

James Butler's Newsletter #88

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

December 2009

Happy Holidays to you all – I hope you have a relaxing and enjoyable festive period. December is a time to reflect on the past year, and this month I want to share my thoughts on 2009. Whatever life throws at us, I think it is important to learn from our experiences, and that is the theme of this newsletter.

If my whimsy on Shiny Happy Death Eaters last month left you confused, don't worry you weren't the only one! And after my feedback that I like getting feedback, it was kind of Julian, amongst others, to say mine was one of the few newsletters he bothered to read. I hope you all find something useful in each issue. Thanks for your attention this year, and I hope for your continued readership and support in 2010. It is amazing to think that next December will be the centenary issue!

Life Lessons in 2009

After 19 years together, with never a night in hospital for either of us, my wife and I have caught up on the average a little this year as she has had a couple of operations. Personally, that has obviously dominated my year, but in business I have learnt a thing or two too, and I want to share my top ten with you – I hope at least one connects with you.

Spend time with those you love: I have always been an advocate of work life balance, and am even more so now. I remember a comment from top coach Duncan Coppock years ago: "No-one ever lies on their death bed and wishes they'd spent more time in the office". So very true – I shall certainly be making more time for my loved ones in 2010.

Spend time doing what you love: I'm lucky, I love my job and really enjoy working with business owners to get more success for them and their business. However, I meet a lot of people who are disenchanted with their job, their situation or their life. My hope for them is they can find the courage to do something about it, and find what they love doing.

Being vulnerable builds relationships: Whether in personal or business relationships, I have found that allowing people to see (some of) your frailties, and accepting their help, strengthens a bond. I have seen colleagues tested, and been able to help, and I have needed support, and appreciated it when people have stepped up. Don't turn every conversation with a client into a therapy session, but you can appear human.

We bounce back more than we think: Willow trees are very supple, and can bend enormously in the wind, but bounce back when the storm passes. Both mentally and physically, we are the same. My wife's body has shown amazing ability to recover, and many businesses have turned around this year after the recession. Never underestimate your own ability to rise to a challenge – set yourself some stretching goals for 2010 and see what happens!

When you take action, stuff happens: My wife had a plan to exercise as part of her recovery – and by doing 3 walks a day, she rebuilt her strength. When I make sure I do what's needed in the business, such as sales activity contacting prospects, stuff happens. Not always where I think it will, but it always happens. I shall be planning more time to do the same in 2010.

Let go to grow: This is something I have learnt from past participants on BGP, especially Jeremy. The more we get others to do, the more success seems to follow. As a control freak, this has been tough for me, but every time I have delegated more, my business has multiplied – making 2009 my best year ever.

We all need white space: My perception of a successful business person is someone with a full diary – lots of meetings, plenty of client calls, lots of bustle. I’m beginning to see that isn’t the case, especially for those leading a business. We need gaps in our diary, both to allow for the unexpected (a laptop crash in my case!) and to allow for strategic thinking and perspective. At home and at work, I will be looking for more space in my diary next year.

Clouds do have silver linings: A relatively negative experience of ill health has given Bev and I the opportunity to deepen friendships and meet anew some really, really kind people. If we look, adversity can bring hidden benefits – not always, but often. We just need to see them.

Careful what you wish for: Bev has wanted a six month break from work for a long time, but I think she intended it in different circumstances. Whether you believe in God, Allah, The Secret or just goal-setting, remember to be specific in the outcome you are planning for!

This is not a rehearsal: We just don’t know what is round the corner – a seemingly excellent client relationship can end suddenly, a serious illness can change priorities, the economy can fall apart within weeks. Whatever your goals and desires in life, make them happen. Live and work responsibly, but dare to dream.

Painless Business News

My year has been characterised by the growth of my associate team, and the added capacity and ability that has brought. We have good plans for 2010 and hope to be able to help more and more business owners and others during the year. It has been an interesting transition for me (I have to learn not to say “I”, and try to use “we”) but one that I have found very rewarding.

Nigel is always keen to point out that he is the only male on my team (but he is very in touch with his feminine side). It’s not deliberate, but it does mean my colleagues bring a certain glamour that counterbalances the balding, middle-aged me!

Book Review

The “inspiring teacher helps kids from rough neighbourhood excel” is a bit of a Hollywood cliché, and I have seen several movies in the category – all quite inspiring. The latest was *Freedom Writers* starring Hilary Swank, and set in Long Beach. What first caught my attention was how one can visit a place like Long Beach and totally miss one side of its character!

But the story of the kids, and Hilary Swank’s character, is a moving one and a brilliant demonstration of what belief and determination can do in overcoming circumstance, prejudice and lack of opportunity. I loved it.

Painless Puns

Just a few to share to finish the year. Having been helped by so many this year, and hopefully paid a little back too, I like this from Ralph Waldo Emerson: “*The greatest gift is a portion of thyself.*”

For those who lament missed opportunities in 2009, and worry their fate in 2010 is thus pre-ordained:

Our history is not our destiny.

Alan Cohen

And for those wondering what footprints they can leave in the world next year:

What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal. Albert Pike

Time for some pantomime-related puns (thanks Nigel):

I was reading in the paper today about this dwarf that got pick pocketed.

How could anyone stoop so low?

And finally:

I was walking down the road when I saw Aladdin standing on a fifth floor balcony shaking a carpet.

I shouted up to him, "What's up, won't it start?"

Final Words

This time of year is about giving, not receiving (or so the ad agencies would have us believe). This quote seemed to sum up the mood and present a good way for me to finish the year:

If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.

I wish you health and happiness for 2010.

Warmest regards

James Butler

email: james@painlessbusiness.com voice: +44 1491 659073 © James Butler 2009
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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.