained to the desk ... in a jailhouse called school ... having facts forced down our throats “because we have to cover it this week” ... in 40-minute intervals ... we don’t learn shit. No surprise. It’s not salient. It’s literally inhuman.
12. ***Think EBI/LBI.*** Education by Interest! Learning by Internship! These approaches are all about salience. EBI/LBI is all about stuff that’s important ... all about passion ... all about things we care about. We learn when we care ... when we’re passionate ... when it matters ... when it makes a difference ... when it contributes. That’s the story. The whole story. (And wouldn’t it be lovely if the “certified educational reformers” got it?)
13. ***Classrooms are abnormal places*** (unless you dream of a career as a prison guard). Need more be said? They have nothing ... whatsoever ... to do with the real world. Nothing to do with the real world at the age of two months, at the age of 72 years. Classrooms are stupid. Classrooms stunt learning. Millions never recover from the experience!
14. ***We need changes of pace.*** The Japanese school system stinks. Too much rote. But they do get some things right. Japanese kids have recesses ... after every class period. That makes sense. Hell, given our concern about kids tripping on a blade of grass, we often don’t have recesses at all these days. The lawyers rule. Education takes the hindmost. It is not normal ... for a growing child (especially boys – it’s a genetic thing) ... to be strapped into a chair ... for six or seven hours a day. Recesses after every period! Amen!
15. ***International test scores are not correlated with hours-per-year-in-class.*** The Swedes score among the highest in nearly every educational test score comparison. Their kids don’t start school until age seven. They don’t spend very many hours in

school. And they do extremely well. And yet we are convinced ... that if we lengthen the school day ... lengthen the school year ... all will be well ... and we'll catch up with the Koreans & Swedes & God knows whoever else. Some authors write one book in their lifetime. They make a huge difference. Some write 35. They make a huge difference. Some write one and make no difference. Some write 35 and make no difference. Who knows? What we do know is that hours-in-the-classroom-per-year is indicative of ... not-one-damn-thing.

16. ***Big classes are slightly problematic. Big schools suck.*** Some teachers can't handle seven kids. Some teachers can handle 27. Some can handle 37. (One of my best friends, a renowned university professor at Ohio State University, can handle 500 kids. Brilliantly. While others can't handle four.) There is something to say about size. But it doesn't apply to the *class* size in particular. It does apply to the *school* size. Small schools – of around 100 students – are “intimate communities” ... that's what research study after research study after research study shows. Giant schools are impersonal. And then the problems begin. Discipline problems. Attendance problems. Etc. Message: Class size is secondary. School size is primary.
17. ***“All this” – the rare right stuff – fits the NWW/New World of Work, hand-in-glove.*** The NWW (New World of Work) supports an Age of Creativity. (Microsoft world, if you will.) I've said that repeatedly in this paper – and all over the world, for years. The good stuff – EBI/Education By Interest, LBI/Learning By Internship – fits this new world order to a T. The “normal” way of doing things – “reformers” way of doing things – fits the “OWW/Old World of Work” to a T. (Pathetic.)
18. ***U.S. schools circa 2001 are a vestige of the Prussian/Fordist model – more interested in shaping behavior than stoking the fires of life-long learning.*** The school system stinks. Bismarck would have loved it. Henry Ford would have loved it. It's based on principles that were in vogue 120 years ago. And outdated at least 50 years ago. And yet the entire “school reform movement” is based on more ... and more ... and more ... of the Prussian-Fordist principles. Something's wrong here. What is it? Every-damn-thing!
19. ***Cutting art/music budgets is nuts.*** Steve Jobs is my favorite person in Silicon Valley. One of his secrets to success is loading up his development teams with artists and historians and musicians and dramatists. He says he wants to bring to bear, on each project, the best of human cultural accomplishment. Go, Steve. How come the schools don't get it? Budget crunch? First things to be cut? Art. Music. I say the hell with the math budget. (I don't really mean that.) But let's enhance the art budget. Let's enhance the music budget. Let's pay far more & reverent attention to those things which are ... indeed ... the highest forms of human creative accomplishment. It's important, in general. It's important, in particular, in an ... Age of Creativity. Right? So why don't we do it? Our response: just the opposite. (Pathetic.)

20. ***Learning is a matter of intensity of engagement, not elapsed time.*** The administratively derived plan is clear: Eleven minutes on the First Battle of Bull Run! Another seven minutes on Vicksburg! And nine on Gettysburg! Good God.

