

Sex,

Leadership

and Rock'n'Roll

**Leadership lessons
from the Academy
of Rock**

“... a brilliant, original, rockin’
Rock’n’Roll model of business
management and leadership...”

Tom Peters

*author of **Thriving on Chaos**
and **In Search of Excellence***

Peter Cook

Foreword by John Otway

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Preface

‘Sex, Leadership and Rock’n’Roll – can life be that simple?’

‘Not really. You need to know why you’re doing what you do as well.’

‘Does leadership benefit from an MBA?’

‘Yes, but no. You need attitude and soul as well ...’

‘So the secret of leadership is not only technique but also attitude?’

‘Er, definitely maybe ...’

MBAs give you access to the special knowledge and rationale behind business, but they sometimes miss out on the attitude necessary to lead. By combining what business gurus say with the wisdom of the 3M Corporation, where our gurus are Madonna, Meat Loaf and Marley, we reach the point where the letters MBA stand for Management By Attitude. This rocks!

I want to take you on a journey in search of ideas that will alter your thinking. This book offers you a unique synthesis of leading-edge thinking plus earthy pragmatism to help you lead businesses where inspiration, perspiration and revolution are the norm. You will find this book especially valuable if you want to:

- increase levels and quality of creativity and innovation at work;
- access fresh thinking on old management chestnuts and cut through the jungle of buzzwords that beset the territory; and
- think differently about relationships, motivation, leadership and high-voltage performance.

This book has several moods and voices. In general, you will find more substantial material on the left-hand pages. To the right you will find summary materials that echo or are out of phase with the left side. You can therefore choose a fast route through the book or a more relaxed one, depending on your mood and preferences. I also use provocation, contradiction and the odd red herring to keep you on your toes. Don’t therefore be surprised if our 3M model transforms into 4M, 6M and 7M before we reach the end. As the health warnings say: Caution! This product may contain nut(ty) remarks!

How did this begin? I gained my most valuable early learning directly from experience, through playing in rock bands and travelling the world

to fix pharmaceutical factories. This meant dealing with senior people at a very early age. I had no training to help me do this and had to improvise to survive. In this respect, my training in rock bands was more important than anything I learned later in the MBA and other formal learning. I continue to dabble with music, performing in bands such as The Cowpokers – an unusual synthesis of country'n'western and glam-rock; a spoof heavy-metal band called Genital Sparrow; and with the punk icon John Otway. This is some kind of CPD (that's Can't Play the Drums yet, not Continuing Professional Development).

In the last twelve years, my company has developed the art and discipline of using music as a major or minor theme in our repertoire of approaches to strategic facilitation, learning, management development and conferences with a difference. In that time we've worked for organisations such as GSK, Pfizer, Kent County Council, Cookson Inc, The Metropolitan Police, Johnson and Johnson, The Royal College of Physicians, Allianz Cornhill, Electronic Arts and BP Amoco.

This book is necessarily the story so far, as this is an uncharted field. Good musicians and leaders never stop learning and I will be delighted to engage in a dialogue with those of you who learn best through conversation.

I can be contacted as follows:

telephone: + 44 (0)1634 855267 / 573788
email: dean@academy-of-rock.co.uk, peter@humdyn.co.uk
website: www.sexleadershiprocknroll.co.uk,
www.academy-of-rock.co.uk, www.humdyn.co.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Cook". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that starts under the 'P' and ends under the 'k', with a small upward tick at the end.

August 2005

Dialogue

Rock on ...

The Practice



In the beginning there was sex, then there was Rock'n'Roll, followed by leadership ...

Well, I guess that some will say this is an oversimplification and the events were not exactly in this order. Nevertheless, my contention is that some business gurus have become increasingly indigestible and we need some fresh thinking on personal development and leadership. We don't need another spreadsheet, as Tina Turner might have put it. In this part of the book I've set out three simple but compelling analogies that provide a different set of lessons for leaders. Rather than the Master of Business Administration (MBA) this is Management By Attitude (MBA). The three analogies that make or break a business are these.

