

Tom Peters

# Re-imagine! Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age

Turning Work Assignments into  
WOW Projects

An Enterprise Media Production

**PREVIEW VERSION**  
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Not for Training use.

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# Introduction

## ABOUT THE TRAINING SERIES:

In the 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 specific program is designed to provide insights into innovation and creativity. You will also see how diverse and motivated people can take mundane work assignments and transform them into exciting, unique, and inspirational projects.

## **ABOUT THIS PROGRAM:**

Memorial Hospital of South Bend, Indiana, is an organization that believes that innovation can help organizations meet the tremendous challenges of health care. They have fostered innovation throughout the entire hospital in ways that not only improves the health of their community, but also develops their employees into champions.

Several years ago, Memorial Hospital took on the challenge of improving the health of their entire community. To do this, they wanted to really teach children about healthy behaviors. Their solution was truly innovative. They developed a health museum for kids -- this is the Disney World of health. HealthWorks Kids Museum and the HealthWorks Hummer have turned health education into something truly different. They have developed new ways to teach and inspire kids. They have truly transformed the job of teaching children about health into a WOW Project!

In this fast paced and fun video, you will see innovative ideas at work. The team at HealthWorks is living a WOW Project! As you watch, you will also learn the key lessons in creating your own WOW Projects. These lessons include:

- Come up With a Cool Idea
- Test Your Idea
- Sell Your Idea
- Hire Non-conformists
- Have Fun and Celebrate Successes

These lessons, however do not tell the full story. This is a great example of how people can be inspired to create bold and exciting visions. It shows that truly committed leadership can inspire an entire organization. More importantly, it provides a blueprint for how you can foster creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm 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 creating a culture of innovation and creativity. It also shows how diverse and motivated employees can make a huge difference.

**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 HealthWorks & The HealthWorks Hummer

## The Story

Several years ago, administrators at Memorial Health of South Bend, Indiana, passed along an assignment to its staff: "Let's do a better job at educating children about health." This assignment was part of a bigger vision of transforming South Bend into one of the healthiest communities in the United States by 2010.

Wanting to do more than the traditional approach of "printing a thousand coloring books and sending nurses to local elementary schools," Memorial Health picked up Tom Peters' *Project50*. They applied the "WOW!" methodology to REFRAME the assignment. The results were amazing. The first new project opened in 2000. It was HealthWorks! Kids' Museum, a 12,000 square foot edu-tainment center that was designed to bring healthy decision making information to life. Its primary goal was to help children understand that the choices they make early in life really can impact the quality and length of their lives. Thousands of school children in grades K–6 visit this museum as an extension of the typically limiting health education courses in most elementary schools.

HealthWorks Kids Museum was a good -- and exciting -- start. But it turned out that it wasn't enough. Middle school kids didn't respond to the museum in the same way as younger children. They thought it was too juvenile for them. The leadership at Memorial Hospital jumped on this new opportunity. They turned it into another WOW Project, hoping for another innovative solution. They got what they were looking for: The HealthWorks Hummer. This is an H1 Hummer that has been converted into a mobile classroom. Middle school kids loved it because it was "cool." The Hummer has representational human body parts attached to it. It has a sophisticated sound system that allows it to burp and belch (which the kids love). All of this transformed middle school health education into something unique and memorable.

The final piece to the puzzle came when the leadership at Memorial Health hired a truly unique and diverse team of people to run the Museum. Innovation can't happen without the right people, and HealthWorks Kids Museum and the HealthWorks Hummer are no exception. What the administration realized is that they needed people with diverse skills and backgrounds. In the program, you will hear from people with skills in nursing and stand-up comedy. You will meet educators, clinicians, and drama experts. The result of this strategy is evident. The team at HealthWorks is a wildly creative and enthusiastic group.

Will South Bend, Indiana, become the healthiest community by 2010? That remains to be seen in 2010 -- and beyond. But there is no doubt that HealthWorks and The HealthWorks Hummer are making a difference in children's lives. Kids are learning -- and remembering -- real messages about health and the employees are committed and motivated. The energy and enthusiasm is palpable. These are truly WOW Projects!

# Key Lessons:

HealthWorks is proof that any project can be turned into something exciting. It's also proof that a culture of innovation can come up with solutions to many problems, even the huge challenges of children's education and health care delivery. Here's what you can do to put these ideas to work in your organization.

- **Come up with a Cool Idea.** Both HealthWorks Kids Museum and The HealthWorks Hummer are cool ideas. They provide innovative and refreshing approaches to the challenge of teaching kids about health. Remember, if you can develop a new and exciting approach to your next project, you'll inspire everyone, plus the project will be more fun! Turn your next idea into something different.
- **Test Your Idea.** Phil Newbold and his team tested the idea of the Hummer with middle school kids. They built cheap and easy prototypes with toys and play dough to get people excited about the project. This allowed the team to make their mistakes early on and inexpensively. You need to test your ideas, too. This gives you the opportunity to learn from your mistakes and improve your ideas.
- **Sell Your Idea.** Once the leadership at Memorial Hospital came up with a cool idea, they had to sell it. In this case, they sold it to outside funders. Everyone must learn how to become salespeople for their cool ideas. No matter what new idea you have, you'll have to sell it. Perhaps you will have to sell the idea to your teammates or to your boss. Maybe, like HealthWorks, you will have to raise funds for the project. As Tom says in the video, "Sales really is everything."



- **Hire Non-Conformists.** HealthWorks hired people with different skills and backgrounds. They understood that great ideas come from everywhere. You should choose people with diverse backgrounds and skills to be on your team. That will create the foundation for learning and creativity.
- **Have Fun and Celebrate Successes.** HealthWorks makes work fun. They celebrate their successes and make every day at work an adventure. You should also celebrate the completion of each big project. It's fun and it also provides closure so you and your team can move on to your next WOW Project.

