

**Excellence for
“The Rest Of Us”:
A “Book” for “Real
People,” Working in
“The Real World”
in 2008**

Tom Peters

Setting the Stage

In 1978, when Bob Waterman and I started the research that led to *In Search of Excellence*, “the word” “on the street”-in the Boardroom was “strategy.” The implication, to only exaggerate a bit, was: “Get the strategy right, and the execution-implementation will take care of itself.” Bob and I looked at a bunch of companies that performed pretty damn well over the long term. What we saw was “excellence in execution-implementation,” with “strategy” secondary. Hence we flipped the conventional wisdom and said, to exaggerate only a bit, “Get the execution right and the strategy becomes incidental.” We also said, our code words for “all of this”: “Hard” is “soft.” “Soft” is “hard.” That is, it’s the numbers and the plans that are “soft.” (And this was pre-Enron, pre-super-derivatives.) And it’s the people and the relationships throughout the “supply chain,” from receptionist-to-bench scientist-to-customer-to-vendor-to-community, that is the truly “hard stuff”—that is, the Bedrock upon which all else stands, including any damn strategy you care to concoct.

With the passage of time, over a quarter of a century, my message was elaborated, book after book was written, and speech after speech was given. My core beliefs were invariant, but the clarity of that first book was, in a way, somewhat lost in the process. But in February 2008 the epiphany came, while on vacation in New Zealand, sitting on the beach looking out on the Tasman Sea. I was reading David O. Stewart’s *The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution*. I’m a pretty good student of history, but my take on the writing of the Constitution was pretty conventional. This College of Cardinals got together in Philly and produced a magisterial document that changed the world, and became humanity’s lynchpin for creating democratic societies. Well the document was indeed pretty good, and it has indeed served us, and at times others, pretty well. But its creation was anything but a cakewalk presided over magisterially by Washington and serving as a platform for James Madison’s genius regarding the human condition and his peerless skill at drafting lucid prose.

Some states, including New York, never, in effect, showed up at the convention. Some little states, such as Delaware, sent big delegations that were invariably in their seats at the morning bell—and thus exercised enormous influence courtesy those #s and that attendance. The story of virtually every day, and it's no exaggeration, was the tiniest smidgeon of soaring rhetoric and then “the other 98%”: brutal horse trading, ego, personalities, slights, backroom deals over a *lot* of booze, and raw economic self-interest. That is, the “people bit” and the “politics of self-interest” were decisive.

Thinking about all this, the messy state of getting things done in the “real world,” I came home from New Zealand and started to write. Nothing earth-shattering, or even entirely coherent, has emerged. And yet *something* has emerged. That “something” is a reflection on the high falutin’ “guru concepts,” including my own, that amount to a library full of books—but that bear little resemblance to the way most of us live and work. And a reflection on “the human stuff” that makes the world turn—Benjamin Franklin, a short, fat old guy with killer social graces, charms the Parisian grande dames over tea in their salons, and thus accomplishes the recruitment of the French as America’s crucial ally in the Revolutionary. (Sure there were numerous geo-political forces at work, and the luck, yes luck, of the American victory at Saratoga, but Franklin’s gargantuan personality was the catalyst that made it all gel.)

What follows, then, is not even a “first draft” of anything. It is an assortment of thoughts on the messy, ever-so-human world in which we live and in which we try to get things done—grand and not so grand, national revolution or implementation of a new IS process in a scattered set of hospitals. Contrarian economist William Easterly claims that in the last few decades “the West” has essentially pissed away \$2,300,000,000,000 in foreign aid. In his masterful book, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Effort to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and so Little Good*, he says the premier reason behind this unmitigated fiasco has been reliance on Grand Plans, and an almost total failure to listen to the people on the ground who live with local political realities, and thus determine implementation. It’s such realities that determine what I call “the missing 98 percent”—that is the messy “human reality” “on the ground” that is the essence of success or failure in getting things done.

[AN ALTERNATE OPENING FOLLOWS.]

Dr Franklin “Gives Good Tea”: America Defeats Great Britain!

The ragtag Americans finally won a game! That is, against all odds and with all the stars for once aligned, the scraggly Continental Army routed the British at Saratoga in 1787, our first military victory of any consequence in a war that was already two years old. With this demonstration of the revolutionaries’ prowess, or at least not impotence, the French become our Allies—hallelujah, the war is won. (Six years later.)

There is some grain, or even two, of truth to the story line recited above. But the most important part—“the other 98%”—is left out. Saratoga was in fact little more than a skirmish. The Grand Alliance that ensued: overwhelmingly the byproduct of the social graces and skill at spin and sipping tea of a short, fat, aging, physically unimposing at best, Bostonian turned Philadelphian by the name of Benjamin Franklin.

The story, of course, has many a twist and many a turn. But the fact is, through sheer force of personality, Benjamin Franklin turned the American cause into the French cause. And he did so, to an extraordinary extent, via charm and wit and attentiveness and a carefully crafted “homespun” personality. (Everything about Franklin was painstakingly self-designed.) Moreover, Dr Franklin’s charm, wit, etc was most relentlessly and successfully and shamelessly directed at “the ladies” in the High Salons of Paris.

Franklin was a whirlwind of social energy—“24/7” we’d call it today. His wit was the “amusing” Americans’ wit. His character was the straightforward Americans’ character. His effective but non-condescending intellectual foreplay was America’s fresh philosophical bent. The Grand Court at Versailles turn their collective backs on “dear Dr Franklin”? The great ladies of the Salons de Paris would not countenance the thought—nor allow their men to do so!

A hundred years and a couple of decades later a lightly regarded British king, Edward VII, also went to Paris, where he was noisily and publicly reviled from every street corner his carriage passed upon arrival. A scant ninety-six *hours* later,

the very same French public declared and shouted, from the very same street corners, that Edward was “our [France’s] king”—“Vive notre roi!” In the ever so brief interim, Edward had danced with the great ladies, attended theater and gushed over the leading actress, charmed the public at every opportunity, repeatedly expressed his great affection for the French, and especially Paris, and in their own language, perfectly rendered. Soon afterwards, reminiscent of the shadow cast by Dr Franklin, a previously unthinkable English-French Entente was signed which determined the outcome of The Great War/World War I. While the negotiation was rough and tumble and pragmatic, the most unlikely, and definitive, impetus to marriage was clearly the residual of Edward’s grand 96-hour social triumph.

These two stories are in fact commonplace when a war is won or lost, or when a sale is won or lost—or when a Nobel Prize for Dr Z is awarded or not. A dumpy old man with infinite charm indeed charms a nation into, if the facts had been dispassionately assessed, a most illogical alliance. A “lightweight” King—in the space of 96 hours—at least temporarily reverses hundreds of years of brutal enmity, and an alliance that remakes the world is the result.

In the world of “management thinking,” the bulk of the plaudits go to the creators of Grand & Clever Strategic Approaches to markets. Or to those who concoct brilliant applications of new technologies. Or revamp sluggish enterprise processes. All such things are of great importance, no doubt at all. And yet in business as in War and the alignment of Great Powers, the Masters of Relationships, the modern day Franklins and Edwards, tightly, as always, grip the reigns of success or failure. Amidst the English-American standoff in Boston in 1776, the British at one point demanded that the Americans surrender and demanded an audience with General Washington. The general bid them visit his headquarters, where he proceeded to summarily dismiss their (very sensible) overture. The truth of the Continental Army was mostly a tale of overdue pay and desertions, loose discipline and disease and lack of supplies. But the purposeful perception Washington concocted that day was very different. Seldom if ever in history has anyone appeared as resplendent or confident or “in command” on horseback as the tall, erect Washington, perfectly turned out in a Commander-in-Chief’s uniform of his own grand design amidst an invisible “Army” clothed in rags in the bitter cold—and as to the horse, a great white steed from the matchless stables of Mount Vernon, again few peers are to be found in history’s course. It is no stretch of the truth to say that the “atmospherics,” the “spin” Washington carefully presented and personified at that most crucial of moments went a long, long way toward convincing the English that the Colonials were a force to be reckoned with, hardly ripe for surrender.

It is also no exaggeration, though of no great consequence either, to say that since the time of the research and drafting of my Stanford PhD dissertation in 1977—“Patterns of Winning and Losing: Approach and Avoidance By Friends and

Enemies”—I have been far more interested in the likes of Dr Franklin’s gift of “giving good salon” and Washington’s consummate acting skills than in the concoction—on paper!—of some grand and clever strategy destined by force of intellect to “crush” the competition. At least one senior Stanford faculty member claimed at the time that mine was the first Graduate School of Business dissertation on the topic of “implementation” per se. Hence, for over three decades my unabashed cause has been what I and a few others called-call “the missing 98%”—that is, the abiding importance of implementation-execution, the doing beyond the thinking.

Though the language was indirect, that “missing 98%” was subsequently the text-subtext of *In Search of Excellence*. The book’s pillars were: People. Customers. Action. And its “motto,” as it were, was: “Hard is soft. Soft is hard.” That is, Bob Waterman and I asserted that it’s the so-called “hard” plans and budgets and numbers that are the *true* “soft stuff”—think derivatives, circa 2008! And it’s the so-called “soft” people and passion and relationships and determination to “stop talking and try *something*, right now” that are the true, “hard” bedrock beneath accomplishment.

It is to this purported “soft stuff,” that is the true “hard stuff,” the “last 98%,” that I now return in this essay—dedicated to the outrageously effective tearoom charms of old Benjamin Franklin and the imperial demeanor of George Washington—and his majestic white steed.

[END OF ALTERNATE OPENING.]

Excellence for “The Rest Of Us”: A “Book” for “Real People,” Working in “The Real World” in 2008

I contend that something is badly out of whack. Consider the world of “business gurus” (myself included, to be sure) and their-our obsessions vs “the rest of us” and our “life-in-the-real-world”:

Guru focus: Big companies and attendant first-order, industry-redefining strategic issues.

Real World: Most of us, still, in 2008, don’t work for Big Companies; we labor in “SMEs,” Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. (Or the likes of government agencies.) And if we *are* in a big company or agency, most of our focus is the 17-person department in which we labor. (As to “SMEs,” Germany is, ahead of China, the planet’s #1 exporter, thanks mainly to focused, high-end middle-sized companies, the Mittlestand enterprises.)

Guru focus: Public corporations.

RW: Most of us work in privately owned companies. (Or in those government agencies.)

Guru focus: Cool industries.

RW: Most of us aren’t in “Cool” industries, we do pretty ordinary stuff—like my pal, Larry Janesky, who makes a buck, and then another (\$60 million, actually), creating “dry basements,” that are free of toxic mold, and can be used as a spare room or for a playroom or storing anything and everything; or Australian Jim Penman, who has over 2,500 franchises worldwide doing such things as walking dogs, washing dogs and installing antennae.

Guru focus: “Excellence” is reserved for GE and GE and GE (or Google or, until last week, Boeing).

RW: “Excellence,” bar none, is the fabulous, friendly, informative, instantly responsive pharmacy next door that takes on docs and insurance companies with vigor and usually victory. (Gary Drugs on Charles Street in Boston, for me.)

Guru focus: Boss-less, flat, friction-free, self-defining organizational settings.

RW: Most of us have “bosses.” Most of us are assigned tasks.

Guru focus: “Getting ahead” means becoming a “Brand You,” in a world where what our peers think of us is more important than the Boss’s evaluation.

RW: Most of us still must cater to our bosses to get ahead.

Guru focus: “Cover boy” CEOs with G-4s, trophy wives, and the kids from all three marriages in prep schools with tuitions starting at \$50K.

RW: Most of us work for government agencies or in schools or fire departments, or in private companies perhaps run by the “millionaire next door,” who owns two suits, a 2006 Lexus, stops in the coffee shop on the way to work, and sends his kids to public school.

Guru focus: New “virtual organization” forms of doing business; workplaces with hierarchy are “so yesterday.”

RW: Most of us work amidst a rather clear “hierarchy” as depicted on a standard organization chart. (Though there are probably a few less layers than there were a few years ago.) (Want hierarchy? Try Home Depot.)

Guru focus: Creative right-brain weirdos, “with it” in these odd times

RW: The majority of us are not “new age creatives,” but are occasionally quite clever ... and pretty good at “blocking and tackling” in order to “get done what needs to be done.”

Guru focus: The immediate threat, to millions upon millions, of being “outsourced.”

RW: Most of us aren’t especially threatened by the prospect of having our jobs outsourced to India or China or Romania.

Guru focus: Global enterprises “playing in the big league,” in a “flat world.”

RW: Many (most) of us are only marginally affected by globalization, and our firms don’t sell more than a modest share of their products or, especially, services beyond our national borders. (The primary reach of the 18-person accountancy in a mid-sized city of 84,000 is perhaps three miles.)

Guru focus: A world where “the Web is everything, changes everything.”

RW: Most of us haven’t had our world turned anything like “upside down” by the Web, though the Web has surely had a significant impact. (We communicate with the plumber by Blackberry email from our car, but he’s still 5 hours late!)

Guru focus: Our ability to be in instant communication with anyone, anywhere.

RW: Use email, but still practice MBWA—Managing By Walking Around.

Guru focus: An encompassing IS-IT strategy, with everything wired to everything else.

RW: While integrating IS is very important, most of us muddle through, trying to ensure that the IT-enhanced bits (the front-line sub-systems) are marvels of simplicity that deliver the goods for those front-line folks and their internal-external customers.

Guru focus: Strategic planners and CEOs desperately seeking “blue oceans.”

RW: Most of us don’t spend much or any of our day making grand plans. Never have. Never will.

