

James Butler's Newsletter #75

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

November 2008

Welcome to the dozens of new subscribers this month, I hope you enjoy this monthly missive of my thoughts. Many readers have emailed me with the results of Googling your own name – including one who found a namesake in the adult entertainment industry!

This month's topic results from a suggestion from Claire, regarding the recent retirement of an unsung British sporting great. Don't worry, I haven't hung up my running trainers so we still have a hope for London 2012. I am in fact referring to former Formula 1 driver, David Coulthard.

How do you define success?



David Coulthard's recent retirement has particular significance for me, because he is just eight months older than me. I will shortly be discussing with Bev the possibility of me retiring in July next year!

However, that's not the focus for this newsletter. Rather, it is the interesting fact that despite never winning a World Championship, and generally being less trumpeted than some of his peers, he finishes his career as the winner of the fifth most career World Championship points, and the leading Briton.

So, as he reflects on his career, will he be disappointed he never won a championship, or proud he accumulated so many points – showing his longevity and consistency? What can we learn from DC's career?

Winners need losers – to come first in a race, you need competitors to race against. The achievements of Schumacher, Hamilton and the like would be irrelevant if there weren't the other 20 cars on the grid. In many areas of life, we need the people who will turn up and do their best even if they know they will never win. Who in your team or business are grid-players, and need to be valued as such? Is that your role, and should you recognise the importance of what you do?

Stay the course – longevity and endurance can be as important for success as high-impact initial success. Particularly at the moment, how do you prepare your business to be sustainable and achieve longevity? What parts of your vision are about lasting the course, not just having explosive and unsustainable immediate reward?

Soufflés risk collapse – I occasionally encounter people in business who talk a great game, generate lots of attention and quickly enjoy the trappings of success. However, when we start to look at their business idea, or their plans for delivery to the customer, this front is quickly exposed as froth and bubble with no substance below. David Coulthard had the substance to consistently deliver for his racing teams.

Being No2 is not failure– a particular hobby horse of mine is the common lament in the sporting world that the English football team are a failure, or that Tim Henman or Andy Murray are losers because they have never been No1. Henman and Murray have been the fourth best in their sport. The England team are currently ranked 10th. How many of us can say we have been in the top 10 of our peers worldwide? Do you give yourself a similar hard time in your life or business?

So, if we look for the positive in David's career, we can see that he was at the top of his sport for 15 seasons, peaking at second in the championship. His consistency accumulated the greatest ever points total for a British driver (by a distance). He has achieved financial success and "retired" before the age of 38. What are the equivalent measures for your business? In what ways can you measure sustained performance in your life? How can you recognise those who complete the grid so the leading driver gets a race?

Painless Business News

The last month has continued to be a busy one here at Painless Towers. I have been developing new material for some talks – including a very successful day at the British Osteopathic Association's annual convention.

Those who have previously enjoyed the talk on what business can learn from Abba can look forward to the 7 January 2009, when the Abingdon Late Breakfast will hear me discuss having a "Rockin' 2009". I am currently trawling the record collection for some foot-tapping lively numbers, with clear business lessons, to get us inspired for the new year. And they call this work?

Over the coming weeks you may also notice some changes at the website – Nigel Day of Clarihon has taken the mantle from Christina as Web Guru and we have some plans to freshen things up. If any readers have anything in particular that they think a business coach's website should include, I'm happy to hear.

Book Review

This month I have enjoyed *The Really Good Fun Cartoon Book of NLP*, by a Cranfield colleague Philip Miller. I love anything that makes a complicated subject fun and accessible, and Philip has certainly succeeded with this book. NLP (Neuro-Linguistic-Programming) is a useful tool for interacting with others and improving communication, and Phil's book, at just less than £10, is far more accessible than a training course at a few thousand!

I have also read a poetry book for possibly the first time in my life – thanks to my friend Chris. Very different from the poetry I remember from school, and if I can get permission I shall share some of the shorter ones in future newsletters!

Painless Puns

In terms of inspiration this month, there can be only one source – the President-elect of the USA, Senator Barack Obama's acceptance speech from Chicago. Here are his closing words, ones to remember when we find ourselves facing challenges:

While we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can.

And as Obama prepares for office, we should not forget perhaps the ultimate lame duck, his predecessor George W Bush. In some ways, I personally will miss him, because if nothing else it has been entertaining. Just a shame he had so much power. Here are some Bush inspired jokes:

The White House now has disputed allegations by members of the House Intelligence Committee that President Bush went to war with Iraq based on vague intelligence. Of course he did. Everything Bush does is based on vague intelligence. Jay Leno

When Stevie Wonder took the stage at the Kennedy Center, President Bush waved to him. Realizing his faux pas, President Bush turned to his wife and said, 'Oh my God, do you think he saw that?' Tina Fey

More and more of our imports come from overseas. George W Bush

It's clearly a budget. It's got a lot of numbers in it. George W Bush

Final Words

On a more serious note, we should also remember that David Coulthard survived a plane crash eight years ago, in which the two pilots died. For me, this is another reminder that whatever success we enjoy, we should make the most of our time. This month I lost a friend, a genuinely great man, to a sudden death in his early thirties. The world is poorer for his absence, but was brighter for his tragically short presence.

As you go about your life and business this month, please cherish and value those close to you, be the best you can in all you do, and end every conversation with a smile, not a frown. To me, that can be the simplest definition of success.

Warmest regards

James Butler

email: james@painlessbusiness.com voice: +44 1491 659073 © James Butler 2008
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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.