

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

**Tom Peters**

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*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 35 “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.**)*

# 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. **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.)
9. **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.
10. **The “sharing economy.”** Sharing pays! Sharing (more) pays (more)!
11. **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.
12. **Calendar supremacy.** You ARE how you spend your time. PERIOD.
13. **Civility.** Civility allows you to sleep at night. Civility is (also) a STUNNING competitive advantage.
14. **“EXCELLENT” Meetings.** Meetings are what bosses “do.” Meetings are de facto Leadership Opportunity #1. Act accordingly. (Few do.)

15. **Your response = The ball game.** The problem is rarely the problem. The response to the problem is the problem.
16. **Thank you!** “Acknowledge” and “Appreciate” are perhaps the two most powerful words in the leader’s language.
17. **Listen up!** Make 2014: The Year of the EAR.
18. **2013-14/New Year’s Week.** BEGINNINGS and ENDINGS matter. A LOT.
19. **The delicacy of the helping process.** We suck at criticism.
20. **EXCELLENCE.**
21. **Limits to “strategy.”** Winners focus on EXECUTION.
22. **RADICAL Personal Development.** It’s the only survival strategy amidst the economic/tech tsunami. Start ASAP.
23. **Benchmarking.** Effective “benchmarking” is NOT about copying—it IS about learning and adapting to circumstances.
24. **Judgment.** OUR JUDGMENT STINKS. PERIOD. (And there are tons of research to prove that VERY uncomfortable point.
25. **Culture comes FIRST.** If (hyper-hardnosed) former IBM CEO Lou Gerstner says it, it must be so!
26. **The THREE Rules.** Taking the high road to success.
27. **The “PI6.”** Or: Personal Impact SIX. Short and (I hope) sweet.
28. **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.
29. **47 questions for newly anointed CEOs.** Do you leave 50% of your time unscheduled? (And 46 others.)
30. **The LAST word.** (For now.)
31. **The LAST word (Version TWO).** People REALLY First—or else.
32. **The LAST word (Version THREE).** Do (NOW) or Die.
33. **The LAST word (Version FOUR).** Implementation: The “last 99%.”
34. **The LAST word (Version FIVE).** The only thing we have to fear is the absence of fear.
35. **The LAST word (Version SIX).** Nothing half way! Use your last ounce of energy!

## 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. **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.**

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

Change: **Recruit allies 2 or 3 levels “down” ... where the real work is done and from which the system can be indirectly manipulated. I.e., “Suck down” for success.**

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.**

# 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 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 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.

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 3 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.

Change agents: Preaching to the choir is just fine. If the members of the choir  
preach to their choirs, it becomes a ... **MOVEMENT!**

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” folk 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” 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 intensity of 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. Leadership 2014: 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. 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.*



## IX. 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.**

## X. 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

## XI. 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 battle cry: 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.”** —Section 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 waaaaay 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 battle cry: ***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.”***

## XII. The Ultimate Truth-teller: **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?*

## XIII. 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 gentlemen. 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 website (from Adam Bryant, *Quick and Nimble: Lessons from Leading CEOs on How to Create a Culture of Innovation*)

## XIV. 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 the 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?*

## XV. 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.*

## XVI. 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 the 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.” 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/)

## 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*

## XVII. 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?*



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.”*

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

## XIX. 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.”*

## XX. **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 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’s how long it takes you to decide to never again accept anything less than excellence from yourself.”

## XXI. Overdoing “Strategy”/Dealing With Strategic Disruption as an Individual

“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**

## XXII. **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 all geniuses & worked together, econ tsunami would still thunder in. Answer is RPD/Radical Personal Development. **PERIOD.**

*Remember: Excellent “Brand You” portfolio about self-LESS-ness, not self-ISH-ness. You are as good as 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.**

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 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*

*“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*

*“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*

## **XXIII. 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 nurse’s observation from 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!*

## XXIV. Judgment, Questionable Quality Thereof

Docs over-rely on clinical evidence—a handful of [distorted memories] about old cases. 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. 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. CS is more or less a synonym for faulty judgment.

Mr. Gladwell gave us “blink.” Research 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 BigData 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 startup looks forward to 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 BigData, 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 ...**

***OPENMINDED.***

**New World Order: FOUR MINUTES after your [Stefan Stern] 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!**

## XXV. 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 **Hardass 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!

## XXVI. 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.

**XXVII. PI6/Personal impact SIX**

**Outwork 'em.**

**Outread 'em.**

**Outlast 'em.**

**Show Up.**

**Listen.**

**Keep an Open Mind.**

XXVIII. 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 Cowan

*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*—Victor 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 the 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 Growth 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  
*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*—Ellah Reza Bourbakhsh  
*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 & Jeff Dachis

*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*—E.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*  
—Evgny 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 Twenty-first 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 What You Can Do About It*—Christine Pearson & Christine Porath  
*Choosing Civility: The 25 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 the Stakes Are High*—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan & Al Switzler  
*Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and 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*—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 This 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*—Richard Whalin  
*Lords of Strategy: The Secret History of the New Corporate World*—Walter Kiechel

## XXIX. **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 you that if you live to be 109, you'll never forgive yourself no matter how many zeroes in your net worth.)

*List your Top 5 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 5 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, can 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 first-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.)**

XXX. 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)*

## XXXI. 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???????

**XXXII. 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?*”**

**XXXIII. The LAST Word (Version FOUR)**

*“Execution is  
Strategy.”*

—Fred Malek

\*Superstar private-sector entrepreneur, my White House boss, 1974.

## XXXIV. 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.”)

**XXXV. 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)