

INITIATIVE

49. Make That "Three-Minute Call"! Today! Now! Yes it is all—as in *all*—about relationships. And ever so many are off track or under-nourished—at any point in time. One very big part of the problem-opportunity comes in the form of what I call "the all-important three-minute call." That is, address the problem early, before the tipping point, with what amounts to no more than a smidgen of effort—and avoid immeasurable pain down the pike.

In short, a three-minute call made today (NOW!) to deal with a "slightly" bruised ego or a "minor" misunderstanding can go a long way toward helping you avoid a trip to divorce court, the loss of a billion-dollar Client (lots of evidence for this), or an employee lawsuit tomorrow.

And it can be and usually is, even more powerful than it seems. In 9 of 10 cases, the call goes far, far better than you anticipated it would. (The fact that you took the initiative accounts for a lot.) Not only does "the call" help "deal with" a thorny problem, but surprisingly often it launches a new and positive trajectory for a fraying relationship.

The issue, of course is the will to "just do it"—which at times means swallowing your pride and seems to be much tougher for boys than girls. Part of the answer, my frequent answer in *The Little BIG Things*, is "working at it." That is, I'd argue that "making the three-minute call" is at least as worthy of study and practice as learning to play a piano or build a fine cabinet: Nations rise or fall, battles are won or lost, based on (1) not making the call, or (2) making the call occasionally, or (3) making the call routinely, as a matter of habit, and with abiding skill.

50. Show Up! (It's a Start) Woody Allen famously said that "*Eighty percent of success is showing up.*" It's a good laugh line—and unchallengeable. It's true for me and you—and true in circumstances of the greatest import. In 1787 in the U.S., delegates came to Philadelphia to draft our enduring, as it turned out, Constitution. The smallest of all the states, Delaware, may have greater influence than any other state. They took the effort seriously (some, such as New York, didn't). Delaware sent a big delegation, they showed up every day (most others didn't) and members volunteered to do every damn thing imaginable—and in the end it paid off, big time. Hence I conclude that "Woody's strategy" works in an office of five people—and when the fate of a nation is at stake. As I said ... Big Time.

51. Get Up Earlier Than the Next (in This Case) Gal. I was flying to Boston from London on a Saturday morning. It was a seven-hour flight. A professional woman was sitting in front of me. I duly swear, she did not look up once during the entire flight. She produced more on her laptop in those seven hours than I do in a week. Or a month.

There's something to say for out-working "the other guy"—or woman. In short, I would give both my right and left arms to have the woman described above on my side—and, God help me, not on the other side!

52. Make an Insane Public Effort. The late sports super-agent Mark McCormack (once voted the most powerful man in sports) once condoned and even certified one of my own crazy habits. He said there are times, not necessarily infrequent, when it is wise-*imperative* to travel 5,000 miles for a 5-minute meeting. It was a tactic I started using in 1974, when I was a junior White House staffer working on drug abuse issues. And the power and effectiveness thereof are literally

beyond measure. You can get a lot done in a short meeting when it's clear that you've killed yourself to be there; but it's overwhelmingly psychological. The power of making an "insane effort" almost always breaks a logjam—and not infrequently leads to a solution on the spot.

The key word here is ... "insane."

This document is #14 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.

