

James Butler's Newsletter #29

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

January 2005

Welcome to a New Year. I hope you enjoyed the festive season and have had a good start to 2005. A lot has happened since the last newsletter – I had a month-long trip overseas and of course the world was rocked by the disaster in the Indian Ocean. Given the enormity of the tsunami, it is an obvious spur for reflection in this issue, but first I want to share some thoughts on my trip in December.



When cigars are good for you

About five years ago, when I was undertaking a thorough review of my life and what I wanted from it, I set a range of goals in a variety of areas. A long held ambition had been to see big cats in the wild – especially tigers (travel is a real passion of mine!). I was lucky enough to see lions and leopards in South Africa before I was 30, but I knew that the endangered status and shy nature of tigers was going to make that a lot harder.

Well, on the 18th December, I saw my first tiger in Kanha National Park, India. I'm sharing that news here partly because I am very excited (!) and partly because I think there is a lesson within the tale. Since I have got back and told people about my trip, many have said "I've always wanted to visit India" or "It's my dream to see the Grand Canyon". What I would love for those people, and for you with your dream, is to have the sense of accomplishment I had on 18th December. So, how did I get there?

The best way to explain it is to use the coaching model CIGAR – a model created by my colleague Carole Gaskell:

Context:- The context was that I was in my late twenties and held an ambition to see big cats (they're just such beautiful animals!!) in the wild. Tigers were hard to see, endangered and may not be around too much longer. Further context was that Bev and I have a passion for travel, but that going to India was likely to be all of our annual travel budget (in terms of money and time off).

Ideal:- The ideal would be me seeing a tiger. Having researched this, I knew that it was entirely possible to spend a week looking and not see one (boy, I would have sulked!!). This meant I needed to give myself plenty of time in the parks, and be mentally prepared to fail in my quest.

Gaps:- Well, there were a few of these – where should I start?

- The cost
- The time involved
- I had no idea of how to get to see them (package tours rarely deliver a sighting)
- One camp we found involved staying in a tent (Bev does NOT do camping)
- The scarcity of tigers
- The notorious coyness of tigers
- They're stripy and live in a jungle – millennia of evolution conspiring against me
- Travelling in India is "an adventure" – translates as "very uncomfortable!"

I managed to arrange these into those over which I had some control – the first 4, and the rest. Now I knew I needed to work on the first 4 as hard as possible to overcome the last 4.

Action:- This is where I explored all the action needed to get me in front of a tiger. We had to research the holiday (delegated that to Bev), earn the money (delegated a lot of that to Bev too!!), arrange the time off, book the trip, sweet talk Bev into the tent bit (that is going to cost me for about a decade) and then endure the travelling bit to get there. What made my dream come true was taking it from a dream and taking the steps to make it happen. They involved planning and sacrifice, but the steps in themselves were all manageable.

Result/Review:- Well, I saw more than 10 tigers – more than I could have dreamed of - and this is part of the review. I can reflect on what process got me to that Park in December and apply that to my remaining life goals – maybe I will share those in a future newsletter! An important part of that review process, I believe, is to thank those who helped on the way – so a special thanks to Bev for all she contributed, to my mother who sponsored a tiger in my name to ensure they are still around for the future, and to B who provided an enjoyable stop on the way to India!

So, what is your long-held dream? How can you use the CIGAR model to make it come true? I would love to hear your stories on what it is you want, and what you are doing to make it come true. I truly would love you to have the same feeling I had over Christmas! Of course, if you would like professional support in making it come true - book a coaching session.

Keep things in perspective

The tsunami in the Indian Ocean has affected many people. Of course, those directly affected have faced tragedy and devastation, but many people in the UK and elsewhere have been touched by the news pictures of despair and suffering. Many have been inspired to donate funds or send relief supplies to areas in need – all of which is fantastic.

As the weeks pass, what positive things can we take from this awful occurrence? How can we ensure these events are not forgotten? I believe we can look for lessons in our own lives, and improve the way we live, as a continuing testament to those no longer here. We will all draw different things from what we have seen, but here are my thoughts.

The first thing that struck me when hearing of the tragedy is how trivial some of the things I was stressed about really were. Seeing something like this puts so much else into perspective – from daily moans and whinges to longer term struggles that are really not worth losing sleep over. This was reinforced for me by seeing the poverty of many people in India – it does make one reassess one's own materialism and priorities. Possessions and status suddenly seem meaningless, whilst relationships, friends and loved ones come to the fore. What is really important to each one of us, and do we reflect that by what we do on a daily basis?

Another train of thought (remember, I was on holiday with lots of time to think) was how would I live differently if I lived for now? If all that you love can be snatched away in an instant, what should we prioritise. For me, it strengthened my resolve to make time for Bev and my family, to never leave a conversation with bad feeling, to seek joy in all I do and to relish my present as well as planning my future. I never want to hear myself say "I wish I had just done XYZ".

