

# James Butler's Newsletter #37

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

September 2005

Ever heard the saying 'Smile and the world smiles back at you'? I believe there is a lot of truth in that, and a smile is something I try to bring to my life every day. Sometimes that is tested, but I'm pretty sure I end up ahead!

Sometimes we take life too seriously, and it is good to step back occasionally and just have some fun. This month, I am using this newsletter to do that – by considering a topic that I will be speaking on at a forthcoming event – What Business Can Learn From Abba's Hits.



## *Thank You For The Music*

Two years ago I drew on Abba lyrics for the newsletter – and this drew such a great reaction I thought I would revisit the idea – but this time I shall cover the seventies pop titans from a business viewpoint.

Whilst a couple of pages would never be enough to relay the full magnitude of wisdom contained in Abba's back catalogue, hopefully these few ideas will get you thinking! Please note, foot tapping is optional, and humming along is best conducted in private.

*I believe in angels  
When I know the time is right for me  
I'll cross the stream – I have a dream*

So often I see that a key component of success in a business is for the leader has a dream, or a vision, that they want to make happen. That vision is unique and different for everyone and what it is can be less important than the fact it exists.

The wisdom in the lyrics quoted above is the acceptance that the right time might not yet be here – so if you have a vision or dream, and you're not yet making it happen, don't despair. The right time to make it happen could be just around the corner.

The key is to clearly formulate the vision, and then work on the strategies for making it happen – whenever the time is right. **What's your dream?**

*If you change your mind, I'm the first in line  
Honey I'm still free  
Take a chance on me  
..  
Gonna do my very best, baby can't you see  
Gotta put me to the test, take a chance on me  
(Take a chance, take a chance, take a chance on me)*

Success in business comes from taking calculated risks. Unless you do take a chance every now and again, your chances for growth will be limited. However, a good businessman or woman will do their best to improve the odds – through research, through testing and through careful analysis. **What could you achieve if you took a chance?**

Another lesson from these particular lyrics, is always be free for someone to take a chance on you. Even when a customer says no, part on good terms – you never know when they might come back. This is certainly something I have learnt over the years – a 'no' is rarely a 'not ever' (except in the case of my rejection by the lovely Susan when I was 15, but let's not go there). **Are you the first in line if someone changes their mind?**

## *I Feel Like I Win When I Lose*

*I work all night, I work all day, to pay the bills I have to pay  
Ain't it sad  
And still there never seems to be a single penny left for me  
That's too bad  
In my dreams I have a plan*

In business there is no getting away from the fact that money is the lifeblood of the enterprise – and you need to be monitoring that pulse regularly. More businesses go bust through poor cashflow than through poor profitability. If you hate numbers, or had a bad maths teacher at school, like me, find ways to deal with that – get someone in to do your books, or get some tuition to overcome your blocks.

And the best way to avoid having to work all night and all day to pay the bills (whether in business or in a job) is to manage costs. Keep an eye on your spending, review large items to identify savings, and budget over a 12 month period to prevent too many surprises. **Do you have a plan for your money, money, money?**

*Breaking up is never easy, I know but I have to go  
(I have to go this time  
I have to go, this time I know)  
Knowing me, knowing you  
It's the best I can do*

It is a myth that any customer is a good customer. Very often we need to decide whether a prospect, or an existing client, is someone we want to do business with. Their values may not reflect ours, their attitude to payment may be outside our limits, they may be constantly trying to reduce margins or they may just be too much hassle for the money.

It is a similar situation with staff. Whenever we appoint new people we are full of optimism, with a tinge of dread that it won't work. One of the most common failings in management is not getting rid of underperforming staff soon enough. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, fired the worst performing 10% of managers each year, and yet he still says that his biggest regret was hanging onto people too long. By all means set targets for people to improve, and be nice to them when they leave, but don't let deadwood weigh your business down.

Whether customers or staff, letting them go is never easy, but it could be the best thing you could do. **Who has to go from your business?**

Well, there you have four ideas on improving business, all inspired by an enjoyable listen to the Abba Gold CD! If you would like to hear a few more, please join me at the Tuesday Business Club on 11 October where I will be expanding on these ideas and a few more. I hope to demonstrate that a smile on the face and some regular reflection should be an important part of managing a business.

