



EXCELLENCE

Oath **AND** *Credo*

Tom Peters

Oath of Office

for MANAGERS/SERVANT LEADERS

Our goal is to serve our customers brilliantly and profitably over the long haul.

Serving our customers brilliantly and profitably over the long haul is a product of brilliantly serving, over the long haul, the people who serve the customer.

Hence, our job as leaders—the alpha and the omega and everything in between—is abetting the sustained growth and success and engagement and enthusiasm and commitment to Excellence of those, one at a time, who directly or indirectly serve the ultimate customer.

We—leaders of every stripe—are in the “Human Growth and Development and Success and Aspiration to Excellence business.”

“We” [leaders] only grow when “they” [each and every one of our colleagues] are growing.

“We” [leaders] only succeed when “they” [each and every one of our colleagues] are succeeding.

“We” [leaders] only energetically march toward Excellence when “they” [each and every one of our colleagues] are energetically marching toward Excellence.
Period.

Credo

A WORK IN PROGRESS

We are thoughtful in all we do.

We are **excellent listeners**—to each other and to all members of our extended family, including vendors, customers, communities, etc. We will make the development of listening skills a primary component in our training portfolio. (It is not coincidental that listening per se is so near the beginning of this document.)

We will make the four words **“What do you think?”** an automatic instinct in all of our internal and external dealings; moreover, “What do you think?” will precede the explication of our own view in 99 out of 100 instances.

We are dedicated to and measure our success to a significant degree by our **unwavering commitment to the extreme personal growth** of every one of our employees.

We will only be “delighted” with our managers if their employees are universally surprised by the level of their personal and professional growth. We will measure this.

We will be clear that we **view leadership at every level as a sacred trust**—and that leaders are indeed the servants of their employees just as the effective classroom teacher is servant to the lives and growth of her or his students.

We believe that **“people development”** is everyone’s responsibility. Hence, everyone will have a peer mentor from the start; and within a relatively short period after joining the organization will become mentors themselves; effectiveness as mentors will be a significant element in everyone’s evaluation.

We see senior officers as primarily in the “people development business.” Hence we will place the particulars of development success as the #1 item in evaluating senior officers.

We will not rest until we are **widely acknowledged as an “employer of choice.”**

We believe that it is possible to **make the evaluation process a positive rather than a negative.** We will provide training in evaluation, devote significant time to evaluation, and will place significant weight on effectiveness as an evaluator. We will measure this.

We will be fanatic practitioners of **MBWA**, or managing by wandering around. Staying in touch is a top priority.

We are smitten with the word **“mastery.”** We expect everyone to pursue mastery of some skill from the outset, just as a military specialty is pursued from day #1.

We believe it is our role to **foster independence** that will serve each employee well in her or his career wherever he or she may alight.

We believe that **everyone should become a leader;** hence, leadership assignments of some sort will be undertaken within 90 days of coming aboard.

We believe in the **“inverted organization chart”**—with the “leaders” at the “bottom” of a reverse pyramid.

We believe that 1st-line supervisors, like corporals and sergeants in the military, are the lynchpins of morale and productivity and employee development and maintenance of the “corporate culture.” Hence, we will seek to **create a matchless 1st-line supervisory cadre**. We will, in effect, manage this cadre as a separate strategic priority.

We will be a **leader in research and development** in every aspect of our business—and we will work primarily with vendors who are also fanatical about research and development; and work to attract a set of core customers willing to play at the edge of things and become our co-developers.

We will aim to **make our customer engagements adventures beyond the comfort zone**, or adventures in growth (to use a less intimidating phrase)—we will aim to add value in novel ways that surprise and stretch our customers and ourselves.

We expect to be renowned for our **“insane” devotion to customer service**. We shall measure this constantly.

We will bring to bear overwhelming and **instant and collective force to redress any customer problem**, real or imagined.

We will use the three words **“Try it! Now!”** almost as often as “What do you think?”

We **revere the experimental method**, and believe success is mostly correlated with the number of things one tries.

We wholeheartedly acknowledge the value of analysis, but in the end swear by **“Actions speak louder than words.”**

We **“encourage” failures (actually “celebrate” failures)**; that is, we acknowledge that a near-religious devotion to “Try it! Now!” necessarily invites the failures that are part and parcel of trying new things.

We will in fact look askance at those whose records include few or no failures—such a spotless record suggests an unwillingness to brave the unknown.

We will, to summarize the last few items, all **view ourselves as explorers-adventurers, proceeding toward individual and collective growth** by actively engaging at the edge of things; we unstintingly believe that our customers will reap enormous value from our commitment to constant, restless exploration.

We will **cut “overhead” to zero**—every “department” shall aim to be best-in-class in its arena, and hence a full-scale participant in our concerted effort to add value in all we do.

We will exude integrity, individually and collectively.

