

# The Dialog Box

EPAM CONTINUUM

A CONVERSATION WITH

Tom Peters

Jon Campbell

**W**hen it comes to CX, Tom Peters was there long before many of us stepped onto the scene. His famed shelf of books, stretching from *In Search of Excellence* (1982) to 2018's *The Excellence Dividend*, has had a profound effect on the way businesses think about designing for both customers and employees. Jon Campbell, Head of Experience and Service Design at EPAM Continuum and a long-time Peters fan, was jazzed to put some thoughtful questions to his literary hero. In the course of their rollicking conversation, they cover many diverse topics: design, W. Edwards Deming, the dangers of ritual in business, thinking skunkily, hiring for poetry, Montgomery and Eisenhower on D-Day, Jimi Hendrix, and so much more. Peters quotes Twain's "Never miss a good chance to shut up," but, fortunately for us, neither he nor Campbell took this injunction too seriously.

**“The Experience that Is Wonderful Is One That Has Emotional Appeal. You Can’t Depend on Metrics. You Can’t Engineer It.”**

—Tom Peters

Listen to the *audio version* of this conversation.

## Mentioned in this Conversation

**Re-Imagine! Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age [Hardcover]** The world of business is ever-changing. To keep pace with the rate of change and emerge as an innovative company, Peters shares strategies for implementing values and processes that empower a talented workforce.

**In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best Run Companies** Tom Peters and Robert Waterman based *In Search of Excellence* on a study of 43 American companies across various sectors. They identify eight principles of management that are attributed to the success of these companies.

**The Design Dimension** Christopher Lorenz provides a fresh look at revolutionary product design and its impact on corporate strategies.

**The Experience Economy** *The Experience Economy* dives into how companies thrive by offering captivating experiences to their customers.

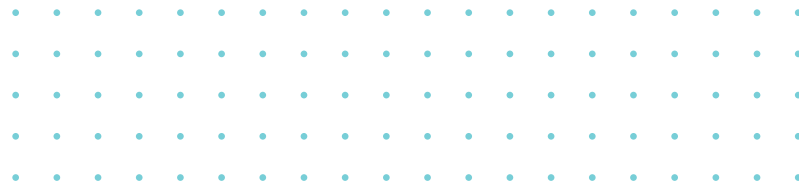
**The Excellence Dividend: Meeting the Tech Tide with Work that Wows and Jobs That Last** A lifetime of passion around the idea of excellence is gathered to give readers inspiration for the realities of 21st-century business.

**Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things** People think, decide, and act on their emotions every day. Don Norman takes his thinking around human-centered design to a whole new level in *Emotional Design*, where he asserts that good design melds well with our emotions.

**A Passion for Excellence** Peters and Nancy Austin delve into what sets some of the most efficacious businesses apart.

**Thriving on Chaos** Peters offers guidance to managers at any level in his “handbook for a management revolution.” In *Thriving on Chaos*, Peters outlines 45 recommendations on how to survive in a world where things are always changing and certainly uncertain.

# Tom Peters



**JON CAMPBELL:** I came across [a hardcover copy of] your book, *Re-Imagine!*, in late 2005, and it ended up scratching an itch I had because I'd been working in marketing and brand strategy [at Harley-Davidson]. I started to rethink the types of products and services I was helping brand and market and the way that organizations were working, and how they deliver value and the like. And in there, you talked a good bit about design and the power of design. I guess within two years of reading *Re-Imagine!*, I actually quit Harley and went to grad school at the Institute of Design in Chicago.

**TOM PETERS:** Oh, cool!

**JON CAMPBELL:** My mom might have been a little unhappy with you at the time when I quit a good job at Harley-Davidson to move and go to school again, but I want to thank you for that.

**“As a civil engineer, the people on our campus who we despised the most were the architects, because they would design some gorgeous, fabulous-looking incredible thing that was totally unbelievable.”**

**TOM PETERS:** I worked with a guy who went to work for IBM based on all the wonderful things we said in *In Search of Excellence*. And the day he walked in, all the shit hit the fan and he never forgave me. Now I'm batting .500, one out of two. That's not bad.

