



Image of the final minutes of the February 2021 landing of Perseverance, Nasa's Mars rover.

Image by [NASA/JPL-Caltech](https://mars.nasa.gov), via <https://mars.nasa.gov>

## SEVEN MINUTES OF TERROR

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***On Excellence***

*March 2021*

February 2021...

*293 million miles away...*

*A journey of 6 months...*

*Travelling at 12,000 miles per hour...*

*Carrying a mini helicopter on its back...*

...*Perseverance*, NASA's Mars Rover went barreling through space to the point of having seven minutes to decelerate to Zero mph, and [stick the landing](#) on the surface of Mars – and it did! This is the *fifth* perfect landing on Mars for NASA. That is five out of five for NASA since 1997.

The seven minutes of “terror” were the seven minutes *Perseverance* entered Mars’ atmosphere; NASA had no radio signals to know if it would burn up, crash or safely land.

If the engineers at NASA had not “stuck the landing” on Mars, they would have burned up \$2.7 billion in seconds!

*What NASA accomplished is a demonstration of what **real excellence** is in organizations:*

People who are:

- *committed to something bigger than themselves*
- *passionate – and in the case of NASA – passionate about space exploration*

They have:

- *a real commitment to integrity (everything being whole and complete and working)*
- *a real commitment to excellence*

A fifth perfect landing on Mars is a demonstration of what leadership in organizations can create and provide.

*NASA is a demonstration of what human beings can accomplish!*

### **What does it take to create excellence in organizations?**

We say excellence in organizations creates:

- a collaborative culture where everyone wins
- people operate with impeccable integrity
- an environment of authentic communication
- each and every person owns and is responsible for the success of the team and the company
- people welcome being held accountable
- people become a demand for excellence from themselves and others

Excellence in an organization is a culture that pulls for people being extraordinary, which provides for long-term sustainable performance.

**Being excellent is an ever-expanding way of being, exceeding expectations at all times and at all levels.**

**A demand for excellence is something that is being generated and created ongoingly. Being excellent is nurturing and produces vitality.**

Nobody needs to be convinced that excellence is rare and missing in business. When you think about companies that perform at a level of real excellence – very few come to mind.

Apple and Steve Jobs, maybe? Apple is unique and distinct. There is only one Apple in the world. Steve Jobs was a ruthless demand for excellence in the area of design – from the product, to the experience of opening the box, to entering the store, to creating a customer experience at the “genius” bar. He was both a demanding leader of his team, and a demanding customer for vendors engaged to produce the first iPhone.

***Excerpt from an article on Jobs in Inc.:***

A senior executive at AT&T retail told me that he received a call from Jobs when Apple was developing the first iPhone with AT&T as its carrier. Jobs wasn't happy with AT&T's in-store customer service. Jobs demanded a commitment to excellent service from the moment a customer set foot through the door -- much like he demanded from the Apple Store experience.

The executive led an overhaul of the in-store experience, *resulting in a string of customer service awards for the brand.*

Your team members don't know what they can accomplish until they've been challenged to elevate their game.

On another occasion, I traveled to California's Central Valley to visit a manufacturing plant that made, among other items, cardboard boxes. The executive guiding me on a tour said Steve Jobs was the company's most demanding customer. Apple boxes had to be elegant to see, easy to open, and a pleasure to feel.

Jobs' attention to detail was unlike anyone's the manufacturing executive had ever seen. But rather than dismiss Jobs as some eccentric leader, this executive said Jobs' commitment to excellence inspired the entire manufacturing team to do more than they ever thought possible.

Many of those who worked for Jobs and for Cook say the leaders drove them to do the best work of their careers. Read more:

<https://www.inc.com/carmine-gallo/apple-ceo-tim-cook-shares-a-leadership-mantra-with-steve-jobs.html>

We assert ***excellence*** isn't a "we'll get to it *someday*", but rather:

*"How do I bring excellence to what I am at work on **right now?**  
How do I raise the bar of excellence with what is in front of me, **right now?**"*

When a company delivers on real excellence, it also sets a new standard for the industry.

Being good or being competent, doing more or trying harder doesn't equal excellence. Excellence equals people who keep moving and extending the boundaries of what they see is possible. Excellence is doing what to others seems difficult or even impossible and doing it the way it is meant to be done, like NASA.