

**Some**  
**(Really)**  
**(Important)**  
**Stuff**  
**(Inspired by Twitter)**

**Tom Peters**

**01 February 2014**

*Okay. Using “really” and “important” in the title is cheeky. Well, the subject matter is decidedly important—even if, obviously, not every statement herein is.*

*This is all a product of Twitter, where I hang out. A lot. Usually, my practice is a comment here and a comment there—driven by ire or whimsy or something I’ve read or observed. But a while back—and for a while—I adopted the habit of going off on a subject for a semi-extended period of time. Many rejoinders and amendments and (oft brilliant) extensions were added.*

*So far, some **50** “tweetstreams” have passed (my) muster—and are included herein.*

*Well, it may not all be brilliant, but I do believe there is some “stuff” within that could improve your organization/business/leadership practice as 2014 performs its madcap opening act.*

*For God’s sake, steal ... **SOMETHING.***

*(The context of the changing economy and changing technology means that no individual or organization can sit on a pat hand. So, I repeat, do use the beginning of this new year/2014 to assess where you are. **PLEASE.**)*

Alternate title:

**50 Ways** (Inspired  
by **Twitter**)

to

***Accelerate***

**Your**

**Journey Towards**

**EXCELLENCE**

**Tom Peters**

**01 February 2014**

*“The greatest  
shortcoming of the  
human race is our  
inability to  
understand the  
exponential  
function.”*

—Albert A. Bartlett

(from Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age*,  
“Moore’s Law and the Second Half of the Chessboard”)

The key word in the (alternate) title of this monogram is ...

***ACCELERATE.*** Things are not just changing, as they always have. That change per se is accelerating.

Exponentially. We have had very major shifts of the tectonic plate before—the Industrial Revolution in particular. The current change is at least as big. But whereas we had a century or so to adjust to the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the current shift is occurring at a stunning pace—and we are in many ways just past the starting line.

Well, this monogram won't solve your or mine or our problems. It is simply a set of 49 relevant “concerns” that I suggest we address. (Most emanated from or were inspired by tweetstreams!) Some are timeless—though, I judge, more important than ever. E.g., understanding the human change process is more important than ever. Why? “Managing change” is going to be the norm with no “time outs” for the foreseeable future. And some, such as dealing with the organizational impact of so-called “social business,” are emergent issues.

There is no “last word” contained herein. But there are a bushel and a peck of actionable ideas. So, I urge you/beg you to try ...

***SOMETHING.***

***NOW.***

***PLEASE.***

# Some (**Really**) (**Important**) Stuff

1. **Change.** Focus/obsess on allies. And allies and allies. And MORE allies. Don't allow yourself to be distracted or sidetracked by foes.
2. **Do good work.** You'll spend most of your waking hours at work. Make the best of it—or you will have thrown away your life. (Strong words. Warranted.)
3. **Start the day on a high.** Bring a SMILE to work. IMMEDIATELY get out and about (MBWA). Etc. Call it “the little BIG things starter kit.” First TEN MINUTES determine the flow of the day.
4. **Close the week with a bang.** More MBWA. Offer thanks for a job well done—“little stuff” more than big stuff. Call three customers. Thank two people in other functions who lent a hand.
5. **Training.** Training must go from “second best” to the very top of the heap. The training boss should sit next door to the CEO. Training courses should unfailingly make you gasp at their quality.
6. **People development.** Priority #1 is no less than a ... MORAL OBLIGATION ... to let nothing get in the way of helping our people—each and every one—grow and prosper and achieve beyond their wildest dreams. (Hint: You'll make a lot of money along the way.)
7. **The “BIG DUH.”** Taking care of people—“even” in retail—PAYS!
8. **Joy.** Damn it. (Why not?)
9. **WOW-ification.** Ugly word. Magnificent aspiration. (Necessary, too, in a hyper-competitive world.)
10. **First-line LEADERSHIP matters—a lot!** The #1 variable determining enterprise productivity is the quality of the full cadre of 1st-line leaders. (Recruit 'em and train 'em accordingly.)
11. **Get aboard the “S-train” or else.** SM/Social Media. SX/Social eXecutive/SE/Social Employees. SO/Social Organization. (ALL HANDS.) SB/Social Business. Cacophonous engagement of one—AND ALL!—with every aspect of the enterprise, inside and out, is determining the difference between winners and losers.
12. **The “sharing economy.”** Sharing pays! Sharing (more) pays (more)!
13. **The “hang out factor.”** Little or nothing is more important than MANAGING your “Hang Out Portfolio”! We are indeed what we eat—and who we spend time with.

14. **Calendar supremacy.** You ARE how you spend your time. PERIOD.
15. **Civility.** Civility allows you to sleep at night. Civility is (also) a STUNNING competitive advantage.
16. **Politics.** IMPLEMENTATION is ... politics. (Get over it.) (Master it.)
17. **“EXCELLENT” Meetings.** Meetings are what bosses “do.” Meetings are de facto Leadership Opportunity #1. Act accordingly. (Few do.)
18. **Email EXCELLENCE.** Why not?
19. **The Reaction is more important than the action.** The problem is rarely the problem. The RESPONSE to the problem is invariably the problem.
20. **Thank you!** “Acknowledge” and “Appreciate” are perhaps the two most powerful words in the leader’s language.
21. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT Power.** (Continued. Why? Said power is AWESOME.)
22. **Listen up!** Make 2014: The Year of the EAR.
23. **TALK. LISTEN. WRITE.** The UN-studied “big three.”
24. **“Have you ...”** The 50 “Have Yous.”
25. **2013-14/New Year’s Week.** BEGINNINGS and ENDINGS matter. A LOT.
26. **The delicacy of the helping process.** We suck at giving criticism. (It matters. A LOT.)
27. **EXCELLENCE.** The 5-minute Rule.
28. **EXCELLENCE.** The 19 Es of Excellence.
29. **EXCELLENCE.** 5 (or less) words to the wise.
30. **Organizations exist to SERVE.** PERIOD.
31. **Limits to “strategy.”** Winners focus on EXECUTION.
32. **RADICAL Personal Development.** It’s the only survival strategy amidst the economic/tech tsunami. Start ASAP.
33. **100% of us ... ENTREPRENEURS.** We are ready! (It turns out.)
34. **Benchmarking.** Effective “benchmarking” is NOT about copying—it IS about learning and adapting to circumstances.
35. **B-I-G?** Over-rated!

36. **Judgment.** OUR JUDGMENT STINKS. PERIOD. (And there are tons of research to prove that VERY uncomfortable point.)
37. **Culture comes FIRST.** If (hyper-hardnosed) former IBM CEO Lou Gerstner says it, it must be so!
38. **The THREE Rules.** Taking the high road to success.
39. **The “PI6.”** Or: Personal Impact SIX. Short and (I hope) sweet.
40. **BIGGEST Life Decision.** Your call ... ONE DAY AT A TIME.
41. **Read! Read! Read some more!** One of the premier investment bankers in the world declares CEOs’ #1 problem to be a failure to read enough.
42. **The Middle Class Is Toast.** (Ye gads.)
43. **47 questions for newly anointed CEOs.** Do you leave 50% of your time unscheduled? (And 46 others.)
44. **The LAST word.** (For now.)
45. **The LAST word (Version TWO).** People REALLY First—or else.
46. **The LAST word (Version THREE).** Do (NOW) or Die.
47. **The LAST word (Version FOUR).** Implementation: The “last 99%.”
48. **The LAST word (Version FIVE).** The only thing we have to fear is the absence of fear.
49. **The LAST word (Version SIX).** Nothing half way! Use your last ounce of energy!
50. **Nobody knows anything.** Hmmmmm .....



## I. Change/Change Agents

### The A-squared Approach: **Allies & Action**

Not sure what triggered it, but I went on a Twitter rampage this morning (Thursday, 11/21/13) on the topic of change. Herewith, FYI:

Change agency: Forget the word “enemies.” Focus on/obsess on ...

# ALLIES.

Big change is not about fighting the bad guys. It’s about surrounding them with your continuously recruited allies.

Success at change: Building a stable of allies. Failure: Pissing and moaning and picking fights.

Change agent time distribution: **50% recruiting Allies. 40% tending Allies. 10%**

**0%** other. **0%** fighting enemies.

Change: Allies do not automatically remain allies. Tend them and do NOT NOT NOT neglect them—the latter is a common sin.

Change the 4F Way: **F**ind a **F**ellow **F**reak **F**araway.

(Change agents need playmates and *distant* playpens.)

Change: Rack up and log ... **“small  
wins”** ... like a ... *maniac*.

Change you want: **It’s already happening *somewhere*. Find it!**

Change the Bob Stone way: ***“Some people look for things that went wrong and try to fix them. I look for things that went right, and try to build off them.”***

Losses as critical as wins: ***Dotcom movement worked big time. Astonishing amount of experimentation in brief period. “LS” as/more important than “WS.”***

Change is about end runs—not a smash-mouth plunge down the middle.

Allies: Recruit the quiet ones as much or more than the noisy ones.

If you can’t find allies, you’re probably perceived as too far out. Find the sweet spot: Exciting/edgy w/o scaring the shit outta people.

A rigid stance nearly always generates an equally rigid response.

Change: Making loud noises is usually a loser’s strategy.

If you are really passionate, you tend to confront. Confrontation NEVER results in victory; it just entrenches your opponents and increases their determination to stop you. You play into the bad guys’ hands: “I knew he was a jackass. Never put him on the agenda again.”

# Action Rules! **1** Thing (Only) I've Learned in **48** Years!

A Bias for Action. (No. 1/"Basics of Excellence"/*In Search of Excellence*/1982)

## Ready. Fire. Aim.

(H. Ross Perot on EDS; as compared to GM's "Ready. Aim. Aim. Aim. Aim. Aim. Aim. ...")

Just do it! (Nike)

## Move fast, break things. (Facebook)

Experiment fearlessly. (Trait #1/Great innovator companies/*Bloomberg Businessweek*)

Relentless trial and error. (Corporate Survival Trait #1 in crazy times/*Wall Street Journal*)

## "You miss 100% of the shots you never take." (Wayne Gretzky)

Fail. Forward. Fast. (Tech exec/Philadelphia)

CAN YOUR BUSINESS FAIL FAST ENOUGH TO SUCCEED? (*Economist* conf. title)

Fail faster, succeed sooner. (David Kelley/IDEO)

## No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. (Samuel Beckett)

Reward excellent failures. Punish mediocre successes. (Phil Daniels/Australian businessman)

*Whoever Makes the Most Mistakes Wins.* (Richard Farson/book title)

"The Silicon Valley of today is built less atop the spires of earlier triumphs than upon the rubble of earlier debacles." (Paul Saffo/tech futurist/Palo Alto)

"The secret of fast progress is *inefficiency*: fast/furious/numerous failures." (K. Kelly)

S.A.V./Screw Around Vigorously (TP: only possible success strategy for crazy times)

## Demo or die. (MIT Media Lab credo)

"Don't 'plan.' Do stuff." (David Kelley/IDEO)

"Effective prototyping may be the most valuable core competence an innovative organization can hope to have."/"Minimize 'mean time to prototype.'" (M. Schrage/MIT)

"This is so simple it sounds stupid. You only find oil if you drill wells." (J. Masters/wildcatter)

"We have a 'strategic plan.' It's called 'doing things.'" (Herb Kelleher/Southwest Airlines)

## "Can do!" (Motto/U.S. Navy Seabees/My starting point in 1966 in Vietnam)

"Execution is strategy." (Fred Malek)

WD40 (Water Displacement, 40 tries to get it right)

## BLAME NO ONE. EXPECT NOTHING. DO

## SOMETHING. (NFL coach Bill Parcells/locker-room poster)

"Quality is a probabilistic function of quantity." (M. Gladwell/"Creation Myth"/re J.S. Bach)

"Ever notice that 'What the hell' is always the right decision?" (Anon. screenwriter)

## W.T.T.M.S.W. /Whoever Tries The Most Stuff Wins.

WTTMSASTMSUW/Whoever Tries The Most Stuff And Screws The Most Stuff Up Wins.

WTTMSASTMSUTFW/Whoever Tries The Most Stuff And Screws The Most Stuff Up  
The Fastest Wins.

**WTTMSW:**

*Whoever*

*Tries*

*The*

*Most*

*Stuff*

*Wins.*

Change: Recruit allies 2 or 3 levels “down” ... the magicians who reside where the real work is done and the place from which the system can be indirectly manipulated. I.e., “Suck down” for success/Make friends in “low” places.

Change: **ALLIES. ALLIES. ALLIES. ALLIES.**  
**ALLIES. ALLIES.** (Then more **ALLIES.**)

Change agents: Commit no minor sins. Don’t let the bad guys find a narrow opening and bring you down for trivial reasons.

Change agents: Keep a civil tongue at all costs.

Winners: Recruit/nurture allies; try lotsa stuff; stay under the radar. Losers: Go toe to toe with the establishment; seek the spotlight.

Change agents: *Speak not ill of  
thine enemies.* Even to pals in private. All  
the walls have keen ears.

Change agents: No: Charts and graphs. Instead: Demos. Demos. Then more demos.

Change: *Success is more about momentum and  
growing excitement around small wins than it is  
about big wins.*

Change: Engage your allies in the design process—even if it introduces impurities. They must FEEL true ownership.

100% of change-that-works is NON-linear. (Remember: Winners are the ones who are “good at Plan B.”)

Change: *Joyfully let/encourage your allies to take*

**100%** *credit for the small wins they're involved in.*

Serious change includes bad days, bad weeks, bad months, perhaps bad years.

Change agents: Re-read all emails **THREE** times before sending.

Social Media is a marvel. But do **NOT** shortchange face-to-face with Allies.

Change agents: *Successful “small wins” with outsiders provide enormous street cred.\** (\*And, increasingly, “Co-invention” is “EVERYTHING.”)

Change agents: Preaching to the choir is just fine. More than fine: It produces a “multiplier effect”: *If the members of the choir preach to their choirs, it becomes a ... **MOVEMENT!***

Greatest waste of time? Trying to “convert” non-believers. Instead, surround 'em. That is, you don't “convert.” “They” “discover”—come to appreciate what you're doing because a couple of their pals have joined up.

**Change I: ALLIES.**

**ALLIES. ALLIES.**

**ALLIES. ALLIES.**

**ALLIES. (Then**

***more* ALLIES.)**

**Change II: “Suck DOWN**  
**for success.”**

**Change III: Demo. NOW.**

**ONE More/Last Time:**  
**Allies, Not Adversaries**

*“Overcoming resistance to change” is the quintessential B.S./misguided/stupid/ignorant approach to getting (important) things done.*

Let me set you straight in precisely ... **SEVENTEEN** words:

*Implementing desired change is not about “vanquishing” “enemies.”  
Implementing desired change is about recruiting and nurturing allies.*

That is the difference between ... **Negative & Positive.**

That is the difference between ... **Enemies & Friends.**

That is the difference between ... **Fear & Fun.**

That is the difference between ... **Night & Day.**

That is the difference between ... **Hell & Heaven.**

That is the difference between ... **Failure & Success.**

**Q.E.D.**



## II. Do Good Work

I admit I've tired of Garrison Keillor, but I do like his tag line:

*“Be well. Do good work. Keep in touch.”* My comments follow:

Garrison Keillor: *“Do good  
work.”*

That is a powerful sentiment. How does today for you stack up on that “metric”?

**Good work:** Of service to our clients. Of service to our peers. Of service to our community. Committed to personal growth. Pushing the limits.

By definition “do good work” revolves around the phrase ...

*“of service.”*

**Good work:** Help others grow. Infectious enthusiasm. Always approachable. A ready smile. Keeping promises. Learning. Learning. Learning.