**JON CAMPBELL:** No, that's pretty good. I'm sure there's dozens and dozens more out there [who] probably quit something or another to go try something else because of those [books]. But that was 2005, so that's like 14 years ago. I started design school in 2007 and joined EPAM Continuum in 2008. So, yeah, it worked out well.

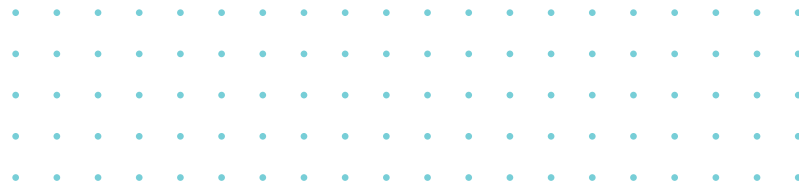
**TOM PETERS:** That's really cool for me, for a different reason. Number one, obviously, I'm delighted it worked for you. But number two, we really started getting serious about design in that book. I had written about it before—a fair amount—but we really put it front and center, and [it's] unavoidable in that one. So it's delightful to see that it had some hooks.

**JON CAMPBELL:** I agree with you, because I had been following you and your blog for a number of years at the time. I'd been following it more from, kind of I guess, a management [perspective] and [a] doing-business-in-a-different-way [perspective], but I hadn't really thought about the power of design on business in such a considered way prior to that. That was a real eye-opener for me. That was 2005. And since then, the iPhone's come out, and guys like the founders of Airbnb went to Rhode Island School of Design and the like, and you start seeing how commonplace really good user-centered experiences are now. I guess I'm kind of curious: Reflecting on what you thought of design back then and then looking at it today, what you've seen happen...

**TOM PETERS:** Well, way back when... there was a management column [that published a] couple of times a week in the *Financial Times*, and the guy who wrote it years ago was called Chris Lorenz. And he wrote a book called *The Design Dimension*. I'm trained as a civil engineer, so to me: (a) design is a foreign language; and (b) I don't trust designers. As a civil engineer, the people on our campus who we despised the most were the architects, because they would design some gorgeous, fabulous-looking incredible thing that was totally unbelievable. So, my first exposure to design was very negative [laughs]. Anyway, Chris wrote this book, and it had lots of case studies, and I thought the case studies were really cool. And—my son went to RISD, but I have zero artistic talent—the way that I work in general is, frankly, more intellectual [than artistic]. And so, I started reading up like crazy and got really fascinated by it. Then Chris Lorenz asked me to write the foreword to his book, which was very cool. And one of the funny things that happened was, I developed a reputation as a design guru in the UK, and even won awards, and had never opened my mouth about the topic in the US. I just sort of grew into it.

One of the things I use to this day is what I call TGRs and TGWs. Thirty or 40 years ago, the quality of a car was measured by TGWs: Things Gone Wrong. And you would buy a car and 90 days later, you would go to your service station, and you would have a list of the 27 things that hadn't worked. Then the quality movement came along and the Deming stuff came along and the continuous improvement came along. And then, eventually, Six Sigma came

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along and stuff worked. And so if stuff works, then what the hell are you gonna do to differentiate? That pushed things in that direction.

I got [in] an incredible amount of trouble, which was purposeful, two or three years ago in Frankfurt—note the word “Frankfurt”—talking about this topic. I said, “Well, I got a Subaru, and my Subaru has 156,000 miles on it, and it’s working great.” And I said, “With all due respect to you Mercedes people: In terms of quality, my Subaru and the Kia I rented last year are as good as anything Mercedes makes.” I said, “I totally acknowledge all the sexy stuff you’ve got on top.” So the point of your question was: Stuff works, how are you going to differentiate?

