



SPEAKERS' CORNER NEWSLETTER



October 2011

Spotting Stories

Last month was the 72nd anniversary of a young rookie reporter being sent to Poland by the Daily Telegraph in September, 1939. Her name was Clare Hollingsworth and this month she celebrated her 100th birthday. What did Clare do that made her name? She was the first foreign correspondent to tell the world that “Germany had invaded Poland”. It was her first story and she went on to be a highly successful newspaper woman. Clare’s story gave us our lead in a recent workshop when we talked about: “Like journalists you need to be alert for a story”. Most of us will never be in Clare’s position of reporting on a world changing event, but we can be the first one to spot a story and use it to make our case. What story have you found today?

“Stories can conquer fear. They can make the heart bigger” Ben Okri

Meeting a Hero

Michael Johnson is a 4 time Olympic gold medallist. His 400 metre world record time of 43.18 seconds is still unbeaten 12 years after he achieved it. He now coaches world-class athletes, runs a Performance Coaching Academy in the USA and is an athletics analyst for the BBC, Channel 4 and a sports columnist for The Times. We went to hear him speak last month in London at the launch of his new book “Gold Rush” It contains not only his thoughts on winning but he has also interviewed 13 other Olympic gold medallists from Usain Bolt to Seb Coe. We met Johnson when he signed a copy of his book for us. We also shook hands which felt rather special since he’s one of our heroes.

On leaving we thought about his Performance Academy – he uses video-ing extensively to give feedback to his athletes. Like him we know that video-ing and feedback works and we continue to use it in all workshops and one-to-one coaching. So if you want to improve your presentation performance contact us now at info@speakersco.co.uk.

“Champions aren’t made in the gym, they’re made in the heart” Mohammed Ali

On yer bike

September saw London host a cycling festival and numerous special events took place including one we enjoyed - an evening of short speeches delivered by cycling enthusiasts – now that’s a first for us! We heard Graeme Obree, who is a world record speed and pursuit cyclist tell us the secret to his success. He developed a pioneering riding position and crafted his own innovative bicycles, including ‘old faithful’ which was famous for using washing machine parts.

So what was his secret? To ask himself the right question. Sounds obvious but frequently we get diverted from the main challenge because we don’t ask the right question. He wanted to go as fast as was possible within the laws of the International Cycling Association. So he asked himself this question: “How can I design a bike that will make me go faster?” It was as simple as that.

Are you asking yourself the right questions?

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” Martin Luther King

10 minute rule

We’re often asked “How long should I speak for?” Our standard reply is “No longer than 20 minutes.” But that doesn’t work for every presentation. John Medina author of “Brain Rules” has an answer. We particularly liked his “10 minute rule”. Audiences check out after 10 minutes, but he says you can keep grabbing them back by telling narratives or creating events rich in emotion. As we say in our Storytelling workshop, the emotions created by a story help the brain to learn. We highly recommend “Brain Rules”. ISBN 978-0-979777745

“Nobody believes the official spokesman, but everybody trusts an unidentified source.” Ron Nesen

Future Babble

“In 1984 The Economist magazine asked sixteen people to make ten year forecasts of economic growth rates, exchange rates, oil prices and other staples of economic prognostication. Four of the test subjects were former finance ministers, four were chairmen of multinational companies, four were economic students at Oxford University and four were London dustmen. A decade later The Economist viewed the forecasts and discovered they were, on average, awful. But some were more awful than others: the dustmen tied with the corporate chairmen for the first place and the finance ministers came last.” To read more examples like this of how the experts got it wrong we recommend Dan Gardner’s book on prediction – “Future Babble. Why Expert predictions Fail and Why We Believe Them Anyway.” [Virgin Books].

“An economist is a man who knows a 100 ways to make love but doesn’t know any women.”

Art Buchwald

Story from Dubai

We recently ran some Storytelling workshops for two creative agencies in Dubai. We visit every year and on the trip from the airport never fail to be amazed by what we see – new buildings, roads and infrastructure - the pace of change is phenomenal - Dubai is simply buzzing. We'd like to tell you one memorable story we heard from a delegate which made us think about how times there have changed. "A young Jordanian student went to university in Dubai. Although everybody spoke Arabic there was one word she couldn't understand – 'Pushka'. She asked her fellow students what 'Pushka' meant. They replied 'servant'. After hearing it used many more times and knowing it wasn't of Arabic origin she asked her professor what it meant and where it came from? He stroked his chin and thought for a moment: 'Well I remember my father telling me that many years ago when the British were here they liked to take their cars out into the desert. Whenever their cars got stuck they would say to their servant: 'Push the car' and over the years it got abbreviated'."

"What great thing would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?" Robert H. Schuller

It's later than you think

We ran this poem in a newsletter 4 years ago. It was sent to us by a sailing friend who found it on Cook Islands near Australia. Our friend Kelvin and his wife Ann totally subscribed to this view and this year had a new yacht built in Slovenia. They took it sailing in the Mediterranean but after 3 months Kelvin had to return because he had become gravely ill. He is now back in Sydney and we wanted to re-run this poem as a tribute to him and Ann and to hope that you are not putting off the things you should be doing now.

On an ancient wall in China
Where a brooding Buddha blinks
These words are deeply graven
"It's later than you think."

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To say just when the hands will stop
Be it late or early hour.

Now is the time you own,
The past is a golden link,
Go cruising now my brother,
It's later than you think.

"Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary". Steve Jobs

Good luck!

Barry Graham and Sally Clare

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