

Service: Problem with Perfection

This sounds weird. And particularly because I have a fair amount of German blood and I was trained as an engineer. But there's a problem with perfection, at least in terms of happy customers, repeat customers, and so on.

You know what the problem with perfection is? You don't remember anything, because it was perfect. The literature is very, very, very clear. And it's bizarre and it's perverse, but then of course so are human beings. The happiest customer of all will be a customer who had an *awful* problem with you, and then you made a brilliant comeback. You overwhelmed them with your responsiveness, your thoughtfulness, your courteousness, your follow up, and so on. And they'll say, "My God, I remember working with Tom Peters."

And what about Tom Peters who made no mistakes? In ten years, every order was delivered on time, every order worked. They won't remember you. I mean, I know that sounds bizarre, and maybe that's an extreme way of stating it. But brilliant comebacks are one of the most important things you can do.

And one pragmatic act that comes out of that is you've got to have the staffing and the resources to be ready to make a brilliant comeback. And literally, it is an art in itself to teach the art of the brilliant comeback after a screw up.

You can go the perverse way. You want happy customers? Do something awful to them and make a comeback. I'm not sure I'm suggesting that. But the power is amazing. Great comeback beats perfection. Think about it at least.

