



**DUCKETTS**  
TRUSTED ADVISORS

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Newsletter

## *Animal Farm special.*



### Book of the month

Q The Carrot Principal by Gostick & Elton

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

I've mentioned both of these books before, but I recently listened to them on CD (in the car) and this gives a very different perspective:

#### The Carrot Principal

<http://www.hrmguide.com/performance/carr-ot-principle.htm>

Everybody responds to praise, so if you turn this into a system by giving rewards for good work, then everybody will work harder? I'm sorry, but I just don't understand, at least where you are dealing with (already) intelligent, motivated people. Apparently,

it's made a big difference at KPMG in the States. Cultural mismatch?

#### The Tipping Point

Malcolm Gladwell's voice is mesmerising. Lots of good stories, so it's very easy to listen to. Any sudden change is brought about by a whole series of small factors working in the same direction. A different spin on Jim Collins' flywheel effect (pun intended).

<http://www.gladwell.com/>



### Stickiness (Tipping Point story)

We are all continuously bombarded by advertising messages, but we only remember a very small proportion. Such memorable messages are said to be "sticky". An experiment in the 90s in the US leads to

some interesting observations. One of the universities was trying to encourage undergraduates to have anti-tetanus vaccinations. So, they split the third year group into 2, sending straightforward explanatory leaflets to one half and graphic/shocking leaflets to the other with the request that the students went for the vaccination. The uptake was 1% with no difference in the effectiveness of the 2 approaches. They then reran the test (different sample), but this time including a map of the campus showing the clinic and also listing its opening times. The uptake shot up to 28%, with no difference between the 2 approaches. This was a surprise as all the students knew where the clinic was anyway. The explanation for this is that a message will be sticky if people can visualise carrying it out. On a more mundane level, it appears that all marketing material should have a map and opening times?

### Career limiting

In accountancy, it used to be that the term "technically competent" was shorthand for "upsets clients". Nobody ever made partner that way. These days, firms respect the work life balance and understand that it's a privilege to have rounded individuals on the

team. It's therefore hard to understand why "family friendly" should be seen as a career limiting tag? You can have job satisfaction and work/life balance, but not in the same week.

## Come back communism, all is forgiven

Once upon a time, the world divided into those that worked (the poor) and those that didn't (the idle rich). Somewhere along the line, this mutated into workers and bosses (less idle, but still rich). Then management and employees (staff v hourly paid). By the early 90s, somebody had concluded that the term "staff" was divisive and everybody had to become part of the "team" (and get with the programme). The latest development (from the States) appears to be that we are now all "associates" – job titles etc are very last century. But remember, whilst all associates are equal, some are more equal than others.

## Alex & Dasha

You may not be aware that we have a couple of new associates on the Duckett team – Alex and Dasha. No nicknames yet.

## Tech corner

All those who use TAS will be interested to hear that the latest release will use Pervasive as the database rather than the (very) old Bitrieve. Sue tells me that the implication of this is that is that several people will be able to work on the system at once, without the risk of crashing. I stand by to be impressed.



## Carrot point

Most new associates leave within the first 3 years. Given the cost of the recruitment process, it's worth doing as much as you can as early as possible to retain such folk. The Carrot Book suggests you should run an interview at the 3 month point with the following 4 questions:

- Is the job what was promised at interview?
- Did you have any ways of doing things at your previous job that we could learn from?
- What do we do well?
- Have we done anything to make you want to leave?
- 

## No more stress

The incidence of stress in the western world is rising all the time and government statistics report vast quantities of working hours lost to stress. Stress is the response to feeling out of control – working for an idiot, for instance. It seems unlikely that there are more idiot bosses than there used to be, so people are responding less well (choosing to be victims). Ability to withstand stress is called resilience and it's your choice as to how you react

<http://www.resiliencycenter.com/articles/stresshype.shtml>

## Understanding accountants (not a new joke)

An architect, an artist and an accountant were discussing whether it was better to spend time with the wife or a mistress. The architect said he enjoyed time with his wife, building a solid foundation for an enduring relationship. The artist said he enjoyed time with his mistress, because of the passion and mystery he found there. The accountant said, "I like both." "Both?" The accountant replied "Yeah. If you have a wife and a mistress, they will each assume you are spending time with the other woman, and you can go to the office and get some work done."

## Chairman of the bored (great pun)

As the financial world continues to fall apart, those left in employment are forced to hang onto their existing jobs, come what may. Given that 20% of the workforce is in the wrong job, this is likely to lead to the new phenomenon of "boreout" (being the opposite of burnout). Symptoms are:

- Constant tiredness
  - Exaggerated irritability
  - Listlessness
  - Increasingly marked introversion
- Pretty much the symptoms for all sorts of other things. The cure for boreout is, of course, to ignore it and get on with some proper work before you get fired (and have something to worry about). "Boreout! Overcoming workplace demotivation" by Phillippe Rothlin & Peter Werder.

## Death & tax?

Inheritance tax is due to be a battle ground in the forthcoming election. People see it as unfair (taxing assets that have already been taxed) and the yields are likely to be lower (as house prices fall). Smart money (well, tax opinion) expects the threshold to rise to £500k each (maybe even £1m) from the current level of £312k. An article (in the Audi magazine, of all places) suggests that, within the next 20 years, we will have the technology to allow people to live 300+ years, making IHT completely irrelevant (at least for the next 299 years). So, death remains the ultimate tax planning scheme.

## The death of leadership

Steven Sonsino works really hard (maybe too hard) trying to get us all interested in leadership issues, despite the fact that there's nothing new to say (or am I just boredout?). His current offering is energetic: <http://leadership.fm/thousands-read-about-and-853-actually-download-the-death-of-leadership-news-release/>

I have to confess to being one of those who has downloaded the report and I can recommend the organisation chart on page 24. But, he does go on a bit.

## Pregnant pause

It's long been clear, even in the small business world, that you can't sack women for being pregnant. However, a recent ruling in Europe concluded that a woman who was undergoing IVF (egg fertilised, but not impregnated) wasn't pregnant. However, as only women can have IVF, firing her for trying is sex discrimination anyway. I have to say, I've never considered firing anybody for trying to get pregnant. It's the succeeding that troubles me. Item courtesy of Sophie Williams, a woman on maternity leave, but promising to be back at work soon.

## Disclaimer

The carrot principal:

"Come into my office and I will eat you and spit out the bones."?

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