

Many years ago I developed a Debriefing process for Research and Development Projects. It was part of stemming the loss of knowledge which happened as projects finished and everyone moved on to different, new projects. We tend to be so fascinated with new beginnings that very often we don't take time to reflect and ponder what's just happened. Thereby missing out on valuable learning's and information. Having developed the process and used it to debrief many projects, both complex and simple, it became a natural way for me to think. To the point where I'd debrief every event, not just wait till the whole project had finished. I learnt the pro and con of this, the pro is that you get to refine, tweak and implement learning's and improvements asap. The con, well in some cases it's over analysis and you don't give the project enough room to breath.

One of my habits is to review the year in context, the business goals and objectives, and my personal goals. After some personal reflection I'll do the business part with the blue pea POD team and we share our thoughts. Ideally the review happens in December and then the individual focus for next year happens in January. This split allows percolation time and stops it becoming a purely logical affair. It also works with how we naturally think.

Here's a simple review structure.

Based on what you / we wanted to achieve this year for each goal/objective:-

- 1) What worked?
- 2) What didn't work?
- 3) What surprises where there and how did you respond to them?
- 4) What lessons did you learn?
- 5) What improvements did you make?
- 6) What, if anything, needs to change?

Questions 3,4,and 5 have a personal focus. Very often the greatest growth comes from increasing our self awareness. If you answer the above questions for each objective you had this year, you'll also uncover patterns. And when you do it for personal stuff too, then you get to see if there are any overarching trends.

One of the things I say to clients is that everything happens for a reason, it just isn't always obvious at the time. This form of debrief and reflection allows you to get that perspective, the lessons and learning's.

Two conversations remind me of the value I get from this. The first was when someone said they hadn't got time for this level of debrief or reflection. Now I guess after several years of thinking this way perhaps it comes more natural to me. However one thing I do know is that I don't want the next year to be a repetition of this one just because I was too busy to improve. I also find it a natural way to spot some of my achievements and successes that otherwise would have slipped away and been taken for granted. It stops me taking others for granted too. The second conversation was when someone said the years just mingled in to each other, it was just more of the same and nothing had really happened. There is such a thing as playing it too safe. I know I'd take the highs and lows over blah and mediocrity any day. Indeed not only this year, but this last

decade has delivered a rollercoaster ride and I'm just putting the finishing touches to my plans for the next one. Better hang on, it's going to be fun.

Gift 2 - The power of letting go

Without endings, there would be no beginnings.

Nature is a great teacher, especially if you pay attention. As I look out of the window the trees are blowing in the wind, any last remaining leaves being whipped away. Any that survive will soon be got by the frost. The tree doesn't protest though, it knows there will be more next year.

We on the other hand have the capacity to hoard, hang on, fight, resist and struggle to let go. And I am speaking from much experience here. Now in some cases we do this physically, anyone still got outfits in their wardrobe which are unlikely to fit you in the next 3 years unless you fast; or coats that have seen better days, but well you never know one day you might need it, and yet if you're honest, it would have to be a desperate day.

December is a natural time for things to end. It's the end of a year. It's a time when we empty the freezer so we can make space for mince pies and sausage rolls. It's a time when we do performance reviews. It's a time when we reflect on what worked, whether we achieved our targets, our personal goals and we begin to think about the next year.

And what I see repeatedly is a rush to greet the new year. We ask our staff what they think their development needs are next year, we ask them to think about their objectives for 2012. New, new, new, Create, create, create.

Do you ever ask or get asked " and what is it now time to let go of / end / stop"?

And more than that, how often do you contemplate the answer to this question from more than a physical place.

Here are some questions that I hope will help you.

- What emotions should I now let go of?
- What behaviours no longer serve me?
- What skills do I no longer want to hone, develop or even be known for?
- What activities no longer bring me satisfaction? [you really have to get rid of these - like germs.]
- What activities no longer bring me alive? [you need to stop these too, but less urgently]

- What thoughts should I stop thinking?
- What beliefs do I have which it's time to re-assess / let go of?
- What services / products / clients / suppliers / staff is it now time to let go of (and with good grace as they have got you to where you are now)?

Remember that anything which no longer brings you alive is too small for you. It's served its purpose so now's the time to let go and move on.

It's also important to know that without letting go you cannot go on to create as successfully as is possible for you.

Again all too often in business I see people starting new projects, developing new products/services, with the same resources as before, and yet not deciding what should come to an end so that this new thing has a chance to flourish.