Guru focus: Thinking, “outside the box” of course.

RW focus: Most of us obsess on “doing,” pretty much inside the box. (There are enough damn problems in the box—pissed off customers of long standing, etc.)

Guru focus: Complex “systemic change.”

RW: Most of us believe in and spend our time doing on-the-cheap, rapid experimentation, picking off the “low-hanging fruit,” muddling our way through to big change.

Guru focus: Imposing words-phrase such as “business models,” “scalable,” “strategic talent management,” “customer-retention management,” and “knowledge-management paradigm.”

RW: Most of us try to use everyday language such as “the way we make a buck” (instead of “business model”), “let’s grow this sucker” (not “Is it scalable?”), “hire good people and treat ’em well and give ’em a chance to shine and thank ’em for the stuff they do” (rather than “strategic talent management”), “bust our ass to keep our customers happy to keep ’em coming back” (instead of “customer-retention management”), and “share the stuff you learn with everybody ASAP, don’t hoard it” (rather than “executing a knowledge-management paradigm”).

Guru focus: Best data base + sexiest algorithms win in our customer-centric enterprise.

RW: Most of us spend our time on “trivial” acts of relationship building with customers, suppliers, leaders in our community, etc.

Guru focus: The relentless pursuit of “synergies.”

RW: Most of us focus, focus, focus in order to stand a chance of succeeding in the marketplace. (Those astounding German “Mittlestand” companies again, or Larry Janesky, the dry-basement guy.)

Guru focus: Marketing sleight of hand!

RW focus: Sales! Sales! Sales!

Guru focus: Put the customer first!

**RW focus: Put the front-line employee and the front-line manager co-first!
(In order to maximize the odds of repeat business.)**

Guru focus: Acquisitions and mergers aimed at expanding our “reach” and “market penetration” and “market share” amidst a zero-sum game, thus reducing risk courtesy a “diverse” portfolio and smothering (“killing”) the competition.

RW: Play from our strengths, work like hell to enhance those strengths, and survive-thrive via “organic” growth and executing very, very well.

Guru focus: Totally “new rules for a new game,” dramatic new “management tools” that “change everything.”

RW: Most of us are learning new things, but nothing that’s particularly “revolutionary” as we labor mightily (fulltime) “just” to “get stuff done,” improve relationships, find good folks and keep ’em by showing appreciation and respect, and providing opportunities to get ahead.

Guru focus: Hiring PhD mathematicians to design obscure algorithms that allow the creation of the likes of “risk free” derivatives and, hence, stunning “competitive advantage.”

**RW: For most of us, snappy execution of the “timeless” “basics” is Job #1.
(And Job #2. And Job #3.)**

Guru focus: A fetish for the diabolically clever.

RW: Most of us know that “relentless” pounding and pounding and pounding, and then pounding some more, on those Golden Basics wins.

Guru focus: Built to last.

RW: Most of us muddle through, trying to make it to the end of the week while keeping our customers content.

Guru focus: Disruptive Innovation is #1.

RW: We “invent” everyday “tools,” such as Xeroxed (paper) checklists, aimed at preventing “line infections” and thus saving thousands-of-lives-per-year of ICU patients, in the U.S. (In a similar vein, as it were, the British observers estimate that over ten thousand lives per year could be saved in hospitals by providing most patients with compression socks that help prevent deep-vein thrombosis.) (Call it “un-disruptive innovation,” with inordinate power?!)

Guru focus: Describe “new age” mortgage bankers, loaded with “intellectual capital” and “integrated systems” who “package” loans as soon as possible and sell them to financial service institutions who create and sell derivatives based on the packaged mortgages—which are in turn re-packaged as super-derivatives.

RW: As, say, a young mortgage-lending officer in a town of 18,000, whose Dad runs a local car dealership, take Mary and John to lunch to get a grasp of who they are before lending them \$450,000; and after the loan, call or drop by every, say, three or six months to see how things are going—even if all payments have been on time.

Guru focus: “Changing demographics,” “the new Gen X world,” as many discrete market segments as there are customers.

RW (I wish): Our primary customers [85% of the time] are women—find the right team [lotsa women in senior management] and go for it. We also, to make a buck, have gotta aim more at boomers or near-boomers, and “geezers” [who collectively have all the dough], and less on callow, so-called “trendsetter” youth.

I am not, by this recitation of “guru sins,” dismissing others’ or my own work over the last quarter-century. I merely intend—personally—to be less distracted by catch phrases (“The world is flat”) and more concerned with the “eternal basics” of human behavior that determine the future of civilization, the future of any given business, and my or your personal success or failure journey—and that of your extant or future children and grandchildren.

Rather than take on each of these issues, I will instead jump headlong into “the messy world” bit—where strategy and “the hard stuff” is secondary and the chaotic state of the human condition is determining. I ask you to consider a rather lengthy set of observations, grand and mundane, in which the de facto topic is “the things that really make the difference” between winning and losing:

Case: The Drafting of the Constitution of the United States of America.

Drafting the U.S. Constitution was our defining moment—or defining summer! The “best and the brightest,” of any generation, met in Philadelphia, our biggest city by at the time, and created a magnificent framework for human interaction that rocked and still rocks the world. While there’s a lot of truth to all those assertions, my line-by-line reading of *The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution*, by David O. Stewart, tells a different tale. Many great men, such as Washington and Madison, were indeed present, and the intellectual Madison, for instance, had assiduously studied numerous forms of government through the ages and around the world. Yet the crux of the (great) matter was a product of a slightly less grand process and mostly achieved by folks slightly less grand than Madison or Washington:

******Horse trading and deals struck in the shadowy corners of pubs were (mostly) the order of the day.***

***The pursuit of practical, “unfair” regional economic advantage, not abstract “theories of government,” was the determining factor in most deliberations; for instance, deals struck between small states seeking economic success and South Carolina kept slavery alive. (See also, for example, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, by Charles Beard.)

***There were gaping holes in the document, such as the continuation of slavery (it took the Civil War, 74 years later, to sort things out) and the glossing over of issues of citizens’ rights. (To be sure, subsequently dealt with by the first 10 amendments.)

***“Muddling through,” or “satisficing,” was very much the daily state of affairs. (“Muddling through”—a term coined by Yale political scientist Charles Lindblom. “Satisficing,” doing a satisfactory job based on real world complications, was a word coined by Herbert Simon, for which he won a Nobel Prize in economics.)

***Luck was here, as everywhere, essential. At one point, as deliberations on the most important and contentious topic of representation (# of members of the prospective congress, preserving the power of the small states) completely bogged down, July 4 popped up on the calendar through sheer luck. Many of the delegates were Revolutionary War veterans, and the Technicolor memory of the intensity and duration and passions of the struggle was an extraordinary motivator; pettiness was pushed slightly and briefly aside, and the logjam was broken up in fairly short order.

***Philly’s famous summer black flies played a role, leading to dispirited attitudes, sessions cut short, and the like.

***“Showing up” was the #1 “rule of success.” Only 11 of 13 states bothered to attend—Rhode Island never sent delegates, New Hampshire’s arrived two months late, and New York’s folks never showed up in numbers enough to amount to a quorum (NY had three delegates, but only one came, Alexander Hamilton, and he was absent most of the time himself). Overall, only 30 of 60 official delegates were normally in attendance—hence one soul, of whatever description, could and did make a helluva difference.

***Despite the hardships, George Washington was almost singular for “showing up,” not missing a day, though as presiding officer he seldom spoke. His magisterial presence per se was a far more important contribution than his ideas—and his astounding demonstration, by his consistent presence, of the importance of turning out *something* saved the day on several critical occasions.

***Money in the bank, or the absence thereof. Many of the delegates were in less than robust financial shape; hence they were continually distracted by having to go home for a short while, and influenced by their perceived need to “get this damn thing over with.” Many an important clause was retained or excised because members were motivated to cut deliberations short, and “get on with it.”

***Raw numbers of delegates greatly influenced the outcome. Wee Delaware had five delegates, only four states had more; hence Delaware provided an “unfair share” of warm bodies on the committees that controlled the outcome in most instances.

“Hanging in***” *per se, as usual, counted big time*: “Lesser known figures stepped forward and carried the banner for the small states. What they lacked in reputation or talent, they made up with tenacity.” (“Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”—William Feather, author)

***Working up early “first drafts,” brought to the conclave, had great impact; that is, others were automatically in a responsive mode, and initiative went to the drafters.

***Annoying personality traits were of the utmost importance. For example, Maryland’s Luther Martin was left off all the important committees because he had a reputation for “bombast” and being “windy”—and who wants a windy guy in a tiny committee room, with the windows closed for security reasons, in Philadelphia, in August with the damn black flies causing their painful bites with lingering aftereffects. (We have “black fly season” in Vermont—trust me, they are awful beasts.)

***Presentation skills, good and bad and mediocre, were also critical.

I neither contend that Convention’s animating ideas-ideals per se were of scant importance, nor that the presence of Washington, Madison, Franklin, et al., was of no import. ***But I do contend that mundane variables, such as those enumerated above, shaped the great document far more than most realize—they were, in fact, determining more often than not.*** Face it, “people will be people,” ego and frailties and self-interest always lurking or on stage, no matter how grand the occasion subsequently proves to have been. In fact, old-fashioned hangovers were probably of more than passing importance to our glorious document. Stewart reports that at one evening gathering of most of the delegates, about 50 in this rare instance, alcoholic consumption consisted of “seven large bowls of rum punch, over 100 bottles of wine, and almost fifty bottles of beer.” (My translation, to save you from doing the math, is four or five hard-liquor drinks, two bottles of wine and one beer per man, doubtless followed by a discussion of

the interstate commerce clause—no wonder our modern day Justices of the Supreme Court have so much trouble interpreting “original intent.”)

Lessons from the summer of 1787:

*****Show up!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

*****Keep showing up!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

*****Control the process through indirect actions**, like doing first drafts, writing Minutes.

*****Remember the social graces**—your emotional “presentation of self” is more important than even “all important”!!!

*****Hang in! Tenacity-relentlessness rules!** (Wear the bastards down. No kidding, this is a matchless “success tool.”)

*****There’s no such thing as a “dull meeting.”** (No kidding!) Every get together is an opportunity to press your agenda, directly or indirectly.

*****Bite your tongue and listen, listen, listen—even to bores.** Nothing wins support like effective listening; it’s the greatest gift you can give anyone!! (This is triply important when you are desperate to correct something someone has to say, even an “enemy” of your cause—attentive listening is a peerless “win ‘en over” “strategic” “tool.”)

*****“Sub-committees rule!** It’s the little chances to become Master of Something and perform-influence in a small group setting that lead to the accumulation of power and the ability to control the flow in an area important to you.

*****Continually “illustrate” your ability to perform well at almost any task, build a towering reputation for reliability.**

*****Cool off!** No passion, no success! Too much abrasiveness in pursuit of a cause that inflames you kills opportunity to succeed like nothing else. (Folks love to put an abrasive person in his place, even if they agree with him.)

*****Take a punch and keep on trucking.** Losses are common—live with ‘em, take ‘em with good grace, and then persevere through out-persevering the other guy/s.

***Speaking of “punch,” out-drinking the other guy sure worked in ’87. Reach your own conclusions here ...

*****Grow up, accept life.** Life, effectiveness is indeed about horse trading as often as not—and at times consorting with one’s enemies. (“The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Keep your passion, stay above the waterline on issues of deep principle—but accept, and embrace, the messy-as-hell “real world”!

*****Remember the black flies!** “Little” distractions can change the whole game.

*****Be ready with “Plan B.”** Repeat: Nothing in the real world follows the script.

*****Nobody**, even George Washington, **gets more than about 60% of what they want!**

*****Keep your word.** A reputation for integrity is priceless.

*****Don’t bite off more than you can chew**, even when “can’t miss” opportunities to further your cause arise—overloading and thence compromising effectiveness is a big black eye.

*****Do something!** “Small wins,” accumulated regularly, build momentum!

***Work assiduously on your **public presentation skills!**

More:

Case: William F. Buckley and His Friends

Observations upon the passing of the founding conservative: “[William F.] Buckley’s ***greatest talent was friendship. The historian George Nash once postulated that Buckley ***wrote more personal letters*** than any other American, and that is entirely believable. He ***showered affection on his friends***, and he had an endless stream of them, old and young.” (Source: David Brooks, *NYT* 0229.08)

***Lesson: **Make friends!**

***Lesson: **Constantly mind your friendships.**

***Lesson: **Keep in touch with your friends.**

***Lesson: **The personal touch, always!**

***Lesson: **Your portfolio of friends must be diverse.**

***Lesson: **Never stop making friends.**

Case: Edward VII Goes to France

***The origin of the unlikely Anglo-French alliance that prevailed in World War I: Edward VII, 1903, booed on the streets as he entered Paris for a 4-day visit. But he “made public appearances, reviewed troops, attended the races ... turned a chill into smiles by **mingling with the audience** [at a play], **paying gallant compliments in French** to a famous actress in the lobby ... **gracious and tactful speeches** [‘glorious traditions ... beautiful city ... fortified by many happy memories’]. ... French-English ‘friendship and mutual prosperity my constant preoccupation.’ When he left, the crowds now shouted ‘**Vive notre roi.**’ Seldom has such a complete change in attitude been seen as that which has taken place in this country. He has won the hearts of all the French.

[TP: in four days!!!!!!!!!!!!] ... Within a year, after hard work by ministers settling disputes, the rapprochement became the Anglo-French Entente, signed in April 1904.” (Source: *Guns of August*, Barbara Tuchman, on the start of World War I)

Lesson: ***Show up.

