

James Butler's Newsletter #7 March 03

Are you enjoying this fantastic spring weather as much as I am? What an amazing time of year - our gardens are showing early flowers and there is colour at long last after so many months of winter dreariness. (Apologies to subscribers in the northern US, who may still be shovelling snow, and those in Dubai, who get to endure glorious sunshine all year round). What can we learn from nature's annual rejuvenation?

In this month's newsletter:

- Spring clean your life - learn from nature the ways to new energy and growth
- Red Nose Coaching Update - still chance to try coaching and help a worthwhile cause
- Media mentions
- Inspiration and humour

Putting a spring in your step

As I sit and type this newsletter, looking out of my office window across rural Oxfordshire there is evidence everywhere that the plants and animals are gearing up for warmer weather, and this seems a beautiful metaphor for how we can breathe new life into our own lives:

- *Get rid of the old* - think how many plants discard leaves or stems over the winter to allow for new growth in the spring. Could we benefit from doing the same? When did you last sweep through your own clutter - physical clutter on your desk, in your wardrobe, around the home; and the mental clutter in your head of unresolved arguments, fears or regrets? Create space for new growth by clearing out the dead wood!
- *Get energy from the core* - the most beautiful flowers in my garden right now are the daffodils. Think how they are ready to grow at this colder time of year. They retreat back inside themselves, to their inner core, and then sprout up from there when the time is right. When was the last time we looked inside ourselves for the inspiration to undertake new challenges or change something in life? Many inspirational people have done just that - Nelson Mandela, Anwar Sadat, Mahatma Ghandi. Adversity forced them to look inside themselves - but surely we can access that ourselves without adversity?
- *Focus on your strengths* - the grape hyacinths in my garden will never be as tall as the pear tree, but they multiply every year and always look beautiful. Do they feel in awe of the tree, or inadequate because they are not a tree? I don't know, because they wouldn't answer when I asked them. I must get Prince Charles down to have a word... Sorry, I digress. My point is that some of us are pear trees and some of us are hyacinths. How does

it serve us to compare ourselves with others - far better to set our own standards and meet those, surely?

- *Turn and face the sun* - how many of us lead such busy lives we dash to work, bury our head in our desks, dash home again and never get to marvel at what is around us (bit hard if you live in cold, damp Moss Side I know, but stick with me, OK)? By taking time out to enjoy what's around us we create an opportunity to release some stress, remember what's important to us in life (will Reading get promotion this year?) and step off that hamster wheel for a moment. Whether that time and space is in your lunch hour or the weekend, treat yourself to some quiet reflection in the spring sunshine. (For the benefit of my wife, it is not necessary to be in the Cayman Islands to do this, in case you were wondering).
- *See the benefit of manure* - ever wondered how a plant feels when we dump chicken manure all over it for the winter? Well, obviously plants don't have feelings, but their natural reaction is to harness the benefit of the nutrients and minerals in the manure. So next time someone shovels chicken manure on your head, look on the bright side..... Seriously, we have to accept that life is such that we don't always get the outcomes we planned for. It is how we react to the metaphorical (or literal) chicken manure that defines how we view our lives. I'm not saying be happy-clappy and unrealistic, but choosing to see learning opportunities or growth potential in unwanted situations is in your power - you may have limited control on life's events, but you have ultimate control over how it affects you.

Further developments of this metaphor will be seen in my Garden makeover/life coaching/celebrity manure slinging TV show coming to a minority cable channel to you some time in the future. Possibly.

Can you see where I'm coming from? (Nod attentively). Can you see how these simple ideas could make a difference in your own life? (Nod defensively). Good, so you will be happy to complete this exercise (Run for the hills):

- 1) What one area of your life could you de-clutter in the next ten days - your desk, a room, your car, the 412 unresolved relationships you have dating from 1982?
- 2) When, specifically, are you going to schedule time to do it?
- 3) Schedule time in your diary now to have a nice lunch in a local park or spend time in your own garden, and reflect on your own strengths, look inside yourself for inspiration and enjoy the natural world around you. I accept no responsibility if it pours with rain. Rain can be beautiful too.
- 4) Sprinkle yourself with manure and watch your hair grow. OK, now I am kidding. Next time the proverbial hits the fan, step back and reflect on what this tells you for the future. If you wish, you can wait until after you have throttled the lout who has dented your car, sacked the member of staff who made a minor mistake, or stomped

off to sulk in the shed because your wife has dropped your favourite Boney M mug.

Red Nose Coaching Update

You may recall a message I sent out a few weeks ago inviting you to try coaching for a 30 minute session and asking you to donate a 'fee' to Comic Relief's Red Nose Day 2003. Well, I am pleased to say that as a result of that advert I was contacted by a number of other coaches and the event snowballed into a global effort to raise money (we had coaches in Spain, America and Canada, as well as the UK). Someone created a website (www.rednosecoaches.com) and we have raised a huge sum of money for Comic Relief. Figures are still coming in, but it is a thousand pounds, at least.

The site is still open, so if you meant to give coaching a try have a look at the site and book a session. This will be possible for at least the rest of the week (after that just call me and we can arrange it direct). And the site is worth looking at anyway, as there is a great picture of me in my favourite Saturday night outfit!!!

Media Mentions

Its been a busy month - articles on coaching have appeared in the Independent, the Telegraph, the Evening Standard and Good Health magazine. Several of the Red Nose Coaches got localised media coverage too. GMTV also did a slot on coaching a week or so ago (so I am told - I am, of course, far too busy to watch daytime TV....)

By far the most important and groundbreaking article on a coaching theme this month is of course written by my own fair hand. Yes, the readers of *Wastes Management* (THE print publication for the waste industry I'll have you know) will this month benefit from searing insights into time management. Signed copies can be made available.....

Snappy Title and Frequency of Publication

I feel the time has come for me to give this newsletter a bit more identity (though at least Cuprinol would like "James Butler's Newsletter" - it does what it says on the tin). I am therefore inviting you all to suggest titles for this much valued and esteemed publication. And please, no-one suggest "Load of manure", because I am easily offended. The lucky winner who suggests the title I finally use will receive the offer of one month's free coaching in return.

I have also been considering producing the newsletter fortnightly and making it shorter each time. I would be delighted to receive your views on that change as well. Would that be too much mail for some people, or would it be better to have exercises and bad jokes more regularly? Please let me know.

Inspirational Quote

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.

And which modern management guru said this? What self-help book did I get this from? Actually, these words are attributed to Aristotle!

Inspirational Quote #2

I think men who have pierced ears are better prepared for marriage. They have experienced pain and bought jewellery. Rita Rudner

And finally the Top Ten Things You'll Never Hear from a Consultant

- 1) You're right; we're charging way too much for this.
- 2) Bet you I can go a week without saying "synergy" or "value-added".
- 3) How about paying us based on the success of the project?
- 4) This whole strategy is based on a Harvard business case I read.
- 5) Actually, the only difference is that we charge more than they do.
- 6) I don't know enough to speak intelligently about that.
- 7) Implementation? I only care about writing long reports.
- 8) I can't take the credit. It was Ed in your marketing department.
- 9) The problem is, you have too much work for too few people.
- 10) Everything looks okay to me. You really don't need me.

Enjoy Spring!

Warmest Regards

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