So why do we resist endings and hope to skip them and go straight to creating something new? Probably because endings don't always happen overnight and there can be pain involved, sometimes a lot. We skip them because beginnings are inspirational, positive, full of hope. And in some cases we know we should end 'blah' but we can't see automatically what the new is that's emerging, so we hang on believing that this 'blah' is better than nothing. I have experience of this too, and I'd like to say I've found a quick way through the void, but I'm still working on that one. What I do know is that in this transition space fear is ever present and can become so intense that we can choose to go back to the old, the comfortable, the known and predictable. Even if we're tired of it at least we're not scared of it. The key thing to remember here is that is not growth, that route leads to stagnation and death (although not always physical, well eventually, but you know what I mean.)

So what is it now time for you to let go of?

Gift 3 - Direction

What do you really want from life, from your career, from your current position? How specific or vividly can you describe those things? Not that you have to tell anyone else, in fact I'd be discerning about whom you do share that information with.

Without knowing what you want from the year, your career or any other facet of your life, it's too easy to get sucked in to doing tasks, feeling very busy, and achieving very little of value. Ever catch yourself saying "I must do this, I should do that". The words must and should imply necessity, either you believe you have no choice, or you don't enjoy the activity. The more often you hear yourself using

words like must, should, have to, the greater the possibility you aren't following your true path. When work is fulfilling or meaningful to you these words don't appear. Unless we pay attention to what we want, then often we move from being vague, to getting sidetracked in to doing things for others who really do know what they want.

It's been proven too many times that the more you know what you want, the greater the chance of achieving it. You've probably heard people say things like 'you get what you think about ' or 'be careful what you wish for'. So if you're thinking about what you don't want to happen and that's as far as your thinking goes, then you'll see more of those elements show up in your life. Now if you don't know what you do want, but you can list all the things you definitely don't want that's great. Look at the list and for everything there will be an opposite - so what is it and would you prefer instead? Whether it's an immediate I don't want or a longer term I don't want, it makes no difference to your head, just start where ever you can.

Top sports people don't go round saying things like "I hope I don't crash in this race" - they focus on what they do want e.g. I want to win, I want to get 4pts, I want to beat my best lap time. In your meetings are you discussing what you don't want to happen with the team, or are you clear about what outcomes you'd like them to focus on?

Then the next step is to explore if your outcome is compelling enough to withstand any tests or resistance. So ask yourself what happens after you achieve the outcome, what will you / others get out of it? It puts the outcome in to perspective and you can decide how much of your time, energy and focus it deserves. Equally when you've answered the question you may also find that there are other ways of achieving the same outcome - so you increase your options.

Having determined what you want, the next stage is to phrase it correctly thereby dramatically improving the chances of success, outcomes should be:

- ✓ **Personal** ('I' or 'We' for a team)
- ✓ **Positively stated** towards a clear vision or image
- ✓ **Believably obtainable** (but still stretching you to your limits)
- ✓ **Stated in the present** (I am / we are)
- ✓ **Ongoing** (so you already have some of what you want and it's increasing / improving; e.g. becoming/growing/ getting/ better / more)
- ✓ **Attractive** (it motivates or inspires everyone concerned)
- ✓ **Relevant and Beneficial** (Ecological)
- ✓ **Specific** (the more you know exactly what you want the less chance of being sidetracked there is).



Examples of this would be

'We are increasing trust in the team by keeping commitments and clarifying expectation's.

'I am becoming a better leader' or 'I am becoming a more compassionate, authentic leader who looks to engage my staff and keep motivation high'.

Remember the personal outcomes are for your eyes only, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks of the words, its merits or whether you can achieve it. As long as it floats your boat that's the main thing.

I trust you find these useful, whether you do all 3 or just 1 of them. Please feel free to share this document. As long as you forward it intact then everyone benefits.

About blue pea POD

We work with leaders in the manufacturing arena, enabling them to experience authentic success. We help our clients develop their corporate culture and leadership to produce workplaces that are engaging, creative and productive; contributing to the needs of both the business and the individuals who work there.

blue pea POD represents the freedom to be yourself and create your vision. Valuing authenticity, honesty, passion and imagination.

Our philosophy:-

- That you have the capacity in this fast changing world to be yourself and yet fully experience life AND success.
- That fulfilment is much more than having things.
- That nothing is ever as complicated as it might seem - really. It's only every as complicated as you make it.
- The more you learn to listen to your intuition and have faith in yourself, the faster things will come.
- That you are unique and it is your uniqueness that is being called upon in order to realise your full potential as a great leader.

Customer Experience

We work as trusted advisors and partners with our clients. We care about them, having faith in them and their future/vision. We believe in them, even if they don't always believe in themselves. We're enterprising and always have an idea or six on how they can move forward and create their chosen future. We're pragmatic, make things simple and are flexible in our approach. We leave our clients with the confidence that they can achieve what they've committed to. We act as a sounding board and ask questions that provoke the old grey matter.

For more information and resources visit www.bluepeapod.com or call us on 0845 123 1280 to see how we can help you realise your plans for 2012 and beyond.