

Ideas from ***A Passion for Excellence***

The Leadership Difference, 1985 by Tom Peters and Nancy Austin
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Tom Peters has built a reputation as a consultant and author who focuses on personal and business empowerment and solving problems. His other books include *In Search of Excellence*, *Thriving on Chaos*, *Liberation Management*, *The Pursuit of WOW!* and *Re-imagine! Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age*.

Since I have never worked in a corporate culture I was pleasantly surprised that in Peters and Austin's writing were gems of wisdom that would benefit not only business people but counsellors, parents, volunteers and others interested in becoming their best and using their gifts to serve others. What about the subtitle? Are we leaders? Sure we are when we take our own path with concern for others. Here is a sampling of ideas from this 574 page book.

Peters coins a phrase "naïve listening" as it spurs innovative ideas developed from customer dialogue. "The lion's share of new ideas comes from the users." Similarly Alexander Graham Bell used to tell his staff to pay attention to the questions children asked because they are not in a life time rut of perception. They can see fresh answers. How might you begin to listen with naïve wonderings? New perceptions, insights and solutions may await you.

This subtitle intrigued me, "The Source of Common Courtesy: Support People as Heroes." Aren't we all heroes when we show courtesy and do the little things that could easily be overlooked? "Commit yourself to performing one ten-minute act of exceptional customer (people) courtesy per day." Peters suggests. Plus, how about acknowledging those who give exceptional service to you? Recognize some every day heroes in your local grocery store, beauty salon or mail carrier.

When Peters talks about "Golden Complaints" he is referring to how customers' grumbles can provide the impetus for improved company performance. But how many of us could benefit from attending to the complaints of those around us in our daily interactions. Sometimes we're slow learners. After years of my hubby telling me that I had an annoying finger wagging habit, I made a concerted effort to stop.

Peters makes reference to the *mistake* of the Post It Note Pads of 3M. "We hope we will persuade you to allow for the inherent sloppiness of innovation—indeed, to take advantage of it." We've all made mistakes. But are we taking *advantage of* them? What mistakes have you made that may save your organization, children, friends or colleagues distress? Don't be afraid of mistakes. Gather them as lessons, just as Thomas Edison did until he finally turned on the first light bulb. Peters adds a question "Is it tough to tolerate failure?" How comfortable are you with the inevitable boo-boos of life? Do you have a tendency to hide them? Fib about them? Get in the habit of sharing your failure stories as a gift to others.

It's a pleasant surprise that this business book addresses the need for fun and enthusiasm. "We've observed that winners are people who have fun—and produce results as a *result* of their zest." He goes onto to describe two CEOs who demonstrate integrity with no manipulation in

their celebration of employees. “They celebrate because they genuinely appreciate what their people have accomplished. It’s plain as day from the gleam in their eye and genuineness of their greeting.” What if we genuinely celebrated with words, balloons, prizes, surprises and appreciation the significant people in our lives—at work and play? Now that’s living and leading with passion.

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