Meyler Campbell

Graduation 2014 Reflective Essays

Meyler
Campbell

Foreword

Congratulations to the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Graduates 2014 on your Graduation Essays, here brought together so you have a small but we hope exciting taste of the richness and diversity you in the Class of 2014 have to offer each other!

As you will recall, there are three reasons why the Programme culminates in this way:

1. to consolidate your learning; the Essay provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the development in your coaching, and your business applications of it;
2. to encourage you to develop and explore your own unique approach to the subject; and
3. to contribute to the wider community. Everyone accepted onto the Programme brings to it considerable expertise in a fascinating range of areas including business leadership, HR and academia. You have fresh and interesting things to say, and this is one of your opportunities to say it.

A few comments: first, people have spoken very freely, so please respect the absolute confidentiality of this set of Essays, sharing none of it in whole or in part outside the community, without explicit permission from the author. Second, I am struck again by the variety within the community and your experience – thank you for your myriad gifts.

It’s been a good year, and I do hope you will all have as much pleasure reading the Essays, representing the tip of the iceberg of the insights of this latest group to join the burgeoning Meyler Campbell community, as I have.

With warm regards to you all, and with my congratulations to you and to your world-class Faculty on all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Professor Mary Watts
Programme Director

Contents

Executive Coaching – an empty vessel?

John Ainley

"The pertinent question is not how to do things right…but how to find the right things to do." (1)

Introduction.

As I have deepened my thinking and learning through the Meyler Campbell programme I have reflected on why the executive coaching profession does not have an overt 'point of view' about what is good leadership. It seems to me that, without an aspiration, coaching can only respond to the presenting problem of the individual coachee or their employer's particular leadership model.

I contend that executive coaching should not only have an inherent belief in the possibility of the individual, but also have an effective way of measuring the human being as an agent for good at work, a point of view about what an effective Leader should be aiming for in the 21st century.

A point of view.

Our agenda for coaching is frequently set for us by the client company, or our coachees', who may look at an issue through their own lens of what is 'good' leadership. In the reading I have carried out for the programme, there has been wonderful advice and insight about how to be more effective at enabling an individual to solve their problems but little about what is good leadership, as our aiming point. The most valuable exception to this has been Patrick Lencioni (2) where he provides a helpful model of what an effective executive team looks like.

I am reminded of Maslow's criticism of the role of the psychologist "The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that, the darker, meaner half' (3)" I believe that the coaching movement has restricted itself similarly.

In my own practice I am determined to coach towards a point of view about what good business leadership looks like and my point of view will be to Coach with a 'Higher Intent'.

What does Coaching with a higher intent mean?

- When we engage leaders in coaching conversations we need to balance our contribution as both 'coaches' and 'thought leaders'. By overtly shaping the 'conversations that will make the biggest difference' we also shape the outcomes that will lead to better transformations. To do this brilliantly we need to deepen our effectiveness across three critical areas:

    1. **Our "leadership" in shaping the agenda** – so that the conversations on the table are the most transformational and value-building topics possible
    2. **Our "relationship and presence" in managing the conversation** – so that we enable transformation for clients
    3. **Our ability to shape the outcomes – by coaching in both the "outer" and "inner" games of leadership (4)** – so that we help leaders achieve more than they thought was possible

I believe that having both a "higher intent" point of view and a commitment to excellent coaching will distinguish my coaching; giving a unique story to tell, and a unique capability to offer to a world that needs more leadership and transformational coaching.

The purpose of a "higher intent" framework is not to cover every aspect of leadership, but rather to engage leaders in powerful conversations that offer the greatest potential to add value, to challenge conventional thinking and to expand leaders' and organisations' capacity for greater effectiveness, learning, transformation and renewal.

I am particularly struck by the importance of the ethical leader in driving business to not only be financially successful but also be a force for good in the world.

My work on the programme, my own research amongst Chairs', CEOs and NEDs (5) and my experience of leading in 3 major plcs have driven me to believe that there are a number of conversations leaders must have if they are truly to lead with power and a "higher intent":

1. **Leading Life**

Point of View: The most powerful tool leaders have at their disposal to achieve what they want in life is "themselves". This requires deep self-knowledge and awareness of values, beliefs, strengths and weaknesses.

The most effective leader know themselves, they have a clear personal vision for their lives and what they want to achieve in their careers. They "lead for a reason"; they have a deep sense of purpose and know the difference they want to make in the world.

The role of the Coach: Engaging leaders in living life with a higher intent and purpose. Helping leaders be the best version of themselves possible. Encouraging leaders to make a true and lasting difference to the people and organisations they touch and transform.

2. **Leading Responsibly**

Point of View: Leadership can be defined as the "act of taking responsibility". In the past leaders were responsible for setting a vision and then making it happen. But in the post financial-crisis world organisations will increasingly be expected to make profits in a way that also "does good" – for society and the planet as a whole.

Responsible leadership then becomes redefined. Leaders must now 'weave together' potentially competing agenda's. They must make things happen, while also making meaning and a difference.

The role of the Coach: Engaging leaders in the possibility of shaping the mission, values and aspirations of an enterprise to have a bigger impact in the world and to do more 'for the common good'.

3. **Leading Performance**

Point of View: If 'leading responsibly' describes, "why we exist" and "what we aspire to" then leading performance explores "how" that will happen – i.e. the strategy and change-enablers to get us where we want to go.

Three things are needed:

- Optimising performance today (short term)
- Delivering performance later (medium term change and transformation)
- Innovating for the longer-term (ensuring the continued health of the enterprise)

The role of the Coach: Challenging leaders to look beyond excelling at getting things done in the short and medium term, to also create sustainable value in the longer-term. Helping leaders free themselves and their key people up to think about and shape the longer-term future of the enterprise.

4. **Leading Energy**

Point of View: Leaders that positively manage the energy of their people recognize that "how it feels" at work is just as critical as "what people do".

"Your first and foremost job as a leader is to manage your own energy, and help to manage the energy of those around you" (6)

Energy management has two distinct elements. Firstly, a leader must engage their people in "who she/he is"; sharing and showing her to be a leader that others want to follow. And secondly, the leader must create an environment and culture that has a unique and distinct identity and character; one in which people feel stretched, energised and challenged to learn and grow everyday, in short 'In Flow' (7).

The role of the Coach: Engaging leaders to get in touch and bring authenticity to work every day. Challenging leaders to recognise that the heart of leadership is 'bringing people with you', and doing this in a way that is balances stretch and strengths, is empowering and developmental.

5. **Leading Relationships**

Point of View: The most effective leaders build strong relationships across a diverse set of stakeholder groups to enable the achievement of their corporate and personal objectives. But these are not just 'good relationships'. They combine higher levels of support and challenge than are 'normal'.

There are three groups of stakeholders that are most critical:

The Leadership Team: This requires a focus on selection, setting the tone and direction, shaping the culture, driving the agenda and facilitating succession and continuity. Most leadership teams are not "high-performing" and fail to fully tap the collective power and potential of great executive teamwork

Key Internal stakeholders: This could include other 'CEO's' if the leader is running one of several BU's, key 'central stakeholders' – e.g. HR, finance, IT, procurement etc., and key talent or members of the 'senior leadership group' (direct reports of the top team) etc.

Key External stakeholders: To include the Chair, NED's, Consumer Groups, Social Media, Press, Regulators, key Investors and Analysts etc.

The role of the Coach: Challenging leaders to see relationships as central and crucial to how they get things done. Pushing leaders to go beyond addressing performance challenges to also address relational challenges and to fully exploit the 'quality of relationships impacts the quality of conversations leading to better quality outcomes', continuum.

Conclusion

The world of work has changed dramatically. The expectations of leaders and the spectrum across which they are expected to contribute have grown significantly. I contend that it is time that the executive coaching profession develops a point of view that helps leaders to meet these new challenges. I have offered a framework against which we can measure coaching excellence in a business context. The framework brings together a mix of personal learning from my experience as a leader, my research with senior leaders about what is important in the world of work right now and the learning from the Meyler Campbell programme.

References

(1) Peter Drucker, Essential Drucker: Management, the Individual and Society (2001)
(2) Patrick Lencioni, 'the 5 dysfunctions of a team' (2002)
(3) Maslow, Motivation and Personality (1954)
(4) Timothy Gallwey, 'The inner game of work' (2000)
(5) John Ainley "What's going on in our boardrooms?' (2013)(Self written research)
(6) Peter Drucker, as above
(7) Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, The psychology of optimal experience (1992)

Inspiration

Charles Handy, "The future of Work' (1984)
Raf Adams 'The Suited Monk" (2013)

John Ainley

John is a Partner with Alexander, The UK's most effective and experienced provider of advice and coaching for senior leaders. He works with CEOs and Executive committee members of FTSE 100 companies. He both coaches senior leaders on a 1-1 basis and facilitates top teams to enable them to deliver more value to their businesses. John has a unique combination of unflappable common sense, practical business experience and thoughtful insight, all delivered with a welcome sense of humour.

Career coaching should be a standard offering of HR

Amy Brand

As part of my coaching practice sessions, I have received an increasing number of requests for career coaching support. In my role as a HR Business Partner, individuals regularly reach out to talk through their career options. Finally, in my conversations with my friends, more often than not, the talk turns to career – should they stay in the city or retrain, should they give up their big job in a bank to become a teacher? All around me, people seem to be unsure of what they want in their career or whether they have made the right choices to date. Given people will be living and retiring later, having the "right" career is increasingly becoming a focus area for people.

With this lack of certainty around what to do career wise, there is a big opportunity for career coaching to support people in working this out. According to the Ginac Group*, career coaching is the process of working with people to help them assess their talents and make critical decisions about career choice and direction*. Like other forms of coaching it is a powerful way of helping people work through their thoughts, challenge their assumptions, help them figure out what they really want and plan how to take this forward. For some people, career coaching could help them realize that their current role is the right/ best one for them and they can meet their aspirations in other ways (through voluntary work, hobby's etc), for others, it helps them understand why their current role is not a fit, what role would meet their aspirations and to plan how to make this change.

The above is the employee approach, there are also many benefits for the organization.

According to a study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), individuals now hold an average of 11.3 jobs between the ages of 18 and 46 years old. Good organizations are now starting to recognize this trend and put in place plans so that employees proactively recognize the growth and development opportunities within their existing organization. Specifically, they recognize that when they hire an employee, it benefits both the employee and the organisation if this new position is seen as a career and not simply a job. Research shows that career prospects and learning opportunities are influencing factors when potential employees are choosing between job offers (Barbeite & Maurer, 2002). These points make supporting employees with their careers a potential competitive advantage for companies in the war for talent.

So, what approach are companies taking when it comes to career development and supporting employees in this key area? While companies recognize the importance of the topic, to address it, most larger company's HR departments have created self service tools, like competency frameworks and other planning and reflection tools and have delegated responsibility for using these to individuals themselves, as well as to line managers to support them.

The principle underpinning this approach is that an employee, supported by their line manager, should be responsible for managing their own career. I agree with this principle, however the reality seems to be that employees cannot/ do not want to navigate through the myriad of self service tools available. Added to that, while I strongly agree that the line manager should coach their employees, it appears that the vast majority of line managers do not have the coaching skills required to support the. For some employees, there is also an inherent conflict in receiving career coaching from their line manager, who they sometimes believe do not have their best interests at heart. Employees also often do not feel like they can be open with their manager about their development areas as this may impact on their bonus…...

In my organization for example, we have an extremely comprehensive career planning tool and provide much training for on careers, yet in our Employee Engagement survey, our scores on career development are extremely low (only 40% of employees confirm that my organization offers them a long term career). This is despite the significant amount of time spent by HR regularly demonstrating these tools and what is available for employees, promoting other roles colleagues can apply for etc.

These poor engagement survey results align with the results in a bank I used to work for, which also took a similar approach to career development.
From this information, it is clear that there is a dilemma – evidence shows that good career development is a critical enabler of engagement. My organization has many tools in place, yet something is going wrong in terms of the current approach to providing career development support, because people are not taking these up and from the Engagement survey results, these tools, coupled with the current coaching approach from line managers, are not having the desired impact.

This leads me to share my personal view based on 10 years HR experience - people clearly want a more hands on approach to career development and although the HR function believes that this has been delegated to line managers, I believe that many managers do not have the skill, time or interest to provide this support. In an ideal world, we would create an environment where line managers have these things and are all excellent coaches of their employees, but I think this is utopia and will take a substantial effort to ensure that for every role, we have the right line manager in place, who has this skills/ interest/ ability/ open mind and can give the time to this topic as part of their line management role. There also seems to be little appetite to focus on this in my organization.

I believe that this situation provides HR with an opportunity to provide this more personal approach to career development through embedding a career coaching service. This career coaching service would not only support individual development, thus supporting organizational development but it would also support the enhancement of the HR brand image, which is currently seen as impersonal or "dehumanized". HR providing this service also helps the function ensure they have their "finger on the pulse" of what is happening throughout the organization, what people are concerned about, what opportunities they see, what development they need. This enables them to stay connected with the organization at all levels, not just at senior management level, which is where they currently have their focus. The impact should be improved engagement and retention of people in the right roles for them, which has a positive impact on the organization and bottom line.

In terms of how this could work, this service could be offered by my organisation's HR generalist team. They currently focus mostly on employee relations issues, but also some systems work. I would propose that this work (approx. 20% of time) is given back to the systems team, who are more expert in this field, to free up the HR generalist's capacity to provide career coaching. This service would then be offered for employees to take up at any time during their career, as a complementary service to the self service tools and the support a line manager should be providing. I also propose that the organization proactively offers this support to colleagues flagged as "talent" coming up to key movement windows ie 2 years in the same role etc to ensure that we help these colleagues reach their potential and also retain them. A substantial training programme for HR generalists would need to be put in place and we would need to ensure that the right people were selected for this course.

The main risk I see with this proposal is that we disempower line managers, who I strongly believe have an important role in coaching their employees, therefore positioning this service as complementary to the line manager role is critical.