**JON CAMPBELL:** Right.

**TOM PETERS:** And I think in 1990, Pine and Gilmore came along with the *Experience Economy* book.

**JON CAMPBELL:** That’s right.

**TOM PETERS:** And that sort of changed everything. The word “experience” got into the language. Obviously, we were always doing it to some extent, but it [suddenly] became hot as a pistol. And it became hot for, in my opinion, very good reasons. Though, to skip way ahead—and we should come back to what you’re saying—but to skip way ahead, in my current book, I wrote a cautionary piece on experience. And I said a lot of people think they can engineer an experience. And the experience that is wonderful is one that has emotional appeal. You can’t depend on metrics. You can’t engineer it. Don Norman, who’s to me the guru of gurus in this stuff, wrote a book called *Emotional Design*. And the one-liner that I remember [from it] was, he said—and don’t ask me to get this exactly right—in a review in a big auto magazine of the Mini Cooper S: “No car in recent memory has brought more smiles to people’s faces.” And he said, “That’s the kind of differentiation [you want].” He said, “The thing has gotta work. That’s the functional part of it. You’ve gotta have the right kinds of features to make it appropriately sexy.” But the question is: “Where’s the stuff that hooks people?” One of the one-liners I use in my books, in my presentation[s], [is] a quote by Laurene Powell Jobs, Steve’s wife, and the one-liner [is]: “Steve and Jony,” as in Jony Ive, the head Apple designer, “Steve and Jony would spend hours talking about corners.” Then

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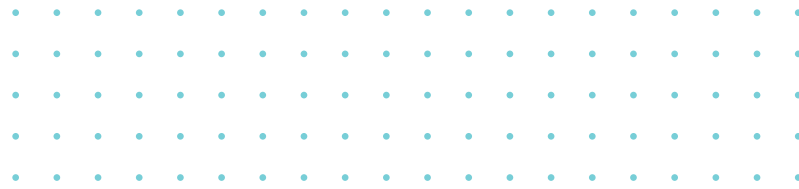
there’s the great Jobs-ism that says, “You know a design is good when you want to lick it.” And yes, somewhat unattractive as that is, I really get it. I think we’ve turned the experience economy in a bad [direction]—but it’s the same damn thing that happens to everything. Six Sigma was fantastic. And then Six Sigma became a religion, and it induced rigidity into systems. I think experience is doing the same thing. I am an archenemy of agile, if you capitalize the A, because then it becomes a religion. When that happens, you end up introducing bureaucracy, and to some extent, you may

often be worse off than you thought. When some GE guy came to 3M, he installed, down to the last nut in the last bolt, Six Sigma into 3M’s innovative culture. 3M incidentally was my favorite company in *In Search of Excellence* in ‘82, and the research I’ve read says that, basically, Six Sigma came within a half an inch of killing 3M. The systems can get way out of hand.

**JON CAMPBELL:** I really appreciate that point, both on quality and also agile with a big “A,” because, as we’ve seen more and more organizations embrace design, or what is commonly referred to as design thinking, you do get this danger of the-process-can-replace-the-people-and-the-experience, right? Where it starts to become this paint-by-numbers approach, as opposed to good judgment, experience, nuance, and not just “following the rules,” so to speak.

**TOM PETERS:** I would only change one word in what you said. You said, I believe, if my memory is worth a damn, [that] the process can eclipse the goal or something like that. And the word I would change is “could” or “can” to “will.” Way, way, way back, IBM was known as the service company. That’s how they broke out of the mold. Their computers didn’t work. Other people’s computers worked. But IBM had all this great market share and they were doing the service thing right. Then the service thing turned into rituals. I spoke at an IBM sales conference. It’s funny the things that stick in your mind. I can still see the conference table. And I was sitting across from a, I don’t know, VP or EVP or [some] big deal [function]. He was dressed perfectly, like IBM guys were, and he pulled a cigarette out of his pocket. And, just like the king or the queen of England, the assistant, who was standing there three feet away, bent over immediately and lit the cigarette. Well, great service, with [the] hands-on, be-there-on-time [ethos]

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had deteriorated into rituals piled upon rituals, piled upon rituals, piled upon rituals, and nearly killed IBM. Yep.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Yeah, I totally agree. And I like the change to “will,” because I do think there is an inevitability that as you start to take anything with its original intent, as you start to pull it apart and look at it as repeatable and then try to scale it, there is a danger that you lose the original intent of whatever that is, right?

**TOM PETERS:** There is a certainty—there’s not a danger, dammit!

**JON CAMPBELL:** [Laughter] I gotta be more specific.

**TOM PETERS:** You gotta be more brutal. You gotta be closer to my age to have the little cynicism button.

**JON CAMPBELL:** [Laughs] One of my old mentors here at EPAM Continuum used to quote a Jimi Hendrix line. Sometimes you’ll talk to an organization that’s interested in, “Okay, what are the six steps that gets us to this design?” And it’s like: “It doesn’t quite work that way...” And so, he had a Jimi Hendrix quote I always use: “The blues is easy to play, but hard to feel.” I love that quote, and I think it’s probably the same [thing] you experienced with quality and with agile, right? You can play the notes, but it doesn’t mean that it’s doing it.

