

PREVIEW/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This Is the (OBVIOUS)
Stuff I Care About.
This Is the (OBVIOUS)
Stuff, the Absence of
Which Sends Me Into a
BLIND RAGE.**

**Tom Peters
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**33 BFOs/“Blinding Flashes of the OBVIOUS”
Anybody Listening??????????**

BFO #1: If you (RELIGIOUSLY) help people—EVERY SINGLE PERSON, JUNIOR OR SENIOR, LIFER OR TEMP—grow and reach/exceed their perceived potential, then they in turn will bust their individual and collective butts to create great experiences for Clients—and the “bottom line” will get fatter and fatter and fatter. (ANYBODY LISTENING?) (PEOPLE FIRST = MAXIMIZED PROFITABILITY. PERIOD.) (ANYBODY LISTENING?) (FYI: “*People FIRST*” message is 10X more urgent than ever in the high-engagement “AGE OF SOCIAL BUSINESS.”)

Note: In 1985, I gave a 2-day seminar to YPO members in Manhattan. As we moved to close, I asked for feedback. Early on, a chap by the name of Manny Garcia got up to speak—Manny, who became a pal, was one of Burger King’s top franchisees. He began, “I really didn’t hear anything new in the two days”—you could have heard my sharp intake of breath from the back row. He continued, “I’d add that this was probably the best seminar I’ve attended in my many years

in business.” Huh? “I’d call it a **‘BLINDING FLASH OF THE OBVIOUS.’** We KNOW all these things—but time and again we fail to relentlessly practice them.” In retrospect, I consider Manny’s feedback to be the best I’ve ever gotten.

There will be ... **GUARANTEED** ... nothing new in the 500+ pages ahead. We know putting people **REALLY** first translates into mid- to long-term growth and maximized profitability. **SO WHY DON’T WE DO IT?** We know ... **GREAT TRAINING** ... pays for itself 100 times over—in business just much as in sports and the arts. **SO WHY DON’T WE DO IT?** We know a simple “**THANK YOU**” is the greatest of all motivators. **SO WHY DON’T WE DO IT?** And on—and on—it goes.

Frankly, I am in a rotten mood. If I was preaching rocket science, and people didn’t “get it,” that’d be one thing. But each of the 27 points in this brief introductory section and each of the 71 items in the main body amount to, beyond doubt, a ... **BLINDING FLASH OF THE OBVIOUS.**

Damn it! Let’s get a move on! It is indeed obvious, which leads to the subtitle of this book ...

NO EXCUSES!

**BFO 2: ENABLING “ALL HANDS”
GROWTH IS LEADER DUTY #1.** (And
ALL good things flow therefrom.)

**BFO 3: The “CTO”/Chief Training
Officer should (MUST!) be on a par with
the CFO/CMO.**

Training = Investment #1.

(8 of 10 CEOs see training as an “expense,” not an investment/prime asset booster.) (“*Our training courses are so good they make me want to giggle.*” “*Our trainers are on the same pay scale as our engineers.*”) (In a 45-minute “tour d’horizon” of the enterprise: GUARANTEE 9 of 10 CEOs* [*10 of 10?] wouldn’t once mention training. THAT = DISGRACE.)

BFO 4: OUT-READ ’EM. AGE 17.

AGE 77. 2014: READ & GROW ... or wilt.

(One financial services superstar pegs CEO prob. #1: “They don’t read enough.”) STUDENTHOOD (OBSESSION THEREWITH) (for ALL of us) FOR LIFE!

**BFO 5: Organizations exist for ONE
reason ... TO BE OF SERVICE.**

PERIOD. (And effective leaders in turn are ...
SERVANT LEADERS. PERIOD.)

BFO 6: The ... **HEART OF THE MATTER** (e.g., productivity, quality, service) ... is the typically under-attended ... **FIRST-LINE BOSS**. (Your FULL CADRE of first-line bosses is arguably a ... **“TOP 3” ASSET**.)

BFO 7: **WTTMSW**. (Whoever Tries The Most Stuff Wins.) **WTTMSASTMSUTFW**. (Whoever Tries The Most Stuff And Screws The Most Stuff Up The Fastest Wins.)

READY. FIRE. AIM.

Practical translation #1: Winning through the discipline of **QUICK PROTOTYPES**. Winners: **“RELENTLESS EXPERIMENTATION.”**

“A Bias for Action”: #1 Success Requisite in 1982.

“A Bias for Action”: #1 Success Requisite in 2014.

BFO 8: “Fail faster. Succeed sooner.”

“FAIL. FORWARD. FAST.”

“Fail. Fail again. Fail better.”

“REWARD excellent failures. PUNISH mediocre successes.”

Book/Farson: *Whoever Makes The Most Mistakes Wins.*

We do NOT “accept”/“tolerate” failures.

WE CELEBRATE FAILURES.

BFO 9: Enabling change: It's **NOT NOT NOT** about “vanquishing (ignorant) foes.” **It's ALL ALL ALL** about recruiting and nurturing ...
ALLIES.

