

Welcome to all the new readers this month – especially those who have signed up through the website. Readership has now passed another milestone, and I am humbled by the number of people who read my musings each month. I hope you find something of value in this issue.

A Finger Of Fudge



Readers of a certain age (about my age, I guess!) may remember the classic TV ad of the '80s, with two boys playing conkers. If you don't remember the pictures, I'm sure you'd remember the theme tune that told us a finger of Fudge is just enough to give your kids a treat.

The tune always pops into my mind when I talk with clients about whether they are doing 'enough' to achieve their goals. How does anyone know what is enough? Even if you're achieving your goals, you might be wondering if they are 'enough', or whether you should have been more ambitious. If one stops and considers what is 'enough', as I have in preparing this newsletter, I think the question can be asked in four areas:

In working through a joblist – my experience in life is that if you have any ambition, and any type of responsibility in life, you never get to the end of a joblist. There is always something else you could do. This is especially true when you run your own business. As a result, it is for us to determine what is 'enough' at the end of the day – only we can set that standard. In my view, enough is determined by what is important – those key tasks we have to complete to achieve what we want from the day. Enough probably also means getting some other tasks done which aren't as important, but it would be good to do.

Having worked on my own for seven years, I have come to accept that enough varies from day to day – depending on what was happening in my life, how my energy levels were, as well as other factors. I think it is important not to do too little, but also important not to expect too much.

I have also learnt (but not always applied the knowledge) that success comes from working smarter, not harder. A hamster running faster and faster on a wheel is a common feeling for clients when they first come to me, and we soon see that hopping off and thinking about other ways of working changes what is 'enough'.

In what you want from life – the current economic turmoil may have taught us that chasing extra material goods, more profit or higher turnover is not always a good thing – sometimes it is good to know what is enough, in terms of possessions, income, personal commitments, hobbies etc. Running 13 miles is a huge achievement, who says you have to go on and run a marathon? Having a CD collection that would take 24 years to listen through may be enough – do you really need to buy the next Shakira album?

Knowing what is enough, financially, materially and in other ways, reduces the pressure to strive for more – meaning that you can reach 'enough' in other areas more easily.

In servicing customers – this is an area that I frequently cover in business coaching. How much is enough to service my customers? We constantly hear that we need to provide exceptional value, wow the customer and excel at what we offer (all of which is true, to a degree). But even positive things have an 'enough' threshold. Beyond that you are over-servicing, reducing your profitability, exhausting yourself or your staff and

potentially devaluing your product. A classic illustration will be a therapist who charges £40 for a 30 minute therapy session. They stretch it to 40 minutes to provide extra treatment, offer to do some research on an ailment for the patient (unpaid for), and provide some extra input a week or two later. Suddenly, they have provided two hours of service for a 30 minute fee. Is that good value, or undermining the price structure?

'Enough' is a concept that should be applied when over-providing products or services. I like it when Waitrose give me 3 for 2, but if they offer 10 for 2 I think the product is dodgy, or over-priced originally.

In writing a newsletter or article – as someone who writes a lot, I have had to learn that you just can't keep polishing your work (some may say it shows). I hope that my writing is 'enough' – good enough to interest readers, provide some value and perhaps create awareness of my work. I'm not aiming for a Pulitzer Prize. I see many business people who deliberate for weeks or months perfecting their marketing communications – and all the time they are missing out on sales.

Don't get me wrong, your communications should be of a high standard, but one eventually encounters a law of diminishing returns, where further polishing does not create substantially different results. (Which, incidentally, is why I don't use male grooming products. When one's looks are this close to perfection, why waste money on incremental improvements – right?) I often say to clients a 90%-perfect newsletter that has gone to customers is likely to create more sales than a 99%-perfect one that is still in draft.

What is enough for you in these four areas? Where are you over-trying, over-servicing or over-polishing? If you did what was enough, and used the spare energy to focus on other things, what else could you achieve? How much less stressed or more relaxed could you be?

Painless Business News

Last month I showed myself up as a LinkedIn novice by inviting people to connect without giving my profile page address. So, if you do use that online networking tool, do visit <http://www.linkedin.com/in/painless>.

I am delighted to say that last weekend saw another successful Beer Festival in Cholsey (www.chokobeerfestival.org.uk), so thanks to those readers who sponsored the event, or attended and swelled funds by buying a pint or two. Preliminary results suggest we took 30% more than last year, but with a bit less sponsorship and a few more costs, we'll probably end up raising about £6000 for good causes again – I'd say that was 'enough'!

For those who have missed me doing business talks recently, I am delighted to be back at the Late Breakfast Abingdon next week (7th October), where I will be explaining what Business Can Learn From ER – with a guest appearance from a Dr Greene lookalike. Visit www.thelatebreakfast.co.uk/abingdon.html for details.

Book Review

I have huge admiration for the young men who give so much in the service of their country in our Armed Forces, particularly in the two World Wars, and an inspiring book on the topic is *Slim's Burma Boys* by John Hill. This tells the tales of the British soldiers in Burma in the latter half of the War. A humbling read, which reminds us how much we owe to these great men.

On the film front, I really enjoyed *Milk* on DVD this week – a superb performance by Sean

Penn in this true story about Harvey Milk, the first significant openly-gay elected official in the USA (in the 1970s). An inspiring, if sad, story that is very well acted and directed. Consider it a sort of *Brokeback Politics*, so think carefully before watching with the mother-in-law.

Painless Puns

The following quotes have caught my attention this month:

The way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit for doing them.

Benjamin Jowett

I have an irrepressible desire to live till I can be assured that the world is a little better for my having lived in it.

Abraham Lincoln

I will take questions from the guys, but from the girls I want telephone numbers.

Silvio Berlusconi

A friend's house burned down and his wife called the insurance company. She spoke to the insurance agent and said, "We had that house insured and I want my money."

The agent replied, "Whoa there, just a minute. Insurance doesn't work quite like that. An independent adjuster will assess the value of what was insured and then we'll provide you with another barn, just like the original one."

There was a long pause, and the wife replied,

"If that's how it works, I want to cancel the life insurance policy on my husband."

Final Words

As you consider the ideas in this newsletter, do be aware that 'enough' can be affected by inflation. I hear that nowadays nothing less than a PS2 and an iPhone is enough to give your kids a treat.

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.