

# Tim Russert: The Real Deal

We had been complacent in our assumption Tim Russert would forever color our Sunday mornings with his ardent yet evenhanded drive for truth in politics. And now he is gone from us, hopefully to hold accountable those who preceded him in death for the actions and words they denied or spun while breathing.

He was an outstanding interviewer, a grateful son, devoted and devout husband and father, avid Buffalo sports team fan, a terrific mentor and coach, a wonderful, humorous and unpretentious human. All of this was apparent every Sunday on Meet the Press. He was a consummate professional; a journalist of supreme values. We loved watching him because there were no contrivances or bias in his dogged research and informed questions.

One of the many things we really treasured was that he actually listened to the answers he received and then formulated his follow-on questions. This is rare in news reporting: the vast majority of political reporters are so focused on the next query on their list that they don't stop to hear what is being said and go with it—to ferret out all there is to learn. According to Senator Bob Dole, it was "Almost like going through the Ethics Committee" to be interviewed by Tim.

Indeed, political journalism was made better and was made *real* by Tim Russert. He was genuine. His eyes shone with pride at every mention of Big Russ, his father. He was a champion of humble beginnings and of his hometown, Buffalo New York. He was as completely dedicated to his work as he was to his family and to his church and figured out how to be the best of the best in all three. In all facets of his life he sought to benefit others and in that, found satisfaction and peace within himself.

**He walked with Kings but kept a common touch" - David Gregory, NBC News, June 15, 2008**

Among the many characteristics we appreciated in Tim Russert was his humility. When recently approached by a security guard, who addressed him as "Mr. Russert", he warmly interrupted, "Please...it's Tim".

He delved to tell the story that was the truth but coaxed it from the main characters of that story. It was never about him. It was about delivering facts to the American people and he knew that

facts were best presented by the owners, albeit with him as a sideline coach to keep things on track. There was no grandstanding; no self-serving zingers. His fame never got in the way. He guided the American people through troughs of political sludge so that we could form our own conclusions.

Veteran newsman Tom Brokaw quipped, "They say no one would lament having not spent more time at work, but he so loved what he was doing you almost had to pry his fingers from his desk."

As the Washington Bureau Chief for NBC news, Tim was responsible for all political reporting and the journalists who worked there. He achieved that status in just four years. "He was the gold standard of broadcasting... at the top of his profession," Brokaw said.

In a special Today Show tribute to Tim, reporter Andrea Mitchell said, "We always tried our best to please him." This was echoed, to a person, by all of the people interviewed in the aftermath of his sudden death. His stewardship was amazing.

**Imagine working for a boss whose standards you admire and want to emulate! To please him or her because in so doing, greatness is engendered? How many managers can be regarded with such respect and appreciation? Can you name one?**

Doing what's right over giving in to what is easy came naturally to Tim Russert. For most of us this is a challenge, but the more we do it, the better we feel, as do those on the receiving end. Leader or not, there are countless opportunities to improve the manner in which we communicate every day. If there is one legacy Tim personified, and which we should all strive to embrace, this would be it. Define the standards and principles by which you will abide and then do so with passionate consistency and decency.

He met everyone, from those who lead the world, to those to clean it: all were accorded the same affability. We could see it. And for those who scoff at the idea that those with the most influence carry a big stick, think again: "Meet the Press was a clear leader of the Sunday morning talk show ratings, chiefly on the strength of Russert's personality. The show reportedly makes more than \$60 million in revenue for the network and often had a waiting list for advertisers." (Associated Press, June 19, 2008)



He was modest man, but he made a huge impact. He will be sorely missed. Our hearts are as full of sorrow for his beloved family and friends as if he was one of our own inner circle. It is hard to think of him only as dimensional as a TV screen, because he was, to use one of his own expressions, the Real Deal.

It is said that a person who walks in another's tracks leaves no footprints. Tim forged a terrific trail for all of us, so we proudly declare him a hero. He's a perfect fit for the word's definition: "...endowed with great strength or ability"; "a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities"; "Courage, honesty, bravery and selflessness."

