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----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

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## THIS MONTH'S THEME: THE ART OF PERSUASION

Hey – how are you this month? I'm a little late getting this edition out – my apologies; it's been busy around here. Anyway, this month's theme is "The Art of Persuasion." If you are a leader, you have to be able to influence others through persuasion, though direct and indirect means, all the time. While coercion yields compliance (at best), persuasion wins commitment, and leadership is all about winning the commitment of others for action. So, in the first section, this edition offers five tips to help you maximize your influence and persuasive power. In the second section, I offer five ways to overcome "the blues," or falling into an emotional rut, because leaders are also people who consistently exude positive energy. To be persuasive, leaders must cultivate the habits of thinking that not only minimize their own experiences of depression or mini-depression, but which help others do the same.

Please forward this edition to friends and those you think will like the content!

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### THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep." -- Scott Adams

"There is no legacy so rich as honesty." -- William Shakespeare

“The more original the discovery, the more obvious it seems afterward.” --  
Arthur Koestler

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## 1. 5 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR INFLUENCE

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### FOCUS ON OTHERS' INTERESTS

Persuasion is the art of helping people take action to obtain what they need. Persuasion helps people do things they need to, but that they initially did not want to do, were afraid to do or did not know they could do, all in the service of their own interests. Persuasion, from this point of view, is a good thing that helps people, though some people persuade in order to meet their own needs, more than the needs of those they seek to persuade. If you want to lead, or cultivate the ability to have a consistently good impact on people and organizations, be sure you are focused on others' interests and needs. For example, a friend recently asked me to assist her family member to develop better job search and interviewing skills. I said I would be happy to help, but that the request would have to come from her family member. A few days later, I heard from the young job seeker, and as he expressed genuine interest in learning, I spent time coaching him at no cost. In leadership or in sales circumstances, we all have opportunities to move to step 2 – the making of recommendations or suggestions – before we have listened to other people talk, express and discover their own needs (step 1). Be sure, when you seek to exercise influence, you don't make recommendations before you have qualified and assessed for a genuine need.

### BE TRUSTWORTHY

Much of the art of persuasion lies in your conduct before you are ever in a position to persuade anyone. Be trustworthy. Show up for things when you say you will show up. Deliver what you say you will deliver, when you say you will deliver it. If you are going to be late for an appointment or if you cannot do what you had said you would do, call (don't email) and explain that you cannot meet your original commitment. IN this situation, find another way to meet the other person's need, either by finding someone else to meet the need or by renegotiating what you can deliver, and when. Don't betray confidences, and don't gossip about other people or habitually focus on others' weaknesses or foibles: when you do, others will assume that they are also fair game for your criticism when they are not around, and you won't be trusted. When you are wrong, don't be afraid to say so. When others are wrong or they make mistakes, don't be punitive and don't remind them of their errors. If it's appropriate, help them fix the situation and move on. If you conduct yourself in this way,

you will be forming and sharpening your own character in a way that will become a habit, and people who don't even know you will sense this when they encounter you. Most of communication is non-verbal, and if you would practice the art of persuasion, you had better develop your character so that your word is always a bankable commodity.

#### ASK QUESTIONS - QUESTIONS ARE BETTER THAN STATEMENTS

When I help people develop sales skills, and when I help people understand how better to lead others, I always focus them on learning how to ask good questions, and ask them in the right way. It's always a safe bet to be curious about people, if your motivation is to build positive connections, and not to interfere or to judge. For leaders good questions are ones that help to understand how people do what they do, how they got started in a particular area, what they enjoy most in their work or even their hobbies, what they would like to accomplish in the future, how they expect to achieve their goals, why they do what they do, who taught them most about how to succeed professionally, etc. Questions like these will help leaders and even salespeople learn more about others' motivations, goals, needs and aspirations so as to be able to help and positively influence them. Of course, if you have nothing to offer based on what you learn, then be grateful for the contact and move on, but if you want to become better at influencing people, questions are better than statements. I once had a client who was the president of a very profitable mid-market management company who excelled at using questions to help his fledgling managers think through business situations – he became moderately famous for not giving answers or telling people what to do, but for asking questions, designed to make his managers think. As a result, he was far more able to influence their decisions and help them make better decisions on their own – making him a highly successful executive and leader.

