

Tom Peters'

Implementation2008

07 January 2008

Implementation/Lists!

For some reason, list grand mal seems to have infected me of late. Herewith three of those lists, stitched together and only loosely related. Most first appeared as recent Blogposts.

I.

Blog1203.07/tompeters.com:

“Top 50” “Have yous”

While waiting last week in the Albany airport to board a Southwest Airlines flight to Reagan, I happened across the latest *Harvard Business Review*, on the cover of which was a yellow sticker. The sticker had on it the 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 yous,” 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 had 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 ideas by two of your folks?
 33. Have you at every meeting today (and forever more) re-directed the conversation to the practicalities of implementation concerning some issue before the group?
 34. Have you at every meeting today (and forever more) 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 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.)
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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?

**100 Ways to Succeed #97:
Relentlessly Focus On Pragmatic Actions***

- (1) See the above list.
- (2) Implement.
- (3) Pick one item.
- (4) Start today.

*At tompeters.com we have been spasmodically offering “ways to succeed.”

IA.

Bonus: New Year's EVE 2007 Blog/tompeters.com:

FLASH!
FLASH!
FLASH!
FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION!
FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION!
FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION!
OLD YEAR'S RESOLUTION!

Call (C-A-L-L!) (NOT E-MAIL!) 25-50 (NO LESS THAN 25) people ... TODAY* ...to thank them for their support this year (2007) ... and wish them and their families and colleagues a Happy 2008!** *** **** *****

*Today = TODAY = N-O-W (not "within the hour")

**Remember: ROIR > ROI. ROIR = Return On Investment in Relationships. Success = f(Relationships).

***This is the most important piece of advice I have provided this year.

****This is ... Not Optional.

*****Trust me: This is fun!!!!

*****Trust me: This "works."

Happy 2008!!!

100 Ways to Succeed #107:
Fifty. Period.

Returning to my 1231.07 Post (FLASH! FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION!) DURING THE Christmas-New Year's period make the damn 50 calls.

Period.

No baloney.

II.

Blog1205.07/tompeters.com:

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 co-operation.

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 organization 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’etre*, and compete with the likes of our Chinese and Indian brethren, we must co-operate 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 co-operation; “the product *is* the co-operation” 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 rise 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 which 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 SCREWUPS.*
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 co-operation.
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 some one who has been pro-active 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 one 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 co-operation, 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 “co-operation 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!

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Relentlessly Focus On Pragmatic Actions**

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Blog0103.08/tompeters.com

III.

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 did 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, 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 Avarkotos, 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 m%^&*f*\$#@& 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 Avarkotos’ 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. Most would agree perhaps—but damn few make it the obsession it needs to 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, rewards.

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.

5. Network! Network! Network! Potential links of great value will neither be possible nor obvious until the network is very dense. The odds of useful connections occurring is 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 will make common cause relative to some key link in the chain.

7. Found material. 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, that was immediately available for use—rather than waiting an eternity for the “perfect” solution.

8. Found material II (People): Find disrespected oddball 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! “Authenticity” matters—especially in highly bureaucratic environments. Passion also suggests annoying “staying power”—“I might as well support him, he's not going away and he'll hound me 'til hell freezes over.”

10. Graphic evidence of the source of your passion. Charlie Wilson had one main hurdle to his plan—a crusty old cynic. CW took him to the astounding Afghan refugee camps—and made a fast and emotional friend of the cause in the space of an 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 testimony from those who are on the losing end of things. Wilson subsequently did such things as creating a little program to treat horrid medical problems in the U.S.—suddenly the demo was next door! (This works for a horrid bureaucratic process that is alienating us from our customers almost as much as in the Wilson case.) Hint: The demo must be ... graphic!)

11. Make it personal. On every visit to the refugee camps, Wilson donated blood on the spot.

12. Enthusiasm. Charlie and Gust oozed it from every pore re Afghanistan.

13. 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! The smell of action must be in the air. Think of it as “momentum management”—an aspect of the showmanship theme.

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.”)