BFO 10: The Gospel of **“SMALL WINS.”**
You and your Allies cobble together a skein of successful trials (“small wins”); momentum around this portfolio of demos more important than any high-investment Big Victory.
(ALLIES + SMALL WINS + MOMENTUM = UNSTOPPABLE.)

BFO 11: Year = 220 lunches. WASTE NOT ONE. Cross-functional SNAFUs are the #1 problem for most orgs. Software ... **WILL NOT ...** fix it. **ONLY ...** “Social Stuff” works—e.g., makin’ pals in other functions; lunch = Strategy #1.

Goal: **XFX**/Cross-Functional Excellence ... or die trying.

BFO 12:
Excellence is NOT an “aspiration.”
Excellence IS the next 5 minutes.
(Or not.)

BFO 13: *In Search of Excellence* theme song:

“Hard is soft. Soft is Hard.”

(E.g., Numbers are the “soft stuff”—witness the crash. Solid relationships/integrity/trust/teamwork = True “hard stuff.”)

Strategy is important.

Systems are important.

CULTURE is ... MORE IMPORTANT.

(Serious change = Tackling the culture. PERIOD.)

(Even “Mr. Analysis,” in his autobiography, Lou Gerstner, IBM turnaround CEO, reluctantly acknowledged culture’s unequivocal primacy in the big-change-game.)

BFO 14: We Are What We Eat =

WE ARE/BECOME WHO WE

HANG OUT WITH. (“Hang out with ‘cool’ and thou shalt become more cool. Hang out with ‘dull’ and thou shalt become more dull.”) **RELIGIOUSLY/ CONSCIOUSLY MANAGE “HANG OUT.”**

EVERY “hang out decision” (employees/customers/ vendors/consultants/lunch mates/board composition/locale/etc.) **is a**

... STRATEGIC INNOVATION

DECISION. (Diversity [ON ANY DIMENSION YOU CAN NAME] is an imperative in confusing times.)

(Hire for ... **CURIOSITY.** EXPLICITLY.)

“If I could have chosen not to tackle the IBM culture head-on, I probably wouldn’t have. My bias coming in was toward strategy, analysis and measurement. In comparison, changing the attitude and behaviors of hundreds of thousands of people is very, very hard. [Yet] I came to see in my time at IBM that culture isn’t just one aspect of the game—it is the game.”

—Lou Gerstner, former IBM CEO

BFO 15: 2011: Apple's market cap surpasses

ExxonMobil's. Why? D-E-S-I-G-N. Are YOU

obsessed by ... DESIGN?

(In EVERY nook and EVERY cranny of EVERY tiny or humongous enterprise—and in your own professional affairs.) (DESIGN is an instinctive STATE OF MIND as well as a set of practices.)

(Less than EXCELLENCE in functionality = Unacceptable.)

(Less than SUPER-COOL in aesthetics = Unacceptable.)

BFO 16: LBT/TGR

MULTIPLIER POWER.

Ceaselessly seek the **LBTs/Little BIG Things.**

“Small stuff” ... BIG Impact: Walmart increases (mere) shopping basket size, small appliance sales up 50%. Reducing TGWs/Things Gone Wrong is invaluable. BUT ... put at least as much effort into remorselessly accumulating

TGRs/THINGS GONE RIGHT.

(E.g. Disney's OBSESSION with memorable Starts & Finishes courtesy ... PARKING LOT EXCELLENCE.)

BFO 17:

WOMEN BUY EVERYTHING.

**WOMEN ARE THE MOST
EFFECTIVE LEADERS.**

**WOMEN ARE THE MOST
SUCCESSFUL INVESTORS.**

(Does your organization ... UNMISTAKABLY ...
reflect that from stem to stern?)

“This will be the women’s century.”

—Dilma Rousseff, president of Brazil, opening address to U.N.
General Assembly/first woman to keynote the opening session)

BFO 18: KEEP ADDING VALUE.

IBM To **IBM**: From Machine dominance to Business
Services dominance.

UPS to **UPS**: From delivering Parcels to managing Logistics
Systems.

(“Transactional customer SATISFACTION” to “Systemic
customer **SOLUTIONS.**”)

(EVERYONE’s game. Tiny. Giant. EVERY industry.)

BFO 19: Forget B-I-G. (100% of biggies UNDER-perform long-term.) Instead build national wealth around ...

“MITTELSTAND” companies—

**MIDSIZE SUPERSTAR NICHE/
MICRO-NICHE DOMINATORS**

—in ANY category you can name. (C.f., Germany’s Mittelstand worldbeaters—#1 global exporter for years.)

(Battle cry: **“BE THE BEST. IT’S THE ONLY MARKET THAT’S NOT CROWDED.”** WHY ELSE BOTHER?)

(FYI: ANYTHING/EVERYTHING is subject to MIND-BOGGLING ADDED-VALUE/DIFFERENTIATION.

