



SOAR WITH THE EAGLES

Canada/US National Holiday Week 2010 Business e-zine

Mind, Heart, Spirit: Don't Just Survive, Thrive!

Victoria C. Leo offers a comprehensive approach to getting you from where you are to where you want to be through professional life coaching. She is a career coach with 13 years experience and a Small Business Coach with an integrated approach to Breaking Down Barriers to Success.

The Soaring Business approach gives you expert analytic advice with the option for powerful techniques to busting through internal barriers using certified medical techniques (clinical hypnotherapy, energy psychology) and some woo-woo that really works (past life regressions).

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In-person in Western Washington & by phone world-wide.

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1. Should you Consider Online Education?

Online degree programs and certificates are such an obvious advantage for busy entrepreneurs, yet we are not heavy users of this form of education. I have been pondering this question and asking my fellow entrepreneurs. If you attend one of my seminars, you get roped into my questionnaires or group discussions at the end of the event. The answers seem to be grouped into:

1. I don't have time
2. I need revenue, not education
3. I'm a people-person: I need interaction
4. Miscellaneous other

Thoughts to ponder:

1. Everyone on Earth has the same 23 hrs 59min/day. You've decided that something else is more important. If you've made a really informed decision, good for you. Maybe you really mean 2.

2. This is the real one for most of us, hidden in a smoke-screen of other verbiage, I believe. You are convinced that all you need is more time on task. Could be. Or you could be furiously driving toward what you imagine is St. Louis only to be surprised when you start seeing Maple Leaf flags and stern-faced dudes with body armor. Maybe taking regular time-outs to input new information and ideas is exactly what you need to get you to St. Louis: a new map, a GPS, a motel guide, studded snow tires, even trading in your car for a river boat. Maybe more education would lead you to more revenue because creative selling ideas are creative – and creative requires periodic breaks from the tunnel-vision of tactical execution. Maybe revenue is the result of other processes and it's only when you focus on the other processes that revenue comes.

3. Anyone who thinks online education is not about interaction has never taken a good-quality online class. As a student, I got to know my fellow students so much more – in numbers and in depth – than I ever have in a seated class where everyone is competing for limited “air time” to impress the instructor. When you are online, you are still trying to impress the instructor, but because the interaction is happening on your time, and you have all the space you need to really convey your ideas, you can fully develop them before you post them. Your fellow students can add, point out your lapses in logic [gently] and laugh along with you as you examine the follies and foibles of molecules, muscles or your fellow humanity, depending on the subject matter. As an instructor, I get to know my students just as deeply as I did when I saw their faces. Some people interact with you more or less; the same percentage are exasperating with their lack of work and expectation of reward anyway. It's life, only on your schedule. One major advantage for everyone stems from the fact that I do NOT see other people's faces. Can you imagine what that would be?

Yes, the major advantage for everyone in building an educational community online is that we don't get to make our quick-slicing judgments about each other in the first three seconds that we lay eyes on each other. I don't know your age, your ethnicity, your attractiveness, your height, your weight, what gender you get romantic with, and any other factors that are irrelevant to the study of geology or sociology. And my students don't know any of those things about me until they are well into the 4th week of class at least and they have had time to absorb my knowledge of the subject, my caring, my tough attitude on deadlines and the things that really matter to knowing me, the person.

Bottom line: consider good-quality education. On selling techniques, OK, and I sell some really good seminars on how to figure out the message that will grab a client, in 5 sentences or less.

2. Winning the Panel Interview

In a one-on-one situation, you can read one person's personality and pitch your messages in words that particular person is most comfortable with. In a group, there are more challenges.

Panel interviews concern my clients a lot. Panel interviews are the rule in **education [colleges, especially, and they are a good source of IT employment]** and are becoming more common in industry, as a way to “get through” the process faster. Panels are not better at picking good candidates, though. In fact, based on solid psych research, I would predict that they are significantly worse. For you as a candidate, understanding why they are probably not good predictors of who will be the best employee will help you to plan how to do better and get the job.