In summary, career coaching is a critical enabler of engagement. Ideally line managers would embrace this role, however evidence from my organisation suggests that this is not happening. Ideally, we would tackle the root cause of the problem ie pick the right people to be line managers and up skill them comprehensively as coaches - this would have the greatest positive impact on the organization. Unfortunately there is little appetite to take this approach. I therefore recommend that HR takes the opportunity to fill this gap due to the critical importance of the topic. They are well placed to take on this role and can ensure that the development of key talent is prioritized. This not only helps employees, but also gives HR the ability to enhance its reputation with the business, become more personal and really get its pulse on the organization and support individual and organizational development in a sustainable way.

Amy Brand
Amy is a senior HR professional, whose career to date has been internationally focused, living and working in the UK, Switzerland and the US. She has significant experience working with and coaching senior executives in the financial services sector where she is regarded as a trusted confidante and sounding board. She holds a BA in International Business and languages and is CIPD accredited.

Become a Business Coach in 20 Hours? A reflection on my Meyler Campbell learning journey.

Michael J Butler

'You're either green & growing or you're ripe & rotting' was a favourite aphorism of Ray Kroc, the uncompromising businessman who made McDonald's a global household name. And it was from this latter position that I embarked on the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme in May 2013, eager to learn some new skills, whilst simultaneously 'un-learning' a range of habits and obsolete skills acquired over a 30 year career, predominantly in Telecommunications.

Our syndicate set a fast pace, aiming to complete the programme before the end of the year, with practice-client coaching sessions beginning around the time of T1, & the extensive reading programme rapidly underway. Into this mix, around the time of T2 in June 2013, another book, that I'd separately pre-ordered as part of my campaign to get 'green & growing', was published: **'The First 20 Hours (How to learn anything...fast)' by Josh Kaufman**. My primary motivation for acquiring this book - at a time when I already had plenty to read - was to finally learn to play Golf, (an endeavour I'd been putting off for decades) alongside a Son keen to make the most of his free-time between graduating and starting work. The central premise of this book, evident from its title, is the lens through which I've chosen to reflect on my Meyler Campbell learning journey.

'Damn you, Malcolm Gladwell', writes Kaufman, for popularising the research findings that mastery of a subject requires 10,000 hours of practice. He suggests that the success of Gladwell's 2008 book 'Outliers' has led to the '10,000 hour rule' becoming common currency, potentially deterring many from learning new skills. Jenny Rogers in 'Coaching Skills' offers a lower, but still substantial, figure of 2,000 hours to achieve proficiency in Coaching. Kaufman's central premise, however, is that the road to mastery of a new skill starts with, a more practical, 20 hours of 'rapid skill acquisition'; enough time to acquire 'sufficiency' in a skill area and to overcome the typical 'frustration barrier' associated with learning something new. Although the primary focus for me was Golf, I'd also logged my 20th hour of coaching-related activity in the month the book was published, so I've chosen to compare & contrast my experience of both at the 20-hour stage. Is '20 hours' an important, indicative, learning threshold, or merely a device to sell books to the lazy or gullible?

First, a little more about the book. Kaufman takes just the first three chapters to crisply outline the neuroscience, research and theory behind 'The First 20 Hours', including an introduction to, and explanation of, 'Ten Principles of Rapid Skill Acquisition' & 'Ten Principles of Effective Learning'. The remaining six chapters are all about the practical application of these principles, and associated techniques, as the author documents his own learning journey to proficiency in skills as diverse as Web Programming, Windsurfing & learning to play the Ukulele; the story of his first 20 hours of learning to play the Ukulele is entertainingly told in a 'TED' presentation, which can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MgBikgcWnY

My intention isn't to thoroughly review Kaufman's book; if you're reading this, I hope that it will encourage you to check the book out for yourself. Nevertheless, some of his 'principles of rapid skill acquisition' are actively facilitated and supported by elements of the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme (BCP) and it's useful to describe the key ones here:

- ***Define your target performance level***
  BCP elements include the Personal Evaluation Tool (PET); written programme objectives; goal-setting techniques.
- ***Focus your energy on one skill at a time***
  BCP elements include the overall programme structure; efficient reading schedule; Tutorial structure & format; self-management skills.

- ***Deconstruct the skill into sub-skills***
  BCP elements include written syllabus Tools; Tutorial discussion and participant coaching; key models such as 'GROW'
- ***Obtain critical tools***
  BCP elements include the core syllabus & resources; reading list; extensive CPD programme; coaching documentation and learning logs.
- ***Create fast feedback loops***
  BCP elements include the Tutorial structure; syndicate peer support; telephone tutorials; practice coaching sessions.

Similarly, a number of his 'principles of effective learning' are particularly apposite to the Business Coach Programme:

- ***Jump in over your head*** (Practice coaching!).
- ***Identify mental models and mental hooks*** (GROW; SMART; Listening levels; Self 1/Self 2 etc).
- ***Talk to practitioners to set expectations*** (Tutor; CPD – Coaching fishbowl, Psychology Distilled, Lunchtime briefings).
- ***Create scaffolds & checklists*** (Programme tools & on-line resources).
- ***Honour your biology*** (Self-awareness tools & techniques; self-management skills).

So, with sufficient similarities established between the Meyler Campbell BCP approach and the methods advocated in Kaufman's book, what were my key findings after the first 20 hours of Coaching and learning to play Golf?

My first 20 hours of Coaching included 6 hours of Tutorial, 1 hour of telephone tutorial, 3 hours of CPD & 10 hours of live practice coaching.

My first 20 hours of learning to play Golf included 4 one-hour lessons with a Pro,
4 hours at the driving range, 2 hours on the 'pitch & putt' course & 10 hours actually playing Golf.

For clarity of analysis I've excluded background reading from this comparison.
In both cases, approximately half the time was spent learning and practicing 'off-line', with the remainder spent 'in the arena'. My underlying sense is that, whilst the former was essential to the latter (practice Coaching would have been less effective without an understanding of 'GROW' and some Tutorial coaching practice), probably 75% of the learning, and ultimate satisfaction, came from the time spent 'in the arena'. My experience bears out much of Kaufman's thesis; after 20 hours, I had acquired:

Sufficiency – a rapid ascent of the learning curve & strong foundations on which to build.
Confidence – enthusiasm & motivation to progress to the next level.
Enjoyment – the satisfaction of learning a new skill whilst having fun (although much of the early practice coaching and driving range sessions didn't always seem like fun at the time).

As for the notion of the 'frustration barrier', the first 20 hours certainly enabled me to charge through the initial one, of basic capability, with bayonet fixed. However, I've also discovered that new frustration barriers will present themselves during a programme of ongoing learning, particularly where motor-skills are involved, requiring frequent recourse to the principles of Gallwey's 'inner game'; or at least acceptance that there's 'no gain without pain'.

My overall assessment is that Kaufman's first 20 hours represents an important & meaningful learning threshold. In the context of the four-stage learning competency model, Kaufman's methods allow the learner to make rapid progress through the foothills of 'conscious incompetence' and deposit him firmly at 'conscious competence' base-camp, from where subsequent hours of practice offer the promise of greater return on investment than any of the first 20.

Moreover, the cumulative effect of the first 20 hours of Coaching & learning to play Golf made my 'ripe & rotting' feeling of a few months earlier both a distant memory and a potentially abstract notion going forward.

Moving beyond the first 20 hours of Coaching, but retaining the 20-hour unit of measurement, it was only when I'd attained 20 hours of Tutorial time, 20 hours of practice coaching, 20 hours of reviewing key books, 20 hours of CPD & additional learning, and 20 hours of enhanced self-awareness - or an aggregate 100 hours - that I started to believe that I might have begun a journey that could eventually lead on to some future version of 'mastery' in Coaching.

Two further, tangential, thoughts on the 20-hour unit of measurement:

20 hours is a reasonable timeframe for a 6-month coaching assignment with a new client (chemistry meeting plus face-to-face time); I believe that many of the principles of rapid skill acquisition and effective learning are relevant to the success of a coaching programme, augmenting the core coaching skills taught on the Meyler Campbell BCP, and offer an additional perspective from which the learning Coach can track his own progress over the course of a new coaching assignment.

Kaufman's book would also be helpful in guiding a coaching client who has targeted new skill acquisition as one of the primary desired outcomes of the coaching programme; the relative simplicity of the principles, coupled with the manageable time commitment, make it a practical tool to introduce to assist a client with realising such a goal.

At the time of writing, in January 2014, I estimate my cumulative time investment in Coaching to be in the order of 200 hours, comprising 50 hours of practice coaching, 50 hours of Business Coach Programme activities (Tutorial, CPD, telephone tutorials, events) and 100 hours of reading and book reviews, a factor-of-ten increase on my situation in June 2013. Which makes a further factor-of-ten increase – to Jenny Rogers' figure of 2,000 hours – seem a much less daunting prospect, particularly when a good proportion of those live Coaching hours will be generating fees.

Now, where's my Guitar...?

Michael J Butler
Michael has spent the past 25 years in the global Telecommunications sector, in leadership positions spanning marketing, sales, general management & board roles. His last full-time position was President & COO of Inmarsat PLC and he currently holds several NED and advisory roles in high-technology businesses.Michael's coaching activities are focused on supporting senior revenue-responsible leaders to become both more productive and more effective.

The one, two, three of why coaching (and consulting) works

Simon Close

Introduction

For a management consultant, non-directive coaching seems a counter-intuitive concept. Your career teaches you that you bring value by using your wealth of knowledge and experience to advise clients on what they should do. In reality, particularly when operating at more senior levels, a good consultant will naturally adopt some coaching techniques to help leaders and leadership teams to develop their goals and plans.

However, nothing prepared me for the shock of completing my first 100% non-directive coaching session. Feeling that I was adding no value, I was pleasantly surprised to find my client was delighted with how I had helped them tackle a problem. Their 'aha!' moment had not come from some great insight I had shared with them, it had come from their response to my "What else?" question.
So why does coaching work? My reflection 18 months on from that first session acting as a coach is that it comes down to three simple factors. And interestingly, these factors resonate with how I help my clients as a consultant.

As a coach I help my clients:
- One: Dedicate time to thinking through a challenge
- Two: Make that thinking time as productive as possible
- Three: Commit to a course of action.

One: Dedicate time to thinking through a challenge
Left to their own devices, people are too busy to find the time to step back and think through a challenge properly. Even if people set aside thinking time in their diaries, this is cut short or high-jacked completely by urgent meetings and e-mails.

Kline (1999) in *Time to Think* states that people increasingly say "we don't take time to think about what we are doing; we are too busy doing it" and that the biggest excuse given for people not creating her so called thinking environment is "… I don't have the time".

However, if a meeting is booked in the diary with another person (their coach) to help them do their thinking, the commitment is greater and the time is more protected. Urgent meetings and e-mails are more likely to be put on hold to honour this time with their coach.

So as a coach I achieve a lot just by being a commitment in my clients' diaries. I do more though. I help my clients honour this commitment: encouraging them to arrange coaching sessions at the frequency they have targeted and, if sessions get postponed, helping reschedule them quickly. The degree to which I am proactive in giving this encouragement is agreed as part of contracting so that my clients remain in control. If the sessions are repeatedly delayed, I discuss this openly as part of a 're-contracting' discussion two or three sessions in to see if I can do more to help.

Two: Make that thinking time as productive as possible.
There are two key ingredients to helping make a coaching session as productive as possible for my clients: having a goal and keeping them focused.

a. ***Having a goal:***
Scoular (2011) says "The goal is utterly key, it does all the heavy lifting of the session – if you don't have a good clear goal you don't have a coaching session". Having a focus, or **'Goal'** for a coaching session is the first element, the **'G'**, in Whitmore's (2009) GROW model. Kline (1999) suggests the opening question in a thinking partnership should be along the lines of "What do you want to think about?"

The goal considered here is not the broader overall development goal that a client sets for their course of coaching. It is the goal for an individual session. The more clearly defined the better. SMART is the often used acronym and is advocated by Whitmore (2009): Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed.

One of the most beneficial developments in my skill as a coach has been becoming better at helping my clients define a clear goal for each coaching session.

b. *Keeping focused:*

Once a goal has been set, a coach plays a key role in helping their client's thinking remain focused on achieving that goal.

This is far from straight forward as there are two people in the room who can, if unchecked, come up with numerous and various ways to distract: the coach and the client.

In the past, some of the ways I have found to interrupt my client's thinking have included:

- Letting my thoughts wander from complete focus on my client and their thinking
- Letting my facial expression or body language send messages that I don't intend
- Misinterpreting silence and interrupting my client's thoughts with a badly timed question
- Asking leading questions that influence my client's thinking with my own ideas.

I have made great strides in learning to manage myself to avoid these pitfalls and I remain vigilant to ensure I continually improve and do not fall back into bad habits.

Some of the most common ways I have witnessed my clients interrupt their own thinking and how I try to help them refocus include:

- Wandering off the topic without realising it; I point this out and help them get back on track
- Holding limiting beliefs that block their thinking; I help the client recognise these and think their way through them
- Trying to deal with a topic whilst their emotions are running high; I allow the client to spend time with their emotions first before trying to tackle their goal objectively
- Letting negative thoughts creep in; I provide genuine encouragement and positive feedback to help assuage these thoughts

…and most commonly for clients who know me as a consultant…

- Wanting me to give them advice; on occasion I do share thoughts when asked, but only once I have challenged my client to think more for themselves and then only with permission and if it is genuinely in their best interests.

Three: Commit to a course of action.

If coaching is to have a tangible impact on a client's development we would expect most sessions to lead to a plan of action. This is the 'W' in Whitmore's GROW model. The 'W' stands for 'Will', both in the sense of "***what*** will you do?" and also the will or commitment to do it.

