

Siege? You don't know the meaning, dear reader, unless you've constantly been under it!

Allow me to introduce myself ... I am an Owl, a country Owl, a mighty fine specimen of my Family-type and I am named 'Hourly'. A handsome bird with a handsome name. Perhaps I am named Hourly as it rhymes with Owly, but it's more likely that it stems from my habit of appearing periodically, at regular intervals, at stated times, at fixed periods, punctually, from day to day, in turn, in rotation, alternately, in shifts, off and on. I am as regular as clockwork, me.

I often wondered how I knew, as a wee Owlet, that Owls wear the Crown in the bird world. But I seemed to know it instinctively from the day I was born (hatched?). Was it an inherited royal title with entitlement to wear the Crown, or were we just superior beings? Smarter than your average birdie? It didn't take me long to find out just what edge Owls held over more common birds. It was obvious ... our unique attribute is WORDS. I love words. One important thing that is not often acknowledged about Owls is that we are obsessed with Words. We are Wordsmiths. As quoted in Roget's Thesaurus "Proper Words in proper places, make the true definition of style", and Man, I am here to tell you that I have that style! And I love those words. My choice of favourite word changes regularly, depending on my mood and the season, but right now my favourite word is *Gelatinous*. But I suspect that by tomorrow it might be Ictus, which has a certain attraction.

As I have grown up as the acknowledged Ruler of the Birds and master-of-many, as long as I keep ahead of the pack by regularly exhibiting my superior knowledge, skills and attributes, the frequent birdie challengers can't cut the mustard, and I retain the Crown. But, understand this, the challenges are both constant and tiring. But I am getting ahead of myself ...

We'll get to why I needed a name shortly, but I didn't have a name (well, not a personal first name) until I recently applied for my first real paid employment. As a little-tacker I would have been known as an Owlet but never in my many years of adulthood could I ever be referred to as Owlsh, which as you know means solemn and dull. No sireebabe, I started life as a chirpy kid and I have maintained that persona over the years. I am more your Prince Harry than your Queen Victoria ... I am confident (okay, okay, maybe a bit arrogant), I am handsome, I am a leader, a trend-setter, a bird of the world, I have skills and experience and want for nothing. Well ... actually, I had been thinking over recent times that maybe it would be nice to have a day-time home that offered a little more prestige than my scrappy hole in a scruffy tree in a tired garden on the southern side of the farm. Would a more substantial home assist to clearly identify me as the Ruler of the Birds? The wearer of the Crown? Was I being pretentious? Above my station? Naaaaaaaaah!

Lazing around one day a few months ago I browsed a newspaper prior to starting my night-shift. It's true, of course, that people should refer to being a 'Wise Old Owl'. Did you think all of this wisdom happens by accident? Nooooooooooooo ... we keep up with the daily newspaper and the radio news and the Internet and Facebook, and ... where do you think the term Tweet came from originally? Owls are neither socially nor culturally isolated creatures. Keep up Humans! Anyway, I saw an advertisement in that newspaper that caught my eye. The original Tender called for "a guaranteed solution to a constantly slamming front door". Sheeeeeeeesh, you could tell from the wording that here was a person who had just plain had enough. Hot Australian summers, rising electricity costs making the use of an Air-Con less attractive, the need to block the door open during daylight hours, gusts of summer winds constantly snatching at the door, causing it to slam, and slam, and slam. I could picture it all.

I thought, I pondered, I speculated, and then it occurred to me. The solution was obvious ... I could be a 'Greater Australian Door-Stop Owl'. But let's be clear here, that's a Greater Owl, not a Greater Door-Stop. I am damnedly good at what I do in twelve hours in every twenty-four which leaves twelve hours to play with, plus, a posh professional

career would substantiate my status as Ruler, plus, I had been thinking about finding a new daytime home, plus, I was sure that I could submit a cheaper quote than some technology nerd with cumbersome overheads and a 10% contingency provision and a dependency on a fully fledged NBN, plus provisions for GST plus Mining Tax plus Carbon Tax, plus, plus, plus ... and, let's face it, I'm good. I am the handsomest door-stopping solution that could ever exist and ... my operational costs would be low as I would have dined-out prior to the commencement of every daytime shift.

A few years ago I saw a film in which Robin Williams (one of my favourites) stated "Seize the Day". Well, I had tucked that thought away until the right opportunity came along, and now I seized. I prepared the best darned Resume that could exist, I responded favourably to every Selection Criteria, I included a raft of false references, I fabricated the usual evidence of previous employment, and whoooooooooooo, here's a hitch ... I had to include my name. That's when I settled on *Hourly, the Greater Australian Door-Stop Owl* and then I emailed it to the listed address by the due date. Easy-peasy. And I waited.

