

SYNTAX

COMMUNICATION MODELING CORPORATION

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Love and Greetings to You

This newsletter is full of provocative thoughts and items of interest to you as a professional communicator.

Thank you for using Syntax to increase mutual understanding in your life and work. Thank you also for all your enthusiasm and referrals. We look forward to learning with you in 2003!

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Give by Receiving?

It is said that people are either givers or takers. Having been brought up on "tis better to give than to receive," most of us want to see ourselves as givers.

What about becoming comfortable with receiving? It's probably a greater challenge!

Recall how good it feels to have someone else receive your caring or your ideas. You give of yourself when you allow yourself to receive. You may need to confront some outdated beliefs or feelings. Receiving and acknowledging are good behaviors for a leader to model. Go on, just say Thanks!

What about ... Doing LESS with LESS?

We hear a lot about the need to "do more with less" when times get tight. I have heard this over at least three cycles of downturn since starting Syntax more than twenty years ago. It occurred to me that it merits closer examination.

At the high tech companies we serve, people have been laid off and budgets are very tight. The remaining employees are supposed to pick up the slack left by departing friends and colleagues. It takes resilience to be highly motivated after extended stressful periods of bad economic news and job insecurity.

A MORE HUMANE RESPONSE

Perhaps adjusting expectations, taking time to rest, and working smarter would be a more humane response for most of the organizations that are struggling.

Relaxed minds come up with breakthrough ideas. Stressed minds not only tend to apply old solutions to the same old problems; they also tend to pass their stress along to others.

CORPORATE SCARCITY

Of course, it has been clear for some time that Wall Street's constant pressure for profit undermines long-term thinking.

Being in a corporation nowadays it's important to be intense and hurry to get results.

Even though the internet bubble was built on beliefs rather than on market performance, it's hard not to perceive the down cycle as being 'the real world.' Scarcity seems to be real, abundance an illusion that was propped up by false accounting practices. Somehow money was flowing, now it has vanished. That mortgage taken on at the top of the market is a monthly squeeze. You have to think before spending forty dollars on dinner.

REDEFINING "ENOUGH"

Let's redefine the concept of "enough" and come to a new understanding of value in the new economy. Creative movement towards a balanced, sustainable economy is going to require realignment of how we define and pursue our desires. Necessity can seem to be a harsh mother, but if that's what it takes to achieve balance, we will be forced to invent new ways to live.

Laurel March, teacher and consultant to organizations, especially nonprofits, says, "When you focus on your real priorities, some things will fall through the cracks. You find out

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they weren't really that important. 'Good enough' is often better than 'absolutely perfect'. " You can experience a personal breakthrough by deciding that this is a good time to rest, take care of your human needs, approach work with a fresh mind to clear away tasks and goals that are no longer needed, and calm your thoughts so that you are receptive to new ideas and possibilities. Do *less* with less. Find the new zen of outstanding performance!

What Participants Said...and Why They Did!

Syntax makes it easier for people to bridge differences and reach goals in their global organizations. The more we lead Syntax learning programs, the more we are able to tune into what is most important and most learnable for participants.

They say, "*Outstanding program. It really opened my eyes to proper communication.*" "*The facilitators are inspiring and motivating.*" "*Everyone needs to attend.*" "*I see a lot of miscommunication out there, and this class could help with reducing it.*" "*Wish all levels of management would take this course.*" "*Made you think about your communication impact and strategy.*" "*Take this course!*"

Why do they say these things?

A) Because the need for Syntax is more and more pronounced, and
B) because we have great people such as **Dee Kinder, Karen Bading, Kay Sandberg, Janet Crawford, and Lucy Freedman** leading the courses these folks attended! Thank you for your unique contributions and your dedication to our clients' success!

Don't Let the Details Get You Down

What a joy it is to find an easy way to be more organized and clear some clutter!

I've been applying lessons learned from Shannon Seek (www.seekolutions.com) and her Organic Organizing Matrix. Thought I'd pass along a few of the reminder phrases for her "Essential Actions" that I repeat at crucial moments, and tempt you to follow up and contact Shannon for your own copy (www.organicorganizing.com/products.htm). Tell her you found her here and she'll give you her characteristic special treatment.

Essential Action #1

When I am overwhelmed and know that I want order but have no idea where to start, I use Shannon's mantra, "Like things with like things." Immediately I start grouping similar things together. Neatness begins to emerge.

Essential Action #6

Another favorite, that comes into my mind often in the nick of time before leaving an activity behind: "Clean up between activities." Major clutter reducer.

Essential Action #7

Here's another smart strategy: "prompt lists" for repetitive detail tasks, like preparing materials for a course. I don't like having to think of everything each time, and it's handy to have a checklist to send along for the course leaders' reference.

The Matrix can be approached in various ways depending on your Personal Syntax. Shannon uses her knowledge of Neurolinguistics and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator to offer guidance on how to use it.

She shares many words of wisdom along the way, for instance that rather than having a goal of constant tidiness, you need to be able to make a mess

and put it away when you're done. Her website is full of great ideas and a growing stock of resources. I hope these ideas contribute to your sense of balance and order for 2003!

A Word About "Smart Business"

from the Institute of HeartMath

"It would startle most companies to have a computer readout weekly, showing the amount of work-time their people spent thinking and emoting over their problems. Then, if you had another computer readout showing the amount of negative hormones released into the body as a result of those thinking habits, and the health consequences, in the name of smart business you would want your people to make some mental and emotional adjustments. Computers can't generate all that data yet, so we don't have to face the facts. Yet, the facts of stress find us — anyhow." — Doc Childre, *Self Empowerment: The Heart Approach to Stress Management* (www.heartmath.org).