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 Nelson’s #1 differentiating attribute: “[Other] admirals were more frightened of losing than anxious to win.”)

17. Repeat: The goal is noble but “the work” is ... Relationships & Networking & Politics. Even if the issue is deeply technical, the “implementation bit” (that all important “last 98%”) is all about ... politics-relationships.

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. (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 busses 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 QQ/Quintessential Quartet. Passion poobah and chief storyteller. Anal doer. Financier. Networker-political master-recruiter-in-chief.

20. When a project is unusual-risky, never, ever waste time or capital going go “up the chain of command.” 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 polite to your boss (Gust wasn’t, there are exceptions to every rule), but do not waste time on him!

21. Demo! Demo! Demo! Get some little thing 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.

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.

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 in 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 Avarkotas and his tiny (never more than a half dozen) nerve center in the CIA 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 true revolutionary mission, the core group must number <10. 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 it was just a few floors of insulation—but even that 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. (Remember, R.O.I.R.—return On Investment in Relationships.)

28. K.I.S.S. Our Afghan allies 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 logistics programs reflected that. *No pie-in-the-sky assumptions!*

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 9 month procedure to get \$\$ transferred) 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 Avarkotas cut corners—to succeed against the powers that be you will 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 comes to fold.

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 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 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.” 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 my Post of 1231.07 on Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov and the immanent 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 can proved such comfort, ridiculous as they are, 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 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 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.

Happy hunting!

**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 Avarkotos 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 problems way beyond their typical reach.) When I was a junior 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 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.)

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 Avarkotos—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.*

IV.

The Power & Implementation³⁴

(From the “Brand You” section of our Master Presentation.)

1. Send “Thank You” notes! It’s (always) “all about relationships.” And at the Heart of Effective Relationships is ... APPRECIATION. (*Oh yeah: Never, ever forget a birthday of a co-worker.*)

2. Bring donuts! “Small” gestures of appreciation (on a rainy day, after a long day’s work the day before) are VBDs ... Very Big Deals.

3. Make the call! One short, hard-to-make call today can avert a relationship crisis that could bring you down six months from now.

4. *Remember: There are no “little gestures” of kindness.* As boss, stopping by someone’s cube ... for 30 seconds ... to inquire about their sick parent will be remembered for ... *10 years.* (Trust me.)
5. *Make eye contact!* No big deal? Wrong! “It” is all about ... Connection! Paying attention! Being there ... in the Moment ... Present. So, work on your eye contact, your Intent to Connect.
6. *Smile!* Or, rather: SMILE. Rule: *Smiles beget smiles. Frowns beget frowns.* Rule: WORK ON THIS.
7. *Smile! (If it kills you.)* Energy & enthusiasm & passion engender energy-enthusiasm-passion in those we work with.
8. *It’s all ... RELATIONSHIPS.* Remember: Business is a relationships business. (Period.) We’re all in sales! (Period.) Connecting! Making our case! Following up! Networking! “Relationships” are what we “do.”
9. *You = Your Calendar.* Your true priorities are “given away” by your calendar. YOUR CALENDAR NEVER LIES. What are you truly spending your time on? Are you distracted? Focused?
10. *What’s in a number? EVERYTHING!* While we all “do a hundred things,” we may not/should not/cannot have more than 2 (or 3) true “strategic” priorities at any point in time. BELIEVE IT.
11. *She (he) who is best prepared wins!* Out study, out-read, out-research the competition. Know more (lots more!) than “the person on the other side of the table.”
12. *“Excellence” is the Ultimate Cool Idea.* The very idea of “pursuing excellence” is a turn on—for you and me as well as those we work with. (And, I find to my dismay, it’s surprisingly rare.)
13. *Think WOW!* Language matters! “Hot” words generate a Hot Team. Watch your language!
14. *Take a break!* We need all the creativity we can muster these days. So close your office door and do 5 (FIVE) minutes of breathing or yoga; get a bag lunch today and eat it in the park.
15. *You are the boss!* Old ideas of “lifetime employment” at one company (maybe where Dad/Mom worked) are gone. No matter what your current status, think of your self as CEO of Brand Me, Inc. We are all Small Business Owners ... of our own careers.

