

Tom Peters

Re-imagine!
Business Excellence in a
Disruptive Age

Think Differently

An Enterprise Media Production

PREVIEW VERSION

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Not for Training use.

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ISBN 1-56106-197-2

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Publisher: Enterprise Media, 91 Harvey Street, Cambridge, MA 02140, 617-354-0017

Introduction

ABOUT THE TRAINING SERIES:

In his revolutionary training program **In Search of Excellence**, Tom Peters described the approach he and Robert Waterman took to the research behind their best-selling book and video. In the introduction to the program, Peters said, "Looked at another way, [excellence is] nothing less than a 180-degree shift in the way we think about managing and leading. The models and metaphors of the past have been the manager as a cop, as a referee, as a devil's advocate, as a naysayer, as a 'pronouncer.' The words we found that seem much more appropriate at the excellent companies are the manager/the leader as a cheerleader, as a coach, as a facilitator, as a nurturer of champions. The drumbeat (and the drumbeat that has been so sadly missing) is it all comes from people."

Today, while much has changed in the world of work, much has remained the same. The critical importance of people remains unchanged, yet the way that successful companies march to that beat has shifted. In this new series of training programs entitled **Re-imagine! Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age**, Tom Peters will explore the ways that leading organizations are meeting the new challenges. As each program unfolds, viewers will gain an understanding of what drives success in this "new world of work."

Each program in this series is designed to focus on a set of skills. This program is designed to provide insights into innovation. More specifically it is about creating an environment where new ideas are fostered, where people think differently about design and the potential demographics of their customers.

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM:

OXO was a company born out of innovation and thriving on continued innovation. A retired entrepreneur and inventor, Sam Farber, created this company to solve the problems of millions of people through simple, yet extremely effective, innovations to classic kitchen products. Today, OXO is thriving with this fostered commitment to innovation, and through partnerships created by outsourcing. The company is also committed to meeting competition head-on and winning. All of this is done by a group of employees who are as loyal and devoted to the product as the inventor himself, because they are each their own inventors!

This program is an excellent example of how thinking differently can transform not only a product, but also a business. The key lessons that come across in the program are,

- Think Differently
- Design Matters
- Stay Lean and Flexible
- Passion Matters
- View Competition as an Opportunity

These lessons, however, do not tell the full story. This is a great example of how passion, collaboration, and creativity are key to success and why innovation is not only important, but essential. More importantly, it provides a blueprint for how you can create a culture of innovation in your organization.

ABOUT THE LEADERS GUIDE/WORKBOOK:

There is a three-part learning structure for this video and workbook:

- 1) Learning key concepts
- 2) Reviewing and discussing them in a group
- 3) Applying the concepts to your own organization

ACTION AGENDA: The video presents the key concepts behind dealing with change and responding to competitive pressures.

DISCUSSION: We have provided discussion questions as well as observations for debate to help participants reflect on the core lessons.

APPLICATION: Application exercises are included to allow participants to develop strategies for putting key lessons from the program to work in their own organization.

Learning from OXO

OXO founder Sam Farber first questioned the effectiveness of kitchen gadgets in response to his wife Betsey's slight difficulty in gripping ordinary kitchen tools. Seeing an opportunity to help not only his wife, but also the millions of Americans who are aging or who suffer from disabilities such as arthritis, Sam set out to create a line of kitchen prep tools that would be comfortable to hold and easy to use. This resulted in the creation of "Good Grips," the ergonomically designed, transgenerational kitchen tools that appeal to the broadest possible market.

With OXO, Farber brought the concept of Universal Design (design for the comfort and ease of users of all ages and abilities) into the housewares industry. This innovation continues to be one of the strongest market influences of the past two decades.

Sam worked with a New York City design firm, Smart Design, to conduct a research campaign that included talking with consumers, chefs, and retailers. The research also extended into the studying of competitive products. After reviewing the research, the designers decided upon the necessary criteria: a handle large enough to grip firmly and avoid strain, an oval shaped handle to prevent the tool from turning in the hand, a round end that fits comfortably in the palm and evenly distributes pressure, and an over-sized hole for easy hanging.