Goodbye, Tim. Thank you for your visits every Sunday morning. Rest in peace ...and go get 'em! ♥♥♥

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Edited by Denise Dollard

Chances are, you have seen both confidence and arrogance among some of your co-workers, not to mention in countless public officials. We all know the basic differences when we see them in others, but can lose sight of how it feels to be on the receiving end when we get too full of ourselves. Arrogance includes:

- ✧ An attitude of superiority or disregard for other points of view
- ✧ Having an overbearing manner
- ✧ Haughtiness, high-handedness, condescension, snobbishness

The characteristics of true confidence, that so often bleed into arrogance, are:

- ✧ Security: freedom from anxiety or fear
- ✧ Belief in yourself and your abilities
- ✧ Self-possession: composure arising from control over one's own reactions

To achieve a sense of confidence is the ultimate reward for hard work. Really getting a concept or process, and all that lies beneath it— the reasons for it, the logic of it, the consequences of cutting

corners—is a heady feeling. In our own minds, we are catapulted from the category of "Know Of" to "Know All". This is where the danger lurks. Once having mastered something does not make one the Master of Others. It *does* make one a valued resource, but that value drops as soon as derision is allowed to roost.

The difference seems to boil down to self-esteem. While it would appear that an arrogant person is brimming with an overabundance of knowledge and self-assurance, we think just the opposite—that arrogance is the delivery method chosen by those who have knowledge but who lack confidence. We could be wrong, but among the people we've known who choose to look down their noses or exploit their positions of authority, we see a core lack of comfort within their own skin: like there's a weakness about which they are aware but deny and so they overcompensate with aggression or cockiness. These individu-

als like to fight to be right and don't let go, while those with simple confidence will walk away when reason becomes ineffective.

The humility we so appreciated in Tim Russert is a great example of controlled expertise. He did not need anything other than research and composure to be the best of the best. He did not need to step upon others to rise above them.

We regret that there was recently a person we dealt with whose arrogance caused us to avoid contact when in a meeting with him a few weeks later. Our distaste for his methods and his inflated ego, although not apparent to others in the room, was obvious to him. We should have handled it better, and next time, we will greet him with respect because he is human and fallible, as are we. We are otherwise guilty of being arrogant, and that doesn't feel right.

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## BIG DESK / LITTLE CUBE:

*(a look at the varied perspectives of managers and employees)*

### The Chain of Command

There are great reasons for the pyramid that is the structure of the Chain of Command. The people at the bottom, whose number is greatest, deal with the everyday issues: they dispense routine answers, solutions, service, output, sales, etc. When there is something out of the ordinary, the next level up becomes involved, and so on. As risk exposure or complexity rises, so does the participation of those closer to the apex. It makes good sense for many scenarios.

Insulation of those at the top should not be absolute, however. When the awareness of an executive is limited to only the information that comes from his or her closest in the chain of command, much can be lost from the initial

incident to the eventual report.

All businesses should have guidelines for the escalation of information, both good and bad. With technology being what it is, it doesn't even have to involve the old "Open Door Policy", although we don't agree that the door should be shut and the President and his/her team be hermetically sealed from reality. Perhaps, instead, they should roam among the herd to see first-hand what the sheep are up to and what how the shepherds are tending the flock. To rely exclusively on sanitized reports is, in our minds, malpractice at worst and ignorance at best.

We'd like to see access to the executive level made easier for the rank and file, as it would surely benefit the entire company. While engaged in a project at Nestle, we saw first-hand how this can work. Then-CEO Joe Weller ate lunch in the cafeteria 2-3 times a week, asking permission to join other employees to exchange information and ideas. It was a real honor to find oneself with him and having him ask what works, and what doesn't.

### BIG DESK PEOPLE

You *must* know that more time is spent spinning what you hear than in the time telling you. What a waste. Why are people afraid to tell you straight out what is going on? Are you not approachable? Are your preferences for 'puffed up and perfect' overshadowing actuality? Is what is removed from the information you receive include how people (employees and customers) feel? Shouldn't you know? How would you know whether or not there's a better way?

And another thing. There are leaders in your employ who might suck at being managers. As we have often said, people quit their bosses, not their jobs. Are you willing to let some of your stars slip away because of this? Do you remember the oft-quoted statistic that it costs 1.5 times the annual salary of the exiting person to replace him or her?

People are wary of approaching you. There are consequences to doing so—most notably, the wrath of the people in between. So, they don't. The political backlash kills the benefits of honesty and openness. This must change if you want more productivity, loyalty and revenue.

### Little Cube Inhabitants

Hang in there. We're trying to help you get your realities recognized. Send this article to your execs, but use a blank interoffice envelope, just in case.