As with goal setting, I try to push my clients quite hard to help them achieve a high-level of commitment to their plan of action. It is important to get true commitment rather than just getting a client motivated in the moment. Motivation is an emotional response and, as argued by Peters (2011) in his book *The Chimp Paradox*, whilst it is helpful to drive us on it is not essential to success. It is unrealistic to feel motivated every day. Commitment means following a plan even if you don't feel like it that day. That is why I encourage my clients to think about why their plans may not work, what support they might need and how to get to (or close to) a '10 out of 10' on their degree of certainty that they will follow through on their action plan.

Consulting compared to Coaching
Interestingly, these same three factors are key to successful consulting.

Simply by engaging me as an advisor, my client sponsor will automatically dedicate more time to the particular challenge than they otherwise would. If they don't, I will raise this with them as without their involvement the engagement won't be successful.

I ensure all my engagements are focused on a clear outcome that is commonly understood and supported. As the engagement progresses, I ensure that the client focuses enough resources and energy in order for us to jointly achieve that goal.

Finally, in order to ensure that my involvement will lead to lasting change, I spend great effort in ensuring there is client ownership of, and commitment to, any action plan that must be implemented.

Although the factors are similar, the role I play as a consultant is very different. Scoular (2011) sums the differences up well: "consulting **puts in** advice, content, information. Coaching by contrast, **pulls out** the capacity people have within."

Despite this difference, these three similar factors mean coaching and consulting can be highly complementary.

So, when is it right to take a coaching approach with my clients? That is a journey of discovery I am still on. It of course depends on the situation and, most importantly, what the clients wants. However, my experiences of coaching to date have re-enforced Maister, Green and Galford's (2000) warning to consultants in *The Trusted Advisor* that "One of the biggest mistakes advisors make is to think that their client always wants their advice."

Conclusion
18 months on from my first experiences as a coach I am convinced that non-directive coaching is a highly valuable tool that I can use to help my clients achieve their goals. I have had to learn a new set of skills and a different approach, but a common set of core success factors means that consulting and coaching complement each other well.

My consulting clients are becoming ever more demanding and many expect me to help develop their teams and people as well as delivering on the core outcomes agreed for a particular engagement. Armed with my new coaching skills I am better able to achieve this.

References

Kline, N. (1999). *Time to Think*. London: Cassell Illustrated.
Maister, D., Green, C. and Galfrod, R. (2000). *The Trusted Advisor*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd.
Peters, Dr S. (2011). *The Chimp Paradox*. London: Vermillion.
Scoular, A. (2011*). FT Guide to Business Coaching*. London: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall.
Whitmore, J. (2009). *Coaching for Performance* (4th Edition). London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Simon Close

Simon is a Partner at the Berkeley Partnership. He has over 20 years of management consultancy experience operating at senior levels across a range of sectors for multinationals and household names. He has helped clients define business growth and operational strategies and shape and manage large-scale business change programmes. As part of supporting his clients in tackling their biggest and most complex challenges, Simon often provides coaching support for individuals and teams.

Coaching on the Move

Jo Cochrane

Years ago a prospective business coach came to sell her wares. In a throw away comment towards the end of our initial discussion, she mentioned that she also coached on the move, taking clients out of the office, often going for long walks whether that was at a prearranged location or the streets near the office. I don't know whether it was a particularly sunny day and the idea of stealing away for a few hours was excitingly appealing but the interest stuck with me. It was only in researching for this essay that I discovered it is not as advertised a concept as I imagined. So is Business Coaching most successful within the office or can it work whilst on the move?

Kline in *Time to Think* is of the opinion that for coaching to work, a 'Thinking Environment' needs to be created through ten key elements (Attention, Incisive Questions, Equality, Appreciation, Ease, Encouragement, Feelings, Information, Place and Diversity). In my experience, coaching can provide results in 10 minutes at a water cooler which makes me surmise that the way the coach manages the situation is more important than the physical presence of the environment, (although it can make a significant difference to help the individual feel at ease). According to Kline, 'Everything we do depends on the thinking we do first. Our thinking depends on the quality of our attention for each other. Set up the right conditions and people will think for themselves.' For the individual to feel at ease, obviously the physical environment needs to have the optimum factors for that specific individual's relaxation and security. Often individuals look to a coach to provide shelter from the manic environment of their office and give them space to think. For some, the escape from the pressures of the physical work environment may fast-track their calm state.

Some individuals' need for peace and quiet to allow them to work through their thoughts in the session may mean a nice walk in the countryside is extremely productive. Kline's view is that during the quiet periods in a coaching session, whilst the least seems to be happening, the most is. However, the hustle and bustle of pounding the city streets near to the office with the distractions of trying to keep yourself safe may prove too much! Additionally, it could prove challenging for the coach to be able to really listen, read between the lines and pick up on body language whilst crafting incisive questions as they cross busy roads or pass pneumatic drills!

Gallwey in *The Inner Game of Tennis* when considering how to overcome the obstacles/ mind games that one puts up against oneself to reach excellence in sporting performance (like lapses in concentration, nervousness, and self-doubt) says, 'The secret to winning any game lies in not trying too hard'. He believes that individuals need to aim for spontaneous performance when the mind is calm and at one with the body (in the zone) to reach their true potential. Gallwey sees success through distracting the mind with another task, so reducing thinking, calculating, judging or worrying, to allow the body to get on with the task. From the coach's side, Gallwey believes that there is danger in over teaching when too many verbal instructions may cause the client to overthink the situation, try too hard and reduce the likelihood of correction because too much is going on in the client's head. His view is that too much instruction is worse than none and that conscious trying often produces negative results.

In my mind, these points are as relevant to Business Coaching. Particularly in the early stages of a coaching career, there can be a risk of over-coaching with the inappropriate motivation to prove oneself. More generally, helping the client define a very clear goal that focuses them at the strategic level, and so keeps their thinking uncrowded, will also often enable the lower level operational points to take care of themselves. Essentially, less is more! So for both the coach and their client in a coaching session on the move, the subconscious focus on the fast pace of life around them as they walk the city streets, or take in the magnificent views as they take a short breath on a hilltop could do wonders in helping the coachee to really focus on the challenge in hand and the coach not to get overly involved.

When learning to interview, I was encouraged to listen with my face and provide encouraging noises but Kline's view on truly listening goes against that. The coach just sharing the space and walking side by side with the individual could well be enough to help the individual feel listened to, and so continue their thinking.

Kline believes that thinking stops when we are upset but restarts if we express just enough feelings. It is important that a coach provides a confidential environment for the client to feel comfortable and supported in expressing or releasing any emotion. For some individuals, not having eye contact can help them work through particularly difficult conversations. Don't they say that couples have their most fruitful discussions in the car so they don't have to look at each other?! In the quiet countryside, there is obvious confidentiality in the tranquillity, but walking the city streets near the office could cause increased concern of bumping into colleagues, being overheard or seen in full flow of emotions.

There is an obvious liberation through being free of the office walls and from the listening ears of the office corridors. The change in environment can bring a physical change with the release of pressure as immediate as walking out of the front door. With very senior executives, being away from the constraints of the office and physically walking side by side also reinforces the equality of the coach/coachee relationship. In addition, successful coaching often helps the individual to reconsider their challenge from different perspectives to hopefully open up doors to solutions previously not in their vision. Gallwey's view is that in many cases for the individual it is not that they don't know what to do but that they don't do what they know. I believe a fresh location (particularly if an inspirational vista) can be powerful enough to trigger a fresh review of issues that the individual may have given up on and accepted as being unfixable.

From my research, those that subscribe to coaching on the move seem to reflect the approach of Strozzi-Heckler of the Strozzi Institute in his view of Embodied or Somatic Coaching. "Embodied" meaning to exemplify something abstract in bodily form; Somatic from the Greek word "soma" meaning the body as a whole. Somatic coaching involves seeing the client holistically; more than their intellect and capabilities, shaped since birth by their life experiences and habitual patterns which formulate their response to the adversities they face through mostly unconscious patterns of muscular activity. Over time these patterns produce conditioned tendencies of reaction to people, situations and environments. When an individual is exposed to a stressful stimulus they will often revert to this conditioned tendency, limiting their available choices for action. Because such stimuli are somatic events rather than exclusively cognitive ones, new information or theoretical insight will not shift the response. Somatic coaching involves every aspect of the intellectual, emotional and physical self, focusing on what the client wants to embody, how they want to present themselves, impacting others by design rather than accident. It teaches the individual to become a keen observer of how they think, the narratives that run through their head, their mood and emotion, and the sensations that are happening in their body. This style of coaching aims to literally reshape the body by disorganising the old shape through conversation, bodily practices and sometimes bodywork (addressing deeply held muscular contractions through touch etc.) which interrupts the old pattern enabling reorganisation / reshaping of the body so that the individual can create the passion, volition and on-going practice to build and sustain their desired trait needed to support their aim.

It is not a big leap to see that from this somatic coaching perspective, with its focus on the physical, taking exercise during the coaching discussion helps to shake up the client's body and unlock the persona otherwise constrained by the office, to find the renewed motivation and confidence needed to face their challenge. Whilst enjoying the beauty of the environment around you, can only help put things into perspective.

In conclusion, different environments may suit different discussions better than others. But more importantly, different environments will suit some individuals better than others. Some may jump at the chance of the physical exertion to stimulate the brain whilst others will prefer the focused discussion across a desk. Going for a walk whilst undergoing Business Coaching should be a choice made by the client rather than the coach, and I look forward to one of my clients taking me up on it. I may hold off on group coaching on the move however, as I'm not sure it would work whilst leading from the front with an umbrella held high!

References

Gallwey, W.T. (1986) The Inner Game of Tennis. Pan Books

Kline, N. (1999) Time to Think. Cassell Illustrated

www.StrozziInstitute.com

Jo Cochrane

Jo works as Head of HR at Allen & Overy with a generalist HR and Employee Relations career spanning over 15 years within the Financial, Professional Services and Legal sectors. She has worked internationally across cultures, employee and Partner levels coaching to reach the best solution for both individuals and businesses. She has a particular interest in female talent progression, reintegration to business and supporting individuals through challenging ER situations.

Thoughts on cultural differences in coaching, beyond a coaching culture

Andrew Daley

Introduction

The objectives of this reflective essay are to increase awareness of culture and the benefits that this can bring to coaching, to list specific aspects that have been helpful to me and to possibly encourage readers to think more about culture in their own coaching journey. I would be delighted if this essay puts readers on alert for cultural pitfalls and opportunities to support more successful and enduring coaching outcomes for their clients.

What is culture and why is it important as a coach?

Culture can be described as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society[1]. Culture is manifested in many ways of behaviour and interaction, including symbols, heroes, rituals and values at both individual and group levels.

Cultural diversity has become much more relevant over the past century. People from across the world have increasingly worked together, made possible by improved transport technology and instantaneous data transfer via telephone, video conferencing and the internet. Furthermore, the necessity of exposure to cultural diversity has accelerated in more recent years as global markets and sources of production, particularly labour and financial capital, have shifted to the East and South, forcing those in the historically developed Western world into close contact with different and unfamiliar cultural norms.

High value-add activities have also evolved, away from linear processes such as production and IT, which are now often outsourced, to more non-linear or creative aspects. These so-called relationship skills include building and leading virtual teams across geographies and companies to solve complex problems.

Roy Y J Chua from Harvard Business School is a leading academic in the area of the benefits and costs of cultural diversity for global businesses. He has found that international success at organisational and product levels are critically dependent upon both business processes and individuals adopting multicultural thinking and cross-border collaboration[2]. His research also shows that cultural diversity brings anxiety and, at worst, conflict; both of these emotions reduce or can even eliminate the positive benefits of cultural diversity.

Coaching employees involved in cross-cultural situations, particularly focusing on avoiding unhelpful anxiety and unnecessary conflict, may create significant benefits for all stakeholders. Benefits include the employee becoming more confident in culturally complex situations and their employer gaining competitive advantage by developing the skills to unlock significant successes that otherwise might be lost to interference.

My international cultural experience

My own experience of working for a leading international investment bank, in which I have personally conducted business in more than forty countries, is that multiple perspectives with different cultural views are often a major contributory factor in creating success; sometimes they are

[1] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/culture
[2] The cost of ambient cultural disharmony: Indirect Intercultural Conflict in social environment undermine creativity, Roy Y J Chua, Academy of Management Journal December 2013 56: 1545-1577

the prime reason for achievement. However, differences in culture also create tension and difficulties, which can result in people with valuable points of view deciding that they prefer not to work together. While lost opportunities are difficult to quantify, I have seen a number of similar situations, with and without cultural appreciation and cooperation, which have had drastically different outcomes.

I have seen that by informally and formally coaching executives involved in such cross-cultural situations, there is a dramatic increase in acknowledgment, appreciation and benefits of cultural differences with much better enduring commercial and personal relationship outcomes.

Coaching to benefit from culture is most successful when there is a coaching culture, or at least openness to the possibilities of coaching and when cultural nuances, combined with shifts in behaviour, are considered in the cultural contexts of the coachee's environment and stakeholders. This is an important aspect as in some situations a coaching intervention is seen as a weakness while in others, executives rightly see coaching as a very valuable investment of their time and money which brings results.

There are a number of observations and tools that I have found helpful during my formal and informal coaching of clients, colleagues and interlocutors.

My observations of cultural aspects to consider in coaching

When under psychological stress or under pressure, there is a tendency to assert our cultural values more powerfully[3]. For example during the final stages of an important business contract negotiation there is often a focus on the key aspects of the transaction with insufficient consideration given to communication, resulting in the participants to adopt their usual approach, this may not be the best way to negotiate. Coaching aims to increase the coachee's self-awareness and identify choices to help them achieve their goals.

Much of the power of communication lies in the tone of voice, the pauses – the non-verbal cues you can hear not being said. These subtle aspects of communication, that become even more complicated across different cultures, can provide very useful feedback mechanisms to help understand those we communicate with, particularly those in cultures different to our norms.

