

# James Butler's Newsletter #65

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

January 2008

As I mentioned last month, I never stop working and looking for topics to inspire you each issue (those who think I could look harder for decent jokes can keep their views to themselves). In recent weeks I have been to the opticians to get some new spectacles – and my mind started to wander to newsletter topics.

## *Better or Worse?*

Other than being part of the promise I made to the lucky Mrs Butler almost 14 years ago, better or worse is part of my optician's mantra during the eye test. Once we have located the letters chart (not easy for me without my glasses!), we go through a process of trying different lenses, and the optician routinely asks whether I can see "better or worse" with a particular combination. Gradually we narrow down to the correct prescription – the perfect range of factors which cannot make my vision any better.

Can you see how this is an excellent metaphor for improving ourselves in life or business? What are the components that we can use? As we talk this through, think of a goal you have for 2008, and how the metaphor would apply to that goal.

**Establish a baseline** – the optician quickly gets to a stage where I can at least read some of the rows of letters. Then we have something we can measure progress from. "Better or worse" is a relative measure – how will you measure whether things are better or worse in 2008?

**Make small, measurable changes** – the optician makes little changes to the lenses to see what happens – not radical interventions. But she can quantify that change; she knows the size of the measure and can relate it to the size of the impact. If you are making changes – are they small and measurable?

**Make one change at a time** – the optician changes one part of the prescription at a time – so that she can measure the improvement in a specific area. If she put 5 of those little lenses over my eye at once, how would she know which one made it better or worse?

**Once you know a change works, change something else** – the optician works through the different elements of a prescription, and once one factor is known, she focuses on the next. With your own goal, what changes should you start with, and which ones can you try after that?

**Be prepared to correct an error** – when my optician picks the wrong lens, and things get worse for a while, she doesn't – to the best of my knowledge – lie awake at night giving herself a hard time, or decide to give up being an optician. She just puts the lens back in the rack, and tries something else. What do you do when errors occur?!

**Be methodical** – the optician has, I believe, a system. She doesn't pick the little lenses at random to "see what happens". She uses her training, procedures and experience to find the right prescription. What system do you have for making the change you desire?

So, whether you want to achieve something on your "dare to dream" list from the last issue, increase the number of clients you are working with, or improve the way some of your staff work, how will you ensure it is better, not worse?

## *Painless Business News*

Painless Towers has been a busy place since the last issue. I am (to show I am human!) busily finishing all the 2007 projects that didn't quite get done last year. Who knows, by mid February I could be closing off that list!

At the same time, New Year is generally a good time for people to get started on achieving what they want, so I have had some great opportunities to work with clients on strategies and plans for 2008. In particular, a few clients have worked with me on their financial plans. I had a very good maths teacher, and am a whiz with a calculator, so I hope this has been a useful exercise for them. If you want someone to talk through your business plans, with an independent and objective financial eye, please discuss your needs with me. Please note, I am neither a financial adviser nor an accountant, but I know good people who are if you need specialised advice.

## *Book Review*

When I was at the International Coaching Federation Conference in LA last October, I picked up a couple of interesting books. Well, one I know was interesting, the other I have yet to read! The book I did start while in LA was *The 4-Hour Work Week* (any idea why it caught my attention?!) by Timothy Ferriss. Personally, I wasn't planning to work as much as 4 hours, but the book has some really interesting tips which, within certain conditions, could lead to you working just half a day a week. Even if you didn't reach that level, it will almost certainly mean you worked less. Maybe I will summarise some of the ideas in a later newsletter (which I will have to write quickly if I am only to work 4 hours in a week).

Whilst not a book, I do want to recommend a blog to you (slowly coming into the 21<sup>st</sup> century you see!). Please have a look at <http://www.stridingandhelping.blogspot.com/> - a good friend is training for an 80 mile walk for Choko, the charity project I am closely involved in. Hilary takes grumbling to unparalleled levels, mostly with good humour, but her commitment to this project is inspiring and I suggest a look.

## *Painless Puns*

The lucky Mrs Butler reads most of these newsletters before they go out. I don't know if this is connected, but for Christmas she bought me a book of humorous quotations - perhaps another attempt to improve this section? Here are some from my new book:

One that Bev might have highlighted:

*I never knew what real happiness was until I got married. And by then it was too late.*  
Max Kauffmann

One you may have heard, or thought you heard, at a recent motivational team meeting:

*Let's jump off that bridge when we come to it.* Sam Goldwyn

A couple for those who prefer not to be up with the lark:

*The early bird may catch the worm, but it's the second mouse that gets the cheese.*  
Jon Hammond

*The early bird would never catch the worm if the dumb worm slept late.*  
Milton Berle

I have recently booked a holiday cottage in Cornwall. The website said it was just a stone's throw from the beach. When I rang up and asked how I would spot it when I arrived, the owner replied, "It's the one with all the broken windows."

### *Final Words*

Whatever your plans for 2008, I do hope they come to fruition. And if there is any way I can help you plan what you want to do, and how to get there, please do contact me to discuss how we might work together.

If you prefer to work it through yourself, please just consider what changes you can make, introduce them one at a time and watch and observe whether they make things better or worse – just like my optician.

Warmest regards

James Butler

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