**Good work:** The quality of the experience of producing the product is as important as the product itself.

Not sure why “do good work” struck me so hard. I guess I realize what a monumental challenge it is to live up to day in and day out.

**Good work:** *Most of our  
conscious life will be  
at work. Like it or  
not. Waste your work  
life and you have  
effectively wasted  
your life.*

### III. “Must Do” Top-of-the-Morning Rituals

I launched the day with a few quick starter-to-dos for bosses. They were vigorously retweeted, so I decided to post them here. FYI:

**MBWA.** (Managing By Wandering Around.)

**NOW.**

**PLEASE.**

Take someone in another function to lunch. **TODAY. DAMN IT.**

Thank someone for bringing a **SMILE**

to work today. Do it in the next ... 30 MINUTES.

**Boss: Observe yourself closely over the next 60 MINUTES. Did you LISTEN more than you talked?**

At the beginning of your next meeting **THANK** two people for **SOMETHING.**

**THANK YOU** for reading these tweets. Have a great day.

## IV. Friday Rituals

Have you prepped for your first meeting with your team today with the same care you'd put into presentation to your boss? THIS is MORE important!

Bosses: *The first ten minutes sets the tone for the day. PERIOD.*

Bosses/Repeat: MBWA for the first 15-30 minutes after arrival at the office.  
Bosses: MBWA, last 15-30 minutes of the day/Friday. Thank a minimum of THREE people for something they did this week.

Bosses: Take someone new and different to lunch today.

Bosses: Re MBWA, saying thanks a couple of times, etc., how about a "daily rituals" list carried in your pocket to remind you of this stuff?

Bosses: How about a promise to yourself not to email/text/etc. any of your team this weekend?

Bosses: Like my old White House boss, set aside a half hour this afternoon to

**CALL** 3-5 "outsider" folks who gave your team a hand this week.

(WH boss) was busiest guy I ever met, yet he did (his late-in-the-day "*Thank you*" ritual) EVERY day. And most calls were "down" to someone who'd offered a helping hand.

Lot of (my WH boss's) calls (this was the old days) were to secretaries/PAs of those above him: *His secretaries network was his secret weapon.*

Bosses/FACT: projects succeed/fail because of cooperation from OTHER functions. Find 2-3 of those "other function" folks to thank today.

Bosses/REMEMBER: *Suck DOWN for success!*  
*(It's the efforts/energy of the network "below" you that makes you a hero ... or a goat!)*

I wrote *In Search of Excellence* about ONE thing: **MBWA.**

**MBWA:** *Being in touch,  
being human,  
emphasizing  
so-called “soft”  
factors, which are in  
fact true “hard”  
factors that drive  
success/growth/  
profitability.*

## V. My Training/Development ...

# Obsession

I just scored Birthday #71. I am more determined than ever to shout/scream about CEOs (and other bosses at all levels) finally “Putting People First”—as their mission statements say, but which is contradicted by their actions. As tech change accelerates, this becomes more important with each passing day.

At an event in Milan (11/05), I passed out one item to the several thousand

attendees. I labeled it my “**#1** Belief.” To wit:

*Your principal moral obligation as a leader is to develop the skillset, “soft” and “hard,” of every one of the people in your charge (temporary as well as semi-permanent) to the maximum extent of your abilities. The good news: This is also the #1 mid- to long-term ... profit maximization strategy!*

Related to the statement-of-principle above, I fired off (right term) on Sunday (11/03) a series of tweets on training. Herewith:

Is your CTO/Chief Training Officer your top paid “C-level” job (other than CEO/COO)?

*If not, why not?*

Are your top trainers paid as much as your top marketers?

*If not, why not?*

**Are your training courses  
so good they make you  
giggle?**

*If not, why not?*

**Randomly stop an employee in the hall: Can she/he describe her/his development plan for the next 12 months?**

*If not, why not?*

Sunday/NFL game day (as this was written): “Players are our most important asset.” “No shit, Sherlock.” Football is a competitive BUSINESS.

*If “people first” is obvious for them, why not you?*

Study/inhale Matthew Kelly’s book *The Dream Manager*. It’s about a fictional sanitary services company. But it’s not fictional. I met the company’s CEO.

*If them, why not you?*

Check out a Marine E-6 (senior sergeant): Ask him/her about training and development objectives, and the intensity of the approach thereto.

*If him, why not you?*

**Want to understand training in a super high-tech business? Talk to the commanding officer (effectively CTO) of a “boomer”/U.S. Navy nuclear sub patrolling the sea with nuclear-armed missiles on board.**

*If them, why not you?*

*Is your CTO/Chief  
Training Officer your  
top paid “C-level”  
job (other than  
CEO/COO)?*

*Are your top trainers  
paid as much as your  
top marketers/  
engineers?*



*(I would guess that most CEOs see IT investments as a “strategic necessity,” but see training expenses as “a necessary evil.”—TP)*

*(“In a connected economy, an employee investment is also a company brand investment.”—Vala Afshar)*

## VI. Leadership2014: Job **#1**

“Employee development” is decidedly **NOT** an HR term; it is a reason for being, along with service to one’s customers:

*Your principal moral obligation as a leader is to develop the skillset, “soft” and “hard,” of every one of the people in your charge (temporary as well as semi-permanent) to the maximum extent of your abilities. The good news: This is also the #1 mid- to long-term .. profit maximization strategy!*

## VII. “BREAKTHROUGH”\* 2014! (\*Duh.)

From the *New York Times*/0105.14, courtesy Adam Davidson, *Planet Money*/NPR:

*“Contrary to conventional corporate thinking, treating retail workers much better may make everyone (including their employers) much richer.” \*\**

\*\*Cited in particular, “The Good Jobs Strategy,” by M.I.T. professor Zeynep Ton.

## VIII. Joy! **(Why Not?)**

FUN. JOY. WORK. *If you think the three are incompatible and you are a leader, I'd beg you to take a hike. (Seriously.)*

*Is your team having*  
**FUN today?**

If not, it's 100% your (leader's)

fault. Soooooo?

With the likes of the fun-joy-work quote, I'm NOT trying to inspire you!! I'm simply asking you to think about it and perhaps talk about it.

Anon. (name withheld by me): "Our IT reorg the last 3 years hasn't been fun ... and many key people have left/leaving. *The leader has stopped asking that question.*"

Fun is wholly unrelated to “funny.” To, I hope, state the obvious. And “fun” is hardly antithetical to “serious”—in fact, they are handmaidens.\* (Doesn’t get much better than “serious fun.”) And it doesn’t mean that some bad days don’t simply

suck. *Instead, “deep fun” is about enjoying our teammates’ company—sharing in their successes and screw-ups; dropping what we’re doing, even when we’re on deadline, to help a teammate in a bind; seeking to change the game with our current project, even if it’s a wee project; etc.; etc.*

(\*“You can’t be a serious innovator unless and until you are ready, willing, and able to seriously

play. **‘Serious play’** is not an oxymoron; it is the essence of innovation.”—Michael

Schrage, *Serious Play: How the World’s Best Companies Stimulate to Innovate*)

**FUN.**

**JOY.**

**WORK.**

**(Plausible.)**

**(Compatible.)**

**(Effective.)**

**(TODAY.)**

## IX. The **WOW-ification** Imperative\*

(\*Okay. It's an ugly word. But this is *my* screed—and it works for me. You suit yourself. Many in the Twitter Gang approved—a few groaned.)

**Innovation Index:** *How many of your “Top Five Projects” score 8 or higher (out of 10) on a “Weird”/“Profound”/“WOW”/“Game-changer” Scale?*

**WOW-ification Index:** *Move every project (definition) that scores 6 or less 2 notches up on the “WOW-ification Scale” within the next two weeks. If your principal current project scores six or less, bring it up one (or two!) notches by noon on Monday. \*\** (\*\*This tweet was written on a Sunday.)

**MORE.  
WOW.  
NOW.\***

**\*Sorry, couldn't resist.**



**WOW-ish** Words ...  
Shamelessly Uttered By “Real People”

**Zappos’ 10 Corporate Values**

**“WOW!”**

Deliver

through service.

Embrace and drive change.

Create fun and a little weirdness.

Be adventurous, creative and open-minded.

Pursue growth and learning.

Build open and honest relationships with communication.

Build a positive team and family spirit.

Do more with less.

Be passionate and determined.

Be humble.

***“Insanely great”*** —Steve Jobs

***“Radically thrilling”***  
—BMW

***“Astonish me!”***—Sergei Diaghlev

***“Build something great!”***

—Hiroshi Yamauchi/CEO Nintendo, to a game designer

***“Make it immortal!”***

—David Ogilvy, to an ad copywriter

***“You know a design is good when you want to lick it.”***—Steve Jobs

**Raise your sights!**

**Blaze new trails!**

**Compete with the immortals!**

—David Ogilvy, on Ogilvy & Mather’s corporate culture

**Wanted by Ogilvy & Mather International**

**Trumpeter Swans**

—David Ogilvy

*“Every project we undertake starts with the same question: ‘How can we do what has never been done before?’”*

—Stuart Hornery, Lend Lease

*“Let us create such a building that future generations will take us for lunatics.”*

—the church hierarchs at Seville

*“We are crazy. We should do something when people say it is ‘crazy.’ If people say something is ‘good,’ it means someone else is already doing it.”*

—Hajime Mitarai, CEO, Canon

## Kevin Roberts' Credo

1. *Ready. Fire! Aim.*
2. *If it ain't broke ... Break it!*
3. *Hire crazies.*
4. *Ask dumb questions.*
5. *Pursue failure.*
6. *Lead, follow ... or get out of the way!*
7. *Spread confusion.*
8. *Ditch your office.*
9. *Read odd stuff.*

10. ***Avoid moderation!***

*“You can't behave in a calm, rational manner.  
You've got to be out there on the lunatic fringe.”*

—Jack Welch

***“I WANT TO BE  
THOROUGHLY USED UP  
WHEN I DIE.*** ... *Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a*

*sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”*

—George Bernard Shaw

*“If you ask me what I have come to do in this world,  
I who am an artist, I will reply: **‘I am here  
to live my life out loud.’”***

—Émile Zola

*“If I had any epitaph that I would rather have more  
than any other, it would be to say that I had ...  
disturbed the sleep of my generation.”—Adlai Stevenson*

“

*Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in one pretty  
and well preserved piece, but to skid across the line broadside, thoroughly used up,  
worn out, leaking oil, shouting*

**‘GERONIMO!’”**

—Bill McKenna, professional motorcycle racer

## **X. Best or Bust: 1st-Line Leadership**

### **The Heart of EXCELLENCE**

Is there a “secret” to productivity and employee satisfaction? Yes! The quality of your cadre of 1st-line managers.

How do I know 1st-line managers singly/collectively are major assets?

Simple: **Ask a general or an admiral about the importance of their cadres of sergeants or chief petty officers.**

***Is your 1st-line leadership training beyond a shadow of doubt “best in industry”?*** If not, you’re walking away from performance excellence!

Do all 1st-line bosses have FORMAL mentors/coaches?

Do you continuously train the 1st-line boss after the initial “boot camp”?

Is your 1st-line manager selection process as rigorous as the one used for exec promotion decisions? (I’m serious.)

Does the 1st-line manager’s assessment focus as much or more on her/his people-development record as on more traditional outcome yardsticks?

Are you clear that a 1st-line boss is a full-fledged

**LEADER**. (NEVER use any other term.)

Many take 1st-line bosses “seriously.” I urge you to take the cadre thereof INSANELY seriously.

*Is there a “secret” to  
productivity and  
employee  
satisfaction?*

*Yes!*

*The Quality of your  
full cadre of ...*

*1st-line  
leaders.*

## XI. The “S-Train” Imperative

The “S train”: SM/Social Media. SX/Social

eXecutives. SE/Social Employees.

SO/Social Organization. SB/Social

**Business.** Any way you look at it, it’s a full-fledged ... REVOLUTION!

*It is axiomatic: SM/Social Media is wasted (almost a “total waste”?) without SE/Social Employees & SX/Social eXecutives & SO/Social Organization.*

Can you have “social hot spots” in an organization & still play the Social Business Game effectively? I mostly don’t think so. It’s pretty close to “all or nothing.”

Can you have a “social business” if the CEO doesn’t play (i.e., is not a “Social eXecutive”)? I border on saying/believing “No way!”

The CEO should focus continuous/concentrated energy on creating/maintaining/

adjusting the culture: *SM/SX/SE/*

*SO/SB is a “culture  
play,” pure and  
simple.*



Whole point of an effective Social Business: Everyone plays.

*Marketing is the least  
of it.* (Yes, I said “LEAST of it.”)

*EVERY function  
plays a crucial role.  
The interaction PER  
SE puts the value  
added into the value  
added proposition.*

Power of the “social” is aborted if several bits/functions de facto or de jure opt out.

HR by definition is (should be!) at the center of the vortex if you truly want everyone to play ... The Great Social Game.

Can there be vigorous tension/disagreement within a committed Social Org? Not only “Yes” but “Damn well better be.” That’s the true nature of the Value Add.

**Biz 2014: Get Aboard the “S-Train”!**

**SM/Social Media.**

**SX/Social eXecutives.**

**SE/Social Employees.**

**SO/Social Organization.**

**SB/Social Business.**

## SocialBiz 2017: No Option!

*“Branding” is about  
Everything AND  
Everyone =  
Social Media/  
Social Executives/  
Social Employees/  
Social Organization/  
Social Business =  
Table stakes by 2017.*

## A Few of My Favorite “Social” Quotes

### Winning in Marketplace2014/A “Helping” Ethos!

*“Today, despite the fact that we’re just a little swimming pool company in Virginia, we have the most trafficked swimming pool website in the world. Five years ago, if you’d asked me and my business partners what we do, the answer would have been simple,*

*‘We build in-ground fiberglass swimming pools’ Now we say, **‘We are the best teachers in the world on the subject of fiberglass swimming pools, and we happen to build them as well.’**”*—Marcus Sheridan, River Pools and Spas (from Jay Baer, *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing Is About Help, Not Hype*)

*“What if instead of trying to be ‘amazing’ you just focused on being useful? What if you decided to inform rather than promote? You know that expression, ‘If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime’? Well, the same is true for marketing: If you sell something, you make a customer today; if you help someone, you make a customer for life. I call this*

*‘Youtility.’ **Youtility is marketing upside down. Instead of marketing that’s needed by companies, Youtility is marketing that’s wanted by customers. Youtility is massively useful information, provided for free, that creates longterm trust and kinship between your company and your customers. ... The way customers gather information about companies and make purchase decisions has changed. ...**”*—Jay Baer, *Youtility: Why Smart Marketing Is About Help, Not Hype*

*“We are the best teachers in the world on the subject of fiberglass swimming pools, and we happen to build them as well.”*

—Marcus Sheridan, River Pools and Spas

## The Emergent Meaning of “Engagement”

*“Customer engagement is moving from relatively isolated market transactions to deeply connected and sustained social relationships. This basic change in how we do business will make an impact on just about everything we do.”—Social Business By Design: Transformative Social Media Strategies For the Connected Company—Dion Hinchcliffe & Peter Kim*

## Marbles, a Ball and Social Employees at IBM

*“Picture a ball and a bag of marbles side by side. The two items might have the same volume—that is, if you dropped them into a bucket, they would displace the same amount of water. The difference, however, lies in the surface area, **Because a bag of marbles is comprised of several individual pieces, the combined surface area of all the marbles far outstrips the surface area of a single ball.** The expanded surface area represents a social brand’s increased diversity. These surfaces connect and interact with each other in unique ways, offering customers and employees alike a variety of paths toward a myriad of solutions. If none of the paths prove to be suitable, social employees can carve out new paths on their own.”*  
—Ethan McCarty, Director of Enterprise Social Strategy, IBM (from Cheryl Burgess & Mark Burgess, *The Social Employee*)

## IBM Social Business Markers/2005-2012

- \*433,000 employees on IBM Connection
- \*26,000 individual blogs
- \***91,000 communities**
- \*62, 000 wikis
- \*50,000,000 IMs/day
- \*200,000 employees on Facebook
- \*295,000 employees/800,000 followers of the brand
- \*35,000 on Twitter

Source: IBM case, in Cheryl Burgess & Mark Burgess, *The Social Employee*

## Seven Characteristics of the Social Employee

1. Engaged
2. Expects Integration of the Personal and Professional
3. Buys Into the Brand's Story
4. **Born Collaborator**
5. **Listens**
6. Customer-Centric
7. **Empowered Change Agent** [TP: A bazillion miles beyond lip service!]