Let's skip the process part of my appointment apart from recording that I was short-listed, I was interviewed, and yeah, it was obvious that they were pretty surprised to discover that I was a real flesh-and-blood local solution rather than a techno-wizz-doodaddy and, bless them, they were old-fashioned enough to take a chance on me. Or perhaps they saw a significant saving in Capital Investment and Operational costs. Or perhaps they were just overwhelmed by my beauty and brains and panache, and ...

Anyway, I fronted up on Day One after a cruisy night around the hills. It was clearly understood that I was 'on trial' but hey, my duty initially appeared quite simple ... to stand, well-balanced, with my feet apart and lean my shoulder, elbow and hip on the front door of the house to prevent it slamming shut in the breeze. For 12 hours. Every day. Without fail. Without rest-breaks. Without public holidays or annual leave or superannuation. And I bet you think that wouldn't take a lot of skill. Wrong, wrong, wrong chickadees. It was tough, it was technical, it was tiring, it was repetitious, but I

was purpose-built for the job, I had the talent and the availability and I wouldn't be at all surprised if my valuable contribution to this household starts a trend.

A typical day? Windy. Wind that blows periodically, at irregular intervals, not at stated times, not at fixed periods, not punctually, from day to day, but in turn, in rotation, alternately, in shifts, off and on. At first I sat and waited for the door to move and then braced myself, ready to repel the flying door before it banged into the door-jamb. That worked okay but got a bit repetitious. Being a smart and well-educated Owl I thought that there had to be a way to add some variety to my day so I started to practice the two methods of hunting that we Owls have. Perch and Pounce, where I sit up high until I spot the prey (okay, okay, the door) and then swoop down, or alternatively, Quartering, where I fly low over the floor just tempting that darn door to move. Both worked to some extent.

Having at least twelve hours a day to think, interrupted only by the swinging door which I discovered hurtled towards a closed position on an irregular but frequent basis, I started to wonder whether there was an opportunity for business expansion. Was I perhaps on to something that could attract a Government Grant as 'a new and emerging industry'? Surely the Greater Australian Door-Stop Owl could be a significant contributor to the newly-popular Green Solutions that are creating excitement in the funding and marketing arena? And a smart promoter would love the acronym GADSO which is entirely appropriate as it also means 'An expression of Surprise' which is just what you end up with when that door swings.

Once I was on a roll I couldn't stop thinking about it. Should I develop an embryonic business, or should I promote the idea and sell it to some gullible (Oops, sorry, enthusiastic young) entrepreneur who could take it forward?

*Here comes the door ...*

Would this be a niche market or, if marketed carefully, could the politicians be persuaded to include it as part of the compulsory 6-Star Rating credentials for new housing ... you know, along with piddling shower-heads and dual-flush toilets, the mechanisms of which last about five minutes before failing.

*The door ...*

Should I write a full-and-costed Business Plan incorporating a detailed Job Description that would assist the investors to understand how well this 'green solution' could work? You know, risk-proof it, and future-proof it.

*Hang on, it's the door again ...* so often the 'Expression of Surprise' definition reinforces its appropriateness!

The more I thought about it, the more it seemed likely that I was the Man to develop the idea and to sell it on to some enthusiastic young person with defined entrepreneurial skills ... and cash ...

*Oops, that was close ...*

If only I could get the wind to 'behave' with a bit of regularity about its intermittence, beat, ictus, pulse, rhythm, lift, swing, alternation, bout, round, revolution, rotation and turn. Too many words, do you think? I can't win ... recently I didn't talk for two days and I was accused of not giving a hoooooot!

Either way, I was not the Man to sit in the line-of-sight of that darn door indefinitely. I am, after all, a wise old owl, a Leader, the wearer of the Crown, and obviously have the maturity and class and style for a more senior position, and/or I thought that long-term, sitting waiting for the next breeze could be a mug's game.

Are we through? If so, I can confirm to you that I decided to just ease myself out of that job by selling the idea on to someone else, or sub-letting the contract, or on-selling the lease ...

*Here comes that door again ...*

I described my change as “Moving on to my new career as a Business-Incubator-Consultant”. Never one to let the moss grow under my feet, and having proven my superior capabilities yet again, I thought that I had been in the job long enough and it was time for a change. After all, my first day did seem to have been a long one.

The change freed me up to face the never ending and ongoing challenges of being Leader of the Birds, as I constantly reinforce my superiority through clever choice and expression of words. Choice of words and application of words in a manner that knocks the fluffy socks off lesser bird-beings and gives me some breathing space. Like all appointed or anointed leaders, I find that proceeding with blatant ballsy confidence reinforces my status, my authority, my adequacy and my self-respect. I boldly defend my right to the Throne, and, until and unless proven otherwise, the Crown is mine, to hold it high.