**TOM PETERS:** Absolutely. 100%. Almost the other end of the spectrum: There was a system which may well have died, started a jillion years ago by Peter Drucker, and it was called “MBO,” which was “management by objectives.” You’re the manager of a group of nine people, and I’m your boss. Drucker introduced MBO, and he never capitalized the letters. And, in fact, he never said the term “MBO.” What he said was “management by objectives and self-control.” The whole point was: You sat down with me, your manager, and we chatted for, over a period of time, a couple of weeks or a couple of hours or what have you. And we came up with your goals for the next three months, and then you went away, and I never saw you again. The whole point was to give you a framework where you could behave autonomously. And 10 years later, the “and self-control” had disappeared. Lowercase “m” and “b” and “o” had become capital “M,” capital “B,” capital “O.” And the thing that was supposed to give you freedom was one more effing layer of control and bureaucracy.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Right.

**TOM PETERS:** And that was just the sweetest example you could imagine.

**JON CAMPBELL:** That’s a fantastic example. And it reminds me: I used to download all your PowerPoint presentations after you would post them after you gave [a] talk. One slide that, I think, was one that you came up with ... and I think it was in response to MBO ... was MBWA, Management By Walking Around—

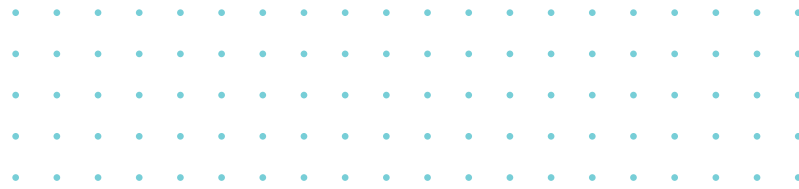
**TOM PETERS:** Do. Not. Give. Me. Credit. [MBWA are] the most important four letters in my life. We found them at a youthful, non-bureaucratic Hewlett Packard. I. Fell. In. Love. You’ll see me now, at the age of 200, get as emotional as I did when we started talking about it in 1978. It was always about being in touch, hanging out with the folks who do the work at HP. In the days that that we did our stuff, Bill Hewlett was still around and you would watch Bill, whose name was on the door, sit down at a computer screen or

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whatever kind of screen they had then [laughs]—he would sit down next to a 23-year-old engineer, and they would talk like peers for 30 minutes. The MBWA thing was absolutely, positively beautiful, and it still is today.

I’ll add one small thing to it. I’m over here in gorgeous New Zealand and I’m actually on the seaside. And I always say this shamefacedly in my talks. Here I am, 76 years old, been writing about this stuff for 40 years and, God help me, I find myself out on the beach thinking about MBWA. This is related, and off on another tangent: I really had this, to me, a real breakthrough—and in an odd way, it has to do with all the stuff that you and I have just been talking about. So I’m walking on the beach and thinking about MBWA. “Why do you

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do MBWA?" Well, you do MBWA to be in touch with the work where the work is being done. They used to say, "at the coalface." You do MBWA so you can meet some of the people and understand who they are and so on. And that's MBWA. And I was on the beach and I said to myself—and you know, there was no tape recorder, my iPhone was turned off—I said to myself, "Tom, that is bullshit. The reason you do MBWA is because it's fun. And if it's not fun, go back to your office, write your letter of resignation [Campbell laughs] and get the hell out of management for the rest of your life. If it's not a kick to be out with your team in the distribution center at 1:00 a.m. You. Are. In. The. Wrong. Job."

And yeah [in MBWA], you learn all those things [such as,] "I learned about the people and I learned about what's really going on and I learned about some of the roadblocks, which are holding them up and all that good stuff." But, mainly, if it's not a hoot, a kick, a pleasure to be doing it, you really are in the wrong job. And by the way, the team at the front will be able to read your attitude a hell of a lot better than you can, and they know when you're going through the ritual. "Guys: Boss said do the MBWA. Oh, shit, it's 11:00 at night, I should be watching whatever is on at 11 and here I am." So you can do it wrong.