Reminder to Syntax Grads

Ah, yes. Remember the Syntax Error, "Resisting Resistance?"

Now, that wouldn't be YOU out there, who is so RIGHT that they keep repeating themselves and not listening or reducing resistance?

Or are you the one who is resisting your own resistance, telling yourself there is something wrong with you and you should always be more perfect, motivated, organized, etc. etc.?

Well, if so...how can you meet it / them / yourself where you are instead of pushing back? Find your flexibility, go back and match, get in step. Really listen. You'll end up with a better mutual goal and better collaboration.

Times of Transition

If you have the sense of experiencing deeper and more pervasive changes than you thought you could imagine, you are in good company. Nearly everyone I know has encountered both distressing and surprising changes, rearranging beliefs, identities, careers, relationships, and all kinds of plans.

I am no exception. I have felt quite challenged to maintain my enthusiasm and motivation. What a relief to feel a surge of inspiration to write and reach out via this newsletter (and other channels) and to re-engage in creating workplaces where a new consciousness can prevail.

This time is presenting us with significant lessons about the cost of continuing to believe and behave in adversarial, dishonest, or wasteful ways. It is also presenting us with the tools and consciousness to make a difference.

It's as if the dark corners we were avoiding have been exposed. No, we can't 'get away with' selfishness, anger, condemnation, self-hatred, violence.

We need to take action to realize the world we dream of, where solvable problems are addressed collaboratively and resources are shared.

As Gandhi said, We need to "be the change we want to see in the world." We can't wait for the outside world to be at peace to seek peace within ourselves.

Our personal journeys are fraught with familiar traps. That old bugaboo, self-doubt, is creeping into the most positive of attitudes among my friends and colleagues.

I am impressed with those who seem free of self-doubt, or have found a way to override it. When I ask what is different about them, I see that they are in service to clear goals, and / or to relationships that are important to them. And some just don't seem to have the capacity for self-doubt in their personal syntax!

Under the influence of self-doubt, just knowing about good strategies, beliefs, etc. hasn't been enough to carry me through emotional ebb tides with energy and motivation. Mental knowledge isn't automatically erasing habitual emotional and fear-based reactions. The self-doubt carries an extra sting: "You know better than this!"

We are waking up again to the work we are here to do. Whatever we are attached to that no longer serves is being pulled away forcibly if we are not willing to let go soon enough.

The quandary of old-strategies-not-working has opened up a deeper search, a more piercing look, to see what in my belief system is not being manifested in how I live.

When I slip into blaming others for my pain; or forgetting that self-care is a primary, not marginal, priority; or worrying about the future; I am playing out negative programming that is familiar and nearly unconscious.

To make changes, I have to follow the advice I have been handing out in courses and coaching sessions for years. That includes both the discipline of changing behavior and the self-acceptance to stop blaming and

doubting myself just because I am a human being.

Fortunately, I have absorbed the message, "Ask for help!" When I couldn't find it within myself to shift consciousness, no matter how many tools and techniques were available, I got myself out the door to consult people wiser than myself, knowledgeable people who could enlighten me, friends who accept me more than I do, and new-found companions in learning.

Not only have we learned from each other, we have also been generating new connections that have practical value for accomplishing emergent goals. By exchanging our stories we have risked sharing our vulnerability, taking the sting out of some of the lowest lows.

When I hear other people describe what they are going through, the self-doubt and blame subside more easily. We begin to believe that we are on a path to somewhere new, rather than being lost in the wilderness.

We are waking up again to the work we are here to do. Whatever we are attached to that no longer serves is being pulled away forcibly if we are not willing to let go soon enough.

I choose to think of the important transitions as coming from within, because we really need to outgrow much of what we still take for granted.

I am making the choice to believe that we are growing into greater fulfillment, service, and joy. The current passages are giving us the opportunity to build up the necessary strength to evolve. May you find peace, companionship, and clarity as you grow in your own personal journey.

--Lucy Freedman, December 2002

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*Holiday Greetings
and Best Wishes
for a Prosperous
and Peaceful 2003!*

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Calendar and News

■ We're in **Best of the West 2003!** The Bay Area Organization Development Network has selected Lucy's session, "Breakthroughs in Collaborative Leadership" for a half-day program on May 9 in their annual professional extravaganza at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. This is an honor and will be a stimulating, entertaining workshop. Get the scoop at www.baodn.org.

■ **New Course** to be offered at San Jose State University In response to many requests, now there's a way for people to participate in Syntax-based training with Lucy Freedman at SJSU's Professional Development Center in Silicon Valley.
• *Breakthroughs in Collaborative Leadership*, for Managers, Facilitators, Non-profit and Profit Sector Leaders, all day February 15 and 22, 2003. Sign up for Course 495T.

■ **Speak the Truth and Point to Hope:
Leadership Maturity for the 21st Century**

Lisa Marshall, former Syntax VP, and now principal of the Smart Work Company, has distilled her message on leadership from real people's stories and is completing a new book which will be an essential resource for conscious leaders. You will probably want to get your hands on this one as soon as it comes out. Read a chapter now by going to the website www.smartworkco.com and contact Lisa to reserve your copy.