

James Butler's Newsletter #94

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

June 2010

I have discussed this newsletter with a few readers in recent weeks, and a question I am often asked is "how do you come up with content each month?". The honest answer is that I have rarely struggled, because life or clients seem to present me with lessons all the time. This month, my own business activity has taught me a valuable lesson, so I'll share it with you here.

You Know What You Need To Do

One of the great things about coaching is that you get to see marvellous things every day, and nothing is better than helping a client realise they had the answers inside their head all along, they just needed help to find it. Very often, people know what they need to do, but don't do it. Here are two of my own recent examples as illustration.

I have been sending email newsletters for nearly 8 years, and have known for much of that time that accepted wisdom/empirical evidence says that having an interesting subject line increases the proportion of people who open the newsletter. So, for reasons I have yet to fathom, I have resolutely kept to the somewhat uninspiring "Painless Business Newsletter" as my title for nearly 100 issues. Last month I took the "big" step of trialling my sister newsletter to this with the article title (Let Go to Grow) as the subject. That one step increased the open rate, all other things being equal, by at least 20%. Why have I not done it before?

One of my regular mantras to clients is that selling to your existing database is much easier than going out to find new contacts and prospects all the time. I believe this with a passion, and have been quite forceful with clients to get them to open up to using their database more often. This month, for the first time in seven years, I followed my own advice. With the result that a course I am running sold out within six hours. Not only have I known in the past what I needed to do here, I have been telling others to do it, yet somehow I have only now done it myself. Why?

Well, if only I knew! But here are some theories on why I, and you, may resist doing the things we know we need to do:

Limiting Beliefs – we may believe that the orthodox thinking won't work for us, or that we're not good enough to make it happen, or that we just can't do it. These sorts of thoughts are often misplaced; they reduce our potential and close down our thinking. *What beliefs do you hold, that are holding you back? What if you found they weren't true?*

Limited Creativity – sometimes we are so stuck in our own job list, and our own tasks, that we stifle our ability to be creative. I'm lucky to have a business partner who takes great delight in kicking my thinking. Luckily, only metaphorical kicking so far, but I am sure it is only a matter of time. *How can you stimulate your creativity? What challenges could you solve if you did?*

Limited Time to Experiment – the process of mailing a target sector in my database seemed like a big task, one I'd never done before. Of course, when it came to the crunch, I spent less time doing it than I had defending why I hadn't done it in the past! But to make that leap, I needed a gap in the schedule to make it happen. The great news is that I now have a system so that Tracey, our admin engine at Painless Towers, can do it without me – freeing more time for experimentation and creativity elsewhere. *How can you create the time to experiment with what you need to do? Will what you really need to do actually take as long as you fear?*

Limited Faith – for some reason I didn't trust that mailing my database was the right thing to do (yes, I note the irony that I was quite happy for others to take the risk with their databases). Recent developments at Painless Towers – Celia's energy and industry and the great flow of work we are experiencing, to name but two – gave me the faith to take the risk. I have now reaped the rewards of growing my comfort zone and extending my willingness to try things. So next time I am challenged, my comfort zone will be bigger, and I will have more faith. *What would you do if you had a more solid belief in success? What factors could build that belief for you?*

I hope these thoughts make you think of what you know you need to do in your life. When you have the list of what you know you need to do, how can you remove any barriers? With the barriers removed, what can you do now?

Painless Business News

With the first quarter of the year coming to a close, I can report that our sales growth continues. We're behind the target we set ourselves, but we're going in the right direction. We thank all of you for the referrals and work opportunities you create for us. We're happy to hear of more!

Many people have enjoyed my talk on Business Lessons from Abba, and most attendees have been visibly relieved when I have neither worn fancy dress, nor sung any of the songs. Further relief could be obtained by a change of speaker, so it is with great pride that I have passed the mantle to Celia, who will be reprising the talk, by popular demand, at an FSB event in Reading in July. So, if you have ever wondered what my talk would have looked like coming from someone with more glamour, and a proper sense of rhythm, get along on 22 July (see <http://www.fsb.org.uk/thamesvalleyevents> for details).

Up until a couple of years ago I held regular workshops for small business owners in Oxfordshire. I have had a few requests to reprise them, and I am looking to judge the likely level of interest. If you would like the chance to network, and learn something of use to your business, at an early-evening event in South Oxfordshire, please email me.

Book Review

For many years I have read business and management books, and they have often referenced articles or studies in *Harvard Business Review*. This year, as part of my own investment in my professional development, I subscribed, and have really enjoyed reading it. I would say every issue has something that is useful to me and several of my clients. It is available online (www.hbr.org), or a subscription is very inexpensive at about £100. Don't forget, Painless clients can get the benefit of us having read it!

Painless Puns

It was interesting to note that in the feedback I received from readers recently, "it makes me smile" is almost as common as "Yours is one of the few I read every month". Both fill me with pride and surprise in equal measure, given the quality of some of the jokes. Thanks to Viv for the puns below, I do love her sense of humour. But first, some inspiring thoughts that found their way to me this month:

Mediocrity is a sin. Don't do your bit; do your best. William F. Halsey, Jr.

The only people who never fail are those who never try. Ilka Chase

Some people are always grumbling that roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses.
Alphonse Karr

Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do. John Wooden

And so to Viv's puns:

Someone came into my office this week and screamed "A N G B". I wasn't having any of that, and told them immediately it was bang out of order.

Viv kindly gave me a bit of advice recently. Her email read:

advi

Even if you don't, I think those are funny.

Final Words

Whenever I type "you know what you need to do", I seem to hear it in my head in my mother's voice. But I don't intend this email to be parental in tone. Rather, I think it is celebratory – the good news is that you already know what you need to do. Please, create the time and opportunity to explore what it is you need to do, and then remove the barriers to doing it.

If you want assistance in the process, we can help.

Warmest regards

James Butler

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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.