Panel interviews in education include one or two decision-makers and a variable number of stake-holders with varying roles. In some cases, the faculty members are just there because they have to be. They are only concerned to make sure that someone truly incompetent or horrible isn't hired. In other cases, they have a true agenda: it may be to ensure the election of a “favorite son/daughter” or to block anyone with a particular educational philosophy. Note that their role is overwhelmingly negative. They are not there to promote anything, unless as stated there is a candidate who is a friend/cousin of their department chair and they smart enough to know their next good review depends on their ability to move heaven and earth to get the person hired. Especially if the department chair says they want no favoritism in the decision. They are there to find something wrong and to keep quiet and go along if nothing negative [in their eyes] comes up.

What some people do is pick out the one or two real decision-makers and pitch their woo directly to them. Sometimes this works, especially if you can see that the decision-maker has a weak sense of self and really needs their ego stroked. A better-adjusted manager doesn't like to see their fiction that the entire panel is going to make the decision punctured. Academics are just like other people, only more so, when it comes to having the

image that they are pitching being disregarded by a person who sees the underlying power structure. Do so at your peril.

What you need to do is to **keep your eyes moving** around the room, slowly moving through all the people around the table. Spend the most time smiling and “answering” the person who has been assigned to ask the canned list of questions, but make sure that you make eye contact with the decision-makers on every question, as you move around the room. This is hard to do while you are creating the most sincere-sounding answer from your list of success stories, so practice. Yeah, I know you’re busy. Too busy to practice what you need to ace the next interview? No, I didn’t think so. So practice. Type up a bunch of questions and put place cards around a table – one of my client did it with her kid’s stuffed animals – and practice answering questions while you make eye-contact with all the teddies, I mean people.

In some schools, the decision-maker allows others on the panel only as a courtesy, so that people feel empowered by the knowledge that they can say “I knew it,” to their faculty groups if the employee does not work out. In others, s/he makes sure that decisions are more democratic, to ensure that s/he is covered should the employee not work out. **The key is whether the decision-maker is a Myers-Briggs P or a J.** The J’s will make their decisions and others’ attendance is a courtesy. The P’s don’t want to move forward without every stakeholder from here to Mars involved and in concurrence.

If the decision-maker is a J, everyone who doesn’t have a mandate for a particular candidate or has conceived a burning hatred for you for some reason, will wait to hear what the decision-maker wants, then echo that, using different verbiage and reasoning so that it sounds like they all spontaneously came to the same conclusion [See my discussion of groupthink.] That is the reason why so many people make the mistake of pitching at the decision-maker exclusively.

Your deepest need then is to know what the Myers-Briggs type of the key decision-makers are and to do it before you have said more than three [possibly wrong] words. What I recommend is that you engage the decision-makers in some preliminary chit-chat that will allow you to assess their MBTI, then pitch the rest of your answers to that type. You do this while saying what you are saying to the entire room. One of my clients does a rapid read on the entire room, then pitches to the most common type, and does very well. It’s easier to rapid-type only one or two people. **I offer an audioconference class in rapid-typing that runs for three hours and includes a laminated cheat-sheet.** Memorized, it is a powerful weapon for acing panel interviews, and in selling anyone on anything. In education, Deans may be J’s or P’s but lower-level employees are likely P. In government, the ST combo is very common, with NT in management.

Why do I predict that panels are worse at picking good candidates than a series of individual interviews? The primary reason is groupthink. Groupthink occurs when members of a hierarchical organization go along with what the leader wants – to keep their jobs, get promoted, be considered a “team player.” When people’s true insights are allowed to flower, one individual can detect flaws that get swallowed by groupthink. In a group discussion after a series of individual interviews, I have been told by interviewers that they are more emboldened to say what they really think. If the entire group was present during the same interview, other attendees can discount your conclusions because they were present and didn’t see what you did; if they didn’t see it, they are inclined to believe that it didn’t happen. Since good intuitive readers can catch a millisecond microexpression, the fact that others’ did not see it does not in fact mean that it wasn’t there. If you were alone in the room when you saw what you saw, you are more likely to stick to your guns. [Because I know the difference between good science and bad, let me assure you that I am not ready for prime time with this conclusion; I had an inadequate sample size and informants in only North Carolina and Washington, not a broad spectrum of US managers.]

