

Mission Possible Ezine

February, 2010

Books....very small selection this month (!)

HBR's Must-Reads on Managing Yourself

The path to your own professional success starts with a critical look in the mirror. What you see there — your greatest strengths and deepest values — are the foundations on which to build your life and your career.



Currently, HBR is offering a collection of articles by various authors on different aspects of management and leadership. It includes the classic Peter Drucker piece: *Managing Oneself*; *Management Time: who's got the monkey?* by Oncken, Wass and Stephen Covey; Robert Quinn's *Moments of Greatness – entering the fundamental state of leadership*; Robert Kaplan's *What to Ask the Person in the Mirror*; *Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time*, by Schwartz and McCarthy; and a bonus article: *The Art of Possibility – transforming Professional and Personal Life*.

You can order by [clicking on this webpage](#), or ringing the US number 617-783-7450. Price is US\$17.95 (which is apparently quite a saving on the price of the individual titles).

While these articles are obviously focused on leadership within the business sphere, they will all have something valuable to say about leadership in general.

leadership

“It’s nothing personal, it’s just business.”
We spend more than 50% of our lives at work. Why would anyone want to wake up in the morning and go to work with that attitude? If you don’t make it personal, and if you don’t make it count, what’s the point?

Business is missing one important core value: compassion.

“Between work and family, I have no time for community.”

This is something everyone feels at some point in their lives. But think about it: What if we made community an integral part of our business? What if we recognized that we can’t have strong businesses without a strong community and we can’t have a strong community without compassion?

"The trouble with being punctual is that nobody's there to appreciate it."
Franklin P. Jones.

The real way strong communities are built is through the compassion we extend to others. Both to those we know, and to those we don’t know.



*continued...*The Internet is amazing because it connects us all. Compassion for those around us now extends globally and beyond our physical boundaries.

We can all do more for each other and be better.

Be compassionate to everyone no matter the level of connection.

Make compassion a core business value.

Start with a smile to a stranger.

Start by getting others to nod in agreement when you say: “If we’re not compassionate to one another, what’s the point in the end?”

Mitch Joel is President of Twist Image and the author of Six Pixels of Separation.

from [What matters now](#) – by Seth Godin and dozens of others.

Peter Bregman comes up week after week with practical stuff about leadership on the Harvard Business site – and does it with self-effacing humour.

In a recent article called [Optimize Transition Time](#) (and stop being late) he writes about how he’s the sort of person who thinks if he just drives fast enough or runs fast enough he’ll make it on time. His wife, on the other hand, needs ‘transition time’ and that takes advance planning – if you want to be somewhere for seven, then you may have to start ‘leaving’ by six, and that means getting ready by 5.30 and so on. (His example is a lot more complex!)



A lack of transition time, he points out, means that lateness for scheduled meetings compounds until the last meeting of the day is so far over time it’s finished before it’s begun. Moreover, transition time gives breathing space, allows for thinking about the meeting coming up (instead of trying to think on the fly) and is easier on the stress levels.

In the face of significant change and opportunity, people are often either uninformed, clueless or frightened. If you're going to be of assistance, it helps to know which one.

Uninformed people need information and insight in order to figure out what to do next. They are approaching the problem with optimism and calm, but they need to be taught.

Uninformed is not a pejorative term, it's a temporary state.

Clueless people don't know what to do and they don't know that they don't know what to do. They don't know the right questions to ask. Giving them instructions is insufficient. First, they need to be sold on what the platform even looks like.

And **frightened** people will resist any help you can give them, and they will blame you for the stress the change is causing. Scared people like to shoot the messenger. Duck.



The worst kind of frightened person is one with power. Someone in a mob of other frightened people, someone with a gun, someone who is the CEO.

When confronted with a scared CEO, time to run. Before someone can change, they have to learn, and before they learn, they have to cease being scared.

cont..

One reason so many big ideas come from small organizations is that there is far less fear of change at the top. One mistake board members and shareholders make is that they reward the scared but hyper-confident CEO, instead of calling him on the carpet as he rages at change.

When I first encountered surfing, I was scared of it. It looks cool, but an old guy like me can get hurt. A patient instructor allayed my fears until I was willing to get started. When you first start out, the things you think are important are actually irrelevant, and it's the stuff you don't know is important that gets you thrown into the ocean. Finally, and only then, was I smart enough to actually learn.

I'm bad at surfing now, but at least I know why.