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***Lesson: **Hang out with the folks.**

***Lesson: **Grace!!**

***Lesson: **Lavish attention and appreciation!** (Suck up, continue sucking up, if it

kills you.)

***Lesson: **Body language matters!**

Case: William II's Bruised Feelings

***Germany's William II, furious at the aforementioned English-French Entente, described above: "most **galling** [to William] was Edward's triumph in Paris"... He **felt "unappreciated"** in UK and elsewhere. "My colleagues, the Monarchs of Europe, have **paid no attention** to what I have to say. Soon, with my great Navy to endorse my words, they **will be more respectful.**" (Source: *Guns of August*, Barbara Tuchman, on the start of World War I)

Lesson: ***Jealousy rules! Always has. Always will. Beware, be conscious.

***Lesson: **Show appreciation** (or get into a war, bureaucratic, or a war with millions of deaths).

***Lesson: **Show respect!**

***Lesson: **All egos are fragile!** (Including the receptionist's.)

Case: Edward VII Goes to Russia

Edward VII, now in Russia: "He had **long talks** with the foreign minister, Isvolski, and ***danced the Merry Widow waltz with the Czarina with such effect as to make her laugh, the first man to accomplish this feat since the unhappy woman put on the crown of the Romanovs. Nor was it such a frivolous achievement as might appear ... the Czar ruled as an autocrat **and was in turn ruled by strong-willed wife.**" [Previous Czar, Alexander III, had "**snubbed William ... and would only talk to him over his shoulder.**"—see above] (Source: *Guns of August*, Barbara Tuchman, on the start of World War I)

***Lesson: **Get close, listen up.**

***Lesson: **Be especially kind to key persons' families.**

***Lesson: **Develop the social graces.**

***Lesson: **Learn to dance.** (At least metaphorically.)

[Note: Edward VII was not seen as a particularly clever fellow—but he obviously had something going for him.]

Case: The Trials and Tribulations of Robert Oppenheimer

***J. Robert Oppenheimer was father of the atom bomb, but his life ended in disgrace when the government withdrew his security clearance during the McCarthy-inspired years of the “Communist scare: “... Lewis Strauss, the Atomic Energy Commission chairman, orchestrated [Oppenheimer’s] downfall because he felt he had been **slighted by him at a couple of parties.**” (Source: Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J Robert Oppenheimer*)

Lesson: ***Beware the real or perceived slight; it ruins careers, costs big sales, screws up implementation of anything and everything—and starts wars. (Lewis Strauss probably *was* a jerk—so what!)

Lesson: **Anyone who stands between you and success—peer or boss—is a beloved soul, to be fawned upon without end. The operative word: *Shameless!!! (The late Ann Richards reminds us that even though we are mightily pissed off at the airline for its latest stupid move, ***smile*** as you’ve never smiled before at the employee at the desk—at the moment, she is the ***only*** person—on the planet—who can make insta-magic for you—or not.)

Case: The Failure to Invite Mr Jeffords to a Party

***President George W. Bush lost control of the U.S. Senate when Vermont Republican Jim Jeffords left the GOP, became an independent, and joined the Democrats’ caucus. Though many “serious” issues led to the split, the trigger event is said to have been the fact that, against all tradition, Jeffords was **not invited to a major bill-signing** regarding major legislation for which he had been a key driver. A White House aide, pissed off at Jeffords about something minor, **scratched him from the list.**

Lesson: The “**tipping point**” in momentous affairs of state is often ***Some small slight or other “minor” human slip-up. Beware!

***Lesson: **When you are pissed off at someone, be doubly aware of what an unkind “small” “satisfying” act of revenge might lead to.**

*There are no limits to
which one will not resort
to seek extreme redress for
a real or perceived slight!*

Case: Mr Schwarzkopf Develops a Passion Tea

***General Norman Schwarzkopf claims that perhaps his biggest contribution to Gulf War One was **excellence in all-night tea orgies**. That is, the Saudis, guardians of Mecca, were exceptionally disturbed by the presence of large numbers of American and other allied troops on Saudi soil. (Though the Saudis had clearly invited them.) Hence, Schwarzkopf spent many a de facto “all-nighter” drinking tea with Saudi’s Crown Prince. It was essential to success of the overall mission.

***Lesson: **Pay lavish and continual and insanely time-consuming attention to key folks who are essential to your project’s success!!!! There is no such thing as “enough” when it comes to investment in key supporters!**

Lesson: ***Become a tea aficionado?

Case: Woody’s Iron Law

***Woody Allen: “Eighty percent of success is **showing up**.” Texas Bix Bender, homespun philosopher: “A body can pretend to care, but he cannot pretend to be there.” Mark McCormack, stellar sports agent: It is often imperative to travel 5,000 miles for a five minute meeting, to seal a deal or overcome a roadblock.

Lesson: ***Show up!

***Lesson: **Show up—no matter what the cost!!**

***Lesson: **Show up! No alternative!**

***Lesson: **Show up! No “sorta”!**

Case: How to Piss Away Two-and-a-Half Trillion Dollars

******In The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Effort to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and so Little Good***, author William Easterly laments, “The West spent \$2.3 trillion on foreign aid over the last five decades and still has not managed to get twelve-cent medicines to children to prevent half of all malaria deaths. The West spent \$2.3 trillion and still not managed to get three dollars to each new mother to prevent five million child deaths. ... But I and many other like-minded people keep trying, not to abandon aid to the poor, but to make sure it reaches them.”

Easterly is the arch-enemy of the Big Plan [his capital letters, not mine—for once] and the fan of practical activities of “Searchers” who learn the ins and outs of the culture, politics and local conditions “on the ground” in order to use local levers, and get those 12-cent medicines to community members. He writes:

“In foreign aid, Planners announce good intentions but don’t motivate anyone to carry them out; Searchers [cap “S”] find things that work and get some reward. Planners raise expectations but take no responsibility for meeting them; Searchers accept responsibility for their actions; Planners determine what to supply; Searchers find out what is in demand. Planners apply global blueprints; Searchers adapt to local conditions. Planners at the top lack knowledge of the bottom; Searchers find out what the reality is at the bottom. Planners never hear whether the planned recipients got what they needed; Searchers find out if the customer is satisfied. ... A Planner thinks he already knows the answers; he thinks of poverty as a technical engineering problem that his answers will solve. A Searcher admits he doesn’t know the answers in advance; he believes that poverty is a complicated tangle of political, social, historical, institutional, and technological factors; he hopes to find answers to individual problems only by trial and error experimentation. A planner believes outsiders know enough to impose solutions; a Searcher believes only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown.” [Excuse the length of the extract, but this statement is among the most brilliant I have ever read about implementation of anything, anywhere. Among other things it explains the 90% consultant failure rate and the 90% of “staff”-centric projects that end in tears.]

Lesson (one of soooooo many): **Show up!** (On the ground, where the action—and possible implementation—is.)

Lesson: **Invest in ceaseless study of conditions “on the ground”—social and political and historical and systemic.**

Lesson: **Talk to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Hear the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Hear the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Hear the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Hear the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Hear the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Respect the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Empathize with the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Try to blend in, adopting local customs, showing deference where necessary—almost everywhere; and never interrupt the “big man” in front of his folks, even, or especially, if you think he is 180 degrees off.**

Lesson: **Seek out the local leaders’ second cousins, etc., to gain indirect access over their uncle twice removed! (Etc. & etc.)**

Lesson: ***Have a truly crappy office, and other un-trappings!***

Lesson: **Remember, you do not in fact have the answers despite your PhD with, naturally, honors, from the University of Chicago—where you were mentored by not one, but two, Nobel Laureates in economics.**

Lesson: **Regardless of the enormity of the problem, proceed by trial (manageable in size) and error, error, error. (Failure motto: “Do it right the first time!” Success motto: “Do it right the 37th time!” And hustle through those 37 tries!)**

Lesson: **The process of political-community engagement must also be approached as a trial and error learning process.**

Lesson: **Always alter the experiment to accommodate local needs—the act of apparent local modification per se is critical, as every community leader, in order for them to accept “ownership” and demonstrate to their constituents that they are in charge, must feel as if they have directly and measurably influenced the experiment.**

Lesson: **Growth (the experimental and expansion-emulation process) must be organic, and proceed at a measured pace—nudged, not hurried.**

Show up!
Listen up!
Hear!

Lesson: ***Speed kills! (To a point.)***

Lesson: ***Short-circuiting political process kills!***

Lesson: ***Premature rollout kills!***

Lesson: ***Too much publicity kills!***

Lesson: ***Too much money kills!***

Lesson: ***Too much technology kills!***

Lesson: **Outsiders, to be effective, must have genuine appreciation of and affection for the locals with whom and for whom they are working!**

Lesson: **Condescension kills most—said “locals” know unimaginably more about life than well-intentioned “do-gooders,” young or even, alas, not so young.**

Lesson: **Progress ... MUST ... be consistent with “local politics on the ground” in order to enhance sustainability.**

Lesson: **You will never-ever “fix” “everything at once” or by the time you “finish”—in our Constitutional Convention in 1787, George Washington only got about 60% of what he wanted!**

Lesson: **Never forget the atmospherics, such as numerous *celebrations* for tiny milestones reached, showering praise on the local leader and your local cohorts, while you assiduously stand at the back of the crowd—etc.**

Lesson: **The experiment has failed until the systems and political rewards, often small, are in place, with Beta tests completed, to up the odds of repetition.**

Lesson: **Most of your on-the-ground staff must consist of respected locals—the de facto or de jure Chairman or CEO must be a local; you must be virtually invisible.**

Lesson: **Spend enormous “pointless” social time with the local political leaders—recall, in Gulf War I, Norm Schwarzkopf spent his evenings, nearly all of them, drinking tea until 2AM or 3AM with the Saudi crown prince—he called it his greatest contribution!**

Lesson: **Keep your “start up” plan simple and short and filled with question marks in order to allow others to have the last word. (I once did the final draft of a proposal, making it as flawless as could be. I gave it to my boss, pre Microsoft Word, and he proceeded to cut it up and tape the pieces back together, and conspicuously cross out several paragraphs of my obviously labored-over brilliant prose that he had agreed to. “Tom,” he said as I recall, “we want the rest of the committee [of important, or at least self-important folks] to feel as though they are participating and that you and I are naïve—not to confront them with a beautiful plan that shouts ‘Don’t you dare alter a word.’”)**

Lesson: *For projects involving children or health or education or community development or sustainable small-business growth (most projects), women are by far the most reliable and most central and most indirectly powerful local players in even the most chauvinist settings—their characteristic process of “implementation by indirection” means “life or death” to sustainable project success; moreover, the expanding concentric circles of women’s traditional networking processes is by far the best way to “scale-up”/expand a program. (Men should not even try to understand what is taking place. Among other things, this networking indirection—largely invisible process will seemingly “take forever” by most men’s “action now, skip steps” S.O.P.—and then, from out of the blue, following an eternity of rambling discussions-on-top-of-rambling-discussions, you will wake up one fine morning and discover that the thing is done that everything has fallen in place “overnight” and that ownership is nearly universal. Concomitant imperative; most of your (as an outsider) staff should be women, alas, most likely not visibly “in charge.”*

Lesson: And 100 other things!

***“She”
is your
customer!***

Case: Mr Bush and the Social Graces

***George H.W. Bush was an **obsessive note writer**. He was constantly in touch with a vast network of contacts. It was, biographers and analysts have declared, one of his most powerful “tools.”

***Lesson: **Keep in touch!**

***Lesson: **Make it an obsession!**

***Lesson: **Make it personal!**

Case: Mr Handy Begs for Plain English

***British management “guru” Charles Handy reports on the use of language. A bank claims to “leverage its global footprint to provide effective financial solutions for its customers by providing a gateway to diverse markets.” He continues, “I assume that it is just saying that it is there to ‘help its customers wherever they are.’”

***Lesson: **K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple, Stupid!)**

***Lesson: **Use plain English!** [or whatever.]

Case: Be Nice or I’ll Sue!

***Hard evidence shows unequivocally that many medical malpractice suits are filed because of doctors’ **often detached and haughty attitudes**—and unwillingness to admit error. One could almost say (actually could say) that great bedside manner, rather than skilled performance, is the key to staying free of the lawyers.

***Lesson: **Social graces rule!**

Lesson: ***Apologize for screw-ups, perceived as well as real, small as well as large. One of the “Top 5” “weapons” of success is the willingness to admit error and apologize for it.

Case: The Eyes Have It

***A senior flight attendant told me that the passengers she takes a shine to are those who say **thank you** after she's delivered a drink (or whatever) and **look her in the eye** and nod as they get off the plane.

***Lesson: **Remember your “little” “thank yous”—religiously.**

***Lesson: **Look folks directly in the eye!! (Always!)**

Eye Contact!

Case: Mastering the Fine Print I

***Jérôme Kerviel took billions and billions of Euros in risky positions, lost a fortune, and came close to bringing down Société Générale. His secret to doing all the above in a secretive fashion was a couple of **“back office jobs”** that had given him the ability to effectively take over key systems, un-noticed.

***Lesson: **Taking little assignments that allow you to master key systems in the bowels of the organization gives you immense power.** [This most assuredly does not mean that I'm condoning Kerviel's behavior.]

***Lesson: **Get an assignment in finance!** [Follow the money —again, I'm hardly suggesting illegal tactics resulting therefrom.]

Case: Mastering the Fine Print II

***Tom DeLay was **master of the “rules”** of the House of Representatives. He used his procedural mastery, and a bit more, to move from obscurity to, arguably, the most important person in the House when the Republicans were in command.

