

# update

enthum | coaching news

Enthum Newsletter

Issue No 4 - March 2009

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## dear friends & colleagues,

Welcome to **update**, our regular newsletter. We value our connection with you and hope you find this edition interesting. [Feedback](#) or comments are welcomed.

### **Easing the Pain of Change** - *Lilliana Gibbs*

Changing behaviour within organisations is much more difficult than we like to think it is. We recognised this recently at Enthum when we introduced a new CRM system, with a calendar feature. We all agreed it was useful tool, and yet some of us have resistance to using it.

Now we can understand why this is, thanks to the integration of psychology and neuroscience. What has been discovered is that change is pain; it genuinely provokes discomfort and zaps our energy.

Our brains have developed a useful capacity to detect 'errors', those perceived differences between expectations and actuality. When Grahame has to remember how to use the new calendar, his brain is registering a mismatch. This would show up on an MRI scan as increased activity in his amygdala or 'old brain', a spot closely connected to the fear circuitry. When activated, the amygdala draws metabolic energy away from the prefrontal lobe where our higher intellectual functioning is generated. Outwardly, this can show up as frustration, and resistant behaviour.

That means the unfamiliar and the new not only increase our discomfort and stress, they actually decrease logical or higher thinking.

So how can we go about lessening the pain and facilitating organisational change? The answer is to give time and attention to new ideas, and to sustain reminders and reinforcement until the mental circuitry changes, and the ideas are adopted. Repeated, purposeful and focussed attention can lead to self-awareness and lasting change.

The brain's prefrontal cortex requires concentration to process new information, so removing everyday routines to focus on something —such as an off-site workshop —provides an ideal environment.

Having secured people's attention, give them the big picture. When allowed to focus, and given a vision, our brains are encouraged to contribute —much like when we read a novel, we picture the characters, and imagine dozens of details.

When powerful visions are shared in organisations, we automatically begin to fill in the spaces, to imagine opportunities and solutions. We are inspired to co-create the picture —conditions ripe for 'moments of insight' —those dazzling flashes of understanding or 'ah ha' moments when we suddenly get it, and join the dots.

Brain scans show sudden bursts of high-frequency gamma waves just prior to moments of new understanding. This suggests a complex set of new connections is being created in the brain. With it comes a rush of adrenaline like neurotransmitters, like a turbo charged pin-ball machine hitting all the bells. These moments of insight are powerful motivators that counter resistance, and propel change.

Even after a popular and engaging workshop, most people find it hard to hold onto new learning. Follow-up coaching has been found to be a powerful adjunct to training and development. One-on-one sessions accelerate changes to the brain's circuitry, measuring nearly three times more effect than that of training alone.

Coaching also encourages insights, because coupled with good process, it is focussed time, away from other demands. These elements together provide a fertile environment where moments of insight are more likely to occur.

Grahame now knows that by using the new calendar software, he is reinforcing change, and we can support his new behaviour and enthuse him with the greater vision. And perhaps along the way he will have some neurological fireworks of his own.



The science comes from the article; The Neuroscience of Leadership by David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz <http://www.strategy-business.com/press/article/06207>.

## Client News – A Steady Compass - Grahame Pitts

It certainly is an unstable time. We have been in a number businesses recently, where everyone is being asked to take a pay cut to keep the business afloat, and often that is on top of a second round of redundancies.

Our work has been facilitating key discussions in workshops, which are focused on cost cutting, yet staying with the goals and framework of the long term strategy —particularly, how to maintain the fabric and infrastructure of the business, hold onto key people and keep up morale— while working with the reality of very poor cash flow.

The dialogue is tough, brutally honest and very demanding of leaders. A sure compass through stormy weather is required. The managers we work with are doing just that, and with care and dignity for people and the business in the process.

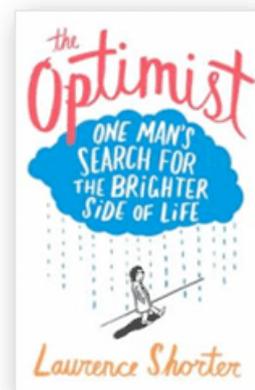
## interesting finds - things we've come across, and wanted to share:

On a lighter touch but with timely relevance this issues finding suggests that it's time to make a change!

### THE OPTIMIST

by Laurence Shorter  
ISBN 9781847670618

As an antidote to the depressing daily news, Laurence Shorter sets out on a quest to find genuine optimists, and asks if they hold the key to happiness. Can Desmond Tutu bring a smile to his face? Will he ride out the tide of pessimism with California's famous Surfing Rabbi? Or will it fall to the ultimate icon of optimism, Bill Clinton, to show Laurence the brighter side of life?



THE OPTIMIST is a hilarious and life-affirming stand against the grind of everyday strife.

All best wishes,

**the Enthum Team**



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