I came across this tape—tape, tape, tape—one of the old tape tapes made out [laughter] of plastic tape, and [it was] written by a general by the name of Melvin Zais, and it was called You Must Care. And he said: "Leaders must care." And the one little story I remember, which is so indicative, he says: "You're a lieutenant and your guys are in the barracks and they're getting ready for an inspection tomorrow morning. If you're the right kind of lieutenant, while they're doing that work, you walk down to the barracks. You do not have to open your mouth. You just walk down to the barracks and you sit down for a little while and walk out." And I can still remember his words: "They know that you know that they are working their asses off to make you look good." That nearly brings tears to your eyes.

**JON CAMPBELL:** It reminds me, I keep a running list of quotes and there's a quote I had—I can't remember off the top of my head who said it—but there's one around: "You can't lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse." [Peters laughs] I really like that, because it's kind of that point. You have to be present and you have to be doing the work. You can't just be quote unquote, "managing things."

**TOM PETERS:** Ulysses S. Grant was unbelievable in that regard. He always used to go riding with the troops, and typically when

a general would go riding with the troops, he would bring seven colonels, nine majors et cetera, et cetera. And Grant went out early in the morning, and he always went out alone. And the way [Grant's biographer]... described it—from the notes and the diaries and so on—he said: "You know, when the other generals would show up, people would kind of run away or stand at attention. When Grant showed up, they treated him like the neighbor next door, and he used some of the language. They said: "Mornin' General, how [are] things going?" and so on and so forth. What a beautiful one!

With any luck—we will not have that many Brits who are listening to us. [Campbell laughs] No, with great luck for your show, we'll have millions of them. And I hope you do. But D-Day! Bernard Montgomery was the head of the English troops. And they were talking about either the night before or the morning of [D-Day]. And by the way, I'm going to cry on the microphone before this is over. The night before [or] the morning of, the two generals [Montgomery and Eisenhower] did their last thing. Montgomery gave a speech to his troops. And it is said that it was absolutely one of the most perfect speeches imaginable. Eisenhower, who never wore medals on his jacket, went down to the beach, and just hung out with the guys, one at a time, walking up and down the line chatting. And one author who wrote about it—I'm getting spine tingles even though I've told this a hundred times and it's so unbelievable—said Eisenhower was so in touch with his troops, that moms and dads were willing to send their sons to die for him. I mean, if that's not a line for history, I don't know what the heck is.

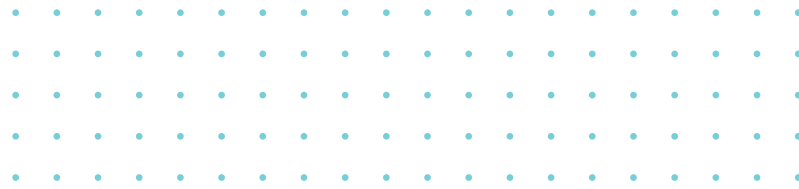
That's MBWA. Honest to God, I wish I could take a selfie for you because I really teared—I've said it 200 times, and I can't say it without tearing up. But you know, that's the essence of leadership. That's when you do agile with a lowercase a, and that's when you do Six Sigma with a lowercase s, and so on. I'm not a very religious person, but there is a spiritual dimension to it.

You have to worry about that in your hiring, for God's sakes. I mean, that's where we screw up. We, as they say, promote the best salesman to sales manager and the two jobs actually have nothing whatsoever to do with each other.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Well, how do you balance the spiritual moving into the ritual? Or is that, like you said, it's inevitable [that things get ritualized]: Whether it's design or its quality or its agile? Is there anything that you can do to protect that?

