



talking about...

December 2009

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

As This Year Ends ...

It is remarkable how most people seem to have a common sense of "where did the last year go?" Perhaps it is the busyness of most people's lives; perhaps it is the fact that we are all a year older and each year is a smaller percentage of our time on the planet; perhaps it is the seemingly ever-increasing amount of information that we have to process each day. Whatever the reason or reasons, when we look back at the years and see them flashing by, it can be sobering to think that each year, each month, each week and each day will inexorably come and go. Our life is our experience of this time and, although there is much that is outside of our influence and control, there is great deal that we can choose to design and seek to create about that experience.

When we reflect on the past year in Talking About, we can look back with satisfaction on great conversations and some significant personal growth for many of our clients and students. We look ambitiously forward to more of the same in 2010.

To those of you we worked with over the past year, we would like to thank you for the trust you have placed in us and, hopefully, that trust has been returned to you in your learning and growth. To those of you who welcome us into your life each month through our newsletter, we want to thank you for letting us share our unique perspective of the world with you. We hope it provides you with food for thought and the occasional pearl of wisdom.

Regardless of how you celebrate at this time of the year, we wish you a joy-filled and safe festive season and may 2010 bring you peace, happiness and success. We look forward to more conversations in the New Year. As they say in America, "Happy Holidays!"

Chris and Jacqui

A Basic Ontological Premise ...

"The trouble with learning from experience is that you never graduate."

... Doug Larson in "The Speaker's Electronic Reference Collection"

I have been writing a newsletter on the world of ontological since 1995. For the past decade, these newsletters have been produced every month. That is a lot of topics to explore! One of the challenges of writing that many newsletters is the need to create coherence about them despite a wide variation in the subjects. My approach to doing this lies in firstly an underlying philosophy on which I see ontological coaching is based and secondly drawing links between what I observe in the world and that philosophy. As this is a time of year when we are more prone to reflect on our lives, I thought I would share that philosophy with you.

Our ontological philosophy is based on the premise that the human con-

dition is a continuous yet momentary experience of living. In other words, life is an uninterrupted process. One of the great human capacities is to create a sense of life that is much bigger than the momentary experience. We do that through our rich use of language to produce our stories about ourselves in relation to the past and the future. Yet we all live in the moment and it is that single idea that forms the basis of our ontological coaching approach. So what does that mean?

Well, initially we can look at what this means about us. How do we deal with the moment? From an ontological perspective, we can say that we are constantly interacting with our environment – our physical and relational environment - and the way we interact is a manifestation of our way of being at that time. Our way of being at any point of time can be distinguished as a coherence of our physical state, our emotional state and our linguistic (thinking) state. At a point in time, our energy levels, what we observe (hear, see etc), how we feel, what we believe and so on, all form the structure that will create our response in the moment to a given circumstance. When we observe what people do, we can use our ontological distinctions to interpret a person's way of being at the time. Ultimately, as an ontological coach, we are working with people to shift their way of being to respond more effectively to the circumstances in which they are likely to find themselves.

If we look at what this means at a practical level in terms of say leader-

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ship, it means that effective leaders are seeking to engage people to take certain actions at a certain point of time in the future. Ideally this means that leaders understand the human condition and what has people do what they do in certain situations. This potentially leads to different approach to leading others that considers what will have things show up for people in the moment they are doing something. This approach lends itself to simplicity rather than too much complexity, to creating clear frameworks of meaning and direction that are born of clarity and consistency of message and action. It lends itself to influencing the emotional states of those who are being led and to creating a physical environment that is conducive to that. Above all, it involves being able to explore a variety of perspectives in order to create the greatest influence in a way that is beneficial for all.

So there you have it. When you see someone do something that you do not understand, rather than thinking "what the @!# are they doing?", why not ask yourself "what is it about them that would have them do that now?". It may well broaden your perspective.

"Men are wise in proportion not to their experience but to their capacity for experience."

... Samuel Johnson (1709 - 1784) English lexicographer and critic

Humour from the Christmas Bon Bon ...

For those who celebrate Christmas, you will know that each year there is the laugh/groan experience of the jokes in the Christmas bon bon. So to get you in the mood ...

Q: What's red and white and black all over?

A: Santa Claus after he slid down the chimney.

Q. Why was Cinderella no good at football?

A. Because her coach was a pumpkin.

Q. Why do reindeer scratch themselves?

A. Because they're the only ones who know where they itch.

Q. Why was Santa's little helper depressed?

A. Because he had low 'elf' esteem.

Q. Why did the man get the sack from the orange juice factory?

A. Because he couldn't concentrate.

Q. How do snowmen travel around?

A. By riding an icicle.

Q. Where do snow-women like to dance?

A. At snowballs.

Q. What happened when Guy ate the Christmas decorations?

A. He went down with tinsel-itis.

Q. What's the difference between a fish and a piano?

A. You can't tuna fish!

Q. Why did the apple turnover?

A. Because it saw the cheese roll.

Q. What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?

A. Frostbite.

"Obviously the facts are never just coming at you but are incorporated by an imagination that is formed by your previous experience. Memories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imaginings of the facts."

... Philip Roth (b. 1933) US novelist and short-story writer

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