Source: Cheryl Burgess & Mark Burgess, *The Social Employee*

## Social Survival Manifesto

1. **Hiding is not an option.**
2. Face it, you are outnumbered. ("Level playing field, arrogance denied.")
3. You no longer control the message.
4. Try acting like ... a human being.
5. Learn to listen, or else. ("REALLY listening to others is a must.")
6. Admit that you don't have all the answers.
7. Speak plainly and seek to inform.
8. **Quit being a monolith.** ("Your employees, speaking online as individuals, are a crucial resource ... can be managed through frameworks that ENCOURAGE participation.")
9. Try being less evil.
10. Pay it forward, now. ("Internet culture is largely built on the principle of the Gift Economy ... give value away to your online communities.")

Source: Tom Liacas, [socialdisruptions.com](http://socialdisruptions.com).

## The “Connection Machine”

*“Once thinking is public, connections take over. Anyone who’s Googled a favorite hobby, food, or political subject has discovered some teeming site devoted to servicing the infinitesimal fraction of the public that shares their otherwise obscure obsession. (Mine: guitar pedals, modular origami, and the 1970s anime show Battle of the*

*Planets.) **Propelled by the hyperlink, the Internet is a connection-making machine. And making connections is a big deal in the history of thought.”***

—Clive Thompson, “THINKING OUT LOUD: How Successful Networks Nurture Good Ideas,” *Atlantic*/10.13



## XII. The “Sharing Economy”

The “sharing economy” is the rage—and, indeed, it is the real thing. The idea stems from an eternal verity. E.g., the quote below dates to 1868:

*“Cast your  
bread upon  
the waters &  
it will come  
back  
battered.”*

—Louisa May Alcott

**Sharing matters.  
Now more than ever.  
(It's a "Share or  
else" economy.)  
Sharing is ... fun.  
Sharing is ...  
contagious.  
Sharing ... works.  
Gear up.  
SHARE.  
NOW.**

### **XIII. The (All Powerful) “Hang Out Axiom”: Diversity (“lower case ‘d’” diversity) Rules**

In every aspect of life, achieving true diversity is a winning strategy. And it must be constantly worked at. Homogeneity is always the default state.

I call it “lower case ‘d’ diversity”: diversity on any damned dimension you can imagine.

I call it the “squint test.” *Forget quotas, but when you squint at an exec team photo, it ought to look more or less (more more than less) like the market being served.*

Squint test redux: Women buy the lion’s share of retail AND commercial goods.\*

Does your top team reflect that? *(If it doesn’t,  
you’re an idiot.)*

Diversity battlecry: Fight RHS! (Rampant Homogeneity Syndrome.)

Gary Hamel: “The bottleneck is at the top of the bottle.” Worst cases of RHS/Rampant Homogeneity Syndrome are boards and top teams.

Diversity: “You will become like the five people you associate with the most; this can be either a blessing or a curse.”—Billy Cox

“You are what you eat.”—Victor Lindlahr/nutritionist/1942 “You ARE who you hang out with.”—T. Peters

( \* “Forget China,  
India and the  
Internet: Economic  
Growth Is Driven by  
**Women.** ” )  
—Headline, *Economist*

**Diversity:** *Hang out with cool and thou shalt become more cool. Hang out with dull and thou shalt become more dull.*

**Diversity:** *Your “hang out with” “portfolio” can/should be as carefully managed/measured as your strategic plan— it IS your de facto strategic plan!*

**Diversity:** *Every relationship-partnership decision (employee/vendor/customer/etc.) is a strategic decision: “Innovate, ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’”*

**Diversity matters: Boards. Exec teams. Customers. Vendors. Consultants. Employees. Benchmarks. Who you go to lunch with. Etc.**

**Diversity: “Future-defining customers may account for only 2-3% of total, but represent a crucial window on the future.”—A. Slywotzky**

**Diversity: “Don’t benchmark, ‘Futuremark’!” (Source unk.) (Tomorrow is being played out today ... SOMEWHERE.)**

**Diversity: “Don’t benchmark, ‘Othermark’!” (Source unk.) (Look waaaay outside your industry for lessons.)**

**Diversity: “Companies have defined so much ‘best practice’ that they are now more or less identical.”—Jesper Kunde/*Unique Now or Never***

**Diversity: “While everything may be better, it is also increasingly the same.”  
—P. Goldberger on retail, “The Sameness of Things,” *NYTimes***

**Diversity: *“The short road to ruin is to emulate the methods of your adversary.”*** —Winston Churchill

**Diversity seeking: *“Do one thing every day that scares you.”*** —Eleanor Roosevelt\*

(\*This is **INCREDIBLY** hard.)

**Diversity seeking: Hire (explicitly) for curiosity.**

Diversity battlecry: ***Fight RHS!***

***(Rampant  
Homogeneity  
Syndrome.)***

Diversity/"Hang Out Axiom"/Billy Cox: ***"You will  
become like the five  
people you associate  
with the most; this  
can be either a  
blessing or a curse."***

XIV. The Ultimate Truthteller: **TIME!**

Your calendar never lies.

Your calendar always  
knows.

(Do you?????)

The way we spend our time  
is our priorities.

The way we spend our time  
is our “strategy.”

The way we spend our time  
is what we (really) care  
about.

The way we spend our time  
is what we “are.”



## Calendar Query #1:

*(Precisely)*  
*how are you*  
*going to make*  
*the next 15*  
*minutes*  
*matter?*

## XV. Civility!

Marissa Mayer keeps execs waiting in place for hours for a meeting she called. (Per *Vanity Fair*) Contemptible behavior by any measure.\* (\*Marissa Mayer has a lot of company in the less-than-civil-behavior league. But a timely article in VF enraged me—and triggered this twitterant.)

Marissa Mayer keeps execs waiting for hours: *Can you imagine Warren Buffett doing that?*

Dave Farley: “Astonishingly rude! I gave my former CEOs 15-30 minutes, then I leave. If one tolerates rudeness (abuse), it never ends.”

No one is so good at what they do to get a bye for rude behavior. Un-productive doesn't faze me. Un-civil/purposeful incivility turns me ... purple with rage.

I'm quite sure Ms. Mayer has no interest in meeting me. I *know* I have no interest in meeting her.

As a 71-year-old, I'd prefer my tombstone *not* say, “He made a lot of \$\$\$, but at the end of the day he was a real shit.”

Reading recommendation for Ms. Mayer: *Rules of Civil Behavior In Company & Conversation*, by George Washington

My favorite in G.Washington's book civil behavior: ***“Always stand when someone, junior or senior, enters the room.”***

(I'm loath to admit it—but sometimes I'm distracted and violate this rule. I kick myself for days. Same with failure to make eye contact.)

Paul Walker: “And move out from behind your desk if you have one.”

John Grinnell: “Civil behavior is called civil for a reason. It's the basis of civilization. Hard earned, can be lost.”

Hyper-disciplined Marissa Mayer never keeps outsiders waiting, which makes her (hence purposeful) behavior toward insiders even more contemptible.

My rule: *More important to be on time for insider meetings than outsider meetings. (Happy insiders yield better results—which makes outsider meetings easier.)*

Tim Brander: *“Internal courtesy sets the tone for external relationships.”*

I might be tempted to keep someone waiting, but I would feel the lingering sting of my mother’s roundhouse slap and mend my ways posthaste. Dave Wheeler:

*“MBMR. Management By Mom’s Rules.* Good Home Training applied can be a performance multiplier and persona ‘differentiator.’”

Richard Branson: *“Respect is how to treat everyone, not just those you want to impress.”*

Stretching only a little, I'd say sales is easy if you have a reasonably good product and unreasonably good manners :-)

Vala Afshar: ***“We are not a team because we work together. We are a team because we respect, trust, and care for each other.”***

Sunny Bindra: ***“You’re not ‘running late,’ you’re rude and selfish.”***

Craig Lorne: ***“Rudeness is lifeblood of forgetting who you serve. Good CEOs support the customers and staff and value follows.”***

Horatio Nelson: ***“I have always been a quarter of an hour before my time, and it has made a man of me.”***

Since “showing up” is 80% of winning the game, we should bless the laties for making it so easy for us ontimies to win.

(For NFL nuts re this stream, Tom Landry and Bill Walsh were first and foremost gentleman. Fact: Fits comfortably with fierce competitiveness.)

*There is a  
time and place  
for civility. All  
the time.*

*Every place.*

*Manners =*

*Respect.*

**“M.R.I.** means ‘most respectful interpretation’ of what someone’s saying to you. I don’t need everyone to be best friends, but I need to have a team with M.R.I. So you can say anything to anyone as long as you say it the right way. Maybe you need to practice with, ‘*Can you help me understand why you don’t want to do this or why you wanted to do that.*’ ... I just make it so it’s a human environment.”

—Robin Domeniconi, CMO. Rue La La, a flash sale web site (from Adam Bryant, *Quick and Nimble: Lessons From Leading CEOs on How to Create a Culture of Innovation*)

## XVI. Politics Is Life. The Rest Is ...

The definition of politics is: The essence of getting things done.

Politics is the lifeblood of getting **ANYTHING** done.

If you dislike politics, then you dislike implementation. PERIOD.

I'm flabbergasted by anyone not understanding that to get anything done he/she must pursue/achieve mastery of politics/political process.

If you dislike politics, then it is a dreadful mistake to be in charge of anything.

To hate all politics is to hate the fact that you were born into the human race.

Politics haters are the same ones who tell the jokes about "Getting things done would be walk in the park if not for the damn people."

Glen Flook: "OMG how true-life is a political process."

Emmanuel Gobillot: "You are so right. Politics is the engine of power. Dismiss either and you are dismissing humanity's search for meaning."

*The most activist political bodies I know are families with two teenage kids. Inspiring aspirations, treachery, etc., etc.*

There will always be hierarchy. There will always be politics. The idea is to do it well and toward an honorable end.

Brian Scatland: "Majoring in political science served my business career better than my MBA."

Read Robert Caro's *Master of the Senate*. LBJ was a Master Scientist of political process!

Want to save the world? Polio vaccine is useless unless you master the politics of distribution in an impoverished setting!

A process not based on messy human reality is pie-in-the-sky.

*If you dislike politics, then  
you dislike implementation.  
PERIOD.*

*If you dislike politics, then it  
is a dreadful mistake to be in  
charge of anything.*

*To hate all politics is to hate  
the fact that you were born  
into the human race.*



**If you give a shit about something, you'll automatically “go political” to gain others' support.**

**I've never observed a big company that's not very “political.” Great *New Yorker* article on the “new” super-companies (Google et al.); they are fundamentally the same as old supercos in terms of hierarchy, power plays and power trips, politics.**

**Who say politics is not rational? An asinine notion. It's “political process,” but rational if you are a student of politics. If you're not, then leading anything is the wrong career choice.**

**Politics = Life:**

**Good restaurants.**

**Bad restaurants.**

**Good politics.**

**Bad politics.**

*I'm flabbergasted by  
anyone not  
understanding that to  
get anything done  
he/she must  
pursue/achieve  
mastery of  
politics/political  
process.*

## XVII. Meetings **EXCELLENCE**

Like it or lump it: Meetings are what bosses “do.” **Get over it.** Act accordingly.

THE meeting issue for boss/chair is: *Will (this meeting) be a Model of Excellence?*  
*“Excellence standard” applies as much to a meeting as to ballet/football.*

Theater is event. Football game is event. Surgery is event. And meeting is event. Up to you whether standard is mediocrity or excellence.

Meeting: “Theater of inquiry and persuasion and motivation and engagement and enhanced teamwork.”

Boss: If staff leaves “morning meeting” less than inspired ... *then you pissed the day away due to gross negligence.*

Boss: Only **ONE** key word concerning **EVERY** meeting.  
**PREPARATION.**

Grade yourself on meeting prep today. Be tough. Odds of 4.0 GPA low.

Meetings = **#1** leadership opportunity. PERIOD.

*Every meeting that does not stir the imagination and curiosity of attendees and increase bonding and cooperation and engagement and sense of worth and motivate rapid action and enhance enthusiasm is a permanently lost opportunity.*

The key word is NOT “control.” The keyword IS “Excellence.”

*Does your organization have a full-fledged training course titled “Conducting Excellent Meetings”? If not, why not?*

I am not in the least bit interested in “better/well run meetings.” I am interested in “EXCELLENT meetings.” For heaven’s sake, why not?

Scheduling is your personal responsibility. A failing grade almost guarantees failing longterm performance.

*Over-scheduling is a mortal, not venial, sin.*

*I am not in the least  
bit interested in  
“better/well run  
meetings.” I am  
interested in  
“EXCELLENT  
meetings.” For  
heaven’s sake,  
why not?*

## XVIII. Email **Excellence** (Why Not?)

17 January 2014: Thank you Chris Christie: Anyone who puts anything in any email that might embarrass him/her next week, next month, 2024, is an ... IDIOT.

**A sloppy\* email is a total piece of  
crap. **STOP!****

(\*Sloppy: Ungrammatical. Poorly argued. Equivocal—could be interpreted multiple ways. Flippantly critical of someone/anyone. Rude. Etc. Etc. I.e., “unprofessional.”)

On The Ball Theory: “Write, rewrite, wait, and then send—the modern version of think before you speak!”

*Assume your boss’s boss will read any email you write.*

*Assume your least supportive colleagues will read any email you write.*

*Assume one or > one customer will read any email you write.*

*Assume that any “clever” email you write will go viral.*

*(Assume your mom will read any email you write. Sorry, couldn't resist.)*

Medieval times (1999): Oral hissy fit would mostly evaporate in 4-5 days. Modern times, no matter how limited the distribution, it may go viral.

Hasty emotional response is the nightmare scenario!

Same rules for “personal” emails as “professional” ones. Personal emails frequently are not personal.

**EMAIL.**

**EXCELLENCE.**

Make this duo a tautology—not an oxymoron.

XIX. The Response **Is** The Problem

I call it ... **Service Rule #1**

*The problem is rarely/never the problem. The response to the problem invariably ends up being the real problem.\**

\*This sounds like an exaggeration. It is ... **NOT**. From screwed-up U.S. presidencies to losing multi-billion \$\$ sales., it seems invariably to be a clumsy response to something (initially) relatively small that sets in motion a full-fledged meltdown.



# Service Rule **#1A**

## The 3-minute Rule

*There once was a time when a three-minute phone call would have avoided setting off the downward spiral that resulted in a complete rupture.*

## XX. Christmas “Thank You” Chronicles

PLEASE consider this. Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> [December, 2013] or Fri 27th or Mon 30th or

Tues 31st: *CALL* **10-50** *people to thank*  
*'em for their support in 2013.*

The two most important words in leader's language:

**“Acknowledge”** &

**“Appreciate.”**

So at year's end work your  
ass off on acknowledgement/appreciation.

21 Dec/I have decided to bug you every day until New Year's Eve to CALL 10-50 people to thank them for their support in 2013.