The public response has been very cheering, though I feel it reflects more on the power of the media than anything else. The death toll from the tsunami is less than three weeks of deaths from AIDS in Africa, yet that rarely makes the headlines. Whilst it is superb that people are reaching out and supporting others around the Indian Ocean, we must remember that poverty, disease and misfortune hasn't lessened in other areas of need (which is why Coaching4Hope will continue to support African causes in 2005).

My hope is that the 150,000 or so people who died, and all those who survived and face destitution, will not have been through this only to be forgotten. We can all use this to change the way we view the world and the way we act. The changes can be in our own lives, or in pressure on politicians to relieve the Third World debt burden, but we can all make something positive from this awful tragedy.

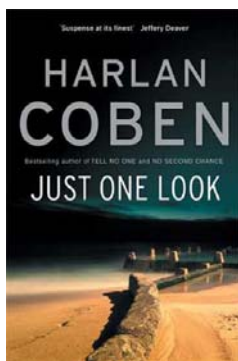
At this point I would like to thank all those people who thought of us, knowing we were in India when the tsunami struck. We were lucky enough to be in the jungle, well away from affected areas – in fact we didn't know it had happened for two days. If you would like to directly support a charity project in one of the affected areas, please visit www.nirvanatrust.com. This project is in Pondicherry, India and is run by a friend, Arvind Devalia. 100% of the money you donate will go to the work being done there after the tsunami.

Painless Business News

The next Painless Business Workshop is coming up on February 23rd. This time we will be considering how to [Build a Dream Team With One](#) – always a challenge for those in small business. We will be looking at the various roles business owners could fulfil, and the best way of structuring the business to get the jobs done. Expect the usual blend of hard work, good humour and lively discussion. As usual, we will be at the Shillingford Bridge Hotel from 5pm to 7pm. Please book early to avoid disappointment!

Before Christmas you will have received a copy of my other newsletter for a spin-off from Painless Business – Painless Practice. This is aimed at osteopaths who want their practice to be more successful, and dare I say Painless! Following a lot of research in 2004 I am now offering programmes to osteopaths on growing their practice, improving customer care and achieving what they want from their work. If you know an osteopath who may be interested, please direct them to www.painlesspractice.com and recommend they sign up for the newsletter (you know how much fun they are to read!).

Book Review



Being on holiday meant the usual crime thrillers and Dan Brown – so not much too intellectual there. One book does deserve a mention – Just One Look by Harlan Coben. Coben is a great thriller writer and this tale has some great plot twists, but by far the best thing about the book is the setting – Ho-Ho-Kus New Jersey.

This New York suburb is the centre of the universe and home to some good friends – who will now be on the tourist trail! Previously you had to stoop to the Andrews Sisters to get a cultural reference to Ho-Ho-Kus.

A very informative book, especially if you are interested in stories behind humanitarian crisis (in this case the Sudan) is Emma's War by Deborah Scroggins. This is an excellent account of an aid worker who marries one of the Sudanese rebel fighters, which highlights a range of issues surrounding the politics of development, corporate involvement in warfare, Western attitudes to Africa and a good old-fashioned love story.

Painless Puns

The following inspiring thoughts have landed in my Inbox this month. Perhaps they will interest you:

Nothing will content him who is not content with a little.

Greek Proverb

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Mark Twain

Many people liked the mother-in-law joke last month (though she hasn't spoken to me since!), but I thought it was time for a change. So here is a holiday-related joke:

Jim and Bob were talking one afternoon when Bob tells Jim, "I reckon I'm about ready for a holiday. Only this year I'm going to do it a little different. The last few years, I took your suggestions as to where to go.

Three years ago you said to go to Ibiza. I went to Ibiza and Marie got pregnant. Then two years ago, you told me to go to the Caribbean, and Marie got pregnant again. Last year you suggested Portugal and, would you believe it, Marie got pregnant again."

Jim asks Bob, "So, what are you going to do this year that's different?"

Bob says, "This year I'm taking Marie with me."

Remember 14 pounds in a stone and 20 shillings in a pound? How about:

2000 mockingbirds = two kilomockingbirds

10 cards = 1 decacards

2 wharves = 1 paradox

Final Words



In case you were thinking Bev was hard done by, shivering in a tent on Christmas Day, I'd like to redress the balance by explaining her dream was to see this beautiful building – the Taj Mahal (that's her photo!). And for her to do that I had to suffer the indignity of a five star hotel with a pool and a view of the Taj Mahal. You see, I make sacrifices too.

I wish you every success in achieving your own dreams and all I ask is you keep me posted on your progress.

Warmest regards

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