

PERFORMANCE

41. It's Show Time! All the Time!

"It's always show time"—David D'Alessandro, *Career Warfare*

I could not agree more. "Show time" for *me* =

Every speech!

Every PowerPoint presentation!

Every *individual* slide!

Every CLIENT phone call!

EVERY INTERCHANGE WITH A "FOURTH-LEVEL" CLIENT "ADMIN ASSISTANT"

(who may make a negative—or positive!—comment to her boss's boss—who signs my check!—about an off-the-cuff comment I hastily made).

EVERY EMPLOYEE INTERACTION ... especially when I'm stressed and/or grouchy.

Every Post at tompeters.com!

Every Tweet at Twitter!

Every TEN-SECOND EYE CONTACT with someone who asks me to sign a book!

And so on.

And on.

"Show time" is a state of mind, an encompassing approach to life. It deserves careful attention—age 23 or 63, commander-in-chief or squad-leading corporal.

42. Work on Your First Impressions. First impressions are your and my personal-career keys, and the keys to the likes of a company's customer service report card. We both get that. (Of course.) And yet I feel quite sure that we need constant reminding, reminding not just of the Power of First Impressions, but that there is a full-blown ... *Science and Art of the Construction and Execution and Maintenance of Fantastic Beginnings*. That is, like so many things in *The Little BIG Things*, it's "obvious"—but to pull it off with power and aplomb, one must become a serious student of the phenomenon—and practice as you would practice gymnastics. I've long had as my mantra: "Perception is all there is." It may irritate you, especially if you, like me, are an engineer by training and disposition—but the fact is the "packaging" is almost as important as the content.

NB: For company leaders, how about CFIO, or Chief First Impressions Officer? (I'm more or less serious about the title—and totally serious about a formal job assignment.)

NB: For you and me as individuals, Fox News über-spin doctor Roger Ailes says all I/you/we have is ... 7 SECONDS ... to make a first impression. Yikes! (On the other hand, package-goods marketers have but 1/3rd of a second to produce consumer impact.)

43. Work on Your "Last Impressions." Beginnings and endings overwhelm our memory of a thing. Their importance demands far more than casual concern. I call the whole shebang EEM (Emotional Experience Management—sorry, I enjoy conjuring up these acronyms). And working on the parting garners PEASS/Planned Exit Atmospheric Strategy & Story. Commerce Bank, the East Coast retail-banking superstar was bought by Toronto Dominion; but in its independent glory, one tactic was to be religiously open 15 minutes before the opening bell and open for another 15 minutes after the closing bell—gotta love it (and it worked like magic).

Big message: *It's not nearly enough to avoid last impression "screw-ups." Of course we don't want anything to "go wrong" at the Experience Exit Stage. But more important, we want a ... PLANNED EXIT ATMOSPHERICS STRATEGY & STORY that's ... MEMORABLE, COMPELLING, EMOTIONAL, that goes "AGGRESSIVELY RIGHT," not "not wrong."*

Beginnings-Endings = Strategic opportunity.

44. Work on Your Presentation Skills (Or: 17 Minutes Can Change the World!) Barack Obama moved from obscurity to the Big Tent with a 17-minute speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. While the stakes are much lower for you or me, the cost or benefit of presentation skills is nonetheless enormous within our local context.

My obsession with bugging others about primacy of top-tier presentation skills started late, after I sat at dinner, in 2007, next to a "Top 25" exec at a Fortune 25 company, an outfit known for its "just the facts" approach to decision making. We were chatting about this, that, and the other, and at one point he said to me, out of the blue, "I work like hell developing guys for the top, and say I've got four guys who've performed well and could move up. I'll swear, two or three, or sometimes all four, will drop off the track as a direct result of lousy presentation skills."

I know this chap well, and he's a naturally reticent genius engineer whose speaking skills were marginal until he applied, over a period of years, his matchless willpower—and brute force—to training/improving himself.

This document is #12 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit tompeters.com.

