

James Butler's Newsletter #91

Amuse, Inform and Inspire

March 2010

A flurry of work in the last few weeks means this will arrive with you very, very close to the end of the month. When clients undertake to communicate with their customers by newsletter, I stress the need for consistency – and I am proud of my record of only ever missing the end-of-month deadline once in 90 issues. I hope everything works today and I don't miss it now!

The flurry of work has coincided with the end of my financial year – which has again been my best year ever. The next year will see significant changes – with Celia bringing new ideas and energy to the business, and with other initiatives to take the business forward. Year-end seems an appropriate topic for the newsletter.

A Good Year

I shall avoid the joke about quality tyres and just ask the obvious question – what makes a good year? How do I know the year just ending is my 'best ever'? As this year end has approached, I have gone through a four-step process, which I think will be useful to share.

Reflect on success – the first thing I have done is look back on what we have achieved in 2009/10. A year ago I was just getting started with Tracey as my administrator (after good work by Carol for years), Vicky was only really getting started as my second associate and Celia and I met for the first time last March. Since then, Tracey, Vicky and Celia have transformed the way Painless Limited works, our turnover has increased by over 35% and we are serving more and more people through our coaching and training. I had my own private challenges last year with my wife's illness, so I will always also reflect on our luck that she ultimately came through that in good health. Personally and privately I can see clear milestones and indicators that show me it was a good year.

- What are the successes you have achieved in the last 12 months?
- Even if you fell short of targets (as I did in a couple of areas), what other areas did you excel in?
- How can you note or celebrate your success?

Set new goals for the year – having acknowledged the successes, and identified the shortfalls, it is time to set the bar of expectations for next year. Ordinarily I would advocate setting a stretching but achievable goal for myself. Having Celia on board has helped me stretch that even further – it is great to work with such an ambitious woman! But the goals are not just business ones – there are private ones too. It helps all of us to know how we want to live our lives, what impact we want to have, as well as what turnover or profit we want to achieve. I am clear today, on 31 March, how I will measure success on 1 April next year.

- Where do you want to be in 12 months? What will constitute a good year for you?
- What personal and private measures of success will you have in the coming months?
- Who do you need around you to help you stretch yourself and go for something a little bigger?

Plan how I will achieve them – once I know what I am expecting of myself in the next year, I can start to develop plans on how I will achieve that. Coaching helps me do that, management meetings with Celia helps me do that, chats with my wife, and friends helps me do that and some 'downtime' for myself helps me do that. But not every part of the path is clear (yet), including how I create more downtime! But I can plan when I will review it, and I realise a good year is a 12 month project, not a 12 day wonder. Part of my plan is to do further planning later in the summer.

- Would a clear plan for the year help you focus your effort – whether on your business, your marketing, your personal development, or a private goal such as running a half marathon (Graeme, you're not getting out of it!)?
- What are the steps on the way to achieving your good year, and what resources do you need to help you take those steps?
- Who can help you develop that plan (and set the goals initially)? If I'm being too subtle, here's a clue: Ann, Celia and Vicky are brilliant Painless coaches who do this for clients every day of the week (except Friday's, because Vicky's plan includes spending time with her children then).

Be Accountable – those of you who work for yourself or run your own business (not always the same thing) will know that one of the challenges is that you don't have a boss to nag you to do things. For the guys there is an easy, if expensive, solution – just get married. OK, that was a cheap gag, but I couldn't resist. Seriously – those of us at the top of the pyramid need some accountability. And holding yourself accountable is not always that easy. So, my lovely wife does help and having a business partner like Celia helps (her clients can testify to her ability to hold you to your commitments!). Having a coach has also helped me be held accountable over the last 8 years.

- What mechanisms do you need to hold you accountable for delivering the plan?
- Who around you can give you the caring support that I crudely characterised as nagging?
- Why not set aside time every month to measure your progress towards your goals, and celebrate success as you go along? Far nicer than being nagged!