Could we be this stupid? Answer: **Yes!** What in the hell goes

through these people's heads? May they all be damned to an eternity of 11-minute-subject-matter attention spans. I'm interested in the 15 years following the U.S. Revolutionary War. I've probably read 35 books on the topic. Well, not true. Probably 75 books. I still don't know half, or a tenth, of what I want to know. I'm still a beginner. I'm still a novice. But I'm working ... like hell ... on that little 15-year period. That's what "learning" ... Real Self-motivated Learning ... is all about. At age 16 weeks. At age 16 years. At age 58.

21. ***Teachers need enough space/time/flexibility to get to know kids as individuals.*** Teaching is about one and only one thing. Getting to *know* the child. Getting *inside* his or her psyche. Getting *close enough* to learn something about his or her learning trajectory. *Partnering* with him or her in the learning-exploration-growth experience. This is not done in little chunks. This is *de facto* psychotherapy. ***WHY DON'T WE GET IT?***
22. ***Scientific discovery processes and the teaching of science are utterly at odds.*** Scientific discovery is about open-ended exploration. About good questions far more than good answers. Scientific "teaching" is about spoon-feeding of "facts." (Pathetic.)
23. ***Our toughest "learning achievement" – mastering our native language – does not require schools, or even competent teachers. It does require a desperate need-to-know.*** Language learning by nine-month-olds (etc.) is the best example of why the school system ... as we have configured it ... is stupid. Many – most? – parents are lousy linguistic teachers. And yet kids pick up the language. Fast. Incredibly fast. Awesomely fast. With incredible skill. With incredible dexterity. There are few exceptions to this. (Damn few, thank God.) It's all about ... passion ... attachment ... a desperate need to know. Right?
24. ***Great teachers are great learners, not "imparters-of-knowledge."*** The greatest teachers are "co-learners" with their students. That's what all the great teachers say. (I've read the biographies and autobiographies of dozens of them by now.) The great ones are learners. The incompetent-fearful ones are "imparters." Those who play it by the Ford model ... Hammering Facts Down the Throats of Innocents. (Preparing for TTMs – "teach the test" moments – no doubt!)

25. *Great teachers ask great questions – that launch kids on life-long quests.*

Questions.
Questions.
Questions.
Questions.
Questions = Life. (Period.)

(And does the school system get it ... ha, ha, ha.) (Pathetic.)

26. *The world is not about “right” and “wrong” answers: It is about the pursuit of increasingly sophisticated questions – just ask a stellar ski instructor or*

neurosurgeon. **There are no answers.**

Anybody who is in pursuit of anything interesting knows that. I’ve been doing whatever I’ve been doing – about business and management and organization change – for 35 years now. I’m more confused than I was when I began. I do hope that I’m asking better questions. Maybe somebody will put that on my tombstone, come to think about it: “Tom, 1942-??: He kept asking better and better and better and better questions.” Praise be. I can’t think of anything more heartening.

27. *Most schools spend most of their time contriving contexts in which kids learn not*

to like particular subjects. **P.S.:** Research studies show that such Brilliant Anti-learning sticks! The testing scheme is such that we teach kids that they’re not competent. They remember those lessons. They drop out of science. They drop out of math. Oh my God. The school system really does “work” – i.e., accomplish *something*. It discourages large numbers of human beings from exploring things that they might actually care about. As I said: Oh my God.

28. *Vigorous exploration is normal ... until you are incarcerated in a school at the age of five or six. (Or 4 or 3.)* Exploration is normal. Exploration is routine. Again: Look at a 10-week-old dog (I am). Look at a 10-week- or 10-month-old kid.

Exploration. Is the spice of life. Is the essence of life. The only-thing-that-matters. And yet the school system drives it out. Remember that quote from the former Hallmark executive, Gordon MacKenzie, about his experience with kids-in-art in elementary schools? (Pathetic).

29. ***There are large numbers of superb schools, superb principals, superb teachers; sadly, they not only fail to infect the (largely timid) rest, but are ordinarily supplanted by wusses and wimps.*** Teacher training programs, a friend of mine deeply involved in them says, attract people who “typically color inside the box.” But I guess we’ve gotten what we deserve. Prussia. Ford. Nonetheless, there are great principals. Great teachers. On the other hand, their impact ... though Worth Its Weight in Gold ... for the 287 students that they influence over a ten year period ... doesn’t *infect* the system. Therein lies the problem. It ain’t so in the private sector. When one “revolutionary” comes along ... Apple or Dell or Schwab ... the rest of the world stands up and takes notice ... or gets killed. In the school system, it’s the “revolutionary” who gets killed ... or at least ignored once that she or he has left the system. So sad.
30. ***Alas, the teaching profession does not ordinarily attract “cool dudes & dudettes.”*** I’m the first to admit that I know some cool teachers and principals. Dennis Littky. Nancy Mark. And, through his writing, John Taylor Gatto. But they are the rare exceptions to the rule. (And they’re usually in trouble.) It ain’t Silicon Valley, folks! The freaks need not apply. And when freaks do apply ... they get their freakiness hammered out of them. Quickly. Or they resign. Quickly.