OXO Good Grips is a brand that is driven by design in everything they do. This drive combined with thinking outside the demographic box allows them to

create products that should be easy for any customer to use, no matter what age or level of experience.

OXO is also a lean company. They operate a large business, over \$100 million annually, with about 35 employees. They achieve this through collaboration and partnerships with other small companies. To ensure the same level of dedication in their partnerships as with their own employees, each partner shares in the risk and the potential reward.

Finally, OXO team members obsess on every detail. They believe passionately in their brand and in the product. This sometimes makes meetings uncomfortable as people toss ideas and concerns back and forth, each argued with the same level of passion. The results are clear, however. The OXO products are appreciably better than those of their competitors.

Key Lessons:

- **Think Differently:** Sam Farber didn't use marketing experts and focus groups to come up with a product that would appeal to an 18–35-year-old. He thought of something that would appeal to all ages -- be they young or old. He used his love of great design to turn that idea into something exciting. To succeed, you must think differently about your customers, and your products. You must also understand that the traditional marketing approaches and ideas may no longer be applicable. Maybe your next wave of customers will come from a different demographic!
- **Design Matters:** At OXO, great design isn't about making a good-looking product. It's about making a product that provides a measurable improvement over the competition. It's about creating a product that connects with people emotionally. Of course, there's nothing wrong if the product looks good, too.
- **Stay Lean and Flexible:** OXO has a small staff managing a big business. They stay lean and flexible by forging collaborative relationships with different designers and manufacturers. Everyone shares in the potential risk and in the rewards. You can use these ideas to leverage your organization, too.
- **Passion Matters:** Everyone at OXO is passionate about the brand and about the products. They care about every detail and they're unafraid to disagree. You should foster and encourage passion in your organization.

- **View Competition as an Opportunity:** OXO knows that companies will copy their products. Where possible, they use patents to protect their innovations. But they have also turned the competitive realities into a “call to action.” They are committed to continuous innovation. That’s the only way they’ll stay in the lead.

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Think Differently

Discussion & Reflection Points

Sam Farber's idea came to him while he and his wife were cooking for guests. Betsy Farber's hand began to feel uncomfortable from the kitchen implements and that prompted Sam's idea. Great ideas come from everywhere. Discuss how you can use everyday occurrences to generate ideas for your organization.

Often the marketing experts tell us to make products that appeal to people who are 18–39. Sam Farber made a product that would help out his wife and many people who had older or weaker hands. His product, however, had universal appeal and proved to be a hit with all ages. Are you too focused on a specific demographic? Discuss how you can think differently. Focus on older consumers. Think about women and minorities. Use different demographic criteria and see if you can come up with solutions. List your ideas below:

OXO uses their wall of gloves as a symbol of their desire to design their products for the broadest possible market. Symbols are very important. Do you have symbols in your company? What are the key ideals that your products should have? Can those key ideals be represented in symbols?

OXO is a lean company and remains so successfully because of the design of their partnership agreements. Manufacturing companies have been using this philosophy for quite some time now with their supply chains, but yet OXO is not a manufacturing company. Does your company have knowledge of the supply chain? Can you think of areas of your business that might be better handled by an outside company that specializes in that area? How can you be more creative in forging collaborative relationships?

Passion and tension can run high at OXO's meetings. In order to diffuse those feelings they often have lunch together in a social setting. Do you have tense meetings? Think of ways you can also diffuse these tensions. If you don't have tense meetings, do you think that some team members are withholding their opinions?

People are protective of the brand at OXO. They also keep a close watch on their competitors. Do you understand your organization's brand identity? What is important about it? Are you thinking about the brand all the time when you are working on new projects, or campaigns?

Trainer's Notes

This is your guide to use with the video **Think Differently**. The program shows how opportunity or entrepreneurial thinking is critical for the success of every organization in the future. This workbook and the accompanying trainer's notes should provide you with additional ideas for anticipating, navigating and dealing with change.