In closing, I should also point out that a 'good' year may be setting our aspirations too low – perhaps we should be aiming for a great year. Maybe, but whoever heard of the Greatyear Blimp?

Painless Business News

The biggest news for us this month is our move into a new marketplace. Those who know me will chuckle at this point, but I am delighted to say that we are expanding our business coaching portfolio to include maternity coaching. I am relieved to say I have no involvement in this project, but Celia and Vicky are both very experienced, both as mothers and as coaches of mothers who are dealing with the issues of running a business, and raising a family.

Our first offering is a **Balancing Baby and Business Workshop**, which will empower you to be the best you can be as a business owner AND a mother. The event is on 10 May and will be at the Me and My Baby Clinic in London. At £75 it is a fantastic investment for anyone who is just pregnant, just about to return to work, or someone struggling to manage young children and a business. For more details or to make a booking visit <http://www.championcoaching.co.uk/workshops.php>.

Note that this workshop is being run by Champion Coaching, which is part of the Painless family – yes, Celia insisted we stopped short of Painless Pregnancy as a brand. I thought it was catchy.

On an unrelated note, one of our readers (Janet at The Silent Customer) has a great business helping people in the restaurant trade improve their customer service (a lifetime's work there then!). They are looking for people who would like to be their mystery diners – no pay, but you get a free meal. Have a look at <http://tinyurl.com/ylysko8> if you have a genuine interest in improving the customer experience in UK restaurants and you believe there is such a thing as a free lunch.

Book Review

Some time ago I mentioned a book called *Yes! 50 Secrets From the Science of Persuasion* – which I found absolutely fascinating. I have now finally finished it. It is full of lessons (50 in fact!) from social research on how to persuade people into certain behaviours. One I liked, and I know a lot of readers will be interested in, was the story of a restaurant owner who greatly reduced the number of no-shows at his restaurant by changing the request on booking from “Please call if you have to cancel” to “Will you please call if you have to cancel?” The two extra words caused his no-show percentage to fall from 30% to 10%. Any therapy practices willing to try the same thing?

Now that it is 20 years since the Berlin Wall came down, it is harder to remember life when nuclear war was a very real possibility in our lives. I recently watched *Thirteen Days* – a brilliant drama portraying the machinations in the Kennedy White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Edge of the seat stuff – with some useful lessons on how to think laterally under pressure, and how learned behaviours can be dangerous things.

Painless Puns

A good friend in the coaching world has a superb blog (www.alidavies.com) and a recent post included a poem – a departure for Ali, and not normally my cup of tea, but it was perfect for her point, and I loved the following line from it:

The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing and is nothing. Anon

This Anon guy (or girl) seems fairly prolific, and I liked this line of theirs:

Leadership isn't about your position, it's about your influence.

As Celia helps me stretch my definition of what growth can look like (in business terms, at 6ft 4in I've had my share of physical growth), this quote seems appropriate:

If everything seems under control, you're just not going fast enough. Mario Andretti

I used my good news blog (www.goodnewsblog.org.uk) to honour the great Harry Carpenter, who passed away recently, and I shall use this newsletter to relay his best ever quote:

Ah, isn't that nice – the wife of the Cambridge president is kissing the cox of the Oxford crew.

That never fails to brighten my day – hope it does yours.

Final Words

Thank you to all of you for contributing to my good year in the last 12 months – whether as readers, providers of feedback, referrers, clients or just contacts, your support is hugely appreciated. I hope the coming 12 months are a good year for you, and if there is anything we can do to help you realise greater success, we are waiting to hear from you.

Warmest regards

James Butler

email: james@painlessbusiness.com voice: +44 1491 659073 © James Butler 2010
Painless Business is a trading name of Painless Ltd. Registered in England No: 5362019

Quick Links...

Subscribe Now <http://www.painlessbusiness.com/newsletters/>

More About James Butler <http://www.painlessbusiness.com/about/profile/>

Previous Newsletters <http://www.painlessbusiness.com/newsletters/>

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.