

Tom Peters

Re-imagine Manifesto!

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“We all agree your theory is crazy. The question, which divides us, is whether it is crazy enough.”

—Physicist Niels Bohr, to Wolfgang Pauli

New Delhi. Thirteen September 2004. I awoke, jetlagged and sweaty, at 3 A.M. I'd had a nightmare. Stark realism. I was, as usual, accused of overstatement and a few (or more) too many exclamation marks (!!!!!). Only this time I'd acceded to “They.” The “They” who believe in The Plan and Built to Last and Continuous Improvement and Quiet, Humble Leaders. No! No! I had failed, in my dream, to live up to my Fervent Beliefs! This must not pass! In a sweat, fearful that the time would not come 'round again, I turned on the light, picked up a pad of paper, and began to scribble frantically. Herewith the result.



They say ... my (Tom's) language is extreme.
I say ... the times are extreme.

They say I'm extreme.
I say I'm a realist.

They say I demand too much.
I say they accept mediocrity and continuous improvement too readily.

They say "We can't handle this much change."
I say "Your job and career are in jeopardy; what other options do you have?"

They say Brand You is not for everyone.
I say the alternative is unemployment.

They say "What's wrong with a 'good product'?"
I say Wal*Mart or China or both are about to eat your lunch. Why can't you provide instead a Fabulous Experience?

They say "Take a deep breath. Be calm."
I say "Tell it to Wal*Mart. Tell it to China. Tell it to India. Tell it to Dell. Tell it to Microsoft."

They say the Web is a "useful tool."
I say the Web changes everything. Now.



They say “We need an Initiative.”
I say “**We need a Dream.
And Dreamers.**”

They say Great Design is “nice.”
I say Great Design is “necessary.”

They say I “overplay” the “women’s thing.”
I say the minuscule share of Women in Senior Leadership Positions is a Waste and a Disgrace and a Strategic Marketing Error.

They say the Women’s Market Opportunity I harp on is “doubtless important.”
I say 9 out of 10, make that 99 out of 100, companies aren’t within striking distance of accurately estimating the potential of the Women’s Market ...
let alone exploiting it.

They say the boomer-geezer market is also “doubtless important.”
I say the boomer-geezer market amounts to a Redefining Moment.

They say we need a “project” to exploit the women-boomer-geezer market.
I say we need Total Strategic Realignment to exploit the Women-Boomer-Geezer Opportunity.



They say "Plan it."
I say **"DO IT."**



They say "Wow" is "typical Tom."
I say "WOW" is a Minimum Survival Requirement.

They say "effective governance" is important.
I say bold-brash Boards that are representative of the market served—more than a token woman or two and an empty seat for the "forthcoming Hispanic"—are an Imperative. Now.

They say "We need more steady, loyal employees."
I say "WE NEED MORE FREAKS WHO ROUTINELY TELL THOSE 'IN CHARGE' TO TAKE A FLYING LEAP ... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE."

They say "We like people who, with steely determination, say, 'I can make it better.'"
I say "I love people who, with a certain maniacal gleam in their eye, perhaps even a giggle, say, 'I can turn the world upside down. Watch me!'"

They say "We must speed things up."
I say "We must Radically change the Corporate Metabolism until Insane Urgency becomes a Sacrament."

They say "Sure, we need 'Change.'"
I say we need "REVOLUTION NOW."

They say "We need Good People."
I say **"We need Quirky Talent."**



They say/acknowledge, "Okay, we need revolution."
I say **"REVOLUTION."**

They say "fast follower."
I say "battered and bruised leader."

They say "Conglomerate & Imitate!"
I say "Create & Innovate!"

They say "Market share."
I say "Market CREATION."

They say "Improve & Maintain."
I say "DESTROY & RE-IMAGINE."

They say "We like words such as 'calm' ... 'certainty' ... 'is.'"
I say "I like words/phrases such as 'turbulent' ... 'opportunity' ... 'might be.'"

They vote for Republicans and Democrats.
I vote for Independents and Libertarians.

They say "Happy balance."
I say "Creative Tension."

They say they favor a "team" that works & lives in "harmony."
I say "Give me a raucous brawl among the most creative people imaginable."

They say "Normal."
I say "Weird."

They say "Peace, brother."
I say "Bruise my feelings. Flatten my ego. SAVE MY JOB."

