

James Butler's Newsletter #60

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

August 2007

Sometimes a range of incidents come together to inspire my newsletter topic, and that is certainly the case this month. My aim is to provide you with ideas that you can apply to life and business which will make it painless, not painful. I also like to keep you interested and amused along the way!

I recently watched the film *Glengarry Glen Ross*, featuring Al Pacino, Kevin Spacey, Ed Harris and Jack Lemmon. While much of the language is not what I would repeat in front of my mother (except in the infamous Alamo Car Rental Incident of September 2006), it is well worth watching – especially if you have any interest in sales techniques. The salesmen have a motto centred around ABC (I'll explain in a moment), and that will be my theme this month. Readers who recall the early 1980s may wish to hum "Shoot that poison arrow", but sadly we won't be using floppy-haired New Romantics as inspiration.

Always Be Closing

The sales team managed by Kevin Spacey were given the motto Always Be Closing, supposedly to inspire them. They used an amazing array of underhand tactics to close the sale, which I don't recommend, but the concept got me thinking how it might apply to my readers.

As I do my job I regularly encounter many people who shy away from closing the sale. They may get people interested in the therapy or service they offer, but never quite ask for the business. Or they may end a conversation with "Call me in six months if you think it might be useful" – which generally produces a different outcome to "Let's put a date in the diary for six months time". My clients will notice that I end sessions by asking when should we speak again – and we book a time. I'm not manipulating them, but experience shows that if you leave people to call when they remember, they don't. As I believe what I do has a value, I want people to use it. And no-one has ever complained or said I'm pushy (yet). **Next time you feel a conversation is heading to a sale, go the distance and close it!**

Closing the deal isn't about undue pressure, locking the doors to prevent escape or annoying persistence. It is about creating the environment where people can say yes. Consumers have so many questions in their head as they evaluate a purchase. So when we are selling (a product service or an idea) we need to learn what questions people have, answer them, and thus remove barriers to them saying yes. Whether you are trying to get another appointment booked, selling a multi-thousand proposal to a client, or asking the boss for a pay rise, the process is the same. **How can you answer the questions your 'customer' has?**

Closing isn't just about sales. It can apply to closing projects, ie completing them. In the last week I have worked with two individuals. One has gone on holiday, leaving about 20 projects up in the air, without clear handovers to colleagues and an ensuing mess. Many things have been started, but seemingly nothing completed. Before their holiday, this meant they needed much more mental bandwidth to keep the plates spinning, and now they have gone their colleagues are stuck catching the ones that are dropping.

On the other hand, a good friend is the perfect example of the type of closer you want on your team. She is a key part of the charity project I support (www.choko.org.uk) – and she is just superb at making things happen. She closes stuff. It is such a pleasure to collaborate with someone who has a can-do attitude and gets stuff done. It's almost painless! **How can you close and complete more of your projects or tasks?**

It's as easy as ABC

That's how easy love can be! Who thought I would smuggle in a Jackson 5 lyric?!

What is it about ABC that makes it easy, I wonder? The thing is that from an early age, we learn that B follows A and C follows B. Not sometimes, not when it feels like it, but all the time. So when we get to B, we know C is coming. It is routine, a habit.

In life we have similar routines or habits that are burned into our sub-conscious. Ever tried getting dressed and putting your shoes on AFTER you have left the house? Let me warn you, in most parts of the world it results in a visit to the local constabulary (not that I've tried it!). Ever tried putting shampoo on your hair before you wet it? Even with my minimal (and disappearing) hair, it's pretty hard work. Somehow we can just follow these patterns on auto pilot.

So, wouldn't it be great if tasks within our business could be followed with a similar lack of resistance? Dare I say it would be painless? My faith in processes and routines arises because when they are used repeatedly they become habitual. So you know nothing gets dropped, and you don't waste energy remembering what to do. So whether it be welcoming a new customer, booking the next appointment or finding the time to work ON your business, not IN it, if we make it a habit, we make it easy to do.

What parts of your life or business could benefit from some easy-as-ABC steps? Who in your team can draw up the processes to make them this easy?

It is often claimed that it takes 21 days to make a habit. So why not draw up some simple but effective processes, routines or ABC steps for 3 or 4 areas of your work? Follow them for a month (that's 21 working days for most people) and review what's happened. I'm prepared to bet that if you drew them up correctly and followed them religiously, your business will improve. If it doesn't, call me and we'll discuss what my forfeit is. It doesn't involve getting dressed after I leave the house!

