

Sunday 22nd April

Weekly tips and ideas for business professionals



# Negotiation Update

The search for value



Not a good week for news



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## Sunday morning...

Friday morning in South London and I'm writing this quickly as I want to get it sent before we go over to Chateau Beasor in Cabourg for the weekend. It's a while since we've been to our house in France so we'll need to do some grass cutting, clearing up and cheese eating.

Some weeks it seems positively trivial to mention sport and the everyday things of business life when you hear what happened at Virginia Tech and also that 200 people died the same day in Baghdad. Maybe it is sport that keeps us sane because if we didn't have something to lose ourselves in then maybe we'd all go mad...but when all else fails we still rest sound in the knowledge that the US citizenry finally saw the light and voted Sanjaya off American Idol.

Maybe there is some light at the end of the tunnel after all...with three tips as usual.

## This week I...

bought the follow up to Ted Simon's book. If you remember... in 1973 he traveled around the world on a motorbike for 4 years and wrote a wonderful book of his experiences. At the age of 69 he has just repeated the journey. I've got a signed edition and I can't wait to start reading it. Check out his website: <http://www.jupitalia.com/>

I bought two identical tickets for the Joburg to Cape Town route on different days. One ticket was exactly double the cost of the other for the same weekday time. Work that one out...

I bought Scorsese's New York, New York on DVD. Not his best film by any means but De Niro and Minelli are always worth watching.

Almost bought a business book...but thought better of it.

## And finally...

A Sudanese man has been forced to take a goat as his "wife", after he was caught having sex with the animal.

The goat's owner, Mr Alifi, said he surprised the man with his goat and took him to a council of elders. They ordered the man, Mr Tombe, to pay a dowry of 15,000 Sudanese dinars (\$50) to Mr Alifi.

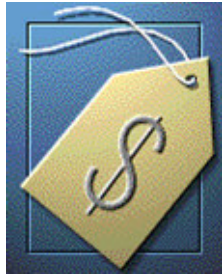
"We have given him the goat, and as far as we know they are still together," Mr Alifi said.

Mr Alifi, of Hai Malakal in Upper Nile State, told the Juba Post newspaper that he heard a loud noise around midnight on 13 February and immediately rushed outside to find Mr Tombe with his goat.

"When I asked him: 'What are you doing there?', he fell off the back of the goat, so I captured and tied him up."

Mr Alifi then called elders to decide how to deal with the case.

"They said I should not take him to the police, but rather let him pay a dowry for my goat because he used it as his wife," Mr Alifi told the newspaper.



## The search for value

# Management Tips

290

### Blame

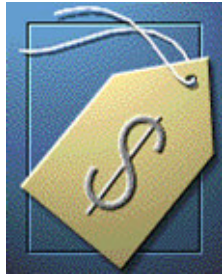
I was watching the UK version of The Apprentice this week and you could see that at every turn of the project each member of the two teams was positioning themselves so that if they lost and went to the Boardroom they could be blameproof.

Don't Blame Me...it wasn't my fault...seems to be a constant litany during the programme.

When one member got pinned with a mistake they denied it until they got pinned some more and then they eventually put their hands up and pleaded "guilty". It never dawned on them that they'd have retained some vestige of dignity if they'd admitted their foul up immediately.

I've written to this topic before and it's a key element of management. Failure is OK if you acted in good faith, learnt from it and didn't repeat it.

Now say that 5 times and go back to work.



## The search for value

# *Sales Tips*

342

### It's a small world

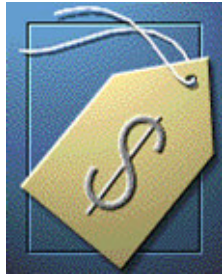
Believe me when I tell you that it's a small world and everyone knows each other.

This week I got an email from someone in New York I've never met who got my name from someone who was on a programme several years ago. I'll be talking to them about training and consultancy...you can bet on that.

I also got an email from a contact in Hong Kong who's arranged a meeting for me while I'm there in May with an old client I haven't worked for for nearly 5 years. I'll be looking forward to that meeting.

It really doesn't matter whether you work locally, regionally or globally you get to know the players in your game and they get to know you...and once that happens then the network can often go exponential.

Never forget a name...never forget a contact...never lose touch. Everyone knows someone who knows someone who knows Kevin Bacon. (If you don't know what I'm referring to then send me an email and I'll tell you know about it.)



## The search for value

# *Negotiation Tips*

362

### Poker and backgammon

My backgammon is improving. I play the computer and I'm up to an ELO rating of 1600.

As I improve it's educating to see the difference between poker and backgammon. There's one great similarity but one huge difference.

In poker you can raise if you have good cards. In backgammon you can double if you think you're in a good position. They both have this element in their games.

In poker you raise but you don't know what your opponent is holding. In backgammon you have the board in front of you and you can see absolutely what position your opponent has compared with yours and if you like it you can wish to play for double the stakes.

Backgammon is a game of perfect knowledge. Poker isn't.

Let's compare negotiation. Negotiation is not a game of perfect knowledge. We don't know what the other side is holding. We don't know their objectives, strategies or deal parameters. That means that negotiation is more like poker.

Imagine how interesting it would be if both sides laid out their numbers, objectives and deal variables in advance for all to see and then negotiated from there. That's backgammon. Interesting concept...I'll explore this more.

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