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## What's Happening?

The newsletter for switched on people  
Summer issue 88 - from Samuel Day

### Symbols, Rituals and Ceremonies

At this time of year it is interesting to see the symbols (eg Santa or Father Christmas or the Cross), rituals (eg carols by candle light) and ceremonies (Mass) that play out in our culture. They can all be powerful in influencing behaviour such as “Be good or Santa will not visit you this year”.

Similarly symbols, rituals and ceremonies in organisational culture can be equally powerful. Bolman and Deal in their book Reframing Organizations says:

*“Symbols embody and express an organisations culture – the interwoven pattern of beliefs, values, practices and artefacts that define for the members who they are and how they do things”.*

We were working with a client once who had a goal of increasing employee retention. This would help with their knowledge capital and competitive advantage in the market place and hence reduce recruitment costs.

One of the solutions we provided was simple yet powerful and it included rewarding people for length of service. So rewards were then given for 1 year (attrition was high in year one) and 5 years (a relatively new company). A medallion was presented at a ceremony to employees who reached each milestone. From a cultural perspective this had the impact of turning tenure into a goal and “water cooler” discussion within the culture. This along with other interventions such as professional development and an employee assistance program helped reduce employee turn over by half.

If you are wondering how symbolism plays out in your organisation look around and see what your environment says about your business or organisation and how this together with rituals and ceremonies work with or against your desired culture. 2010 can be an opportunity to implement something new.

### Positively speaking

In the most part Australia has been able to sustain growth in the face of the GFC and on going negative media reports. This year has been one of the busiest professional years of my life both - exciting and rewarding. All good news! Alison, my assistant gave birth to twins and is already back at work. You are amazing AI as are all Happening People Consultants!

Many people selected Happening People for their executive coaching and many new clients selected Happening People for their corporate training and people management consulting. Just as significant are our long term clients who continue to use Happening People, thank you all!

2010 is looking great as we are launching a leadership program for one our clients around the country to be run over 3 years and using Harvard resources and a new national sales program for another client together with many new executive coaching clients. We are also sponsoring a new network of professionals “Human Resource Management @ Work” an impressive body of people. Innovation is alive and well here 2010 as we hit 15 years! Keep well and Merry Christmas. Kind regards, Sam