

"BIG"

161. Retirement Sucks. My college fraternity brothers have a wonderful ritual: an annual newsletter that we all contribute to. A few years back (I was 62 at the time), I vented about the topic of "retirement": "You've all doubtless heard the Churchill yarn. The old man was transiting the Atlantic by ship. An aide made a mental calculation and turned to WSC, 'Sir Winston, I've calculated how much brandy you've drunk. It comes to about here,' he said, pointing to a spot about halfway up the wall of the cavernous ballroom in which they were seated. WSC leaned in toward the chap, pointed to his de facto marker on the wall, and purportedly said, 'So little time, so much to do.'

"I am often tired (I'm 62, not 22), but I Love & Appreciate the Opportunities I've been granted to take part in the Universal Dialogue about the Meaning of Work & Life & National Purpose.

"PUT SIMPLY, 'RETIREMENT' TO ME MEANS BEING DRAGGED OFF A STAGE AND SLIPPED INTO A SIMPLE PINE BOX INSCRIBED WITH THESE WORDS: 'HE GAVE A SHIT.'"

162. Think Legacy!

"My life is my message."—Gandhi

LEGACY!

It can be a beautiful word!

(Why I mattered.)

(What I left behind that lasted.)

But I urge you also to think of it as a continuous goal. Consider your current assignment as head of a 7-person branch in an IS/IT department. (Or whatever.) Suppose you move on in 6 or 12 or 18 (or 21) months: WHAT ... ONE SENTENCE ... WILL SUMMARIZE YOUR "TERM"?

Real bedrock: I believe a Single Day can have as much of a "legacy" as a lifetime. In fact, that had better be the case! Why? Because this day ... stretching out before me ... is filled (at the moment) with limitless opportunities ... and it is ... ALL I HAVE!

Right?

Just another day?

Hardly!

THIS IS ... IT!

163. Don't Forget Why You're Here! Peggy Noonan, "A Life's Lesson," on the astounding response to the passing of Tim Russert, the *Wall Street Journal*, June 21-22, 2008:

"In a way, the world is a great liar. It shows you it worships and admires money, but at the end of the day it doesn't. It says it adores fame and celebrity, but it doesn't, not really. The world admires, and wants to hold on to, and not lose, goodness. It admires virtue. At the end it gives its greatest tributes to generosity, honesty, courage, mercy, talents well used, talents that, brought into the world, make it better. That's what it really admires. That's what we talk about in eulogies, because that's what's important. We don't say, 'The thing about Joe was he was rich!' We say, if we can, 'The thing about Joe was he took good care of people.'"

I wish you a long life, but if tragedy were to have struck you yesterday, what do you think "they" might say at your memorial service? This maudlin question is not to be dwelt on "24/7," but it is worth considering on an irregularly regular basis.

Amen.
And good luck.

This document is #48 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.

