

# The Ostrich and the Fisherman

## Is your head in the sand or are you casting your net wide?

There once lived an Ostrich called Ollie and a fisherman called Fred. They didn't know each other and lived very different lives. They had one thing in common: they both ran their own businesses.

Unfortunately Ollie had a problem. A problem so entrenched in his psyche that he wasn't necessarily even aware of it. Ollie suffered from **Ostrich Syndrome** and his business suffered as a result. He constantly wondered why everything always seemed to go wrong or be particularly difficult and couldn't figure out how to change the status quo.

Fred however had a different approach. He knew what was going on in and around his business. He worked hard and was able to cope reasonably well with the rough and the smooth. His awareness and his knowledge meant he could adapt, shift and change depending on what worked for his market and his business.

This tale is very simple yet equally applicable in today's world. Some businesses survive and others don't. The difference between survival and failure is wide and varied. This article takes a simple look at characteristics. Read on and see how the characteristics of Ollie and Fred helped or hindered their ability to change.

## The Ostrich



Ollie the Ostrich was obviously a bird. A really big bird. He looked like nothing would faze him. Everyone's perception was that he could take on any challenge and 'make it count' for his business. He had strength, speed, and his obvious size, all working in his favour. The world was his egg, so to speak. All he had to do was take it.

Ollie had run a successful Ostrich Egg export business for a number of years but was now suffering the effects of the economic downturn. It was becoming more difficult to maintain existing business let alone expand existing or create new business. Ollie decided he needed some help so he finally took the plunge and got someone in to take a quick look at things and give him some objective feedback on what he was or wasn't doing well and some ideas on what he could do next.

After talking to Ollie, his staff and observing the business operations here's what was discovered...

Ollie suffered from Ostrich Syndrome and it was severely impacting his ability to respond and adapt to what was happening in his industry, market and the economy in general. He was still operating in the same way he had for years because 'it's what we do' rather than zooming in on where he could make significant changes and benefit as a result.

Ostrich Syndrome is caused by fear of the unknown, and its effects and the characteristics being exhibited by Ollie were common for this condition. Ollie was:

- Keeping his head in the sand
- Had a definite lack of awareness of what was going on around him
- Hoped it'd all go away
- Didn't really want to know
- Had no real plan of attack
- He didn't make any noise and wasn't interested in flying
- His preference was to run away, fast
- While he had access to big eggs he wasn't making the most of them

Fred the Fisherman however had a quite different approach...



## The Fisherman

Fred the fisherman was a small wiry bloke, burnt brown by the sun and gnarly after many years at sea. He worked hard. In fact Fred worked so hard that people thought he spent all his time working in his business and no time growing it.

However hard he worked and however good his business was Fred was also pragmatic and knew that sometimes someone else might have an idea or an approach that could help him do even better. So he worked with someone on a fairly regular basis to help review his operations enabling him to analyse and pin down the areas where he could improve or expand.

Fred's specialty was line fishing. His customer base had a specific requirement and Fred was the supplier that best served their needs. Fred maintained this part of his business with huge success. He also recognised, through his various reviews and analysis tools, that to continue this success he needed to expand his business by adapting these specialist skills to a new market.

What then were the characteristics that Fred exhibited and how did he successfully adapt? Fred had:

- Strength and a willingness to adapt and collaborate
- Practicality that he could apply when facing harsh as well as buoyant conditions
- Preparedness for various events
- Recognized he could adapt tools and techniques to prompt new ways of thinking both in himself and his staff
- Regular reviews in place for improvement and maintenance of processes, people and equipment

Fred always got something out of the reviews he conducted but the biggest one had to be nets. For one thing he could cast a net much wider and achieve a far bigger catch than with his specialized line fishing. But by taking that analogy even further Fred was able to cast his net wider for all manner of things. It became his way of enabling his entire organizations thoughts, ideas, and opportunities outside anything he'd previously thought possible.

## What is Ostrich Syndrome? What is the potential impact of it on your business?

Ostrich Syndrome is a condition that needs immediate treatment. If left unattended it can cause significant damage. By sticking ones head in the sand and hoping it will all go away things inevitably only get worse; remember that you can't manage what you don't know.

### Diagnosing Ostrich Syndrome

Are you watching? Are you listening? Do you know what is going on around you and its impact on your business? The symptoms of Ostrich Syndrome are not always obvious to those affected by it, but with careful analysis the condition can easily be detected. It's important, particularly in the current global economic situation to get a quick diagnosis and make changes for the better.

### Curing Ostrich Syndrome

The cure is simple though not always easy: Lift your head out of the sand and take control. Then contact Unlike Before to Alter - Transform - Integrate change into your business through tools and techniques that will reduce the potential for future occurrences of Ostrich Syndrome and help you find a way to cast your net wider.

**Unlike Before Ltd are specialists in effecting change in complex or crisis organisational transition and project situations. We work internationally to assist progressive organisations and individuals through a practical transformation process that inspires and delivers tangible outcomes.**