

GREG BUSTIN

LOST CHAPTERS

"I'm grateful for all of the insight, sharing and support I've received from the Vistage community, and so I'm sharing five "lost chapters" that never made it in to my upcoming book, *Decision Time: Inspiration, Insight & Wisdom from History's Make-Or-Break Moments*. I believe you'll find the questions in these chapters can serve as a foundation for exercises for your members."

- *Greg Bustin, 15-year Master Chair and speaker*

"Exceptional leaders are lifelong learners, and Greg has collected, organized and presented these leadership lessons to stimulate learning, inform decision-making and inspire action. This is a book that all teams and business leaders should read."

- *Elizabeth Bryant, Chief Learning Officer, Southwest Airlines.*

DECISION TIME

Inspiration, Insight & Wisdom from
History's Make-or-Break Moments

Greg Bustin

Table of Contents

Click to jump to a chapter:

1: Taco Bell Buys the Liberty Bell...just kidding

How a little bit a humor led to lots of sales

2: Joan of Arc Leads the French to Victory

How an inexperienced leader distinguished between collaborating and commanding

3: Construction Begins on Pisa's Bell Tower

How failing to fix a small problem early required millions to fix it later

4: Eleanor Roosevelt Asks Americans to Write to Her

How listening to someone's concerns can be the first step toward helping to solve them

5: Michelangelo Receives Commission for Pietà

How leaders can learn from a master sculptor who brought out the best

"Exceptional leaders are students of history. Draw insight and inspiration from these significant events in history. And remember: Making the decision is worth nothing without executing it." — Greg Bustin

Taco Bell Buys the Liberty Bell...just kidding

How a little bit of humor led to lots of sales

*"Next to power without honor,
the most dangerous thing in the
world is power without humor."*

~ Eric Severeid

Humor in the workplace is vital.

The 24/7 Internet cycle where instant gratification is measured in minutes can create a pressure cooker environment. Throw in the politics of race, gender and religion and it seems we're all either too busy to laugh or too scared to crack a joke that might offend someone.

This pressure is not healthy. The right kind of humor can help. Laughter enhances oxygen intake to increase endorphins released by your brain while alleviating high blood pressure. Laughter releases neuropeptides to combat chemical reactions to stress.

It's no joke. Humor in the workplace helps you and your colleagues. You can be the catalyst, provided you're mindful of your timing, tone and intent.

April Fool's Day is a tailor-made opportunity to relieve tension and generate some laughs.

The first day of April doesn't have to be the only day for fun, though it's one of the most light-hearted days of the year. It didn't start that way. When Pope Gregory XIII ordered the Julian calendar replaced in 1582, the new calendar moved the beginning of the year from the Feast of Annunciation on 25 March to 1 January.

Communication traveled slowly then so news of the change reached some people years later. Others who were more rebellious refused to acknowledge the change and continued to celebrate on the last day of the former celebration. Some countries held out for centuries: Scotland until 1660; Germany, Denmark and Norway until 1700; England until 1752.

These people—the slow and the rebellious—were labeled “fools” by the general populace, and were ridiculed, sent on “fools’ errands,” given invitations to nonexistent parties, and had other practical jokes played on them.

During the Renaissance, court jesters became familiar figures among the royal court and were licensed by monarchs to provide entertainment. Jesters were given leeway to criticize and speak truth to people in power, including their noble employers. Humor softened the blow.

How can you employ humor to lighten up, stimulate creative thinking, and inspire problem solving?

With April Fool's Day around the corner in 1996, several Taco Bell executives huddled in a conference room brainstorming ways "to play an April Fool's joke on America."

As ideas were tossed around, Jonathan Blum, Taco Bell's vice president of public affairs, pitched an idea. He reminded his colleagues the 1995 federal budget battle had led to furloughing 800,000 government employees and closing non-essential services, including closing several national landmarks. One of these landmarks was Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, purportedly rung on Independence Day in 1776.