- **'Sex'** is about making, keeping and ending work relationships, drawing on leading-edge psychology that is easily digestible. We're talking romance, love and friendship under the 'sex' analogy rather than just whips, chains and hardcore, so it's OK to read on ...
- **'Drugs'** is about motivating and leading others. 'Drugging yourself' is about reaching peak personal performance and 'drugging others' about engaging people in a shared ambition, i.e. leadership. Again, we're talking adrenaline and endorphins rather than smack, crack and cocaine here ...
- **'Rock'n'Roll'** is about reaching and sustaining high performance. This includes delivery and execution skills, learning, unlearning and reinvention. No need to throw a TV out of your office window to get in the zone, however enjoyable that might be ...

In other words:

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX because LOVE IS THE DRUG so ROLL OVER,
BEETHOVEN

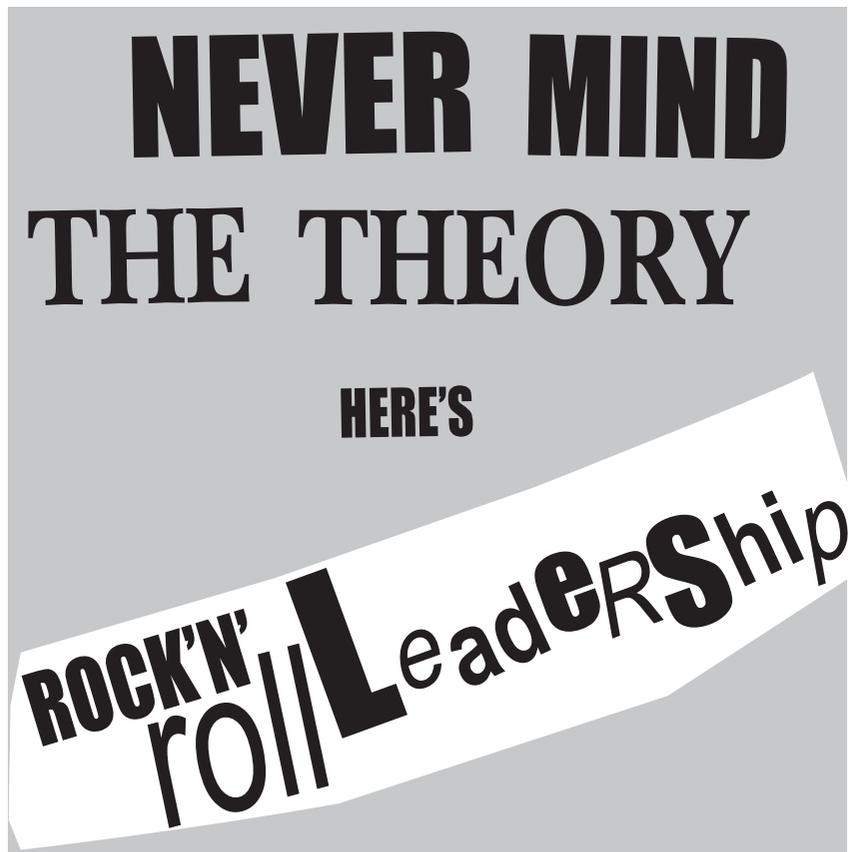
So let's get on up ...

**Fed up with indigestible
business gurus?**

Want a fresh take on relationships?

**Read everything on motivation
and leadership?**

**Need to create a high-performance
workplace?**



Systematic uncertainty

I defined leadership as ‘drugging others’. One aspect of this addresses the unknown and how people respond to it. This leads us to another definition of leadership.

Leaders make and engage others with strategic decisions under conditions of high uncertainty of means, high uncertainty of ends or both means and ends.

In other words, leaders help others to deal with ‘unknowingness’ by helping them to make sense of complexity and chaos through metaphors, stories and interventions that reduce potential fear of the unknown.

Can we have a systematic approach to uncertainty? Crudely speaking, the answer is definitely maybe. Business uncertainty broadly divides into four boxes:

		Clarity about goals	
		High	Low
Clarity about means	High	1 We know where we are going We know how to get there	2 We do NOT know where we are going We know how to get there
	Low	3 We know where we are going We do NOT know how to get there	4 We do NOT know where we are going We do NOT know how to get there

Taking these boxes one by one, leaders can respond to uncertainty in the following ways:

Box 1: Both the goal and the means of achieving it are clear. Typically, all that is needed to resolve issues of this level of difficulty is knowledge and rational thinking, maths or judgement gained through experience.

