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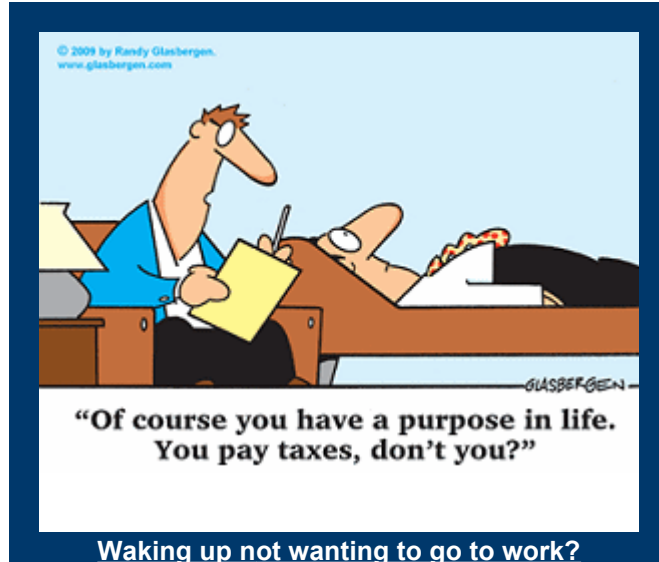
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**In this Issue:**

(Time to read entire newsletter:  
18 minutes)

- ▶ [Love Your Job](#)
- ▶ [Are You A Business Or A Bank?](#)
- ▶ [Improving Your Memory](#)
- ▶ [Staying Out Of Jail in a Tough Market](#)
- ▶ [Marketing & Sales 101](#)
- ▶ [Thoughts of the Month](#)
- ▶ [On the Lighter Side - Memory Tip](#)
- ▶ **STOP PRESS** Learn Master Coach's Income Secrets  
"A minute of thinking is often more valuable than an hour of talk or unplanned work."  
*John C Maxwell*

**This month's cartoon ...**



**Peter Rowe**

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Hi,

The rapidly changing employment market has had me focused on guiding my clients to take a long, hard look at the performance and engagement levels of the people with who they currently work, and to consider taking advantage of some of the great talent that's on offer at the moment to do some top-grading.

The other side of that coin is, of course, "*What sort of a leader are you? How well are you doing your job?*" Could it be that the very best of employees - the ones who can drive your business to a whole 'nuther level - are probably out there looking for the very best employer!

So, how do you stack up? Would you like to find out how you are seen by your troops?

If you'd like the form that [Semco](#) developed for their people to evaluate their supervisors, [just email me](#).

Are you game to find out?

Regards Peter Rowe

Director Profitune Business Systems



PS: Thank you to everyone who completed our market research survey. If you missed it, you still have a chance - [complete the survey here](#) and you'll get a free report on "100 Sales Generating Tips".

**STOP PRESS!**



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**Love Your Job**



*(Time to read this article: 4 minutes)*

Paolo Coelho has moved many people with his writing, and reading his "*Love Your Path*" lead me to think about my own work path and the opportunities I'm given to Coach Clients to realise their "true path" within their business. That is often less a case of "changing everything" than it is a case of "seeing what was always there" - the aspects of their current role that draw most positively upon their spirit and their intelligence, the aspects that truly inspire them, and at which they (can) excel.

I've traced Coelho's footsteps in the context of the business world, keeping in mind Kahlil Gibran's words that "work is Love made visible":