"Let's sponsor it," Blum suggested.

Once the laughter stopped, Blum and his colleagues began figuring out how to bring this idea to life.

By mid-March Taco Bell's public relations agency had designed a full-page ad to run in The Philadelphia Inquirer, New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Dallas Morning News, and USA Today.

On April Fool's Day readers opened their paper to see a photo the Liberty Bell dominating the top of a page with the headline "Taco Bell Buys The Liberty Bell." The copy read:

In an effort to help the national debt, Taco Bell is pleased to announce that we have agreed to purchase the Liberty Bell, one of our country's most historic treasures. It will now be called the "Taco Liberty Bell" and will still be accessible to the American public for viewing. While some may find this controversial, we hope our move will prompt other corporations to take similar action to do their part to reduce the country's debt.

By mid-morning, Taco Bell's "purchase" was the talk of the nation.

Most people realized the Liberty Bell was federal property and couldn't be purchased. It was a joke. Some were not amused.

"The problem with having a sense of humor," legendary football coach Lou Holtz once said, "is often that people you use it on aren't in a very good mood."

In what ways can you laugh at yourself in order to bring people together and build trust?

Taco Bell's April Fool's Day ad drove sales, generated millions of dollars of publicity, and reinforced the image of a company unafraid to take a chance and willing to laugh at itself.

At a noon news conference, company executives reassured Americans the Liberty Bell was safe, and pledged \$50,000 to its maintenance.

Humor reveals a person's true character. So does adversity.

When problems arise, put them in perspective and determine whether any humor can be found amidst the difficulties. Your sense of humor will help your colleagues exhale and get to work fixing the problem.

"Last year we said, 'Things can't go on like this,'" cracked Will Rogers, "and they didn't. They got worse."

When things are bad, great leaders acknowledge the truth while putting others at ease. What's going on in your organization right now that could use a little bit of humor to break the tension?

You don't have to be a stand-up comic to be humorous or even witty. Just be authentic. Be observant. Connect the dots, then bring your unique perspective to others with a smile.

Joan of Arc Leads the French to Victory

How an inexperienced leader distinguished between collaborating and commanding

*“One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. But to sacrifice what you are and to live without belief, that is a fate more terrible than dying.”
~ Joan of Arc*

On May 7, 1429, Joan of Arc led 1,500 French soldiers on an assault lifting the six-month siege of Orléans and fulfilling her prophesy to King Charles VII she would deliver victory to the French.

This battle became the turning point in the Hundred Years' War.

Though another 22 years of fighting would ensue before the English were driven from France, this long-running conflict and Joan's remarkable life offer three lessons for today's leaders.

The Hundred Years' War entangled five generations of kings fighting for the throne of Western Europe's largest kingdom from 1337 to 1453.

Seeds of conflict were sown in 1328 when Charles IV of France died, leaving no male heirs. The French, preferring a fellow countryman as their ruler, named Philip VI, a cousin of Charles, their king. Edward III, son of Charles' sister Isabella, proclaimed himself the rightful king and in 1337 declared war on France.

Western Europe's longest, bloodiest and costliest conflict began as a family feud.

The combination of continuous conflict and the Bubonic plague decimated Western Europe's population. France lost half its population during the Hundred Years' War with Normandy losing three-quarters of its population and Paris two-thirds. One-third of England's population perished.

Where in our organization—whether we're a family business or a group of hired professionals—must I set aside rivalry, personal preferences and pettiness to ensure the long-term health and success of the enterprise?

Significant English victories during the war—most notably at Crécy, Poitiers, and Agincourt—changed the way battles were fought and fueled predictions the English ultimately would defeat the French.

Chivalry died on the battlefield of Agincourt in October 1415 as France's greatest knights led 36,000 men to their annihilation by an English army numbering 6,000 men equipped with longbows.

By 1424, France was divided: Burgundians aligned themselves with the invaders and against the Armagnacs.

