



## The Season of Good Will?

As this is the December edition I thought that it may be timely to look at how you might communicate “good will” to the colleagues, family and friends that you will converse with in this Christmas/New Year season....

Let’s start with Christmas and the season of giving. I find it fascinating that people subscribe to the mantra “it is better to give than receive” and yet the most common question at Christmas is “what did you get for Christmas?” Perhaps you might experiment with an alternative question like “what was the best gift you gave someone?” Some children may find this challenging but I have found that most people have experienced great delight in selecting at least one very suitable present for a special someone.

New Year represents a time to look back on the last 12 months as well as a time to look forward. If you are catching up with some old colleagues or enjoying rare contact with old friends you might normally ask “what has been happening this year?” or “what’s news?” If you would like to promote good will you might try something different like “what have been your favourite achievements this year?” or “what have you most enjoyed about 2010?” It will be important to listen and respond appropriately – and by appropriately, in a spirit of good will, I suggest that it will be important to validate their sense of satisfaction rather outpoint them. eg If their favourite achievement is being recognised with a promotion please be happy for them rather than boast about your own promotion.

In the same way, when thinking about the coming year, you might find it far more engaging to ask “what are you most looking forward to in 2011?” rather than “so, any New Year’s resolutions?” And this might also be relevant to conversations with yourself. If the thought of a New Year conjures up a “same old, same old” reaction in your mind then you might benefit from asking yourself “what is one thing that I want to be better this year?”

It is also, for many people, a holiday season and most people enjoy chatting about their travels. If you would like a factual account by all means stick with safe questions like “where did you go?” and “what did you do?” If, however, you would like a more engaging conversation you could trial options like:

- What were the highlights of your holiday?
- What were your most enjoyable experiences?
- Who were the most interesting people that you met?
- What would you love to be able to do again?



(Please note the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun – make the conversation about them and see what happens. Attentive listening and an enthusiastic response may generate a more enthusiastic discussion than the travelogue alternative.)

This is also a season of summer sport and many people like to take the opportunity to play spectator even if they can't play themselves. You don't have to be an expert to enjoy the spectacle of Sydney to Hobart yachting, the tradition of Test or excitement of day/night cricket and the atmosphere of the Australian Open tennis – even if you're just watching on TV. And apparently some people actually attend in person. So you could ask someone "was it a good game?" or "how was the tennis?" An alternative could be to ask them to recount their highlights or invite them to describe the best part of their day at the sailing/cricket/tennis/golf/surf lifesaving/A-League/basketball/baseball/water polo....

It can sometimes take an effort to communicate a strong sense of good will towards others. It is an even greater skill to frame questions which draw out that good will and latent enthusiasm in your colleagues, family and friends.

I would like to wish all readers a happy Christmas and a successful New Year – enabled by quality communication.