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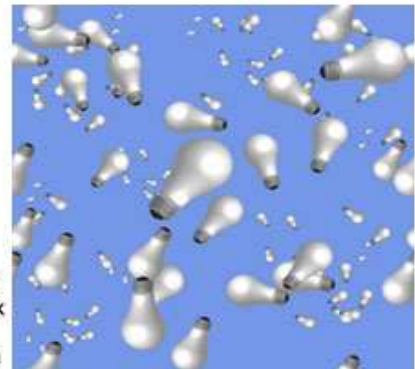
## Hello and welcome to 2009!

We begin writing this newsletter, aware of the contrast between the daily news and forecasts of doom and gloom and the spirit of hope generated by the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States. It reminds us that truly amazing and positive change can and does occur. That change can bring despair but just as often brings hope. That our ability to "see the light" is dependent on our having experienced the dark. That we have a greater chance of achieving our goals and helping others achieve theirs if we have the will to lead, the willingness to learn, and the wisdom to build capability by sharing rather than hoarding our skills and resources. As Barack Obama said: "...the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But... they will be met." This article, like the Harvard Business Review article described further on, discusses how we may constructively use our collective capabilities rather than our individual (and isolated) intellects.



The media feed us a daily diet of receiverships, bankruptcies, restructurings, closures, and fear. And many of us are feeling full up, heavy, sick to the stomach. For survival and growth, our organisations and people need nourishment and nurturing, not punishment and purging. As nourishment in a physical sense involves sampling, tasting, chewing our food and making choices about what's healthy and palatable, the nourishment of mind and spirit too requires experimenting, experiencing, chewing over or deconstructing, deciding what can be assimilated and put to use, and what we may need to reject or spit out.

Mr Obama also spoke of gathering together "...because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord." So... the healthy choice may be to begin reflecting, and sharing our thoughts, about the ways in which the chaos and complexity of our times might serve also as a creative and regenerative force. Thoughts about how new ideas, concepts (and businesses) might take root in previously drought-damaged or ravaged soil, thoughts about how we can nourish and revitalize the soil that is our organisations, build resilience and cultivate capability.



A recent Harvard Business Review article advocates that managers promoted to leadership roles should focus on "collective quick wins", suggesting that early success is not about a personal scoreboard or pet project but about management of a group of individuals. The authors say pressure on new leaders to show quick wins will not go away "But, in the final analysis, the measure of a quick win's success is not the size or speed of its impact on the bottom line. It's the wisdom acquired in the process." Did the new leaders get a better understanding of the team's strengths, weaknesses, motivations and aspirations? Did they learn the dynamics of the team's working relationships? Do they understand the leadership challenges they are likely to confront? Have they got transition as well as position capability?

Five behaviours highly correlated with failure among transition leaders are:

- focusing too much on details and losing sight of the bigger picture;
- responding negatively to criticism – believing they have a mandate, they view any hesitation or criticism as aggression;
- intimidating others into compliance through an over-confident or supercilious attitude;
- arriving at conclusions and implementing plans without consultation and engagement; and
- micromanaging rather than trusting in others' capabilities.

The authors' suggestions are:

- Make people believers, not bystanders – enlist your team in becoming fully engaged, working on meaningful business improvement in which they can take pride.
- Understand uncertainty – appreciate that as a result of your new appointment, your people too are going through a difficult time. A focus on collective achievement pushes anxiety into the background and sends a clear message that success is defined as a team effort.
- Show humility – seek your team's guidance and demonstrate respect for their capabilities, along with your own willingness to learn.
- Learn about your team – working toward a collective quick win gives you an opportunity to learn about the strengths, weaknesses, motivations and dynamics of your group.

We believe these suggestions might be valuable to leaders at all levels and in all times – helpful hints to new leaders and timely reminders to those well accustomed to the most senior responsibilities.

## Through My Eyes: a story of organisational change through the eyes of different participants

### The Colleague



Today was one of the worst days of my life since Dad left us. Everyone at work has known that a few jobs would have to go since the merger failed and our share prices dropped. You only had to read the papers to figure that out. But we had no idea it would be so soon or so big. My manager called us all together in the Board Room this morning and made the announcement that by the end of the day, some of us would have jobs and some wouldn't. And because the company needs to cut costs dramatically, 30% of our workforce would be retrenched! I thought I would be sick on the spot. We all looked at each other but didn't say anything. Nobody knew who would be called in for "the big chat".

As it turned out, we were all called in to meet with the boss individually. When my turn came I was sure I would be given

a package, but that didn't happen. My boss got to the point quickly and told me that my role was staying in the new structure and that I would be needed to help rebuild the team. Before I could stop myself, I felt my eyes welling up. He was surprised – I guess he expected me to express relief or gratitude, but I felt so guilty. As if I didn't deserve it. Friends and colleagues who I thought did a better job than me were going, and here was I, safe and sound. I couldn't feel happy or relieved, just sad.

When I left his office I had to go straight to the ladies' to powder my nose – the tears kept coming. Two of my colleagues were in there as well. They were angry and upset that we had to work for the rest of the day. Muriel was angry and said we should have been given the rest of the day off, like the people leaving, because who could be expected to work on a day like this?!

My parents tell me that this is not the first time the economy has been bad; they have seen businesses boom and bust over the years. That's fine for them. But I have never felt so unsure of myself or the future as I do today. I joined this company because I thought it was successful and stable, and that I would have a good future. Now I don't know – I could be the next one to go if things don't improve.

**"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves". [Lao Tzu]**

With our very best regards,

The Team at Lee Hecht Harrison