The video is divided into three parts:

INTRODUCTION: In the opening, Tom Peters introduces himself and sets up the business challenge.

CASE STUDY: The OXO case study is set up in a story format where the viewers are led from the creation of the first OXO product through to the successful company it is today. Along the way, the viewers see how the employees of OXO create new products, deal with change, work with their fellow employees, and create collaborations with their competitors. The story is made more powerful by the first-hand commentary from Sam Farber.

LEARNING POINTS: In the conclusion, Tom Peters comes back on camera and provides the key lessons. This allows people to understand the lessons of the case study and begin to think about how they can apply them to their own organization.

Audiences

Creative and innovative thinking is a tool that can help you meet competitive challenges and create product innovation. Audiences who will find the video particularly useful include:

SENIOR MANAGEMENT: Members of senior management will find this video useful because it demonstrates how effective use of the supply chain can keep a company lean and flexible. Supply chain decisions need to come from senior level managers in order to be effective. Senior management can also see that powerful commitment to the brand delivers better products and innovations.

MID-LEVEL MANAGERS AND FRONT-LINE SUPERVISORS: If your company is committed to innovation and opportunity thinking, managers at all levels must be involved in the process. These managers need a solid understanding of the key concepts presented in this program. It is also helpful to watch and reflect on a successful case study such as the one presented.

ORGANIZATION-WIDE TRAINING: All employees of an organization will benefit from this video because it demonstrates that having passion and creativity can occasionally cause tension. The employees of OXO have very effective ways of dealing with that tension. In addition, it is interesting for every employee to see the creative process in action. That way, they can gather ideas for their own team collaborations.

How to Use **Think Differently**

This video and print package includes a number of elements to help you meet your training and teamwork goals.

The following is a list of action steps you can take in planning and conducting a course using **Think Differently**. You may want to modify these items to accommodate time constraints, intended audience needs, and training goals.

Advance Preparations

1. View the program in advance of the training session at least once and review the key learning points in the program (listed in this workbook).

Think about how the OXO story can be applied to your organization. Use the space below to write down your observations:

2. Arrange to have a VHS videocassette player and a monitor available for this training session. If you have more than 20 people attending, be sure to order at least a 25-inch monitor.

3. Remember to encourage participation. The management issues presented here can trigger concerns as well as good ideas. Getting everyone involved will help build consensus on the issues and encourage audience members to feel that they share "ownership" of the solution.

- Obtain one guide for each participant.
- Test your equipment in advance and adjust color, sound, etc.
- Bring writing materials for each participant.

4. Try to let everyone go home with a concrete "to do" list of ideas and actions so the lessons from your discussion can be put to work.

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Sample Training Session

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION. Welcome people to the training session and give them an overview of the program. You may want to address the concepts presented in this program in the context of your own organizational goals.

SCREENING. Show **Think Differently**. You can watch the program in its entirety or focus your training session on one or several specific segments in Tom Peters' presentation.

POST SCREENING DISCUSSION. Use the themes from the program as a catalyst for discussion, including:

- Think Differently
- Design Matters
- Stay Lean and Flexible
- Passion Matters
- View Competition as an Opportunity

SECOND SCREENING. You may find it valuable to re-screen the program after discussion.

Exercise 1: QUOTABLE QUOTES Approaches to Team Risk-Taking

Objectives: This exercise should help you to describe the team's current approach to risk-taking. In addition, you should be able to form agreement on the team's approach to and support for risk-taking in the future.

Participants: Fewer than 10 people is best but may be used with a maximum of 20. Larger groups may be divided into subgroups of 4 to 5 people. Chairs around a set of tables in a U-shape with a single table up front for the projector.

Time Limit: 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Materials and Resources: You should make an overhead transparency or slide of "Quotable Quotes" and an overhead or LCD projector.

Step One: Explain the objectives of the activity, including a brief presentation on the importance of risk-taking.

