

Traveling Light Newsletter

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Welcome to the fifth edition of Traveling Light, Selby Group's free (almost) monthly newsletter. Traveling Light© is a newsletter exploring how those blessed with the talent and opportunity to lead can be more effective and lighten the load inherent in their lives, based on the work of management consultant Jennifer Selby Long. Copyright 2007 Jennifer Selby Long. All rights reserved.

Quick Tips for Lightening Your Load

In the US and Europe, the corporate holiday party season is upon us. Corporate holiday parties are one of the weirdest hybrids of work and play that I have ever experienced. They're a veritable minefield in which if you perform well, absolutely no one will remember you, and if you perform poorly, *everyone* will remember you for years to come -- for all the wrong reasons. In the spirit of ensuring the former and not the later, I offer these tips.

- If you are unsure how you are expected to dress, ask a few people whose judgment you trust and who have attended this particular company's events in the past.
 - Guys, for the record, I would not head to the men's department and ask the clerks. Their job is to sell you something, and how on earth could they understand the meaning of the mysterious combinations found on the invitation, like "festive casual" or "black tie formal optional" at any given company?
 - For the women, what can I say except that we face strange conundrums in the holiday business wardrobe department, like figuring out what constitutes a power evening gown.
- Nobody cares what you do for living or what projects you're working on. Yet, in American culture, like work-a-holic lemmings we instinctively ask, "What do you do?" or "What project are you working on these days?" Become the greatest conversationalist they've ever met in their entire lives by *not* asking about work. Try, "What interests you outside of work?", "What are you doing these days for fun?", "What are your kids up to?", or anything else that invites conversation on a subject of interest other than work. Follow-up questions help, too. ("So your teenagers are musicians and you're delighted that they're into the new skull tattoo retro-funk movement. Wow. I'm not familiar with that. What is it?")
- If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to less than your ego thinks you can handle. Particularly limit yourself to one or two drinks during cocktails, since there's a lot more to come with dinner. If you're tipsy, you might be terribly warm and charming, but odds are greater that you'll just look like a fool. This tip applies even if your superiors are stone-cold blottoed. That promotion or transfer you may want will in part be based on your good judgment in a variety of settings. No, it's not fair, is it?
- Introduce yourself to every person at your table, and try to talk with each of them at some point during dinner, including the spouses, who will speak highly of you forever simply because you steered the conversation away from endless droning on about the office. Bonus points if you remember names and introduce people to each other.
- When you sit down next to the CEO, avoid eating his or her food by remembering that your bread plate is to the left and your drink is to the right. You can cue yourself by forming an "o" with your index finger and thumb. On the left hand, this forms the letter "b" for bread, and on the right hand, the letter "d" for drink. Try it now. See? Nifty, huh? Don't worry about getting caught doing this. It's a great conversation starter. For example, the person next you just might say, "Ah, I see you read *Traveling Light*..."

I Envision Success in Your Future

Think back to when you first starting working in your profession. There was quite a bit of variance in the talent and intelligence of your many peers, wasn't there?

Now that you've moved up the food chain, the variance isn't so big, is it? After a certain point, talent and intelligence alone won't help you get ahead. It's the mind game that counts. You can psych yourself up or psych yourself out.

One tool I've used with clients for many years is from the world of sports psychology. I first learned this tool from Dr. Rebecca Kraus, a sports psychologist for the Olympics and a superb trainer at the Center for Creative Leadership.

I've modified the approach just a bit over the years for pragmatic reasons. When you're having trouble with a particular performance (say, you repeatedly clam up in important meetings) or you just want to improve a skill (like putting), give it a try.

There are five steps and I do recommend that you do them all:

1. *Pre-Performance*: This is like a rehearsal. Go through the entire performance in your mind, as close to real time as you can get within the confines of your schedule.
2. *Pre-Act*: immediately before the performance, visualize the performance as if on fast forward
3. *Performance*
4. *Post-Act*: immediately after the performance, remember the performance as if on fast forward
5. *Post-Performance*: remember the performance more slowly, analyzing how you did and identifying any needed changes in your performance

To get the most value from the visualization process, try the following:

- Visualize yourself in the actual room, on the putting green – wherever you will be performing.
- Imagine the entire situation with vividness and clarity.
- Imagine the feel of the action, what it would really be like to be in the meeting or on that putting green right now.
- This is not an exercise in perfectly predicting the future – just take reasonable guesses about what will happen, what others will say and do, how they will respond, etc.
- Succeed mightily during the rehearsal. If you start to fail in the rehearsal, rewind and do the failing part over until you are successful.
- Take a few deep breaths before visualization and again before the performance to relax. Unclench your fists, too.
- The night before the event and the morning of the event, relive your best previous performance. If you have not yet had a successful performance, relive a different successful performance that is in some way similar.

Now, get out there and knock their socks off!

News

I'll be speaking on how to build more effective client relationships at the Silicon Valley Financial Planning Association on December 14. Lunch is served at 11:30 and my talk is 12:00 – 1:00. Meetings are held at the Techmart located at 5201 Great America Parkway in Santa Clara. The cost to attend is a paltry \$35 in advance, \$55 at the door. To register, go to <https://s08.123signup.com/servlet/SignUp?P=152326200&PG=1523262182300>.

Those of you who've wanted to apply your Myers-Briggs learning at home will enjoy *Opposites Attract -- And Live to Tell About It*, a panel of Type-savvy couples sharing the secrets of how they use psychological Type in their relationships. February 9, 2008, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn, 2000 Bridgepointe Circle, San Mateo. BAAPT charges even less than the financial planners charge -- \$25, including a continental breakfast.

If you're in HR and want to learn how to coach and to manage coaching resources, I'm teaching March 15 and 22, at UC-Berkeley Extension in downtown San Francisco. There will be very little theory and tons of practice. More information to follow so stay tuned.

A Blinding Flash of the Obvious

I need an intervention. I'm addicted to Brickbreaker. It's a silly little game on my Blackberry, not much more sophisticated than the old Pac Man machines, but I can't seem to stop myself. I wonder if there's a 12-step group for us. It would have to be held in the familiar confines of a hotel conference room with stale pastries, weak coffee, and fluorescent lighting, since we're all businesspeople.

This all started when I finished the book I was reading before the end of a flight. Ugh. Isn't it the worst feeling to know you're trapped in that seat for another hour with nothing good to read? I started fiddling around with my Blackberry and clicked on an icon of breaking bricks.

It was straight downhill from there.

At least I'm not alone. Last year, the Wall Street Journal reported that some kid is making a killing coaching executives in Brickbreaker strategy. The fact that I remember this story from over a year ago is telling. There's even an overly emotional Brickbreaker forum for people who take this thing way too seriously: <http://www.blackberryforums.com/general-8100-series-discussion-pearl/58170-brick-breaker-cheats-pearl.html>: Not that I would know.

For the uninitiated, Brickbreaker is a game in which you knock a ball around, and each time it hits a brick, the brick cracks, until it disappears. The addiction comes from the fact that there are more levels than 99% of people will ever achieve, and once you've hit a new level, you want to get back to it. Inevitably, the next game you play will stink, prompting another game to make up for the lousy one and relive your glory. It reminds me of golf that way, minus the walking, sunshine, and companionship.

Just think what I could accomplish if I scaled back my Brickbreaker time. I could write a book on leadership. Spend more time with family. Change the world. And I will, once I reach Level 17 or surpass my all-time high score of 8895. Really. I promise.

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Jennifer Selby Long
Selby Group