English victories continued. In 1429, eleven days after another English victory at Rouvray, Joan of Arc concluded her 270-mile journey through enemy territory by delivering a message from God: If Charles would give her an army, she would drive the English from France.

That a peasant girl in her teens believed she could accomplish what seasoned soldiers had not was incredible.

But the Armagnacs, facing destruction, were desperate. Following a series of tests by scholars, clergy and wives of two noblemen, Joan's "goodness, humility, virginity, piety, integrity and simplicity" were affirmed.

If Joan the Maid was sent by God, what sign would she give doubters?

Her reply was forceful: "In the name of God, I have not come to Poitiers to give signs; but take me to Orléans, and I will show you signs of the purpose for which I am sent."

Once at Orléans, Joan's generals recommended a series of cautious skirmishes. Joan would have none of this. Her plan was bolder. On May 4, Joan led the French assault.

With failure expected, could victory represent a sign from God?

There's a time for collaboration and coaching, and there's a time for a mandate. How do you balance asking and telling, and when do I decide which approach is required? When do you collaborate and when do you command?

On the afternoon of May 4, Joan's army captured the fortress of Saint Loup. The next day Joan led a march to Saint-Jean-le-Blanc, finding it deserted.

On May 6, Joan's army captured a fortress built around a monastery called Les Augustins. Joan was wounded and was asked to sit out the final assault on the Boulevard-Tourelles. She refused.

May 7 was a day of fruitless bombardment. As evening approached, some commanders recommended delaying the final assault until morning. Informed of the decision, Joan called for her horse and rode off to pray, then returned to the camp, grabbed a ladder and launched the frontal assault, inspiring her troops, "All is yours – go in!" French soldiers rushed after her.

In spite of being wounded by an arrow between the neck and left shoulder, Joan led a final assault that claimed the fortress, lifting the siege. Her chaplain later shared Joan's premonition of her wound. The day before the attack, Joan said, "tomorrow blood will flow from my body above my breast."

For the next year, Joan led the Armagnacs in victories over the English.

But on 23 May 1430, while attacking a Burgundian camp north of Compiègne, she was ambushed and captured.

Her trial, designed for maximum embarrassment to the Armagnacs, was a farce. Despite attempts to trick and trap an illiterate peasant, Joan's unshakeable faith guided her answers, astonishing the court.

Asked if she knew she was in God's grace, she answered, "If I am not, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me."

Asked if God loved or hated the English, she replied, "Of the love or hatred God has for the English, I know nothing, but I do know that they will all be thrown out of France, except those who die there."

On 30 May 1431—two years after her victory at Orléans—Joan was burned at the stake. She was 19 years old.

In 1453, the English were driven from France as Joan foretold.

What gives you a sense of certainty?

Joan's fiery death could not extinguish the flame she lit in the hearts of her countrymen.

In 1909 Joan was beatified; in 1920 she was canonized as a saint. Every May 30, the Festival of

Construction Begins on Pisa's Bell Tower

How failing to fix a small problem early required millions to fix it later

"An error doesn't become a mistake until you refuse to correct it."

~Orlando Aloysius Battista

The Leaning Tower of Pisa in the Tuscany region of Central Italy is one of history's most beautiful, most well-known and most spectacular planning failures.

Construction on Pisa's bell tower began in August 1173.

By 1178, as construction proceeded on subsequent floors, it became evident the architects and engineers had not accounted for the soft ground on the tower's south side. This soil was unable to support the heavier load and a fluctuating water table on the tower's north side caused the tower to begin to sink under its own weight.

Nevertheless, construction proceeded in patchwork fashion with engineers designing asymmetrical columns and arches to compensate for the problem. Unwilling to start over, they adjusted their view of success. While the engineers and architects managed to design and build a beautiful bell tower, their design compromises did little to mitigate the possibility of collapse.