1. Your Path begins anew every day with the choices you make: What to focus upon; which of two or more tasks to tackle; whether to do or to delegate; whether to look far or near - plan or make-work. Your true Path lies along the line of those tasks that make you and those around you grow.
2. Your Path doesn't last forever. Gerber said, "Run your business as though you are getting ready to sell it". It's sound advice; makes you keep everything tidy; grows the people around you; polishes the brand; and puts you in an excellent position to take an exit - or a growth - opportunity whenever one presents. Or not.
3. Honour your Path. It's *never* what you do, it's *how* you do it that changes you. Put the best of yourself into what you do and it will put the best of itself into you. Respect your work of choice and it will respect your soul, and change you.
4. Be well-equipped. Take every opportunity along your Path to collect small tools: a vision to inspire and guide you all; *knowledge* that will sustain you; *processes* to challenge and which grows everyone; *values* to keep you all on the Path; *systems* to leverage and honour the time of all; and *goals* to inspire excellence.
5. Your Path goes backward as well as forward. At times you have to go back to retrieve a lesson or knowledge, or to make good on something that was overlooked. If your Path is clear, it is easy to travel in both directions.
6. Take care of your Path before other paths. Be aware of, but not distracted by, the paths of the market, the economy and your competitors. Know that sometimes the ground is soft and favours widening your path, and other times it is hard and warrants a narrowing.
7. Be constant. Some tasks like tax returns, stock takes, bank reconciliations and performance reviews may not be as exciting as selling, inventing or window-dressing - but they are necessary to a smooth path. Constancy keeps your Path in good order.
8. Paths cross. You will encounter others travelling paths that appear easier than yours and be tempted to follow them. Listen, reflect, look back, then make a decision without regret. Merchant banking is not as smooth as it once looked.

9. The territory you traverse just *is*. Your market has seasons, weather and terrain, all of which are beyond your control, so don't complain, learn their patterns, prepare, and make the most of them.
10. Your Path becomes a mirror of you. When you look into your work, whatever displeases you is of your making, so either accept it or change it; and whatever pleases you is of your making, so accept it, and use it to understand yourself a little more.
11. Love your Path. If you're not on the path for fun, personal growth, to help others and to make a profit, what the hell are you doing there?

If you're waking up most mornings and not wanting to go to work, it's probably an excellent investment of a few minutes to email me for a chat about [Rediscovering Your Passion](#).



## Are You A Business Or A Bank?



*(Time to read this article: 2 minutes)*

If you're on the national average, your Customers will now owe you money for an average 57.6 days as research shows Australian companies holding on to *your* cash to improve *their* cashflow and working capital.

Small businesses are paying 15% quicker than big companies but don't rush to polish their halo's - their average is still 53.9 days on a typical "30-day account".

That money of yours that your debtors are holding would cost them between 9.13% and 13% from their bank, depending on their creditworthiness (given that they are stretching you out, they are probably not that hot a bet, and would be paying at the high end of the range) - and you're lending it to them for ... how much interest are you charging, tell me again?

With a business overdraft interest at just 12%, every \$10,000 extended to your debtors is costing you \$180 - provided their lateness is not the tip of the iceberg, after which they go broke taking the lot!

## Those Numbers In Perspective

Many businesses run at less than 10% net profit, meaning that every \$10,000 on their debtors ledger requires an extra \$1,800 in sales to cover its carrying costs. If one of those \$10,000 debtors goes belly up, you'll need to sell *another* \$100,000 that you weren't projected to sell, just to fill in the hole (and that may not be an easy rabbit to pull out the hat in the present climate).

## Bottom Line

There's a sharp message here: Make sure that your credit policies are watertight and enforced with a personal phone call to your customer *the day* their payment is overdue.

If you strike resistance, make sure you have a clear, well-thought-out system that you or your staff can follow that has been carefully designed to preserve your customer's buying relationship with you, while getting your money in on time!



## Improving Your Memory

*(Time to read this article: 3 minutes)*

It seems to be harder and harder to remember "the stuff that matters" in amongst all the chatter and static of the ever-increasing, technology-based information overload.

From what I've learnt about recalling information when you most need it, I can offer you two key points:

1. We usually don't "forget" anything. We just "fail to learn it". For information to be immediately and consciously accessible we need to learn it in an aware fashion. We seldom *forget* where we put our keys, for example, we just did not dedicate sufficient energy to *learn* their put-down location so that it would survive the onslaught of new information washing over us after that fact. Try it yourself: If you have a challenge with constantly misplacing your keys, purse, glasses, or anything else, next time you put it down dedicate one short, sharp second to mentally photographing its location. You'll find that it sticks easily, and you'll go straight to it when needed.