From [Frightened, clueless or uninformed?](#) – Seth Godin

Being effective at work:

*In the book, **Supervision in the Helping Professions**, the authors discuss the need to continue to learn and flourish in your work environment. Since this relates to National Mission's ongoing concern for the health of ministers and leaders in the church, I'm including one list from their chapter on the topic (notes in brackets are mine).*

1. Be in love with learning. Stay at your learning edge and have a learning project.
2. Be clear about your learning style and keep expanding it. [*Knowing your learning style helps you be sure that you're learning at your own pace, not at the pace of others.*]
3. Attend to your emotional well-being.
4. Increase your capacity to relate to and engage with others. [*They suggest going outside your comfort zone of people you relate to easily.*]
5. Attend to your physical well-being - diet, exercise, sleep, breaks. [*Days off!*]
6. Have a personal or spiritual practice. [*For Christian leaders, this means not neglecting those spiritual disciplines - they're often one of the first things to fall off this sort of a list.*]
7. Find a group of good co-learners/fellow travellers. [*People who encourage you - people who can mentor you.*]



You might be interested to read an article from Harvard Business online called '[Harnessing Your Brain Power](#)' (written by Barbara Strauch - pictured) which reinforces some of the above. She notes: One of the best things we can do for our brains is to continue to work. Most modern jobs — even most modern hobbies — are multi-layered and involve socialization as well as problem-solving.

But we also have to, as brain scientists say, "get out of our comfort zones." Research shows that it helps to search out people — and ideas — that are different, to rattle established brain patterns, and shake up the cognitive egg to spur growth. (And another good reason to listen to younger colleagues.)

In a group of executives I realized that one of the defaults that shapes many of us in leadership is the search for some method or program that will provide solutions to problems. I talked about this default we have to **'hit the bullseye'** as if there was some object out there that, if we could just name it correctly (leadership with authority or a vision statement with a well executed plan) we would solve most of our problems. I remember the consternation on some people's faces when I said we are in the kind of new space where there just aren't any 'bullseyes' out there to hit and this was, in fact, a wrong way of thinking about leadership.



I experienced this again in the classroom last week where good leaders were eager to know what the bullet points looked like or wanted to make sure all the content was being properly covered. These were good leaders and there is nothing wrong with bullet points or content; but, when we find ourselves in a new space, a place of leadership where most of us have never been before, these ways of discovering how to lead are less than helpful. **We need a radically different set of criteria to lead in the new space we now inhabit.**

In the end, culture change is about apprenticing and then working with new sets of skills and practices then working them and working them and working them. **We are convinced that the new leadership we need to cultivate isn't primarily about more knowledge and content; it's about how you form learning communities that are apprenticed into new skills and habits.**

from [Alan Roxburgh on changing the way we view leadership](#)

mental health

Mental health well-being amongst fathers within the Pacific Island Families Study, by El-Shadan Tautolo, Philip J. Schluter and Gerhard Sundborn

This article investigates the prevalence of potential psychological disorder amongst a cohort of primarily Pacific fathers in New Zealand over their child's first 6-years of life. The analysis is based on data collected at 12-months, 2-years and 6-years after birth during the Pacific Islands Families Study, and uses the 12-item General Health Questionnaire to assess the prevalence of psychological distress amongst participant fathers at each measurement point.

The majority of fathers within the study reported good overall health and well-being. 'Symptomatic' disorders were initially low at 12 months (3.9%) but increased significantly at 2 years (6.6%) and at 6 years (9.8%). Other factors, such as employment, smoking and drinking, and marital status were taken into account, and were seen to have an effect on the mental health of the father.

It is finally being acknowledged after many years that the mental health and wellbeing of fathers is of particular importance to the function and wellbeing of the family.

Pacific peoples experience higher rates of mental illness than New Zealanders overall with the 12-month prevalence of Pacific peoples experiencing a mental disorder being 25% compared with 20.7% of the total New Zealand population.

cont....



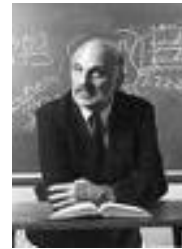
There is a need for further research in mental health amongst Pacific Islanders, particularly amongst specific groups such as youth and males in general. However, this perspective is only reflective of the situation amongst New Zealand based Pacific people, and may not represent the situation amongst Pacific people living in the Pacific Islands.

This article [is available in full online](#).

ministry

On the Per Crucem ad Lucem you can find 19 theses from Walter Brueggemann. These 'theses' are entitled, [A Script to Live \(and to die\) by](#).

Brueggemann replaces the commonly-used word, 'worldview,' with 'script,' which is a helpful change, and then points out in the 19 statements how we follow a script in our society of *technological, therapeutic, consumer militarism that socialises us all, liberal and conservative*.



He goes on to say that this script not only makes us unhappy, it's a failure. He then goes on to say that the alternative script is rooted in the Bible and offers a counter to the prevailing script. The key character in the script (and I think he means us to read 'character' as like a character in an ordinary play or film script) is God, the God of the Trinity.