David Ivers: “It works well Tom! I personally delivered to the 14 people on my team a handwritten Christmas Card with a small Lindt Chocs box.”

21 Dec/Christmas gift *from* you today. If shopping, be especially courteous to grouches and smile at stressed-out staff even if service is sub-par.

21 Dec/Best Christmas gift I've heard of this year: Customer brings a cup of coffee mid-morning to our beleaguered local postal clerk.

21 Dec/If, like many of us, you're shopping today, enjoy the madness. Engage the madness in the spirit of Christmas.

21 Dec/Saturday before Christmas. Cherish the madness. You're only here for a little while.

21 Dec/ ***Be present today.*** It's the greatest gift you can give.

21 Dec/The worse your voice, the more vigorously you should sing the Carol. It's about spirit, not 6-sigma quality.

21 Dec/Pop into a church and light a candle for someone sick today. (Even if you are a strict non-believer.)

21 Dec/Make those calls to thank people for their support. Promise: You will enjoy it immensely. (We all need a kick in the ass. Once you start, you'll really get off on it.)

21 Dec/John Barnes: ***“On your advice, I've been doing this for 3 years, always one of the professional highlights of the year.”***

Dave Wheeler: “And spend a few words/seconds to thank your frontline team individually and personally! Cost minimal. **ROI monstrous!**”

21 Dec/Dave: “Cost < 0 because it ends up making you feel good at least as much as recipient!”

21 Dec/Nosy me. Asked grocery checkout person how many say “Happy Holidays.” She said probably 1 in 4 or 5, “less by late afternoon.”

21 Dec/Real key is making kind comment ... **WITH EYE CONTACT** . Otherwise the gesture is diminished by three quarters.

Trevor Gay: “Best gift I've had this Christmas was the chat I had with the homeless guy when I took my dog for walk today. Feel blessed.”

Monday 12/23: Go on a “Thank you” binge. **DAMN IT.**

The degree to which the average analytically trained businessperson fails to appreciate TYP/Thank You Power is staggering/pathetic.

*If you feel awkward  
saying “Thank  
you,” it’s because  
you haven’t practiced  
enough.*

If you feel awkward saying “Thank you,” tell the person you are thanking that you feel awkward. Zounds. The credit you will get.

*Can you say “Thank you” too much? Doubtless, yes. But in the human race’s first 60,000 or so years, no one has overdone it so far.*

I worry about Syrian civil war & 7,999,999 other things. That people will say thank you too much didn’t make my “Top 8,000,000 Worries” list.

Steve Pfistner: “Ah, the joy of affirming another fellow humanoid.”

“Affirming another humanoid”—Love it!

Handwritten notes make me weak in the knees.

*An “almost” guarantee: Even if your first “Thank yous” seem forced, the response will be so overwhelming that you’ll soon be in the groove.*

At the very least, you can do a “Hey, thanks, bro, somehow we survived another year.”

Mike Ferguson: “You’re saying I have to make a call, not email, right? I thought so. Okay okay okay.”

Ever heard the phrase “Bet your sweet ass”?

**Cindy Starks:** *“This is one of those things that I just don’t understand. I’ve tried. Why is it so hard for people to say ‘Thank You’ or ‘Thanks’”?*

I am as befuddled as you are.

**Drew:** *“The importance of ‘Thank you’ is drilled into children, yet often lost on adults. It’s something I had to relearn.”*

**Jeff Hathaway:** *“Things like ‘Thank you’ should be on the list called ‘assumptions,’ especially for leaders. Maybe why the future is brighter for Women?”*

**John Hinton III:** *“I always say ‘Please’ and ‘Thank you.’ You never know what type of day someone is having. Best way to convey appreciation.”*

**John Wheaton (engineering chief):** *“#1 reason engineers leave biz is they are not appreciated.”*

Damn right, John. We engineers are human, too. :-)

**John Wheaton:** *“Say [‘Thank you’] in Monday meetings. Say it on rounds. The more you say it the easier it is.”*

**Catherine Huggins:** *“Expressing thanks is just another way of acknowledging life is bigger than any one individual.”*

**Lisa Rokusek:** *“Often it takes the doing of gratitude to ignite the feeling. We can’t let a lack of feeling stop us from grateful actions.”*

**Lars Leafblad (Fundraiser):** *“The five seconds of silence I experience when I call a donor for no other reason than thank you is deafening!”*

**Trevor Gay:** *“In my experience the most well received ‘Thank you’ is one for doing your routine task.”*

**Amen!!!!!!! My version:** No one ever has an “average day.” There’s always *something* worth noting.

**“The Power of Thanks” is well supported by science too:**

**[http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/03/the-power-of-thanks/ ...](http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/03/the-power-of-thanks/)**

## XXI. The (Awesome) Power of ... Acknowledgement

*“The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.”*—William James

*“The two most powerful things in existence: a kind word and a thoughtful gesture.”*—Ken Langone

*“Employees who don’t feel significant rarely make significant contributions.”*

—Mark Sanborn

*“Good leaders make people feel that they’re at the very heart of things, not at the periphery.”*—Warren Bennis

**“Leadership is about how you make people feel—about you, about the project or work you’re doing together, and especially about themselves.”**—Betsy Myers, *Take the Lead: Motivate, Inspire, and Bring Out the Best in Yourself and Everyone Around You*

*“The philosopher Isaiah Berlin remarked that Churchill ‘idealized’ his countrymen ‘with such intensity that in the end they approached his ideal and began to see themselves as he saw them.’”*—Robert Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*



## The **(Awesome)** Power of Acknowledgement: **NOTEBOOK** Power

Whenever you are interviewing or meeting with someone ... carry **(without fail)** a notebook.

Take notes.

To be sure, you'll doubtless hear something worth recording. But, mainly **(without fail)** you will gain the enduring respect of the person you are interacting with.

Why?

By recording their ideas you are saying, in effect, ***“I think you have something to say worthy of recording and I wish to capture it for eternity.”***

Always carry the notebook. Take copious notes. Record info. AND: It's the ultimate form of flattery/acknowledgement/respect.

Joel Heffner/**Creativity Kit: Field Notes  
Notebook + Pencil**

Stefan Stern: "The bosses who don't take notes may also be the ones who say 'Got it!' too quickly when in truth they aren't really listening."

Sachin Shah: "I got our EO's asst to take notes in her meetings so she could listen. She estimated \$50k gain in her productivity."

Note to bosses: *In your last conversation with an employee, how many pages of notes did you take?*

(Query to bosses: *In your last conversation with an employee, did you listen at least **75%** of the time?*)

## XXII. Listening Is **Job #1**/Make 2014 ... The “Year of the Ear”

**REALLY:** Nothing but nothing but nothing is more important than listening! I will have to admit that the next three pages are not from a tweetstream. It’s just that I can’t publish any paper without making my “STRATEGIC listening plea.”

### Listening is ...

(And when you read “listening,” please substitute “*OBSESSION* with listening.”)

Listening is ... the ultimate mark of *Respect*.

Listening is ... the heart and soul of *Engagement*.

Listening is ... the heart and soul of *Kindness*.

Listening is ... the heart and soul of *Thoughtfulness*.

Listening is ... the basis for true *Collaboration*.

Listening is ... the basis for true *Partnership*.

Listening is ... a *Team Sport*.

Listening is ... a *Developable Individual “Professional” Skill*.\*

(\*Though women are instinctively *far* better at it than men.)

Listening is ... the basis for *Community*.

Listening is ... the bedrock of *Joint Ventures that work*.

Listening is ... the bedrock of *Joint Ventures that last*.

Listening is ... the core of *effective Cross-functional Communication*\*

(\*Which is in turn Attribute #1 of organizational effectiveness.\*\*)

(\*\*I know, I keep repeating this—only because “Attribute #1” is no exaggeration.)

Listening is ... the engine of *superior EXECUTION*.

Listening is ... the key to *making the Sale*.

Listening is ... the key to *Keeping the Customer’s Business*.

Listening is ... the engine of *Network development*.

Listening is ... the engine of *Network maintenance*.

Listening is ... the engine of *Network expansion*.

Listening is ... *Learning*.

Listening is ... the *sine qua non* of *Renewal*.

Listening is ... the *sine qua non* of *Creativity*.

Listening is ... the *sine qua non* of *Innovation*.

Listening is ... the core of *taking Diverse opinions aboard*.

**FYI: Harvard Med School doc Jerome Groopman, in his book *How Doctors Think*, tells us that the patient is the doctor's best source of evidence about the patient's problem. Then, citing hard-nosed research, Groopman asks, “*On average, how long does the patient speak before the doc interrupts?*”**

**Answer?**

***“18 ... seconds.”***

Listening is ... *Strategy*.  
Listening is ... *Source #1 of "Value-added."*

Listening is ... ***Differentiator #1.***

Listening is ... ***Profitable.\****

(\*The "R.O.I." from listening is higher than from any other single activity.)

Listening underpins ... *Commitment to EXCELLENCE.*

Do you agree with the above?

(Frankly, that's a set-up question. How could you *not* agree?)

(I hope.)

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *a Core Value?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *perhaps Core Value #1?\**

(\* "We are Effective Listeners—we treat Listening EXCELLENCE as the Centerpiece of our Commitment to Respect and Engagement and Community and Growth"—or some such.)

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *a Core Competence?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *Core Competence #1?*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Shouldn't listening be ... *Core Competence #1?***

\*\*\*\*\*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *an explicit "agenda item" at every Meeting?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *our Strategy—per se? (Listening = Strategy.)*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *the #1 skill we look for in Hiring (for every job)?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *the #1 attribute we examine in our Evaluations?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *the #1 skill we look for in Promotion decisions?*

***If*** you agree, shouldn't listening be ... *the #1 Training priority at every stage of everyone's career—from Day #1 to Day LAST?*

***If*** you agree, what are you going to do about it ... **in the next 30 MINUTES?**

***If*** you agree, what are you going to do about it ... *at your NEXT meeting?*

***If*** you agree, what are you going to do about it ... *by the end of the DAY?*

***If*** you agree, what are you going to do about it ... *in the next 30 DAYS?*

***If*** you agree, what are you going to do about it ... *in the next 12 MONTHS?*

***“Our work, our relationships, and, in fact, our very lives succeed or fail gradually, then suddenly—one conversation at a time.”***—Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*

***“It’s amazing how this seemingly small thing—simply paying fierce attention to another, really asking, really listening, even during a brief conversation—can evoke such a wholehearted response.”***

—Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*

***“Let Silence Do the Heavy Lifting”***

—chapter title from Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*

***“There is a profound difference between having a title ... and being someone to whom people commit at the deepest level. If we wish to accomplish great things in our organizations, we must come to terms with a basic human need: a universal longing to be known.”***—Susan Scott, “Be Here, Be Prepared to Be Nowhere Else,” chapter title, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time*

Suggested addition to your statement of Core

Values: *“We are Effective  
Listeners—we treat  
Listening  
EXCELLENCE as  
the Centerpiece of  
our Commitment to  
Respect and  
Engagement and  
Community and  
Growth.”*

**Mikael Pawlo/tweet:** *“Nothing beats eye-to-eye or ear-to-ear. Asking questions and listening with a smile is raw power.”*

**TP: Amen.**



## XXIII. The **BIG THREE**

What do we (actually) ... **Do**?

**TALK.** (Present.)

**LISTEN.**

**WRITE.**

Why have we most likely never studied the first two\* (\*especially #2/Listening), and probably not studied the third since high school?

Anybody up for ... **MASTERY?**

## XXIV. The 50 “Have Yous”

*While waiting in the Albany airport to board a Southwest Airlines flight to Reagan one morning, I happened across the latest Harvard Business Review, on the cover of which was a bright yellow “lead article” sticker. On it were the words “Mapping your competitive position.” It referred to a feature article by my friend and admired colleague Rich D’Aveni.*

*Rich’s work is uniformly good—and I have said as much publicly on many many occasions dating back 15 years. Moreover, I’m sure this article is first-rate, too—though I admit I didn’t read it.*

*In fact, it triggered a furious negative “Tom reaction,” as my wife calls it. Of course I believe you should worry about your “competitive position.” But instead of obsessing on competitive position and other abstractions, as the B.Schools and consultants would invariably have us do, I instead wondered about some “practical stuff,” which I believe is far, far more important to the short- and long-term “strategic” health of the enterprise, tiny or enormous.*

*Hence, rather than an emphasis on competitive maps or looking for a “blue ocean” (empty space, per the popular book Blue Ocean Strategy), I urge you to pay attention to my 50 “Have Yous,” as I call them. The list could easily be three times as long—but this ought to keep you occupied for a while. Of course, the underlying hypothesis is that if you proactively do the “small stuff” below, your “competitive position” will improve so much that mapping will become a secondary issue!*

*Herewith:*

# TODAY?

1. Have you called a customer ...
2. Have you in the last 10 days ... visited a customer?
3. Have you in the last 60-90 days ... had a seminar in which several folks from a key customer’s operation (different levels, different functions, different divisions) interacted, via facilitator, with various of your folks? (Goal: Fully integrates us with our key customers—and makes it clear we want to get to know them on all levels.)
4. Have you thanked a front-line employee for a small act of helpfulness ... in the last three days?

5. Have you thanked a front-line employee for a small act of helpfulness in the last ...

# THREE HOURS?

6. Have you thanked a front-line employee for carrying around a great attitude ... *TODAY*?

7. Have you in the last week recognized—publicly—one of your folks for a small act of *cross-functional cooperation*? (“Small,” social acts enhancing cross-functional bonding may be my Obsession #1.)

8. Have you in the last week recognized—publicly—one of “their” folks (another function) for a small act of cross-functional cooperation with your gang?

9. Have you invited in the last month a leader of *another function* to your weekly team priorities meeting?

10. Have you personally in the last week-month called-visited an internal or external customer to *sort out, inquire, or apologize* for some little or big thing that went awry? (No reason for doing so? If true—in your mind—then you’re more out of touch than I dared imagine. Pity.)

11. Have you in the last two days had a chat with someone (a couple of levels “down”) about specific deadlines concerning a project’s next steps?

12. Have you in the last two days had a chat with someone (a couple of levels “down”?) about specific deadlines concerning a project’s next steps ... and what

## specifically *you can do to remove a hurdle*? (**Boss as CHRO, Chief Hurdle**

## **Removal Officer.** Peter Drucker: “Ninety percent of what we call ‘management’ is doing things that make it more difficult to get things done.”)

13. Have you celebrated in the last week a “small” (or large!) *milestone* reached? (I.e., are you a milestone fanatic? Are you a celebration fanatic?)

14. Have you in the last week or month revised some estimate in the “wrong” direction (i.e., acknowledged that things were more problematic than previously estimated) and apologized for making a lousy estimate? (*Somehow or other you must publicly reward the telling of difficult truths—and the reporting of bad news.*)

15. Have you installed in your tenure a very comprehensive customer satisfaction scheme for all your *internal* customers? (With major consequences for hitting or missing the mark.)

16. Have you in the last six months made a week-long, visible, very intensive *visit-tour* of external customers’ operations?

**17. Have you in the last 60 days called an abrupt halt to a meeting and “ordered” everyone to get out of the office and “into the field” *immediately* with the *order* to fix (f-i-x, finito!) *some/any* nagging “small” problem through immediate practical action?**

18. Have you in the last week had a rather thorough discussion of a “trivial” “cool design thing” someone has come across—*away* from your industry or your function—at a website or in a product or its packaging? And do you urge/insist that everyone (*every* one) be on the lookout for, bring in, and present “incredibly cool stuff I’ve found” from “everyday life”?

19. Have you in the last two weeks had an informal meeting—at least an hour long—with a front-line employee to discuss “things we do right,” “things we do wrong,” and “What would it take to turn this job into something approaching their “dream job”?”