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# Light Touches

## Service Extras That Linger Long After the Experience

Being self employed means it makes sense for us to lease our vehicles rather than buy them—it's a tax thing. Anyway, the lease on our Nissan Murano was coming due in May, so we launched a mission in January to find a new vehicle for the best price and performance without skimping on the features we just had to have (like a navigation system and arctic-quality air conditioning with a wind chill factor of -29°). We spent countless hours on various websites and in dealerships dodging overzealous salesmen.

We investigated SUVs, sedans, coupes, V-6's, and even a few 4-banger hybrids. Many auto manufacturers had vehicles that met some of our criteria, but all had at least one deal breaker such as inadequate leg room, high-octane fuel requirements or tinny sound systems.

After 3 months of intensive research, we found ourselves at **Community Honda** in **Whittier**. We had not previously considered adding another Honda to our fleet because

they sit so low to the ground and we're not exactly into the Fred Flintstone feel, but the 2008 Accord EXL, re-styled and revved up, fit the bill.

But it wasn't just the car. The real surprise and delight came in the sales and finance people there at Community Honda. Imagine that!!! **Frank Mercado, Richard Warren and Randi Warner** blew us away with their no-pressure friendliness and efficiency. We picked up the documents on Friday, returned them the following Monday, and 90 minutes later drove off in our sparkling new car.

Talk about an amazing auto-leasing experience: Frank introduced us to the people in the Service Department, who all congratulated us on our new car. Both he and Richard made several follow-up calls to ask how we like it and Randi dropped by the house to get a final signature on yet another form. We thank them for making the transaction truly remarkable! And P.S.—the car is fantastic!  
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### Bright Ideas: Stuff You Probably Didn't Know

Our objections over exaggerated advertising often appear in our newsletters, but more to inform than to complain. Here, in an optimistic twist, we have learned about some really good stuff that is not advertised, although manufacturers might be well-advised to promote because ① it is true, ② it actually works and ③ solves a problem.

In a recent email from dear friend Armida Heckler, we learned of a feature in many food wrap containers that has been around almost as long as we have. Can you relate to the annoyance of pulling the foil or plastic wrap from the container only to have the entire roll emerge? Well, unbeknownst to most, there are perforations in each small end of the boxes. Simply press them in and the roll is held in place. Neat, huh?

If you have a Remote Keyless Entry for your car (a fob with which you lock and unlock the doors or set/disengage the alarm system), and have someone at home with a duplicate fob, you can call him or her on your cell phone. Hold the cell phone about a foot from the car door and have the person at home press the unlock button, holding it near the phone on their end. Your car will be unlocked!

Lastly, there are lots of things WD-40 does for you (its basic ingredient is fish oil). Our faves:

- Removes tomato stains from clothing
- Untangles jewelry chains
- Restores and cleans chalkboards
- Removes stains from "stainless" steel
- Keeps shower doors free of spots
- Removes bug guts from your car
- Keeps flies off cows (does this make beef as healthy as seafood?)
- Removes all traces of duct tape
- Repels pigeons—they hate the smell

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## pArticle Piques Irrksome iotas that cost: Best Buy/Worst Experience

It's a darn shame that people have to take risks to save money. But if you shop at Best Buy, what you save on the front end could surely bite you in the back end.

They aren't alone in charging a 15% restocking fee. Sears and other sellers of electronics have done this too, but Best Buy is the worst, in our opinion. And on special order items, the fee jumps to 25%! This policy, ostensibly to discourage consumers from returning a product after using it (like a big screen TV for the Super Bowl), hurts legitimate buyers, too. Even more maddening is that refunds of the remaining balance, if originally paid by check, cash or debit card, are not immediately given: instead, Best Buy tells clients they will receive a check for the total due within 10 days.

We checked with the Better Business Bureau (BBB), and found that there are no laws against the assessment of restocking fees for "open box" items. According to the BBB, "A store is not legally required to accept items for refund, exchange, or credit unless the merchandise is defective or was misrepresented."