How can we attract the freaks?

Places where “cool things are going on” attract freaks.
Freaks change the world.
Freaks matter.
We need freaks ... freaky principals ... freaky teachers.
We need freaks. Desperately.
HOW DO WE GET THEM ... NOW?

31. ***Schools of “education” should by and large have their charters revoked.*** I’m not being fair here. And my knowledge is, admittedly, limited. On the other hand, from what I do know about schools of education ... if I were King ... I’d close them down. Close every-damn-one-of-them down. And that is *not* fair. And I know it’s not fair. But, by and large, they teach people to color inside that box. And that won’t do. Not at all. Not in 2001. (CLOSET TAYLORISTS ALL, THEY TEACH OR IMPLY THE DOGMA OF THE “ONE BEST WAY.”)

32. *“Education” must “develop in youth the capabilities for engaging in intense concentrated involvement in an activity.”* That’s what James Coleman said in

1974. And he was right. Oh, I love that. **Intense ...**

concentrated ... involvement ... in an activity. That’s the nature of education. Age 10 months. Age 10

years. Age 92. (Evelyn Snow Peters, my mom.)

33. *Stability is dead; “education” must therefore “educate” for an unknowable, ambiguous, changing future; thence learning to learn & change is far more important than mastery of a static body of “facts.”* Learning to learn. Embracing change. Loving thine errors, because errors alone are the fuel of growth. Easy phrases to compose or intone. And: the antithesis of what we do in schools. Alas ...

Education. Classrooms. I look at it this way. I get paid a loony amount of money for my Public Speaking. On the topic of management. Business. Enterprise. I have a bunch of college degrees. Two in engineering. Two in business. But I make my Big \$\$\$\$\$ by Public Speaking. Guess

what? ***I never took a course in public speaking.*** (And, by the way, Hemingway couldn’t spell worth a damn.)

I have a burning passion for what I do. So did Hemingway. Those who make a difference ... and I hope I’ve made a tiny one on my little piece of turf ... do so because of their Passion. Period.

I did get a great formal education. But it’s not encompassed by the degree in civil engineering from Cornell. In business from Stanford. It’s about ... a very few ... *people*. It’s my extraordinary first grade teacher. **Mrs. Landers**. My extraordinary third grade teacher. **Mrs. Gaver**. Our wonderful principal, at Severna Park Elementary. **Miss Churchill**. By that amazing guy ... who had all of us over our heads and me diving into American history ... in the 10th grade. **Mr. Chapin**. It’s about **Mr. Hooper**, the 10th grade physics teacher I had, who said that our entire

universe might well be a molecule in the tip of the finger of someone else. It got me thinking. And I never forgot.

It’s about **Professor White** at Cornell, who really made me excited about structural engineering. The forces at work in an I-beam. A concrete block. (How cool!) It’s about **Captain Anderson**, the Battalion Commander of my Seabee Battalion in Vietnam. He treated me like an adult worthy of serious mentoring, not like the dorky junior officer that I was. And another one who treated me like an adult:

Gene.

Gene Webb, my Stanford mentor. (WOW.) It's about the Allan/Allens ... **Allan Kennedy** and **Allen Puckett** ... at McKinsey & Co. About **Warren Bennis**, a Great Man who took me seriously. And my wife **Susan Sargent**, who challenges me all the time, and has no mercy, in any argument about any subject. (WOW.) And ... Evelyn. **Evelyn Peters**, a Voracious Learning Machine and Argumentative Enthusiast. (WOW.) (Lordy, I did a great job in choosing my genetic material.)

My education is not “education.” **My education is the handful of people who pushed me. The people who challenged me. The people who told me that enough was not enough.** I was

thinking about it, as I sat down to write this. Here's what I think about “them”: **They made me fall in love. They helped me figure out who I was.**

That's what teaching – and learning – is all about. In the real classroom. The classroom called Tom-Peters-Becoming-Responsible-For-His-Life's-Project.