Over time, the tower's situation worsened. The seven bronze bells the tower was intended to showcase were removed to decrease weight.

As you aim for excellence, take time to critique in a constructive manner your organization. When was the last time you surveyed your leadership team, your customers, prospects, vendors and employees to understand their perceptions of your organization's performance?

Pisa's bell tower rises 185.93 feet (56.67 meters) from the ground on the high side and 183.27 feet (55.86 meters) from the ground on the low side. This lack of alignment has been a problem for centuries.

By 1350, the tower was leaning 1.4 degrees. Engineers calculated the tower was sinking at a rate of about 0.05 inch per year. The foundational problems existed at the outset of construction and became magnified over time, growing to a misalignment in excess of 5 degrees. What started as

a small problem became a 30-inch (76 centimeter) difference, prompting the removal of nearby buildings that would be crushed in the event of a catastrophic collapse.

In organizations of every type, in every industry and of every size, alignment is one of the most essential factors to generate and sustain high performance.

It's vital that an organization's senior leaders acknowledge and resolve real and perceived differences—no matter how small they may seem at the time. Alignment does not mean absence of conflict. Just the opposite. Authentic alignment is achieved only when conflict is encouraged, options for resolving the conflict are weighed, and a solution is reached that all leaders support. For healthy conflict to occur, leaders must trust each other. They must be able to talk openly and candidly about problems, fears, and controversy. Without trust, there's no conflict. Without conflict there's no change. Without change, improvement is nearly impossible. Lack of alignment among the leadership team will, at the least, hold back your organization and, at worst, kill it. So if alignment is absent following the planning process, it's best to ask those who fundamentally disagree with you to move on then wish them well.

Because if senior leaders can't agree on what's to be done and how, by whom and by when, this lack of alignment will trickle down through your organization and dilute or even poison daily operations.

What is the meaty issue you and your team must openly discuss and reach agreement on in order to make the changes that will improve your performance?

The risk of collapse grew as the tower continued to sink. No solution worked.

In 1935, engineers attempted to seal the base of the tower by drilling a network of holes into the foundation and filling the holes with a cement grout mixture. This activity actually worsened the problem.

In 1990, when another Italian tower (the Civic Tower of Pavia) abruptly collapsed due to masonry degradation, Pisa's city officials feared the worst for their tower.

Following a two-year study, a bold engineering plan was approved to save the tower—and the city's huge tourism business. Ultimately, more than 1,382 cubic feet (38 cubic meters) of soil was removed totaling 70 metric tons and a cabling system was installed at a cost of more than \$35 million.

Leaders and their key colleagues must consider the rewards you will bestow to recognize the successful completion of a project or achievement of annual objectives—and it's usually more than money (though money is important). You must also consider how you will address those who—for whatever reason—consistently fail to perform as agreed. Minimize emotion and stick to the facts.

Be sure rewards and penalties are implemented fairly and consistently (not necessarily equally).

What are the rewards that will motivate our colleagues, and what will be our response to under-performance?

Questions and controversy have swirled about the identity of the architect of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Some say the ambiguity arises from the fact that no one wanted to be known for designing a flawed structure.

For better or worse, you and your team are the architects of your organization's future and you will own the outcome of your planning session.

Eleanor Roosevelt Asks Americans to Write to Her

How listening to someone's concerns can be the first step toward helping to solve them

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'" ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

It's easy to take certain freedoms for granted.

In America only about half of registered voters exercise the freedom to choose their public servants.

Yet elected officials have the power to tax us, divide us or inspire us.

In 1932, American's fear of prolonged hardship and impending ruin caused by the Great Depression propelled Franklin D. Roosevelt into the White House in a landslide victory over Herbert Hoover.

Soon after FDR's inauguration, Americans discovered the election had brought them a bonus in the form of the president's wife, Eleanor.

In an era when few woman worked outside the home, Eleanor Roosevelt pioneered many causes we take for granted today. She was the first First Lady to conduct regular press conferences, host her own radio show and speak at a national party convention.