We will **encourage and insist upon constant and vociferous disagreement**, but be absolutely intolerant of disagreement in the form of personal attacks.

We will exemplify the word **transparency** in all of our internal and external dealings—and bend over backwards to give new meaning and breadth to the term “information sharing.”

We will individually and collectively **accept blame for our mistakes**, or even our rather minor contribution to others’ mistakes—and apologize accordingly and with dispatch.

We will **under no circumstance badmouth** a competitor.

We will aim to **turn every customer contact into a memorable experience**, remembering that all of life is indeed a stage.

We **honor the word “design” in all we do**, in every nook and every cranny of our organization; every system, every web page, every customer invoice, every employee restroom is part of our purposefully designed “signature,” and stands out and exudes exceptionalism in one way or another.

We understand that difficult decisions must be made, but we will bend over backwards to implement such decisions with **kindness and grace**—the dignity of the individual will always be foremost in our mind.

We will not intrude into our employees’ lives, but we are committed to aggressively **helping employees achieve a healthy lifestyle**.

We will **master the art of appreciation** and be profuse in our use of the words “Thank you” to honor assistance or achievement of even the most minor sort.

We will acknowledge through celebration even small successes—and always cast a wide net in our **“Thank yous”** to include bit players, especially from other functions.

We aim for others to always be surprised by our **“vibrancy” and “vitality”**—we view enthusiasm as the key to success in anything, and take particular care in leader selection to ensure that every one of our leaders is a “remarkable” “carrier” of enthusiasm through thick and, especially, thin.

We will drop whatever we are doing and **rush to the aid of those involved in tight-deadline** activities—even if those involved caused some of their own problems.

We will be careful in our planning, but also understand that nothing ever unfolds as planned—hence we will be known for our ability to **muster resources in an instant, without fuss and from everywhere, to deal with the unexpected**; participating in these ad hoc response activities will not be seen as a distraction from our “real work,” but as a significant part of our “real work” and an opportunity to contribute to others and build our own skills in ways we might not have imagined.

We live in an uncertain world. And resilience is a matchless survival trait. We will design every system and develop every person with a constant eye on **overall and individual resilience**.

We fully acknowledge that other units-departments-functions have other points of view than ours, but we will bend over backwards to **develop social connections with those in other functions** so that dealings over warring perspectives are dealings among friends.

We unequivocally believe that **cross-functional communication is the #1 key to both execution and producing “value-added”** for our Clients. We will therefore move heaven and earth to insure that barriers are removed and that cross-functional communication becomes a profound competitive advantage. Each unit in the organization shall visibly celebrate acts of noteworthy support from outside their department. We will insure that incentives, positive and, alas, negative, support this top priority.

We acknowledge that **agreed upon deadlines are holy writ**, and will attempt to balance requisite urgency and requisite realism in all of our commitments.

We will fight tooth and nail to **minimize the complexity** that “necessarily” comes with growth and the mere passage of time.

We will **declare total war on our own systems** to insure that they do not strangle us.

We gladly acknowledge that **anyone in the organization has the duty as well as the right to challenge anyone else** when he or she believes they have a valid and useful perspective to offer—this is particularly true regarding any issue that has to do with safety, quality or meeting agreed upon deadlines; such challenges may be firm but not rude.

We will **be civil** in all our dealings with one another.

We will bend over backwards to **bring truly (not superficially) diverse views** of every stripe imaginable to bear on plans and decisions of every sort.

We will pursue “diversity” in part so that the composition of our workforce and leadership from top to bottom is a “pretty good” **reflection of the demographics of the markets we serve** or aim to serve.

We will use new technology tools to extend the definition of “our family” to every corner of the globe—we will **welcome ideas and participation** in our affairs from anyone and everyone.

We will aim for **gender balance** in all we do and from tippy top to bottom—for reasons commercial more than reasons moral.

We will be responsive in every way to the overwhelmingly large **women’s market**—ignored by so many.

We will be responsive in every way to the overwhelmingly large **boomer/boomer+ market**—ignored by so many.

We will never, in any way, compromise on the quality of our products or services—regardless of difficulties in our marketplace and economy.

We wholeheartedly acknowledge that in the short term (as well, obviously, as the long term) we must be profitable and exhibit **stellar financial performance** that is consistent with the audacious efforts to serve our people and our Clients as described above.

We aim to be seen by others as **“conservative” in our financial practices.**

We shall **talk about EXCELLENCE** constantly.

We shall unfailingly **aim for EXCELLENCE** in all we do.

We shall **use EXCELLENCE as the principal benchmark in the assessment of ourselves and our work** and our impact on our Clients.

We shall never forget that the bedrock of EXCELLENCE is the unwavering commitment to growth of 100% of our employees—and in fact all of those with whom we come in contact.*

* Perhaps some subset of these items will become a true “Credo.” If so, I would suggest that something like the full list be enumerated as organizational “objectives.”