

cover story

# WISE GUYS

BIG IDEA GURUS ARE MOVING OUT OF THE WAY FOR THE MORE MODERN "WISE TEACHER" WHO IS IN TOUCH WITH THE CHANGING MANAGEMENT SCENE. **GODFREY GOLZEN** REPORTS ON THE NAMES TO WATCH AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

"Can the theories of business gurus like Drucker and Peters relate to contract cleaning?" is the title of one of the sites under "business gurus" on the Internet. Now there's a question — but it's one more and more companies are asking as the price of listening to gurus goes ever higher. A world-class guru can command fees of more than \$40,000 for a two-hour, company specific seminar, and admission to open meetings to listen to stellar gurus such as Tom Peters or Michael Porter runs at around \$2,000 per person.

Is it really worth it? Just as the cynical definition of a management consultant is that of a man who borrows your watch to tell you the time and then forgets to return it to you, a guru has been described as someone who turns bull \*\*\*\* into first-class airline tickets. That may be unkind, but there are too many gurus who travel round the world giving much the same expensive spiel to different audiences.

Interviewing one famous guru three years ago, I stole a look at his notes when he was called out of the room. The talk he was giving in London, I discovered, was the same as the one he had delivered in Toronto some days previously. It was full of ideas and superbly delivered, but there were some complaints 20 ▶

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