#### CULTIVATE BROAD NETWORKS

When you ask good questions and listen to understand people's needs, you will hear some things that don't fit your area of expertise or don't fit whatever ideas or products you are selling. That's why you have to have broad and diverse networks of people who will take your phone call, because some of those people may be able to provide what others may actually need. If you can be the one to identify the needs of others and link them with the resources that maximize their interests, you will be indirectly enhancing your own ability to exercise influence. By doing this, you show you can be trusted to listen for people's genuine needs without trying to superimpose your own agenda or solution – enhancing your credibility. Second, by cultivating broad and diverse networks, you can simultaneously help people in your network link up with those who may need their expertise or services – at once helping them and the person

whose needs you first identified. By becoming known as a good “matchmaker” this way, you enhance your ability to influence others because you mark yourself as a “go to” person for solutions. Getting to this point begins with the long-term process of cultivating relationships and diverse networks of people, be they mechanics or consultants or acupuncturists!

#### TAKE ACTION

In a leadership situation, you will not always persuade the majority of your audience that your idea or recommendation is the best. But if you can take some measured action with others that can generate some results, you may win the skeptics over later. Starting pilot programs represents a great strategy for winning people over and experimenting with new practices, allowing ideas to be refined and gain followers along the way. Very often, persuasion is a matter of taking successful action that others can observe – and even assist – rather than saying or doing anything in particular to get people to change their minds.

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## 2. 5 WAYS TO OVERCOME THE BLUES

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### RECOGNIZE THE NEGATIVE SITUATION IS NOT PERSONAL

There are two types of negative situations that people find themselves tempted to take personally. One has to do with broad trends and outside conditions that pretty clearly have little to do with them – for example, I recently talked to a downhearted professional who has been out of work for a few months. He felt ashamed and depressed, even though the current U. S. job market has been very tough on working people and professionals alike – particularly in his industry. Clearly, his extended unemployment was not a situation to take personally – sometimes outside forces can give anyone bad luck. The second type of situation is one that is easier to take personally – such as when a boss may give you a negative evaluation. Many people will take such an event as evidence of some flaw or weakness on their own part – a personal interpretation. But there are any number of other explanations that could just as accurately explain the negative evaluation. The job may not best amplify a given person’s talents, or the evaluation system may be flawed, or the boss may just have misjudged based on bad data, or maybe the problem is not due to an enduring lack of talent but to a need for more learning, which can be fixed. People who avoid depression are those who interpret negative events as having causes outside of themselves – they do not believe the negative situation is one to take personally, even if they do take personal responsibility for their actions, and their consequences.

### RECOGNIZE THE NEGATIVE SITUATION IS NOT PERMANENT

Similarly, people who avoid the blues recognize that negative situations are mostly not permanent. “This too shall pass,” the old saying goes, and there is wisdom in it. Even people who experience, for example, the permanent loss of a limb, or some disability or disfigurement, need not become downcast. There are many people who thrive in spite of obstacles because, while some disability may be permanent, they discover ways to work and thrive with it, through persistence and resilience. And let’s take the case of my unemployed friend: the downturn in his industry will not last forever, and in the meantime, he can learn new skills that can enhance his talents and marketability before he finds the next right job. On the other hand, people who tend to get down often interpret bad situations as permanent and hopeless, even when history shows us that the worst conditions often change – if we just show up and keep plugging away long enough. Someone who thinks to himself, “Why does this always happen to me?” is giving himself a double whammy – interpreting a bad event as both personal AND permanent!

### RECOGNIZE THE NEGATIVE SITUATION IS NOT PERVASIVE

The down person who is falling into hopelessness thinks to himself, “It’s like this everywhere!” In other words, he – or she – will see the negative situation as pervasive. But it’s not – nothing is pervasively negative. Take, for example, my unemployed friend: his industry is experiencing a down cycle – but other industries are healthier. It would not be a simple transition, but he could try to apply his skills to another, perhaps somewhat related, industry. Let’s take another example of a woman who has become disillusioned with men (imagine that!). She might think to herself, “All men are jerks and can’t be trusted!” But the situation is not universal – only some men (and women – let’s not be sexist!) are jerks and cannot be trusted.

### FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Many people, whether they recognize it or not, link how they feel to the actions of others or to circumstances outside of their control – a sure recipe for disappointment, at the very least. My unemployed friend may become discouraged as he fails to win interviews with his calls and after sending out his resume, but he cannot control the choices and actions of others. At best, he can only influence them. What he can control are his responses to his situation: his consistency in searching and networking that can generate alternatives for him, and his state of mind as he works his way through this transitional time in his life. The traditional serenity prayer says, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the strength to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Whether you believe in a god or not, or whether you pray or not, the message of the prayer is helpful – focus on what you can control and learn to let the rest go. Failing to focus on what you can

control only leads to wasted time and action, and a missed opportunity to take more productive, helpful steps to change a negative circumstance to a more positive one.