Step Two: Display Quotable Quotes on the projector. Ask team members to pair up with the person next to them and decide which quote best describes the team's current approach to risk-taking. (Allow 5 minutes for this step.) The Quotable Quotes are:

"Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained."

"Go for the Gusto"

"Activity Doesn't Mean Productivity."

"A Place for Everything and Everything in its Place."

"Ready, Fire, Aim."

"Time Waits for No One."

"Slow but Sure."

"Look Before You Leap."

"Opportunity Knocks but Once."

"When in Rome, Do As the Romans Do."

"Seize the Day."

Step Three: Facilitate a discussion on the responses. Probe for reasons for selecting a quote. Ask for examples of past team actions or decisions that reflect the idea behind the quote.

Step Four: Ask the team how satisfied they are with the current approach to risk-taking. If they are somewhat dissatisfied ask: "In the future, which the of the quotes would you like to be known by?" Facilitate a discussion on the responses leading, if possible, to a consensus on one or two quotes.

Step Five: Close the session by facilitating a discussion on ways the team can increase the level or type of risk-taking.

Variations: You can change the quotes to make them more relevant to your team or you can ask the team to come up with a quote that best describes their approach to risk-taking.

Exercise 2: Undiscussables

Purpose: To unveil and learn from taboo topics, where even the fact that they are undiscussable is usually undiscussable.

Overview: This activity takes the form of a card game in which people can anonymously raise the questions that never get raised.

Participants: An intact team that has discovered itself blocked or failing, and no one can talk about why. A facilitator may be helpful.

Time: At least two intensive hours. These conversations can last five or six hours, if you uncover deep issues that are affecting the team.

Supplies: Three-by-five-inch cards; writing tools for each person in the room; a wall covered with paper; tape or glue sticks.

Environment: A comfortable meeting room setting.

A significant barrier to team learning is the existence of topics that team members feel can't be discussed, because they might offend someone or violate an unspoken taboo. When people are willing to talk about them, these topics often turn out to be critical factors in forming the strategic plan, solving the current problem, creating the team's vision, or developing the team's ability to learn.

To begin, you should agree upon the following ground rules:

- Respect the fear that accompanies this exercise.
- Reflect and take notice of your initial response to each undiscussable as it is read aloud.
- Listen for what is said and not said.
- Challenge ideas and assumptions, not people.
- Beware of untested attributions, especially of peoples' motives.

STEP 1: GATHERING DATA.

Each person on the team is given three three-by-five cards and equivalent writing tools, so everyone has the same color ink or pencil. Without discussion or collaboration, each person writes one "undiscussable" statement on a card -- describing it in enough detail for any reader in the room to understand. If someone's behavior is part of the undiscussable, then refer to that person by job title and not by name, because the undiscussable is intended as a statement of a problem, not as an attack on another person.

Some examples of undiscussables from other people's sessions:

- The owner/founder's children are not interested in the business and have said so to other workers. We must talk about a succession plan without them in it.
- There are not enough resources to fund the current strategic growth plan. If we proceed with the current plan, the company will probably crash and burn.
- The president of the company is not open to dialogue. He must always have the last word, even when people are using humor. So no one talks to him about what is important.
- All our performance reviews are three to six months late.
- We have a problem with people burning out, but when I try to get more time for myself, or more resources to do my work well, I'm treated as if there's something wrong with me.

STEP 2: DEALING THE CARDS.

The blackjack option: Someone collects the cards and either shuffles and deals them, or puts them in a stack and allows people to draw them. Team members, as they draw or receive a card, place it face up on the table in front of them.

The treasure hunt option: At the end of five minutes, everyone leaves the meeting room, holding their cards. One at a time, team members reenter the meeting room and hide their three cards. Two cards should not be hidden in the same spot. Once all the cards are hidden, everyone reenters the room. Each person finds three cards that are not his or her own, and sits down. This feels silly to some people, but has the advantage that no one ends up reading

from his or her own cards. It is also a physical reminder of the hidden structures debilitating the team.

