

James Butler's Newsletter #41

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

January 2006

In the words of John Lennon, another year over, a new one just begun. Whilst the British weather has done its best to dampen spirits, 2006 seems to have started well in the Painless office and I hope the same is true for you.

Welcome to all our new clients and subscribers and thanks to all those who forward on this newsletter to friends and colleagues. You can never do that too much, so please consider who may be interested in this month's issue. Thank you also to all those who sent lovely comments after last month's topic of legacy. It is nice to hear how these newsletters affect people!

After a lovely holiday to reflect on a busy year (though the New Year revelries did undermine my intention to recuperate as well as reflect), I have come back to some great sessions with clients, reviewing their plans for this year. From those conversations two themes have emerged for this newsletter – the first is the importance of perspective, the second is the ripple effect of our actions.

Somewhere Over The Rainbow

*Somewhere over the rainbow
Skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.*

Believe it or not, about twenty years ago I sang this song in a regional theatre production of Wizard of Oz. The highpoint of my thespian career, and the lowpoint for the musical history of this particular song! The reason I quote it here is that it illustrates beautifully how a different perspective changes what we see in our world.

Several clients this month have felt trapped or threatened by various circumstances, and have been struggling to see a way forward. Through our work together, they have come to understand that another perspective exists, that is less intimidating and that allows progress to be made. So how can anyone find that other perspective?

The first stage is to fully understand your current perspective. This means stepping back from the hurly-burly of life and giving yourself space to think it through (which of course a coaching session is ideal for!).

Articulating the situation to someone else (dare I say "such as a coach"?!) then allows you to more fully understand your situation, and to identify the key facts, issues and beliefs. Telling someone who is not involved and is impartial helps you to be fully truthful and stops them telling you what to do. As you identify the facts and beliefs, try to distinguish between the two. Some will be indisputable – they are facts – and some will be what is in your head (they are beliefs).

You can't change historical fact (unless you are administering a government cover-up), so the next step is to see whether any of the current facts can be changed in your favour – sometimes they can. After that, have a look at the beliefs you hold (such as "mortgages are always a liability", "all advertising is a rip off" or "newspaper features never get your phone ringing") and see whether they are helping you or hindering you.

For those that are hindering you, consider what it would be like if the reverse of your belief were true. This is your place over the rainbow, where the sky is blue. Have another look at your current challenge from that perspective – does it help?

This exercise is difficult to do on your own, because sometimes we need help challenging our beliefs and shifting ourselves over the rainbow. Working with a coach is perfect for achieving this – and this is not intended as an advert, honest – so if you are struggling to get perspective on an issue, I would recommend working with your coach to gain it.

Make Ripples Before You Make Waves

Another theme I have noticed in recent weeks is that from seemingly small actions, consequences can extend like ripples on a pond. I have been involved in a project for about twelve months that started out with relatively modest aspirations, but as it has progressed it has had a number of knock-on effects which have taken it from involving a few dozen people (at most) to having global potential that will reach thousands.

I do believe that in this particular case it is because it is an idea that is 'meant to be' and to an extent it has been like pushing an open door, but I have seen enough similar cases to know that we have almost no way of knowing what ripples we create when we drop pebbles in a pond (metaphorically – throwing pebbles into ponds is bad for fish and thus my karma).

Only recently, I was leading a training course on business development and a number of delegates were asking what my secret, guaranteed-success tips were for marketing their business. Initially I wanted to say "There is no such thing", but instead found myself saying "Just do something".

What do I mean? Well, there are a few marketing options I have never heard good words about, but generally any option will have some good. The key thing is to be taking some action – regularly. That action is the pebble in the pond – and the ripples can bring unforeseen (hopefully positive) results from unpredictable quarters at some point in the future.

Don't get me wrong, I would still advocate a carefully researched and resourced marketing plan or campaign (and I can recommend Tangram Ltd if you are looking to do that). But I see too many clients paralysed into inaction because such a task seems too much. Far better to sit quietly on your own and just wait for the phone to ring – much less scary!

With so many low or zero cost options for marketing or promoting your business, why not start with those whilst you research your marketing campaign. Who knows what ripples it might create?

Painless Business News

The next group of people to experience the thrill of a Painless Business Workshop will be a number of people running rural enterprises in the East Oxfordshire/West Bucks area later this month. We will be exploring what they want from their business and how to make more money without selling more (always a good thing!). If you know anyone who runs a business like that in that part of the world, please let me know. It is an event run by Business Link, but I am sure I can engineer an invite!

I am delighted to say one of my clients, James Lamper, has just launched a great new business called Weight Matters. This company builds on James' expertise in psychology, coaching and personal training to offer a complete package to people wanting to manage their weight. He offers educational seminars and then support programmes to really help with motivation and fully adopting a more healthy lifestyle. He has a number of seminars coming up from the end of January, so have a look at www.weightmatters.co.uk if you want to better manage your weight. If you know someone else who may be interested, please forward the link (but do it gently and with compassion!).

Book Review

No business books this month, because I have been focussed on chilling out by a South African pool (www.rissington.co.za for a picture). I did read a John Grisham novel (The Broker), however, which was not only an excellent read but also got me thinking.

The plot involves someone pardoned and released from prison and then given a new identity in a foreign country by the US intelligence community to protect them. It was fascinating to read how quickly someone can learn a new persona and lose their old one when their life (literally) depends on it.

So how easily could we learn a new persona? I don't mean change your name and start a new life in Nicaragua, but I do mean let go of things from our past which no longer need to define who we are. Truly a case of New Year, new you!

Painless Puns

As usual, a few thoughts that have inspired me this month:

The optimist is wrong as often as the pessimist. But he has a lot more fun. Unknown

Actually, I think the optimist is right more often, but I guess that makes me an optimist! And I love this two-thousand-year-old marketing secret:

The drops of rain make a hole in the stone not by violence but by oft falling. Lucretius

One of the books in my "to read" pile is *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss – a book about punctuation. With that in mind, I offer the following two statements which contain the same words but have very different meanings:

For the men: *A woman, without her man, is nothing.*
For the women: *A woman: without her, man is nothing.*

Final Words

I hope this issue helps you gain perspective on any of your challenges, and I look forward to hearing what ripples you have been creating!

Warmest regards

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