Where can you use simple ABC steps to close more conversations, more sales or more projects in the next month?

Painless Business News

You still have time to book a place on my next workshop – at 5pm on 26th September in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire. Our topic is **The Price Is Right** – part game show, part reflection on how we set our fees, and whether we can earn more by increasing them. I can guarantee this will be fun and educational, so why not click reply and book now? Just this morning I received an email from someone who attended the last one, saying "Thanks for an excellent workshop in July. It has certainly worked." I couldn't put it better myself!

I'm about to embark on a busy period, with a lot of time away from my desk. I'm quietly confident that a laptop, wireless internet connections and my excellent assistant Carol will allow me to hold it all together and maintain normal service throughout. I am still very happy to hear from anyone who wants more in life and business, with less pain. Whether it is me or one of my team of associates, I am confident we can support you in defining what you want and finding a path to get there. Why not review your answers to the questions in the first two sections of this newsletter, and call us to see how we can help you implement the changes? We like a challenge!

Book Review

This month I really enjoyed *The Unwritten Laws of Business* by WJ King and James Skakoon. This is a 21st Century update of a book originally written for engineering graduates in 1944. It is astounding how much of it is still enormously relevant in the world of work now, especially with regard to human interaction (because we don't really change over time). It is an easy read and suits anyone in work, whether on their own, in a small business or in a large organisation. One of the things that fascinates me about the work I do is the way people think, act and interact with each other. This book deals with that perfectly.

Now our new super-duper TV is installed, we have been enjoying the sixth series of ER on DVD. Almost every episode contains material I could use in workshops, newsletters and seminars (and I know some of you enjoyed the ER-themed talk at the Tuesday Business Club). I'm sure one learns just by watching. And that Dr Greene is just THE most handsome actor.

Painless Puns

I receive an "inspirational quote" by email each day, and here are a few recent ones I want to share with you.

Don't be just another member of society, be a living example of your dreams and goals.
Author Unknown

I recently used my experience running a marathon as a metaphor for a presentation. This quote seemed relevant:

The man who can drive himself further once the effort gets painful is the one who will win.
Roger Bannister

Of course, Bannister only ran a mile. I don't care how fast he did it, what kind of an effort is that?

After speaking with a client recently who was in total overload, I was tempted to use this quote, as some form of "Confrontational Coaching", but I was worried he would hit me:

Realise that if you have time to whine and complain about something then you have the time to do something about it.
Anthony J. D'Angelo

With apologies to all those ladies who have more fun and are preferred by gentleman just because of their hair colour, a joke about ABC:

A blonde girl comes rushing home to her mum and says: "Mummy mummy! Today at school everyone could only count to 3 but I can count to 5. Look - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Does that mean I am special mummy?" Her Mum replies "Yes dear it does."

The next day the blonde girl comes running in again and says: "Mummy mummy! Today at school everyone could only say the alphabet from A to C but I can go until E. Look - A, B, C, D, E. Does that mean I am special mummy?" Her Mum replies "Yes dear it does."

The next day the blonde girl comes rushing home and says "Mummy mummy! Today at school we were getting changed for sport and all the other girls had really flat chests but I am fully developed. Is it because I am special mummy?"

"No dear it's because you are 25."

Final Words

I do think the world would be a better place if everything could be as easy as ABC. I'm sure it can't all be that easy, but I do believe it could be a lot easier than we tend to make it. In addition, my own experience has been that sometimes we can't see for ourselves just how complicated we make our lives.

So, when you are looking to create some ABC steps chat it through with someone, whether that be a spouse, a friend, a colleague or a coach (I know some good ones). That external view can really help you find a new path.

OK, I couldn't resist a bit of Martin Fry. (The tune has been in my head for the last hour as I wrote this!) "Who broke my heart? You did, you did" - happy memories from when I was a small boy!

Warmest regards

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Careful assessment of your needs ensures that the most appropriate intervention is supplied – whether one to one ongoing coaching, strategic reviews, training events or facilitated group exercises within a team.

To discuss how you can painlessly build the business you want, call James today for a no-obligation discussion of your situation.