

YES

68. Just Say Yes!—Or: A Lesson from My Mother-in-Law My wife Susan and I, on short notice, invited her mom to come down from New Canaan CT and join us for a Midtown Manhattan dinner. She said "No." I've known her for a long time. If she's anything, she's self certain. I.e., "No" = No.

When we arrived in town from Vermont, we were therefore nonplussed to find a message from Joan, saying, *"I'll be arriving at 7."* We obviously asked her why she'd changed her mind.

"I decided to say 'Yes.'" She recalled a friend who'd had a vigorous life into her 90s. "She said she had three 'secrets': First, surround yourself with good books on any and every topic. Second, spend time with people of all ages. And third, say 'Yes.'" She added that indeed she had not intended to drive down from Connecticut. But she remembered her friend and determinedly decided to say ...

"Yes."

69. For the Sheer Glorious 24/7 Fun of It! Richard Branson's idea of fun is going head to head in the ring with someone who has him by a jillion pounds. As Michael Specter wrote in his wonderful *New Yorker* profile ("Branson's Luck"), "Branson likes to enter a market controlled by a giant ... British Airways, say, or Coke or Murdoch. Then he presents himself as the hip alternative." Branson *is* his brand, he enjoys nutty stunts that personify the brand's "hipness."

I'm not Branson by a long, long shot; but I understand the guiding impulse. The *only* reason that I take on new stuff, and keep accumulating frequent flyer miles, has long been the unadulterated pleasure I get from always marching "the other way"—and in particular storming after those I think have let us down—from numbers-obsessed execs to the healthcare industry's lack of rigor as measured by hundreds of thousands of preventable annual deaths in the U.S. alone.

My advice?

This is *strategic*: As boss, do your darnedest to "make it fun," "make it a ride to remember," "make it a bloody ball"! Though you don't need to do round-the-world balloon escapades like Branson, your Job #1, or at least Job #2, is to in fact ... "make it fun/cool."