Box 2: The goal is currently unclear but the business has the capabilities to achieve the goal as it becomes clearer. Therefore, the first capability required is that of creating a clear vision. The goals proposed by visionary leadership may also be somewhat imprecise in detail but offer a future that is worth achieving. Tell the followers to ‘just do it’. The details will emerge as the future unfolds. If questions of unclear goals cannot be solved positively, then political games may break out. Recall the games on pages 78-81.

At some level you are calling on improvisation rather than relying solely on a score. In other words, more Rock’n’Roll Leadership than Orchestral Management.

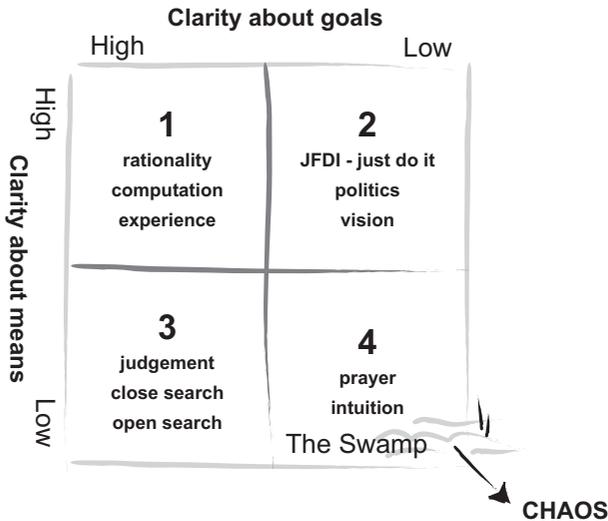
Dialogue 2: *Drugs* – Rock on ... Motivation and Leadership

Box 3: The direction is clear but current means of achieving the goal are suboptimal. This calls for either radical or incremental creative problem solving. This requires a more systematic process than is needed for Box 2 issues. Essentially you come back to orchestral or A–Z thinking, using a structured process (score) for systematically redefining problems, generating novel and appropriate solutions, and implementing those solutions in reality.

Box 4: Neither the goal nor the means of achieving it is clear. These kinds of problems are sometimes termed ‘the swamp’. At the extreme, chaos leads to bewilderment as the issue becomes increasingly complex.

For example, famine and global warming are swamplike problems, in so far as the goals are not shared by all and there are many vested interests and varying points of view, and the proposed solutions are often simplistic, which means that there are no clear winners.

We can summarise the typical responses as follows:



Although the matrix points up some pretty obvious things, I’m constantly surprised at how some companies apply the wrong tool for the job. For example, lengthy brainstorming sessions (Box 2) are used to solve Box 1 problems such as ‘How do we compare with competitors?’ when a little bit of benchmarking or the use of a knowledge-management expert would do. Box 1 solutions such as maths are often used by politicians to persuade the public that they are in command of complex Box 4 problems such as ‘world peace’ or ‘entry to the euro monetary system’.

Sledgehammer

'If it ain't broke, we've still got a chance to fix it.'

Mike Hammer, Management Guru

Pablo Picasso possibly commenting in advance on Mike Hammer:

