



## Interesting Stuff - August 2011

### “Today at 1400 water started to flow”

This is a text I’ve received - the culmination of two years effort. It meant the work which began with our trip to Mont Blanc to raise funds, has lead to water being available where it’s needed most in the village we support in Kenya. You can imagine how excited I was when I got the text.

In some ways though, it’s only the beginning. Wycliffe our project manager can now begin to put in place a series of irrigation channels allowing fruit, maize and vegetables to be produced.

With water everything will flourish. What has been barren ground, will produce not just one, but two crops each year.

The text got me thinking about flow in other contexts. Flow affects us in other things we do. When things flow we become energised. We become fully immersed, more focused, less distracted. I’m sure we’ve all had times when things flow. You lose yourself in what you’re doing; you lose track of time. Perhaps you do your best work, writing, painting, music, sport.

And when things don’t flow – life becomes hard work, like pushing water uphill.

I was curious – how can we make things flow in our own lives?

For answers or ideas, I went to TED. TED is a great source of ideas and inspiration – the world’s best brains invited to give 20 minute talks. If you’ve not seen them, check out [www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com).

I sought out Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – probably the world’s leading authority on flow. I’m not sure how to pronounce his name, if you’re having trouble. I tried Wikipedia, but all that gave me was - “pronounced / ‘mi:haɪ ˌtʃi:ksentmə ‘haɪ”. Some help! I settled on Mihaly Sixth-Sense-Mihalyi. Probably wrong but fitting.

Anyway – he describes flow as being that state when you lose yourself; where you’re so wrapped up in something that you’re no longer (consciously) thinking; like being on automatic pilot, but very focused, very purposeful.

He gives some examples of people who’ve experienced this state, and you will have too. So can we achieve this state regularly?

He suggests a key component is PASSION. When we do things that we’re passionate about, that interest and excite us, things flow more easily. Flow comes when we when we raise the challenge we set ourselves and the skills we have to achieve it.

So I was left with two thoughts that I’ve been asking myself – firstly, are you passionate about what you do? Does it interest and excite you?

And secondly, reflect on the challenges you’ve set yourself, at home or at work. Is there enough challenge to excite you?

If so – you’re on the right track. If not, and if things are not flowing – my number is 01707 395850. Do call me.

## Funding

Since our last newsletter we've taken advantage of funding available to all businesses under the Leadership & Management Advisory Service (LMAS for short). It is designed to support business leaders to grow their organisations – in fact I've applied for the funds myself to allow me to develop my own business skills.

It's a really simple process to apply, so I'd strongly urge all businesses (and charities) to look at it.

It provides matched funding which could give you an extra £1,000 worth of training or coaching. As an example, this would mean that you could get our support for a whole year with us through [TheLeadersForum](#) for just £500+VAT AND leave you with another £500 to use on other development. How good is that!

In Greater London the scheme is being managed by Exemplas and details can be found at [www.exemplas.com/LMAS](http://www.exemplas.com/LMAS).

Outside of London, in the East of England (so Herts, Beds, Cambs, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex) it's run by EMB – [www.embltd.co.uk](http://www.embltd.co.uk).

If you're interested drop me an email and I'll let you know precisely who to contact, so you can check whether this applies to you.

## What else is happening in Kenya?

The news that we have water flowing at the farm was welcome indeed. With that well under way, we're turning attention to extend our bursaries.

During 2011 we've ensured that five Kenyan children, whose families could not afford to continue their education, have been able to attend secondary school. We got involved and with the help of four other fantastic families who each agreed to sponsor a child, the children have now completed two terms of their school year. Would you be interested in changing a child's life by giving them an education?

Please watch our video – [www.redrubberball.co.uk/foundation](http://www.redrubberball.co.uk/foundation).

We're actively looking for more families to sponsor children in 2012. What's the phrase – could this be you? Again if so, please do call me on 01707 395850.

## Research initiative

I've long admired the initiatives of Carter Backer Winter, one of our clients and an accountancy firm who often lead the way. One of their new ventures is a project with Henley School of Business - a study on international management culture.

With leading international HR expert, Professor Chris Brewster, this is the latest in a long series and earlier findings are now being referenced in a number of business schools.

The survey will cover 1,000 people and they're looking for people to complete a 10 minute online survey later in the year.

**So could you or someone you know participate?** They are seeking Non-UK nationals working in the UK in management or director level jobs.

If you know someone, please ask them to email Lisa Tesselaar, Director of Marketing at CBW – [lisa.tesselaar@cbw.co.uk](mailto:lisa.tesselaar@cbw.co.uk).

## **Book review – Greg Mortenson – “Three cups of tea”**

Over the years I've been inspired by many people, by my family, friends, clients, by some people I've only ever met once, and sometimes by people I've never met but read about.

Greg Mortenson comes into this category. I read “Three cups of tea” some time back. I think the title appealed to me as a Yorkshireman brought up to appreciate that whenever you're faced with something new or challenging, first have a cup of tea!

Finding himself cut off in a mountain village while climbing in Pakistan, Greg Mortenson committed himself to helping the villagers build a school, so girls could receive an education.

Despite being on a modest salary he raised the funds to fulfil his promise and over the years his foundation has now built over 130 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan. A truly inspirational story.

He's shown just what is possible by one person, with one simple idea. He made a choice to do something and with passion, vision and action, he made it happen.

Our work in Kenya started with a similar commitment - we can all commit to something new or significant in our own lives. With passion, vision and action imagine what you too can achieve.

Neil