

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.**

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**27 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 as 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 from there.)

**BFO 3: The “CTO”/Chief Training
Officer should (MUST!) be on a par with
the CFO/CMO.** (In a 45-minute “tour d’horizon” of
the enterprise, I 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 problem #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** (productivity, quality, service, you name it) ... is the typically under-attended ... **FIRST-LINE BOSS**. (Your FULL CADRE of 1st-line bosses is arguably ... **ASSET #1**.)

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

“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.*

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: Year = 220 lunches. WASTE NOT ONE. Cross-functional SNAFU #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 11:

**Excellence is NOT an “aspiration.”
Excellence IS the next 5 minutes.**

(Or not.)

BFO 12: *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 13: 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.)

BFO 14: 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?)

BFO 15: Forget B-I-G. (100% of biggies UNDER-perform long-term.) Instead build national wealth around ... **“MITTELSTAND”** companies—**MIDSIZE SUPERSTAR NICHE DOMINATORS**—in ANY category you can name. (C.f., Germany.) (Battle cry: **“Be the best. It’s the only market that’s not crowded.” WHY ELSE BOTHER?**)

BFO 16: 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: **OVERKILL. UNEQUIVOCAL APOLOGY.**

BFO 17: 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 18: The two most powerful words in the English language are?

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

BFO 19: Have you done your **MBWA**/
Managing By Wandering Around ... **TODAY?** If not, why not? (Hint: There are ... **ZERO ACCEPTABLE EXCUSES.**)

BFO 20: Your **CALENDAR** knows your **TRUE** priorities. Do **YOU?**

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

BFO 21: 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 22: 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 23: While on the topic of ... **WOW:**

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
SERVICES 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 in this direction within
the fortnight!

**BFO 24: 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 25: CIVILITY WORKS. CIVILITY PAYS.

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

Kindness = Repeat business = Profit.

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

**BFO 26: Most of us/most organizations discount ...
INTROVERTS. THAT IS A ... 1ST-ORDER
STRATEGIC BLUNDER.** (Please read Susan
Cain’s book *QUIET*. It was a no-bull lifechanger for me.)

BFO 27: Listen (HARD) to my old D.C. boss, Fred Malek:

“EXECUTION IS STRATEGY.”

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