

Weekly obligation

By Stuart White
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Leaving the office yesterday a new staff member heard me grumble that I still have this week's article to write. 'How do you think of something to say every week?', she asked and my answer was I have no idea! This week I considered writing about mad people because I seem to be attracting them faster than bees to a honey pot at the moment. I pondered the possibility of writing about a phase I am going through of allowing myself to eat more biscuits, even though I know that it makes me fat. (It might have been hard to make my editor's 1000 word quota out of that, even though I have been guilty of tackling lamer topics and dragging them out to the required length). And, I contemplated writing about how we are only as sick as our secrets, and how that is as true as for individuals as for organisations – but that's a juicy one that I need to dig up some more dirt on so it'll have to wait for a later date. The truth is I don't know how I come up with ideas every week. I would like to romanticise that a great literary and creative force takes hold of me every Thursday evening (deadline is Friday lunchtime) which sweeps myself and my pen to another dimension, my body possessed by the spirit of Rabbe Burns. It all starts to flow, I get in the moment, things just fall into place and an article is born. But I have never had that experience once – not even close.

Instead I find myself writing about things that I have witnessed, ideas and opinions I have formed, incidents that occur – but recently this is presenting a dilemma. When I started this column a few years ago, in the early days of the newspaper, the idea was to talk about high-performing individuals, companies and business ideas. It had been born out of our company marketing campaign we were running at that time which had a morning radio slot on Gabs FM called Hi Flyers, supported by a quarterly company newsletter with a similar name. These two activities complimented the column called Hi Performance to help brand our company as one that worked with hi flyers, promoted hi performance and was an authority of sorts on what that looks like.

Today this column deals as much with me bemoaning how the way people park their cars drives me to a state of madness, how this generation of kids has it all, how it appears sometimes that the majority of Boards in Botswana appear about as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike, to admitting to having suffered from time to time with depression. I find myself sharing intimacies of my life with a whole group of strangers week in and week out and bitching about whatever takes my fancy OR NOT. Oh my God I have created a monster, I have become a blog!

So I started as something and ended up as something else and I am not quite sure when, I know there was no why. What I do know is that it wasn't by design which leaves only default. But as this is just a recent observation and more gut feeling than fact, I decided I needed to examine the accuracy of my perception, how I felt about it and what, if anything, I was going to do about it. Appreciating how critical market research is I knew that I needed to check how my little space was being perceived in the market; blog or a column? And then a third thought crossed my mind – does anyone care? Early poll results from the reading public (aka bumping into people at Woolies who I know, have read my column and are willing to express an opinion on it) say that they prefer it when I write about myself and experiences as opposed to an article on something work-related like interviewing skills (NB – please do not emulate this methodology in business – this does not qualify as a representative sample of anything except a small-scale 'voice of the people' survey on Sunday Standard HR columnists).

It appears it has come to pass, that I moved, unplanned, unwittingly and unaware. All of a sudden I have a blog disguised as a column or is it a column disguised as a blog? Here's the thing, I didn't want a blog, didn't intend to write one and it hardly fits into my Hi Performance marketing campaign. But you know what? Change happens!

Sometimes we change because we have to, other times our conversion is so gradual we don't even notice it and all of a sudden, like the spotty teenager who one morning wakes up with clear skin and deep voice, the proverbial ugly duckling turned swan, we are transformed. But not all transformations are beautiful and we don't always wake up to smell the brand of coffee we want. We chase dreams only to realise we were on the wrong path all along. We hanker for success in the form of material things only to lie on our death bed with emptiness in our soul and a far too late epiphany that the stunning house with the right address and the silk-sheeted Victorian four poster bed you are lying on are irrelevant whichever way you look at it. All too late we understand what wise people were always trying to tell us, that you can't take it with you.

For me it stresses the need to keep checking what you are doing. Whether it's your weekly blog or another mundane activity, don't presume that because it once had purpose, it still has. You have to question whether what you do still has validity, adds value and takes you nearer to where you want to go and what you want to achieve.

So do I need to rethink the column or blog or whatever, or maybe leave it and see what happens. Because sometimes I embrace the status quo, other times I crave change, like an addict feeding off their addiction. In business we put ourselves under incredible pressure to change. We devote whole departments to it, task forces are assembled, catalysts employed, consultants hired and change is forced upon us. It is drummed into us that if we aren't changing we are standing still. It's a general accepted misconception that flux is good and fixed is bad – but if it's standing still in the right place at the right time doing the right thing, seems pretty senseless to move for the sake of it.

Well I haven't solved my problem. But I found something to write about, even if it is just another blog entry, no hi performance advice or evaluations. Sometimes I just feel like saying and sharing; It's said that life imitates art but in this case my art imitates my life - whatever, what is just is, the week that was just was, and everything else can just blog off.

Agree or disagree with this? Don's twitter amongst yourselves – tweet your chirps to http://twitter.com/Stuart_Botswana

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