

WORK

45. On Being a "Professional." Think "professional," and what words come to mind? Doctor. Lawyer. School teacher. Musician. Ballplayer. Six Sigma quality guru. Cloud-computing consultant. JIT inventory management expert. These sorts of professionals share certain characteristics such as: student of their craft, dedicated to a "calling," pursuing constant improvement, master of a defined body of knowledge. My effort in many sections of the book is to expand, or even re-define, the idea of "professional" to include several bedrock areas of behavior, the effective practice of which determines success or failure in getting things done. For example:

- Saying "Thank you" (Mastering the Practice of Appreciation)
- Apologizing (Repairing frayed relationships)
- Listening (Hearing and Absorbing others' views)
- Achieving peace and prosperity among warring organizational tribes (turning cross-functional integration into Strategic Weapon #1)

Each of these items *can* be studied and *can* be mastered—with about as much practice as is required to achieve mastery in painting or molecular biology. Most of us take most of the things enumerated immediately above "seriously." But few of us are determined to achieve no-bull ... "professionalism" ... around these and like topics, which are the true bedrock of enterprise effectiveness.

46. "Everything Passes Through Finance." (And So Should You.) While one can joke about finance ("Those guys have a one-word vocabulary, 'No'"), the fact is that the "finance guys" play a determining role in all but the tiniest projects. Face up to it—and do something about it. Study, make pals, seek a temp assignment in finance, whatever—the dividends will be stratospheric. Bottom line:

Everything passes through Finance.
Their business is your business.
Stop pissing and moaning about their world.
Invest in appreciation of their world.

47. What's on the Agenda? Why Don't You Decide? There are a bunch of "lousy" or "trivial" tasks that are neither lousy nor trivial. Agenda creator and official notetaker are perhaps first among equals. Using avenues like this to manipulate the power nodes within an organizational system can be extraordinarily useful—and can happen early in one's career. (James Madison to a significant degree shaped the Constitution because he was the convention's official scribe—is that a good enough example for you?)

48. We Are All in Sales. Period.

"Everyone lives by selling something."—Robert Louis Stevenson

A successful TV producer saw his work rejected again and again. While accidentally viewing a late-night advertorial on some topic such as "How to get rich in real estate," it dawned on him that his sales skills stunk. He turned his formidable skills to learning the sales trade—reading and reading, attending a dozen all-day sales seminars, etc. In relatively short order, he reports, his losing streak became a winning streak—and now he sits near the top of the TV-world food chain.

The "bottom line" is or should be obvious: Literally every one of us needs to formally sharpen our sales skills—many will end up echoing the record of my TV industry pal.

This document is #13 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.

