The Day The World Stopped Listening

When I was a teenager and in my early twenties, I had little or no confidence and would not dream of having any opinions of any substance. I was a quiet, naïve and rather nervous lad. Nobody really listened to me because I really had nothing to say.

After I split up with Kate at the age of 20, I threw myself into work. I worked hard at Burroughs and then, when I had sufficient money for a deposit; I bought my first house and spent years working hard to refurbish it. By the time that I reached my late twenties, through hard work, honesty and trustworthiness, I found that people were interested in what I had to say. I had risen from trainee service engineer to managing the engineering support team at Burroughs. I had also done reasonably well financially having let a part of my house.

At thirty I was persuaded to move to the sales department and started a new career as a trainee sales representative. As a salesman I worked hard to find the right customers for my product, unlike many salesmen who used their rather obvious sales techniques in order to sell to anyone they could. I was almost unique in my approach. If I honestly felt that my product wasn't right for the customer then I would walk away. The net result was that my computer installations were successful and I became good friends with the majority of my customers and I therefore took a lot of follow-on business. I also had a lot of very good customer references that helped me to win further business from new customers.

As a result of this success I became more and more confident in myself. I had changed from the nervous, naïve lad into the confident businessman. In the ten years from the age of thirty to the age of forty, I was one of the most successful salesmen and sales managers in Burroughs (which became Unisys). I was proud of my achievements and I was highly respected.

I was in demand both within Unisys and, from the number of headhunters that contacted me, by other companies. But as well as being honest and trustworthy I am also loyal and it would have taken a lot to drive me away from Unisys. Financial offers meant little to me, as I have never been motivated by money.

After the problems of interest rates and Mark Wrigley, my career at Unisys was over and I started PSL. Again, through a great deal of hard work, I built relationships with key partners at the Universal Postal Union, at NCR and in many other industry bodies and consultancy groups and built a solid customer base.

So, throughout my late twenties, my thirties and my forties, people listened to me and trusted me. I had developed influence and I could make things happen to benefit my partners and my customers. I became one of the most trusted and revered consultants in

the postal industry and was invited to speak at postal related conferences throughout the world. People were indeed listening to me and taking note of my comments and advice.

Then came the inveiglement and my naivety and trust in others was to be my downfall. After the dawn raid I wrote my honest but self-destructive voluntary statement, which was used selectively in both civil and criminal actions.

What was to take its toll of my mental health was the frustration of this selective listening. From now on people would only believe what suited their agenda, ignoring everything that didn't.

The police started their investigations with a determination to convict Buchanan and me. As well as my voluntary statement I was the subject of two lengthy formal recorded interviews and many non-recorded discussions with the police. There is no doubt that Steve Ball, the man, believed my version of events and even had some sympathy for my position, yet as D/C Ball, the lead investigating officer for the fraud squad, he had a job to do, which, primarily, was to get a conviction against Buchanan.

I helped the police in whatever way I could in their investigations, yet when Buchanan's trial came to court, the police statement advised the court that Buchanan and I had 'hatched a plan' to take the money. Everything I had told them regarding the inveiglement was totally ignored and was irrelevant to their case. After a five-year investigation into the crime, the police had to get a conviction of Buchanan even if I suffered along the way. Immediately after sentencing D/C Ball went out of his way to "send his regards," to me, which undoubtedly was his way of saying that he was sorry for my sentence.

The civil case was even worse. Using my voluntary statement, NCR's barrister simply told the judge that I had admitted my guilt and that was the end of my involvement. They never even defined the nature of the guilt that I had admitted. This was all brushed away as the focus moved to exposing Buchanan's lies.

Neither Judge King in the criminal court nor The Honourable Mr. Justice Lightman in the high court allowed me one second of time between them in order to present the 'how and why' I had been inveigled into this crime. They were not interested. They would not listen. The justice system was not interested in any moral factors affecting this case. The ignorance of the system sent me into a spiral of destructive anger and frustration. Why would nobody listen to the facts? Why did they accept what I had to say and then ignore it when it didn't fit their agenda?

So, after so many years of stress I was sent to prison and PSL died along with my investments and my customer's investments.

I now had to deal with the many financial institutions to whom I owed money, led by the evil Barclays. I wrote so many letters to explain my situation and ask for a little time to

resolve matters. Nobody was interested. I lost count of the letters and phone calls begging them to wait just a few months so that I could address the situation, but would they listen; not a chance.

Still fighting the evil banks, I was released from prison. NCR immediately made contact through their solicitors to advise me that their position had not changed and that they wanted to know what offer I could make to NCR in order to settle our affairs. I wrote to NCR advising them of my huge debts due to the failure of my business, which, in part, they had caused. They ignored my letters. They were not listening. They were not interested in the destruction they were still causing.

I still counted myself as lucky as I had my beautiful family. With my family to support me I could achieve anything. But did I? Fiona's initial coldness upon my release from prison didn't soften. She had changed dramatically during the time I had been in prison.

I worked as hard as I could to resolve the problems, to start a new business and to build a future for my family. I was determined that I would, in some way, turn this hell into a heaven. I was determined that we would look back on these events as the stepping-stone to a better life. I asked Fiona to give me two years to get on top of life before we moved to the country for our new life. She wasn't listening. She had convinced herself that we were heading for a life of destitution on benefits. I prepared plans for our future and tried to talk to her about it but she would not talk. One day I pressed her to talk about the future; she dismissed me with the devastating "what's the point."

I was working all hours on a new business in order to build her dream life of a home in the country yet she would not talk to me; the future of our family was not even worth a chat.

On top of all of the other fools that would not listen, now the most important person in my life won't listen.