



One-Minute Excellence, by Tom Peters

One-minute excellence. I can sense the curling of your lips. While such a catchphrase makes me shudder, too, it contains a gem waiting to be discovered.

How do you go on an effective diet? How do you stop smoking? How do you stop drinking?

In short, you do it and it's done. Then you work [hard] for the rest of your life to stay on the weight-maintenance, non-smoking, or booze-free wagon.

A while back, I came across a line attributed to IBM founder Thomas Watson, If you want to achieve excellence, he said, you can get there today. As of this second quit doing less-than-excellent work.

The idea is profound.

Suppose you're a waiter and, for your own future's sake (...) you decide to set a matchless standard for service. How? You do it. Now.

Sure you'll be clumsy at first. You'll get a lot of it wrong. You'll need to read up, listen to audio-tapes, take classes, tune in to on-line electronic chat rooms, visit other restaurants to collect clues. And you'll need to keep doing such things to maintain your edge (as an opera singer or a professional athlete does).

Nonetheless, you can become excellent in a nanosecond, staring with your first guest tonight. [...]

Does it sound wild? Silly? Naive? Maybe, but it isn't. The first 99.9 percent of getting from here to there is the determination to do it and not to compromise, no matter what sort of roadblocks those around you (including peers) erect.

The last 99.9 percent (I know it adds up to more than 100 percent -- that's life) is working [in right earnest] to 1. Keep your spirits up through the inevitable storms, 2. learn something new every day, and 3. practice that something, awkward or not and no matter what, until it's become part of your nature.

What holds for the waiter also holds for the manager of a six-person department or the chief executive of the 16,000 person firm.

How long does it take you, as boss, to achieve world-class quality? Less than a nanosecond to attain it, a lifetime of passionate pursuit

to maintain it,

- By Tom Peters from "The Pursuit of Wow!"

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