16. Do something in ... the next half hour! Don't let yourself get stuck! There is ... ALWAYS ... something little you can start/do in the next thirty minutes to make a wee, concrete step forward with a problem-opportunity.

17. Test it! NOW! We call this the "Quick Prototype Attitude." One of life's, especially business life's, biggest problems is: "Too much 'talk', too little 'do'." If you've got a Cool Idea, don't sit on it or research it to death. Grab a pal, an empty conference, and start laying out a little model. That is, begin the process of transforming the Idea to Action ... ASAP. Incidentally, testing something quarter-baked in an approximation of the real world is the quickest way to learn.

18. Expand your horizons. Routinely reach out beyond your comfort zone. TAKE A FREAK TO LUNCH TOMORROW! Call somebody interesting "you've been meaning to get in touch with;" invite them to lunch tomorrow. (Lunch with "the same ole gang means nothing new learned. And that's a guarantee.) (Remember: Discomfort = Growth.)

19. Build a Web site. The Web is ubiquitous. Play with it! Be a presence! Start You.com ... ASAP!

20. Spread the credit! Don't build monuments to yourself, build them to others—those whose contributions we wholeheartedly acknowledge will literally follow us into machine gun fire!

21. Follow Tom's patented VFCJ strategy! VFCJ = Volunteer For Crappy Jobs. That is, volunteer for the crummy little assignment nobody else wants, but will give you a chance to (1) be on your own, (2) express your creativity, and (3) make a noticeable mark when it turns out "Wow."

22. VOLUNTEER! Life's a maze, and you never know what's connected to what. (Six degrees of separation, and all that.) So volunteer for that Community Center fund raising drive, even though you're busy as all get out. You might end up working side-by-side with the president of a big company who's looking for an enthusiast like you, or someone wealthy who might be interested in investing in the small business you dream of starting.

23. Join Toastmasters! You don't need to try and match Ronald Reagan's speaking skills, but you do need to be able to "speak your piece" with comfort, confidence and authority. Organizations like Toastmasters can help ... enormously.

24. Dress for success! This one is old as the hills and I hate it!! But it's true. FIRST IMPRESSIONS DO MATTER. (A lot!!!)

25. Follow the Gospel of "Experience Marketing" in all you do. The shrewdest marketers today tell us that selling a "product" or "service" is not enough in a crowded marketplace for everything. Every interaction must be reframed as a ... Seriously Cool

Experience. That includes the “little” 15-minute presentation you are giving to your 4 peers tomorrow.

26. Think of your resume as an Annual Report on Brand Me Inc. It’s not about keeping your resume “updated.” It is about having a Super-cool Annual Report. (Tom Peters Inc 2004.) What are your “stunning” accomplishments that you can add to that Report each 6 months, or at the most annually?

27. Build a Great Team ... even if you are not boss. Best roster wins, right? So, work on your roster. Meet someone new at Church or your kid’s birthday party? Add them to your team (Team Tom); you never know when they might be able to assist you or give you ideas or support for something you are working on.

28. She or he who has the Fattest & and Best-managed Rolodex wins. Your Rolodex is your most cherished possession! Have you added 3 names to it in the last 2 weeks? Have you renewed acquaintance (email, lunch, gym date) with 3 people in your Rolodex in the last month? “MANAGE” YOUR ROLODEX!

29. Start your own business! Sure that’s radical. But people are doing it—especially women—by the millions. Let the idea percolate. Chat about it, perhaps, with pals. Start a file folder or three on things you Truly Care About ... that just might be the basis for Cool Self-employment.

30. There’s nothing cooler than an Angry Customer! The most loyal customers are ones who had a problem with us ... and then marveled when we went the Extra Ten Miles to fix it! Business opportunity No. 1 = Irate customers converted into fans. So ... are you on the prowl for customer problems to fix?

31. All “marketing” is Relationship Marketing. In business, profit is a byproduct of “bringing ’em back.” Thus, systematic and intense and repeated Follow-up and After-sales Service and Scintillating New Hooks are of the utmost importance.

