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## ReadThinkLearnLaugh

Dear Dennis,

**Don't you just hate it** ...when something is not what it seems? Lies. Illusions. Fakes. Pretension:

- When someone promises one thing and delivers another?
- When someone says one thing but means something else?
- When an employee/customer steals from you?
- When a product does not work the way it should?

This month I want to explore: consistency vs. change - and hope you will come along for the ride...

These are important topics, so this month RTLL is longer than usual but you don't have to read it in one sitting, right?

### **THINK: What makes US tick, makes business tick...**

There are three things that make humans human. Well, more I suppose, but these three things are what really distinguish us from gorillas.

#### **The ability to consider**

Cogito ergo sum - I think therefore I am - is Descartes's original insight, and not only is it his 'proof' that we exist, but I believe proof that we exist (uniquely) **as humans**. After all, plants also exist even if they don't think about it.

Humans can consider the external and internal influences and evaluate these. We judge. We compare. We employ our critical faculties to take a position.

Something is not just what it is. It is also good or bad. We can distinguish one from the other. Not just thinking, but critical thinking.

#### **The ability to decide**

Not just react or choose, but actually decide. Choosing the non-obvious. When a gorilla eats the banana instead of the apple, that is not choice, it is an instinctive reaction, a habit or a preference. Humans do this too.

Consumer psychology is explicit about this and in fact [we train people](#) how to use this in a sales environment - what we called the primitive brain; where people make shortcut decisions on a sub-conscious level.

But we can also take decisions that are not always in our interest. We save someone's life. We do good for no return. We don't have to yield to the urge to procreate randomly, but can choose to stay faithfully married to a single person. These are the things that make us human.

#### **The ability to change**

Human beings are unique capable of change. They don't just evolve, they change. And change that follows a decision to change is uniquely human.

Inherently we can translate our dissatisfaction (non-acceptance) into a series of decisions **and** actions. Thoughts become decisions become actions.

Things happen. But we can choose our reaction to it. And not always the first reaction, but a considered reaction. If we don't like what we have, we can change it. If we don't like who we are we can change it. And if we choose wrong, we can evaluate the outcome and change again.

Employees and customers (just like us) can ...

- ✗ consider (think) -
- ✗ decide -
- ✗ change -

### What does this have to do with business?

Maybe the time has come for us to look **differently** at how we consume things.

- We do not always have to respond to the lowest common denominator.
- We don't have to accept the status quo.

As a marketer it would be a challenge to position your product or service to appeal to a higher motive. (And challenges carry career- and ego risks.) It is even more difficult to communicate those needs because we believe inherently in Maslow's hierarchy as a pyramid where only a few people can be 'noble' and the masses are somehow more primitive. Therefore we believe the market at the bottom of the pyramid is a bigger market.

Marketers **must lead the way** by positioning and promoting something that is more sustainable. I am not necessarily referring to being 'green' - just being more human and less like animals.

Everything isn't fun. Everything isn't instant. Not everything is meant to taste good. There is pain and suffering and bad things happen to everyone. And it is meant to be like that.

Too often we appeal to people's baser instincts and people's needs that must (somehow) be satisfied immediately.

There is an alternative: We can appeal to people's humanity - not just their sex drive. We can ask employees to sacrifice - which can be a reward in itself. We can ask customers to postpone gratification. We can suggest that they should not buy something.

We are primitive - all of us. But we are also noble - all of us. Because we are human. These traits and needs are not the preserve of the rich or some fully evolved sub-species.

I come from Africa. I can tell you that in the slums and squatter camps you can find generous people, kind people and spiritual people. Just like (if not more so) than in the equivalent of any city's 'northern beaches'. We are all human.

Marketing/Business/Work - these are **opportunities to practice our humanity**. And it starts with choices:

- ✗ What do you choose to do with your life?
- ✗ What is the fabric of your dreams?
- ✗ How do you spend your free time? (Why?)
- ✗ How much do you give and how much do you take?
- ✗ Do you trust?
- ✗ Do you make suggestions because they are right, or because you make more money?
- ✗ Have you really accepted that what you have and who you are is the result of the choices you have made to date?

I am not offering any answers because everyone's answers will be different. I suppose there are more, but rather than simply scan over the list, why don't you have a think about what your answers really are? This is the first month of the new year and a new decade after all.

**There is a very big market in being human.**

**LEARN: The art of consistency**

Anyone who has ever run a business will tell you that it is the hardest thing: how do I get my people to be consistent. They really mean: how do I get my people to be more like me - to care as much as I do and to use their brains like I do.

If you work for a larger organisation you will be familiar with policies and procedures, benchmarks and 'systems' of every shape and colour. Every wannabe-consultant will tell you that McDonalds is successful because their 'systems' are so legendary good.

In the previous piece I spoke about change. That is the YIN. On the other hand, there is also consistency (YANG).

- We should stick what we are good at.
- We should stay focussed.
- We should commit.
- Be reliable.
- Quality.

These are all aspects of consistency. We like it when people are predictable.

Which raises the all-important question: when do I change and when do pursue consistency? I believe the answer to this question applies equally to life and business.

When you avoid change simply because it is easier to keep doing what we do - we should change. If we change simply because we are bored, we should remain focussed. If we want to change to please other people, we should think twice.

**But most importantly:** it is OK to change a process, but think again before changing your goal. And when you do - be consistently tough in evaluating if it is for the right reason. And you *will* know when it isn't.

**READ: (Check this out!) Something different**

I would like to give you a tip Dennis. I reckon it is *the best tool on the internet* that I have come across in 10 years. Now not everyone has the need to collect and collate a lot information (some form websites, some form 'notes' and personal documents like I do).

Traditional bookmarks don't do a very good job (you'd agree) for grouping information into topics. Not even social bookmarking sites like delicious work. I have searched extensively for a tool that would allow me to create the equivalent of an online binder where I could clip and collect varied information from a variety of sources easily.

- If you are an information hunter/hoarder, **you should try...** [Evernote](#). (It is free too.)

Since we are talking about writing:

- Here is my [favourite blog](#) about blogging.
- And (some shameless self-promotion) how about some the more interesting recent blogs. This one ([Who goes first](#)) and this one ([The other side of the road](#)) are both about 'perspective'. And for something different, how about taking some marketing lessons from [Lady GaGa](#)?

**LAUGH**

I am a very infrequent TV watcher, so I come late to many shows, and Seinfeld was one of them. But if you are a fan too Dennis, here is a 3min clip with a [100 of the most memorable quotes](#) from the show.

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**Meet our member-of-the-month: [MARK D.](#) Check out his profile. Check out his organisation. Can you maybe do business with him? Do you have something in common? Can you learn something from each other?**

To check out some of the other uploads this month, click on 'FILE SHARING' on the menu, scroll to bottom of the page. Hover your mouse pointer over the little square icons and you will see the name of the file. DOWNLOAD what you like, and if you are in the mood to share, you can also UPLOAD.

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But, MOST of all, why don't you just [talk back](#) Dennis? Always good to hear from you...

Have fun but do take care...

Dennis, Moonyeen & Crew

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