They say "Vanilla."
I say "Cherry Garcia."

They say "Basic Black."
I say "TECHNICOLOR RULES!"

They say "Branding is for the likes of Nike."
I say "Branding is for Everyone & Anyone with the Passion & Tenacity to foist their Wonderful & Weird Point of View on the world ... and the New World's (read: Web's) power allows-encourages such "silly" (until recently) visions-of-ubiquity to become reality, perhaps overnight."

They say we need "happy customers."
I say "Give me pushy, needy, nasty, provocative customers who will drag me down Innovation Boulevard at 100mph."

They say they want to partner with "best of breed."
I say "Give me Coolest of Breed."

They say we need "supply chain harmony."
I say we need "supply chain Innovation."



They say "We seek Harvard MBAs."
I say I seek Certificate-free "PhDs" from the School of Hard Knocks.

They say "We seek Harvard MBAs."
I say "I seek RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) MFAs."

They say "Integrity is important."
I say "Tell the Unvarnished Truth, All the Time ... or take a Long Hike."

They read Jim Collins and grok on "quiet, humble leaders."
I say "Give me the Bold, the Brash, the Brassy, the Egocentric Dreamers who, like Steve Jobs, 'Dent the Universe.'"

They say they need a "vision" born of McKinsey.
I say we need a "Grandiose Dream" born of a Passionate & Intemperate Belief that the world can be a different, better place.

They say they want recruits with "spotless records."
I say "The Spots are what matter most."

They say "Of course we believe in marketing."
I say "Is the CMO (Chief Marketing Officer) on the Board of Directors?"

They say "Of course we believe in marketing."
I say "Has your customer database won numerous major industry awards?"



They say healthcare, our biggest industry, is “a mess.”

I say our hospitals, which **kill over 100,000 patients** a year, are part of a system that is “**a disgrace.**”

They say “obesity is a problem” ... “lose some weight.”

I say Re-imagine the entire healthcare system ... NOW ... to focus on Prevention & Wellness.

They say “Of course we believe in marketing.”

I say “Is your Web site Sooooo Cool, Sooooo Fresh, Sooooo Friendly to Use that it gives you goose pimples just to e-visit, even though you’ve seen it 1,000 times?”

They say “Of course we believe in marketing.”

I say “How many in-depth customer visits did the CEO make last month?”

They say “Yes, the ‘Women’s thing’ *is* important.”

I say “Do women hold at least 1/3 of your Board seats?”

They say “We’re coming around on the design bit.”

I say “Is, as at Braun, your Chief Design Officer on the Board of Directors?”

They say "Improve."
I say **"Re-imagine!"**

They say "Of course we think the 'experiences thing' is important."
I say "Is there an 'EVP Experiences'?"

They say "Of course innovation is important."
I say "Is your percentage of revenue devoted to R&D at least 1.5 (2.0? 2.5?) times the industry average?"

They say "Of course we believe in IS/IT."
I say "Is the CIO on the Board of Directors?" (Only 5% of Fortune500 CIOs are on the Board. One example: Wal*Mart.)

They say "Of course we believe in IS/IT."
I say "How many members of your Board are under 35 years old?"

They say "We believe in having a 'flat organization.'"
I say "Is your headquarters in a Tower?"

They say "no child left behind."

I say "education" is leaving ALL our children behind, as it is totally misaligned to deal with tomorrow's (this afternoon's) uncertain, ambiguous, creativity-driven economy.

They say "If it can't be precisely measured then it isn't real." (And I suppose if it can be measured it is real? Think Enron? Adelphia? WorldCom?)
I say "If it can be precisely measured it isn't real." (Think Age of Intangibles & Relationships.) (Think: "He knew the price of everything and the value of nothing.")





They say “Rationality is the Bedrock of Modern Society.”
I say “Irrationality (irrational exuberance?) is the Mother of all True Entrepreneurial Pilgrimages.”

They say “Order is the necessary precursor to measured, sustainable success.”
I say “Dis-order is the precursor to Opportunistic Sorties, Market Creation, Quantum Leaps, and Entrepreneurial Adventure.

They say “To get anywhere, you have to know exactly where the hell you’re headed.”
I say “If you know precisely where you’re headed and exactly how you’re gonna get there, then you clearly suffer from Advanced Shrivelus Imaginationus.”
(This disease is fatal.)

