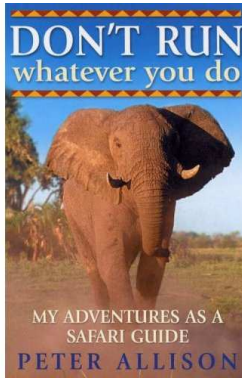


# James Butler's Newsletter #78

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

February 2009

I am lucky enough to have seen the big cats of lion and tiger in the wild, and even luckier to have experienced a safari on foot in both tiger and lion country. Some would say my luck goes even further, because I didn't meet either a lion or a tiger when I was out on foot! The title of a book I recently enjoyed gave me pause for thought for this month's newsletter.



## *Don't Run, Whatever You Do*

Safari guides will tell you that if a wild animal charges, the last thing you should do is run. Your natural instinct for survival will tell you the opposite, not helped by the fact that there is always a caveat where SOME animals will attack if you stand still (I know this is the case with bears in North America).

Anyway, the point is that when faced with the ultimate test of our survival instinct – you against a wild cat the size of a small car – standing your ground and avoiding panic is the route to being able to tell your grandkids the story.

With the current economic climate the toughest in my generation, what does that mean for those of us running small businesses? As I talk to the many businesses who are riding the storm, some doing better than others, I see owner-managers who haven't run and have faced the challenge. What can we learn from a safari guide to help us do the same?

**Remember the briefing** – before you go on a walking safari you have a safety briefing where they share advice like “Don't Run”. When we hit a crisis like being charged by a lion or our customers feeling the credit crunch, we need to remember what we were taught – don't forget all those simple business basics. These make companies successful in good times, and mean they survive in bad times. So remember what you learnt and did well before this situation arose. As an aside, I always think the safety briefing and reassurances are slightly undermined by the need to sign a “If you are totally dismembered and we have just a torn baseball cap to return to your loved ones, we accept no liability” forms. I think I could help them with their customer journey...

**Stand tall and show you're a hunter** – apparently lions quickly see that we have forward facing eyes, and so are predator not prey, and they react to our size, so we need to make ourselves as big as possible when we face off a charge. In the business context, this means drawing on our pride in our product or service (so our own belief makes us stand tall) and making sure we are still marketing effectively (showing we are a predator not prey). Now is the time to be calling customers, maintaining your brand etc.

**Know your ground is solid** – the moment when you stand tall before a bull elephant may not be the time to realise you're on a wobbly log or a loose rock. Similarly, now is not the time for surprises in your business, so make sure you have the right financial and other key management information on the health of your business. If times are tight, increase the frequency of reporting, and put more management time into evaluating variance and making improvements. Focus on having that strong foothold for the business.

**Get a positive attitude, fast** – if the tiger thinks, even for a second, that you're bluffing, you're in trouble. You need to be sure that standing your ground is the thing to do. You can uncross fingers and unclench buttocks later. The people I see doing well in business right now are the ones who are looking for opportunities, or making the most of the times we live in. Those who act as victims, become victims. As Tom Cruise said in Jerry Maguire: "When you get on the field, it's all about what you didn't get, who's to blame, who underthrew the pass, who's got the contracts you don't, who's not giving you love. That is not what inspires people. That is not what inspires people! Shut up, play the game – play it from the heart." Are you playing from the heart and inspiring yourself, your people and your customers?

### *Painless Business News*

Obviously the most exciting news anywhere this week has been the reappearance of the dashing handsome Dr Greene in ER, at least for one episode. Considering he is technically dead, that's a pretty neat scripting trick! I now look forward to a reprise of my celebrity-lookalike career.

I mentioned last month that Nigel Day and I were working on a project, and I am delighted to say we are now ready to show it to the world – and you are the first to hear about it. Please visit [www.goodnewsblog.org.uk](http://www.goodnewsblog.org.uk) for a regular dose of good news – to counter balance the gloom mongers in our national media. We hope it will, in a small way, encourage more people to have the positive attitude to life and business which we need to work our way out of the economic difficulties. Please visit it today – and leave comments!

### *Book Review*

If you have any interest in Africa or wild animals, I would heartily recommend *Don't Run, Whatever You Do* by Peter Allison. He tells of his experiences as a guide in Botswana, with all the various animals (including the guests of course) that he encounters. Not sure if I should have read it just before my next safari trip, but very enjoyable!

Having quoted *Jerry Maguire*, I would also recommend digging out this old '90s classic from the DVD cupboard. A genuinely heartwarming story, with some great lines in it. Totally inoffensive escapist fun. Well, the language may be offensive to some, but other than that, definitely escapist fun.

### *Painless Puns*

One of the top lessons I learnt in sales was to make your offer, ask for the business and then stop talking – whoever talks next concedes something or undermines their position. In Jerry Maguire, he has split with his love played by Renee Zellweger, realises the error of his ways and comes back to reclaim her. He launches into a great monologue about why he is there and she responds with "Shut up, just shut up. You had me at hello." A lesson for all of us who get verbose when making a pitch!

In the context of facing down lions, here are some inspiring quotes:

*Courage is the art of being the only one who knows you're scared to death.* Harold Wilson

*Some have been thought brave because they were afraid to run away.* Thomas Fuller

*Although prepared for martyrdom, I prefer that it be postponed.* Sir Winston Churchill

And just to prove I can face down a wild animal that has been provoked, I'm happy for Mrs Butler to read the following:

*My wife sat down on the couch next to me as I was flipping channels. She asked, "what's on TV?"*

*I said, "Dust".*

### *Final Words*

In a press article recently I quoted Rudyard Kipling's "If you can keep your head, when all about you are losing theirs" – and the same thought underpins the "Don't Run" mentality. If you stand and face the fear, with resolve and courage, you may be surprised at what you can tackle.

And if you want someone to stand right beside you (or marginally behind if we're talking lions) as you face the challenge, someone to offer a sounding board, encouragement, an intelligent ear, please give me a call.

Warmest regards

James Butler

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James Butler helps people build the business they want. Through improving your strategic outlook and guiding you on sales, marketing and personal development he can provide renewed motivation and momentum in building your business.

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.