Same goes for remembering people's names. If you invest a tiny amount of time and attention to associate someone's name into a funny picture you'll find it's a lot easier to recall it when you next need it.

(I must admit, I was tempted to end this article here and then wait for the howls of "You forgot the second point!", but my conscience got the better of me, so here's the second point):

2. While we may not consciously invest the effort to learn something that we'll need to recall in future, we do in fact unconsciously "snapshot" it and store an involuntary impression of the event, thing or person automatically in our unconscious or subconscious.

Recalling unconsciously stored information requires just that - putting a call in to your unconscious, asking for the specific information, and then waiting for the answer to be delivered in "unconscious time". We've all experienced this phenomenon when attempting to remember someone's name and having it pop into our heads at a later time, but it still surprises me how seldom others treat it as a repeatable technique.

For the record: Imagine yourself having the answer you need, next sincerely thank your unconscious self for delivering it, then go about your business *knowing* that the answer will come, and respecting the fact that your unconscious experiences time in an entirely different way to your conscious self.

## Bottom Line

Failing to remember important information is a common stress symptom of over-tasking and the cure for that is really simple: Invest a little time and money in using [The Best Time Management System on Earth](#).

**Tip:** The faintest ink will outlast the longest memory, so if something is truly important; capture it on paper, or with a written or spoken note in your PDA. There! You don't have to remember it any more, and can now use the freed brain space for other work!

## Staying Out Of Jail in a Tough Market



(Time to read this article: 6 minutes)

When the market breathes out and the chill winds of economic winter blow through the gaps in the walls of the business, some ill-informed people in business have been known to make the odd error of judgement.

While you're not in that category, it's worth reminding you to be on the lookout for *other* people's mistakes, particularly when they could cause you pain or loss. So, here are:



## 12 Traps to Avoid in a Toughening Market

1. **Insolvency.** In most countries, the laws governing company behaviour require Directors to ensure that their business is always in a position to pay its bills as and when they fall due. If at any time it trades with insufficient funds or credit available to do so, they are guilty of insolvent trading, and conviction often entails gaol time.

2. **Unexpected redundancy.** Australian courts are indicating that they expect employers to keep employees in the loop when it comes to job losses, and are prepared to rule in favour of employees unless employers can demonstrate they properly prepared their employees for the eventuality by sharing relevant and timely details as to the financial circumstances of the company.
3. **Unfair redundancy.** After 30 June 2009, using the word "redundancy" as a substitute for "dismissal" will open employers (particularly those with more than 15 employees) to a range of legal action. Instead of simply citing "operational reasons", employers will need to show that they genuinely tried to redeploy the worker elsewhere. Documentation as to why redundancies are required, and why particular staff are selected, would prove helpful in responding to a redundancy-based dismissal case.

4. **Intellectual property losses.** Employers who don't have clear written agreements with their staff in relation to their "trade secrets" (customer & supplier details; privacy material; employee records; pricing; systems & processes; patents; trademarks; etc) and the management of these (including transfer to flashdrives, laptops and PDAs; or access to them from outside the business) are just as guilty of negligence as if they left cash on desk tops. In the absence of formally signed non-disclosure and/or confidentiality agreements there is little hope of recovery for the immense damages that information leakage can involve.