20. Have you in the last 60 days had a general meeting to discuss “things we do wrong” ... that we can fix in the next 14 days? (With follow-up *exactly* 14 days later.)

21. Have you had, in the last year, a one-day, intense offsite with each of your principal internal customers—followed by a substantial celebration of “things gone right” on both parties’ parts?

**22. Have you in the last week privately pushed someone to do some family thing that you fear might be overwhelmed by internal deadline pressure?**

23. *Have you learned the names of the children of everyone who reports to you? (If not, you have 30 days to fix it.)*

24. Have you taken, in the last month (two weeks?), an interesting-*weird* outsider to lunch? And, do you keep careful track of “weirdo lunches”?

**25. Have you in the last month invited an interesting-*weird outsider* to sit in on an important meeting?**

26. Have you, in the last three days, discussed in a meeting something interesting, beyond your industry, that you ran across while reading, etc.? (This means more than an email from you with a cyberlink or two.)

27. Have you in the last 24 hours injected into a meeting “I ran across this interesting idea in (strange place)”?

28. Have you in the last two weeks asked someone to report on something, anything that constitutes an act of brilliant service rendered in a “trivial” situation—restaurant, car wash, etc.? (And then discussed the relevance to your work—and then implemented *on-the-spot* some little thing from what they learned?)

29. *Have you in the last 30 days examined in detail (hour by hour) your calendar to evaluate the degree to which “time actually spent” mirrors your “espoused priorities”?*

(And repeated this exercise with everyone on the team.)

30. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to your group by a “weird” outsider?

31. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to the group by a customer, internal customer, vendor featuring “working folks” 3 or 4 levels down in the vendor/customer/internal customer organization (and in your organization)?

32. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to the group of a cool, beyond-our-industry idea by two of your folks?

33. Have you at every meeting today (and forevermore) redirected the conversation to the practicalities of implementation concerning some issue before the group?

34. Have you at every meeting today (and forevermore) had an end-of-meeting

discussion on “action items to be dealt with in the next **4, 24,**

**48** hours”? (And then made this list public—and followed up in 4 or 24 or 48

hours.) (And made sure everyone has at least one such item.)

35. Have you had a discussion in the last six months about what it would take to get recognition in a local-national poll of ... *“best places to work”*?

36. Have you in the last month approved a *cool-different-very different training course* for one of your folks?

37. Have you in the last month taught a front-line training course?

38. **Have you in the *last week* discussed the idea of *Excellence per se*?** (What it means, how to get

there, concerning a current project.)

39. Have you in the last week discussed the idea of ...

**“Wow”?** (What it means, how to inject it

into an ongoing “routine” project.)

40. Have you in the last 45 days assessed some major internal process in terms of the details of the “experience,” as well as results it provides to external or internal customers?

41. Have you in the last month had one of your folks attend a meeting you were supposed to go to, which therefore gives them unusual exposure to senior folks?

42. Have you in the last 60 (30?) (15?) (7?) days sat with a trusted friend or “coach” to discuss your “management style”—and its long- and short-term impact on the group?

43. Have you in the *last three days* considered a professional relationship that was a little rocky and made a call to the person involved to discuss issues and smooth the waters? (Taking the “blame,” fully deserved or *not*, for letting the thing-issue fester.)

44. Have you in the last ... *two hours* ... stopped by someone’s (two-

levels “down”) office-workspace for 5 minutes to ask **“What do**

***you think?”*** about an issue that arose at a more or less just completed meeting? (And then stuck around for 10 or so minutes to listen—and *visibly* taken notes.)

45. *Have you ... in the last week ... looked around you (“eyeballed”) to assess whether the diversity of the group pretty accurately mirrors the diversity of the market being served?*

(And began to act on the disparity, if it exists?)

46. have you in the last day at some meeting gone out of your way to make sure that a normally reticent person has been engaged in a conversation—and then thanked him or her, perhaps privately, for their contribution?

47. Have you in the last four months had a half-day, full-team session specifically aimed at checking on the “corporate culture” and the degree we are true to it—with presentations by relatively junior folks, including front-line folks? **(And with a determined effort to keep the conversation restricted to “real world” “small” cases—not theory.)**

48. Have you in the last six months talked about the *Internal Brand Promise*—i.e., what you and the organization promise to employees in terms of respect and growth opportunities?

49. Have you in the last year had a full-day off-site to talk about individual (and group) aspirations?

**50.** Have you called a customer ... **TODAY?**

(51. Have you “mapped your competitive position” since you finished this checklist? Now it’s okay to do.)

## Have You ... *Started?*

Obviously I hope you'll use this list. Perhaps as follows:

- (1) Circulate to your team.
- (2) Agree on no more than a half-dozen items to act as a Starter Action List.

(3) **Pick one item.**

(4) **Do it today.**

(5) Repeat once a week.



## XXV. 2013-14/New Year's Week

This week you get a twofer. An ending and a beginning. *Beginnings and endings are all-important.* Act accordingly.

As year closes, emphasize that we are a team moving forward. Use the word

# “We”

per se until you're blue in the face.

**Bosses.** This week collect folks' 2013 stories. With mouth mostly shut, ears open, encourage energetic commitment to personal growth in 2014.

Good or not so good results, most folks have done their bit to contribute. Show your appreciation this week.

*Pope Francis has made an enormous impact on an enormous institution with his way of being. Apply to your wee corner of the world this week.*

Bad year? It happens. Be a paragon of grace and thoughtfulness.

Good year or not so good year, end it on a high with an un-showy show of energy and enthusiasm and appreciation and joie de vivre.

Make 2014 the year of committed servant leadership.

2014: Thought for those **NOT** in formal leadership slots: *Every day, on or off the job, offers up a plethora of leadership opportunities! Go for it!*

*May each and every one of those you are privileged to lead have a 2014 marked by accomplishment and growth.*

*Make 2014 the year of committed servant leadership.*

*Thought for 2014 those not in formal leadership slots: Every day, on or off the job, offers up a plethora of leadership opportunities! Go for it.*

## XXVI. Criticism, (Severe) Limits Thereto

Remember: *Criticism poorly given rarely leads to correction. It leads to evasion—avoiding the task in the future.*

Joel Heffner: “Coaching is like walking on eggs; any dope can criticize.”

Try Ed Schein’s book *Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help*.

*Helping is far more delicate than neurosurgery!*

Vala Afshar: “Most people will do better work and put greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism.”

Wendy Maynard: “Positivity goes a long way, as does asking people what they think went well.”

Wendy Maynard: “There’s just been too much emphasis in management about ‘constructive criticism’; it can easily be abused.”

Rich McDonald: “Why many bosses stink—they watch too many military movies and forget that in-your-face degrading remarks never work for anyone.”

Wendy Maynard: *“Most people were criticized unfairly as kids. As managers, they simply repeat the bad patterns.”*

## XXVII. **E**xcellence

Remember (per me): Excellence is not an “aspiration.” Excellence is the next five minutes. Or not.

John Miller: “You are only 5 minutes max away from Excellence.”

*Excellence is not a  
“culture.” Excellence is your  
next email or  
IM or 30-second chance  
meeting in the hall.*

If you are a big cheese, Excellence that translates into \$\$\$ is about your interactions during the elevator ride to the top floor.

If ever there were a day for Excellence via MBWA, it’s tomorrow [12/31/13].

Remember, Excellence is the work that gets done on the real or metaphorical “lower floors.” Camp out there this week.

Vala Afshar: The Foundation of Excellence is:

**Grace**

**Dignity**

**Humility**

**Grit**

**Optimism**

Excellence is **NOT** a “goal.”

Excellence **IS** a way of life.

Or not.

Excellence is **NOT** an  
institutional choice.

Excellence **IS** a personal choice.

Or not.

Excellence is **NOT** an  
“aspiration.”

Excellence **IS** the next 5 minutes.

Or not.

*Excellence is  
not an  
“aspiration.”  
Excellence is  
the next five  
minutes.  
Or not.*

**Q:** *“Mr. Watson [CEO/IBM],  
how long does it  
take to become  
excellent?”*

**A:** *“One minute. That  
is how long it takes  
you to decide to never  
again accept  
anything less than  
excellence from  
yourself.”*

## XXVIII. The “19 Es” of EXCELLENCE

- Enthusiasm!** (Be an irresistible force of nature! *Be fire! Light fires!*)
- Exuberance!** (*Vibrate*—cause earthquakes!)
- Execution!** (Do it! Now! Get it done! Barriers are baloney! Excuses are for wimps! Accountability is gospel! Adhere to coach Bill Parcells’ doctrine: “*Blame nobody!! Expect nothing!! Do something!!*”)
- Empowerment!** (Respect! Appreciation! Ask until you’re blue in the face, “*What do you think?*” Then: Listen! Liberate! 100.00% innovators!)
- Edginess!** (Perpetually dance at the frontier and a little, or a lot, beyond.)
- Enraged!** (Maintain a permanent state of mortal combat with the status-quo!)
- Engaged!** (Addicted to MBWA/Managing By Wandering Around. *In touch. Always.*)
- Electronic!** (Partner with the whole wide world 60/60/24/7 via all manner of electronic community building and entanglement. *Crowdsourcing wins!*)
- Encompassing!** (Relentlessly pursue diversity of every flavor! Diversity per se generates big returns!) (Seeking superb leaders: *Women rule!*)
- Emotion!** (The alpha! The omega! The essence of leadership! The essence of sales! The essence of design! The essence of life itself! Acknowledge it! Use it!)
- Empathy!** (*Connect! Connect! Connect!* Click with others’ reality and aspirations! “Walk in the other person’s shoes”—until the soles have holes!)
- Ears!** (Effective listening in every encounter: *Strategic Advantage No. 1!* Believe it!)
- Experience!** (Life is theater! *It’s always showtime!* Make every contact a “Wow”! Standard: “Insanely Great”/Steve Jobs; “Radically Thrilling”/BMW.)
- Eliminate!** (Keep it simple!! Furiously battle hyper-complexity and gobbledygook!!)
- Errorprone!** (Ready! Fire! Aim! Try a lot of stuff, make a lot of boo-boos. CELEBRATE the boo-boos! Try more stuff, make more boo-boos! He who makes the most mistakes wins! *Fail! Forward! Fast!*)
- Evenhanded!** (Straight as an arrow! *Fair to a fault!* Honest as Abe!)
- Expectations!** (Michelangelo: “*The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we hit it.*”)
- Eudaimonia!** (The essence of Aristotelian philosophy: True happiness is pursuit of the highest of human moral purpose. *Be of service! Always!*)
- EXCELLENCE!** (The only standard! Never an exception! *Start NOW!* No excuses!)



*In Search of Excellence in SIX Words:*

**Hard is soft.  
Soft is hard.\***

**\*The “hard” numbers and the plans are the true “soft stuff.” The “soft” relationships and commitment to Excellence and integrity-in-all-we-do are the true “hard stuff.”**

**Excellence!**  
**Now!**  
**More Than Ever!**

**Excellence is the best defense.**  
**Excellence is the best offense.**  
**Excellence is the answer in good times.**  
**Excellence is the answer in tough times.**  
**Excellence is about the big things.**  
**Excellence is about the little things.**  
**Excellence is a design “good enough to lick”/S. Jobs.**  
**Excellence is a relationship.**  
**Excellence is a philosophy.**  
**Excellence is an aspiration.**  
**Excellence is immoderate.**  
**Excellence is a pragmatic standard.**  
**Excellence is execution.**  
**Excellence is selfish.**  
**Excellence is selfless.**

**Excellence keeps you awake.**  
**Excellence lets you sleep well.**  
**Excellence is a moving target.**  
**Excellence knows no bounds.**

## XXIX. EXCELLENCE Redux

Five (or Less) Words to the Wise

- 4 most important words: **“What do you think?”**  
(“Most important words in any organization.”  
—Dave Wheeler)
- 4 most important words: **“How can I help?”** (Boss as CHRO/  
Chief Hurdle Removal Officer.)
- 2 most important words: **“Thank you!”** (Appreciation/  
Acknowledgement/Recognition.)
- 2 most important words: **“All yours.”** (“Hands-off” delegation/  
Respect/Trust.)
- 3 most important words: **“I’m going out.”** (MBWA/Managing By  
Wandering Around/In touch!)
- 2 most important words: **“I’m sorry.”** (Stunning power of unconditional  
Apology! Marshall Goldsmith: #1 exec issue.)
- 5 most important words: **“What did you learn today?”**  
(Grow or die.)
- 5 most important words: **“Did you tell the customer?”** (Over-  
communicate.)
- 2 most important words: **“She says ...”** (“She” is the customer!)
- 1 most important word: **“No.”** (“To don’ts” > “To dos.”)
- 1 most important word: **“One!”** (“Best bosses do one big thing at a  
time.”—Drucker)
- 1 most important word: **“Yes.”** (Anon. quote: *“The best answer is  
always ‘What the hell.’”*/Wayne Gretzky: *“You  
miss 100% of the shots you never take.”*)
- 3 most important words: **“Let’s do lunch!”** (“Social accelerators” =  
secret to problem/opportunity #1: XFX/  
cross-functional Excellence.)
- 4 most important words: **“Thank Susan in accounting.”** (Readily/  
constantly/profusely acknowledge  
help from other functions.)
- 2 most important words: **“After you.”** (Courtesy rules.)
- 3 most important words: **“Thanks for coming.”** (Civility. E.g., boss  
acknowledges employee for coming to  
her/his office.)
- 2 most important words: **“Great smile!”** (Acknowledge good attitude!)
- 1 most important word: **“Wow!”** (“Avoid moderation.”—K. Roberts)
- 1 most important word: **“EXCELLENCE!”** (Why else bother?)
- 2 most important words: Excellence. **NOW.** (The next 5 minutes.  
Or not.)

## **XXX. Organizations Exist to Serve: Why Else Get Out of Bed in the Morning?**

*Organizations exist to serve. Period.  
Leaders live to serve. Period.*

Passionate servant leaders, determined to create a legacy of earthshaking transformation in their domain (a 600SF retail space, a 4-person training department, an urban school, a rural school, a city, a nation), create/must *necessarily* create organizations which are no less than “cathedrals” in which the full and awesome power of the Imagination and Spirit and native Entrepreneurial flair (“We are *all* entrepreneurs.”—Muhammad Yunus) of diverse individuals

**(100%** creative Talent—from checkout to lab, from Apple to Wegmans to Jane’s one-person accountancy in Invercargill NZ) is unleashed in passionate pursuit of jointly perceived soaring purpose (= win a Nobel peace prize like Yunus, or at least do something worthy of bragging about 25 years from now to your grandkids) and personal and client service Excellence.

Such Talent unbound pursue Quests—rapidly and relentlessly experimenting and failing and trying again—which surprise and surpass and redefine the expectations of the individual and the servant leader alike. The collective “products” of these Quests offer the best chance of achieving rapid organizational and individual adaptation to fast-transforming environments, and provide the nutrition for continuing (and sometimes dramatic) re-imaginings which re-draw the boundaries of industries and communities and human achievement and the very conception of what is possible.

In turn, such organizations, bent upon excellence and re-imaginings based on maximizing human creativity and achievement, will *automatically* create cadres of imaginative and inspiring and determined servant leaders who stick around to take the organization to another level, and then another—or, equally or *more* important, leave to spread the virus of Freedom-Creativity-Excellence-Transforming Purpose by pathfinding new streets, highways, and alleyways which vitalize and revitalize, through creative destruction, Entrepreneurial Capitalism, which is the best hope for maximizing collective human Freedom, Happiness, Prosperity, Wellbeing—and, one prays, some measure of Peace on Earth.