***Lesson: **Master key systems in the bowels of the organization.**

Master key systems in the bowels of the organization.

Case: Stabilizing a Hostage Situation

***George Kohlreiser had a 95% success rate as a hostage negotiator. Getting inside the bad guy's head was his key to success: "What I learned from my years as a hostage negotiator is that we do not have to feel powerless—and that *bonding* is the antidote to the hostage situation." (Source: *Hostage at the Table*)

***Lesson: **Listen, empathize, get inside the other guy's head. (Easier said than done—perhaps some of it is innate, but much of it can be learned, practiced.)**

Case: Consult! Consult! Consult!

***An IT exec had a great success at implanting a major system. He explained to one of my exec audiences: "There is no success until there is **wholesale customer-user buy in**. My strategy was **to show my system, warts and all, to users early on**. I'd ask for suggestions, and if I **changed but a few lines of code to conform to one of their suggestions**, they would take significant ownership of the whole system, coming to believe that if their tweak had not occurred the whole thing would have gone South; they became better salesmen than me!"

***Lesson: **Consult prospective customers early, at the design stage. Do small things to accommodate them. Let them (and others, e.g., their peers) know that you have responded to their need with specific changes.**

***Lesson: **It actually takes but a small nod in the customer's direction to create a vociferous ally.**

***Lesson: **The clear goal is front-line "users as saleswomen/men."**

***Lesson: **Consult, consult, consult ... (Consult, consult, consult ...)**

Case: Love Thy Internal Customer ... Or Else!

***The head of all staff services at a huge Italian bank measures internal (“user”) customer satisfaction—staff officers have their performance evaluated, and their bonuses calculated, largely based on internal customer satisfaction—and a few who didn’t get with the program were let go, with a bit of fanfare.

***Lesson: **Want user buy-in for internal systems, including control systems? Make it clear to users that they have a stake in the result.**

Case: Policeman or Pal?

***In Vietnam I was operations officer for a 750-person combat engineer battalion. My first commanding officer expected staff officers to be in the field—and he made it clear that our Job #1 was to facilitate our “customers’” projects. My second CO used his staff as cops, making sure that our customers were complying with “regulations,” especially annoying little ones. In the first instance “we” (it was a joint effort) got a lot of stuff built and had happy customers (mostly U.S. Marine Corps combat units). In the second case, everybody, we and our external customers, were always at each others’ throats, or so it seemed.

***Lesson: **A good staff leader is a facilitator, not a cop. (Though there are important controls that must be maintained—but again, this will mostly happen with the user’s approval, if the user is aware and part of the compliance process.)**

***Lesson: **Per the above, even control systems can be of joint value if there is user inclusion.**

Case: Sales Training for One and All!

***On vacation in New Zealand, I met a wildly successful U.S. TV Director (a couple of top shows that many of you watch, I am sure), who said that early in his career he realized he had good stuff—but he continually failed to close the deal. “I figured out that **I was a lousy salesman, and I was determined to fix the problem,**” he told me. “I must have read 25 ‘self-help’ books [on selling], and I even attended a 2-day workshop on selling life insurance and another one from a renowned real-estate guru. I picked up a

basketful of ‘tricks of the trade,’ and in pretty short order I was closing the deal. No kidding, that was the difference—all this was about twenty-five years ago.”

***Lesson: **Life is sales!!!**

***Lesson: **Regardless of your job, teach yourself sales! Practice!**

***Lesson: **Bosses, especially staff bosses, send your entire gang through sales training!**

Life is sales!!!

The rest is details!

Case: Making Friends in Low Places

***GE has an infinitely potent risk assessment group, a very senior energy sector sales guy told me. It’s also a pretty lean staff. When a salesman is in a hurry to close a deal or move it along, he is dependent on the past investment he’s made with a handful of folks in risk assessment. “Think of it,” Tom, “as a ‘personal relationship economy’—I unabashedly aim for a queue jump, an ‘unfair’ share of the risk guy’s attention.”

***Lesson: **Success for many of us (all of us?) will depend on undue responsiveness by staff folks who can give us a timely hand—or not. Hence ‘investment’ in those folks is, or is damn close to, Job #1.**

***Lesson: **Actively manage the internal-“customer” Investment process!**

***Lesson: **C(I) > C(E). For lasting success in the marketplace, strong internal “customer” relations are as important/more important than external customer relationships.**

Case: Body Language Rules!

***I was watching a DVD of a TV show about the Italian detective Montalbano. It had subtitles, and at one point Susan muted the Italian. In a flash, I was struggling with the story flow. I realized that although I know all of about three words in Italian (va bene, etc.), I depended on the characters’ inflection, tone, as much as if they’d been speaking

English. I was in turn reminded of research I've read that says body is 90% of communication, or close to it as I recall.

Likewise, a friend of mine, Thom Mayer, M.D., teaches docs how to empathize (etc.) with patients—typical of the “tricks (anything but, actually) is **never to cross their arms** when addressing a patient—it re-enforces the already yawning doc-patient barrier. (Bad enough that you're lying there in shitty garments—essentially powerless.) Likewise another pal, a renowned secondary school principal, upon entering a classroom and talking to a student, **gets down on his knees, or assumes the baseball catcher's stance**, with the result that he looks up at the student—the impact is nothing short of stunning, and the conversation becomes, de facto, between peers.

***Lesson: **Be aware of your body language to the best of your ability!**

***Lesson: **Work explicitly on your body language—and insist that those who work for you do so as well.**

Case: I Have a Dream ...

***Frankly, it's ordinarily not my favorite flavor of management book, the parable format. But, while passing a few moments in an airport bookstore, I came across *The Dream Manager*, by Matthew Kelly; and I was hooked after a couple of pages. Kelly argues, and a moment or two of reflection will probably win you over, or it should, that **everyone has dreams**—often unarticulated, whether fast-food clerk or CEO (many are un-reflective in my experience). Unearthing those dreams and helping people move forward in their personal lives can transform a workforce. Yes, Kelly hooked me: “**An organization can only become the-best-version-of-itself to the extent that the people who drive that organization are striving to become better-versions-of-themselves.**” “A company's purpose is to become the-best-version-of-itself. The question is: What is an employee's purpose? Most would say, ‘to help the company achieve its purpose’—but they would be wrong. That is certainly part of the employee's role, but an employee's primary purpose is to become the-best-version-of-himself or –herself. ... When a company forgets that it exists to serve customers, it quickly goes out of business. **Our employees are our first customers, and our most important customers.**” Kelly goes on to lay out an explicit program for eliciting folks' dreams—and helping them begin their quest.

***Lesson, question to answer: **Do you believe that we *all* have dreams?**

***Lesson, question to answer: **Do you believe that to put the customer truly first means putting the employee who serves that customer “more first”?**

***Lesson: **Work assiduously on helping everyone in every position to grow in ways that are important to them. E.g., offer them assignments that dovetail with their larger aspirations.**

***Lesson: **Make the above part of the official “value proposition” for the outfit as a whole.**

Putting the customer truly first means putting the employee who serves the customer “more first.”

Case: Ask and Ye Shall Receive

***During an executive seminar in Zurich (the same exchange has taken place in Chicago and Atlanta and ...), the discussion centered around discovering what motivated people. And the following exchange ensued, almost verbatim (I wrote it down at the next break):

Exec: “... but Tom, how do we **find out what it is that people really want?**”
Tom (after a long pause and a lot of thought—and I’m not kidding): “Ask ’em.”

***Lesson: **Ask ’em.**

***Lesson: **Adopt body language that clearly suggest you are listening—and hearing.** (If you are a guy, practice on your spouse, and beg for brutal feedback.)

Case: Silence Really Is Golden

***While reading a Robert Littell thriller, the protagonist, at a CIA safe house, is trying to extract the “life story” from a defector. The narrator comments, “He had learned when he was very young **that if he kept quiet, the other person would fill the silence.**”

***Lesson: **As a boss, often as not our idea of a “conversation” is that we talk and the other person listens. Stop! Now! Start practicing today: Listen! Heed the advice immediately above.**

***Lesson: **Learn to “meditate,” learn the meditator’s approach to breathing—practice “quickie” meditative breathing; it’ll help you slow down**

and perhaps help you not to re-take the floor before you've in fact relinquished it in the first place.

Case: Onward to Amazon ...

***I cannot urge you strongly enough to take these ten books aboard:

The Manager's Book of Decencies: How Small Gestures Build Great Companies—
Steve Harrison

Respect—Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

Hostmanship: The Art of Making People Feel Welcome—Jan Gunnarsson &
Olle Blohm (leader as host to his-her employees)

The SPEED of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything—Stephen M.R. Covey

The Dream Manager—Matthew Kelly

The Customer Comes Second: Put Your People First and Watch 'Em Kick Butt—
Hal Rosenbluth and Diane McFerrin Peters (no relation)

Crucial Conversations—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Crucial Confrontations—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

Influence: Science and Practice—Robert Cialdini

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ—Daniel Goleman

Lesson: These books are “bibles” for the “Hard is soft. Soft is hard” “religion.”

Another take on the “soft factors” that are really the “hard factors,” in a slightly different format, that first appeared as a Blogpost at tompeters.com.

Case: You, Me and Charlie Wilson’s War

Over Christmas I read George Crile’s *Charlie Wilson’s War*, the tale of the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan and the subsequent implosion of the “Evil Empire,” our undisputed nemesis for the first half century of my life. I can state with some certainty that it was the most incredible non-fiction story I have ever (!) read. Last night I saw the movie—it was, for me, wonderful, though a pale reproduction of the full 550-page treatment by Crile. Turning to the practicalities of your and my day to day professional affairs, the story was peppered with *de facto* analyses of how Charlie pulled off his amazing thing. He is indeed “larger than life,” and yet his practical “can do” tactics have a lot to teach all of us. As I imagine it, 100% of the readers of this Blog are Professional Change Agents, fighting wars against the bureaucratic evil empires which impede success. So what follows is rather (!) lengthy for a Blogpost, but ridiculously short considering the importance of the subject matter:

1. Make friends! And then more friends! And then more friends! “The way things normally work, if you’re not Jewish you don’t get into the Jewish caucus [at the CIA], but Charlie did. And if you’re not black you don’t get into the black caucus. But Charlie plays poker with the black caucus; they had a game, and he’s the only white guy in it. The House, like any human institution, is moved by friendships, and no matter what people might think about Wilson’s antics, they tend to like him and enjoy his company.” Likewise Wilson’s CIA partner, Gust Avrakotos, made friends among the black members of the CIA, becoming the first white guy to win their informal “Brown Bomber Award” (“We want to give this award to the blackest motherfucker of all.”) Bottom line: Your power is directly proportional to the breadth and depth of your Rolodex. Quantity counts almost as much as quality—you never know from whom you will need a “little” special service. “She/he who has developed the best network of allies wins” is essentially a truism—though not acknowledged by the majority of us and the overwhelmingly useless MBA programs which spawned many of us.

2. Make friends by the bushel with those *several* levels down and with various *disenfranchised* groups. Gust Avrakotos’ strategy: “He had become something of a legend with these people who manned the underbelly of the Agency [CIA].” E.g., Gust apparently knew every Executive Secretary by name—and had helped many of them out with personal or professional problems. You could almost say he had the “invisible 95%” of the Agency working for him, which allowed him to make incredible things happen despite furious resistance from the top of a very rigid organization. I have spoken and Blogged on this topic before, arguing among other things that *the* key to sales success is “wiring” the client organization 3 or 4 levels down—where the real work gets done, and the real editorializing takes place. Most would agree perhaps—but damn few make it the obsession it must be to foster success. One added (big) benefit is that “those folks” are

seldom recognized, and thence the “investment” will likely yield long-lasting, not transient, collective rewards of unimaginable size.

(Charlie [tp: sorry for the sexism, but Charlie is Charlie] made pals with a ridiculously charming Houston “hostess with the mostest,” also passionate about the Afghan cause. She threw some very parties in D.C. Of course, old Ben Franklin did the same thing, 200 years earlier, an urbane figure in coonskin cap, in the Salons of Paris—a crucial alliance followed.)

3. Carefully manage the BOF/Balance Of Favors. Practice potlatch—giving so much help to so many people on so many occasions (overkill!) that there is no issue about their supporting you when the time comes to call in the chits. “Wilson made it easy for his colleagues to come to him, always gracious, almost always helpful.” Some would argue, and I think I’d agree, that conscious management of one’s “balance of favors” (owed and due) is a very sensible thing to do in a pretty organized fashion.

4. Follow the money! “Anybody with a brain can figure out that if they can get on the Defense subcommittee, that’s where they ought to be—because that’s where the money is.” Getting near the heart of fiscal processes offers innumerable opportunities to effectively take control of a system—as long as you are willing to invest in the details that lead to Absolute Mastery of the topic. From the outside looking in, this is another big argument for nurturing relationships a few levels down in the organization—in this case, the financial organization. And another big argument, in any organization, of wangling a 2-year assignment in “finance” where you will learn to master key processes and, again, make lasting relationships in the organization’s boiler room.

5. Network! Network! Network! Potential links of great value will neither be possible nor obvious until the network is very dense (the law of exponential link power). The odds of useful connections occurring are a pure Numbers Game. The more hyperlinks you have, the higher the odds of making the right connection.

6. Seek unlikely, even unwholesome, allies, or at least don’t rule them out. Find the right path (often \$\$\$\$) and the most bitter of rivals, and sometimes “appalling” (to your pure-as-the-driven-snow, as you see it, sensibilities) will make common cause, for perverse reasons (like getting even with an enemy of your enemy) relative to some key link in the chain.

