

Welcome to the thirty-third edition of Jennifer Selby Long's *Traveling Light*. Are you blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead? *Traveling Light* will skyrocket your impact and lighten the load in your life. It's based on the work of executive coach and management consultant Jennifer Selby Long.

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Make 2009 the Best Year for Your Business: Ten Tragic Mistakes to Avoid

Welcome to 2009! How can I be so upbeat when I'm reporting on the topic of *tragic mistakes*? Because I know YOU can thrive this year, and your business right along with you. It's your choice – curl up into the fetal position or go for the gold.

Don't let the economic doom and gloom obscure your decision-making. This month's *Money* magazine cited an absolutely fascinating study demonstrating how we see patterns that simply aren't there when we feel out of control of our environments. Participants in the study were given two different headlines, one indicating that this year would be smooth sailing for the stock market, and the other indicating that the year ahead looked rocky.

Sure enough, when shown pages of utterly random dots, participants who had read the unsettling headline genuinely thought they saw patterns, while those who read the optimistic headline weren't fooled. They knew there were no patterns on those pages.

This translates into real life when we find ourselves searching, searching, searching for a clear pattern to explain what is happening, on the assumption that if we understand the pattern we can regain control. When we feel out of control, we make poor decisions.

That's why it's so essential to seek out not only data, but perspective, from a variety of sources. One of my favorite ways to ensure that I make informed decisions and recommendations is to gain a broader viewpoint through conversations (both in person and on line) with my peers.

One great source of these insights has been my membership in The Society for the Advancement of Consulting® (SAC®). SAC is an international association of consulting professionals who subscribe to an industry code of ethics and have provided evidence of significant consulting results among our clients.

We recently developed a Top Ten list of the best and worst practices in current economic conditions, based on the observations of our global membership and the tens of thousands of clients we serve. These are the ten tragic mistakes to avoid:

1. Panicking as leaders, and allowing employees to witness dissension, indecision, and vacillation
2. Withdrawal and downsizing so severe that the probability of being positioned strongly when the upturn arrives is remote
3. Sacrificing productivity of remaining workers through rolling and seemingly arbitrary layoffs
4. Failure to spread sacrifice, and a perception that executives are not sharing the burden
5. Poor communication of short and longer term plans to the workforce
6. Failure to manage public relations, media speculation, and reporting
7. Follow-the-leader mentality instead of carving out a singular approach to the conditions as they affect the organization
8. Failure to provide incentive for key talent which can't easily be replaced
9. Cutbacks in the wrong areas, such as customer responsiveness

10. Poor use of existing credit and financial reserves

How are you doing in each of these areas?

If any of them look familiar to you, it's never too late to steer the boat in the right direction, but don't put it off. Recession rewards those who are nimble, not those who analyze and ponder until the opportunity passes them by. If your organization is drifting into these bad practices, you need to make changes right now.

For the **Top Ten Best Practices** list, please visit my blog at <http://www.jenniferselbylong.com>.

My intent in sharing our top ten lists is not to scare you. There's the American media to do that. My intent is to help you make better-informed decisions. Your happiness and success mean a lot to me. If there's anything I can do to help you make 2009 your best year, please let me know.

News

It's official. I'm the 2009 President-Elect of the International Association for Psychological Type (www.apinternatinal.org), the premier professional association for professionals who use the MBTI® and other Jung-based psychometric instruments in their work as well as a cadre of "type enthusiasts" who may not use personality type in their work, but seek to learn more for their own personal and professional growth. Stay tuned for more news from APTi as I become more deeply immersed in the organization.

Early Bird financial planners – mark your calendar now for the Financial Planning Association Northern California Conference happening in San Francisco May 26 - 27. I'll be speaking on ***Building Effective Client Relationships, Even During Difficult Times***. Attendance at this conference is a fraction of the cost of my private, customized consulting fees and it's a great opportunity to learn from not only from me but from dozens of other experts as well.

We're back from the Mayan Riviera, just south of Cancun on the Yucatan Peninsula. We enjoyed extreme R&R, made new friends, and learned about Mayan culture and history through a guided tour of the ruins at Tulum. I managed to pick up the cold that's been going around the world, too, but I'm back in the saddle again after a couple of quiet days at home.

As a professional who spends a lot of time on the subject of communication, I particularly enjoyed learning how the Yucatan area got its name. When the Spaniards arrived, they asked, "What is the name of your country?" to which the Mayans replied (and I will spell this phonetically), "Yu-cah-cah tan." The Spaniards quickly began shortening the name to Yu-ca-tan and the name stuck.

In Mayan, the phrase "Yu-kah-kah tan" means, "I don't understand your language."

I just love that story.
