

Brainstorm E-Bulletin

June 2006 BRAINSTORM E-BULLETIN

Written by Jurgen Wolff

Here, a bit later than planned due to my U.S. trip, is your June Brainstorm e-bulletin. Every winter I promise myself that next summer I'll spend more time enjoying the sunshine (when we're lucky enough to see it here in London)—but this time I'm determined to actually do it! How about you—are you taking some time off to sit in the park or take a walk in nature to remind yourself it's not ALL about emails, to-do lists, and paperwork? I hope so. Meanwhile, here are some ideas I hope you'll find helpful:

1: What starts your motor?

If, like me, you're not a morning person, sometimes it's hard to get started. In an interview in *The Writer* magazine, author Ayelet Waldman reveals how she does it: "I often start the day with a Lorrie Moore short story. I have reread them all countless times. Something about her voice, the elegance of her prose, the humor, really inspires me."

ACTION: What would be a good trigger to get you moving at the start of the day? It might be something inspirational to read, a rousing piece of music on your stereo or iPod, or a meaningful image. See whether starting the day with one of these motivators makes it easier to get up to speed.

2: What are you supposing?

One of the ideas of Neuro Linguistic Programming is that we all have certain pre-suppositions (things we assume) when we go into a situation. Someone who is paranoid, for example, presupposes that everybody is out to get them. Richard Bandler, co-creator of NLP, once suggested we'd have better experiences by being pronoid: that is, assuming that everybody is out to help us. What we assume colors our experience.

Here's an example: in the NLP magazine, *Rapport*, expert trainer Lara Ewing said the presuppositions she uses at the beginning of a training include assuming that we all make mistakes and learn from them, that everyone is competent, and that the group will work collaboratively and supportively. She says: "You demonstrate your presuppositions in your behaviour. They come through in how you stand, the openness of your body, your tone of voice, the order in which you call on people."

ACTION: The next time you are about to go into a situation that you consider challenging, stop and ask yourself what are your presuppositions about it. Are there equally valid different presuppositions that might influence the outcome in a good direction? Try taking those into the situation and notice the effect.

3: Give yourself a good talking to!

If you ever have to give presentations, here's an unusual tip (it might be equally useful in any situation where you are nervous about what you are communicating). It comes from presentation coach Jennifer Scott, and she calls it "shading." You augment what you say out loud with something you say silently, to yourself. For example, she might introduce herself by saying, "Good morning, I'm Jennifer Scott," and pause and say to herself, "and I'm a warm and friendly person." Then, out loud: "I work for a company called Theatre Techniques for Business," followed by the silent, "and I love what I do." She says most of us talk to ourselves anyway, so why not make that work for us.

ACTION: The next time you're communicating with someone—one-to-one or a group—try this technique and see whether it helps you come across more positively.

Would you like to be more effective in how you use your time? Have you been frustrated by traditional time-management approaches? My e-book, **Time Management for Writers**, can help all creative people (not just writers) quickly learn how to use breakthrough right-brain time techniques. Get the full story by clicking [here](#) or go to www.TimetoWrite.com and click on the 'e-book' button.

4: A Short Course in Human Relations

I don't know the original source for this, but I think there's a lot of wisdom in it:

- * The six most important words: "I admit I made a mistake."
- * The five most important words: "You did a good job."

- * The four most important words: "What is your opinion?"
- * The three most important words: "I love you."
- * The two most important words: "Thank you."
- * The one most important word: "We."
- * The least important word: "I"

ACTION: Which words do you use most? Least? Any need for a change?

5: What's the worst solution to your challenge?

At the marketing agency Play, located in Virginia, one of the creativity techniques they use is to start with the WORST solution to a challenge. From there, they try to brainstorm their way to something related that might work. For example, some years ago they were charged with creating an event that would promote summer-weight wool clothing. The worst solution that came up was setting a bunch of sheep loose in New York City. They refined this until they came up with the idea of having models wearing wool lead a bunch of sheep on leashes along Madison Avenue. According to Fast Company magazine, the stunt got more than 8 million media impressions.

ACTION: If you have a challenge, think of the worst solution possible. Then brainstorm how to transform that into a good solution.

6: And a quote to think about (not just for painters):

"If you hear a voice within you saying, 'You are not a painter,' then by all means paint...and that voice will be silenced." – *Vincent van Gogh*

Until next time,

Jurgen

PS: There are more useful tips and techniques on my website, www.TimetoWrite.com and my blog, www.timetowrite.blogs.com. Check them out now to see the new content.

PPS: And here's another instalment of the series I call "Letters to an Unknown Friend":

Dear Friend,

Some time ago I read an article in the New York Times about a venture that I'll tell you about in a minute. My reaction was delight and shock—and then shock that I was shocked.

The article, written by someone with the itself-delightful name of Anemona Hartcollis, described a warehouse in Long Island City. Formerly a Ford assembly plant, the place now goes by the name of M.F.A., or "Material for Artists." It has been going since 1979, run by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, and it's full of stuff. Stuff like bolts of fabric, hundreds of thousands of buttons, frames, all kinds of paper, spools, bra straps, beads, even office furniture. It's all donated by companies who don't need it, in exchange for a tax write-off. The "shoppers" who come to get it, free, are artists and teachers, who use it for their artwork or class projects. Everybody wins. Over ten thousand people show up each year to dig through this treasure trove.

You can probably tell why I was delighted – it's a great idea, a kind of crazy idea, and it suggests that the arts are worth a bit of effort and support. I also can imagine wandering through those aisles for hours (my first choice of heaven is bookstore, but an office and art supplies store runs a close second).

But feeling shocked was my second response, a mild shock that in today's world where seemingly everything is measured only by its profit-making potential, such a non-profit enterprise, such a gentle enterprise, is flourishing. Setting up a whole warehouse, running it at some expense to the taxpayers, so that artists can get stuff for free? What kind of crazy, hippy idea is that!? What is this, 1966? Frankly, I was even surprised that New York has a Department of Cultural Affairs. In your city or area, how many such endeavors can you think of? I know I can't think of any in mine.

Next I felt shocked at the shock, and a bit sad, too, that this kind of thing seems so unusual now, so out of the spirit of the times. It's great that it does exist, and maybe the article will inspire others to do something similar. Maybe hidden in those bins of buttons, bra straps, and beads there's a little hope for the return of kinder times... that would be groovy, don't you think?

Your friend,

Jurgen

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