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# Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects

## Discussion & Reflection Points

HealthWorks has hired people with different skills and backgrounds for their Kid's Museum. They believe that a diversity of skills and backgrounds contributes to creativity, innovation, and, ultimately, success. Do you look for people with similar diversity in your organization? What can you do to add more diversity to the team you assemble for your next project?

It is important to figure out ways of testing your ideas. Ideally, these tests should be easy and inexpensive. At HealthWorks, they tested the ideas for the HealthWorks Hummer by creating small prototypes using toys and play dough. They showed these prototypes to middle school kids -- and even funders in order to get feedback on their ideas. The prototypes worked and helped the team make its mistakes early and inexpensively. How can you test your ideas? Can you survey customers or make inexpensive prototypes? Discuss ways you can test your ideas. List your thoughts below:

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Everyone must sell their ideas. If you come up with a cool idea or a WOW Project do you have an idea of how you will sell the idea? Who approves your ideas? What excites them? Can you present your idea in a way that will energize and excite people -- and get them to say "yes"?

All team members at HealthWorks are always trying to come up with their own WOW Projects! When we went to HealthWorks to film this segment we heard about many of these ideas. Some team members had ideas for new ways to use games and interaction to teach specific health stories to kids in the museum. Other team members had ideas for extending the messages to high schools and beyond. What is your next WOW Project? Ask people to share some of their thoughts. Write down some of the cool ideas below:

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Do you celebrate the completion of projects? Remember, celebration gives closure to a great effort. It also allows people to move on to the next project. It doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive, but it should be fun. Discuss ways you can celebrate the completion of some projects you're working on right now. List your ideas below:

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In our interview, Phil Newbold explained how the innovation philosophy can solve all kinds of problems and meet many challenges -- both big and small. Some employees at Memorial Health have used this philosophy and methodology to help conceive and design a new cardiac wing for the hospital. Others have used the same process to redesign new admitting forms. Think about all the challenges you have -- both big and small. Can you use this focus on innovation to come up with solutions to these problems? Why not try this out.

One of the other elements that Phil Newbold mentions is that innovation is messy. You must be open to the reality that some of your innovations will fail. These failures provide valuable information for your team in coming up with ideas that will succeed. Remember, you must be open to failures if you are going to arrive at WOW solutions to your problems.

# Trainer's Notes

This is your guide to use with the video **Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects**. The program shows how innovative thinking can deliver exciting and out-of-the ordinary solutions to work challenges. This workbook and the accompanying trainer's notes should provide you with additional ideas for anticipating, navigating and dealing with innovation.

The video is divided into three parts:

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

**CASE STUDY:** The case study shows how a diverse, energized, and motivated group of people can come up with creative solutions to challenging problems. It is designed to be both engaging and funny so people will remember the lessons.

**LEARNING POINTS:** In the conclusion, Tom Peters comes back on camera and reviews the key lessons that were presented in the HealthWorks case study. 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

The innovation messages presented in this story show how you can meet competitive challenges that your organization will face in the future. Audiences who will find the video particularly useful include:

**SENIOR MANAGEMENT:** Phil Newbold and his team at Memorial Hospital have used WOW Projects and innovative solutions at all levels in their hospital. They solve both large and small problems by using this methodology. Senior managers at any kind of organization can learn from this leadership approach.

**MID-LEVEL MANAGERS AND FRONT-LINE SUPERVISORS:** Everyone has new challenges and projects with goals and deadlines. The innovation approach that Memorial Hospital uses can help mid-level managers find solutions to the problems they are facing. This approach can be motivating to employees -- and impressive to superiors. It is a true win-win approach to work challenges.

**ORGANIZATION-WIDE TRAINING:** There is no doubt that the employees at HealthWorks are motivated and enjoy their work. It is a truly energizing place. Everyone can learn from the example of this team of people, and everyone can use the WOW Project approach to solve problems and find solutions to work issues.

## How to Use **Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects**

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 **Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects**. 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 story can be applied to your organization. Use the space below to write down your observations.

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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 **Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects**. 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:

- Come up With a Cool Idea
- Test Your Idea
- Sell Your Idea
- Hire Non-Conformists
- Have Fun and Celebrate Successes

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

# Exercise: **Turning Work Assignments into WOW Projects**

**Purpose:** To create a framework for developing WOW Project ideas and responding to the team's new ideas.

**Materials:** People should have pads and papers. A flip chart or board should be available for listing group ideas. Also, have a couple of nerf balls.

**Assignment:** Everyone has projects that they are working on. The goal of this exercise is to brainstorm ways you can turn your project into a WOW Project.

**Step One:** In your larger group, discuss the top assignments that you are about to take on. As you review your own assignments, think about what your competition might be doing. List your ideas below:

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**Step Two:** Have your group break up into small working groups. Using the ideas listed above, have each mini-group discuss and come up with a list of at least five ways you can turn this new idea into a WOW Project. Be creative – and be willing to try out some ideas that might be a little unusual.

**Step Three:** Reassemble in the larger group and have each mini-group present their ideas. Your goal should be to agree on at least three ideas to develop further for innovations.

**REMEMBER:** Avoid negativity -- in this phase of the discussion, everything should be on the table. List phrases like the ones below on a sheet of paper. If people say these phrases, have people hit them with a nerf ball to stop negativity. Here are some sample phrases:

- Yes, but
- I don't think...
- We can't do that
- It isn't done that way

# 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.