Of course, each individual expresses their cultural norms in different ways, and while giving examples they should not be taken as generalisations. I have seen examples of language, time, power and hierarchy, body language, working overseas and group cohesion which might be unusual or even confusing to those whose reference culture is UK.

The meaning of words varies across cultures. The word "yes" is a very powerful word. It can indicate agreement in some cultures but does have different meanings. In Chinese culture, when asked a question it is considered polite to answer "yes". This yes does not indicate agreement; it merely indicates that the question has been heard.

The words used to describe time and the measurement of time has profound impact in many aspects of coaching, including actions and getting things done. South Africans refer to "now", "just now" and "now now" in their communication of when tasks will be completed[4]. South African "now now" has a similar urgency as a UK "immediately", while South African "just now" is equivalent to a UK "in a minute" and a South African "now" implies something like a UK "leave it with me!"

Even quantified timing has literal and non-literal meaning: many African countries use "it will be ready in 10 minutes" as a generic reply to say that the task hasn't been completed; in fact the task

[3] Richard D Lewis - http://www.crossculture.com/services/cross-culture/negotiating-across-cultures/
[4] http://www.joburgexpat.com/2011/02/just-now-or-now-now.html

may have not even started! Asking the same question 10 minutes later may well bring the same reply of "yes, it will be ready in 10 minutes".

Power and hierarchy is not a constant across cultures. Even within countries there can be wide variations between business organisations. An example close to the UK is the contrast between French and British feedback on line management when given the opportunity such as in a 360° review. UK employees often see a 360 as an opportunity to emphasise perceived negative behaviours, while French employees are more usually highly supportive and loyal to their manager, going as far as not reporting any aspects that may be perceived to be negative.

Body language is an important part of communication. Direct eye contact in the UK is seen to show confidence and interest in the conversation; however in Asia, it is associated with anger, unpleasantness and unapproachability. Conversely, the Japanese usually use indirect eye contact when speaking with their elders or superiors as a sign of respect and deference, while in the UK indirect eye contact may create an impression of being untruthful or untrustworthy[5].

In some cultures, a focus on individual success may be seen as detrimental to the success of the group, despite the individual becoming a stronger member. In Nigeria, specific employment terms and conditions are widely known, and increases in compensation are usually rejected at the individual level if the collective peer group is not similarly rewarded. This is in stark contrast to the UK, where compensation is typically regarded as a private matter between employer and employee.

Three useful cultural models

The understanding of culture has developed a number of models and tools. I have found the Lewis Triangle, the Rosinski's Cultural Orientation Framework and Unruh and Cabrera's three areas of value creation to be helpful in considering the nuances of culture and what it means for my coaching approach.

The Lewis Triangle[6] approximates cultures as a combination of two of three categories of behaviours: Linear-active, multi-active and reactive. Each categories of behaviour can be described by particular characteristics such as formality, the preferred amount of talking compared to listening and the display of emotions. These three categories of behaviours have been mapped to national cultures and I have found this model particularly useful as a diagnostic tool to assist in decoding others' behaviours and then encoding to explain and communicate to others.

Rosinski's Cultural Orientation Framework[7] is helpful in understanding individual and group cultural orientations. It focuses on seven types of orientations including sense of power and responsibility, time management and notions of territory and boundaries. This model is particularly helpful in developing multicultural teams, such as contract bid and delivery team for a large infrastructure project where specialist skills come from other project elsewhere in the world.

Unruh and Cabrera's three areas of value creation[8] is a model that is focused on helping leaders develop into successful global leaders by firstly considering what knowledge, skills and perspective are needed by thinking and doing, secondly making use of global awareness by exploiting divergence, convergence and networks, and finally deploying these insights beyond commerce to make a positive difference to those around you.

[5] Cultures and Organisations, Software of the Mind (Third Edition) Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov. 2010
[6] When Cultures Collide, Leading Across Cultures (Third Edition)– Richard D Lewis, 2005
[7] Coaching across cultures – Philippe Rosinski - 2003
[8] Harvard Business Review - Join the Global Elite, Managers with a cross cultural perspective are in high demand – Gregory C Unruh and Angel Cabrera, May 2013

Conclusion

Recognising cultural differences and benefits has application in all aspect of coaching, from appreciating the cultural context of oneself as a coach, our coaches' environments and their stakeholders' perceptions which decide their success or failure. As a coach alert to these cultural nuances and potential benefits, we can better support our coachees as they create engagement, form teams and avoid leadership derailment during their personal developmental journeys.

Background sources

Business coaching – Anne Scoular - 2011
Business coaching – Achieving Practical Results Through Effective Engagement – Peter Shaw and Robin Linnecar, 2007
Cultures and Organisations, Software of the Mind (Third Edition) Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov. 2010

Andrew Daley
Andrew is widely regarded for his track record in originating and establishing long term senior commercial relationships across Europe and Africa, and taking on challenging leadership roles for a leading investment bank. Andrew is distinct for his professional integrity which supports his trusted adviser status in fast moving financial markets serving multinational clients. Critical to his success is understanding cultural nuances and establishing rapport with the diverse teams he leads.

The role of intuition in the coaching environment

Ian Dobson

Introduction

My early life experience was defined in many ways by proximity to physical danger. A childhood living with a violent parent followed by ten years in the Royal Marines Commandos. As a very young child I learnt to 'read' my father and to listen to and act upon my instinctive 'feeling' of how to react to danger. As an adult I developed an ability to read dangerous situations, particularly groups of men who posed a threat and to calibrate how I responded to diffuse that threat. Intuition has, therefore, played an important role in my actions and, indeed survival.

Although I was very confident in my intuitive decision-making in threatening situation, when training as a coach, I was less confident that this ability would transfer into a coaching situation.

In my view Coaching is about creating an environment in which the client can focus, explore, think and make decisions. The role of a coach is to support and guide the client through this process. In order to do so the coach will make many decisions regarding which direction to encourage the client to explore; when to leave the client to choose the direction; when to be supportive and when to challenge. Often the coach not only needs to make choices, but also needs to calibrate their approach in order to appropriately match the client's state of mind in that moment.

I believe that a crucial aspect of effectively supporting the client is the coach's ability to hear and to act upon their intuition.

What is intuition

There are many definitions of intuition, but the common theme is the ability to develop an understanding and make a decision without the use of analysis or reason. Jung defined intuition as "perception via the unconscious" and an "irrational function". Elise Lebeau Ph. D says that, "Intuition is a right brain process that taps into subconscious information to provide guidance about everyday life."

Intuitive abilities were tested at Yale University in the 1970s where it was noted that highly intuitive subjects could make decisions very quickly with accuracy levels that were the same as non-intuitive people, but were unable to identify their rationale. The Recognition Primed Decision (RPD) model is based this ability to use experience to rapidly develop valid solutions to a problem with little or no analysis.

Similarly, The Yale University studies also noted that some people could read nonverbal facial cues before further information was provided. Psychologists William Ickes and William Tooke introduced the term Empathic Accuracy (or "everyday mind reading") in 1988 building on Carl Rogers' accurate empathy (1957). Empathic Accuracy refers to how accurately one person (the perceiver) can infer the thoughts and feelings of another person (the target) using their words, emotions and body language.

There is, therefore, a growing body of evidence that intuition is an important driver of making rapid and accurate decisions. A reasonable conclusion is that empathy coupled with experience can develop an intuitive sense that is a great help in making the right choices during a coaching engagement.

How it works for me

My reaction to danger is to become very alert and emotionally still. It is often as if my temperature has dropped. I feel a slight tension across my shoulders, but otherwise relaxed. When these feelings become apparent I automatically still my mind, my breath deepens and my eyes and ears become very sensitive to any sound or movement. My focus becomes at once acute, but also soft, as if my field of vision has expanded. In this state I react entirely instinctively, with no pre-thought or analysis. I communicate with little sub-vocalisation or consideration. I have a sense of 'knowing' what to say and do. If I am about to make a wrong decision an image similar to a red flag and a strong sensation across my chest alerts me and I stop.

When I have an intuition in a coaching environment, I also experience a still mind, deep breathing and soft though intense focus. However, I have learnt that my intuition has some different indicators than when I am in danger. In particular, as an intuitive indicator appears it starts with a warm feeling in my stomach that grows as the session goes on. At a point when it feels like a fist sized ball I will usually visualize the question I would like to ask and fully understand why I wish to ask it. At this point I will typically use the question no matter the flow of the conversion. An example would be when I was coaching a client on why she was struggling to maintain a work/life balance. I had a strong sense that there was something important that she was not aware of. This sensation grew as a ball of energy in my stomach. Suddenly I had an image of the client in a sound proof room, so I asked the question "if you were alone in a room and could say a word out loud that would describe the organization which nobody will ever hear, what would it be". After a moment of reflection she gave an answer. Immediately her energy changed, her eyes sparkled and the coaching move in a new and quite unexpected direction. In the next session she told me that this recognition of a deeply held, but unconscious view had totally changed her relationship with work for the better.

My understanding of how my intuitive insights come to me allows me to distinguish them from biases or emotional reactions. Further more, I am able to support the client on accessing, recognizing and becoming confident in their own intuition.

How to access intuition

I believe a pre-requisite for tapping into intuition is the ability to really listen in the way that the Co-Active Coaching model (Henry Kimsey-House et al) calls "Global Listening". The coach and the client are in a bubble that contains all the information being communicated. The coach is able to pick up information that is not directly stated, sensitive to subtle stimuli and changes in the client and able to react to information from all the senses. In this state the coach is not distracted by any external or internal interference, such as worrying about where the process is going or what question to ask next. This allows the coach to become truly empathetic with the client, recognising and understanding the client's emotional state.

The empathetic connection can be enhanced and strengthened by developing a state of rapport with the client. The coach may achieve rapport by using corresponding posture, movement, breathing and speech, including language, pace and volume. In rapport it possible for the coach to 'tune into' the client, allowing the coach to begin to sense what the client's motives, attitudes and feelings might be.

The coach will now be absolutely focused on the client and absorbed in curiosity. The stilling of the coach's mind, the removal of self and immediate feedback loop established in rapport now creates the conditions where the inner voice can be heard.

Using intuition in the coaching environment

The expression "every day mind reading", should also give the coach pause for thought. In Cognitive Behavior Psychology "mind reading" is defined as a belief or assumption that a person knows as a 'truth', without any hard evidence, what another person is feeling and why they act as they do. This is classed as a style of 'distorted thinking' that can "cause problems on a reliable basis".

When the coach feels that they have accessed an intuition, they should not ignore it, but must be cautious. The intuition can be the coach's natural biases, personal opinions, prejudices or preconceptions coming through. Indeed, the coach may be reacting to a trigger of their own.

It is, therefore, critical that the coach is self-aware and can identify where their issues may be getting in the way of maintaining an objective judgment. Throughout the coaching session, the coach must monitor themselves for reactions to the client's context or comments. If the coach is aware immediately that one of their triggers happen, the coach can set their reaction aside and continue to focus on the client without getting in the way of the client's journey.

The coach can use their state of rapport to determine how and when to use an intuitive insight. However, the coach should consider that, as intuition is based on an innate feeling rather than actual facts, it is often best to test it early, rather than allow it to potentially distract the coach's focus. A good technique is to propose the intuition as a hypothesis and describing it as a feeling the coach has rather than a fact. This both allows the client to accept or reject the intuition without fear of offending the coach and opens the potential for eliciting new areas or options to explore. Critically, the coach, in true non-directive style, must not become attached to the intuitive insight.

Conclusion
A large body of evidence is developing that supports the proposition that rapid and accurate decisions can be made by tapping into innate knowledge that comes from experience and the ability to absorb all the information available, including, indeed especially the non-verbal communication.

If the coach believes that the client and they have all the resources they need to face and overcome their challenges, then accepting that they may just 'know' the answers is a key part of coaching.

Through establishing a state of empathetic rapport and becoming entirely absorbed in non-judgmental curiosity, whilst stilling their mind, the coach creates the conditions to tune in to their intuition.

Although there is a danger that the intuition may be manifestations of the coach's own emotional triggers, self-awareness and the non-directive approach to coaching provide the tools for the coach to use their intuition effectively. When the coach has a moment of intuitive they must state it early as a hypothesis whilst remaining open to allowing the client to accept or reject it.

My belief is that intuition is at the heart of coaching and that the coach should actively seek to develop their ability to tap into their intuition. Through practice and client feedback, the coach can learn how to recognize when they have a genuine intuitive insight and how this differs from their reaction to an emotional trigger.

Through developing the skill of accessing and using intuition within the coaching environment the coach adds an important and powerful tool to their toolkit.

Ian Dobson
Ian Dobson's life journey has involved major personal change from Commando to Accountant to Marketeer, holding senior management roles and being self-employed. Ian uses his unusual breadth of experience as a consultant working with some of the UK's largest Brands, to challenge thinking and provide new perspectives. Ian believes that leadership is about creating an environment where people can achieve their highest potential and brings this approach to his coaching.

Coaching: Change, Leadership, Learning… and Slinky

Katie Driver

Coaching. Just listen, ask a few questions, prompt some action from the client – sorted, right? Perhaps, to uninformed observers. But the more I learned and practiced, the richer and more complex it became. In turn, fears of 'missing something' or 'getting it wrong', increasingly risked interference with my potential coaching performance[1]. To steer coaching conversations with confidence, I had to bring order to the complexity. This essay explains my approach.

What's the purpose of coaching?

I started by thinking about the bedrock of coaching: change. "Clients want change; they want to see results. They want to move *forward*."[2] But if change were easy, the client would have done it already. The desire for coaching implicitly recognises there is more to change than meets the eye (or ear, or hand for NLPers).

In business coaching, changes are principally about leadership – how to lead in a new or more senior role or in another organisation, or tackle challenges more effectively. As with change, leadership is not simple and has no clear definition or route-map.

And coaching is not successful unless the client learns from the change, strengthening self-awareness and resilience so that they continue developing beyond coaching. "Coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them."[3]

What do I understand about change, leadership and learning?