They say “Employees need Well-defined Structure.”
I say “Talent should be encouraged to embark on Quests to the Unknown.”

They say “I’m here to maximize shareholder value.”
I say “I’m here to inflame each & every member of my Awesome Staff to embark with Vigor & Determination & Passion & Enthusiasm on a Quest of Monumental Consequence.” (And if I come even close to succeeding, it will, in fact, dramatically up the odds of Thriving Amidst Today’s Chaos—and creating untold shareholder value in the process.)

They say we need to “bring effectiveness to the supply chain.”
I say we need an IS/IT/Best Sourcing revolution based on nothing less than an Entirely Original Vision of what organizations are and how they interact.

They say “men.”
I say “**WOMEN.**”

They say “Globalization is a bumpy road.”

I say India and China and Asia in general are within two decades of running the show: Get ready or get trounced.

They say “defense” and “consolidation” are musts for a global game.

I say encourage Offense, nurture a Generation (or 10) of Entrepreneurs, cherish Creativity & Risk-taking from primary school onwards ... and don't expect to be saved by a bunch of bulky, retro behemoths commanded by a phalanx of Old White Guys who think 30 minutes a day on the corporate treadmill and 27 holes on the links are a fit defense against Revolution.

They say Diversity is a “good thing.”

I say Diversity is a Fresh Breath of Creative Air ... Absolutely Necessary for Economic Salvation in perilous times.

They say “Wait your turn, honor those who have marched these corridors before you.”

I say Get Off Your Butt & Go for the Gold ... TODAY ... or sign the transfer papers willing your job in perpetuity to a Chinese or Indian who Gives a Shit and Gets Up (VERY) Early and works Saturdays & Sundays.

They say “offshoring” is a “blight.”

I say the Earth proved not to be the center of the Solar System ... and the USA is not the epicenter-in-perpetuity of the Earth ... and that we had best learn ... NOW ... to prosper and take pleasure in a dynamic, exciting, creative, multi-polar economic environment. (Damn it.)

They say “It's a fright.”

I say “It's a Helluva Ride.”





They say it's "daunting."
I say it's "a bronco rider's delight."

They say "Life is a marathon; husband your strength."
I say "Life is a sprint. Begin planning your World-beating Me Inc. start-up ... TODAY."

They say lifetime employment was a boon.
I say lifetime employment was Indentured Servitude, modern-day Slavery.

They say "safety net."
I say "I am my safety net; give me the 'Ownership Society.'" (And I'm a lifelong Democrat.)

They say "zero defects."
I say "A day without a screw-up or two is a day pissed away."

They say "Think about it."
I say "Try it."

They say "Plan it."
I say "Test it."

They say "continuous improvement."
I say "Bold Leaps."

They say "Keep on Improvin'."
I say "Keep on Leapin'."



They say “Radical change takes a decade.”
**I say “Radical change
takes a Minute.”**
(See AA.)



They say “Built to last.”
I say “Built to Soar. We’re all dead in the long run ... live your Insane Fantasy.
Devil take the hindmost.”

They (Jim Collins) say “Walgreens is Cool.”
I say “I love Larry Ellison.” (Oracle rules ... at least for the next ten minutes.)

They say “Play the odds.”
I say “Reward excellent failures. Punish mediocre successes.”
(Thanks, Phil Daniels.)

They say “Eighty-hour weeks will kill you.”
I say “Work 35-hour weeks, and the Chinese will kill you.”

They say “Install cost controls with teeth.”
I say “Ha. Ha. Ha. Blow Up the existing enterprise and start with a Clean Sheet
of Paper.”



They say "Install cost controls with teeth."
I say "Grow the Top Line."

They say "Times are changing."
I say "Everything has already changed. Tomorrow is the First Day of Your Revolution ... or you're Toast."

They say "We can't all be Anita Roddick or Maxine Clark or Stan Shih or Les Wexner or Jerry Yang."
I say "Why not?"

They say "We can't all be a Brand."
I say "Why not?"

They say "We can't all be Revolutionaries."
I say "Why not?"

They say "Beware the Hype."
I say "Been to China lately? Visited Infosys in Bangalore lately?"

They say this is just a Rant.
I say this is just Reality.

They say "The man is not nice."
I say "The times are not forgiving."

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