32. BRANDING ain’t just for Big Dudes. This may well be Business Mistake No. 1 ... the idea that “branding” is only for the likes of Coke and Sony and Nike. Baloney! Branding applies as much for the one-person accountancy run out of a spare bedroom as it does for Procter & Gamble.

33. Credibility! In the end ... Character Matters Most. Does he/she give their word, and then stick to it ... come hell & high water? Can you rely on Her/Him in a pinch? Does she/he ... CARE?

34. Grace. Is it “a pleasure to do business with you”? Is it a pleasure to “be a member of your team”?

IVA.

Blogpost0103.08/tompeters.com:

**Don't Know Where You're Going?
So What?
Get Going Anyway! Now!**

When you decide to move, no matter where, no matter how wise, you more or less (mostly “more”) force “the other guy” (army, opposing team, business competitor) to react. And those who watch or participate in, say, football know—running backwards and reacting is as tough an act as there is.

General U.S. Grant was the master of this. “Keep moving, somewhere, anywhere, but keep moving” was his de facto-de jure “strategy.” As long as he was on the move the other general was in a constant reactionary mode of operations. (“What the hell is Grant up to now?”) This strategy applied with legendary relentlessness led Grant to victory after victory—and won the Civil War for the Yankees. (Since there’s no such thing as a free lunch, it’s worth noting that one of Grant’s few weaknesses was building defensive fortifications.)

I thought about all this while examining the results of this year’s Gator Bowl. Texas Tech’s Red Raiders are in the second tier when it comes to the likes of recruiting might, yet once again they had a great season, ending with a Gator Bowl win against the favored and nationally ranked Virginia Cavaliers.

Texas Tech is football’s #1 proponent of “just keep moving”—and let the other guy react. Their basic offensive “strategy” is “everybody who legally can run like hell down the field and we’ll throw the ball toward one of you.” Against UVA the result was an unexpected 31-28 victory.

Virginia’s quarterback, Jameel Sewell, passed 28 times, and garnered 17 completions—an average set of numbers per normal offensive practice. (For the year, Mr Sewell completed 162 of 270 passes—again, about normal.) On the other side of the line at the Gator Bowl, Red Raiders quarterback Graham Harrell threw the ball an astounding 69 times—and picked up 44 completions; for the year, which included one 75-7 victory, Mr Harrell had 512 completions from 713 attempts. (Those who are not fans of American football will have to take my word for it that statistics like this, to the normal follower of the sport, are truly “dumbfounding”—at the least.)

Air Force Colonel John Boyd re-wrote the modern military strategy book with an idea called “O.O.D.A. Loops.” O.O.D.A. stands for: Observe. Orient. Decide. Act. Whoever has the shortest OODA cycle tends to win—mostly by confusing the enemy who is

forced into a permanently reactionary mode of action. In aerial warfare, the opponents of those with the quickest OODA loop-cycle tend to die not shot down, but by crashing courtesy *disorientation* caused by over-reacting to the lightening fast twists and turns of the “keep on moving” pilot.

We have, I am aware, but a small number of fighter pilots in our Blogging community at tompeters.com—and a large # of you who couldn't care less about this year's Gator Bowl, hard as that is for me to fathom. For you, as well as those of us blessed with a love of the smell of pigskin, my bottom line is quite simple: Instead of spending the first weeks of the New Year reviewing plans for the days ahead, hustle the hell out onto the field and visit a passel of customers, give the green light to a slew of half-baked prototype tests, say “yes” to damn near any proposal that crosses your desk. (Why not, in fact, a green light, permanently lit, on your office door or desk?) Message: Just start chuggin'! We want the “other guys” to be immediately forced to run backwards—and as the title of the Post says, don't worry much about what you're doing, just get doing. (E.g., Have you made those 50 calls I ordered on New Year's Eve? I'll generously give you a week of grace—but I will not tolerate your attendance at a bunch of planning meetings. Period.)

Good luck with the above!