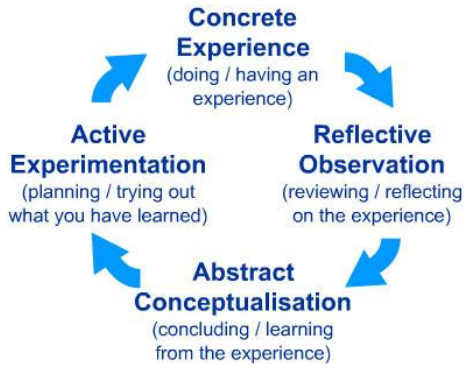
I then looked to the models and metaphors I have found the most useful.

First, for change: Prochaska's six stages of change[4], of which Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance seem most pertinent to coaching; and, more simply, Kurt Lewin's organisational change phases of 'freeze, unfreeze, refreeze'[5]. Both models imply progression: the anticipation of change, a transitional period, then consolidation. Additionally, change is not instant – a child does not learn to walk in a single day. With both models, however, it is important to guard against thinking that action only happens in the mid-phase – of which more later.

With regard to leadership, I like Heifetz's[6] metaphor that a leader should be among the dancers on the dance-floor whilst also viewing the event from the balcony. The leader's balcony view gives perspective on the whole event, but they must simultaneously interact on the dance floor to refine partners, steps, music etc in order to shape or adapt the whole. Leaders must be able to operate at both levels, using each to leverage the other. Balcony time represents the more reflective elements of leadership, whilst dance-floor time is its more active part. Which leads nicely into…

…Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which I have used successfully to design and deliver training.

[1] Downey "Effective Coaching" (2nd Ed 2003): "Potential minus interference is equal to performance." p11
[2] Kimsey-House et al "Co-Active Coaching" (3rd Ed 2011) p78
[3] Whitmore "Coaching for Performance" (4th Ed 2013 reprint) p10
[4] Prochaska et al 1992, summarised by Peltier "The Psychology of Executive Coaching" (1st Ed 2010) p2-3
[5] Lewin 1997 summarised by McLean "The Completely Revised Handbook of Coaching" (2nd Ed 2012) p89-90
[6] Heifetz, R., and Linsky, M. "Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading." (1st Ed 2002) p73



Effective learning occurs when a person progresses through the four stage cycle. Kolb views learning as an integrated process with each stage mutually supportive of, and feeding into, the next. The cycle can begin at any stage. However, effective learning only occurs when a learner is able to execute all four stages. Therefore, no single stage is effective as a learning procedure on its own[7].

How might these models and metaphors fit together to benefit coach and coachee?

This is where the Slinky comes in.

Imagine lying a Slinky on its side on the floor. The tightly-packed spiral goes round and round, but it is only a few inches from one end to the other. The coils going round and getting nowhere are like loops of thought and action in coaching clients at Contemplation stage. They are typically asking 'what if?' questions, fighting nebulous fears and taking unfocused actions. For example, Client A was contemplating moving to a different sector. She was wondering what other sectors might be like and worrying whether her skills would transfer, scanning job adverts and building her LinkedIn network, but with no real focus.

Ultimately only the client can decide whether they are prepared to risk stretching themselves. The coach can help by establishing whether they can build a concrete and compelling case for change. For some, exercises to build a positive vision may do the trick. For others, feedback may help them understand the impact of their behaviour and where it could lead. For all, it is important to explore what it would mean to leave behind their current ways. Loss aversion is well documented (eg Kahneman[8]) as a far stronger motive than expectation of gain. "How does the current situation serve you?" is a key coaching question at this point.

With a clear future vision and an understanding of what they leave behind, a client may be sufficiently motivated to progress to Preparation and Action - to 'unfreeze'. I didn't manage to help Client A unlock this motivation. However, when I worked with redeployment clients, it was striking that those who I could support to shape new visions of working life *and* allow themselves to relinquish old working identities moved far quicker to productive action than those who could not.

Clients in this phase are like a Slinky starting to stretch. They are still anchored to their starting point, but spirals of thought and action extend their reach into new places. The spirals become more like Kolb's cycles and thus a key role of the coach is to secure the client's learning in all four phases – particularly by helping action-oriented clients to reflect, or thoughtful clients to act. Feedback continues to help in raising self-awareness, or the coach could help the client develop an action plan and identify opportunities to practice. For example, Client B was exploring steps up and out of her organisation. To enrich her understanding of top leadership and how it might work for her, we reviewed experiences in her own organisation and others she had observed, and developed plans for her to try different behaviours and actions which she productively reflected upon in subsequent sessions.

[7] Text (edited by me) and diagram from simplypsychology.org.
[8] Kahnemann "Thinking Fast and Slow" (1st Ed, 2012 UK reprint) p283-5

In which direction will the client stretch? This is where Heifetz is useful. Does the client want a Viennese waltz, a dance-hall jive or a punk mosh-pit? Enabling the client to develop a really clear vision and understand why it is important to them is key. For example, Client C wanted to reduce time spent working late on seemingly endless tasks. I helped him develop his vision of what he wanted to achieve and be recognised for in his role, by establishing what was important for him at work and at home. For the vision to be realised specific actions must take place (booking the orchestra, skiffle band or mohicans…). Client C identified particular tasks that he would no longer do and specific limits to his day. In co-active coaching terms, we had worked on both the big-"A" and little-"a" agendas[9].

At this point, your childhood fingers might remember the sharp snap of a stretched Slinky pinging back if unsecured - just as steps towards a significant change always involve setbacks and false starts. Moving forward is hard, not just because the client must change, but also because it takes time (months or maybe years[10]) and they will underestimate the influence of their environment (the 'fundamental attribution error'[11]) – and that it may actively resist change (the 'homeostasis' premise in systems thinking[12]). The coach must anticipate this with the client and help them prepare. Work on the vision and supporting actions remains crucial and can be increasingly detailed. Specific steps and new habits help anchor the client's changing behaviours and attitudes. When reviewed with a coach – or increasingly by the client on their own – perceived progress can strengthen motivation towards the larger goal. Similarly, a strong vision can provide the motivation to keep plugging away at daily actions.

The other crucial element at this stage is to ensure the client has strategies to deal with the inevitable setbacks: acknowledge them, learn from them, and keep starting afresh. So when Client C identified tasks to stop, I made sure we discussed how much time that would release and what, specifically, he would do instead to stop other work simply expanding. Recognising that accountability to others also helps prevent back-sliding, he promised his wife to help complete a specific domestic task in the newly-available time.

Over time, the change increasingly becomes second nature – the client has 'refrozen', or achieved the Maintenance phase. The dancers have settled into their rhythm and the evening's a great success. The Slinky stretched across the floor will spring forward to a new spot. The coach's work on this particular change is done. Time to end the relationship, or start on a different change.

So how does all this help me?

I now keep the Slinky in mind when working with clients, steering the session by asking myself: Are they coiled or stretching? Where are they reaching to? And, therefore, how might I best support them in this conversation?

This helps me reach my ultimate goal for coaching: to part company with the client knowing they have made significant changes which move them closer to their vision, and that they have the wherewithal, resilience and motivation to keep dancing towards it.

Katie Driver
Katie founded the Thinking Alliance to help people develop leadership that is good for them, their organisation, and for society. Katie is interested in habits that anchor good leadership and in how introverts can lead effectively. Coaching since first training in 2001, Katie brings an independent, calm and pragmatic approach. She combines an interest in psychology with experience of Senior Civil Service leadership, entrepreneurship, portfolio working, volunteering and marathon running.

[9] Kimsey-House et al "Co-Active Coaching" (3rd Ed 2011) p120-1
[10] Eg see Ibarra "Working Identity" (1st Ed 2004 paperback) p53-4 section entitled 'In the Middle'
[11] Eg see Scoular "Financial Times Guide to Business Coaching" (1st Ed 2011) p125
[12] Peltier "The Psychology of Executive Coaching" (1st Ed 2010) p140-1

The secret of business coaching – 'be yourself with more skill'

Alexandra Durnford,

In their book 'Why Be Led by You': What it takes to be an Authentic Leader', Goffee and Jones argue that rather than there being a series of universal leadership characteristics that would-be leaders should slavishly follow, '*those aspiring to leadership need to discover what it is about themselves that they can mobilise in a leadership context. They need to identify and deploy their own personal leadership assets'*[1]. I think the same is true when aspiring to build an effective, successful coaching relationship.

Much of their work on leadership has direct comparisons with coaching, not least their belief that leadership should be something 'we do with' rather than 'do to' other people. I could go on and highlight the similarities between 'successful' leadership (at least in the eyes of Goffee/Jones) and coaching. For instance, the requirement for situational sensing, reframing for the benefit of followers and the fact that leadership is non-hierarchal etc. Not to mention the fact that to be a coach you need a client (follower). However, what is most striking to me in this informal comparison between Goffee/Jones' leadership and coaching is learning to '*be yourself with more skill'*[2]. By this I mean becoming a coach who is tuned in, empathetic, supportive, generous and who does not get in the way of the client.

Before I really get into my stride here, let me give you a little context to help explain why this phrase, and the implications I believe it holds for coaching, resonate so deeply. I am a consultant and if I take on-going employment as indicator of success, I am not bad at it. I am well versed in the client/consultant relationship, particularly its early stages. (In my experience) it requires me to inform my potential client, subtly and sometimes with a sledgehammer, that I am good at my job. That I know my stuff, that I have experience that stretches back decades, that there is very little about them, their sector, the way their organisation operates that I haven't seen and solved before. In short, they are in safe hands, I am the knowledge bearing super-heroine fit for the task and what's more, thank goodness for that because, my god, do they need saving. Therefore, at least to begin with, to get me into the room and keep me there, I need to validate my credentials and in other words, I (and my professional persona) have to be absolutely in the way of the client.

Even contemplating taking this approach to the fragile and critical first moments of a coaching relationship makes me cringe and twist my feet in embarrassment. And here my direct comparison with Goffee/Jones on leadership ends (for the moment at least). They state that '*enough* self-knowledge' (and emotional intelligence) is sufficient. But, if there is one thing I have learnt in qualifying as a business coach, it is that developing self-knowledge and self-awareness is crucial to building an effective coaching relationship. You need it from the moment you walk in the door and you can never have '*enough*' and not only that, it is more important than the other type of intelligence we traditionally associate with winning and building client relationships.

I am now acutely aware that my voice, eyes, tone, hand movements, head tilt, eyebrows, foot twitch, smile and grimace (and the questions, judgments and emotions that lie behind them) are all likely to produce a reaction in my client. That this reaction, no matter how fleeting, will influence their decision on whether or not they can trust me and ultimately whether they will want to build or walk away from the relationship. Therefore, the requirement to recognize these seemingly innocuous ticks in myself, to understand their source and impact, is fundamental to my ability to eliminate them or at least deploy them with a pre-determined outcome in mind i.e. to make my client feel safe, listened to, understood etc. If I get this wrong, it doesn't matter if I have 20 years' experience in their field, a PhD in astrophysics or even just a great LinkedIn profile, they won't want to work with me. They won't trust me enough but worse than that, I will get in their way.

[1] Why Should anyone be Led by You? : What it Takes to be an Authentic Leader (Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones 2006)
[2] Why Should anyone be Led by You? : What it Takes to be an Authentic Leader (Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones 2006)

This is not to say that business coaching is all instinct and emotional intelligence. Understanding the theories, frameworks and psychologies of effective business coaching is critical to developing a coaching style and approach. There is huge skill in facilitating a goal-orientated conversation where the destination may not be clear to coach or client at the beginning but has to be reached by the end of the session. Learning to listen, rather than *'queuing to speak'* [3]whilst battling the voices shouting, 'this is what I would do, I know the answer' becomes far easier when you have delved into and at least partially understood the complex web of psychology and neuroscience (yours and the client's) that underlie the difference between success and failure.

This is hardly groundbreaking and original thought. But, it was for me. It has been fiendishly hard, frustrating and sometimes just scary going into a room professionally naked, unable to offer my degree or logo laden client list to get me through. I have had to identify what is authentically me and deploy this to ensure my clients feel at ease, calm and reassured that they are the only person whose story and agenda matters. Now though, having been scrubbed clean of the consultant's desire to know the answer/provide the solution, I have discovered that *'situation sensing'* is far easier (and much more rewarding) when you are being yourself with a bit more skill. Now perhaps I will be a better coach and, ironically, a far more effective consultant.

Alexandra Durnford
Alexandra has specific experience in working with clients who require support in managing the impact of significant change on their role including promotion, restructure, and career change. She coaches crisis management teams on leadership skills, including; decision making; setting overall objectives and direction; and team motivation and collaboration under conflict. She works extensively with clients in energy, financial services, pharmaceuticals, professional services and not for profit.

[3] Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind (Nancy Kline 1999)

Is Herminia Ibarra's "Working Identity" a bridge between 'advice from a headhunter' and non-directive coaching?

Alex Gordon Shute

The thing that drew me into coaching is that people started to tell me that 'coaching' was what I was already doing when I listened and talked to people in the course of my executive search work. Specifically, they seemed to mean the ability to help individuals work through their thoughts about careers and career transition.

Having now completed the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme, I know that describing what I was doing previously as coaching was 95% wrong: it was neither non-directive, nor was it doing anything other than tackling one particular subject area (career transition) in the lives of those I was in conversation with. This is too limiting to be a definition of coaching. The 5% of 'coaching' that I was doing, which did perhaps fit the accurate definition, was intent and focused listening, designed to help individuals find their own paths through something they found perplexing.

This realisation has come together with a deeper and more practised understanding of Herminia Ibarra's "Working Identity", in two outcomes for me. First, my conversations with my search candidates now have clearer boundaries: if I think the individual would really benefit from a course of coaching sessions in order to get themselves 'sorted' with their career thinking, I will recommend it, rather than blundering on as an enthusiastic but time-pressed, unpaid, amateur. Second, what I have to offer is coaching tools to help individuals draw out observations about themselves, which can be combined with their own reflections on Herminia Ibarra's wise words and some 'content' (from me) on how the job market works and what they can do positively to interact with it. These three elements can be explored within a short-ish time frame (a two hour 'interview'), which means that the individual usually leaves with a more practical, optimistic, better-informed approach of how to navigate the senior job market successfully in order to get where they want.