13. Bringing Out the Best

Do you know Muhammad Yunus? Perhaps you don't. I urge you to read his book. *Banker to the Poor*. Muhammad Yunus is the founder of the Grameen Bank. Founded in Bangladesh. Saved

souls. And that's no understatement. ***“It's not people who aren't credit-worthy,” he says. “It's banks that aren't people-worthy.”*** At the time he wrote the book, the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh had lent 2.3 billion dollars to 2.3 million

people. The typical first loan was \$15. For a sewing machine. For something that allowed a woman to pursue and achieve independence. There was a 98 percent recovery rate. Astounding. By anybody's standards. Intriguingly, 94 percent of the loans went to women. One-third of those who received the loans rose above poverty, and another one-third had moved up to a non-poverty threshold. (In Bangladesh, remember.)

“The Grameen loan,” Yunus says, “is not simply cash. It becomes a kind of ticket to self-discovery and self-exploration.”

I wish I had the space to devote to Grameen Bank and Muhammad Yunus in this paper. This paper on education. Mr. Yunus is a Great Man and a Great Educator ... whose name can be mentioned in the same breath ... in my opinion ... with my hero for all times ... Nelson Mandela. Yunus is saving lives. Giving millions ...

purpose. He does it through a simple business loan. There are a lot more details. But ... basic point ... he empowers people. Really empowers them. It's a long way from Bangladesh to Los Angeles. A long way from a \$15 Grameen Bank loan to winning a championship for the Los Angeles Lakers. Phil Jackson did it in 2001, for the second straight year. Add six championships with the Chicago Bulls. That's eight ... in the short space of 11 years, as I recall. I read an interview with Mr. Jackson, following the Lakers' final 2001 victory. He talked about what it was like to deal with Shaq and Kobe ... et al. Jackson declared,

“Coaching is winning players over.”

Coaching is not about giving orders. Coaching is not about displaying the Xs and Os on a play board. It does involve that, no doubt. But it's about “winning players over.”

Helping people to believe in themselves ... believe in the possibility of winning championships ... if they work together ... toward a Greater End. That's the magic of Phil Jackson ... with Michael and Scottie ... with Shaq and Kobe. (And the way of Muhammad Yunus with millions of \$15 loan recipients struggling mightily to create a life.) Love that. Because it applies to teaching. Of course, basketball coaching is teaching. No different from kindergarten or the first grade. Try transplanting the word-according-to-Phil: “Teaching is winning students [people!] over.” And I would add: One-At-A-Time. (Like Shaq & Kobe.)

Right?

Hey, that's what this is really all about. Great teachers are taught by their students. Make no mistake. Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot is an intriguing amalgam. Half African-American. Half Native American. Sociology professor at Harvard. She wrote a marvelous book.

With a marvelous title. One word: ***Respect.*** One particular observation captured my attention: *"It was much later that I realized Dad's secret. He gained respect by giving it. He talked and listened to the fourth-grade kids in Spring Valley who shined shoes the same way he talked and listened to a bishop or a college president. He was seriously interested in who you were and what you had to say."*

Oh. Dear. I love that so much. It's the essence of teaching. The essence of learning. The essence, I suppose, of being human. (And ... as usual ... I must add this ... the antithesis of the premise behind the so-called "school reform movement.") "It [is] impossible to claim that all good teachers use similar techniques," writes Parker Palmer in *The Courage to Teach*. "Some lecture non-stop and others speak very little; some stay close to their materials and others loose the imagination; some teach with the carrot and others with the stick. *But in every story I have heard, good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of*

personal identity infuses their work. **'Dr. A. is really there when he teaches.'** **'Mr. B. has such enthusiasm for his subject.'** **'You can tell that this is really Prof. C's life.'** "

Palmer goes on: "One student said she could not describe her good teachers because they differed so greatly, one from another. But she could describe her bad teachers because they were all the same: *'Their words float somewhere in front of their faces, like the balloon speech in cartoons.'* "

It's been the message of this entire presentation. Learning. Passion. Engagement. All of us as students. Whatever. It's so sad. So deeply, depressingly, sad. It's all the antithesis of the "school reform" "movement." Why? Oh God, why?

14. Coping with/Thriving on the New World Order

My world – management world – has been dominated for quite a while by two people. One of them is the god-of-gods, Peter Drucker. And I guess, truth be known, the other one is probably ... 20 years after the publication of *In Search of Excellence* ... yours truly. The only person who knows Drucker and myself well is Warren Bennis. Asked about the two of us a while back, Warren commented that “*If Peter Drucker invented Modern Management, Tom Peters repainted it in Technicolor.*”

Praise be. I hope that it’s one-tenth true. (And thank you, Warren.)