**TOM PETERS:** Part of my answer, which is not very attractive relative to the goals of this show [laughter], is to say it's a losing

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battle. One of my old McKinsey colleagues, Dick Foster, who was a researcher's researcher, did a study of the 1,000 largest publicly-traded American companies over a period of 40 years. Over that period of 40 years, not a single one outperformed the market. As I said to somebody: "For God's sakes, if you've got an N of 1,000, you would think that maybe one or two could have made it past the hurdle." But it really is a downhill slide. When I'm in my smartass mode when I'm giving a speech, I say: "Hey, have fun, go for it, do anything crazy. You're gonna lose but you might as well enjoy the trip—"

**JON CAMPBELL:** "—as you do it—"

**TOM PETERS:** "—as you do it."

I think bureaucratic deterioration only goes in one direction. To go back to my own experience, the gorgeous, vital, lovely Hewlett Packard that Bob Waterman and I wrote about in *In Search of Excellence* in '82 and researched in '78, is long gone. And, in its place, there are rigidities piled upon rigidities and we could have a long discussion that's way beyond my skills about monopolies and concentrations—and I get that—but I do not believe that the most modern of the modern of the modern tools that we have now will, in the long term, keep a Facebook or a Google or an Apple from not calcifying as well.

**JON CAMPBELL:** It's hard because you end up fighting all the detritus that you've built up over the years as you look to scale. The challenge is how you identify a second way of working when you're looking to innovate, as opposed to whatever first way of working that the optimized engine kind of [requires].

**TOM PETERS:** One of the things, again, and this takes us back but it now has become common is—I don't think this is [in] *In Search of Excellence*. I think this is my second or third book, either *Passion* or *Thriving on Chaos*—I started studying the Lockheed Skunk Works. And Lockheed built its first Skunk Works in Burbank, California, to handle precisely what you have just talked about. The first thing that Kelly Johnson and his gang created was a famous spy plane called the SR-71, and the SR-71—and this is probably inaccurate but it is within real close spitting distance—

the SR-71 was developed by a team of 175 people. And it took them six or nine months. The same thing [using the conventional development process] at Lockheed would have taken 3-4,000 people six to seven years. They started this Skunk Works and they put it out in the boondocks, and they didn't micro-control it. Obviously, it had a finance guy who was doing the numbers, but for a while that was the secret. There's no way in hell you are going to de-bureaucratize the product development process in a big company. And so the answer is, or an answer is: Create something really totally wacky. Don't put it within 75 miles of the corporate headquarters, et cetera. I really fell in love with the Skunk Works thing.

And we used to do this thing. It was just incredible fun, and I wish you had been around for it, you would have loved it. We got so turned on by this idea that—my office was in Palo Alto, and down south of Monterey, about 90 miles away—we started holding these things called Skunk Camps. They were basically aimed at answering the question, which you asked a couple minutes ago, and that is: "How do you get vitality back into a big corporation?" And the whole idea was to try to think skunkily, if you will. And so, we spent five days talking about Kelly Johnson's Skunk Works and a Skunk Works that I had run into [at] the Xerox corporation, and so on and so forth. (A) it was great fun, and [(b)] we really got some characters to attend.

**JON CAMPBELL:** I feel like that could be something you still run today, because more and more of these large established companies are looking at how they build up new business units or spin up new startups or partner with accelerators, all in that same service of getting away from the mothership.

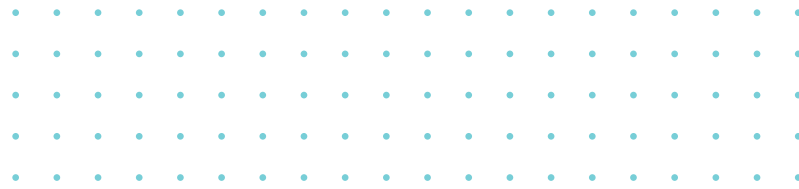
**TOM PETERS:** Absolutely.

**JON CAMPBELL:** You talk a lot about hiring for empathy, the notion of empowering your employees. We

frequently see companies trying to build their internal human-centered design and innovation capability, trying to stay nimble and adaptable. A lot of what we talk about is that need to hire empathetic employees and then empower them so that they can have the decision-making rights to move faster, to be [nimbler]. You've been talking about that for decades. And I'm curious: When

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you look at today versus the last few years and even back into the prior decades, has that gotten better? Because it seems to me like a lot of companies are still very nervous about their employees' empowerment.