It makes me smile to think that, for a tiny, three-woman search business, our 'corporate responsibility' activity is mainly centred on me having a stack of twenty copies of "Working Identity" on my desk, so that I can dash to retrieve one at an appropriate moment for an individual who may be in need of it! These are given away to those individuals who – if they read the book carefully – could potentially find it to be life-changing for them in how they navigate their careers. What I have usually done by the time I give them a copy of Ibarra's book is explain what I consider to be the essence of its power, namely (in my words):

> 'She describes the linear approach which those of us who have been educated to a reasonable standard and have had 10-15 years of professional life are used to solving problems with… you articulate the big goal on the horizon; you chart the path to get there; it's got milestones on the way; and you set off, ticking the milestones off as you pass them until you get to the goal.
>
> But what she makes clear is that the model would be fine for career transition if only we all knew what the 'perfect job' was which we were aiming for. But we don't.
>
> Instead, what she says is "ditch that model and take this one instead: you're standing in the centre of a circle; you take one step out in each of 20 different directions; 20 conversations become six stage two conversations and six become three, and three becomes one… and hey presto, you're standing on the edge of the circle and you've landed in your dream professional incarnation". But you could never have predicted where on the edge of the circle you were going to land when you set off. It's all about experimentation and iteration… expanding your horizons and exploring other parts of the professional ecosystem, so that you start to find new possibilities which your rational brain and your emotions will be able to digest on the way in order to guide you to more distant horizons.'

What I then do, based on some of the 'content' which I've now learned as an executive search consultant, is to make sure that individuals have a narrative. To that extent, I am building on Ibarra, who talks about the need to have the conversations, but not about *how* to have them. My search specialisation is Corporate Affairs and Investor Relations Directors, so I start by saying, 'the hardest thing of all is to apply to yourself your day-job skills of crafting key messages and a core narrative – but that's what you need to do'. I take the wry smile which is the usual response as permission to continue:

> 'You will create not just an opening to have the conversation but actual enthusiasm to help you if you talk to people about the 'gap year' or 'next 6 months' (or whatever the timetable is - by the way, it needs to be not less than four months and not more than a year in my view) – in which you are going to be 'getting gold medals for drinking cups of coffee'. You're going to be exploring how the rest of the world works, which you've rather missed out on since you've had your head down in your day job for the last x years. You're going to enjoy the process of exploration and discovery which this coffee offensive will take you on.
>
> What you do with that narrative is that you describe that you're looking for a job, but you don't need one by a week on Monday (so they don't have to panic if they don't have one for you); you are in active listening mode (which will make the conversation much more creative and fluid than if you had a set agenda); and you are going to 'enjoy the journey' (who doesn't want to hang out with someone who wants to listen to them and is chirpy and positive in the way they do so?). Hey presto, doors start to open and you start to have really interesting new conversations about your career.'

There are, of course, other areas of advice (such as how to navigate the shark-infested waters of the executive search community) which I offer too, in an attempt to cover the basics which someone might need for their new journey. Despite this, in my view, Ibarra's contribution is the most critical. It gives the individual a sense of their own choice of the path ahead, when perhaps they were mired in the slough of despond about losing their job, or having to 'sell' themselves to their friends and contacts. That is a magical thing. It has a transformational effect, which is then amplified and shaped in a more personal way, as they read and reflect on Ibarra's "Working Identity" during the course of their 'homework' reading after the meeting.

Ultimately, I feel very lucky to have found a delicious 'sweet spot' in the Venn diagram overlap of my own experience, Ibarra's inspiring and seminal "Working Identity", and the skills from the Business Coach Programme which seem to have a liberating and positive impact on people who are seeking help at an often difficult time. Having set them on a positive path, they are free (in an entirely non-directive way!) to take whatever course they choose. But now they have confidence, a sense of 'a plan', and an understanding that this is a 'tried and tested' method they are following. Ultimately they also have a spring in their step for the journey ahead.

Alex Gordon Shute
Alex founded and leads Ithaca Partners, the leading corporate functions search firm. She specialises in finding exceptional Corporate Affairs and Investor Relations Directors for major organisations across the economy. She will be using her improved mastery of coaching from the Meyler Campbell programme to coach leaders in the Non-Profit sector (her 'giving back agenda'), in addition to her day job in headhunting.

Small Steps and Career Transitions: A Personal Reflection

Saverio Grazioli-Venier

This is a personal reflection, based on my experience coaching through career changes and transitions. It centres on the notion that helping clients to break things down in small steps can be a very strong tool in career coaching. I look at how two books, Herminia Ibarra's *Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career*[1] and Timothy Gallwey's *The Inner Game of Tennis*[2], tie in with this notion and why they have had an important influence on my coaching approach.

My finding is that a coaching philosophy grounded in the concept of working through small steps can be a significant catalyst for change and much more powerful than any of the individual steps would suggest. What's more, I have seen that this most pragmatic of approaches is often experienced as not only rewarding but also exciting.

Small Steps and Momentum

My background as a headhunter and my personal experience of two career transitions, meant that career coaching was one of the areas I was most interested in when starting the Meyler Campbell programme. Herminia Ibarra's book *Working Identity* immediately struck a cord with me for the simple reason that she provides much needed pragmatic grounding in a field that can sometimes be abstract and theoretical.

What sets Ibarra a part is her thesis that reflection and introspection "best come later" when you have momentum on your side. According to Ibarra 'doing' comes first and experience is key when searching for a new and different working identity. The idea is that by dipping your feet in the water you can test out whether a particular field is really for you, given that changing careers is as much about changing identities. The first of Ibarra's nine Unconventional Strategies is: "Act your way into a new way of thinking and being. You cannot discover yourself by introspection"[3].

I have noticed as a headhunter how difficult it is for clients to try to define their ideal job in the abstract. Often this is because they are not able to draw on personal experience.

An additional hurdle when anyone looking to change careers is picking up the necessary momentum and sticking with a process that can seem long and intimidating at the outset. Clients who have come to me to work on career transitions - whether making a re-adjustment within their current field or finding an entirely new direction - have all expressed at one point or other the sense of being overwhelmed by the task. And their behaviours and thought patterns are being influenced by this.

It is exactly here - when the task is perceived to be huge and daunting – that breaking down actions into small pragmatic steps can be so effective. I have found that helping clients to identify small practical steps to complete ahead of the next session has almost always proved a far more effective method than working with a client to try to sculpt their ideal job.

The task is transformed from a daunting project of personal introspection to a manageable task of exploration, experimentation and self discovery. Clients often find the process exciting because feedback is quick and results are tangible. Next comes momentum and from that breeds confidence. The prospect of finding a new career all of a sudden becomes exciting.

[1] Ibarra, H. (2004). Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career. Boston, Harvard Business School Press
[2] Gallwey W. T. (1986). The Inner Game of Tennis. London, Pan books.
[3] Ibid Ibarra H., page 167

Small Steps and Letting It Happen

What exactly is happening here and why does this approach feel so exciting? I think Timothy Gallwey helps to explain this with the following simple equation:

Performance = Potential – Interference

Eliminate the interference of that rational critic we all have inside us (our Self 1) and you can aspire to perform to your natural potential (Self 2). Just the idea of performing to your full potential is exciting let alone the prospect that it is actually within grasp.

Gallwey goes on to encourage a new way of learning[4]. A process in which we must put our judging self to one side, trust in the process and let things happen. Now 'letting things happen' is often harder than it sounds but I have found that it is far easier to let go when you break things down into small steps. I have found this reflected often when coaching. Its more likely for a client to try out ideas that come from their non critical self when it involves small commitments simply because they feel that there is less at stake.

Consider this statement:

"Having requested your body to perform a certain action, give it freedom to do it."[5]

Allowing yourself to listen to your non-critical Self 2 is a luxury that many people feel they had given up on many years back (family, children, mortgage, etc.). But by seeking a career change you are to some extent revealing a belief that your true potential has not yet been met. Whether we have the courage to admit it or not, we all wish we could find that one occupation that speaks to our natural abilities and makes us happy.

Breaking things down into small steps affords the freedom of action that Gallwey talks about – there is less at stake if you get it wrong. This goes a long way in quieting the inner critic and allowing our more natural self to express itself. Without interference we are far more likely to perform to our desired potential, we can let things happen. And the rest follows.

I had some experience of this during my own journey throughout the course. The subject matter interested me from the start and I hoped I had it in me to develop into a good coach. But the lack of previous experience played on my mind and I sometimes found myself getting blocked when coaching.

This happened mostly during the early tutorials when practicing coaching within our syndicate. I listened to myself, my inner critic, rather than the syndicate members I was coaching. I tried hard to find clues in what I was hearing that would match with the literature I had read leading me to overthink it. It did not work and it started to affect my confidence.

Breaking into small steps meant that the first on the list was to let go and listen properly. I made a pact with myself that nothing else would matter. Not the literature I had read, nor the expectations I had of myself as a coach. Taking inspiration from Ibarra I would "act my way" into a new way of thinking. The most difficult part was to trust that the rest would then follow – thankfully it did.

[4] Ibid Gallwey T., page 73
[5] Ibid Gallwey T., pages 73-74

In the end, I found I was able to integrate the theoretical frameworks that made a mark on me in a natural and unforced way. Not all at once but one step at a time. It gave me momentum, confidence and, most important of all, it allowed me the freedom to be myself when coaching.

Conclusion

The goal of many people at a time of career transition is to somehow find a career that truly reflects who they are and draws out their full potential. But as described, this can be very difficult. Yet Ibarra and Gallwey give us frameworks that can be very effective when coaching clients through a career transition: act your way into a new way of thinking, ground it in practical experience, quieten the inner critic, then "just let things happen". I have found that breaking things down into small chunks is the glue that keeps these frameworks together.

A process that starts out as a practical, step-by-step approach quickly becomes something much more powerful. It feels exciting and within grasp and gives space to express oneself with less fear and self doubt. It is both pragmatic and inspiring.

Saverio Grazioli-Venier
Saverio is a headhunter and business coach. He recently set up and co-led an in-house executive search function for King's College London, the first of its kind in Higher Education. He previously worked for global executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles and has held managerial positions in the energy and drinks sectors in Italy, the US and the UK.

Reflections of a Journey

Michael Grisenthwaite

'The willingness of professional learners to trust coaches are related to the extent to which a coach is able to make their expertise available without engaging in guidance or breeding dependency' (CUREE, 2005)

Introduction

This assignment reflects on some of the learning gained during the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme, involving tutorials and practice coaching sessions. The aim of the course was for me to develop my coaching skills and enable me to apply such skills within my workplace.

Having looked at several coaching models, I was aware of themes, which ran through them. The models suggest that successful coaching is usually carried out on a one to one basis, there must be mutual trust between the coach and the coachee and the coachee should have the resources to pursue change with the help of the coach (Lofthouse et al, 2010).

The aim of my coaching is to listen, reflect and question, rather than provide answers, ideas and advice in order to help the coachee maximise their potential (Whitmore, 1992).

The coaching sessions

Rogers (2008) feels that coaching relies on openness between two people and that a client who is willing to give the coaching a go will earn the respect of the coach. I feel that having an initial positive and rewarding discussion at the outset of any coaching relationship sets the tone for the rest of the sessions. It is important for the coach to establish with the coachee an understanding that the coaching sessions will be conducted on a confidential basis and in a non-judgmental manner by the coach (Hughes, 2006).

During the coaching sessions, I was determined to remain an equal and to keep the process relaxed, whilst challenging. Whilst being non-judgemental, coaching sessions should also be based on trust and respect, with the person being coached controlling the agenda (CUREE, 2005). It should also be completely detached from any performance management process (Lofthouse et al, 2010). On occasion, I have had to educate managers as to what coaching provides, whilst also explaining how it is distinguished from other forms of development. Often, managers will confuse coaching with the more directive forms of mentoring and performance management. Coaching is about helping people to help themselves and changing from within (Hughes, 2006; Whitmore, 2002). It is about the coachee finding the answers from within themselves and thereby taking ownership of their actions and achieving their goals.

Some coachees came with a view that the coach provides the answers to the questions raised by the coachee – I had to learn to deflect these questions and turn the questions back on the coachee. For example, on one occasion, I responded by saying 'before I give you an answer, let's explore what you think is the right approach'. On the occasion where the coachee had provided their answer and then asked what my answer would be, there is a temptation to give my own answer. I felt by doing this, I would undermine the commitment the coachee had given to themselves to follow through on their own answer. Therefore, I simply answered, 'you have found the answer and it is better than any answer I could give you'.

A disadvantage of using a coaching model can be that it inhibits the coach and limits the understanding and learning (Creasy and Paterson, 2005). As my coaching experience grew, I learnt that although a coaching model provides a useful framework within which to operate, it should not be followed slavishly. This was seen with the 'GROW' model, where I started by following each step and never returning to an earlier step, if the need arose. I soon realised the importance of not tying myself to the step-by-step approach the model offered me. I became more liberal in my application of the model and, where it was relevant, I would return to an earlier stage. Having the freedom to return to the 'Goal' stage, for example, was important, as it allowed the coachee to redefine what they were looking to achieve, as each stage of the model was explored. Coaching is seen as a circular, rather than linear form, with some of the stages being revisited at different times (Rogers 2004, Goleman et al 2002).

Many coaching experts claim that the better you know a subject, the harder it is to be non-judgemental (Hughes, 2006). One coachee asked how I could coach him when I do not know his area of expertise. I simply responded that my role was to facilitate in him providing the answers and I will help him breakdown any barriers that confront him and limit his thinking. I would achieve this in the questions I asked of him and by challenging him. It was easier to ask the questions, not knowing the coachee's area of expertise, as my own thinking was not determining which questions to ask in order to produce the answer I was looking for from my own experiences of the subject. Asking questions and phrasing comments appropriately are prime coaching skills (Rogers, 2008). In practice, I was conscious of the need to build an unconditional acceptance of my coachees (Rogers, 2009), through careful questioning and active listening.