Technicolor is my middle name.

In reality, my first-and-middle-and-last-names. I believe that leadership ... as I said before ... is about love. About *passion*. Great *adventures*. Great *screw-ups*. Great *successes*. Great *efforts*.

And thence I am led to education. I’m led to the conundrum. Why education is *not* about these things. Why education is about 40-minute periods. Why it’s about bells. Security people standing in the hallways with guns. Why it’s not about what it is about ... at the age of four months and three-and-a-half years ... namely, exploration and adventure. I write this piece with nothing other than Deep Sadness.

I hope for so much. I see so little. Education is the Roots. And it’s so wrong. So wrong-headed. Headed, so much, in exactly the wrong direction.

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Tom Peters' MANIFESTOS2002: The BRAWL WITH NO RULES Series

WE ARE IN A BRAWL WITH NO RULES. We are RE-INVENTING THE WORLD ... from scratch! WHAT A THRILL! (And a thrill of the sort no one's had for centuries.) We are in a BRAWL WITH NO RULES. We get to make it up as we go along. I am so psyched to be around for "all this." Is it confusing? OF COURSE. Is it maddening? ABSOLUTELY. But how sweet *that* is!

THE WORK MATTERS! White Collar Work – 90+% of all work – will be totally reinvented in the next 10 or so years. GET WITH THE PROGRAM ... OR GET RUNOVER. Strategies: (1) Turn "Departments" into full-fledged, for-profit "PSFs" – Professional Service Firms. These "PSFs" become, in turn, the primary engines of company value added through the accumulation of intellectual capital. (2) Turn all "the work" into no-bull WOW! PROJECTS. Projects you'll be bragging about 10 years from now! (3) Encourage every "employee" to pursue a spicy Brand You strategy – creating a Unique & Valuable Identity that's worth a fortune to the employee & the company. (This booklet is the basis for our three book "Reinventing Work" series: *The Professional ServiceFirm50 ... The Project50 ... The Brand You50.*)

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE: A THREE-GENERATION REPORT CARD. *In Search of Excellence* marks its 20th anniversary in 2002. I aim to "beat the press" in terms of commentary. My chosen vehicle: a three-generation look. That is, I look at 1982 (the book's pub date) ... and 20 years back (mgt. practice, circa 1962) ... and 20 years forward (mgt. 2002). It was fun to write – and I hope of some small use.

THE DEATH KNEEL FOR "ORDINARY": PURSUING DIFFERENCE. "We" have gotten (lots) better at everything. But so has "everybody .else." "Excellent" products & services are quickly becoming "ordinary" and thence "commoditized." This MANIFESTO summarizes 9 powerful strategies for combatting Creeping & Ultimately Fatal Commoditization. (Several of these strategies are the subject of separate MANIFESTOS below.)

WOMEN ROAR: THE NEW ECONOMY'S HIDDEN IMPERATIVE. The evidence is clear! (1) WOMEN ARE BETTER LEADERS THAN MEN (under the conditions of the New Economy). (2) WOMEN ARE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST MARKET OPPORTUNITY (BY FAR) ... and are wildly underserved. The stakes amount to TRILLIONS of dollars. ("The" answer, incidentally, is not "target marketing"; it is the much deeper Target Innovation.) Our story: WOMEN ROAR. WOMEN RULE. Believe it! (And ... Damn Few "Get It" ... even in 2001. WHADDAN OPPORTUNITY!)

DESIGN MINDFULNESS. “It” works (understatement) for SONY. And APPLE. And GILLETTE. And BMW. And WALT DISNEY. And BODY SHOP. And BLOOMBERG. “It” = An Abiding Passion for DESIGN. Design turns out to be the Principal Reason we LOVE or HATE something ... “product” or “service.” Hence, design is the Hidden Engine powering the Brand Promise. So ... WHY DO SO FEW PAY (OBSESSIVE) ATTENTION TO IT? Again, the potential payoff is humongous.

GETTING WEIRD & STAYING WEIRD: CREATING & MAINTAINING THE HIGHSTANDARD DEVIATION ENTERPRISE. Standard Deviation is a statistical measure of Weirdness. Companies that will thrive in Weird Times will systematically adopt Weird Practices. That is: Hang With Weird Customers & Suppliers. Recruit & Promote Weird Talent. Appoint Weird Boards. Etc. Etc. Innovation is “easy”: Force yourself/organization into Constant & Intimate Contact with The Weird Ones! (It is that EASY!)

