

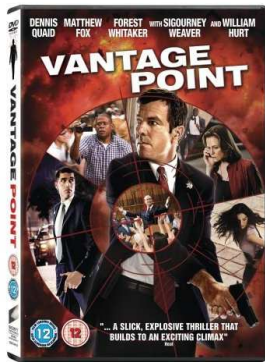
# James Butler's Newsletter #79

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

March 2009

The 2008 action thriller *Vantage Point*, as well as being an entertaining film, has lessons for many of us. The film's tagline is "8 strangers. 8 points of view. 1 truth." The central tenet of the film is that the same event is different, depending on your point of view (or vantage point). How often do you consider other vantage points in issues you face?

As an aside, the movie is a great marketing trick – replay the same 20 minutes of action 8 times, from a different angle each time. If only we could all sell the same thing 8 times and leave the customer happy!



## *Vantage Point*

So, without spoiling the plot for you, the film shows us the aftermath of an attempted presidential assassination from the vantage point of 8 protagonists, and each perspective reveals a bit more of the plot.

After watching the film, I started to ponder what lessons this had for our personal and business lives. We are unlikely to witness an assassination, but we each face highly-charged emotional issues on a regular basis. How would it be if we had more than one vantage point? What else can we learn from the film?

- **Ours is not the only perspective (or version of the truth)** – when faced with difficult situations, conflict or a complex problem, we can mistakenly believe that our version of reality – truth – is the only one. If we ever concede another point of view exists, we remain convinced ours is the RIGHT one. Being open to the possibility that another vantage point may offer a better view radically increases our opportunity to find a solution.
- **Other vantage points tell us more of the story** – in the film, each time we saw a different vantage point, a little more of the events were revealed. As a result, we learnt more, developed wider understanding and saw a more rounded picture of events. How often do we seek similar varied viewpoints in our work? Taking soundings from peers, staff, management or customers can broaden our understanding.
- **Sometimes an impartial vantage point is required** – it is obvious that any player in a game, or a fan with an allegiance, will have a bias in their interpretation of events. Sometimes it helps to have the vantage point of someone not emotionally involved in a situation, to provide an alternative view of reality. This reflection-from-a-distance is an integral part of much of my work with clients.
- **To truly understand vantage points, read user comments on the web** – whether it be film reviews on Amazon or LoveFilm, or seller reviews on eBay, sometimes one wonders if two people are talking about the same thing! With such polarisation of views evident in others, how can we be so confident our view is right?
- **Sometimes it pays to stick to the facts** – as Dan Ackroyd said in the Eighties comedy *Dragnet*, 'Just the facts, ma'am'. If any viewpoint includes a person's filter of events, far better we stick to the facts – in the business sense this will be those specific measures of success you have in your business (key performance indicators or KPIs). When you face business challenges, dig below the opinion and search for the facts.

So, if you could see one of your own current challenges from everyone's vantage point, how would your reaction be different? How can you gain those various vantage points – who do you need to ask? Would an independent vantage point add a beneficial perspective? Stephen Covey's fifth habit of highly effective people is "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Whose vantage point do you need to understand?

## *Painless Business News*

Lots happening at Painless Towers at the moment. Behind the scenes, since the start of the year I have been working on some of the infrastructure stuff to support my business, with the help of a number of people. This will result (but hasn't yet!) in improved databases, management systems, more website visibility and a revamped website. In addition, some new coaches will be joining the team to work with clients alongside me. Exciting times and more on all those issues in future newsletters!

Some of you will know that this newsletter is distributed using an online software provider called Constant Contact. I wanted to mention a marketing campaign they are currently running. I recently received an email from them, proclaiming that I had been selected as a Constant Contact All Star for 2008. At first I thought it was another multi-million lottery win from Nigeria, but they genuinely have logos and other support for their All Stars. They probably sent it to every customer, but it was an interesting way of making me feel special (I'm easily flattered). Who of your customers would you call an All Star? Have you told them?

I am delighted to announce that in the last month my second published work hit the streets. Entitled *Running a Successful Homeopathic Practice*, you will realise it has a fairly defined target market, and has been published by the Society of Homeopaths to celebrate their thirtieth anniversary. It's a thrilling read, of course, and I really enjoyed working with my co-author Sarah Whittaker on the project. For those of you waiting for a more widely available business-building book, watch this space!

## *Book Review*

My favourite book this month was definitely *Running a Successful Homeopathic Practice*, which I have to say is brilliantly written. OK, that was an obvious and cheap gag, but would you expect anything else from me?

I would recommend *Vantage Point* if you are in your local video store. It is not Oscar material, but it is great at what it tries to do (despite some negative user reviews on the net!). I would also recommend [LoveFilm](#) to UK readers – a superb service with great customer care. And if you do follow the link and sign up I get a reward – happy to share that with you!

This month I have read the business book *The Trusted Adviser* by Maister, Green and Galford. For anyone in a consultative/professional service job this is a very valuable resource on how to build trust with clients and develop the relationship in their interest, so you can ethically get more business from them. It included this great quote: "The trick of earning trust is to avoid all the tricks". How true.

## *Painless Puns*

Whilst writing this newsletter, a quote arrived in my email Inbox, so it seems right to include it:

*The only place where your dream becomes impossible is in your own thinking.*

Robert H Schuller.

I want to believe him, but I suspect he's not aware of my 'score a winning goal for Liverpool and then celebrate all night with Sandra Bullock' dream. Or is that my own thinking limiting my possibilities?

Far less subject to challenge is the following from Charles Schultz, who created Snoopy:

*Don't worry about the world coming to an end today. It is already tomorrow in Australia.*

Some puns I liked this month:

*I have a really nice step ladder but, sadly, I never knew my real ladder.* Harry Hill

*I can only agree with Lothian Council. Tuesday and Thursday are Rubbish Days.*

Arthur Smith

### *Final Words*

It is always my intention with these newsletters to give you, the reader, a new vantage point on issues you may be facing in life and work. I hope this issue succeeds. If you would like to offer me your perspective on whether I achieve that, I would be very happy to hear from you.

As you face issues or challenges in the coming weeks, please stop, step back and consider the vantage point of others involved – I hope it will help you find a new or better solution.

Warmest regards

James Butler

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To discuss how you can painlessly build the business you want, call James today for a no-obligation discussion of your situation.