The Service Station alongside the busy Motorway of working life – a Personal Perspective

Coaching is the service station on the motorway of working life. There are various lanes on that motorway with vehicles travelling at different speeds and with different destinations. Some travel in convoy, whilst others travel alone. There are the slower vehicles travelling in the inside lane, the caravans, the coaches and the articulated lorries. There are those people at work who are members of a team, or sole contributors. There are the labourers, the doers, the task driven individuals. In the outside lane, exclusivity prevails, as only certain vehicles are permitted to travel there. This is similar to those persons with professional qualifications and licences to practice.

Overtaking on the motorway is similar to career progression in the workplace, as one vehicle has the ability to pass another, just as one employee is promoted over other employees.

So, how does coaching fit into this busy world of activity, the modern workplace where everyone has their own career destination and route to achieve it? In a similar way, coaching is like the services station on that motorway of working life. It provides individuals and teams with a place to pullover, stop, reflect, check, replenish and ensure you are ready to continue your journey and in the right direction. A service station will provide you with fuel for you and your vehicle. It offers you a chance to address any issues, from putting air in your tyres, to replacing a light bulb. It allows you to break your journey and re-energise. It gives you an opportunity to check on the route and the direction you are taking in work, projects and careers. It provides you with the chance to check on the original destination itself as still being the right one for you.

Coaching provides you with an array of tools and services - from visualisation, to one on one, or team coaching, to applying various applicable tools for a situation like using the Johari window to better understand working relationships.

Conclusion

Rogers (2009) describes a coaching conversation as unique, as it involves a high level of trust from each participant. This changes many of the rules of a normal conversation and the use of open questions and active listening are vital for success. Through listening, reflecting back and asking questions, together the coachee and I managed successfully to think through issues and reach conclusions.

Coaching is based on the belief that change needs to come from within and has been likened to holding up a mirror and asking appropriate questions to help people think through their issues

(Hughes, 2006). It is about giving people the chance to reflect on their practice in a relaxed and non-threatening environment, empowering them, motivating them and improving them. It should always be viewed as a positive and on-going process.

References

CREASY, J and PATERSON, F. (2005) Leading Coaching in Schools.
CUREE (2005) Mentoring and Coaching for Learning.
GOLEMAN, D, et al (2002) The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results.
HUGHES, M. (2006) *And the Main Thing is… Learning.*
LOFTHOUSE, R, (2010) *Coaching for teaching and learning.*
ROGERS, J. (2008) Coaching Skills: A Handbook.
WHITMORE, J. (2002) Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose.

Michael Grisenthwaite

Michael began his career as an employment lawyer working for City firms before moving in-house in 2000 to set up the HR Legal Department for a global financial institution. During his time at this financial institution, Michael was a member of the HR Leadership Team working with the HR Directors across the globe. Michael's coaching has involved him with private equity firms, law firms, real estate and asset management companies.

The magic of time and space in coaching

John Hornby

An awareness of the extraordinary range and power of the properties of time and space and their effect on our daily lives is central to the tools at the disposal of coaches. They are at the heart of communication; they have many restorative and healing powers and they have a number of practical applications. This essay looks at all of these.

Communication

Humour enriches life. A comedian is said to have good timing. A pause for the perfect length of time before delivering the punch line maximizes the laughter and is based on pure instinct as to the state of mind of the audience. Equally in reverse speed of delivery can be used to maximum effect by exposing the humour and surprising the listeners before they have got there.

In sport, particularly ball games, timing is essential. Through natural judgment and anticipation an illusion of time and space can be created. One batsman facing an identical ball to another can give the impression of having more time. The stroke is relaxed and unhurried. It all adds to the grace, beauty and therefore the entertainment. The mark of great players in many sports is that they are said to have time.

The conductor of an orchestra may well be assessed on his mastery of time, on the way he or she dwells on a cadence or how well the tempo that is set is in tune with the artistic sensibilities of the audience.

We each have a different heart rate which in turn quickens or slows according to the individual's physical and mental being. In communication whether through professional entertainment, private conversation or business coaching the more sensitive we can be to the natural rhythms of life, whether in an individual or in a group, the better we will be able to create harmony, reduce interference and ease the flow of communication.

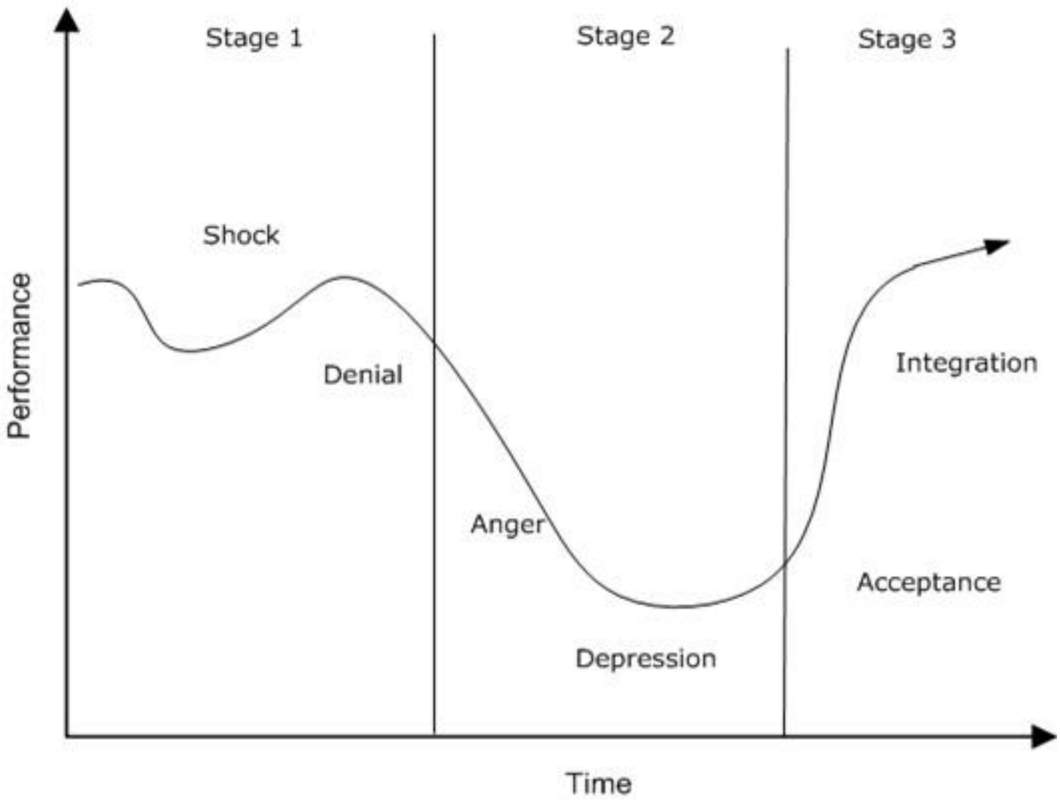
My first lesson on timing in coaching was pointed out to me by my tutor following a session I had with one of my earliest clients. The coaching involved a dilemma – whether to go abroad and teach or stay and study for a professional qualification. The coachee's heart was for going abroad and mind was for staying. We drew up a list of pros and cons recognizing that the relative length of the list was not determinative as there was the weighting factor to be taken into account. We also acknowledged that there might be a 'killer' point, which was conclusive. At one point after some hour's discussion he made a point to which I said that it was the killer point. He agreed. But 15 minutes later he was not convinced and resumed the debate. In salesman parlance I closed too early. He needed to come to this conclusion in his time not in mine. Eventually, some weeks later, he did agree and stayed here to study.

A cure

The Change Curve (see graph below) originated from Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's model developed some 50 years ago[1] to explain people's various stages of reaction to bereavement. It has subsequently been widely used by managers and coaches alike in situations where people have undergone significant change in their business lives. The skill of the coach is in the first instance recognizing at all times exactly where the client is along the time line and secondly being sensitive to the fact that every individual's Change Curve is different and particular to them following the change in question. For

[1] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) *On Death and Dying (incorporating Five Stages of Grief):* Simon and Schuster

some a stage may be missed. Shock may lead directly to Anger. The stages may come in a different order so that Denial does after all manifest itself but as part of the Depression phase. The reason why interpretation of the curve is so essential for coaches is that it will inform what help the individual confronting change needs. People require reassurance when in shock and denial. The isolation experienced by people in the depression stage can be helped by an explanation of this Change Curve and that others have been and are in the same situations. Only when people become more accepting of the change and are climbing out of depression might it be right to discussion options and opportunities. This takes us back to the point that it is the coach's experience of and sensitivity to the timeline that is crucial.



In my previous business life I had a client who frequently put himself under pressure and got exasperated. He invariably left ringing me for advice until Friday afternoon and he relished the process of heated academic debate in order to arrive at a solution. If he disagreed with my advice, which he often did at first instance, the prospect of his cooling down that Friday afternoon to acknowledge that my advice had merit and should at least be considered was remote. The powers of time and space worked more times than I can remember in his case with the result that on Monday morning he would ring me courteously to acknowledge that he had thought about the matter and been brought round to my view. Coaches frequently find themselves having to raise challenging and unpalatable issues. It can take far more time than is available in a single coaching session for these to be registered let alone accepted. The timing of the delivery of the issue and its follow up discussion is central to its chances of being accepted, time and space having been left to work its magic.

Space has restorative powers in a different context. People may find themselves under extreme pressure such that they are carrying a huge burden so it seems there are never enough hours in the day to cope with it. This may be pressure at work or perhaps having to care for dependent relatives (young or old) such that there appears to be no prospect of respite in sight. Artificially creating space in such circumstances is a frequently cited remedy. This may take the form of regularly allocating time to yourself for recreation. It may involve building slack or tolerance into the system say by reducing personal financial targets and, perhaps as a consequence, remuneration. There was a moving talk given by a New Zealand psychologist advising people who had to contend with the interminably slow rebuilding of their homes and their lives following the Christchurch earthquake. Life is tolerable if space is created.

Continuing with the healing properties of time Dr Claire Weekes in her bestselling study about nervous stress[2] prescribes four stages of cure for anxiety attacks and nervous breakdowns. They are:

Facing
Accepting
Floating
Letting time pass

Her view is that against a cycle of Fear – Adrenaline – Fear true acceptance breaks the fear but the real cure lies in time passing whilst maintaining that true acceptance. Fighting (i.e. non-accepting) and impatience with time can at any stage trigger again the anxiety.

The practice

There are certain practical applications for time and space in the coaching process. I give three examples here. First the wisdom is that the coach should, within reason, aim to match the coachee's speed of delivery to create the sense of being in tune, in harmony with the person. Secondly quite apart from the professionalism inherent in this, time-keeping during a coaching session both by starting on time and adhering to any structure that has been suggested can be particularly important say to those who might have *Judging* as their MBTI preference, being people who like closure in the temporal as well as substantial sense. Thirdly the space created by silence can be a powerful tool. It can on the one hand serve as a pause and therefore a relaxant but on the other it can be an activator for further reflection, creating its own pressure that thinking should be taken to another level.

In conclusion whilst this paper has highlighted the remarkable forces that time and space bring to the coaching world the true magic is in its application in the hands of a gifted coach who has the necessary knowledge of the potential, sensitivity to the individual and instinct in application so as to maximize the benefits.

John Hornby
I am a consultant with The Professional Career Partnership giving a blend of career advice overlaid with pure coaching. Transition work particularly for lawyers and other City professionals is a particular strength. My career was with a City law firm, Macfarlanes, where I developed a passion for making a difference to our own people, whether senior partners or trainees. I also part-own a pub, chair a small football club and plant trees in France.

[2] Dr Claire Weekes (1977) *SELF-HELP for your NERVES*: Thorsons

Reappraising Appraisals from a Coaching Perspective

Heather Kleeman

'Feedback is merely data, which only has an impact if individuals are motivated to direct their attention to goals'.

Reading this quote from Dr Almuth McDowall in Jonathan Passmore's Psychometrics in Coaching has sparked some reflections on my own experiences in providing feedback. Before training as a coach, I spent six years as HR Director of a private equity firm. One of my early responsibilities was the overhaul of the review system. When I arrived at the firm, the 'system', if that was the appropriate word to describe it, was an administrative nightmare of handwritten review forms (largely written in aeroplanes), only incorporated downwards feedback, excluded all Partners, and lacked any sense of consistency or calibration. Many reviews reflected the performance of the previous eight weeks for better or worse for the individual reviewed. By the time I left six years later, it was a properly thought out, structured system. It offered an online 360 tool, which was easy to use; produced excellent reports; and included everyone from Associate to Partner, a process in which all the team invested huge time and effort. At the time I thought I had done rather a good job. It was best practice, looked slick and efficient, what was not to like?

But now I am much less confident. Partly as a newly minted coach, partly as a result of some reading around the subject, I am beginning to see its flaws. I started wondering if Adrian Furnham had a point when he wrote in his article on appraisal systems in The Talented Manager: *'Appraisal systems give HR a bad name'.*

On reflection, there is plenty to criticise in my system. Firstly, feedback was given, with some woolly objectives tagged on to the end, and then each individual was effectively left to their own devices to get on with it. For some, that worked quite well. There were always a few lucky ones who gained such great experience and exposure the following year that they developed apace. Others who thrived on feedback didn't rely on ours. They pushed for more targeted feedback on a one-to-one basis and then acted on it. But many filed their review report in their bottom drawer and, not surprisingly, received very similar feedback and rather similar objectives the following year. I had a sneaking suspicion that a fair amount of the feedback produced was copied and pasted from the previous year.