STEP 3: UNCOVERING COMMON THEMES

Each person in turn reads aloud the three cards from step 2, and then posts them on the wall. When all cards have been read, team members group them to reflect common themes. The team must also decide how many themes will be tackled in this meeting and how to deal with the rest. (Leftover undiscussables should be discussed soon, before they go underground again even deeper.)

Starting with an “easy” undiscussable builds the team's ability to talk about the more difficult topics. Some cards may provoke discussions that can last for hours; thus, every thirty minutes, pause to decide how much more time the team wants to spend on this topic before moving on to the next card. Time checks keep the dialogue on track, and help the group determine its progress.

These questions may help guide the dialogue:

- What is the threat behind the undiscussable?
- What mental model has allowed this hidden structure to persist?
- What has kept this issue from being discussed seriously?
- What are the unintended consequences of the undiscussable, in the past, present, and future?
- How does this undiscussable support or block our ability to learn as a team?
- How does this undiscussable fit with our espoused vision and values?
- What do we want to do about this undiscussable?

About Tom Peters

"In no small part, what American corporations have become is what Peters has encouraged them to be."

The New Yorker

"Peters is ... the father of the post-modern corporation."

Los Angeles Times

"We live in a Tom Peters world."

Fortune

"In Tom's world, it's always better to try a swan dive and deliver a colossal belly flop than to step timidly off the board while holding your nose."

Fast Company

Fortune calls Tom Peters the Ur-guru of management—and compares him to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and H.L. Mencken. The *Economist* tags him the Uber-guru. His unconventional views led *BusinessWeek* to describe Tom as "business's best friend and worst nightmare." Tom describes himself as a prince of disorder, champion of bold failures, maestro of zest, professional loudmouth (as a speaker he's "a spitter"—according to Dilbert), corporate cheerleader, lover of markets, capitalist pig, and card-carrying member of the ACLU.

Tom & Bob Waterman co-authored *In Search of Excellence* in 1982; the book was named by NPR (in 1999) as one of the "Top Three Business Books of the Century," and ranked as the "greatest business book of all time" in a poll by Britain's Bloomsbury Publishing (2002).

Tom followed *Search ...* with a string of international bestsellers: *A Passion for Excellence* (1985, with Nancy Austin), *Thriving on Chaos* (1987), *Liberation*

Management (1992), *The Tom Peters Seminar* (1993), *The Pursuit of WOW!* (1994); *The Circle of Innovation* (1997); and, in 1999, a series of books on Reinventing Work: *The Brand You50*, *The Project50*, and *The Professional Service Firm50*.

In October 2003, Tom and publisher Dorling Kindersley released *Re-imagine: Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age*; the revolutionary book, an immediate No. 1 international best seller, aims to do no less than re-invent the business book through vibrant, energetic presentation of critical ideas.

Two Tom Peters biographies have recently been published: *Corporate Man to Corporate Skunk: The Tom Peters Phenomenon*, by Stuart Crainer; and *Tom Peters: The Bestselling Prophet of the Management Revolution*, by Robert Heller (part of a four-book series of business biographies on Peters, Bill Gates, Peter Drucker, and Warren Buffet).

Tom presents about 75 major seminars each year, about 50 percent outside the U.S., and has also authored hundreds of articles for various newspapers and popular and academic journals.

Tom is an engineering graduate of Cornell (B.C.E., M.C.E.) and Stanford (M.B.A., Ph.D.); he holds honorary degrees from several institutions, including one from the State University of Management in Moscow, awarded in 2004. In the U.S. Navy from 1966–1970, he served two tours of active duty in Vietnam (a Navy Seabee) and a tour in the Pentagon. He was a senior White House drug abuse advisor in 1973–74, and then worked at McKinsey & Co. from 1974–1981, becoming a partner in 1979. Tom is a Fellow of the International Academy of Management, The World Productivity Association, the International Customer Service Association, and the Society for Quality and Participation.