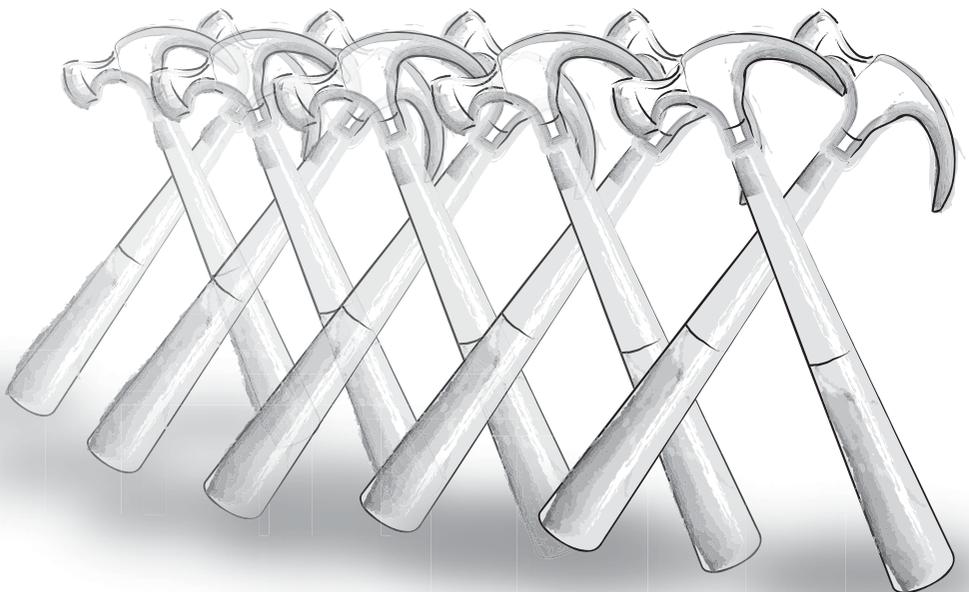
'Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.'

Pablo Picasso

Chinese wisdom on Sledgehammers:

'The nail that sticks up will be hammered down.'

Anon



When change is over, change again – Bowie as magician

Bowie's next project was less successful. He formed a guitar rock band called Tin Machine. They released an eponymous album to poor reviews and supported it with a small tour, which was only moderately successful. Tin Machine released a second album, *Tin Machine II*, which was ignored. On this occasion, the magic did not work. Time to change again ...

Forming innovative partnerships – Bowie as networker

In 1995 Bowie teamed up once again with Brian Eno to produce *Outside* and went on tour, co-headlining with Nine Inch Nails to lure a younger audience, but his strategy failed. In 1996 he recorded *Earthling*, an album heavily influenced by techno and drum and bass. *Earthling* received positive reviews, yet it did little to attract a new audience. Many techno purists criticised Bowie for exploiting their subculture. It seemed that his attempt to cross demographic and culture divides was not going to work on this occasion. Since then Bowie has formed partnerships with a number of artists, including Placebo, and reinvented himself as a brand for a US online bank.



The main learnings from this dramatic series of reinventions include:

- make radical changes, even when your current strategy is successful;
- hire and work with the best people you can find, especially if they are better than you;
- read the environment and engage with new movements when they are more than fads; and
- learn from failure and quickly move on.

At last, a book that cuts through the jargon of leadership and personal development. It offers a real world source of inspiration and provocation in areas such as: creativity, innovation, relationships, motivation, leadership, high performance, learning and reinvention. Peter Cook's unique approach springs from a mix of leading edge concepts with the wisdom of the street in the form of rock music and is served up in a quirky and challenging, but intelligent way.

This book examines leadership issues using the analogy of 'Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll' rather than the language of prophets, consultants and gurus. In this context, the letters MBA stand for Management By Attitude.

Let there be Rock'n'Roll Leadership!

"No one would doubt that we live in a Rock'n'Roll Age – so what makes more sense than a brilliant, original, rockin' Rock'n'Roll model of business management and leadership? *Sex, Leadership and Rock'n'Roll* is a marvellous book, which closes the door on the tidy, hierarchical, know-your-place 'Orchestral Age' and ushers in a new, creative era of challenge and change. Hooray!"

Tom Peters, author of *Thriving on Chaos* and *In Search of Excellence*

"An intriguing approach to the delivery of leadership concepts and very different from traditional MBA style teaching. Interesting for Generation X'ers to consider as well as baby boomers."

Declan Doogan, Pfizer Plc

"This book rocks harder than early period Sabbath. I gulped it down quicker than Ozzy Osbourne used to down a bottle of bourbon."

Phil Beadle, columnist *Education Guardian*, award winning teacher, and author of *Could do Better*

"Peter Cook provides an unusual musical insight into Leadership. Underpinning everything is "the relationship", "the environment" and "the situation"."

Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive, Kent County Council

Peter Cook started in pharmaceuticals, leading innovation teams to bring multimillion dollar drugs to market and as an international troubleshooter. He is the Managing Director of Human Dynamics, offering strategy facilitation, coaching, training, practical MBA programmes, conferences and events.

He is also a rocker in his spare time.


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