### DON'T ISOLATE YOURSELF – FIND AND KEEP GOOD ALLIES

Imagine you were starting up a company. You would want to have a solid group of advisors – a solid board of directors – to help you stay focused and see your business through the tough times. And you would be choosy about those whom you would invite to sit on your board. Your life is the same way. One of the most important ways to overcome the blues and insulate yourself from falling into a rut is to keep a good circle of friends. Get involved in their lives, and let them get involved in yours. And be sure to choose people who tend to lift you up, and not cut you – or others – down. The brain absorbs the negativity of others, and negative thinking has a chemical effect that takes its toll. Positivity is as much a habit – like brushing one's teeth – as it is an inherent trait. Choose people in your life who are positive and hopeful and you'll all help to lift each other up and keep each other healthy and prosperous. But it only takes one or two very negative people in your immediate circle to begin to drag you down.

(Some of the material offered in this section is adapted from the book, "Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life," by Martin E. P. Seligman, which I have recommended in the past. If you want to learn more about cultivating the habits of mind that lead to hopefulness and defend against negativity, this is a good place to start.)

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### 3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

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BOOK: "Leading Quietly: An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing," by Joseph L Badaracco, Jr., Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2002

A recent New York Times bestseller, Badaracco's book offers a nice corrective to the "bold action hero" model of leadership that gained ascendance in the go-go 90's. I remember, at my Wharton commencement, our then Dean, Russell Palmer, quoted Ted Turner to us, imparting to us an attitude he thought we should exemplify: "Lead, follow, or get out of the way!" But that individualistic, bull in a china shop model of leadership does not really work very well, in my experience. "Leading Quietly" takes the opposite point of view from Ted Turner, and is nicely written. A good and provocative read.

FILMS: "Seabiscuit" and also "Lost in Translation," in wide release.

I finally saw Seabiscuit. I had been resisting a little, since it was so hyped as an inspirational experience. Sometimes I just want to be entertained, more than inspired. Well, once I saw it, I was entertained, though there is no truth to the rumor that I got teary a couple of times. I had allergies. Sniffles. Really. I swear! To find out more about the movie, click [here](#). "Lost in Translation" was a little unusual. It was not a drama, not a romance, not exactly a comedy, but then again, the moments that stand out for me the most are the funny ones, and there are plenty. Bill Murray just broke me up, perhaps all the more so because his manner was so deadpan, while the subject of the movie was a bit on the serious side. You can learn more about "Lost in Translation" by clicking [here](#).

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#### 4. CHUCKLES

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A client sent this to me a week or so ago. This one is a creative, funny jab at us consultants:

A shepherd was herding his flock in a remote pasture when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of the dust cloud towards him.

The driver, a young man in a Broni suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leaned out the window and asked the shepherd, "If I tell you exactly how many sheep you have in your flock, will you give me one?"

The shepherd looked at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looked at his peacefully-grazing flock and calmly answered, "Sure."

The yuppie parked his car, whipped out his IBM ThinkPad and connected it to a cell phone, then he surfed to a NASA page on the Internet where he called up a GPS satellite navigation system, scanned the area, and then opened up a database and an Excel spreadsheet with complex formulas. He sent an email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, received a response. Finally, he prints out a 150 page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized printer then turns to the shepherd and says, "You have exactly 1,586 sheep."

"That is correct, take one of the sheep," said the shepherd.

He watches the young man select an animal and bundle it into his car. Then the shepherd says: "If I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my sheep?"

"OK, why not," answered the young man.

"Clearly, you are a consultant" said the shepherd.

"That's correct," says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that?"

"No guessing required," answers the shepherd.

"You turned up here, although nobody called you. You want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked, and you don't know squat about my business; now give me back my dog!"

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## 5. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

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You don't have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

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## 6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

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A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

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## 8. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

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A. J. Schuler, Psy. D.  
Speaker, Consultant & Leadership Coach  
Schuler Solutions, Inc.  
6300 Stevenson Avenue, Suite 916  
Alexandria, VA 22304  
Phone 703.370.6545  
Fax 703.783.0232  
Email: [AJ@SchulerSolutions.com](mailto:AJ@SchulerSolutions.com)  
Website: [www.SchulerSolutions.com](http://www.SchulerSolutions.com)

"Make each day your masterpiece." -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend. -- AJS :-]