Dang, you are thinking, why would I want individual interviewers? I want to get hired, for heavens’ sake! No, you don’t. You want to get hired at a company, in a job, that you have at least a 27% chance of actually being able to stand. If you really aren’t suited for the job, if it’s going to be hell on earth for you, I want you to keep looking.

3. The Downside of Just-in-Time lean inventories

For two decades, the Japanese Just-in-Time concept has been High Gospel. To review, if you keep few components in stock for your manufacturing, or you keep little inventory in stock in your stores, you have less capital tied up in components or inventory. You maximize your profits. This works very well in economic calm

periods, or in industries where ups and downs never occur. In volatile times, it is the kiss of death. One company that has been doing very well on paper using JIT techniques is John Deere. As the recession tightened its grip, Deere let inventory shrink at its dealers. But here's what the bean-counters did not consider: Deere makes farm equipment; seeds need to be planted at precise times; if I can't be sure of getting equipment in time for planting, I have to get it from someone else. Guess whose most loyal customers are defecting right, left and center? Good old JIT Deere. They got so mesmerized by the on-paper benefits of JIT, that they forgot their customers. The economy suddenly lurched back into positive mode, everyone went out to buy new combines – and Deere has nothing in stock. Sure, Deere is gearing up the factories, finally. But the customers they lose this year, who have always bought green-and-gold, will never be as loyal again. They are discovering that other [non-American, darn it!] companies can make 4-wheel drive, air conditioned tractors. Deere is losing market share like crazy. Keep this in mind the next time you hear someone pontificating on the necessity to not “waste” money on adequate inventory. If you can't prognosticate, you have to know your own business; if there's a chance of losing customers if your crystal ball cracks – don't risk it!

It's not just manufacturing that has been bitten by JIT. Retail has been clobbered big-time by selected surges as consumers start to spend again.

4. New Ideas, New Books – Economy IS Picking up!

Of course, you are all serious students of economic indicators and you know that the economy has turned around. The massive bailout of the key banks and financial institutions stabilized our economic system and we did NOT have another Great Depression. Lots of us had lots of net worth wiped out, never to return, and I don't want to minimize that at all. I do want us all to remember what did not happen. Human brains focus on negatives. It's just how we're wired. We can endlessly Monday Morning Quarterback what we think we would have done. Bottom line for us all: we dodged a really big bad bullet.

- If you are seeking employment, companies are starting to hire, albeit mostly in contractors. You don't have to worry about being stigmatized if you take a contract. The people who didn't lose their jobs weren't the A-list, or the smartest, or the best, or anything like that. They just happened to be the people in the industries that were least hard-hit, or they had a job that someone considered mission-critical [some of which made me scratch my head mentally] or they just happened to be in a little protective bubble of factors. Anyone who doesn't realize this is in denial or is a pea-wit. Don't worry about them. Get a contract. If you don't know any good contracting companies, call or email me.
- If you are a small business owner, sales are going to start getting better by fall. That is when most of the cash will hit the businesses and the individuals that you are aiming at. I sincerely hope that you have not been too pig-headed about your market niche this recession. I know small businesses that are turning away work that is not in their sweet-spot, like a photographer who only wants portraits, not industrial work. Dude, just get your cash flow now. By fall, you can probably start landing more of the gigs that you want to specialize in. The middle of Armageddon is not the time to specialize, unless you choose to specialize in something that is a Need, not a Want.
- If you are a manager at a larger company, you probably know this already: people are starting to get good jobs at your competitors [see the next item]. If your company has used this Recession as an excuse to exploit people, boy are you going to have a hard time holding on to your people. It may be time for you to revamp your resume as well.