7. Found material I (Stuff). Don’t re-invent the wheel. It costs too much, takes too much time, and requires too much bureaucratic hassle. Again and again Wilson took advantage of stuff, such as materials-weaponry, that was “redundant,” sitting in forgotten warehouses, and immediately available for use—rather than waiting an eternity for the “perfect” solution-hardware.

8. Found material II (People): Find disrespected oddball people-groups that have done exciting work but are not recognized. (E.g., in Wilson’s case, a band of crazies in the Pentagon’s lightly regarded Weapons Upgrade Program.)

9. Real, Visible passion! Perceived “authenticity” matters—especially in highly bureaucratic environments. Passion also suggests annoying “staying power”—“I might as well support the son-of-a-bitch now, he’s not going away and he’ll hound me ’til hell freezes over.” (This was my #1 key to modest success as a veeeeeeery junior-hence-“powerless” staffer in the White House in the early 70s. I was almost universally considered nauseatingly tenacious.)

10. Graphic evidence of the source of your passion. Charlie Wilson had one main hurdle to his plan—a crusty, grouchy, old, cynical Committee Chairman, Clarence Long of Maryland. CW took him to the astounding, vast Afghan refugee camps on the Pakistan border—and made a fast and emotional friend of the cause in the space of one afternoon. If you’ve got a cause, you usually want to fix something that is a mess—figure out a way to expose would-be converts to startling, live demos of the problem, replete with “real people’s” testimony from those who are on the losing end of things. Wilson subsequently did such things as create a little program to treat horrid medical problems, bringing victims to the U.S.—suddenly the “live demo” was next door at Walter Reed! (This works for a horrid bureaucratic process that is alienating you or me from our customers almost as much as in the Wilson case—our genetic wiring is such that none of us is immune to a good story—just ask the ghost of Ronald Reagan.) Hint: The demo must be ... graphic-immutably legit!)

11. Make it personal. On every visit to the refugee camps, Wilson donated blood on the spot. (Shameless bastard—exactly the point; why was there a first aid station at the exactly right location on the inspection visit with Long?)

12. Enthusiasm. Charlie and Gust oozed it from every pore “24/7” re Afghanistan.

13. Unvarnished showmanship! This (*any* implementation) is a theatrical production, just like political campaigns—every project needs a showman obsessed with creating and moving forward the compelling “story line.”

14. Visible momentum, hence “inevitability”! The smell of action must be in the air. Think of it as “momentum management”—an essential aspect of the showmanship theme. (One definition: “Get on this soon-to-be-popular-bus while the getting is good.”)

15. Perception is ... *always* ... everything. Play head games with the bad guys. The goal was to create a Vietnam-like sense of hopelessness among the Soviets. The bark was worse than the bite—but demoralization, even in a totalitarian state, is eventually decisive. Wear the buggers out by inducing hopelessness. (“We don’t need this.”) (It ultimately worked—was decisive.)

16. Goal is clear and unequivocal and inspiring ... Victory. Gust: “It wasn’t a defeatist attitude [at the CIA], it was positive—making the enemy [Soviets] hemorrhage. But I don’t play ball that way. It’s either black or white, win or lose. I don’t go for a tie.” (Mirrors one biographer’s conclusion about Lord Horatio Nelson’s #1 differentiating

attribute: “[Other] admirals [friend as well as foe] were more frightened of losing than anxious to win.”)

17. Repeat: The goal is noble but “the work” is ... Relationships & Networking & Politics. And Relationships & Networking & Politics. Even if the issue is deeply technical, the “implementation bit” (that all-important “last 98%”) is all about ... politics-relationships. “Political relationships” is life. Buy in, purist in heart though you may be, or live an implementation-free life!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

18. Recruit a politics-networking maestro. Charlie Wilson had this part down, and he needed help with the doing. If you are the doer, then you must find the politician-networker. They are a special breed—and worth as much as the doer, probably more. (The legendary community organizer Saul Alinsky, pointed out the difference between “organizers” and “leaders.” Leaders are the visible ones, out there giving the speeches and manning the picket lines. The largely invisible organizer worries about recruiting the folks who will be on that picket line, settling disputes about who goes where—and procuring the buses to get the picketers to the right place at the right time with the necessary signs and bullhorns. I firmly believe that Alinsky’s *Rules For Radicals* is the best “project management” manual ever written.)

19. Think Q-squared/Quintessential Quartet. Passion poobah and chief storyteller. Anal doer. Financier. Networker-political master-recruiter-in-chief. (Incidentally (1) their power is exponential; incidentally (2) with any leg absent, the stool collapses.)

20. When a project is unusual-risky, never, ever waste time or capital going “up the chain of command,” at least until the very end—when the chain of command comes to you, belatedly joins in, and takes all the credit, which is fine with you, because those who need to know do know. Risk aversion rises as one nears the top ... everywhere. Constantly devise and try and discard and re-revise end runs that build the network, add to knowledge, and create “small wins” that start the process mushrooming. Be especially *polite* to your boss (Gust wasn’t, there are God-like exceptions to every rule), but do *not* waste time on him!

21. Demo! Demo! Demo! Demo! Demo! Demo! Get some wee thing/s done no matter how grand the goal—you need visual evidence of hope.

22. Demo redux: Plant a field of seeds, most will die, a few will grow—and pay special attention to the *wildflowers*. Fill the air with possibility, energy, action—no matter that 96.3% will come to naught. (Many of the little successes will surprise you, in terms of content—committed people do the strangest damn things—and since they are oddballs for the most part, they don’t give a shit what you think, knowing, as they do, that at the time you need them more than they need you.)

23. Take chances on unusual talent, regardless of formal rank. Mike Vickers, a junior (GS-11) officer was given enormous responsibility because of his demonstrated skills and tenacity and creativity. (Vickers, among other big things, was a wizard at making the

numbers add up, especially when they didn't add up—and as a bonus could present his analytic case several levels up with aplomb—i.e., respect but doggedness.)

24. Recruit peculiar talent with no investment in conventional solutions. Most of what you do won't work—don't spend ages trying to stuff square pegs into round holes. Cultivate a Special Network of Weirdos, often junior, who bring no baggage to the party.

25. Create a small, insanely committed “band of brothers” to act as mostly invisible orchestrators. When all was said and done, Gust Avrakotos and his tiny (never more than a half dozen) nerve center in the CIA basement never got even a smidgen of recognition for what was the Agency's biggest success. But his little team did the work of hundreds (In a truly revolutionary mission, the core group must number <10—there's a ton of historical evidence on this. (Margaret Mead: Nothing of significance has ever been started by a group that numbered more than a dozen.”) I've long used the (stolen from Lockheed) term “skunkworks” to describe such small bands of insanely determined renegades.

26. The “Band of Brothers”-“Skunkworks” must be physically separated from top management. In Gust's case there were just a few floors of insulation—but even that was-is essential.

27. Think, subconsciously ... long haul. A small act of recognition toward a Major in an ally's military pays off Big Time 15 years later when he is Chief of Staff of the Army—one never knows, but stitch enough of these events together, and the odds of one paying off go waaaaay up. That is, passion for today's action is paramount—but always, always, always think consciously about ... Network Investment. (R.O.I.R. as I call it—Return On Investment in Relationships.)

28. K.I.S.S. Our Afghan allies (of the moment) drove the Soviets crazy less with “big weapons” (oh so difficult for an irregular program to acquire) than with an endless and ever-varying stream of “simple” (cheap, reliable, easy to train, easy to transport) weapons such as bicycle bombs (shades of our problems in Iraq).

29. Plan for the “real world.” Mike Vickers was a genius at understanding the way things really were in the field—his convoluted, ugly-on-paper, logistics programs reflected that. *No pie-in-the-sky assumptions!* (Absent in Iraq redux.)

30. Cut red tape. “What we did in one month with Charlie would have taken us nine years to accomplish.” (Approval process in Congress, 8 days for a typically 9-month procedure to get \$\$ transferred) (Again: Charlie had spent a decade racking up favors without asking anything in return—he'd approved Defense program after Defense program while representing a very rural district in West Texas that never had nor would receive a penny of Defense money.) My longtime definition: Boss = Chief hurdle remover. Which (again) means the boss must be master of the intricacies of the political process. A little known congressman, Tom DeLay, became one of the most powerful people in America by total mastery of the political rules. In a business project, this

means, say, total mastery of the client's purchasing process—including total comprehension of the power politics going on at the moment.

31. Don't document it! Charlie Wilson and Gust Avrakotos cut corners—to succeed against the powers that be you will have to. Keep documentation to a minimum—watch your emails!!

32. Luck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Never deny the reality of lucky (or unlucky) breaks; realizing that allows you to “stay in the game,” playing hand after hand until your cards come in—or the time, occasionally, does come to fold. (If you don't acknowledge luck, to yourself, you will become dispirited—assuming that your genius has failed you and that therefore you'd best fold your tent too early.)

33. The Game Ain't Over Until the Fat Lady Sings. I call them the “yoiks,” which actually stands for un-intended consequences. After the Russians had withdrawn from Afghanistan, the U.S. once again returned to benign neglect—the result was, indirectly, 9/11 orchestrated from Afghanistan mostly by some of the people we had supported a decade earlier. As to not finishing the chore, Charlie Wilson said that the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, their first in the Cold War loss and a spur to the unraveling of the Evil Empire, was a “glorious accomplishment that changed the world. And then we f&*^ed up the end game.” Though that assertion is surely self-serving, I'm with Wilson, regardless of today's threats; as one who lived through the entire Cold War. We are indeed now free of the not particularly low odds threat of planetary extinction. (See, among other things, my Post of 1231.07 on Soviet Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov and the imminent end of the world on 26 September 1983.) But that's not the point either—instead it is the more general axiom that you never know what new can of worms you are opening—which, to me of course, makes the linear, logical approach to planning and life so laughable. Well, I guess we all need our illusions, and if plans provide such comfort, ridiculous as they are other than as bureaucratic cover, it's fine by me.

Concluding reminder: Any project worth doing is worth doing because in some small or large way it challenges “the way we do things around here.” Moreover, it is a given that bosses are primarily hired to be cops who make sure that we do things “the way we do things around here.” *I'd guess that 98% of projects fail in terms of even near-total implementation. And 98% of the 98% failures are the results of lousy political and networking skills—not selection of the wrong project management software package.* Hence “the work” of projects is the political implementation of ideas and processes which necessarily engender even more emotional resistance by the powers that be. We who would change things are insurgents. Charlie and Gust were insurgents who fought, for years, an inch at a time, through the corridors of power from Congress to the CIA headquarters in Langley VA to the presidential palaces in Pakistan and Egypt—and even Israel.

*All success is a
matter of
implementation.*

*All implementation
is
a matter of politics.*

**100 Ways to Succeed #103:
Friends/Network Several Levels “Down”**

Among the 33 ideas-tactics just presented this one, after careful examination, comes in #1 on the importance list.

Remember Gust Avrakotos from “Charlie Wilson’s War”: “He had become something of a legend with these people who manned the underbelly of the Agency [CIA].” (Gust helped these unempowered folk with many personal problems way beyond their typical reach.) When I was a very junior officer in the Pentagon, I discovered a link to the E-3 (very junior enlisted rank) English major from Brown University who was the letter-speech writer for The Secretary of the Navy, John Chafee (from Rhode Island, home to Brown). I shamelessly used my own Ivy League/Cornell link to him, which he got a kick out of—and was able to get a few favors (not too many or too extreme!) which allowed me to do some stuff that made no sense for a junior officer (O-3) to pull off.

Hence: *Invest heavily and continuously in those “several levels down” in the organization, particularly executive assistants, who hold the keys to access and working with some ease through convoluted processes.*

Remember another piece of advice: C(I) > C(E). Internal customers are perhaps more important than the “bottom line” external customers; engaged internal customers will help you get you an unfair share of internal attention which in turn allows you to perform miracles of implementation for your external customers.

**100 Ways to Succeed #104:
Shut Up!**

Referring to the protagonist, Paul Christopher, a CIA field officer (again—and very consistent with *Charlie Wilson’s War*) in *Christopher’s Ghosts*, author Charles McCarry, says: “He [Christopher] had learned when he was very young that if he kept quiet, the other person would fill the silence.” McCarry also tells us at one point that Christopher’s key to a debriefing is to shut up and not interrupt—Christopher claims that “everyone has a story to tell, if only you have the patience to wait for it and not get in the way of it.”

So: *Shut up!*

I’m practicing (a 2008 resolution) keeping quiet, and waiting for the story to emerge. (Fat chance, my colleagues would say—screw them.)

Make friends!
And then more friends!
And then more friends!

**100 Ways to Succeed #105:
Master of Internal Processes**

(More from the Charlie Wilson post.)

Become a *Master of Internal Processes*. Recall, from the Charlie Wilson post the reference to Tom DeLay who effectively controlled the House of Representatives by grabbing control of internal processes. This requires heavy investment (again) (What doesn't?) and a passion for details. This one, too, is open to junior folks.

Addenda: If you are boss of a project team, no matter how small, include a Master of Process, preferably with corporate staff experience, for your team. Also bring on someone who likes to “do lunch” with those in the “underbelly” (Gust Avrakotos—CIA) of the organization; this, Ms Project Manager, is your job, too—personally. Incidentally (not so incidentally, actually) “Ms” is likely to be far more effective at this than “Mr.”

**100 Ways to Succeed #106:
Assignment in the Finance Department**

(More from the Charlie Wilson post.)