## **Oath of Office: Managers/Servant Leaders**

*Our goal is to serve our customers brilliantly and profitably over the long haul.*

*Serving our customers brilliantly and profitably over the long haul is a product of brilliantly serving, over the long haul, the people who serve the customer.*

*Hence, our job as leaders—the alpha and the omega and everything in between—is abetting the sustained growth and success and engagement and enthusiasm and commitment to Excellence of those, one at a time, who directly or indirectly serve the ultimate customer.*

*We—leaders of every stripe—are in the “Human Growth and Development and Success and Aspiration to Excellence business.” “We” (leaders) only grow when “they” (each and every one of our colleagues) are growing.*

*“We” (leaders) only succeed when “they” (each and every one of our colleagues) are succeeding.*

*“We” (leaders) only energetically march toward Excellence when “they” (each and every one of our colleagues) are energetically marching toward Excellence.*

***Period.***

*Organizations  
exist to serve.  
PERIOD.*

*Leaders live to  
serve.  
PERIOD.*

## XXXI. Overdoing “Strategy”/Dealing With Strategic Disruption as Individuals

“Amateurs talk about strategy. Professionals talk about logistics.”—General Omar Bradley

Great 12/28/13 *Financial Times* book review: *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory*. Chalk up the win as due to superior management/logistics.

Former McKinsey MD to team, on over-emphasizing strategy: ***“Don’t forget the implementation part, boys. It’s that all-important ‘last 99%.’”***

Jack Welch on “strategy”: “Pick a general direction and then implement like hell.”

TP: Could we call it WTFWUT\* rather than “strategy”? [\*WhatThe F\*\*\* We’re Up To] Strategy is too grand a word for me.

Glen Taylor: “Like sports—your competitors already know your strategy Success = focus on execution needed to win.”

Clay Christensen [and his obsession with disruption] be damned; message for you and me: FIRST, get so frigging good at something that you have reason to worry about being disrupted.

***If you spend your life worrying about disruption, you won’t have time to get good enough at anything to be disrupted.***

*“Amateurs  
talk about  
strategy.  
Professionals  
talk about  
logistics.”*

—General Omar Bradley



*“In real life, strategy is actually very straightforward. Pick a general direction ... and implement like hell.”* —Jack Welch

## XXXII. **Radical** Personal Development

This riff took place @ 9AM on ... **1 January 2014:**

Accelerating tech changes/etc. = Middle class in tank; good jobs falling to algorithmic automation and offshoring. **ONLY** answer/**ONLY** chance: Determined/intensive commitment to personal growth. Start date: 1/1/14.

Public policy is largely irrelevant. Revolutionary econ structural change is here-to-stay. Only defense is personal development. **NOW!**

*You totally misunderstand overall econ context if you choose not to start today on **RPD/** Radical Personal Development.*

If Reps & Dems were all geniuses & worked together, econ tsunami would still thunder in. Answer is RPD/Radical Personal Development. **PERIOD.**

*Remember: Excellent “Brand You” portfolio is about self-LESS-ness, not self-ISH-ness. You are as good as the network you develop-nurture. **PERIOD.***

Beating econ revolution: Invest in your network (help/share). Hit the books (study).

Work your ass off. **WOW-ify** every project. Start: **TODAY.**

I like RPD. Just bought ... <http://RadicalPersonalDevelopment.com>.

*Beating the  
economic/tech  
revolution: Invest in  
your network (share).  
Hit the books (study).  
Work your ass off.  
WOW-ify every  
project. Start:  
TODAY.\**

**\*1/1/2014**

*(“The median worker is losing the race against the machine.” —Erik Brynjolfsson /Andrew McAfee/Race Against The Machine )*

*(“The root of our problem is not that we’re in a Great Recession or a Great Stagnation, but rather that we are in the early throes of a **Great Restructuring**. Our technologies are racing ahead, but our skills and organizations are lagging behind.” —Erik Brynjolfsson /Andrew McAfee/Race Against The Machine )*

RPD or bust. Start date: TODAY. Tomorrow: **TOO LATE.**

Do ... SOMETHING. **NOW.**

RPD/Today: Download an interesting book. Schedule a lunch with someone interesting ... **THIS WEEK.** Concoct a next step to WOW-ify a current project ... **TODAY.**

RPD/Today: Check out MOOCs. Work with a pal on a reading list for the next 6 months. Call a good professional pal: Noodle on creating a Club RPD.

**Boss & RPD:** *Your job is safer if every one of your team members is committed to RPD/Radical Personal Development. Actively support one and all!*

Bosses supporting RPD/Radical Personal Development: Read Matthew Kelly's *The Dream Manager.*

Bosses/In the next two weeks: Plan a sit-down meeting with each of your team members concerning her/his RPD/Radical Personal Development aspirations.

***“The role of the Director is to create a space where the actors and actresses can become more than they’ve ever been before, more than they’ve dreamed of being.”***—Robert Altman, Oscar acceptance speech

***“Groups become great only when everyone in them, leaders and members alike, is free to do his or her absolute best. ... The best thing a leader can do for a Great Group is to allow its members to discover their greatness.”***—Warren Bennis and Patricia Ward Biederman, *Organizing Genius*

***“No matter what the situation, [the great manager’s] first response is always to think about the individual concerned and how things can be arranged to help that individual experience success.”***

—Marcus Buckingham, *The One Thing You Need to Know*

*“When I hire  
someone,  
that’s when I  
go to work for  
them.”*

—John DiJulius, *What’s the*

*Secret to Providing a World-Class Customer Experience*

**XXXIII. FUNDAMENTALLY ...**

**We Are Ready!**

***“All human  
beings are  
entrepreneurs.***

*When we were in the caves we were all self-employed ... finding our food, feeding ourselves. That’s where human history began. ... As civilization came we suppressed it. We became labor because they stamped us, ‘You are labor.’ We forgot that we are entrepreneurs.”—Muhammad Yunus*



***(“We are in no danger of running out of new combinations to try. Even if technology froze today, we have more possible ways of configuring the different applications, machines, tasks, and distribution channels to create new processes and products than we could ever exhaust.” —Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *Race Against The Machine: How the Digital Revolution Is Accelerating Innovation, Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly Transforming Employment and the Economy*)***

## **XXXIV. Benchmarking, Problems Therewith**

**Benchmarking Rule #1:** *“Best practices” are to be learned from, **NOT** mimicked/treated as law. “Best practices” must **ALWAYS** be adapted to local conditions!*

**Benchmarking Rule #2:** *When pursuing “best practices,” **DON’T** benchmark.*

***FUTUREMARK.** Tomorrow’s stars are already out there. Find ’em!*

**Benchmarking Rule #3:** ***DON’T** benchmark.*

***OTHERMARK.** Tech company can adopt “**WOW**” service practice from, say, a local restaurant or car dealer.*

**Benchmarking Rule #4:** *Make benchmarking*

***EVERYONE**’s biz. Ask all to collect best practices from “everyday life.” Share **WEEKLY.***

Corporate governance (Twitter I.D.): “Healthcare’s service standard shouldn’t be other HC providers. It should be Zappos.”

One of VA’s biggest breakthroughs apparently started with a nurse’s observation from the local Burger King. (Use of barcoding.)

Adam Jacoby: *“Examples of excellence are everywhere. The art is in customization & execution. Don’t settle for others’ best.”*

*The setting need not be grand! We can also learn powerful tidbits—or more—from the corner store! (If our eyes are always open.) (My book The Little BIG Things opens with the sparkling restroom in a small restaurant in Gill, Massachusetts.)*

Lots of small biz owners are refugees from big business—trying to right “worst practices” they were muzzled by.

Corporate governance: Yes, and I discovered my corner shop owner was a PhD in economics and an MBA. Talked for full hour on service!

Sandy Maxey: “As currently used, benchmarking is a tool of self-reinforcing smug complacency—not about innovation.”

TP: Alas, I have no choice but to agree.

*“Best practices” are  
to be learned from,*

***NOT** mimicked/  
treated as dogma.*

*“Best Practices”*

*must **ALWAYS**  
be adapted to*

***LOCAL***

*conditions!*

**XXXV. W-A-A-Y Overemphasizing Big Stuff**  
(And other issues concerning small businesses and growth businesses)

*Why is “the business literature” overwhelmingly about giant corporations or self-help for individuals? Where’s stuff on 2-50 person company—where the large majority of us work?*

It’s partially because “gurus” like me historically get off on interviewing the Jack Welches of the world.

Frankly, I think the “gurus” or academics disdain or ignore these companies.

There is no time that is bad for a start-up if you are passionate about something and can beg, borrow, or steal a few bucks.

My focus here is not on entrepreneurs and start-ups. I’m thinking more about an existing 2-50 person company that someone’s aiming to make supercool.

*My real target is a 17-person company that someone wants to guide to excellence, stellar productivity, and a “best place to work.”*

Comment: Isn’t focus on “scalability” (growth & replication)?  
If I never hear the term “scalable” my life will be immeasurably happier.

**Comment:** Isn't every company into growth? Using giants as benchmarks?  
**Response:** What about a local auto dealership or community bank? Not aiming for \$10B in assets or \$250M in sales.

My favorite book on non-monsters: *Small Giants: Companies That Choose to Be Great Instead of Big*, Bo Burlingham.

My #2 fav on non-monsters: *Retail Superstars: The Best 25 Independent Stores in America*, George Whalin.

Comment re fighting perils of size: Richard Branson used to say automatically break it up when it gets to 50 employees. *Jack Welch used to say he wanted every piece of GE to be run like an excellent small biz.*

Robert Cook: "I worked in one of Jack Welch's businesses; always pushing team to understand their customers but run your own business or else."

In a way we tried to de facto focus on the "working size" bits in *In Search of Excellence*. Avoided CEOs. Aimed to extract lessons from the person running a \$50M division.

New aim: I want my bit "Tingleworthy."

Wow-ify that little sucker 'til it's Tingleworthy! Okay?

Glen Taylor: *"Yes, like a great rock band's growth comes when you make ravenous fans of what you do. If it's not tingleworthy, who gives a sh\*t."*

Beautiful, brother! Beautifully beautiful!

Woody Zuill: "I am fully in alignment on this. If Not Tingle Now, When?"

Adam Jacoby: "In my last biz we called it creating a 'World of Wow.'"

Love it!

*Wow-ify that  
little sucker  
'til it's  
Tingleworthy!  
(What else?)*

**Jerry Garcia: “We don’t want to be the ‘best of the best.’ We want to be the only ones who do what we do.”**

***Per my 1999 PSF Model, a small business is also a 25-person logistics department in a \$250M business unit. (PSF = Professional Service Firm.)***

***Small biz: Training Inc., a 14-person unit in a 50-person HR dept. in a \$200M biz unit in a \$3B corp.***

**Comment: Training unit is different from small business.**

***Excellence for that 14-person training dept. dittos the 14-person retailer in my book. Shooting for Tingleworthiness or bust.***

**Carlo Navato: “And that’s what matters right? Authentic, original, visceral, bang!”**

**Start-ups are not particularly a young person’s affair: In fact, in the U.S. most start-ups are older folks, many many 50+/50++.**

**Comment: Aversion to scalability cannot hold for tech/Web.**

**There is no “tech.” There are 23,000,000 different flavors thereof. Minimum.**

***I venture to say that if you are focused on “scalability” from the start, you are doomed.***

**To aspire to be Facebook is arrogance beyond measure. To use FB as a model is insane.**

**I admire boldness. But the fact that there are a handful of bazillion-\$\$ companies is of no use whatsoever to a start-up.**

**Protagonist (Twitter I.D.): “Scale this sucker and monetize it and sell it.” Me: Let’s do seriously/ embarrassingly cool shit!**



**Small biz:** *Training Inc.,  
a 14-person unit\*  
in a 50-person HR  
department in a  
\$200M biz unit in  
a \$3B corporation.*

**\*PSF** /Professional Service Firm (See my *Professional Service Firm 50:  
Fifty Ways to Transform Your “Department” Into A Professional Service Firm Whose  
Trademarks Are Passion and Innovation.*)

**Comment: “FB focused their product to make it great by scaling slowly, college by college. That’s what a great biz does.”**

**Most of the Web successes I know come from a superb niche idea; if it begins to gain traction, then worry about growth/replication/“scaling.”**

***Personally, I’d rather have \$5M in venture money than \$25M; in the latter case I’d be perpetually pushed to do “good enough” work and grow (“scale”) as fast as I can.*** (Somewhat parallel: I negotiated a low advance for book #2 so I wouldn’t be forced to try to quickly copy #1 while it was “hot.”)

**Protagonist:** *“It’s ‘good enough’; so scale it, monetize it, and sell it.”*

**Me:** *“Let’s do seriously cool shit. Now!”*

## B-I-G: Over-rated?

*“I am often asked by would-be entrepreneurs seeking escape from life within huge corporate structures, ‘How do I build a small firm for myself?’ The answer seems obvious: Buy a very large one and just wait.”*—Paul Ormerod, *Why Most Things Fail: Evolution, Extinction, and Economics*

“Mr. Foster and his McKinsey colleagues collected detailed performance data stretching back 40 years for 1,000 [large] U.S. companies. They found that none of the long-term survivors managed to outperform the market. Worse, the longer companies had been in the database, the worse they did.”—*Financial Times*

“It’s just a fact: Survivors underperform.”—Dick Foster

*“Data drawn from the real world attest to a fact that is beyond our control: Everything in existence tends to deteriorate.”*—Norberto Odebrecht, *Education Through Work*

“Not a single company that qualified as having made a sustained transformation ignited its leap with a big acquisition or merger. Moreover, comparison companies—those that failed to make a leap or, if they did, failed to sustain it—often tried to make themselves great with a big acquisition or merger. They failed to grasp the simple truth that while you can buy your way to growth, you cannot buy your way to greatness.”—Jim Collins/*Time*

***Retail Superstars:***  
***Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America***  
by George Whalin

**Jungle Jim’s International Market, Fairfield, Ohio:** “An adventure in ‘shoppertainment,’ as Jungle Jim’s calls it, begins in the parking lot and goes on to 1,600 cheeses and, yes, 1,400 varieties of hot sauce—not to mention 12,000 wines priced from \$8 to \$8,000 a bottle; all this is brought to you by 4,000 vendors. Customers come from every corner of the globe.”

**Bronner’s Christmas Wonderland, Frankenmuth, Michigan, pop 5,000:** 98,000-square-foot “shop” features the likes of

**6,000** Christmas ornaments, **50,000** trims, and anything else you can name if it pertains to Christmas.

Lessons (for Everyone) from *Retail Superstars!*

1. Courses/Workshops/Demos/Engagement
2. Instructional Guides/Material/Books
3. Events & Events & Events ...
4. Create “Community” of Customers
5. Destination
6. Women-as-Customer
7. Staff Selection/Training/Retention (FANATICISM)
8. Fanaticism/Execution
9. Design/Atmospherics/Ambience
10. Tableaus/Products-in-Use
11. Flow/Starts & Finishes (Disney-like)
12. 100% Orchestrated Experience/Focus: “Moments of Truth”
13. Constant Experimentation/Pursue Little BIG Things
14. Social Media/Ongoing Conversation with Customers
15. Community Star
16. Aim High
17. **PASSION**

***“Be the best. It’s the only market that’s not crowded.”*** —George Whalin, *Retail Superstars*

***Small Giants:***  
***Companies That Choose to Be Great Instead of Big***  
by Bo Burlingham

“They cultivated exceptionally intimate relationships with customers and suppliers, based on personal contact, one-on-one interaction, and mutual commitment to delivering on promises.

“Each company had an extraordinarily intimate relationship with the local city, town, or county in which it did business—a relationship that went well beyond the usual concept of giving back.

“The companies had what struck me as unusually intimate workplaces.