The Tuesday Business Club is a new networking group in the Wallingford area (South Oxfordshire), which meets monthly and offers informal networking along with thought-provoking and fun presentations. We meet at the Springs Hotel – a location with it's own pop trivia, having been owned by rock god Ian Gillan of Deep Purple in the past and so still boasting a guitar-shaped pool! The club's website is [www.tuesdaybusinessclub.co.uk](http://www.tuesdaybusinessclub.co.uk) and you can read about the history of the hotel at [www.thespringshotel.com](http://www.thespringshotel.com).

## Painless Business News

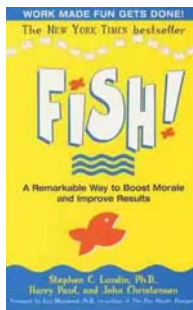
This issue of the newsletter is later in the month than usual – and this is because I was waiting to be able to make the following announcement – I am now a published author! Yes, my Business Development Handbook – aimed exclusively at osteopaths – has finally come back from the publishers. The book is being distributed in partnership with the British Osteopathic Association, so it is not publicly available at present – anyone who wants a copy will need to wait until 2006!

Having appeared in Cosmopolitan in the past, I have now been interviewed by the BBC and can be seen offering advice on a range of personal development topics on their website (visit [www.painlessbusiness.com](http://www.painlessbusiness.com) and follow the link from there).

As well as the Abba talk on 11 October, I will also be speaking at the Late Breakfast, a networking group near Abingdon. There we will be considering “Painless Customer Service in Three Easy Steps” – the usual mix of what I hope are business insights and a sprinkling of humour! See details of the group at [www.otcn.co.uk/late\\_breakfast.htm](http://www.otcn.co.uk/late_breakfast.htm).

**Marathon News** – it is just three weeks until the marathon as I write this. Bev and I have done our last long training run – around Rutland Water this weekend. How weird to consider 16 miles a ‘short’ run! Thanks so much to all those who have visited [www.bmycharity.com/chokomarathon](http://www.bmycharity.com/chokomarathon) and sponsored me. The money raised is going to support a community in South Africa that we have links with – giving orphans and other disadvantaged people a helping hand to help themselves. We need to raise a few more hundred pounds to hit our target – so any further support would be greatly appreciated! By the next newsletter, I should be a marathon runner!

## Book Review



Whilst I was tempted to recommend my own book (!!), the fact it is not publicly available, and some modesty, prevents me from doing so. Instead, I shall recommend this book suggested by my VA Carol of DBS. Fish! is a great, fun, readable book on how to motivate teams and deliver top customer service.

One of the four key messages is to play – and that is something that underpins Painless Business. If you and your team could play more at your work, what impact would that have on your business?

## Painless Puns

I have the following inspiring thoughts for you this month:

*It's good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure that you haven't lost the things that money can't buy.*

George H. Lorimer (thanks to Dick Denney for sending this in!)

*It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, but only thirteen to smile – be lazy more often.*

Anonymous

*He got the better of himself, and that's the best kind of victory one can wish for.*

Miguel de Cervantes

*What would life be? Without a song or a dance what are we? So I say thank you for the music.*  
Abba

After last month's fishy songs, and this month's book recommendation, here are a couple of fishy puns:

*A man walks into a fishmongers with a salmon under his arm and asks "Do you make fishcakes?" "Of course" replies the fishmonger. "Good," says the man "It's his birthday".*

*Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says, "Dam!"*

Congratulations to Chris Goslar for being the first to respond last month and give the answer that the marathon was extended to by 385 yards in order that the 1908 Olympic marathon could finish in front of the Royal Box. I shall be cursing the royals for each of the last 385 yards on October 16<sup>th</sup>, as well as wondering why they didn't just move the start!

### *Final Words*

I hope you have enjoyed this newsletter, especially the 50 or so new subscribers this month. I would love to see you at the speaking engagements I have in October, otherwise watch out for next month's newsletter – as well as recounting my marathon experience, we may have a medical theme. How could that relate to business?

Warmest regards

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