So let's give thanks that the worst is behind us. This interlocking global market economy was not allowed to collapse. It wasn't glamorous, it makes me mad that we had to do it, but we did have to do it. Jobs are coming back, the economy is coming back. Maybe at a permanently lowered standard of living. But it could have been much, much worse. It wasn't. It won't be.

Business Week Online featured an article by Liz Ryan on May 17th, titled *5 Ways to Ensure Mediocrity in Your Organization*. She says: “*The recession is no excuse for ignoring, misusing, or demeaning talent.*” She reminds managers that “*productivity has come on the backs of workers, especially salaried types viewed by too many management teams as infinitely elastic resources. Many chief executives use the tough competitive environment as a handy excuse to put off salary increases, tighten the screws on performance, and generally drop any pretense of creating a human-centered workplace. But the tough-economy picture has two sides. Much of the workforce has tuned out, waiting for a more welcoming job market to make career moves. Those organizations that haven't wavered on their commitments to flexibility, recognition of talent, and transparent leadership will keep A-list players on board as the job market improves. Their competitors may be wishing they'd paid a little more attention to employee TLC as employees start peeling off for greener pastures.*”

If you know yourself to be an A-list employee, remember that the recession will not last forever and when jobs become more plentiful in your industry, you will not be feeling as powerless as you do now. Keep up your spirits until that happy day, through meditation, prayer, exercise in the beautiful summer sunshine and an enjoyment of the beauty that you do have in your life. Have an abstemious holiday or two. And check out this excellent article!

Three new books are being added to the Business Books list on my website [under Resources]. [Blunder](#) and [How we Decide](#) focus on how we humans REALLY make decisions [it's not what you probably think] and [The Wisdom of Whores](#) talks about how we make public policy, a specific type of decision, about national and international AIDS policy. It is also a fascinating look at the link between how science really works, and the culture that it is embedded in.

5. Victoria Day, May 20th, Other Holidays!

Every once in a while one of my American clients will see Victoria Day in their calendar and ask me what that's all about. I solemnly tell them that it's **a national holiday in which they are required to bring a gift for their friends named Victoria, and that I prefer Amazon gift cards**. That sends them scurrying to Wikipedia. The fact that even people who moments before were bemoaning the six deadlines that they had to meet before they could leave for the day will run off to Wikipedia when I tell them that, tells me that the average American would rather keep working until midnight than plunk down for an Amazon gift card – or that nobody likes to think that there's something going on that they're not “in the know” on. Franz de Waal has seen this latter motivation in action among chimpanzees. It's at least 8 million years old.....

I'll fess up and admit that you're supposed to bring gifts for Queen Victoria, not me. It's a holiday all around the Commonwealth, which includes Canada. That also means that **anyone who lives within 1,000 miles of Canada is entitled to give themselves a gift**. Because if there's another thing that's true of humans, and not chimpanzees, it's that we don't get enough hugs, time off, gifts or holidays. So take one from the list and celebrate! You deserve it – even if your name isn't Victoria. Belated celebrations may be invoked up to 60 days after an event, so you have until July 20th on this one.

Canada and USA National Holidays

To all my friends north of the 49th Parallel of latitude [excluding Alaska and including the tip of Vancouver Island], Happy Canada Day! Oh, Canada! I promise, any decade now, I am going to forgive y'all for pulling a fast one and grabbing the lower part of Vancouver Island for your country during the border treaty negotiations.

To all my friends in the lower 48, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and assorted other islands, Happy 4th! Please focus on embracing all Americans, and asking for blessings on all of us, not on what divides and separates us. That is truly worth celebrating.

Next issue will explore how to know when it's time for a new business plan for your small business [Hint: waiting until sales drop off is too late...]

Another WebCircle e-zine will be coming your way very soon ...until then, SOAR WITH THE EAGLES!