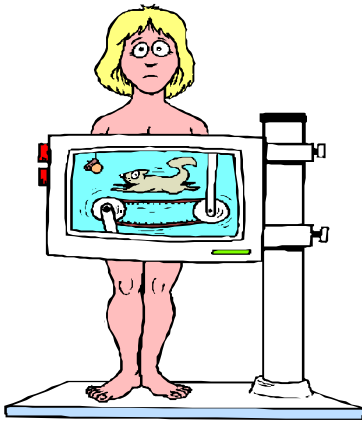
They advise finding out the store's (or website's) return policies BEFORE buying, and we'd all do well to heed this. This includes gift items, by the way, so look out! Best Buy allows only 14 days for some items and a maximum of 30 for others. Some are not returnable at all, even if you'd be willing to take 10 cents on the dollar!

Best Buy stands out as Worst in Class for us, because they will haggle to the death with customers returning even defective merchandise. Some things will be exchanged in kind, like small-ticket items such as CDs, DVDs and software, but if you can't prove that dent in your new washer was made before you took delivery, you're stuck. The definition of defective becomes murky and all of the decisions as to whether it is made by Best Buy and their happy-to-heaven employees.

Online orders can be even more dicey. All of that money you paid for shipping is lost, and in many cases, you may not return online purchases to their stores, so you get to pay the freight back again.

So beware: the Blue-shirted vultures of Best Buy will drain your green until you see red.

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**Swiped Again!**

Thanks to Mom, who shared an article published in the North Valley Community News (February 2008), we learned more about about the credit card fraud scheme called "skimming". The FTC estimates that 60-70% of credit card fraud or skimming occurs in restaurants.

"Skimming is the theft of credit card information used in an otherwise legitimate transaction. It is typically an "inside job" by a dishonest employee of a legitimate merchant, and can be as simple as photocopying of receipts. Common scenarios for skimming are restaurants or bars where the skimmer has possession of the victim's credit card out of their immediate view. The skimmer will typically use a small keypad to unobtrusively transcribe the 3 or 4 digit Card Security Code which is not present on the magnetic strip.

"U.S. federal law can hold the cardholder victim responsible for up to \$50. Merchants in high-risk industries such as unattended automated fuel pumps or Internet sales, anticipate a cer-

**Insider Insights**  
*Thoughts and Information We Felt Like Sharing*

tain amount of credit card fraud, and set prices accordingly. These higher costs are then passed onto the customer. The FBI's Financial Report to the Public for 2007 report losses of \$52.6 billion, affecting 9.91 million Americans.

"In the case of fraud, the merchant and not the credit card company pays the full cost of the fraud plus a chargeback fee or the merchant's chargeback insurance covers it. In addition, credit card companies have to pay for preventing fraud while maintaining a good customer experience.

"Online merchants have the ability to sign up for services offered by Visa and MasterCard i.e. "Verified by Visa" or "MasterCard SecureCode" to prevent being "charged back" for fraud transactions. Merchants often do not take adequate measures to protect their websites from fraud attacks." - *Wikipedia.org*

**Easy Solutions**

There are now products in the offing to thwart this growing threat. Europe and Canada have been using a system called "Pay at the Table (www.PayAtTable.net) that allows restaurant customers to swipe their own credit cards—at the table. The wireless system also allows debit card transactions. National Bankcard Systems offers a Verifone product (www.merchantequip.com) now in use at Ruth's Chris steakhouse in Texas; client feedback has been very positive.

Tell your favorite merchants you want this protection—it will save *them* hassles and money, too!  
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**Beacon Bits**

Quotations to cast rays of humanity across everyday business life

"It is those times when no one else is watching us that our work reflects the true quality of our character"

- *contributed by Florence Menck*

"The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right time, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment"

- *unknown*

"Creative minds always have been known to survive any kind of bad training"

- *Anna Freud*

"Noise proves nothing. Often a hen who has merely laid an egg cackles as if she had laid an asteroid."

- *Mark Twain*

"To lead the people, walk behind them."

- *Lao-tzu*

**Last Laughs:  
Well-Grounded Humor**

The ground crews for UPS planes reportedly have great senses of humor in their responses to the complaints of flight crews. Here are some excerpts of an email received from our friend Susan Garrett:

**Problem:** Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

**Solution:** Almost replaced left inside main tire.

**Problem:** Something loose in cockpit.

**Solution:** Something tightened in cockpit.

**Problem:** Dead bugs on windshield.

**Solution:** Live bugs on backorder.

**Problem:** Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.

**Solution:** Evidence removed.

**Problem:** Target radar hums.

**Solution:** Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

**Problem:** Aircraft handles funny.

**Solution:** Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right and be serious.

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