

RE-IMAGINING

144. Create a "Cathedral"! (If Not, What?) I was asked to keynote the first major conference, organized by the Australian Institute of Management, honoring the life's work of Peter Drucker. I felt an enormous responsibility—and allowed my imagination to soar on the topic of organizing fundamentals. I began with a barebones definition:

Organizations should be ... *no less than cathedrals in which the full and awesome power of the Imagination and Spirit and native Entrepreneurial flair of diverse individuals is unleashed in passionate pursuit of ... Excellence.*

"Cathedral/s" is a Big Word. My usage is not intended to be religious in any formal sense—hence the lowercase "c." But, in terms of human potential (quasi-religious?), I do see all effective organizations as driven ... first and foremost ... by an Unstinting Commitment to Members' Growth.

A classroom in a primary school should ... obviously ... be such a "cathedral." But so, too, an *accounting* or *training* department. No doubt of it: Organizations must effectively serve their external customers to survive, let alone thrive. But my line-of-logic is, at least to me, crystal clear and admits no alternatives: *The odds of the external customer being served effectively and in a way that binds them to your organization is a direct function of such service being provided by those [employees] who are themselves Engaged in a Vigorous Quest for Growth and Excellence.*

NB: This challenge—organization as cathedral devoted to human development—is simply gargantuan, and one I thought about a lot before issuing. And by now I've tested the idea all over the world—from Dubai to New Delhi to Helsinki to Joinville, Brazil, to San Antonio. In sit-down discussions there is agreement that "If not this, what?" is, in fact, a sane question—at least worthy of serious conversation. I am wholeheartedly convinced that something like this makes commercial sense. (And, I repeat, if not, what's the alternative?)

145. Enable Dreams. (If Not, What?) Matthew Kelly's parable-based *The Dream Manager* is not ordinarily my kind of book. But Kelly's premise got to me—and it has become a centerpiece of my work. The idea is simple: *Everyone has a dream!* And if we can help him and her fulfill those dreams then he and she will be more engaged human beings—which will, practically speaking, pay off for the organization as it strives to serve its customers.

Kelly writes: *"A company's purpose is to become the-best-version-of-itself. But 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."* When you ponder that, it is both obvious and profound: "We," the team, is only as good as the engagement of and commitment to *personal* growth and achievement and Excellence by each and every individual. (Obvious in football and dance—why not groceries and the accounting office?) "The question is," Kelly continues, *"What is an employee's purpose? Most would say, 'to help the company achieve its purpose'—but they would be wrong. [Ponder, slowly, again.] 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."* As stated, the book title is *Dream Manager*. In fact, Kelly asserts that explicitly helping people achieve their dreams—directly business-related or not—is *a*, or even *the*, primary task a

boss has. The boss, to both serve her customer or get things done in general, becomes a "dream enabler"—e.g., works with the 28-year-old maintenance man from Ghana to achieve his dream of a junior college degree. To repeat the chain of logic: If that 28-year-old feels wholly supported in his personal-growth dream, odds of his aspiring to do and doing his maintenance-man job with Excellence are very high.

So ... are you?

That is, are you (explicitly) a "dream enabler"?

Subsequent to the publication of *The Little BIG Things*, I translated the ideas of the last two items—cathedrals, dream-enabling—into what I call "The Manager's Oath":

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-organization] only grow when "they" [each and every one of our colleagues] are growing.

"We" [leaders-organization] only succeed when "they" [each and every one of our colleagues] are succeeding.

"We" [leaders-organization] only energetically march toward Excellence when "they" [each and every one of our colleagues] are energetically marching toward Excellence.

Period.

146. Launch "Project Ray." I very rarely "dedicate" a presentation. But a while back I launched a presentation with a PowerPoint slide that read ... "For Ray." Susan and I had just watched the movie *Ray* on DVD. And, in short: *Ray Charles is the embodiment of the Spirit of Re-imagining!*

Time and time again he chose to Invent & Go His Own Way, to spit in the face of the sure thing, the assured cash flow, the powerful advisors ... and instead march in the brand new musical direction his Spirit willed him to march. To be sure, the movie is an extraordinary story of overcoming adversity, from blindness to racism to drugs to fame itself. But for me it was, above all, a ... Matchless Tribute to the Power & Glory of Gutsy, Lonely Re-imaginings!

Watch *Ray*. Consider starting a "Ray File" ... or a "Re-imaginings File." The "problem" is so easy to state. We're already scoring 12-hour days—and keeping up is a nightmare. There's no "extra

time" for ... Project Ray! However (trust me on this one): Odds are high, very high, that if you could project forward 10 years, you'd wonder why the hell there was no ... Project Ray 2010.

(Time flies.)

(Believe it.)

This document is #42 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.