Follow the money!
Follow the money!
Follow the money!

A CIO who was remarkably successful in a huge organization declares the key was a five-year stint in the corporate Finance Department as a mid-level guy—he had many friends and many “favors due” in finance, which allowed him to acquire assets, exceptions to rules, etc.

Hence: ***Seek out, by hook or by crook, a tour of duty in Finance—early on.***

Attending to the “Last 98%”: The New “Management Science,” or “Hard Is Soft, Soft Is Hard”

Success Is a Function of* ...

$$S = f(\#\&DR; -2L, -3L, 4L, I\&E)$$

Success is a function of: Number and depth of relationships 2, 3, and 4 levels down inside and outside the organization

$$S = f(SD>SU)$$

Sucking down is more important than sucking up—the idea is to have the entire organization working for you.

$$S = f(\#\text{non-FF}, \#\text{non-FL})$$

Number of friends, number of lunches with people not in my function

$$S = f(\#\text{FF})$$

Number of friends in the finance organization

*These are obviously not true equations. But in honor of my engineering background and the need to have a little fun to make my serious points, I chose this format to summarize what I’ve presented above.

*“It helps to know
people in ... high
places!”*

*“It helps more to
know people in ...
low places!”*

$$S = f(\text{OF})$$

Number of oddball friends

$$S = f(\text{PDL})$$

Purposeful, deep listening—this is *very* hard

$$S = f(\text{\#EODD3MC})$$

Number of end-of-the-day difficult (you'd rather avoid) "3-minutecalls" that sooth raw feelings, mend fences, etc.

$$S = f(\text{UFP, UFK, OAPS})$$

Unsolicited favors performed, UFs involving co-workers' kids, overt acts politeness-solicitude toward co-workers' spouses, parents, etc.

$$S = f(\text{\#TN} + \text{\#C})$$

Number of thank you notes sent, number of people consulted about an issue-decision (courtesy Roger Rosenblatt)

$$S = f(\text{A\#C, PTS/"OLC", SAPA})$$

Absolute # of consultations, perception of being taken seriously (Responsible for "one line of code"), small acts of public appreciation

$$S = f(\text{SU})$$

Showing up (Woody Allen, Delaware's ridiculous influence on the Constitution of the USA)

$$S = f(\text{1D})$$

Seeking the assignment of writing first drafts, minutes, etc. (1787)

$$S = f(\#SEAs)$$

Number of solid relationships with Executive Assistants

$$S = f(\%UL/w-m)$$

% useful lunches per week, month

$$S = f(FG, FOC-BOF, CMO)$$

Favors given, favors owed collectively, balance of favors, conscious management thereof

$$S = f(CPRM, TS)$$

Conscious-planned Relationship management, time spent thereon

$$S = f(TN/d, FG/m, AA/d)$$

Thank you notes per *Day*, flowers given per Month, Acts of Appreciation per Day

$$S = f(PTA100\%A\text{“T”}S, E\text{“NMF”}—TTT)$$

Proactive, timely, 100% apologies for “tiny” screw-ups, even if not my fault (it always takes two to tango)

$$S = f(AMR, NBS-SG)$$

Acceptance of mutual responsibilities for all affairs, no blame-shifting, scape-goating

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{APLSLFACT})$$

Awareness, perception of little snubs—and lightening fast correction thereof

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{G})$$

Grace

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{GA})$$

Grace toward adversary

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{GW})$$

Grace toward the wounded in bureaucratic firefights

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{PD})$$

Purposeful decency

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{MB} \text{“TSS”} \mathbf{MR})$$

Purposeful management of this Soft Stuff by people reporting to me

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{EC}, \mathbf{MMO})$$

Emotional connection, mgt & maintenance of

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{IMDOP})$$

Investment in Mastery of detailed organizational processes

$$\mathbf{S} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{H-TS})$$

Time spent on Hiring

$$S = f(\text{TSPD}, \text{TSP-L1})$$

Time spent on promotion decisions, especially for 1st level managers

$$S = f(\% \text{“SS,” H-PD})$$

% soft stuff involved in Hiring, Promotion decisions

$$S = (\text{TWA}, \text{P}, \text{NP})$$

Time wandering around, purposeful, non-planned

$$S = f(\text{SBS})$$

Slack built into Schedule

$$S = f(\text{TSHR})$$

Time spent ... Hurdle Removing

$$S = f(\% \text{TM} \text{“TSS,”} \\ \text{PM} \text{“TSS,”} \\ \text{D} \text{“TD”} \text{“TSS”})$$

Success is a function of: % of time, measured, on this *Soft Stuff*, purposeful management of this *Soft Stuff*, daily “to-do” concerning “*this Soft Stuff*”

I'll conclude with three more “equations”—oriented toward organizational success-effectiveness-excellence:

$$O(B) = f(XX)$$

O(B), the “blueness” of one’s “ocean” [think *Blue Ocean Strategy*, the popular book], is directly proportional to one’s eXcellence in eXecution/XX, per me. [If one finds a “strategic” “blue ocean,” one will, especially in today’s world, copied immediately; the only “defense”—possibility of sustaining success—is XX/eXcellence in eXecution. Think EXXON MOBIL; they and their rivals know where the hydrocarbons are—but EXXON MOBIL handily out-executes the competition.]

$$S(O) = f(XXFX)$$

The single most important cause of failure to execute effectively is the lack of effective cross-functional communication-execution. Hence, Organizational Success is a function of eXcellence (X) in cross-functional (XF) eXecution (X). Attached as Appendix II is my: *The “XF-50”: 50 Ways to Enhance Cross-Functional Effectiveness and Deliver Speed, “Service Excellence” and “Value-added Customer ‘Solutions.’”*

$$S(O) = f(X“SIT”)$$

In 1982 in *In Search of Excellence*, Bob Waterman and I wrote about the idea of “MBWA,” or Managing By Wandering Around; we came across “MBWA” at Hewlett-Packard, then a much smaller company, and it was love at first sight! For reasons described in Appendix III, I recently returned to the centrality of that notion—and created a list of 50 “Have Yous.” That is, instead of worrying ceaselessly about “strategy” and “blue oceans,” how good a job have you done at Staying In Touch with your extended internal and external “organizational family”? That is: S(O), Organizational Success, is a function of X “SIT,” eXcellence at Staying In Touch. (See Appendix III.)

Q: But where's the
beef?

A: *This **is** the beef!*

In conclusion (for now):

“Gurus” (me included, if we must use that wretched word) invariably focus on “the wrong stuff.” (See above, the beginning of this essay.) They take what I think is “the right stuff” for granted. And yet whether the topic is the drafting of the U.S. Constitution, the English-French “entente” before World War I, or medical malpractice, the outcome is almost entirely determined by “the missing 98%,” the sorts of things sketchily presented above.

There will be more to come, but this “inkling” is the product of musings and reading during a three-week “vacation” to New Zealand in January-February 2008.

Note: The “equations” were first formally presented to the Australian financial services company, Flexirent, to general approval.

Tom Peters/Boston/7 April 2008

Appendix I: Lessons/Summary

Here are the “Lessons” from each of the vignettes above, repeated in one place—with, no surprise, lots of duplication; if there were no duplication, then I could be seen to be barking up the wrong tree.

*****Show up!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

*****Keep showing up!!**

*****Control the process through indirect actions**, like doing first drafts, writing Minutes.

*****Remember the social graces**—your emotional “presentation of self” is more important than even “all important”!!!

*****Hang in! Tenacity-relentlessness rules!** (Wear the bastards down. No kidding, this is a matchless “success tool.”)

*****There’s no such thing as a “dull meeting.”** (No kidding!) Every get-together is an opportunity to press your agenda, directly or indirectly.

*****Bite your tongue and listen, listen, listen—even to bores.** Nothing wins support like effective listening; it’s the greatest gift you can give anyone!! (This is triply important when you are desperate to correct something someone has to say, even an “enemy” of your cause—attentive listening is a peerless “win ’em over” “strategic” “tool.”)

*****“Sub-committees rule!** It’s the little chances to become Master of Something and perform-influence in a small group setting that lead to the accumulation of power and the ability to control the flow in an area important to you.

*****Continually “illustrate” your ability to perform well at almost any task, build a towering reputation for reliability.**

*****Cool off!** No passion, no success! Too much abrasiveness in pursuit of a cause that inflames you kills opportunity to succeed like nothing else. (Folks love to put an abrasive person in his place, even if they agree with him.)

*****Take a punch and keep on trucking.** Losses are common—live with ’em, take ’em with good grace, and then persevere through out-persevering the other guy/s.

***Speaking of “punch,” out-drinking the other guy sure worked in ’87. Reach your own conclusions here ...

*****Grow up, accept life.** Life, effectiveness is indeed about horse trading as often as not—and at times consorting with one’s enemies. (“The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Keep your passion, stay above the waterline on issues of deep principle—but accept, and embrace, the messy-as-hell “real world”!”)

*****Remember the black flies!** “Little” distractions can change the whole game.

*****Be ready with “Plan B.”** Repeat: Nothing in the real world follows the script.

*****Nobody**, even George Washington, **gets more than about 60% of what they want!**

*****Keep your word.** A reputation for integrity is priceless.

*****Don't bite off more than you can chew**, even when “can't miss” opportunities to further your cause arise—overloading and thence compromising effectiveness is a big black eye.

*****Do something!** “Small wins,” accumulated regularly build momentum!

***Work assiduously on your **public presentation skills!**

***Lesson: **Make friends!**

***Lesson: **Constantly mind your friendships.**

***Lesson: **Keep in touch with your friends.**

***Lesson: **The personal touch, always!**

***Lesson: **Your portfolio of friends must be diverse.**

***Lesson: **Never stop making friends.**

***Lesson: **Show up.**

***Lesson: **Show up.**

***Lesson: **Show up.**

***Lesson: **Hang out with the folks.**

***Lesson: **Grace!!**

***Lesson: **Lavish attention and appreciation!** (Suck up, continue sucking up, if it kills you.)

***Lesson: **Body language matters!**

***Lesson: **Jealousy rules!** Always has. Always will. Beware, be conscious.

***Lesson: **Show appreciation** (or get into a war, bureaucratic, or a war with millions of deaths).

***Lesson: **Show respect!**

***Lesson: **All egos are fragile!** (Including the receptionist's.)

***Lesson: **Get close, listen up.**

***Lesson: **Be especially kind to key persons' families.**

***Lesson: **Develop the social graces.**

***Lesson: Learn to dance. (At least metaphorically.)

***Lesson: **Beware the real or perceived slight**; it ruins careers, costs big sales, screws up implementation of anything and everything—and starts wars. (So Lewis Strauss was probably a jerk—so what!)

***Lesson: **Anyone who stands between you and success—peer or boss—is a beloved soul!** (The late Ann Richards reminds us that even though we are mightily pissed off at the airline for its latest stupid move, **smile as you've never smiled before** at the employee at the desk—at the moment, she is the **only** person on the planet who can make insta-magic for you—or not.)

***Lesson: **The “tipping point” in momentous affairs of state is often some small**

slight or other “minor” human slip-up. Beware!

***Lesson: When you are pissed off at someone, be doubly aware of what an unkind “small” “satisfying” act of revenge might lead to.

***Lesson: Pay lavish and continual and insanely time-consuming attention to key folks who are essential to your project’s success!!!!

***Lesson: Become a tea aficionado?

***Woody Allen: *“Eighty percent of success is showing up.”*

***Lesson: Show up!

***Lesson: Show up—no matter what the cost!!

***Lesson: Show up! No alternative!

***Lesson: Show up! No “sorta”!

Show up!
Listen up!

Lesson (one of soooooo many): **Show up!** (On the ground, where the action—and possible implementation—is.)

Lesson: **Invest in ceaseless study of conditions “on the ground”—social and political and historical and systemic.**

Lesson: **Talk to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Listen to the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Respect the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Empathize with the “locals.”**

Lesson: **Try to blend in, adopting local customs, showing deference where necessary—almost everywhere; and never interrupt the “big man” in**

- front of his folks, even, or especially, if you think he is 180 degrees off.
- Lesson: **Seek out the local leaders’ second cousins, etc, to gain indirect access over their uncle twice removed! (Etc. & etc.)**
- Lesson: **Have a truly crappy office, and other un-trappings!**
- Lesson: **Remember, you do not in fact have the answers despite your PhD with, naturally, honors, from the University of Chicago—where you were mentored by not one, but two, Nobel Laureates in economics.**
- Lesson: **Regardless of the enormity of the problem, proceed by trial (manageable in size) and error, error, error. (Failure motto: “Do it right the first time!” Success motto: “Do it right the 37th time!” And hustle through those 37 tries!)**
- Lesson: **The process of political-community engagement must also be approached as a trial and error learning process.**
- Lesson: **Always alter the experiment to accommodate local needs—the act of apparent local modification per se is critical, as every community leader, in order for them to accept “ownership” and demonstrate to their constituents that they are in charge, must feel as if they have directly and measurably influenced the experiment.**
- Lesson: **Growth (the experimental and expansion-emulation process) must be organic, and proceed at a measured pace—nudged, not hurried.**
- Lesson: **Speed kills! (To a point.)**
- Lesson: **Short-circuiting political process kills!**
- Lesson: **Premature rollout kills!**
- Lesson: **Too much publicity kills!**
- Lesson: **Too much money kills!**
- Lesson: **Too much technology kills!**
- Lesson: **Outsiders, to be effective, must have genuine appreciation of and affection for the locals with whom and for whom they are working!**
- Lesson: **Condescension kills most—said “locals” know unimaginably more about life than well-intentioned “do-gooders,” young or even, alas, not so young.**
- Lesson: **Progress ... MUST ... be consistent with “local politics on the ground” in order to enhance sustainability.**
- Lesson: **You will never-ever “fix” “everything at once” or by the time you “finish”—in our Constitutional Convention in 1787, George Washington only got about 60% of what he wanted!**
- Lesson: **Never forget the atmospherics, such as numerous celebrations for tiny milestones reached, showering praise on the local leader and your local cohorts, while you assiduously stand at the back of the crowd—etc.**
- Lesson: **The experiment has failed until the systems and political rewards, often small, are in place, with Beta tests completed, to up the odds of repetition.**
- Lesson: **Most of your on-the-ground staff must consist of respected locals—the de facto or de jure Chairman or CEO must be a local; you must be virtually invisible.**
- Lesson: **Spend enormous “pointless” social time with the local political leaders—in Gulf War I, Norm Schwarzkopf spent his evenings, nearly all of them, drinking tea until 2AM or 3AM with the Saudi crown prince!**

Lesson: **Keep your “start-up” plan simple and short and filled with question marks in order to allow others to have the last word.** (I once did the final draft of a proposal, making it as flawless as could be. I gave it to my boss, pre Microsoft Word, and he proceeded to cut it up and tape the pieces back together, and conspicuously cross out several paragraphs of my obviously labored over and brilliant prose that he had agreed to. “Tom,” he said as I recall, “we want the rest of the committee [of important, or at least self-important folks] to feel as though they are participating and that you and I are naïve—not to confront them with a beautiful plan that shouts ‘Don’t you dare alter a word.’”)