5. **Unclear job descriptions or contracts.** Most employers would not purchase a major plant worth tens of thousands of dollars without a tightly worded contract that laid out the obligations of both parties, and yet those same employers will have the loosest of agreements with their employees. Unclear agreements lead to unmet expectations, which lead all too often to disputes - and pain. Negotiate crystal clear performance-based agreements with your team, take legal advice to protect the interests of both parties, talk about them until they are fully understood, then put them away and get on with the job.
6. **Abuse of restructuring.** When times are tough, among the options considered may be bringing forward leave, reducing work hours, reclassification of some work, removing long-standing privileges, and pay reductions. As with most things, early, sincere and in-depth consultation is most likely to provide the best outcomes from all sides. Anything less, and you're probably going to be paying a solicitor to make up for your oversight.
7. **Abuse of part-time staff.** Employers may instinctively look to shed or reassign or redeploy part-time staff before cutting into full timers, but any redundancy decision based on gender, age, or family responsibilities is likely to run foul of equal opportunities legislation and bring grief.
8. **Abuse of sick or injured staff.** Both industrial relations and workers compensation laws may apply to sick or injured staff and, while the temptation may be strong in tough times, there is no excuse for discriminating and for not following due process with these employees.
9. **Mistreating contractors as employees.** From 1 July 2009 industrial relations laws provide a strict definition of a contractor and even before that date, courts have found contractors to be de facto employees working under sham arrangements, and employers have been forced to reimburse them for back pay, allowances and to pay fines (up to \$33,000 per offense).
10. **Lousy shareholder or partnership agreements.** What happens when one of the partners of a business goes through divorce? Given that family law can "see through" most commercial structures (including those of companies and trusts) and reach the assets behind them and make rulings on the disbursement of those assets in a settlement, how well-placed are your partnership or shareholder agreements to handle a divorce (for each partner)? Given that tough times can put strains on personal relationships, the likelihood of a divorce rises above one-in-three for each partner as the market falls, and yet it is at precisely this time that a business (and its shareholders) is least able to bear such a trauma. What insurance have you put in place?
11. **Unclear capital agreements.** What are the rules when the business needs additional working capital and shareholders have an unequal ability to provide them? Are they an unsecured loan to the business, or is security provided? Are they a loan or additional equity (this unbalancing the previous

shareholding)? If loaned, do they incur interest, and how and when is that to be paid? Again, these are matters best sorted before the circumstances arise that require them.

12. **Lack of clear exit agreements.** When times get tough it's sometimes the less robust who get going - right out the door! Tough times can accelerate a partner or shareholder's retirement or redeployment plans and yet it is at precisely such times that the remaining shareholders are least able to access buy-out funds, and that the banks are least willing to lend them! When would be a good time to clarify your (and your partners') exit strategy, and then gain some agreements around that?

## Marketing & Sales 101



(Time to read this item: 3 minutes)

It's always struck me as funny that we tend to use the phrase "Sales & Marketing" rather than putting the words into the order they deserve: "Marketing & Sales".

After all, marketing is about first *"gaining favourable attention"* for yourself and/or your products so that you can, second, gain sufficient time and attention with a prospective customer to persuade them of your value proposition (ie: to sell to them).

Sometimes, it's really clarifying to put this relationship into the simplest of terms, and to ask ourselves some of the simplest questions, one of which could be, "What do we want to happen when our marketing works?"

### The Desired End Result of Your Marketing

You may want your marketing to do for you what an optimistic friend of mine used to ask of callers to his office on the days when he was playing golf: His door sign read, *"If we're not here, please just shove your money under the door. Thanks, Tom."*

I'll give Tom one thing: At least there was a clear "call to action" in that little sign - which is more than I can say for much of the advertising I see.

Yes, sure, there are "awareness building ads" that just spout a brand name but you have to pour a lot of money into that type of advert on the side of a bus or on television or in a crowded newspaper to gain any sort of awareness for your brand from the small portion of the vast public who just might buy from you - and even then, they may just like you (so the ad worked) . . . and then buy from someone else! (After all, you didn't ask them to do any differently, did you?)

### Tell Them What to Do

So, Marketing Rule #1: Be clear on what you want to happen if your marketing works. For the online seller, that may be *"go to my website so that I can pitch to you"*; for the retailer it may be, *"come to my store, so that I can sell to you"*; and for the service businessperson it may be, *"call me so that I can understand your challenge - and then solve it for you"*.

In many cases, the desired end result of an excellent piece of marketing is to have a person with the potential to become a new high-value customer, to believe that there is a chance that you can get them what they want, and to have them make direct phone, email or in-person contact with you.



