

James Butler's Newsletter #70

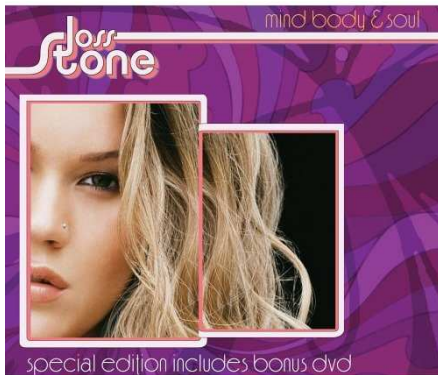
Amuse, Inform and Inspire

June 2008

It was a pleasure to receive so much feedback on last month's newsletter – I hope that each of you has a slightly less risky business as a result of reading it and implementing some of the ideas.

This month, I want to explore the concept of 'less is more'. Obviously this has a good connection with the Painless brand, but I have to confess that is accidental. My motivation for choosing this topic comes more from some conversations with clients in recent weeks, who are currently feeling that 'more is less' and would like to reverse it.

Less is More



This phrase can either be linked to the minimalist architecture of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe or the music of Joss Stone. The former is probably more appropriate, but the latter is more photogenic, and actually her lyrics do sum up what I am trying to convey:

*Back it up, slow it down, let it breathe
Cause too much of a good thing can be bad*

In Ludwig's case, the useful definition we can use is "Simplicity and clarity lead to good design". I suggest that simplicity and clarity can lead to good business too.

The main benefit of simplicity and clarity is **improved focus**. By concentrating on what is most important, and what is most productive, we can channel our energies and resources to achieve them. If we have more on our plate, this becomes harder to do. If you reflect on the last month, how focussed have you managed to be, and has your focus been diverted by the unimportant or unproductive?

I do believe that **aiming to achieve less** can lead to us achieving more. Often, we want to achieve more as a response to external pressure, especially social conditioning. I have one client who has achieved far more since she gave herself permission to follow her own rhythms and start work at lunchtime. Aiming to achieve less has freed her brain from that internal dialogue about whether she was 'good enough' and she can focus on important issues.

Aiming to achieve less is about saying **no to certain new tasks, and letting go of others**. For tips on how to do this, have a look at a very old newsletter from April 2003 (<http://www.painlessbusiness.com/newsletters/2003/apr/>). As we are asked to do new things, or opportunities arise, we should be reviewing whether they contribute to our big picture, or not. I know how hard this is, because I am the world's worst at getting sucked into things I could do without, so I speak with conviction when I say that saying yes to less does allow you to do more.

As the press try their hardest to talk us into a recession, less is more can be a useful mantra – to ensure you spend time and money in the right areas. If we are to tighten our belt to weather a storm (to mix metaphors), we need to make sure we don't hold back on the wrong things and damage our capability to trade out of any market slowdown. Doing the right activity in less areas could cut costs but have more impact.

If we are in a downturn, and you find yourself with less customers at the moment, consider how you can offer more to less people. How can you deliver extra value (at little cost to you) to the customers you do have? Could that be a little more time, or greater attention? Perhaps connecting them with someone else in your network? Perhaps passing on some useful information. Here, having less clients could allow you to deliver more – strengthening the client relationship.

So, if less is more and simplicity and clarity are things that appeal to you, how can you change what you are doing today, tomorrow and in the coming weeks? What do you need to evaluate? How do you know what is most important and most productive? What help do you need to say no, and to let go? Where should you be focussing at this time?

And in the spirit of less is more – I shall stop there!

Painless Business News

Last month I promoted a Small Business Day where I would be exhibiting. Thanks to the excellent organisation put in by Barrett's and Jennings, it was a huge success with about 100 people coming together to learn from each other about business growth. It was a pleasure for me to meet some new contacts, develop some good business prospects and to connect with several people I know already.

I recently gave a short talk to the Reading Business Club, on the importance of connecting with others, and developing a quality connection, not a surface-level handshake. (I am amazed how easy it was to get a room full of people hugging each other, though the guys seemed a bit more reserved – how British!) At the end of the talk, I was asked who my ideal client would be, and I thought it might be good to share my answer with you (though now I have had chance to ponder it, hopefully it will be a little clearer).

My ideal client is an owner/manager of a business (my current clients range from a one-person company up to the MD of a multi-million IT business) who just feels they are not quite fulfilling the potential in the business. They may be frustrated, they may be unsure or nervous, or they may just want some simplicity and clarity. Ultimately, they want more from their business than they are currently getting. I help them get that. So if you see anyone in that position, please tell me, or ask them to call me.

Book Review

Continuing the less is more theme, I would like to recommend an author I first read about 7 years ago, Richard Carlson (the book was *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*). His books are the familiar US-based self-help texts about de-cluttering, mentally and physically, and being more philosophical about life's challenges, but I found *Don't Sweat* was a really powerful book. I have also read his more recent book *Slowing Down to the Speed of Life* – and have dug that off the book shelf to read next time I am chilling in the motorhome!

As another resource in this area, I would also commend Sally Lever's website and newsletter (www.sallylever.co.uk). Sally is a coach specialising in downshifting and simple living and she walks her talk.

Painless Puns

I must thank my old friend Jay for the gift of a joke book and a book of Bushisms. Unfortunately, a huge proportion of the material is not suitable for this newsletter, as I try not to offend anyone, especially email filters! But I think these two are safe:

One drunk says to the other "I didn't have sex with my wife before we were married. Did you?" "I don't know," says the other, "what was her maiden name?"

and

The alarm outside the town fire station goes off, and in one pub a guy immediately gets up and leaves his beer on the bar. "I didn't realize you were a fireman" says the barman. "I'm not, but my girlfriend's husband is."

My book for osteopaths on growing a business has just been printed in second edition, so this quote from Groucho Marx seemed timely:

From the moment I picked up your book until I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter. Some day I intend reading it.

Perhaps more inspirational is this quote from TS Eliot:

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

Final Words

For the 50 or more new readers this month, I hope you have enjoyed it. I hope all of you will stop and think how you can do less to achieve more. I am always keen to hear feedback on each issue!

Have a great month.

Warmest regards

James Butler

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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.