***“I noticed the passion that the leaders brought to what the company did. They loved the subject matter, whether it be music, safety lighting, food, special effects, constant torque hinges, beer, records storage, construction, dining, or fashion.”***

*“... agile  
creatures  
darting  
between the  
legs of the  
multinational  
monsters ...”*

—*Bloomberg BusinessWeek* on the peerless, economy-driving

German **MITTELSTAND**

## XXXVI. Judgment, Questionable Quality Thereof

Docs over-rely on clinical evidence—a handful of distorted memories about old cases. There are a jillion research studies on that.

(I mis-spoke on “jillion” studies re faulty clinical judgment. Number is probably a few thousand.)

I’ve been studying faulty judgment for **41** years. And research waaaaaay predates me.

Turns out most professionals are shitty decision makers. They over-rely on “clinical” experience—i.e., very low “n”/sample size.

Require as basic text in med school: **Daniel**

**Kahneman’s Thinking,**  
**Fast & Slow.**

“Clinical judgment” is in general laughable.

Clinicians (a) are dealing with a small sample of data; and (b) their judgment is overwhelmed by a tiny sample-within-the-small-sample which is the extreme events they actually recall.

My friends and I laugh hysterically after close study of Kahneman. **ALL** professionals tend to be pathetic/horrid/wretched decision makers.

The power of “clinical” judgment? Most/all fund managers suck over even the mid-term, let alone the long-term. Try a Vanguard PURE Index fund if you want results. (THIS IS NOT A RECOMMENDATION.)

Re clinical judgment: HR “experts” are being made to look like, um, non-geniuses re hiring, etc., by Big Data/algorithms.



**Re judgment:** *The “funny thing” is how relatively simple the algorithm can be that tops “professional” human judgment.*

The research, alas, snickers at common sense, too. Common sense is more or less a synonym for faulty judgment.

Mr. Gladwell gave us *Blink*. Research is clear: Intuition is laughably bad in most cases.

***Kahneman’s data suggest “thinking out of the box” is the supreme enemy of sound decision making.***

CDC uses Big Data VERY accurately to predict the path of a flu outbreak. Odd correlations are better predictors than local disease data.

The days of sampling are coming to an end. Big Data often deals with population data.

NYC software start-up looks forward to the day when “data studs” will make more or less 100% of medical “clinical” “judgments.” (I do not exaggerate—may or may not be true; but even the fact that it’s thinkable enough to attract big venture money is telling.)

Tom Asaker: “Your judgment is probably decent. Unfortunately, your desires overrule it most of the time.”

Tom, I think there’s truth to that—but my confidence wanes by the hour. It’s more fundamental than emotional roadblocks. We are *always* dealing with small samples.

“The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool.”—Richard Feynman (courtesy Tim Fargo)

This tweetstream constitutes bitter medicine. And the Big Data, etc., etc., road has a million twists & turns ahead. There is only one sin: Keeping one’s head in the sand.

Hence: **STUDY. STUDY.  
STUDY.**

*Ain't it a bitch to  
learn definitively that  
your "judgment"  
sucks? \* I'm joking  
but I'm not. And: I  
sure as hell ain't  
exempting myself!*

\*For a definitive list of **166** cognitive biases, see ...

*[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cognitive\\_biases](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases).*

**I have spent a lot of time in the last 12 months in denial concerning this stuff. I'm still in denial—but a lot less so than a year ago. I have now reached the point of being genuinely ...**

***OPEN-MINDED.***

**New World Order: FOUR MINUTES after your [Stefan Stern's] tweet [about Julian Birkinshaw's book *Becoming a Better Boss*], I COMPLETED downloading it onto my iPad.**

**Stefan Stern: “HNY.” [Happy New Year.]**

**Tim Fargo: “The consistent problem is, even with ‘data’: It often gets shaped to support our prior opinion or discarded if not in agreement. Humans!!!”**

**Usually we shoehorn new data [from info that is inconsistent with our extant beliefs] into our prior model; our beliefs are untainted by the new contradictory evidence.**

**Cindy Potts: “Maybe excessive comfort in your judgment is a sign you've stopped growing/learning.”**

**TP: Uncomfortable discussion [for many]. Losing followers. Cool.**

*“The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool.”\**

—Richard Feynman (courtesy Tim Fargo)

**\*Repeat: I do not view this tweetstream as negative. We simply need to educate ourselves and strip off the rose-colored glasses—better judgments, or at least less-bad judgments, may well ensue. But:**

**Blinders NEVER pay!**

## XXXVII. Culture Comes ... FIRST

WSJ/0910.13: *“What matters most to a company over time? Strategy or culture?”*

Dominic Barton,\* MD, McKinsey & Co.: *“Culture.”*

Bill Walsh,\* NFL Hall of Fame Coach: *“Culture precedes positive results. It doesn’t get tacked on as an afterthought on the way to the victory stand.”*

Lou Gerstner,\* former CEO, IBM: *“If I could have chosen not to tackle the IBM culture head-on, I probably wouldn’t have. My bias coming in was toward strategy, analysis, and measurement. In comparison, changing the attitude and behaviors of hundreds of thousands of people is very, very hard. Yet I came to see in my time at IBM that culture isn’t just one aspect of the game—IT IS THE GAME.”*

---

\*Note that all three of these CEOs are/were charter members of the **Hard-ass School of Management**. This was a realization that emerged for each one over time, but is stated here—UNEQUIVOCALLY.

# *Hard is soft!*

# *Soft is hard!\**

**\*People. Customers. Values. Corporate “culture.” Some—most?—call these “variables” “soft.” Instead they say with a near sneer: “Show me the numbers and the plans!”**

**Surely there is room (and need!) for the numbers and a plan. But *they* are the real “soft stuff”—malleable and manipulable. (As we saw/continue to see time and again during the 2007+ economic crisis.)**

**The truly “hard stuff” cannot be faked or exaggerated: The relationships with our customers and our own people and our communities. The spirit and grit of the enterprise. Integrity. A willingness to laugh at good tries that go awry—the heart of innovation success. And so on.**

**“Hard” is soft. “Soft” is hard.**

***In Search of EXCELLENCE ... in just SIX words!***

Culture With a ... **100X BANG**

*“I am ... **hundreds**  
**of times** ... better here  
[than in my prior hospital  
assignment] because of the support  
system. It’s like you are working in  
an organism; you are not a single  
cell when you are out there  
practicing.”* —Dr. Nina Schwenk, Mayo Clinic\*

\*One of the two core values instilled by Dr. William Mayo (Mayo Clinic) in

**1910** was, effectively, practicing team medicine. Designing the practice around the patient, or “patient-centered care,” as some call its rare manifestation today, was the other core value. At Mayo, upon occasion prominent M.D.s have been asked to leave because of their inability to fully grasp the team-practice concept.



## Culture ... **UNVARNISHED**

There is a ton of high falutin' stuff written about "corporate culture"—hey, I've written some of it. But the unvarnished flavors appeal most to me. Former Burger King CEO Barry Gibbons is a pal. He orchestrated a magical turnaround at a troubled firm at a tough time. And the heart of the matter, which he largely achieved, is described—UNVARNISHED—here:

*“I didn't have a 'mission statement' at Burger King. I had a dream. Very simple. It was something like,*

***'Burger King is**  
**250,000 people, every**  
**one of whom gives a**  
**shit.**’ Every one. Accounting.  
Systems. Not just the drive-through.  
Everyone is ‘in the brand.’ That’s  
what we’re talking about, nothing  
less.”*

## Culture ... **Give-A-Shit-ism**

Forget “culture”/“vision”/“stories”/“narratives.” Skip the pseudo-technical language. Don’t call the consultants or “coaches.” Inspired by ex-BK chief Barry Gibbons, how about ...

*Plain-Vanilla-Insanely-Important-Self-Managed-Give-A-Shit-ism? Give-A-Shit ... about each other, about the work, about the community.*

Give-A-Shit-ism Attribute **#1**: A desperate need (*desperate, not urgent; need, not desire*) to help others grow.

Mike Brown: “Commit to your people’s growth or don’t come at all.”

*Respect is by far the most powerful motivator of them all.*

Philip Hopewell on respect: *“Lean forward and listen.”*

TP: That “simple” tweet must be read carefully to have the impact it deserves.

More, subtle but not subtle, adapted from a tweet by Trevor Gay: It’s *“Thank you”* for the ordinary, not the extraordinary, that matters most. That’s the true sign of your awareness!

## XXXVIII. The **THREE** Rules\*

(\*With which I am in *full* agreement.)

From Michael Raynor and Mumtaz Ahmed's ...

*THE THREE RULES: How Exceptional Companies Think\*\*:*

- 1. Better before cheaper.**
- 2. Revenue before cost.**
- 3. There are no other rules.**

\*\*From a database of over 25,000 companies from hundreds of industries covering 45 years, they uncovered 344 companies that qualified as statistically “exceptional.”

**XXXIX. PI6/Personal impact SIX**

**Outwork 'em.**

**Outread 'em.**

**Outlast 'em.**

**Show Up.**

**Listen.**

**Keep an Open Mind.**

## **XL. BLD**

**Fact is:** *You can take  
any damned  
attitude you  
choose to  
work today!*

**(It's your BLD/Biggest Life Decision.)**

**XLI. Hit the Books. HARD.**

*“If I had to pick one failing of CEOs, it’s that they don’t read enough.”*

—Co-founder of one of the world’s largest and successful investment services firms in the USA/world (from a dinner discussion—November 2013)

**Some Stuff to Read NOW:**  
**The (Utterly Insane\*) (\*And Getting  
Evermore Insane) New World Order**

Let me be clear. This is my recent reading list ... **for me**. There *is* rhyme and reason to it—it's an effort to try to at least stay close to the hyper-changing action. But it is **NOT** a systematic “best of” ... in any way, shape, or form.

*Race Against The Machine: How the Digital Revolution Is Accelerating Innovation, Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly Transforming Employment and the Economy*—Eric Brynjolfsson & Andrew McAfee

*The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*—Erik Brynjolfsson & Andrew McAfee

*The Soft Edge: Where Great Companies Find Lasting Success*—Rich Karlgaard

*Average Is Over: Welcome to the Hyper-Meritocracy*—Tyler Cowen

*Big-Bang Disruption: A New Kind of Innovator Can Wipe Out Incumbents in a Flash*—Larry Downes & Paul Nunes

*The Crowdsourced Performance Review: How to Use the Power of Social Recognition to Transform Employee Performance*—Eric Mosley

*Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling In Las Vegas*—Natasha Dow Schüll

*Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*—Nassim Nicholas Taleb

*Automate This: How Algorithms Came to Rule Our World*—Christopher Steiner

*Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*—Viktor Mayer-Schönberger & Kenneth Cukier

*Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business*—John Mackey & Raj Sisodia

*Enough. True Measures of Money, Business, and Life*—John Bogle

*Creation: How Science Is Reinventing Life Itself*—Adam Rutherford

*Amped*—Daniel Wilson

*Employees First, Customers Second: Turning Conventional Management Upside Down*—Vineet Nayar

*Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*—Steven Johnson

*Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*—Tom Bissell

*Fab: The Coming Revolution on Your Desktop—from Personal Computers to Personal Fabrication*—Neil Gershenfeld

*Fast Future: How the Millennial Generation Is Shaping Our World*—David Burstein  
*The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding From You*—Eli Pariser  
*For the Win: How Game Thinking Can Revolutionize Your Business*  
—Kevin Werbach & Dan Hunter  
*The Gamification Revolution: How Leaders Leverage Game Mechanics to Crush the Competition*—Gabe Zichermann & Joselin Linder  
*How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed*—Ray Kurzweil  
*Join the Club: How Peer Pressure Can Transform the World*—Tina Rosenberg  
*Knowledge and Power: The Information Theory of Capitalism and How It Is Revolutionizing Our World*—George Gilder  
*The Lean Startup: How Today’s Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*—Eric Ries  
*Loyalty 3.0: How Big Data and Gamification Are Revolutionizing Customer and Employee Engagement*—Rajat Paharia  
*Makers: The New Industrial Revolution*—Chris Anderson  
*Minecraft: The Unlikely Tale of Markus “Notch” Persson and the Game That Changed Everything*—Daniel Goldberg & Linus Larsson  
*Models Behaving Badly: Why Confusing Illusion with Reality Can Lead to Disaster on Wall Street and in Life*—Emanuel Derman  
*Better, Stronger, Faster: The Myth of an American Decline ... and the Rise of a New Economy*—Daniel Gross  
*Numbersense: How to Use Big Data to Your Advantage*—Kaiser Fung  
*Open Services Innovation: Rethinking Your Business to Grow and Compete in a New Era*—Henry Chesbrough  
*The Org: The Underlying Logic of the Office*—Ray Fisman & Tim Sullivan  
*The Power of Co-Creation: Build It with Them to Boost Growth, Productivity, and Profits*—Venkat Ramaswamy & Francis Gouillart  
*Predictive Analytics: The Power to Predict Who Will Click, Buy, Lie, or Die*  
—Eric Siegel  
*Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now*—Douglas Rushkoff  
*Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*—Susan Cain  
*Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*—Jane McGonigal  
*Women and Gaming: The Sims and 21st Century Learning*—James Paul Gee & Elisabeth Hayes  
*Writing on the Wall: Social Media—the First 2,000 Years*—Tom Standage  
*The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*—Brad Stone  
*Rewire: Digital Cosmopolitans in the Age of Connection*—Ethan Zuckerman  
*Robot Futures*—Illah Reza Nourbakhsh  
*The Rise of the Creative Class*—Richard Florida  
*The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*—Ray Kurzweil



*The Shareholder Value Myth: How Putting Shareholders First Harms Investors, Corporations, and the Public*—Lynn Stout

*The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—But Some Don't*  
—Nate Silver

*Smart Business, Social Business: A Playbook for Social Media in Your Organization*  
—Michael Brito

*Social Business By Design: Transformative Social Media Strategies for the Connected Company*—Dion Hinchcliffe & Peter Kim

*The Social Employee: How Great Companies Make Social Media Work*  
—Cheryl Burgess & Mark Burgess

*The Social Organization: How to Use Social Media to Tap the Collective Genius of Your Customers and Employees*—Anthony Bradley & Mark McDonald

*The Social Conquest of Earth*—Edward O. Wilson

*Taming the Big Data Tidal Wave: Finding Opportunities in Huge Data Streams with Advanced Analytics*—Bill Franks

*Thinking, Fast and Slow*—Daniel Kahneman

*Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*—Dan Ariely

*To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*  
—Evgeny Morozov

*Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet*—Andrew Blum

*Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme*—Richard Brodie

*The Meme Machine*—Susan Blackmore

*Memetics: Memes and the Science of Cultural Evolution*—Tim Tyler

*The Smart Swarm: How Understanding Flocks, Schools, and Colonies Can Make Us Better at Communicating, Decision Making, and Getting Things Done*—Peter Miller

*Wait: The Art and Science of Delay*—Frank Partnoy

*Wired For War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*  
—P.W. Singer

*You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*—Jaron Lanier

*Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is about Help not Hype*—Jay Baer

*The Rise of the Expert Company—How Visionary Companies Are Using Artificial Intelligence to Achieve Higher Productivity and Profits*—Edward Feigenbaum, Pamela McCorduck, and Penny Nii

*Redesigning Humans: Choosing Our Genes, Changing Our Future*—Gregory Stock

*Wetware: A Computer in Every Living Cell*—Dennis Bray

*Worm: The First Digital World War*—Mark Bowden

*The Department of Mad Scientists: How DARPA Is Remaking Our World, from the Internet to Artificial Limbs*—Michael Belfiore

