

## Excellence: MBWA

As absurd as it sounds, I can almost say that I had a day back in 1978 that was the most significant day of my professional life. I worked for McKinsey & Co., a big consulting firm. I worked in San Francisco. And my colleague, Bob Waterman, and I were looking at companies that did things well. And typically because of the nature of the company we worked for, we worked with these giant, big, bureaucratic companies like Chase Manhattan Bank and CitiCorp and Bank of America, and so on.

And so, we went 25 miles down the road from San Francisco to what was then the reasonably small town of Palo Alto to visit a reasonably small, but interesting company called Hewlett-Packard. We met the president, a guy by the name of John Young, and as John told us these fascinating stories he also revealed one of the “Hewlett-Packard secrets,” which was something that he called, they called, MBWA, or Managing By Wandering Around.

And Bob and I had spent our professional careers with CEOs who sat behind layer after layer of secretaries and people, and didn't get out of their office from one week to the next. And we were just enchanted by it.

And what is it, '77 to now, it's over 30 years later and I'm even more in love with the term. And in love with the term, it's the term, MBWA, Managing By Wandering Around. But what I really am in love with it as is more or less a metaphor, a metaphor for being in touch, a metaphor for not losing touch with your employees, your vendors, your customers or what have you.

And so I'm trying simply to sell you the term, MBWA, and I'm also trying to sell you the discipline of, in fact, getting out of your office and getting close to where the work is really done and working like hell to make sure the normal course of affairs does not keep you from doing that.