I like what follows in thesis 12:

The ragged, disjunctive, and incoherent quality of the counter-script to which we testify cannot be smoothed or made seamless because when we do that the script gets flattened and domesticated and it becomes a weak echo of the dominant script of technological, consumer militarism. Whereas the dominant script of technological, consumer militarism is all about certitude, privilege, and entitlement this counter-script is not about certitude, privilege, and entitlement. Thus care must be taken to let this script be what it is, which entails letting God be God's irascible self.

Bullying, Abusive Congregations

I was alerted to [this blog post](#) on abusive congregations by a tweet from a friend on Twitter.

The post itself is fairly moderate, but the several comments that follow show an appalling problem within the church - an appalling lack of Christian behaviour from people in some congregations towards their ministers. You have to wonder if they ever pray, read their Bibles, think about Christian discipleship.

I've heard of such things with other colleagues, and experienced it myself in a somewhat less severe way when I was filling in as pastor at a former church, so it's by no means an American problem.

The post itself refers to research on the topic from the [Clergy Health Initiative](#), and one of the people commenting adds [several useful links](#) which anyone suffering this kind of abuse should follow up.

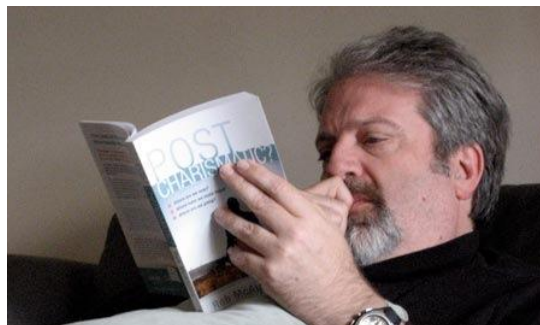
One of the other awful things from the comments is how many of them talk about the way in which the ministers' spouses were also abused. As Paul says, if I remember rightly, *Brothers (Sisters), these things should not be!*

mission

A somewhat tongue-in-cheek approach to the use of the word 'missional' from [Bill Kinnon's blog](#)

Missional Sunday Morning

I got up from a good night's missional sleep and ready for a missional day. Missionally showered with missional shampoo and headed out the door. Jumped into the missional SUV and exited the missional neighbourhood - heading for the partially-opened missional church doors. Sang missional songs with the gathered missional people, listened to the missional sermon, partook in the Lord's missional Supper, got a missional blessing, grabbed a fair trade missional coffee at the door, picked the SUV up from the missional parking lot and headed missionally home. **I just love being missional.**



After he's finished this section, he goes on at length about missional – very effectively. It's a good blog post.

trends

Throughout New Zealand, there are Presbyterian churches, elders and ministers who focus much of their time on ways to be in touch with the young people around them. Some churches are more successful than others, often because the right kind of person is in the role of youth leader, or because there is a good team of people reaching out to young people.

To listen to some devout people, one would imagine that God never laughs.
~ Sri Aurobindo

Having information about young people is one way in which to improve your ability to work with them. This may be information that's primarily local, or it may be anecdotal or word of mouth.

The Ministry of Youth Development has recently improved their website and one of the pages contains youth statistics for New Zealand. Statistics may not be everyone's cup of tea (particularly not youth leaders at the coal face) but they can give interesting overviews of an area or of trends in relation to a particular subject.

As an example: *In the 2006 Census,*
19.5 percent of young people aged 12 to 24 identified as Māori,
9.3 percent as Pacific,
13.1 percent Asian
and 1.2 percent as Other ethnicities.

These figures are all significantly higher than the proportion of the total population that identifies with each of these ethnic groups. In other words each of these people groups has more young people than old. The only exception are the Europeans.

You can see a graph showing these [stats more clearly on the web](#), and further down the page a table comparing where the different ethnicities predominate. *cont...*

In another section, the [wellbeing of young New Zealanders is discussed](#).

Take a few minutes to check the site out. It may prove more valuable than you'd expect.

In the [NZ Herald on the 5th of January](#), **Mick Duncan** wrote an opinion piece about women and binge-drinking.



He believes the reason why so many young (middle-class) women go out binge-drinking is that they've lived cotton wool-lives, protected from all sorts of risks, told not to speak to strangers, driven to and from school, and much more. Everything was made safe for them as they grew up.

Binge-drinking involves risk: I might get arrested, I might get knocked down by a car, I might get raped or wind up in bed with a total stranger, I might not even survive the night.

While it isn't much of a reason for these young women to be doing what they do, it perhaps shows that helping children avoid risks isn't as healthy as it might seem.

It also shows, perhaps, that these people know little about bigger adventures in life; they feel their lives are constrained. (And the same probably goes for the young men, including the boy racers.)

