

Good-Bye Chicken Little

By Mindy Gibbins-Klein

How many people are out there at the moment spreading tales of doom and gloom? Even if you don't turn on a television or radio or read a newspaper, you will still come into contact with friends, family members and associates with pessimistic predictions about the economy and its implications for business. I liken these doom and gloomers to Chicken Little who ran around crying "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!"

If you know the story, you may remember that Chicken Little had an acorn fall on his head and it was his distortion of this simple event that created all the hassle. Similarly, how you react to the current situation will determine to a large extent how it will affect you in the long term. Are you listening to the Chicken Littles in your world? Are you being a little chicken yourself? I believe that having the courage to make your own distinctions about what things mean gives you incredible power over the vast majority of people. Yes, we are seeing businesses suffering and people having trouble with rising costs and uncertainty in their careers. But that doesn't mean that there are no opportunities out there or that everyone will be in trouble. The sky is not falling; a few acorns are dropping from the trees – like they tend to do – and if one hits you, you need to see it for what it is and get

on with the business of running your life and your business.

Too bad the chicken and his friends did not know about NLP. The great thing about NLP is that it gives us many tools with which to make sense of things and improve the experience and perception of our world. With a powerful reframe, we can turn someone's perception around, sometimes very dramatically. Reminding them of positive references (for example, surviving the last recession and the good things that resulted from it) allows them to experience more certainty about the possibility of another

positive outcome. And we can future pace them, helping them paint the picture they want.

When speaking to clients in times like these, our own language choices become critical. I was at a networking event this past week where I bumped into a fellow coach. I was surprised and dismayed to hear that person talking about

the marketplace and their own challenges in quite a negative way. On the one hand, they were being upfront and honest; on the other hand, from the way they spoke, I could tell this story was being told again and again in different meetings. My concern is that if we engage in this kind of talk, it is harder to switch into a more positive and supportive tone when speaking to clients. If we assume that many clients are listening to the Chicken Littles in their sphere of influence, they are

looking for another perspective from us and it is our job, our responsibility and our privilege to give that perspective.

All of these techniques and many more can and should be used in our writing as well as our verbal communications. When writing a blog, keep in mind your intention for the reader. If you want to influence people in a positive way, ensure that your language and content are aligned with that intention. Writing articles requires even more thought, and book writing most of all. These items can remain in print and in circulation for a long time, so you want to get your tone and your message exactly right. Done well, written communications can have an amazing and far-reaching impact on large groups of readers, many of whom have not met you and may never meet you.

I hope they see you as the inspirational, knowledgeable coach you are, sharing your wisdom while others run around like the proverbial chickens. ●

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