

October 2009: The Dare to be Different Edition

It's Time to Challenge what you are Doing

This month's edition of our newsletter challenges you to be different. We aren't talking about gratuitous dissent and deviation: but we do think that now is a good time to challenge the status quo.

As the South east starts to rise out of the economic problems we've had, your competitive situation may be different; if you're in the commercial sector. If you are in the public sector, we doubt the next twelve months will be easy for you and that all means tough times ahead for the voluntary sector too.

Challenge all of your Budgetary Assumptions and Review your Plans

There is never a bad time to study your underlying figures: but now is a good time. In times of change, your monitoring must be closer, more frequent and more critical. Evaluate the extent to which your planning assumptions have been validated.

Were you too optimistic?

If so, it's time to look for savings or focus on generating more or higher quality revenue.

Perhaps you were too pessimistic

How can you capitalise now on your unforeseen opportunities?

Maybe you were pretty much spot on

Pat yourself on the back for five minutes, then step back and get realistic. Ask: "Have we limited our success by setting targets too low?" It is time to set some new, more stretching targets to ensure that, if they create a self-fulfilling prophecy, it is at least a result that will delight you.

Learn More: [Financial Planning and Budgeting](#) on 20 October, or [Finance for Directors and Senior Managers](#) on 22 October.

Everything is Negotiable

Now is a good time to challenge your assumptions about your customers and clients.

Are there any great clients that you have never been able to secure?

Who are your potential customers that never buy from you; always from your competitors? In turbulent times, some client relationships may be damaged - or even broken. So, just because you could not secure the sale last year ... it does not mean that you can't win some work or sales now.

... but not everything should be Negotiated

Remember, you must have a bottom line. Don't let your enthusiasm for a new client over-ride your commercial judgement.

Winning at any price will not feel like winning for long. If you do decide to make a big concession, be clear why you are doing it and what you will really be able to get out of the relationship in the long term.

Learn More: [Sales - The Client Meeting](#), on 10 November; or [Negotiating Skills](#) on 19 November. You might also like [Influencing and Persuading](#) on 28 October.

Be honest with yourself: Are you Supporting Dead Weight?

We'll come to the main theme of this article in a moment, so hold on ...

First, let's look at everything we mean by "dead weight". Surplus stock, spares, parts and materials inventory, plant and vehicles that are hardly used, accommodation and warehousing that is half full. All of these are costing you money.

Challenge:

How can you use them to generate more revenue or realise some valuable cash from your un-needed resources?

Of course, many readers will have thought: “Oh, you mean him or her.” It’s just the same issue. How can you get more productivity from your under-productive staff, or make space for more productive people?

In tough times, and in times of change, you can ill afford passengers - or worse still, hostages - in your team. Offer people the support that they need to succeed. At the same time, make clear the consequences of not performing to the requirements of their contract.

Learn More: Our highly popular [HR Essentials](#) is on 4 & 5 November, or [Managing Under-performance and Difficult Behaviour](#), on 13 November. Book the two together and get **an extra 5% discount**.

When is Thinking Differently called Leadership?

An important role of leadership is to challenge the status quo; to see things differently. Anyone can see what’s obvious, but a visionary leader can see further than others, and can paint a picture of what they see, for others to share.

Doing what everyone else is doing is not leadership. This does not, of course, mean that everyone else is wrong; the crowd can be wise.

So when is Leadership about not Thinking Differently

Once you have seen the way forward, it takes real leadership to stick to the path in the face of adversity. You must be able to face setbacks and criticisms with equanimity.

But, always stay open to thinking differently. Circumstances do change, so don’t be a leader whose perseverance becomes dogmatism. Welcome divergent opinions and evaluate them objectively.

We’ve never understood why politicians fear a ‘U’ turn: if you are going the wrong way down the road, what else would you do?

Learn More: The [Leadership Programme for Directors and Senior Managers](#) starts on 6 November and continues on 4 December.

You may also fancy [Psychology for Business Part 2](#) on 11 & 12 November (for people who have done Part 1 or equivalent).

How do you get your Message across?

There was a lot of coverage over the summer, for the twentieth birthday of ... PowerPoint. Did you celebrate? At Kent Trainers, some of our trainers use it a lot, and some a very little: it’s a matter of personal style. What about you?

If you need to present to colleagues or customers, it’s time to re-evaluate your choices. Take a look at your last couple of presentations. If you are guilty of “*death by PowerPoint*” then it’s time to make changes to your style. Here are three things to think about.

1. Banish the Bullet Point

How can you use PowerPoint in an innovative way? Try getting your message across without words. If you are creative, it’s easier than you think!

2. Learn to use all of the functions

What can PowerPoint do that you don’t know about? The 2007 version has a lot of new tools, but our guess is that many readers won’t know how to use more than 50% of what’s there in the 2000 or 2003 versions. We are not suggesting you “*go gimmicky*”. Certainly not!

3. Ditch the slides altogether

Let the magic of your voice and the power of your words make you point for you and deliver your ideas with a refreshing impact.

Learn More: [Presentation Skills - Presenting with Impact](#), on 19 November; and [Influencing and Persuading](#), on 28 October.

Also coming soon ...

[Management Essentials](#)

14 October

[Microsoft Word for Advanced Users](#)

20 October