THE HEART OF BRANDING. BRANDING IS EASY. (And, of course, impossible.) Forget clever marketing programs. And compelling logos. And Big Bucks Advertising. They’re all important, but the icing on the cake. The cake itself is an unswerving & crystal-clear answer to some “simple” questions: WHO ARE WE? HOW ARE WE (no bull) UNIQUE? WHY DOES IT MATTER? WHO CARES? IS IT COMPELLING ENOUGH TO VAULT 1000s OF EMPLOYEES OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING? Branding That Matters is difficult (KNOW THYSELF!) and simple (KNOW THYSELF!).

THE CASE FOR “BRAND INSIDE”: IT’S THE “ORGANIZATION,” STUPID! Brand Inside Rules! Few businesses fail for want of a Great Strategy. Or Soaring Vision. Most businesses that fail (99 percent ?) do so because of lousy execution. Any idiot can write a strategic plan. Pulling it off is an entirely different matter. You need Execution. That is, the PEOPLE. The politics. The systems. The culture. The character.

TALENT! There’s an All-out War for Talent. WINNING? Easy! Like Branding: Easy... and impossible. WINNING THE ALL-OUT WAR FOR TALENT DEMANDS ...FIRST AND FOREMOST ... AN ABIDING OBSESSION WITH TALENT! NFL Franchise-variety. Ballet Company-style. (TALENT-IS-ALL!) Provide Awesome OPPORTUNITIES. PAY Incredibly Well. Pursue DIVERSITY. Seek out THE STRANGE ONES. Honor YOUTH. Etc. Talent Am Us ... or We Ain’t Serious. PERIOD. (P.S.: Talent= The Brand ... over the long haul. OBVIOUS. Right?)

BOSS-FREE IMPLEMENTATION OF STM/STUFF THAT MATTERS! Forget the “power-less-ness” CRAP! (Try that Sob Story somewhere else! Gandhi ... and King ... and de Gaulle ... were NO SHIT POWERLESS ... and Changed the World!) THE Success Secret: Recruiting often “powerless” but always passionate allies ... who will play with you

and try out your seriously-cool-but-untested ideas. And “Sign Up.” I call it: F2F/K2K/1@T/R.F!A. That is: Freak to Freak. Kook to Kook. One at a Time. Ready.Fire!Aim. Enemy No.1: An epitaph that reads: HE WOULD HAVE DONE SOMEREALLY COOL STUFF ... BUT HIS BOSS WOULDN'T LET HIM. Our Hero? Michelangelo: THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT OUR AIM IS TOO HIGH AND WE MISS IT, BUT THAT IT IS TOO LOW AND WE HIT IT. (Whoops.)

WEB WORLD: THE 100% SOLUTION ... NOW! Key term: 100%. Others know more than I about The Web. But I have developed an Unshakeable & Radical Point of View: **THE WHOLE NINE YARDS. OR NOTHING.** Taking lessons from Schwab, GE, Oracle, Cisco ... I assiduously believe that you must convert ... **ALL ACTIVITIES TO THE WEB**(internal & external affairs) ... or risk losing the business. Message: **THE WEB AIN'T A HALF-WAY SORTA THING!** (P.S.: Potential = UNLIMITED. For the BOLD.) (DREAM BIG. DREAM BOLD. Or, skulk off ... stage left!)

PSF UNBOUND: THE (TOTAL) VICTORY OF THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRM. I/we have written extensively about the “Professional Service Firm Model.” I/we have seen it as a way to save one’s soul (or at least one’s job) in the face of the Coming White Collar Tsunami. Fine. But ... there’s a Bigger Picture. Hewlett-Packard offered \$18 Billion for PricewaterhouseCoopers consultants. Making a “great box” was not enough. My contention is that the “internal” “professional services” will – quickly – become The Engine of Value Creation. In damn near any firm. To be sure, the Internal PSFs will have to join together to create value; but, still, it is their world. Period.

EDUCATION AND THIRD MILLENNIUM WORK: WE’VE GOT IT DANGEROUSLY WRONG. Education for the Third Millennium ... undoes everything we’ve done in education for the last 100 or so years. Our “system” works. Or, rather, worked. It turns out docile – sit in your seat, Tommy – “products” (humans) perfectly fit to spend 40 years in a Ford Model T plant. And perfectly unfit to be part of the new Brain & Productivity-based Economy!