(BANISH the word ... “commodity.”)

BFO 20: The problem is RARELY the problem. The lackluster RESPONSE to the problem is invariably the real problem. Answer? Slavishly adhere to these two response

commandments: **LIGHTNING-FAST**

RESPONSE OVERKILL.

UNEQUIVOCAL QUICK-TIME

APOLOGY.

BFO 21: What do people (most) desire—including thee and me? **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.**

So: Show your appreciation ... **BIG TIME/ALL THE TIME.**
(Track it ... **RELIGIOUSLY!**) (“Acknowledgement” is ...
THE MOST POWERFUL WORD IN THE LEADER’S VOCABULARY.)

BFO 22: The two most powerful words in the English language are?

No contest: **“THANK YOU.”**
(**ACT ACCORDINGLY—e.g., OBSESSIVELY.**)

BFO 23: Have you done your **MBWA**/
Managing By Wandering Around ... **TODAY?** If not, why not? (Hint: There are ... **ZERO ACCEPTABLE EXCUSES.**)

BFO 24: Your **CALENDAR** knows your **TRUE** priorities.
Do **YOU**?

You ... ARE ... your calendar.
Your calendar ... NEVER LIES.

(Drucker: Best bosses do **ONE** thing at a time.)

BFO 25: What is the individual's/organization's #1 enduring strategic asset? Easy: **ASSET #1 = INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EXCELLENCE AT ... L-I-S-T-E-N-I-N-G.**

(Listening can be ... TAUGHT. Listening PER SE is a ... PROFESSION. Are YOU a “stellar professional listener”? THINK ABOUT IT. **PLEASE.**)

BFO 26:

Leadership is **NOT** about abstractions.

Leadership **IS** about ... mastering discreet skills.

E.g.:

“Aggressive ‘professional’ listener.”

Meetings as leadership opportunity #1.

Expert at “helping.” (Helping “*professional.*”)

Fanatic about training.

Master of appreciation/acknowledgement.

Effective at apology.

Creating a culture of automatic helpfulness by all to all.

Master of hiring. (Hiring “*professional.*”)

Master of evaluating people.

Student of decision-making/devastating impact of irrational aspects thereof.

Creating a no-nonsense execution culture.

Meticulous about employee development/100% of staff.

Student of the power of “d”iversity (all flavors of difference).

Making team-building excellence everyone’s daily priority.

Understanding the value of matchless first-line management.

BFO 27: Aim to make EVERY internal and external experience (PRODUCT/ SERVICE/SYSTEM/EMPLOYEE INTERACTION/CUSTOMER INTERACTION/

COMMUNITY INTERACTION) a ... **WOW!**

(WOW = WOW. USE THE

“W-WORD” PER SE!) (E.g., Do 4 out of

your Top 5 projects score 8 or above on a 10-point “WOW

Scale”? If not, get on it:

NOW.

TODAY.

WITHIN THE HOUR.)

BFO 28: EVERY DAY PROVIDES

A DOZEN (LITERALLY) **LEADERSHIP**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERY

ONE OF US. (Every = EVERY. From the most

junior—*and even the 3-day temp*—to the Big Dudes.)

GRAB AT LEAST ONE.

BFO 29: Circa 2014+: You (me/all of us) totally misunderstand overall econ context if you choose not to

start today on ... **RPD/Radical Personal**

Development.

BFO 30: White collar work is by and large ticketed to fall prey to artificial intelligence/eye-popping algorithms as well as globalization. Stand there and take it on the chin?

NO.

My answer (1999 book, *The Professional Service Firm 50*):

CONVERT EVERY “DEPARTMENT”/ “UNIT” [and yourself] INTO A FULL-FLEDGED ... “PSF”/PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRM ... WHOLLY DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE & WOW & ADDING SKYSCRAPING VALUE TO THEIR CUSTOMERS’ [usually internal customers] ACTIVITIES.

Why not?

There is no good reason not to proceed within the fortnight!

BFO 31: CIVILITY WORKS. CIVILITY PAYS.

E.g.: **K = R = P.**

Kindness = Repeat business = Profit.

(ONE MORE TIME: “Kindness” is **N-O-T** “Soft.”)

BFO 32: Most of us/most organizations discount ... **INTROVERTS.** THAT IS A ... **FIRST-ORDER STRATEGIC BLUNDER.** (Please read Susan Cain's book *QUIET*. It was a no-bull lifechanger for me.)

BFO 33: Listen (HARD) to my old D.C. boss, Fred Malek:

**“EXECUTION IS
STRATEGY.”**

(Herb Kelleher/Southwest: “*We have a ‘strategic plan.’ DOING THINGS.*”) (Jack Welch/GE: “*In real life, strategy is actually very straightforward. Pick a general direction ... AND IMPLEMENT LIKE HELL.*”) (Charles Munger, Berkshire Hathaway “*Costco figured out the big, simple things and executed with total fanaticism.*”)

Execution: That all-important ... **“LAST 99 PERCENT.”**