

# Joel Kurtzman, a Unique Leader at the Right Time

**I**N THIS ISSUE OF BRIEFINGS, we won't have our usual Parting Thoughts column by editor in chief Joel Kurtzman. Joel, who fought a long and brave battle with cancer, passed away in April. All of us at Briefings, along with our 7,000 colleagues at Korn Ferry, have Joel and his family in our thoughts and prayers. We know that he fought his illness with the same passion and commitment that he brought to the pages of Briefings since its first issue.

It was seven years ago that we at the Korn Ferry Institute had an idea. Through Korn Ferry, our sister organization, we had amassed decades of executive performance, demographic and compensation data. We had access to top global chief executives, board chairs, directors and heads of human resources. We knew a great deal about what it takes to lead and perform, motivate, develop and engage others, as well as to make real-world decisions about business and societal issues, which collectively determine the ultimate success or failure of any organization.

Our idea was simple: Let's capture this knowledge base, share our case studies with notable leaders and present our findings to the world in an effort to not tell people what to think, but rather to illuminate what they need to think about. To do this, we would publish a world-class quarterly magazine.

But Briefings couldn't become a reality—a truly first-rate editorial publication and not just another consulting firm “also-ran” house organ and shell for services rendered—without someone very special at the helm. We needed an editor in chief who was a leading journalist, who understood the global business community and knew what true leadership was all about. We needed someone with a formidable Rolodex who could attract a global stable of incredible writers, writers who could capture the wins and losses, the science, the stories and the people who were driving the global business community. In other words, we needed a thought leader who could bring to bear all that Korn Ferry had to offer.

Fortunately, we knew a great search firm! After an exhaustive engagement, we found our thought leader. Indeed, he actually coined the term “thought leader.” Joel Kurtzman had a résumé that was the envy of his fellow journalists. He was an editor and columnist at The New York Times. He became editor in chief of the Harvard Business Review. He helped Booz Allen start its own publication, Strategy + Business, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary as an influential business journal. And he was a senior partner at PwC and a senior fellow at the Milken Institute, where he helped found the Milken Institute Review.

Needless to say, it was a successful search for Korn Ferry. Over these years, under Joel's leadership, we have produced 27 issues of Briefings, which quickly became a respected, award-winning publication. Under his deft guidance, we have reported on a steady flow of timely and important subjects—from CEO successions at Novartis and Ford to leadership insights from A.G. Lafley at Procter & Gamble. We've published thought-provoking interviews with world leaders such as Mexican President Vicente Fox and leadership gurus like Warren Bennis. We've profiled the likes of billionaire Carlos Slim, star quarterback Andrew Luck and rock star Mick Fleetwood. Our writers have provided insightful and in-depth looks at a countless array of topics built around our core interests in leadership and talent management.

And along the way, Joel shared his Parting Thoughts with us on everything from the impact of the Internet on our lives, to the importance of happiness, to his early childhood memories of building a strong work ethic while cleaning pools in the summer in California's San Fernando Valley.

As anyone in the field of thoughts and ideas understands, it is impossible to overstate the impact of an editor who brings this kind of insight, experience and wisdom to a publication. In Joel, we had a unique leader—a man who brought all those talents to our team, along with unending grace, kindness and compassion. He honored the pages of Briefings with his commitment to excellence and we intend to honor his legacy in all the issues to come. We miss him greatly. **///**

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