What do you think about Mick's conclusion? And check out this [Geek Dad page](#).

wellness

Today's Youth Have More Mental Health Issues

Results from a new study reveal that five times as many high school and college students are dealing with anxiety and other mental health issues as youth of the same age who were studied in the Great Depression era.

The findings were gathered from responses to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory — a popular psychological questionnaire used as far back as 1938. Led by Jean Twenge, a San Diego State University psychology professor, researchers at five universities analyzed the responses of 77,576 high school or college students who, between 1938 through 2007, took the MMPI.

Overall, an average of five times as many students in 2007 surpassed thresholds in one or more mental health categories compared with those who did so in 1938. A few individual categories increased at an even greater rate — with six times as many scoring high in two areas: "hypomania," a measure of anxiety and unrealistic optimism (from 5% of students in 1938 to 31% in 2007) and depression (from 1% to 6%). cont...

"It's another piece of the puzzle — that yes, this does seem to be a problem, that there are more young people who report anxiety and depression," says Twenge. "The next question is: What do we do about it?"

Though the study has critics and does not provide a definitive correlation, mental health professionals speculate that a popular culture increasingly focused on the external — from wealth to looks and status — has contributed to the increase in mental health issues. Divorce rates for their parents have gone up, as well, which may lead to less stability.

Scott Hunter, director of paediatric neuropsychology at the University of Chicago's Comer Children's Hospital, notes this latest generation has been raised in a "you can do anything atmosphere." And that, he says, "sets up a lot of false expectation" that inevitably leads to distress for some.

From Pastor's Weekly Briefing 15.1.10

I've had a long distance association with Australian **Rowland Croucher** for a number of years, first when I used to buy his books in for the bookshop I ran, and more recently, with the advent of *Facebook*, in seeing his regular contributions to that site. I also get a (fairly) regular ezine from him.



Recently he's put together [a short piece in which he compiles the main links](#) to articles on his John Mark Ministries site relating to *stress and burnout*. Unfortunately, unless you're (a) a member of Facebook, and (b) a 'friend' of Rowland's, you won't be able to access this page.

Some of these articles aren't new, by any means. Nevertheless, the material in them isn't dated; if anything the problem has got worse since these articles were written. The first piece he focuses on is [Stress and Burnout in Ministry](#). It's written by Rowland himself, is directly on the topic, and talks not only about why pastoral ministry is so stressful, but also offers some basic advice on how to overcome some aspects of the stress.

I like the way he puts one of the recommendations for staying healthy:

2. Take regular time off. You aren't called to work harder than your Creator. Develop a way of being 'through for the day' (at least most days). Take your full four weeks' annual leave in one stretch (and make alternative arrangements for weddings, etc.).

Encourage your denomination to include two weeks' extra, all-expenses-paid study leave each year.

On your day/s off, do something very different from what you do the other days. (Wednesday or Thursday is best for preachers - away from the adrenalin-arousing Sundays).

Listen to Spurgeon: 'Repose is as needful to the mind as sleep to the body... If we do not rest, we shall break down. Even the earth must lie fallow and have her Sabbaths, and so must we'. [*Spurgeon should know: he struggled with depression a good deal.*]

Jesus said, 'Come apart and rest awhile'. (If you don't rest awhile, you'll soon come apart!).

Take some time off to read this article. It may be a lifesaver!

"A man would do nothing, if he waited until he could do it so well that no one would find fault with what he has done." Cardinal Newman

A marketing story which may double as a preaching anecdote:

10pm. Wanting to take a coffee to Neelam who is working till 11, I discovered our favourite restaurant had just run out of coffee beans. Instead of a "better luck next time", they referred me to the competition, WITH 2 empty take away coffee cups just in case they had run out!

Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing till it gets there.
~Josh Billings

Sure enough they had run out of cups (what were the chances?!), but when I told the guy I just happened to have empty ones in my car, he laughed and said sure he'd make me some coffees. He then refused to let me pay him anything, saying he was grateful I'd given him something to do!! The friendly folks of New Plymouth huh? I love this place!
Matt Dalman on Facebook.

Real life situations are sometimes so bitter that they consume all the carefully nurtured faith down to its roots.

I have closely watched the Zimbabwean situation. I have interacted with my friends in Zimbabwe. Now in India, I am closely watching the status of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Heart rendering.

I bleed in my heart seeing the photos of the burnt homes, sexually violated girls and women, child soldiers handling weapons with their tender hands! All such situations are tsunamis that could drown our faith in God. Where am I supposed to find God's healing hands in such situations?

The question we need to ask ourselves is not 'Is God Dead?'; rather - "Is my faith Alive?"

[CWM Missionary Joseph Kennedy](#)

Good judgment comes
from experience, and
often experience comes
from bad judgment. ~
Rita Mae Brown

Mission Resource Blog

you can have posts sent directly to your email box each time a new one appears