Lesson: ***For projects involving children or health or education or community development or sustainable small-business growth (most projects), women are by far the most reliable and most central and most indirectly powerful local players in even the most chauvinist settings—their characteristic process of “implementation by indirection” means “life or death” to sustainable project success; moreover, the expanding concentric circles of women’s traditional networking processes is by far the best way to “scale up”/expand a program. (Men should not even try to understand what is taking place. Among other things, this networking indirection-largely invisible process will seemingly “take forever” by most men’s “action now, skip steps” S.O.P.—and then, from out of the blue, following an eternity of rambling discussions-on-top-of-rambling-discussions, you will wake up one fine morning and discover that the thing is done, that everything has fallen in place “overnight,” and that ownership is nearly universal. Concomitant imperative; most of your (as an outsider) staff should be women, alas, most likely not visibly “in charge.”***

Lesson: **And a hundred other things!!**

***Women are better than men at
“relationship stuff,” hence better at
implementation in general.***

*****Lesson: Keep in touch! Obsessively! Make it personal!**

*****Lesson: Try for plain English!**

*****Lesson: Apologize for screw-ups, perceived as well as real, small as well as large. One of the “Top 5” “weapons” of success is the willingness to admit error and apologize for it.**

*****Lesson: Remember your “little” “thank yous”—religiously.**

*****Lesson: Look folks directly in the eye!! (Always!)**

*****Lesson: I’m hardly condoning his disgraceful behavior. I am suggesting that taking little assignments that allow you to master key systems in the bowels of the organization gives you immense power. (Which, absent appropriate controls, can be used for nefarious behavior.)**

*****Lesson: Ditto our devil at Société Générale. Master key systems in the bowels of the organization.**

*****Lesson: Listen, empathize, get inside the other guy’s head. (Easier said than done—perhaps some of it is innate, but much of it can be learned, practiced.)**

*****Lesson: Consult prospective customers early, at the design stage. Do small things to accommodate them. Let them (and others, e.g., their peers) know that you have responded to their need with specific changes.**

*****Lesson: It actually takes but a small nod in the customer’s direction to create a vociferous ally.**

*****Lesson: The clear goal is front-line “users as saleswomen/men.”**

*****Lesson: Consult, consult, consult ... (Consult, consult, consult ...)**

*****Lesson: Want user buy-in for internal systems, including control systems? Make it clear to users that they have a stake in the result.**

*****Lesson: A good staff leader is a facilitator, not a cop. (Though there are important controls that must be maintained—but again, this will mostly happen with the user’s approval, if the user is aware and part of the compliance process.)**

*****Lesson: Per the above, even control systems can be of joint value if there is user inclusion.**

*****Lesson: Life is sales!!!**

*****Lesson: Regardless of your job, teach yourself sales! Practice!**

*****Lesson: Bosses, especially staff bosses, send your entire gang through sales training!**

*****Lesson: Success for many of us (all of us?) will depend on undue responsiveness by staff folks who can give us a timely hand—or not. Hence ‘investment’ in those folk is, or is damn close to, Job #1.**

*****Lesson: Actively manage the internal-“customer” Investment process!**

*****Lesson: C(I) > C(E). For lasting success in the marketplace, strong internal “customer” relations are as important/more important than external customer relationships.**

$$\mathbf{C(I) > C(E)}$$

For lasting success in the marketplace, strong internal “customer” relations are as important/more important than external customer relationships.

*****Lesson: Be aware of your body language to the best of your ability!**

*****Lesson: Work explicitly on your body language—and insist that those who work for you do so as well.**

*****Lesson, question to answer: Do you believe that we *all* have dreams?**

*****Lesson, question to answer: Do you believe that to put the customer truly first means putting the employee who serves that customer “more first”?**

*****Lesson: Work assiduously on helping everyone in every position to grow in ways that are important to them. E.g., offer them assignments that dovetail with their larger aspirations.**

- ***Lesson: **Make the above part of the official “value proposition” for the outfit as a whole.**
- ***Lesson: **Ask ’em.**
- ***Lesson: **Adopt body language that clearly suggest you are listening—and hearing.** (If you are a guy, practice on your spouse, and beg for brutal feedback.)

Ask ’em!

- ***Lesson: **As a boss, often as not our idea of a “conversation” is that we talk and the other person listens. Stop! Now! Start practicing today: Listen! Heed the advice immediately above.**
- ***Lesson: **Learn to “meditate,” learn the meditator’s approach to breathing—practice “quickie” meditative breathing; it’ll help you slow down and perhaps help you not to re-take the floor before you’ve in fact relinquished it in the first place.*****

I cannot urge you strongly enough to take these ten books aboard:

- The Manager’s Book of Decencies: How Small Gestures Build Great Companies*—Steve Harrison
- Hostmanship: The Art of Making People Feel Welcome*—Jan Gunnarsson & Olle Blohm (leader as host to his-her employees.)
- The SPEED of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything*—Stephen M.R. Covey
- The Dream Manager*—Matthew Kelly
- The Customer Comes Second: Put Your People First and Watch ’Em Kick Butt*—Hal Rosenbluth and Diane McFerrin Peters (no relation)
- Respect*—Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
- Crucial Conversations*—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler
- Crucial Confrontations*—Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler
- Influence: Science and Practice*—Robert Cialdini
- Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*—Daniel Goleman

Lesson: These books are “bibles” for the “Hard is soft. Soft is hard” “religion.”

You, Me and Charlie Wilson's War:

- 1. Make friends! And then more friends! And then more friends!**
- 2. Make friends by the bushel with those *several* levels down and with various *disenfranchised* groups.**
- 3. Carefully manage the BOF/Balance Of Favors.**
- 4. Follow the money!**
- 5. Network! Network! Network!**
- 6. Seek unlikely, even unwholesome allies, or at least don't rule them out.**
- 7. Found material.**
- 8. Found material II (People): 9. Real, Visible passion!**
- 10. Graphic evidence of the source of your passion.**
- 11. Make it personal.**
- 12. Enthusiasm.**
- 13. Showmanship.**
- 14. Visible momentum!**
- 15. Perception is ... *always* ... everything.**
- 16. Goal is clear and unequivocal and inspiring ... Victory.**
- 17. Repeat: The goal is noble but "the work" is ... Relationships & Networking & Politics.**
- 18. Recruit a politics-networking maestro.**
- 19. Think QQ/Quintessential Quartet.**

- 20. When a project is unusual-risky, never, ever waste time or capital going "up the chain of command."**
- 21. Demo! Demo! Demo!**
- 22. Demo redux: Plant a field of seeds, most will die, a few will grow—and pay special attention to the wildflowers.**
- 23. Take chances on unusual talent, regardless of formal rank.**
- 24. Recruit peculiar talent with no investment in conventional solutions.**
- 25. Create a small, insanely committed "band of brothers" to act as mostly invisible orchestrators.**
- 26. The "Band of Brothers"-“Skunkworks” must be physically separated from top management.**
- 27. Think, subconsciously ... long haul.**
- 28. K.I.S.S.**
- 29. Plan for the “real world.**
- 30. Cut red tape.**
- 31. Don't document it!**
- 32. Luck!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**
- 33. The Game Ain't Over Until the Fat Lady Sings.**

**100 Ways to Succeed #103*:
Friends/Network Several Levels “Down”***

**100 Ways to Succeed #104:
Shut Up!**

**100 Ways to Succeed #105:
Master of Internal Processes**

**100 Ways to Succeed #106:
Assignment in the Finance Department**

Appendix II

The “XF-50”: 50 Ways to Enhance Cross-Functional Effectiveness and Deliver Speed, “Service Excellence” and “Value-added Customer ‘Solutions’”

A 2007 letter from John Hennessy, president of Stanford University, to alumni laid out his long-term “vision” for that esteemed institution. The core of the vision’s promise was more multi-disciplinary research, aimed at solving some of the world’s complex systemic problems. The chief of GlaxoSmithKline, a few years ago, announced a “revolutionary” new drug discovery process—centers of interdisciplinary excellence. (It worked.) Likewise, amidst a study of organizational effectiveness in the oil industry’s exploration sector, I came across a particularly successful firm—one key to that success was their physical and organizational mingling of formerly warring (two sets of prima donnas) geologists and geophysicists. The cover story in *Dartmouth Medicine*, the Dartmouth med school magazine, featured a “revolutionary” approach, “microsystems,” as “the big idea that [might] save U.S. healthcare.” The nub is providing successful patient outcomes in hospitals by forming multi-function patient-care teams, including docs, nurses, labtechs and others. (“Co-operating doc” may top the oxymoron scale.) One of the central responses to 911 is an effort to get intelligence services, home to some of the world’s most viscous turf wars, talking to one another—we may have seen some of the fruits of that effort in the recently released National Intelligence Estimate. And in the military, inter-service co-operation has increased by an order of magnitude since Gulf War One—some of the services’ communication systems can actually be linked to those of other services, a miracle the equal of the Christmas miracle in my book!

All this, and much more, amounts to a “revolution” (the latest revolution?) called “working together.” Web-based tools certainly abet this latest attempt, but the story at the end of the day is timeless: attitude, relationships (investment therein), protecting powerbases-turf, “corporate cultures,” and the like. I.e., dealing with human nature itself. But if anything helps this eternal-intractable problem it is simply “keeping it on the agenda.” Relentlessly! In *Re-imagine* I tried to do just that with as full chapter titled “Welcome to XF/Cross-functional World.” The main idea was-is that in order to provide the “value-added” solutions to customer problems that are necessary to move beyond commodities and compete with India, China, et al., we have no choice but to deliver the “integrated” “goods” from every nook and cranny of the organization and its supply chain. XF wars are a killer, now much more than ever. Alas, no one paid the slightest bit of attention to this chapter—which I thought was one of the most important in the book.

But I refuse to give up. The *Re-imagine* chapter was organized around a list of 50 ideas. I have herein resurrected that list—and modified it significantly in the process. Hence this holiday gift—of sorts. In short, nothing (n-o-t-h-i-n-g!) is more important than getting the bits of the organization, or organizations (most project teams extend beyond our borders), in synch. “In synch” and more, much more—XF work at its best is not merely about “reducing organizational friction,” as important as that is. It is about fundamental revision of the breadth and depth of the “product” the company offers. If the chef doesn’t get along with two of our four waiters—the clientele is screwed, and the restaurant evaporates. Intellectually that’s the same story, writ small, as development of the Airbus 380 or intelligence services cooperation.

