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## Conversations for No Possibility

“Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You’re crazy.”  
—Drillers whom Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil (1859)

“This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.”  
—Western Union memo (1876)

“What use could the company make of an electrical toy?”  
—Western Union rejecting the rights to the telephone (1878)

“Everything that can be invented has been invented.”  
—Charles H. Duell, Commissioner of the U.S. Patents Office (1899)

“Flight by machines heavier than air is impractical and insignificant, if not utterly impossible.”  
—Simon Newcomb, astronomer (1902)

“Man will never tap the power of the atom.”  
—Robert Milliken, Nobel prize winner in physics (1905)

“Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.”  
—Irving Fisher, Yale University economics professor (1929)

“I think there is a world market for about five computers.”  
—Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of IBM (1943)

“The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives.”  
—Vannevar Bush, presidential advisor (1945)

“Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.”  
—*Popular Mechanics*, forecasting advance of science (1949)

“Space travel is utter bilge.”  
—Dr. R. Wooley, British Astronomer Royal (1958)



“We don’t like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.”

—Decca Recording Company rejecting the Beatles (1962)

“The odds are that the United States will not be able to honour the 1970 manned-lunar-landing date set by Mr. Kennedy.”

—*New Scientist* (April 30, 1964)

“There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home.”

—Ken Olson, President of Digital Equipment Corporation (1977)

“640k ought to be enough for anybody.”

—Bill Gates, Microsoft (1981)

“The concept is interesting and well formed but in order to earn better than a ‘C’, the idea must be feasible.”

—Yale University management professor responding to Fred Smith’s paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

“You want to have consistent and uniform muscle development across all muscles? It can’t be done. It’s just a fact of life. You just have to accept inconsistent muscle development as an unalterable condition of weight training.”

—Response to Arthur Jones, who solved the ‘unsolvable’ problem by inventing Nautilus in the late 1960s

“If I had thought about it, I wouldn’t have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can’t do this.”

—Spencer Silver on the work that led to the invention of the unique adhesive for 3M “Post-it” Notepads (1970)