**TOM PETERS:** Oh, I think they are.

God descended on my shoulder and gave me two of the greatest slides I have ever had. I'm not 100% happy with God because He gave them to me just too late [Campbell laughs] to put in my latest book. They are literally two paragraphs and if I had them at hand, I would read them to you. But they are about Google. They talk about two very serious, big data research projects that Google did. Number one... was to figure out what the characteristics were of the best Google employees. And so they came up with eight characteristics and number eight on the list was STEM skills. All of the other seven were soft skills. You know: Listens well, pays attention to other people's ideas, and so on. So, that was top employees. The second one they did was an analog and it was most creative teams. And Google apparently breaks teams down into A teams and B teams. And the B teams routinely beat the crap out of the A teams.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Really?

**TOM PETERS:** And they did the analysis and it was the same thing, the soft stuff. I take your ideas into consideration. I listen when you talk. Et cetera. And one of them that was really cool, I thought was fantastic and, unsurprising to me at least, in places like Google or Facebook, is the number-one item that the B teams exhibited, that the A teams didn't, was no bullying. In that software world where everybody has an IQ of 372 and all 300 of them graduated first in their class at MIT or Stanford, they are bullies. They behave that way a lot of the time. As I said to somebody: "My life is over. All I have to do is show these two slides, hand them out to people in paper copies [Campbell laughs] or electronic copies, and then leave and say: 'There it is, guys; take your truth, guys and women.'" There's the proof. And yes, as I said, I love it because it was Google. Because if it was Joe and Harry's Bar and Grill, it would be anecdotal. But Google has never done anything anecdotally in their whole bloody life.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Right. It's also such a good example, too, where your point around STEM coming in at number eight [is concerned]. It's like: "That's great that you have these incredible engineering skills or your 375-point IQ, but there is no substitute for being able to work and build off the ideas of others and communicate

clearly." And that goes for the leading tech companies as much as it does anything else.

**TOM PETERS:** Those skills are far more important, I would hypothesize, on remote teams than they are on teams that are together. When 40 of us from 30 locations in nine countries on three continents are trying to get something done, and I know it's being done electronically, blah, blah, blah, but to really get something good done, you know, really requires a depth and a human touch to pull it off. You could argue that that's actually more important [for remote teams] than it is in the big open office at Google or Facebook.

**JON CAMPBELL:** And that trend's only going to continue to increase.

**TOM PETERS:** Incidentally—on one of my favorite topics—it's also one of the reasons that particularly in these distributed environments, that the research shows pretty clearly that women on average are better managers than men. They listen better. They can handle ambiguity better. And that's, if you will, the perfect design for the kinds of teams we're using today. Guys are good if there's a hierarchy. Women are better when there's ambiguity and no rules.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Which is what innovation is—so that makes total sense, right? How do you navigate ambiguity and figure out what comes next, what to do next?

**TOM PETERS:** Incidentally, and it's something that I'm paying a little bit more attention to [nowadays]: Those kinds of skills ought to be, and you can't get them entirely out of a classroom, ought to be far more intensely taught in professional schools than they are today. And I'm not talking [just] about computer science. I'm talking about computer science, engineering, law, medicine, et cetera. I remember the guy who invented the checklists—who was not Gawande, who wrote *[The Checklist Manifesto]*—but a Hopkins doc by the name of Peter Pronovost. And I remember *Peter saying in his book*, he said, "When I was in medical school, I probably looked through a microscope for 300 hours, something that I have never done for one microsecond since I got out." And he said, "I did not have one minute of team leadership training. And here I am now running the ICU at Johns Hopkins Hospital." And (a) it's a disgrace; but (b) all the professional schools need [to hear] this. Lawyers don't know how to talk in front of a judge. The Stanford and MIT computer science people don't know how to deal with their next-door neighbor[s]. And [in] all the professional schools, that's arguably the case.



# Tom Peters

**JON CAMPBELL:** Yeah, this idea of training for collaboration and how you actually work in teams, as opposed to whatever discrete craft or skill that you're building up.

**TOM PETERS:** I think the evidence is pretty clear, and I do not pretend to be an expert, that that stuff is teachable. I can't teach it to you the same way that your second-grade teacher taught you the multiplication tables, but I can give you a lot more sensitivity and thoughtfulness toward these topics.

**JON CAMPBELL:** You talk a lot about hiring for empathy. And we hire here for four, I guess, attributes. We're always looking for: Empathy, curiosity, poetry, and logic. And I think all four of those are—

**TOM PETERS:** Oh my God: I love it. I love it. I love it. I love it. Especially number three.

When your son or grandson attends my MBA school 25 years from now, I will be long dead. He is going to take, or she is going to take, an art appreciation course. And on top of that, the school will be still called an MBA, but it will be called the Master of Business Arts. I love it that you guys do that.