Enough of my introduction. What follows is my latest effort to get you to pay “strategic” attention to what has always been Issue #1 in organizational effectiveness, from Airbus to the Army, from Napoleon to the man on the moon:

1. It’s our organization to make work—or not. It’s not “them,” the outside world that’s the problem. *The enemy is us.* Period.
2. Friction-free! Dump 90% of “middle managers”—most are advertent or inadvertent “power freaks.” We are all—every one of us—in the Friction Removal Business, one moment at a time, now and forevermore.
3. No “stovepipes”! “Stove-piping,” “Silo-ing” is an *Automatic Firing Offense.* Period. No appeals. (Within the limits of civility, somewhat “public” firings are not out of the question—that is, make one and all aware why the axe fell.)
4. *Everything* on the Web. This helps. A lot. (“Everything” = Big word.)
5. Open access. All available to all. Transparency, beyond a level that’s “sensible,” is a de facto imperative in a Burn-the-Silos strategy.
6. *Project managers rule!!* Project managers running XF (cross-functional) projects are the Elite of the organization, and seen as such and treated as such. (The likes of construction companies have practiced this more or less forever.)
7. “Value-added Proposition” = Application of integrated resources. (From the entire supply-chain.) To deliver on our emergent business raison d’être, and compete with the likes of our Chinese and Indian brethren, we must cooperate with anybody and everybody “24/7.” IBM, UPS, and many, many others are selling far more than a product or service that works—the new “it” is pure and simple a product of XF cooperation; “the product *is* the cooperation” is not much of a stretch.
8. *“XF work” is the direct work of leaders!*
9. *“Integrated solutions” = Our “Culture.”* (Therefore: XF = Our culture.)
10. Partner with “best-in-class” only. Their pursuit of Excellence helps us get beyond petty bickering. An all-star team has little time for anything other than delivering on the (big) Client promise.
11. *All functions are created equal!* All functions contribute equally! All = All.
12. All functions are “PSFs,” Professional Service Firms. “Professionalism” is the watchword—and true Professionalism rises above turf wars. You are your

- projects, your legacy is your projects—and the legacy will be skimpy indeed unless you pass, with flying colors, the “works well with others” exam!
13. *We are all in sales!* We all (a-l-l) “sell” those Integrated Client Solutions. Good salespeople don’t blame others for screw-ups—the Client doesn’t care. Good salespeople are “quarterbacks” who make the system work-deliver.
 14. We all invest in “wiring” the Client organization—we develop comprehensive relationships in every part (function, level) of the Client’s organization. *We pay special attention to the so-called “lower levels,” short on glamour, long on the ability to make things happen at the “coalface.”*
 15. We all “live the Brand”—which is Delivery of Matchless Integrated Solutions that transform the Client’s organization. To “live the brand” is to become a raving fan of XF co-operation.
 16. We use the word “*partner*” until we want to barf! (Words matter! A lot!)
 17. We use the word “*team*” until we want to barf. (Words matter! A lot!)
 18. We use the word “*us*” until we want to barf. (Words matter! A lot!)
 19. We obsessively seek Inclusion—and abhor exclusion. We want more people from more places (internal, external—the whole “supply chain”) aboard in order to maximize systemic benefits.
 20. Buttons & Badges matter—we work relentlessly at team (XF team) identity and solidarity. (“Corny”? Get over it.)
 21. *All (almost all) rewards are team rewards.*
 22. We keep base pay rather low—and give whopping bonuses for excellent team delivery of “seriously cool” cross-functional Client benefits.
 23. *WE NEVER BLAME OTHER PARTS OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SCREW-UPS.*
 24. WE TAKE THE HEAT—THE WHOLE TEAM. (For anything and everything.) (Losing, like winning, is a team affair.)
 25. *“BLAMING” IS AN AUTOMATIC FIRING OFFENSE.*
 26. *“Women rule”*—women are simply better at the XF communications stuff—less power obsessed, less hierarchically inclined, more group-team oriented.
 27. Every member of our team is an honored contributor. “XF project Excellence” is an “all hands” affair.
 28. We *are* our XF Teams! XF project teams are how we get things done.
 29. “Wow Projects” rule, large or small—Wow projects demand by definition XF Excellence.
 30. We routinely attempt to unearth and then reward “small gestures” of XF cooperation.
 31. We invite Functional Bigwigs to our XF project team reviews.
 32. We *insist* on Client team participation—from all functions of the Client organization.
 33. An “Open talent market” helps make the projects “silo-free.” People want in on the project because of the opportunity to do something memorable—no one will tolerate delays based on traditional functional squabbling.

34. Flat! Flat = Flattened Silos. Flat = Excellence based on XF project outcomes, not power-hoarding within functional boundaries.
35. New “C-level”? *We more or less need a “C-level” job titled Chief Bullshit Removal Officer.* That is, some kind of formal watchdog whose role in life is to make cross-functionality work, and I.D. those who don’t get with the program.
36. *Huge (H-U-G-E) co-operation bonuses.* Senior team members who conspicuously shine in the “working together” bit are rewarded Big Time. (A million bucks in one case I know—and a non-cooperating very senior was sacked.)
37. *Get physical!! “Co-location” is the most powerful “culture changer.”* Physical X-functional proximity is almost a guarantee (yup!) of remarkably improved co-operation—to aid this one needs flexible workspaces that can be mobilized for a team in a flash.
38. *Ad hoc.* To improve the new “X-functional Culture,” little XF teams should be formed on the spot to deal with an urgent issue—they may live for but ten days, but it helps the XF habit, making it normal to be “working the XF way.”
39. “Deep dip.” Dive three levels down in the organization to fill a senior role with someone who has been proactive on the XF dimension.
40. Formal evaluations. Everyone, starting with the receptionist, should have an important XF rating component in their evaluation.
41. Demand XF experience for, especially, senior jobs. The military requires all would-be generals and admirals to have served a full tour in a job whose only goals were cross-functional. Great idea!
42. Early project “management” experience. Within days, literally, of coming aboard folks should be “running” some bit of a project, working with folks from other functions—hence, “all this” becomes as natural as breathing.
43. “Get ’em out with the customer.” Rarely does the accountant or bench scientist call on the customer. Reverse that. Give everyone more or less regular “customer-facing experiences.” One learns quickly that the customer is not interested in our in-house turf battles!
44. Put “it” on the-every agenda. XF “issues to be resolved” should be on every agenda—morning project team review, weekly exec team meeting, etc. A “next step” within 24 hours (4?) ought to be part of the resolution.
45. XF “honest broker” or ombudsman. The ombudsman examines XF “friction events” and acts as Conflict Resolution Counselor. (Perhaps a formal conflict resolution agreement?)
46. Lock it in! XF cooperation, central to any value-added mission, should be an explicit part of the “Vision Statement.”
47. Promotions. *Every promotion, no exceptions, should put XF Excellence in the top 5 (3?) evaluation criteria.*
48. Pick partners based on their “cooperation proclivity.” Everyone must be on board if “this thing” is going to work; hence every vendor, among others, should be formally evaluated on their commitment to XF transparency—e.g., can we access anyone at any level in any function of their organization without bureaucratic barriers?

49. Fire vendors who don't "get it"—more than "get it," welcome "it" with open arms."
50. *Jaw. Jaw. Jaw.* Talk XF cooperation-value-added at every opportunity. Become a relentless bore!
51. *Excellence!* There is a state of XF Excellence. Pursue it. Talk about it.

Good luck!

Appendix III

“Top 50” “Staying in Touch” “Have You’s”

While waiting in the Albany airport to board a Southwest Airlines flight to Reagan/DCA, I happened across the current, at the time, *Harvard Business Review*, on the cover of which was a yellow sticker. The sticker blared these words “Mapping your competitive position.” It referred to a feature article by my friend Rich D’Aveni. His work is uniformly good—and I have said as much publicly on several occasions dating back 15 years. I’m sure this article is good, too—though I didn’t read it. In fact it triggered a furious negative “Tom reaction” as my wife calls it. Of course I believe you should worry about your “competitive position.” But instead of obsessing on competitive position and other abstractions, as the B-schools and consultants would always have us do, I instead wondered about some “practical stuff” which I believe is more important to the short- and long-term health of the enterprise, tiny or enormous.

Hence, rather than an emphasis on competitive maps or how blue your water is, I am urging you to pay attention to my “Top 50” “Have you’s,” as I shall call them. The list could easily be three times longer—but this ought to keep you occupied for a while. Of course the underlying hypothesis is that if you do the stuff below your “competitive position” will improve so much that mapping will become a secondary issue! Some will rebut with the tired old saw (and silly idea) of “doing the right things” versus “doing things right.” I, for example, believe that if you do even a smidgeon of what’s below you will wildly enhance both “do the right thing” and “do things right.” (Admission: As an engineer by training and disposition, doing things right is priority #1. I am an admitted “implementation nut.”) In any event here’s my list, random but in batches of ten:

1. Have you in the last 10 days ... visited a *customer*?
2. Have you called a customer ... *TODAY*?
3. Have you in the last 60-90 days ... had a seminar in which several folks from the customer’s operation (different levels, different functions, different divisions) interacted, via facilitator, with various of your folks?
4. Have you thanked a front-line employee for a small act of helpfulness ... in the last three days?
5. Have you thanked a front-line employee for a small act of helpfulness ... in the last three *hours*?
6. Have you thanked a frontline employee for carrying around a great *attitude* ... today?
7. Have you in the last week recognized—publicly—one of your folks for a small act of *cross-functional co-operation*?
8. Have you in the last week recognized—publicly—one of “their” folks (another function) for a small act of cross-functional co-operation?
9. Have you invited in the last month a leader of *another function* to your weekly team priorities meeting?

10. Have you personally in the last week-month called-visited an internal or external customer to *sort out, inquire, or apologize* for some little or big thing that went awry? (No reason for doing so? If true—in your mind—then you’re more out of touch than I dared imagine.)
11. Have you in the last two days had a chat with someone (a couple of levels down?) about specific deadlines concerning a project’s next steps?
12. Have you in the last two days had a chat with someone (a couple of levels down?) about specific deadlines concerning a project’s next steps ... and what specifically *you can do to remove a hurdle?* (“Ninety percent of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to get things done.”—Peter “His eminence” Drucker.)
13. Have you celebrated in the last week a “small” (or large!) *milestone* reached? (I.e., are you a milestone fanatic?)
14. Have you in the last week or month revised some estimate in the “wrong” direction and apologized for making a lousy estimate? (Somehow you must publicly *reward the telling of difficult truths.*)
15. Have you installed in your tenure a very comprehensive customer satisfaction scheme for all *internal* customers? (With major consequences for hitting or missing the mark.)
16. Have you in the last six months had a week-long, visible, very intensive *visit-“tour”* of external customers?
17. Have you in the last 60 days called an abrupt halt to a meeting and “ordered” everyone to get out of the office, and “into the field” and in the *next eight hours*, after asking those involved, fixed (f-i-x-e-d!) a nagging “small” problem through practical action?
18. Have you in the last week had a rather thorough discussion of a “cool design thing” someone has come across—away from your industry or function—at a Web site, in a product or its packaging?
19. Have you in the last two weeks had an informal meeting—at least an hour long—with a frontline employee to discuss things we do right, things we do wrong, what it would take to meet your mid- to long-term aspirations?
20. Have you in the last 60 days had a general meeting to discuss “things we do wrong” ... that we can fix in the next *fourteen days*?
21. Have you had in the last year a one-day, intense offsite with each (?) of your internal customers—followed by a big celebration of “things gone right”?
22. Have you in the last week pushed someone to do some family thing that you fear might be overwhelmed by deadline pressure?
23. *Have you learned the names of the children of everyone who reports to you?* (If not, you have six months to fix it.)
24. Have you taken in the last month an interesting-*weird* outsider to lunch?
25. Have you in the last month invited an interesting-weird outsider to sit in on an important meeting?
26. Have you in the last three days discussed something interesting, beyond your industry, that you ran across in a meeting, reading, etc?
27. Have you in the last 24 hours injected into a meeting “I ran across this interesting idea in [strange place]”?

28. Have you in the last two weeks asked someone to report on something, anything that constitutes an act of brilliant service rendered in a “trivial” situation—restaurant, car wash, etc? (And then discussed the relevance to your work.)
29. *Have you in the last 30 days examined in detail (hour by hour) your calendar to evaluate the degree “time actually spent” mirrors your “espoused priorities”?* (And repeated this exercise with everyone on the team.)

Axiom: Calendars never lie.

Axiom: You = Your calendar.

30. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to the group by a “weird” outsider?
31. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to the group by a customer, internal customer, vendor featuring “working folks” 3 or 4 levels down in the vendor organization?
32. Have you in the last two months had a presentation to the group of a cool, beyond-our-industry idea by two of your folks?
33. Have you at every meeting today (and forevermore) re-directed the conversation to the practicalities of implementation concerning some issue before the group?
34. Have you at every meeting today (and forevermore) had an end-of-meeting discussion on “action items to be dealt with in the next 4, 48 hours? (And then made this list public—and followed up in 48 hours.) And made sure everyone has at least one such item.)
35. Have you had a discussion in the last six months about what it would take to get recognition in a local-national poll of “*best places to work*”?
36. Have you in the last month approved a *cool-different training course* for one of your folks?
37. Have you in the last month *taught* a front-line training course?
38. Have you in the last week discussed the idea of *Excellence*? (What it means, how to get there.)
39. Have you in the last week discussed the idea of “*Wow*”? (What it means, how to inject it into an ongoing “routine” project.)
40. Have you in the last 45 days assessed some major process in terms of the details of the “experience,” as well as results, it provides to its external or internal customers?
41. Have you in the last month had one of your folks attend a meeting you were supposed to go to which gives them unusual exposure to senior folks?
42. Have you in the last 60 (30?) days sat with a trusted friend or “coach” to discuss your “management style”—and its long- and short-term impact on the group?

43. Have you in the *last three days* considered a professional relationship that was a little rocky and made a call to the person involved to discuss issues and smooth the waters? (Taking the “blame,” fully deserved or not, for letting the thing-issue fester.)
44. Have you in the last ... *two hours* ... stopped by someone’s (two-levels “down”) office-workspace for 5 minutes to ask “What do you think?” about an issue that arose at a more or less just completed meeting? (And then stuck around for 10 or so minutes to listen—and visibly taken notes.)
45. Have you ... in the last day ... looked around you to assess whether the diversity pretty accurately maps the diversity of the market being served? (And ...)
46. Have you in the last day at some meeting gone out of your way to make sure that a normally reticent person was engaged in a conversation—and then thanked him or her, perhaps privately, for their contribution?
47. Have you during your tenure instituted very public (visible) presentations of performance?
48. Have you in the last four months had a session specifically aimed at checking on the “corporate culture” and the degree we are true to it—with all presentations by relatively junior folks, including front-line folks? (And with a determined effort to keep the conversation restricted to “real world” “small” cases—not theory.)
49. Have you in the last six months talked about the *Internal Brand Promise*?
50. Have you in the last year had a full-day off-site to talk about individual (and group) aspirations?

The End