*The Coming Jobs War*—Jim Clifton

*Future Perfect: The Case for Progress in a Networked Age*—Steven Johnson

*Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*—Martha Nussbaum

## Some (Other) (Very Good) Stuff to Read: Mostly New, All Eternal Verities

*Better By Mistake: The Unexpected Results of Being Wrong*—Alina Tugend  
*Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*—Kathryn Schulz  
*The Collaborative Habit: Life Lessons For Working Together*—Twyla Tharp & Jesse Kornbluth  
*Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety*—Eric Schlosser  
*The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility Is Damaging Your Business and to Do About It*—Christine Pearson & Christine Porath  
*Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*—P.M. Forni  
*Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All*—Tom Kelley & David Kelley  
*Crucial Confrontations: Tools for Resolving Broken Promises, Violated Expectations, and Bad Behavior*—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan & Al Switzler  
*Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan & Al Switzler  
*Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time*—Susan Scott  
*Listening Pays: Achieve Significance Through the Power of Listening*  
—Rick Bommelje  
*Power Listening: Mastering the Most Critical Skill of All*—Bernard Ferrari  
*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*—Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi  
*Fooled By Randomness: The Hidden Role of Change in Life and in the Markets*  
—Nassim Nicholas Taleb  
*Helping: How to Offer, Give, and Receive Help*—Edgar Schein  
*How to Win Friends and Influence People*—Dale Carnegie  
*Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*—Robert Cialdini  
*The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable on Real Success in Business and in Life*—Robin Sharma  
*Management Lessons From Mayo Clinic: Inside One of the World's Most Admired Service Organizations*—Leonard Berry & Kent Seltman  
*Practice Perfect: 42 Rules for Getting Better at Getting Better*—Doug Lemov, Erica Woolway, and Katie Yezzi  
*Turn the Ship Around!: How to Create Leadership at Every Level*—David Marquet  
*What You Can Change And What You Can't: The Complete Guide to Successful Self-Improvement*—Martin Seligman  
*The Little Book of Talent: 52 Tips for Improving Your Skills*—Daniel Coyle  
*The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems*—Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin & Monique Sternin  
*Retail Superstars: Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America*  
—George Whalin  
*Lords of Strategy: The Secret Intellectual History of the New Corporate World*—Walter Kiechel

## **XLII. *The Second Machine Age***

by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee

“The greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function.”—Albert A. Bartlett (from Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age*, “Moore’s Law and the Second Half of the Chessboard”)

The issue, circa 2014, is not “big change,” it is

***ACCELERATING*** Big Change. Time to adapt is evaporating!

“[Some argue] that the true work of innovation is not coming up with something big and new, but instead recombining things that already exist. And the more closely we look, the more this recombinant view makes sense.”

*TP: Creativity that matters is not predominantly of the “gee whiz” variety. Creativity is the ability to integrate stuff, a very different kettle of fish.*

“Organizational Coinvention” [coinvention of organization and technology]: “While a one-for-one substitution of machines sometimes occurs, a broader reorganization in business culture may have been an even more important path for skill-based change. ... [In some industries], each dollar of computer capital was often the catalyst for more than ten dollars of complimentary investments in ‘organization capital.’”

***TP: The new stuff is only part of the point. Complete re-invention of organizations and networks of organizations is the real payoff!***

*“The greatest  
shortcoming of the  
human race is our  
inability to  
understand the  
exponential  
function.”*

—Albert A. Bartlett (from Erik

Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age*, “Moore’s Law and the Second Half of the Chessboard”)

**(1)** Person interviewed by the authors re TurboTax: “No way. I don’t use an H&R Block tax preparer any more. I’ve switched to TurboTax software. It’s only \$49 and much quicker and more accurate.” Brynjolfsson and McAfee: “The creators of TurboTax are better off—but tens of thousands of tax preparers now find their jobs and incomes threatened.”

**(2)** CEO interviewed by the authors says he installed new infotech equipment before the Great Recession, but did not cut payroll when profits were soaring. And then: “When the recession came, business as usual was obviously not sustainable, which made it easier to implement a round of painful streamlining and layoffs. As the recession ended and profits and demand returned, the jobs doing routine work were not restored.”

**(3)** “For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, employment usually rebounded after each recession, but since the 1990s employment didn’t recover briskly after recessions. It’s not coincidence that as the computerization of the economy advanced, post-recession hiring patterns changed.”

TP: *These three quotes are the heart of the matter.*

“Every digital app developer, no matter how humble its offices or how few its staff, almost automatically becomes a micro-multinational, reaching global audiences.”

TP: A wonderful story.

*“The Gross National Product does not include the beauty of our poetry or the intelligence of our public debate. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”*—RFK

TP: GDP is an important measure. PERIOD. But it ain’t the whole ball game—not by a long shot!

***Race AGAINST The Machine:***  
***How the Digital Revolution Is Accelerating***  
***Innovation, Driving Productivity, and Irreversibly***  
***Transforming Employment and the Economy***  
by Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee

*“The root of our problem is not that we’re in a Great Recession or a Great Stagnation, but rather that we are in the early throes of a **Great Restructuring**. Our technologies are racing ahead, but our skills and organizations are lagging behind.”*

***“The median worker is losing the race against the machine.”***—Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *Race Against the Machine*

“... breakage of the historic link between value creation and job creation ...”/Great Recession: “... lack of hiring rather than increase in layoffs ...”

40 Years: Median inflation-adjusted wages, men 30-50 with jobs, 1969-2009: \$33K, **-27%**—“The Slow Disappearance of the American Working Man,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*/08.11.13

The “U-shaped Curve” Phenomenon:

High-skilled: **Waaaaay Up!!!**

Low-skilled: **Stable/Up.**

Middle: **Down/Down/Down.**

TP: **Yikes.**

## XLIII. **47** Questions for Newby CEOs

*A reporter asked me to think about “a couple of questions a new CEO ought to ask her/himself.” I stopped—for now—at 47:*

Can you imagine your tombstone having your net worth carved in it? Of course you can't. (I hope.) So what *would* you like on the tombstone?

How would you explain what you do to your 10-year-old daughter? (Aim for 25/50 words or less.)

How would you explain your most recent major decision to your 10-year-old daughter? (Aim for 25/50 words or less.)

Did you miss half your 13-year-old daughter's soccer games this year? (I'll guarantee that if you live to be 109, you'll never forgive yourself no matter how many zeros in your net worth.)

*List your Top Five active projects: How many score 8 or higher on a 10-point “WOW Scale”?*

Are your training courses so damn good they make you giggle?

Can every employee, when stopped by you in the hall, describe her or his personal development strategy for 2014? (Is it radical?)

***Is your CTO/Chief Training Officer on a par (e.g., pay, perks, pecking order) with your CFO/CIO/CMO?***

Have you read *Forbes* publisher Rich Karlgaard's ***The Soft Edge?*** (Of course you haven't. It's not out. But you damn well better read it when it arrives!)

List your Top Five active projects: *How  
many score 8  
or higher on a  
10-point  
“WOW  
Scale”?* \*

\*TODAY. Take ONE project. Figure out—with your team—how to move it up ONE notch on the WOW Scale. (I call this, God help me ... **“WOW-ification.”**)



Whenever you read this: Have you modeled Unadulterated Excellence in the last 30 minutes?

Do you have enough freaky customers in your portfolio, pushing you to the limit day in and day out?

If you got run over by a bus, could you guarantee that your successor is BETTER than you are?

Have you thanked 10 people for **SOMETHING** ... today?

At year's end do you call 25-50 people to thank them for their support during the prior 12 months? (Inspired by Hank Paulson)

Is EVERY meeting a Paragon of Excellence? (To a large extent, like it or not, meetings are what you do.)

Do you ever act like an asshole? (Guess what, dude, you can't get away with it—you are NOT Steve Jobs.)

Do you have an implicit bias for capital investments over people investments?

(Think **VERY** carefully about this.)

Are you a good listener? (Odds are **VERY** high that you are not—**AND** that you're getting worse. Nothing is more important. It is a subject that can be studied and mastered.)

Are you a **PROFESIONAL** ... listener?  
Are you a **PROFESIONAL** ... at hiring?  
Are you a **PROFESIONAL** ... at evaluating people?

***How many-off-the-charts crazy new people have you had lunch with in the last 90 days?*** (Inspired by FedEx CEO Fred Smith.)

**Do you read enough? (10:1 says the answer is “No.”)** (Inspired by one of USA’s top 10 investment bankers who said not reading enough is the number ONE failing of CEOs.)

**If all of your traditional marketing programs were shut down tomorrow, would your extant Social Media programs carry the load?**

**Do you think the whole “social media”/“social employee”/“social business” “thing” is overblown? (It may be, but are you sure? Good chance it’s “underblown.” How do you plan to test the overblown/underblown hypothesis?) (In any event, STUDY like a maniac.)**

**Do you think the whole “big data” “thing” is overblown? (It may be, but are you sure? Good chance it’s “underblown.” How do you plan to test the overblown/underblown hypothesis?) (In any event, STUDY like a maniac.)**

***Do you make eye contact 100% of the time?***

**Do you practice Intense MBWA (Managing By Wandering Around) EVERY day? (Courtesy, in effect, Starbucks’ Howard Schultz, who visits a minimum of 25 shops per week.)**

**To what degree can you say you are honestly (regularly, intensively) in touch with folks three levels “down” in the organization—where the real work gets done?**

**Are you over-reliant on email, or do you still use the phone regularly?**

**Do you reward imaginative failures that lead to significant learning? (Courtesy a successful Aussie exec who says his philosophy is, “Reward excellent failures, punish mediocre successes.”)**

***How many physical visits to key customers have you made this quarter?***

***Do you have a rigid/near-religious routine of calling a key contact at each of your top 10 (25?) customers once a month?***

Are you sure that you are not so intimidating that you cause people not to share priority problems with you early on when they are fixable? (**Hint, you think you are approachable—odds are you are alone in that assessment.**)

Women buy the lion's share of retail AND commercial goods. Does your top team reflect that? (***If it doesn't, you're an idiot.***)

***Is your top team a paragon of diversity?*** Or did they all go to Stanford? (I went to Stanford. It is, of course, the best university in the world. But lack of top-team diversity is a huge mistake. Inspired by Billy Cox: “You will become like the five people you associate with the most; this can be either a blessing or a curse.”)

Have you read and attentively studied and widely shared Daniel Kahneman's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*? (It will shake your confidence in your and your colleagues' judgment/decision-making skills—that's a good thing.)

Do you think your intuition is good? (I don't—and I don't even know you.)

Is **50%** of your time unscheduled? (Courtesy Intel

superstar Dov Frohman's book *Leadership the Hard Way*. Frohman says over-scheduling and failure to “daydream” are CEOs' two top failings.)

Is your full cadre of 1st-line bosses staggeringly talented and well trained/mentored/compensated? (The population of 1st-line bosses is unmistakably the #1 determinant of productivity/employee retention.)

Do you have an implicit bias toward noisy, aggressive people? (You probably do. Read the book *Quiet*—and realize that shortchanging introverts is a strategic mistake.)

**Do you acknowledge that failed cross-functional communication/cooperation/synergy is the #1 cause of delays of ... EVERYTHING? (It is.) Do you work VISIBLY on this EVERY day? (Inspired by Mayo Clinic—MC fires top docs who fail to buy into team medicine.)**

***Do you acknowledge that there are about 500 ways to de-motivate people, and about 5 ways to motivate them—and act accordingly?***

**Do you quickly get tired of people who constantly say “the sky is falling”? (Well, I do, too. But sometimes it is falling. I pray you are an optimist; I pray that you have a few pessimistic pals whom you do not dismiss out of hand.)**

**Do you acknowledge that acquisitions rarely live up to their billing—the billing that was so gloriously touted by you? And do you acknowledge that when acquisitions blow up it is usually courtesy a “culture clash” which you didn’t look at hard enough during the vetting process? (If you don’t acknowledge that, you are wrong. PERIOD.)**

**In presentations you review, is there as much/more text devoted to implementation as there is to problem/opportunity analysis?**

**Is your strategic plan > 2 pages? (If yes ... *for shame.*) (Courtesy Larry Bossidy.)**

XLIV. The **LAST** Word\* (\*For Now)

*“Be the best.  
It’s the only  
market that’s  
not crowded.”*

—**George Whalin** (from *Retail Superstars: Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America*) (Sure, it’s obvious—but that’s the point. Amidst the madness that leads us to go this way, then that way, then the other way, it’s important to remember that being bloody damn good at ... SOMETHING ... was and is and will be the immutable bedrock of everything else.) (FYI: *Retail Superstars* is a marvel—even if you are in HR or finance. It’s 25 stories/sagas/tales about the unbridled power of imagination—sagas of people who have turned the ordinary into the extraordinary with such vigor that it makes one—or me, anyway—giggle at times. FYI: In the same vein, read/ingest Bo Burlingham’s *Small Giants: Companies That Choose to Be Great Instead of Big.*)

*(“We are crazy. We should do something when people say it is ‘crazy.’ If people say something is ‘good,’ it means someone else is already doing it.” —Hajime Mitarai, Canon)*

*(“There’s no use trying,” said Alice. ‘One cannot believe impossible things.’ ‘I daresay you haven’t had much practice,’ said the Queen. ‘When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’” —Lewis Carroll)*

## XLV. The LAST Word (**Version TWO**)

1/4,096\*: *“Business has to give people enriching, rewarding lives ... or it’s simply not worth doing.”*

—Richard Branson

\*A year ago I posted “everything I know” at a new site, excellencenow.com. It ended up being a 4,096-slide, 23 part PowerPoint presentation. Some ONE slide had to go ... **FIRST**. And capture the spirit of the whole shebang. I chose Mr. Branson’s quote above to fill the bill. After all, what could possibly be more important???????

**XLVI. The LAST Word (Version THREE)**

**1T/4,096\*:** *“You miss  
100% of the  
shots you  
never take.”*

**—Wayne Gretsky**

**\*This one tied for first among 4,096 with Mr. Branson. Bob Waterman and I put “Bias For Action” at the top of the list of eight winner’s traits in *In Search of Excellence*. Meant it then. More important than ever now. Plus: It’s a great life lesson for thee & me. I also like this kin from an anonymous Hollywood screenwriter: *“Ever notice that ‘What the hell’ is always the right decision?”***



**XLVII. The LAST Word (Version FOUR)**

*“Execution is  
Strategy.”*

—Fred Malek\*

\*Superstar private-sector entrepreneur (my White House boss, 1974)

## XLVIII. The LAST Word (Version FIVE)

Do or Die/Innovate or Die\*: **“Do  
*one thing  
every day that  
scares you.*”**

—Eleanor Roosevelt

\*The world of enterprise is living on the edge. So, too, you and I. Hence, we must thrust ourselves into the “discomfort zone” each and every day—to even have a chance of thriving. The problem is, and it’s a huge one: The seemingly simple advice here ain’t simple at all. The near at hand is onerous enough—there’s no time left to venture out into the unknown. But there must be time—you must make the time. And preferably, per Ms. Roosevelt, each and every day. (See also our discussion here about what I call the “Hang Out Axiom.”)

**XLIX. The LAST Word (Version SIX)**

*“Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in one pretty and well preserved piece, but to skid across the line broadside, thoroughly used up, worn out, leaking oil, shouting ...*

***‘GERONIMO!’”***

**—Bill McKenna**  
(professional motorcycle racer)

L. The LAST Word (**Version SEVEN**)

*“Nobody  
knows  
anything.”*

—William Goldman,  
screenwriter extraordinaire

As I walk down the street today (1 FEB 2014) in my small town in New Zealand (Takaka), I can't help but wonder, “*Well, will things here really be all that different a decade from now?*” Y'know, I'm not all that sure they won't be. And I'm not all that sure they *will* be.

Cheers,

Tom