

## **WOW**

**147. Realism? Not On My Watch!** We recently finished a summer building project on our Vermont farm. We did our levelheaded best to budget it correctly—getting contractors to rework estimates and redesigning accordingly. All that said, it looks like the carefully considered \$40,000 project will come in at about \$70,000. (Uhm, or so.)

I decided to do a little casual research at a dinner party, asking several people about their homebrew projects. Three questions:

- (1) How did you do vs. budget for projects completed a couple of years ago?
- (2) If you'd known the real price tag when you started, would you have gone ahead?
- (3) In hindsight, was the eventual price tag worth it?

To Q1, the answer ranged from about 5 percent over plan (if you can believe it—I'm skeptical) to 5 times plan (which I *do* believe). As to Q2, four of the six I queried said "no way" would they have started if they'd known what they were getting into—the other two were on the fence. Concerning Q3, after-the-fact satisfaction, five said, in effect, "*Yes! We'd do it again*"—all five of those five "yups" were dogmatic. And one said "Maybe, maybe not."

It's obviously dangerous to generalize from such a tiny sample and trivial topic, but my reading of history, business, and in general, says this phenomenon is as ordinary as it gets. Furthermore, in the back of one's mind, one damn well *knows* that the price tag will likely be far in excess of what's planned. And my point? Yes, you'd better have a superb number-crunching CFO, but if you let him-her rule the roost, there won't be much left to roost on. Of course I know it's "Damned if you do, damned if you don't." On the other hand ...

Progress (ALL PROGRESS) clearly hinges on illusion and delusion!

Cherish your dreamers!  
Master "dreamer nurturing."  
(And also have a top-drawer CFO.)

### **148. If No WOW, Then ... No Go.**

Does "it" Pop?  
Does "it" Sparkle?"  
Does "it" make you Grin?  
Is "it" ... WOW?

If "it" (grand or mundane) isn't WOW ... re-do it!  
Or don't do it!

This is ... Your Day.  
Not "their" day.

(I own no rose-colored glasses. Few 66-year-olds do. I have crappy days—and crappy months. But I am unable, in *anything* I do, to be satisfied with less than the aspiration of an 8 on the 1-to-10 WOW-o-meter. That's as true for the brushcutting micro-project I do most every day in the summer on my Vermont farm as it is for the speeches-for-profit ... and this book. Why not WOW-as-"ordinary"-goal?)

**149. What Makes You So Special?—Or: "Only" Beats "Best."** I *guarantee* that any reader—from anywhere, in any business—can learn something from this book: *Retail Superstars: Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America*, by retail guru George Whalin. These are stores that, literally, give new meaning to the word "special"—and "Gaspworthy" & "WOW"! That personify one of my "Top 10 Favorite Quotes," from Jerry Garcia (The Grateful Dead): "*You don't want to be merely the best of the best. You want to be the only ones who do what you do.*"

We start, naturally (!), in *Fairfield, Ohio*, home to Jungle Jim's International Market. The adventure in "*shoppertainment*," as Jungle Jim's call it, begins in the parking lot and goes on to 1,600 cheeses and, yes, 1,400 varieties of hot sauce—not to mention 12,000 wines priced from \$8 to \$8,000 a bottle; all this is brought to you by 4,000 vendors from around the world. Like virtually all the stores in this book, customers flock to the doors from every corner of the globe.

And on it goes from there ...

These stores demonstrate-prove so many things:

You can create a worldwide attraction and thrive as an independent in the Age of the Big Box retailer!

You can do anything!

You can be from anywhere!

You can make any-damn-thing ... bizarrely-amazingly-stupendously-special!

Yes, regardless of your speciality or business unit, I will indeed ... GUARANTEE ... that you can learn from this book.

**150. Is It "Gaspworthy"?** Will your plan for addressing today's "mundane" task make others "gasp" at its audacity? As an alumni of McKinsey and Co., I received an email from the firm in 2004 about its response to the tsunami in Southeast Asia. I read it, nodded, and cast it aside. (But did not "delete" for some unknown reason.) I returned to it a few hours later—and was moved to send McKinsey's managing partner an email. I said that the response was "perfectly adequate," but I added that business has a tawdry rep those/these days, and that McKinsey is viewed far and wide as the home of the premier Counselors to Global Top Management; so, I chided, I saw it as a missed opportunity in that McKinsey's response failed to ... "*make me gasp by its audacity.*"

Forget McKinsey. The Bigger Point is that in our "responses" to tragedy and opportunity alike, "good enough" is a tawdry way to pass through life. How about, instead, as aspiration, my cobbled-together term ... "*gaspworthy*"? So, does your response to today's principal "chore" qualify for a ... Medal of Certified Gaspworthiness?

(Surely, you say, I live in the land of make believe. There's a lot of stuff that just needs doing—and need not produce a "gasp." I acknowledge that's apparently true, and indeed the default state of nature. Yet *The Little BIG Things* is mostly dedicated to the idea of little things that aren't in fact little at all—so-called "little things" that are in actual fact "gaspworthy.")

**151. Extremism in the Defense of WOW Is No Vice.** Corporations are falling like dominoes. Chief executives are getting the axe at a record pace. Why? Incremental solutions in discontinuous times seldom if ever work. The axiom applies to a great enterprise and to a tiny two-person accountancy alike. And to me. And to you. Take a look at Tomorrow's Calendar. Today's, for that matter. Find and underscore something—*anything*—on that calendar that

represents a small step towards something extreme. Something big. Something monumental.  
(And worry like hell if there's nothing!)

Extremism in politics stinks.  
Extremism in business is a necessity.

This document is #43 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](http://tompeters.com).

