

# James Butler's Newsletter #16

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

December 2003

*"Another year over, and a new one just begun"*

*John Lennon*

The end of the year is usually a time of reflection, and then a time for dreaming and planning for the following year. As an incurable optimist, I always find this process rewarding and inspiring. In this newsletter I present a checklist of issues you may wish to consider when planning your own goals for next year.

However, we do live in the real world, and unforeseen challenges can arise. This year I have learnt a lot from two close friends who have shown great character and been true to themselves despite a difficult year. They have not been dealt the best of hands, but they have kept playing and smiling (most of the time). That resolute nature is one we can all be inspired by.

So, this Christmas message is all about providing focus for your review and planning over Christmas. I hope it sparks ideas for you, whether you are celebrating success, overcoming challenges or - like most of us - doing a mixture of both.

## *Christmas Message*

You might like to structure your review around the following topics:

*Career* – how have you progressed in the last twelve months? Are you in the right job for you? What do you want to have achieved by next Christmas?

*Health* – have you maintained a sensible health and fitness regime this year? Is your diet and exercise regime what you want it to be? What would you like it to be next year? NB. Are your goals truly yours, or imposed by someone else/society?

*Reading/study* – what have you done to develop intellectually this year? Is there anything you would like to learn next year? A new language or skill? A new qualification or hobby?

*Inspiration* – is there something you've always wanted to do that you achieved this year? (For me it was visiting Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club). What could you plan for next year? It can be big or small, but ticking off a lifetime ambition can be hugely inspirational.

*Stuff/clutter* – have you accumulated or cleared clutter in your life this year? Do you have less or more room to move in the house? Can you get in the garage? Can you set goals to clear a room each month next year?

*Time* – are you happy with the way you spent the half a million minutes you had this year? How will you spend them differently next year? What are your priorities for your time next year? (For tips on managing what's on your plate, see Issue 8 of this newsletter)

*Money* – has your net worth increased this year in line with your plans? Do you know what your net worth is? Or what net worth means? What are your financial goals for next year? (For tips on managing money, see Issue 2 of this newsletter or [www.nicolacairncross.com](http://www.nicolacairncross.com))

**Attitude** – are you happy with how you have reacted to life in the last year? If you could change anything about your own attitude, what would it be? How can you work on making that change? What will be your theme for next year – being positive, being resourceful, being thankful, being something else?

**Seize the Day** – or “Carpe Diem” as the Romans used to say. What could happen for you next year if you seized opportunities that came your way, if you got on with tasks rather than just thought about them?

To give you the opportunity to seize the day immediately, I think I have asked thirty questions above. Answer them now.

## *Painless Business News*

Thank you to those people who have passed on the gift voucher from the last issue, or who used it yourself. Christmas might be a great time to consider how someone might benefit from thirty minutes of coaching – so those men amongst you who have yet to buy their loved one a gift – this is an easy-to-wrap solution!

Thank you also to those who pass my newsletter on. My readership has doubled this year and I am overjoyed by the numbers who read it each month (and that’s just the ones I know about). If you can think of anything that would improve it (hard to imagine I know!), please send me some feedback.

Following the course at my local Adult Education Centre, some of the students have worked with me to set up a group coaching circle meeting at my house every fortnight in the New Year (starting 13 January). This will cost £6 per evening and will last for two hours. We have a few spaces still available, so if you would like to be coached but would prefer group work to one-to-one coaching, please contact me before 9<sup>th</sup> January.

## *Media Watch*



The most talked about (ha ha) coaching article in the last month was of course my article in Better Business magazine – aimed at small business owners throughout the UK.

The article was entitled *Zen and the Art of Business Maintenance* and discussed a key concept within Painless Business – that we can achieve more if we remove some of the friction and pain from running our business.

The Independent on Sunday recently ran an article featuring the Top 10 coaches in the UK. It was obviously poorly researched because they missed me (ha ha again). Seriously, it was another opportunity for the coaching profession to get some publicity and congratulations to the 10 who were listed.

## Book Review

Two coaching colleagues have had books published in the last month, and I would heartily recommend both. The first is *Get a Life* by Arvind Devalia. Arvind was a big help for me when I organised Red Nose Coaches back in March (where we raised £2500 for Comic Relief through coaching). His book provides 25 steps to building a dream life – using building a house as a continuing metaphor through the book. As someone who is having his house extended, I really connected with the theme. Though I will be mentioning to Arvind that he missed out the chapter on the all pervasive nature of brick dust!



The second book I have enjoyed is *52 Ways to Handle It* by Annabel Sutton. Annabel produced this book from some of her newsletters (now there's an idea...) and she has a great talent for making a topic accessible very succinctly.

You can visit Annabel's website, [www.life-designs.co.uk](http://www.life-designs.co.uk) or you can purchase the book through Amazon.

To order Arvind's book, paste this into your internet browser:  
<http://www.nirvanacoaching.com/book.html>

For details of *52 Ways to Handle It* paste this into your internet browser:  
<http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1874581525/wwwjamesbutlo-21>

## Inspiration and Humour

Last Christmas I was lucky enough to be in South Africa with my wife and mother, enjoying the fantastic wildlife and the best hotel in the world – Rissington Inn, Hazyview. The bar at Rissington has lots of wooden puzzles, so the following joke has happy associations for me!

*There were three foreign tourists at a bar celebrating that they put a puzzle together. The bartender says, 'How long did it take?'*

*The players said, 'it took us 64 days.' He said, 'that must be some kind of record.'*

*They said, 'It must be. On the side of the box it said 2 to 3 years.'*

And my favourite joke of the month is:

*Two parrots are sat on a perch. One says to the other, 'can you smell fish?'*

Think about it! And finally a couple of quotes:

*"Great things are only possible with outrageous requests."* Thea Alexander  
(Perhaps worth thinking about on the centenary of the day two bicycle shop owners (the Wright brothers) became the first to achieve powered flight).

*"Why not seize the pleasure at once? How often is happiness destroyed by preparation, foolish preparation?"* Jane Austen

So, whilst I have encouraged you to review last year and plan next year, remember the last tip is *Carpe Diem!*

## *Final Words*

As a very satisfying year for me draws to a close, I would like to thank all of you for your support - whether in terms of being clients, providing advice or by passing on my newsletter.

I have ambitious plans for next year and I look forward to sharing the journey with you all. Who knows, by next Christmas I may have found a sense of humour and published my first book - The Philosophy of Abba.

Warmest wishes for the Christmas period and I hope your dreams come true in 2004.

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