

ENTERPRISE

140. An Organization Is "People Serving People." (Period!) A challenging trip to Siberia to give an all-day seminar got me thinking about the fundamentals of organizing and organizations. I surprised myself when the definition of "enterprise at its best" that follows emerged from my keyboard:

An emotional, vital, innovative, joyful, creative, entrepreneurial endeavor that maximizes individuals' growth and elicits maximum concerted human potential in the wholehearted service of others. (*Employees, Customers, Suppliers, Communities, Owners, Temporary Partners.)*

On the one hand, this definition is pretty high-stepping. Idealistic beyond the realm of common sense. But examine it ... one word at a time. Conjure up the word's opposite, and consider the possibilities:

Do we want an emotionless organization—or an exciting one? (That's a practical enough question, eh?)

Do we want a joyless organization—is joy "impractical" in the World of Work? (Since said world is where we spend the bulk of our conscious hours as adults, I'd hope the possibility of Joy is not pie-in-the-sky.)

And so on.

I have used this formulation 100 times now, literally in every corner of the globe, from Seattle to Shanghai to Riyadh to Estonia to Luanda. And to my delight, most of the people at my seminars sign up for the "Siberia option." Not "sign up" in the sense of taking a blood oath, but in the sense of agreeing that when you examine the words ... ONE AT A TIME ...and when you do conjure up the opposite of each word, you are likely to agree that while it is indeed a towering aspiration, it is not to be dismissed, either.

Organizations exist to *serve*.

The true bottom line: *People serving people.*

If membership in your club (organization) is not aimed at "mind-blowing" development for each staff member and "window rattling" service for each customer and other extended family member, then ... *just what the hell is the point?*

141. The PSF Mandate: "Work Worth Paying For." At the beginning of 2008, a *BusinessWeek* cover story reported that Schlumberger may well take over the world: "THE GIANT STALKING BIG OIL: How Schlumberger Is Rewriting the Rules of the Energy Game." In short, Schlumberger knows how to create and run oilfields on a turnkey basis. As China and Russia, among others, make their move in energy, state-run companies are eclipsing the major independents. Aiding these new players, at the center of the Schlumberger "empire," is a relatively new outfit, reminiscent of IBM's enormous Global Services unit (these days, Global Services = IBM) and UPS Logistics' teams, which run entire supply chains for enormous companies. The Schlumberger version is called IPM, for Integrated Project Management. It lives in a nondescript building near Gatwick Airport, and its chief says it will do "just about anything an oilfield owner would want, from drilling to production."

As I see it, Schlumberger is transforming itself pell-mell into what may become the biggest and most powerful "PSF" (Professional Service Firm) in history. Moreover, paths like this, from IBM and UPS and Schlumberger, are open to many firms. Think Best Buy's "Geek Squads," the mobile service units that *are* Best Buy's competitive advantage in electronics retailing; or the "PSF" components of many giant GE "industrial" units, which produce well over 50 percent of the units' revenues; even the likes of MasterCard are getting into the act—MasterCard Advisors are running entire payment systems activities for some of their clients, penetrating ever more deeply into the heart of the Clients' operations.

In view of all this, one of my "Top 5" Tom Rants is urging *every* "department" in an organization to re-conceive itself as a turnkey-service, de facto or de jure profit-making "PSF." And, likewise, I urge companies of all flavors to consider aiming to grow through "PSF-ing"—more or less along the lines of the Schlumberger-IBM-UPS-GE-MasterCard transformations. In short, I believe the "Professional Service Firm Idea" is central to many firms', including or especially small ones, potential to differentiate themselves in today's and tomorrow's increasingly competitive environment. In particular, these "PSFs" can offer differentiated services limited only by their imagination—who would have thought that the "Geek Squads" would have led the way to re-positioning giant Best Buy?

142. Don't Let the "Enemy" Rule Your Life.

"Obsessing about your competitors, trying to match or best their offerings, spending time each day wanting to know what they are doing, and/or measuring your company against them—these activities have no great or winning outcome. Instead you are simply prohibiting your company from finding its own way to be truly meaningful to its Clients, staff and prospects. You block your company from finding its own identity and engaging with the people who pay the bills. ... Your competitors have never paid your bills and they never will."—Howard Mann, *Your Business Brickyard: Getting Back to the Basics to Make Your Business More Fun to Run*

Mr. Mann in turn quotes Mike McCue, former VP/Technology at Netscape: *"At Netscape the competition with Microsoft was so severe, we'd wake up in the morning thinking about how we were going to deal with them instead of how we would build something great for our customers. What I realize now is that you can never, ever take your eye off the customer. Even in the face of massive competition, don't think about the competition. Literally don't think about them."*

Don't let the "enemy" rule your life. Try your damndest to follow the exact advice of Mr. McCue: *"Literally don't think about them."* Far, far easier said than done, no doubt, but self-awareness is a start:

We ... are the problem.

They are ... not ... the problem.

We have one source only of Excellence: Us.

143. Love Your Competitors. At the top of my *business* priority list is a desire for my overall market to grow by leaps and bounds! Sure, as the number of people giving speeches and seminars and writing books and blogging and tweeting on similar topics has leapt, my "market share" has gone w-a-y down. (It was about 100 percent after *In Search of Excellence*, when I was more or less the only public "management guru.") But my revenue has soared in the process—the "smaller share of a much bigger pie" axiom.

Moreover, I want (am desperate that) my competitors to do terrific work! If they do, the "guru" industry's stock as a whole, which is sometimes wobbly, will rise. In short, I want my competitors to thrive.

Does all this suggest an altruistic streak? Perhaps. But mostly not. To begin with, I think that when one badmouths or attempts to diminish one's competitors in any way or tries to limit their activities, the "word gets around." And one develops a reputation as prickly and egocentric—and, well, as a selfish jerk.

More important: *I think (I know!) the only effective long-term defense against the competition (think Apple versus its stalwart competitors) is to do better and unique work—and to earn and to retain the custom of those who are interested in the things I worry about.*

"Win" with a remarkably better product.

"Win" with deeper relationships.

"Win" when your industry is prospering and has a good reputation.

Build up your competitors!!

Build up your entire industry!!

This document is #40 in a series of 48 highlights from Tom Peters' *The Little BIG Things: 163 Ways to Pursue Excellence* (HarperStudio, 2010). For more information, visit tompeters.com.