She pressed the United States to join and support the United Nations and became its first delegate. She served as the first chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights and oversaw the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

By the time of her death in November 1962 at age 78, Eleanor Roosevelt was regarded as "one of the most esteemed women in the world."

Who are the people who inspire you to keep going in the face of adversity? Who inspires you to accomplish great things?

In 1932, there was a four-month gap between Election Day and Inauguration Day. During the Great Depression, fear flooded into this void.

The day before FDR's inauguration, banks in thirty-two of the country's forty-eight states had closed. Deposits evaporated. Money was useless—there was nothing to buy.

Fifteen million Americans were out of work—one out of every three people. Capital investment dropped from \$10 billion in 1929 to \$1 billion in 1932. Farm income had plummeted 60 percent.

Worldwide gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 15 percent. By comparison, worldwide GDP during the 2008–2009 Great Recession fell by less than one percent.

In 1933, America was on her knees.

There are five questions every employee wants answered, and one of them is “Where can I go for help?”

Eighty-five years ago, as fear and uncertainty gripped the country, Americans searched for answers and cried out for help.

Eleanor Roosevelt answered.

In the August 1933 issue of *Woman's Home Companion* in an article entitled “I Want You to Write Me,” Eleanor Roosevelt wrote that through this new column, she was establishing “a clearing house, a discussion room, for the millions of men, women and young people who read the *Companion* every month.”

The purpose of this column was to “help [people] solve the problems which are forever rising in our personal, family and community lives, not only with my ideas but with the ideas of others.”

Eleanor Roosevelt's column continued:

I want you to tell me about the particular problems which puzzle or sadden you, but I also want you to write me about what has brought joy into your life, and how you are adjusting yourself to the new conditions in this amazing changing world. I want you to write to me freely. Your confidence will not be betrayed. Do not hesitate to write to me even if your views clash with what you believe to be my views.

We are passing through a time which perhaps presents to us more serious difficulties than the days immediately after the war, but my own experience has been that all times have their own problems. Times of great material prosperity bring their own spiritual problems, for our characters are apt to suffer more in such periods than in times when the narrowed circumstances of life bring out our sturdier qualities; so whatever happens to us in our lives, we find questions constantly recurring that we would gladly discuss with some friend. Yet it is hard to find just the friend we should like to talk to. Often it is easier to write to someone whom we do not expect ever to see. We can say things which we cannot say to the average individual we meet in our daily lives.

Eleanor Roosevelt's column started an avalanche of correspondence as more than 300,000 letters and postcards found their way to the White House from September through December 31, 1933.

The response was unprecedented, and, incredibly, each piece of correspondence was referred to the appropriate government agency for action and Eleanor Roosevelt's staff replied to each writer.

To whom do people in your organization turn for help?

I facilitate about 10 strategic planning sessions each year and speak to leaders at conferences and workshops about 50 times per year.

It never ceases to amaze me that people will confide in someone they've just met, telling me their greatest concerns about what's happening in their organizations.

These conversations are not occurring because I have some magnetic appeal. Rather, they are occurring simply because I ask, I listen and I promise to do what I can to help begin to address their issue.

What might your co-workers tell me?

Here are the five questions every employee wants answered:

1. Why are we here? (What's our purpose beyond making money?)
2. What is expected of me?
3. How am I doing?
4. What's in it for me? (Hint: It's not always money.)
5. Where can I go for help?

Eleanor Roosevelt provided hope and help for a fearful nation.

Her simple leadership lesson: She asked people to tell her the help they needed. She listened. She took action based on what she heard.

Leadership is not always so simple. Sometimes it is.

Michelangelo Receives Commission for Pietà

How leaders can learn from a master sculptor who brought out the best

“Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.”

~ Michelangelo

Michelangelo was considered the greatest living artist in his lifetime and today is regarded as one of the greatest artists of all time.

