

## Hello again!

Many thanks to those who responded to our September newsletter – we appreciate and value your feedback. In this month's issue, we continue the series "Through My Eyes", which tells the story of organisational change through the eyes of different participants, this time featuring **The Boss**. We also include a summary of a good read on sticking points in our careers and lives.

In our previous newsletter, we spoke of research into career management programs for baby boomers, conducted at LHH by students of the Department of Management and Marketing, University of Melbourne. Included with this newsletter is a copy of the *Executive Summary* from that study.

We commissioned the study because our reading and research suggested the baby boomer issue was a snowball gathering size and speed and likely to fast become an avalanche. We did so also because in recent times, conversations with several of our customers suggested concern and uncertainty about how best to manage the issues arising from the impending retirement of large numbers of their workforce.

We found ourselves asking "Does this relate to a small number of organisations or is there more widespread concern, reflecting a need for action?" The findings indicate this is indeed the case.

So... where to now?

Clearly a more detailed analysis is required. We are committed to doing this and we believe it is best undertaken in partnership with our customers. So please - read the Executive Summary, and let us know if you would like to participate in a deeper (obligation-free) round-table exploration of the issues, which will enable us to creatively and collaboratively engage with the challenges.

With our very best regards,

The Team at Lee Hecht Harrison

November 2008

## Through My Eyes....

*The Boss: Delivering the Message*

You are not looking forward to today. The hot shower wakes you and you dress as the sun comes up –it's coming up earlier now that spring is here – and you mentally review the schedule for this morning's events. It's important that things go according to plan, as the media will respond quickly to the news of your restructure. So many of your competitors have made it to page 1 and 2 of the morning papers for the same story recently: shrinking market, competition from overseas manufacturing, increasing price of shipping products... the inevitable realignment of business structure to reduce costs.

You don your suit of armour. This is business, the world in which you used to thrive, although lately you're starting to wonder if life on the farm wouldn't be more attractive. A thousand issues run through your head as you manoeuvre across town – traffic is light this time of day.

There are a number of employees you and your team will be meeting with today to advise of their departure from the business. Then a media release and email to the rest of the company. Your first notification meeting is with a long-term employee and senior manager. You've worked together for the last three of their twelve years in the business and you suspect they won't take the news of redundancy well. Even though you know this is the right business decision you hope you will be wrong and their response will be relief, not sadness. You know these things are unpredictable – it wouldn't be the first time you thought you knew someone well and were surprised!

You arrive at the office, check for urgent emails, make a few phone calls. Your HR Manager arrives with the paperwork and to participate in the meetings. You go over the details together. At a few minutes before 9:00am there is a knock on your door and you stand up to greet the first employee with a handshake....

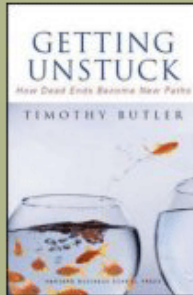
What will you say?

(Look out for the next edition of *Careerfocus* in which we continue the story - this time through the eyes of "The Colleague – Left Behind!")



## Good reading

*Getting Unstuck: How Dead Ends Become New Paths.* Harvard Business School Press, 2007



Timothy Butler outlines a six step process for getting through the times when we feel stuck – in our careers or in life. He speaks of this feeling of stuckness or inability to take action as an impasse that is developmentally necessary. A crisis that provides the impetus for changing well-worn approaches to problems or difficulties. We are likely to arrive at an impasse many times in life and he says it is important to experience the frustration and pain that goes with feeling stuck, acknowledge that our map of the world might need updating, work through the inevitable blame and shame, and arrive at a new understanding of ourselves and our environment.

Impasse is often a byproduct of change. Businesses are continually challenged by change and we are required to deal with change in our industry, profession or organisation; change in our role; and change in the ways each one of us responds to change. Timothy Butler sees impasse as a process and outlines six phases which are not linear but interwoven and even iterative.

- 1. Arrival of a crisis.** A common initial response is to simply keep going.
- 2. Deepening of the crisis.** The usual response - working harder and longer – doesn't help and we feel stuck, incapable of making progress. We become susceptible to well-worn feelings of being not good enough, smart enough or capable enough, and our inner critic is louder, more insistent.
- 3. Realisation that the old approach isn't working.** We ask ourselves what's really going on and pay attention to the data of raw experience.
- 4. Increased ability to take in new information.** We tune in to complexity and metaphor and new ways of understanding, beyond the concrete and analytic.
- 5. Deepening of insight.** Increasing awareness of self patterns – things we like and dislike, our values, people we enjoy, those we tend not to enjoy, activities we find meaningful and environments that feel more nourishing.
- 6. Action.** The developmental experience is actualised when we demonstrate that we've been through the impasse, acquired new learning, and are able to apply it. We have greater awareness of significant life interests and how they are expressed in our work, which ones are the most important to us, and which organisational roles will allow us to express them.

It is important to stay with the stuckness in order to get through it. Dr Butler says a culture that values relentless work and constant connectivity leaves no room for self exploration and "We don't feel permission to feel stuck, to be uncertain, to want to go deeper, to want to say, 'what's going on?' " The book and its companion website – <http://www.careerleader.com/gettingunstuck/> - provide exercises to support this process, encouraging us to go deeper and discover what's most likely to satisfy us in our careers and lives.

**"In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists."**

[Eric Hoffer]