Getting that simple fact clear should then shape your marketing content and strategy.

### Check Up

Now might be a good time to pause, and bring to mind your own marketing, and to ask yourself (or someone else), *"How clear is the course of action that I am asking my target audience to follow?"*.

If you'd like a [Free Marketing Appraisal](#), email me your two best marketing pieces (one can be your website if that's one of your top two strategies). I'll give you an honest, warts-and-all score and maybe a few suggestions for quick and easy improvements around what you already have.

## Thoughts on the of Working



(Time to read this item: 2 minutes)

If you don't do it excellently don't do it at all, because if it's not excellent, it won't be profitable or fun, and if you're not in business for fun or profit, what the hell are you doing there?

*Robert Townsend*

A minute of thinking is often more valuable than an hour of talk or unplanned work.  
*John C Maxwell*

Until you value yourself, you won't value your time. You will not do anything with it.  
*M. Scott Peck*

I love the man who can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but she whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves her conduct, will pursue her principles unto death.  
*Thomas Paine (with a PC twist)*

The summit has never looked so bright, and the path has never looked steeper. If you are not stirred by both prospects then you are too tired to do honour to your Path just now. Rest for a while and then continue in new heart, or abandon it to others. Nothing else will do in the days ahead.  
*Retep Elttil*

Nature will continually attempt to reclaim your Path. It is yours only so long as you walk it and tend it.  
*Retep Elttil*

It is the first of all problems for a man to find out what kind of work he is to do in this universe.  
*Thomas Carlyle*

To hunger for use and to go unused is the worst hunger of all.  
*Lyndon B. Johnson*

Sweetest Lord, make me appreciative of the dignity of my high vocation, and its many responsibilities. Never permit me to disgrace it by giving way to coldness, unkindness, or impatience.  
*(Not just) Mother Teresa*

Along the journey we commonly forget its goal. Almost every vocation is chosen and entered upon as a means to a purpose but is ultimately continued as a final purpose in itself. Forgetting our objectives is the most frequent stupidity in which we indulge ourselves.  
*Friedrich Nietzsche*

## On the Lighter Side

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A man and his wife having difficulties with their memory were given the name of a memory therapist by a friend, and decided to give it a shot.

A few weeks later the man of the house was chatting with an old friend and mentioned how pleased he was with their memory therapy. As it turned out, the friend had begun to experience a few short-term memory challenges of late, and asked the name of the therapist.

"You'll have to help me here a little with my memory technique," the husband replied. "Uh, name's like a flower, long stem, um, thorns ..."

"Rose," the friend guessed.

"That's it! Thanks," said the husband, "Hey Rose . . . what's the name of our therapist?"



## The Brevity Brief

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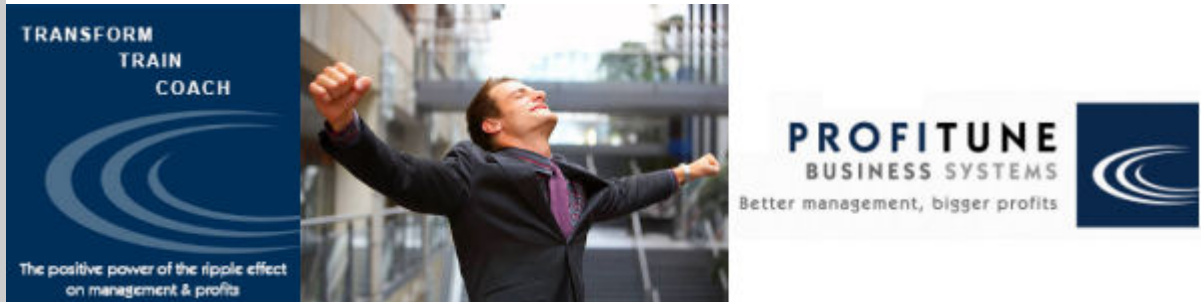
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