Several of his works in sculpture, paint and architecture rank among the most famous in existence.

In November 1497, Michelangelo was commissioned by a representative of the Pope to carve a sculpture showing the Virgin Mary grieving over the body of Jesus. Negotiations 520 years ago could be as protracted as those of today, and it wasn't until the summer of 1498 that terms were agreed upon and Michelangelo began work on Pietà. He was 23 years old.

When Pietà was unveiled, people were astonished.

Georgio Vasari, a contemporary of Michelangelo's and a highly regarded painter and architect as well as a pioneering art historian exclaimed, “It is certainly a miracle that a formless block of stone could ever have been reduced to a perfection that nature is scarcely able to create in the flesh.”

Michelangelo's Statue of David—completed four years after Pietà—is considered the world's finest sculpture. When asked about it, Michelangelo replied, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.”

His comment is a fitting metaphor for coaching.

What's the difference between a consultant and a coach?

You may know the difference between a consultant and a coach. For someone like me who worked for years as a consultant, I figured I knew the difference. A consultant is paid for answers. A coach is paid for questions that allow the person being coached to discover for him- or herself what's possible.

I'd never really considered myself a coach. Today, my belief is that to be an exceptional leader, you must be a competent coach.

Coaching is the art of bringing out the best in a person.

What can you do differently to bring out the best in those around you?

In 1505, 30-year-old Michelangelo was invited back to Rome from Florence by the newly elected Pope Julius II. Michelangelo was commissioned to build the Pope's tomb, which was to include 40 statues and be completed in five years. He experienced continual interruptions, including painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

According to contemporary accounts, Donato Bramante, who was working on St. Peter's Basilica, resented Michelangelo's commission for the Pope's tomb and convinced the Pope to commission Michelangelo for the Sistine Chapel project. Bramante's motive was to force Michelangelo into a medium with which he was unfamiliar—painting, not sculpting—in order that he might fail at the task.

Given a job designed to expose his weaknesses, Michelangelo conquered his fear of failure and vowed to make his enemies regret their decision.

One of the first stops on my journey as a Vistage Chair was a workshop in Atlanta delivered by Larry Wilson. Larry rocked my world. His vulnerability in a room full of strangers was magical. Vulnerability, I thought, was a weakness to be hidden or avoided. Larry transformed vulnerability into a strength, talking openly and directly about tough topics. His workshop focused on the difference between playing not to lose and playing to win.

In his book *Play to Win*, Larry identifies what he calls the Four Fatal Fears:

1. The fear of rejection (the need to be accepted)
2. The fear of failure (the need to succeed)
3. The fear of emotional discomfort (the need to feel emotionally comfortable)
4. The fear of being wrong (the need to be right)

Larry considers these fears fatal because they will lead to intellectual, emotional and spiritual death if they remain unconquered. Michelangelo conquered his fears to create a masterpiece.

What are your fears? What steps can you take to conquer them?

If you agree that one of the behaviors separating consultants and coaches is asking questions that encourage the person on the receiving end to reflect, discover and grow, consider these four questions inspired by Michelangelo and Larry Wilson:

- What fears am I trying to avoid that cause me to behave a certain way?
- How many of my team's fears are caused by my leadership style?
- Am I making stuff up? What evidence do I have that my fears are real?
- What action am I willing to take in order to conquer my fear and create my masterpiece?

In his book, Larry recounts a series of questions posed by legendary coach Dick Leider, starting with, “If you could live your life over again, what would you change? What is the wisdom that you would pass on?”

Most responses could be categorized as:

- I would see the big picture and make time for the things that are really important.
- I would be more courageous, especially at work and in relationships.
- I would make a difference to help others and leave a legacy.

“The greater danger for most of us,” said Michelangelo, “lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”

What are you aiming for?

Given your current behavior and trajectory, what’s the likelihood you’ll achieve your mark?



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