

Follow-up

SEPTEMBER 1999



Keeping up with the Teletubbies

Have you ever wondered how influenced we are by advertising and trends? We spend our lives needing to buy the right car, wear the right clothes, eat the right food, and even manage our businesses by the latest management techniques. These desires are fueled by a stream of (mostly) American prophets (maybe profits would be more appropriate!) And if you don't have the articles or follow "X"'s ideas you are simply not a real person.

The pressure to get us to buy stuff starts early. Recently it has raised several questions about what is really important in the global scheme of things. Our granddaughter, age 2, has just gotten a new bedroom and a new bed. It was thought that it might be appropriate to find her some new bed linens as well. You know, duvet cover, fitted sheets and pillowcases. Her parents are determined to keep commercialism at bay and requested we not select items of a commercial nature. That is, no Barbie, Barney, Mickey, Pooh or

for that matter Po. Their request was understood and we thought that it would present no problem. We admire their fight to protect her from the onslaught of advertising aimed at small people. They even manage to not have TV or, for this purpose, bed linens. (At least until she is older and asks why her friends "all" do!)

We go to that well-known Swedish store — no commercials here, but where are all those wonderful primary-coloured, stripy/spotty/starry sheets they used to have? In the children's section, there are flowers and cats — we aren't fond of cats. We take a look in "adult bedding". We see some we like for ourselves but not what we have in mind for our favourite 2-year-old. How about the catalogue? Twin-sized duvet covers are in very short supply but there are lots of comforters with "you know who" as well as sporting motifs. Getting somewhat desperate, other members of the family located in such

far flung places as California and Indiana are dispatched to look for suitable items. (We tell ourselves that there must be a better selection in the United States.)

But no, if it is not Barbie, Barney, Mickey, Pooh, and Po, it barely exists. Small people's bedding comes with character names on it. At this point in time, our granddaughter is neither buying anything for herself nor particularly interested in Barbie, Barney, Mickey, Pooh or Po. So it must be all us well-meaning relations that want sheets with BBMP and P on them. Once again, we are keeping up with that superbly well-directed advertising and striving to do "the right thing." Those bed linen manufacturers are missing a real opportunity. They need to make them queen size!

On reflection, as you consider whether you should implement 360-degree feedback, teamwork, competencies, globalisation and other well-intentioned management theories, or even buy bedding for the small people in your life; think about whether Confucius got it right over 2000 years ago when he said, "Those who would get together all day long and, occupying themselves with witty remarks, never once get to the topic of appropriate conduct — such persons are hard to deal with."¹

Maybe if left to your own devices you might well be able to learn how to work more effectively with people, stay healthy and enjoy life without the constant barrage of all those things you "can't live without!"

This is the first electronic-only edition of *Follow-up*. We started creating *Follow-up* in 1992, and this edition will be our 18th. We would guess that in 1992 hardly any of us had e-mail—now nearly 500 of the 800 active names on our database have an e-mail address that we know about it. How the world has changed in this decade! We have even had a Web site for over three years.

The electronic version is set up in a similar way to the printed editions and you can read it by invoking Adobe Acrobat. (You can, of course, print it off too, but unless you use a color printer it may not look so pretty.) The format and content are similar to the earlier print versions, with an article, a client profile and a quiz. We have had the "What's New?" section as part of our regular ["What's New?" web page](#), which we update at the beginning of each month.

We welcome your feedback and look forward to receiving your quiz answers. We will be awarding prizes to the first three correct entries opened on October 31, 1999.

Jane

¹ Analects of Confucius, 15.17 — a philosophical translation by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. 1998, Ballantine

For up-to-date info, check the Web site regularly — we update it at the start of each month.



CLIENT PROFILE

The Georgia Straight: Our Leadership Journey

For over 30 years the Georgia Straight has been an integral part of the Vancouver newspaper scene. Starting as a fringe paper in the 60's, it attracted more than its fair share of adverse publicity but came through it all to be one of the most significant "free" weekly papers in North America, outlasting many of its early critics. A video made by the independent film producers, Tony Wade and Tom Crichton in 1997 entitled, "The Last Street Fighter—the History of the Georgia Straight" is a wonderful look at the story of the paper and of Dan Mcleod, its original and only publisher. For an interesting piece of history, Bob Geldof talks about the job he had on the Straight in those early days before he went into some other spectacular directions.

This year the management group has been working on "Our Leadership Journey" and I am privileged to work as their coach, referee and facilitator on the trip. We have given ourselves a year to work together, during which time we are covering a number of themes around working with each other and with the people who look to us for inspiration and leadership. At this point in time, we are about half way through. We have talked about communications, teams, the Six Thinking Hats® method to improve our thinking. We have listened to Joel Barker talk about paradigms. And we have related all of the material to the practical requirements of producing a paper each Thursday morning. Upcoming meetings will include recruiting and managing others more effectively.

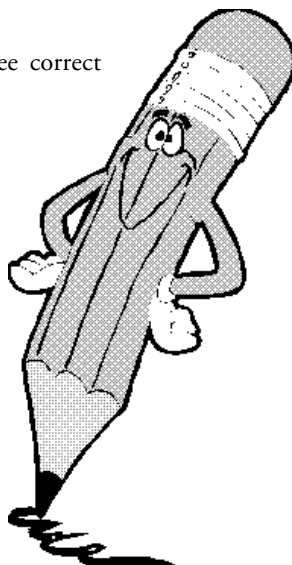
For more information on the paper, or to find out more about Our Leadership Journey, contact Deb Kennedy, the Straight's General Manager (e-mail deb@straight.com or phone 604-733-7089), or Jane.



Quiz

Send your entries in by October 31, 1999 — the first three correct ones reviewed on that day will win prizes!

- 1. Name three clients that Jane has worked with in 1999.
2. What is the name of the video made about Dan Mcleod, publisher of the Georgia Straight?
3. How many granddaughters does Jane have?
4. What is the ENIGMA (at least two answers possible here if you look in www.janedurant.com/news.htm#enigma)?
5. What is the name of the book that Jane's Books group is reading this month?



Follow-up is published two or three times a year for clients and friends of Jane Durant. We hope it helps you get better results for yourselves and others. If you would like the opportunity to be part of a future issue, or if you would simply like to receive a copy, please call, e-mail or write me at:

Jane Durant
708 West 26th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C.
V5Z 2E8 CANADA
Tel/Fax: (604) 872-7761
Email: jdurant@direct.ca
http://www.janedurant.com

Country Code for North America is 1-604-872-7761

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Desktop design by Janice Harvey