**JON CAMPBELL:** That's cool.

**TOM PETERS:** No, it is not cool, it is seriously hot shit. There are some things that deserve words like "cool" and "hot shit" may or may not be appropriate in this context, but that's what it is.

**JON CAMPBELL:** It's critical to be able to tell stories and connect, and not just have that part where you're spouting the facts or you're just trying to lead people through. You have to be able to make things sing, so to speak, right?

**TOM PETERS:** It's a long way from you guys, in a way but it's the basic point: There's a one-liner that I found. Our Secretary of State was a guy by the name of Dean Rusk. And the wonderful line from Secretary Rusk is "The best..." and this is precise: "The best way to persuade someone is with your ears." And that's a beauty.

**JON CAMPBELL:** That's really good. Because then you understand what they're looking for, what their needs are, and can respond accordingly.

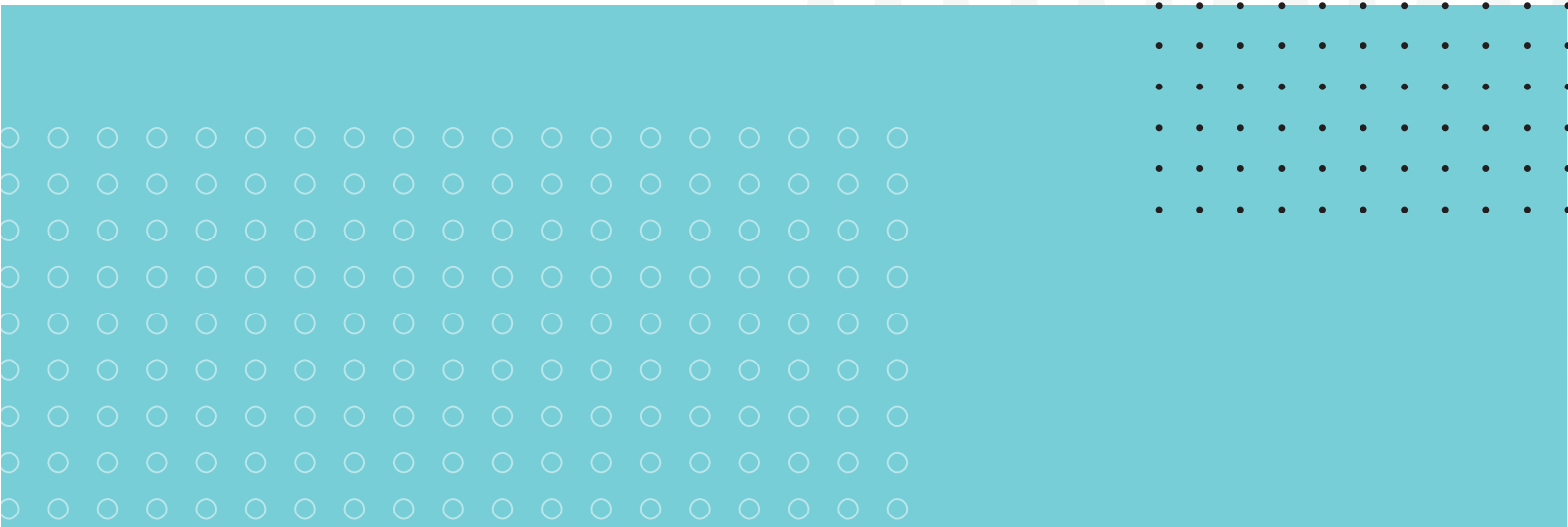
**TOM PETERS:** Absolutely. Absolutely. The Mark Twain version of Dean Rusk was, "Never miss a good chance to shut up."

**JON CAMPBELL:** [Laughs] I'm a big Twain fan. And another one of his quotes that I use is: "It's better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid than open it and remove all doubt."

**TOM PETERS:** [Laughs] I love it.

**JON CAMPBELL:** Yeah, that's his sense of humor.

**TOM PETERS:** I love it. I love it. I love it. I love it.





## The Dialog Box: A Resonance Test Magazine

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