Secondly, there was a tendency to assume the strengths (and that the recipient knew exactly what those were) and focus instead on the weaknesses. A review intended to boost morale could have quite the opposite effect. As Adrian Furnham put it: *'Appraisals are full of accusations, denials and excuses, not about how to work well'.*

Thirdly, in spite of HR's efforts to make the messages consistent, it still remained the case that multiple source feedback could not always present a consistent message. It was left to the individual to interpret some of the comments and work out for themselves which were the right messages to absorb. This could become a highly emotionally charged and destructive process.

So, it came as no surprise to me to read a study by Kluger and DeNisi published in 1996 which concluded that post-feedback performance declined in one third of observations. They had no doubt that feedback when done well was a good thing and did help employees improve their performance, so they investigated what was going wrong when it did not. Interestingly, they found that the negative effects of feedback interventions could not be traced back to receiving negative as opposed to positive feedback. Both types of feedback could misfire. Their studies led them to conclude that the **nature** of the goals given was key to whether goals were then attained and that goals relating to **actual task performance** were most effective. They concluded that important factors likely to lead to motivational feedback were that it should be task-oriented; include concrete detail about how to improve performance; include a formal goal-setting plan; and avoid a focus on performance relative to others. They also noted that a '*serious problem for multisource appraisals is that they often present the employee with conflicting messages about his or her performance…..Personal coaches may be the key to dealing with the inherent discrepancies found in 360-degree ratings. A coach can help further motivate employees who receive positive feedback from various sources, while helping the recipients of negative feedback formulate a workable strategy for performance improvement'.*

I then found another piece of thought provoking research published by Thomas and Bretz in 1994. They argue that evaluations are often perceived by employees and supervisors with *'fear and loathing'.* They concluded that one possible explanation for the fear and loathing is the absence of a *'sense of ownership'*. Reviews often present the recipient with goals but there is little dialogue about those goals or indeed - and very importantly - what he/she felt their goals should be. As we know all too well from coaching, without that sense of ownership and the will to do something about it, little often changes.

Looking back now on my review process with a coaching hat on, I can see that it was missing some of the most inspirational and effective dimensions that coaching can bring. What it needed was a big dose of GROW. Reviews were delivered without encouraging enough ownership. Goals were delivered without enough discussion on how to achieve them, whether they were realistic, what success would look like and when it might be achieved. Furthermore, the will to make these changes was assumed rather than explored. Many reviews highlighted the need to improve team skills – I suspect very few of the recipients of that feedback genuinely had the will to do anything about that. Similarly, we often told an individual that he/she was on Partner track, with no real detail on what that meant and how we could help them succeed.

It seems to me that including a coaching phase as a formal element of the appraisal process could transform its effectiveness. This could be provided either by an internal or an external coach. The internal coach has the advantage of being close to the company and its culture, but the external coach can bring total objectivity and a greater sense of confidentiality and security. My personal preference would be for the latter, providing they invested enough time to understand the particular nuances of the firm and its culture.

Involvement ideally would include the following:

- Being involved upfront in ensuring the review process a) provides feedback that is positive and constructive b) offers specific examples and evidence c) has specific goals.
- Providing input into review delivery – very few of those delivering reviews get any training on this. Holding a one and a half hour breakfast seminar on delivering feedback for all review deliverers would make an enormous difference. Review delivery style, in my experience, could swing from discussing last Sunday's rugby match to launching headfirst into a stream of negatives.
- Providing feedback to those delivering the reviews.
- Coaching the recipient post receiving their review.
    - Checking he/she has heard the message, the good and the not so good and absorbed it in a balanced way.
    - Brainstorming the goals from a coaching perspective. Ensuring they are clear, targeted, measurable, that the individual knows what success what look like.
    - Encouraging engagement and ownership. Checking the will to change is really there (and if not, explore why not).
    - Agreeing on clear, identifiable, time measurable action steps and what help will be required from others.

- Holding regular (quarterly?) follow-up meetings to discuss progress.

It seems to me there must be a demand for this. Most firms are highly committed to investing a great deal of time and money in their annual appraisal process, but if DeNisi and Kluger are right (and many support their views), then there are flaws which undermine that investment – and these are flaws that a coach is well placed to address. The relative additional cost of a coach is small, but the potential upside enormous. So, as I embark on marketing with prospective clients, I am going to include this in what I can offer. It opens the door to them using me as a coach, but with a specific angle to try me out. What's not to like?

References

1. Psychometrics in Coaching by Jonathan Passmore
2. The Talented Manager by Adrian Furnham
3. Feedback effectiveness: Can 360-Degree Appraisals Be Improved? Authors: Angelo DeNisi and Avraham Kluger in The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005) Vol 14 No 1

Heather Kleeman

Heather has spent the last nineteen years working within the private equity sector, initially as Head of the private equity practice at the executive search firm The Rose Partnership, then as HR Director for Cinven. After taking a year out to train as a business coach, she now combines talent management consultancy with coaching, and has a particular focus on the private equity sector and career coaching.

Balance

Keith Krasny

I am standing on a BOSU ball at the gym and my legs are starting to quiver. Have you ever seen those things? (BOSU balls, I mean; not my quivering legs.) They are composed of a circular plastic platform glued to the top of half a blue rubber ball, like a child's drawing of Saturn with the top half of the planet sliced off. You stand on a BOSU ball to improve your balance. Or in my case, you stand on a BOSU ball to observe in horror as your legs take on a life of their own, shimmying and shaking in a vaguely obscene St. Vitus' Dance.

The muscles of my legs fire off in rapid pulses. They are not just quivering now. Through some tragi-comic harmonic sympathy, the quivering has become vibration, has become bouncing, and now I am standing on a fast-motion pogo-stick. I have become a hideous hybrid creature: BOSU-Ball Jack-Hammer Man.

A few thoughts come rushing at me, shoving and slapping each other as they vie to squeeze through the narrow threshold of my consciousness simultaneously. Let's call those thoughts Moe, Larry and Curly.

Moe thwacks me in the head, glares at me, and hisses: "You idiot! You look ridiculous. You're no good at this. You've got no sense of balance. You're making a fool of yourself." He gives me a two-fingered poke in the eyes to ensure he's driven home the message.

Larry looks in the mirror, notes that I do in fact look ridiculous, and then cries in pleading tones: "My legs! What in God's name is happening? This is not normal. This hurts. This is hard and I want to stop!"

I rather agree with Larry. He may have a point; I could be doing myself some real damage here. It doesn't *hurt* exactly, but it is very uncomfortable, this unfamiliar and possibly pointless exercise of standing atop a shivering semi-Saturn. I could fall and crack open my skull. And of course then, as Moe points out, I'd look even more ridiculous.

I am considering stepping off the BOSU ball to stop the madness when Curly pipes up: "Hey fellas! Hey fellas! Look at me! I'm balancing!"

I look in the mirror. Although all three thoughts are valid and correct in their own way, Curly's is the observation that really matters. I have climbed atop this BOSU ball because I want to improve my balance and, yes I look like an idiot, and yes, this shaking is bizarre and uncomfortable. But guess what? I am balancing. Barely. Badly, like just-born Bambi, but I *am* balancing.

Then I start to laugh. I no longer look like an idiot. To anyone in the gym incautious enough to risk eye contact with me, it is evident that I am insane and quite possibly dangerous, laughing maniacally to myself as my body continues its strange, jellified flailing. But it *is* funny. So I laugh. And I relax. I am balancing, after all. Nobody said it had to look pretty.

In our busy lives, if there is one golden ring that we all yearn to grasp, one Holy Grail we quest for, it is that elusive, perhaps mythical state-of-being that, by mutual agreement, we refer to as "balance". HR directors and recruiters lure us with the siren song of "Work-Life Balance". Through bitter experience, most of us have come to equate the term with snake oil.

In 2013, Laurel Bellows, then-President of the American Bar Association, went further, proclaiming: "Talking about work-life balance is fraud." So not only does work-life balance not exist, but apparently just speaking about it is now somehow criminal. There are in this world many types of balance, but beware "The Balance that dare not speak its name!" The consensus seems to be that, like Nietzsche's God, work-life balance is dead.

And if by work-life balance we mean perfect equilibrium, a steady state of undisturbed harmony famously analogized in soft-focus, black and white inspirational posters of rounded rocks piled atop each other in a delicate but sturdy tower, then yes, work-life balance is no more. If we are imagining the scales of justice, balanced out equally with a stack of items on one side marked "Life" and a stack on the other side marked "Work", then yes, work-life balance is a fraud, a honey-trap to tempt the naïve, the unwary and the desperate.

As busy human beings buffeted by the reality of clients, co-workers, family, friends, personal interests, worries of all shapes and sizes and the whole wonderful, messy business of being alive, we must realize that we cannot, once and forever more, achieve a "state of balance". In a system as complex as life, balance is not a *state*; balance is a *process*. It is not a destination; it is a continual striving.

That slight shift in perspective is vital in gaining comfort with the *practice* of balance. Because to get better and more comfortable at the *process* of balance, we have to become aware that balance must be practiced. No one can simply grant us balance and it is certainly not something that a law firm or a company can provide. The best we can hope from any organization is sufficient enlightenment of policies to allow us that extra bit of space we need to begin consciously practising the process of balance.

I'm back on my BOSU ball, laughing and jack-hammering and clearing more and more people from my proximity. Then, tired at last, I step off the ball. I shake my head, smiling my "isn't that just the darnedest thing" smile, which causes the remaining stragglers to shuffle quickly away.

Then, a remarkable thing happens. I wait a few minutes, my legs acclimatizing to life back on terra firma. Just for kicks, I step back on the BOSU ball. The frantic shimmying is miraculously gone and I am far more stable. My brain and my body have sussed something out. They have discovered some secret of balancing on that bloody contraption, entirely without my conscious input.

We overestimate what we can achieve consciously while wildly underestimating what we are in fact achieving in each moment entirely without the help of our conscious minds. We place far too much emphasis on the process of conscious learning and we punish ourselves mercilessly for not achieving what we expect to achieve in the timeframes we set ourselves. We measure by results and too often we don't measure up to the standards we set ourselves. Like Moe from The Three Stooges, we are brutally critical and keen to give ourselves a good smack in the head or a poke in the eye.

We rarely - if ever - acknowledge those many, many days when we trawl our way through piles of emails, managing difficult clients, difficult colleagues and difficult decisions while simultaneously fighting a half-dozen fires. We tend not to look in the mirror while our legs are bouncing furiously and say to ourselves, "Hey, look! I'm doing it!" But we *are* doing it. Day in and day out.

One of the beauties of coaching is the objective, external perspective that it helps to provide. Coaching grants us that mirror that allows us, like Curly, to stop and acknowledge what we truly are achieving and to allow ourselves some credit for it. By quieting Moe, reassuring Larry and encouraging Curly, coaching first helps us to acknowledge the frantic shimmying we may feel in our lives, which in turn gives us a certain permission to accept, and that acceptance provides a type of mental rest. Like the tiny micro-muscles firing away in quivering legs, much of what we feel and how we react to those feelings is outside our conscious control. But those micro-muscles (and their analogous counterparts in our brains that develop those tiny, repetitive routines that eventually form our habits) are learning, whether we are consciously aware of the learning or not. So in the process of awareness, acknowledgment, acceptance and rest, we can teach ourselves the behaviours that help us to feel more balanced. And by practising, we get better at it.

Time spent in coaching is like stepping off the BOSU ball. Amazing things happen during that period of rest. Coaching does not necessarily teach us to achieve something. One can never say, “Hey, I’m done: I am totally and completely coached!” The process of coaching teaches us first how to be coached and then, to a degree, how to coach ourselves. We gain a different perspective on our life’s shimmying, accepting it not as something scary to fear or as some shameful weakness, but rather as the natural result of standing on the BOSU ball. We have chosen to be on it and while we remain there, we can learn both to enjoy the ride and to get better at it. And from time to time, a little coaching provides just the rest and perspective we need.

Keith Krasny
With years of practising law in firms (Weil, MoFo) and as in-house General Counsel (Expedia, AOL), I focus primarily on coaching in the legal sector. Working with lawyers is great as they’re smart, fun and so dedicated to sorting out other’s problems that they’re nearly oblivious to the benefits of sorting out their own. So, when those clicks come, they’re very powerful. When not coaching, I love to surf, play guitar and have just finished my first novel.

The Curious Coach

Yatin Mahandru

"'Curiouser and curiouser!' cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English…) Alice in Wonderland; Lewis Carroll.

Introduction - Being Curious

How curious are you? I became aware of the value of curiosity in non-directive coaching as I went through the Meyler Campbell program; both in the coursework and the live coaching with practice clients. Looking to find a way that would help me in being supportive and facilitative with my practice clients; I rehearsed questions and frameworks for the meetings. It felt clunky and contrived at times. Then I read Co-Active Coaching (Kimsey et al) and following a discussion with my tutor had a thought:

'Could curiosity as a state of mind mean that my questions and facilitation might come naturally from within me?'

Having then sought to build this as a frame of mind for my coaching, I explored it further and the value that curiosity has in my coaching became one of my major reflections from the program.

What happens when you are an expert?

Firstly, let's briefly consider the situation when we are the "experts" in a field. Usually, we are expected to have an opinion, be a problem solver and have the answers. We can spend a lot of time talking in any one interaction. We build some rapport; establish our credentials, fact find and then present our solutions. It's what I do very naturally…

There could not be a more diametrically opposed approach to non-directive coaching!

What is Curiosity?

There is a discussion in "The Psychology of Curiosity: A review and re-interpretation"; by George Loewenstein. The interpretation of curiosity here is that: 'it is a form of cognitively induced deprivation that arises from the perception of a gap in knowledge or understanding". To summarise for the purposes of this essay; it discusses the nature and power of curiosity, the distinction between state or trait curiosity and stimuli. A key statement is that "the best one can do is to note the similarity between curiosity and a wide range of information seeking phenomena that all seem to reflect a human need for sense making". Staying curious; asking appropriate questions, prompting curiosity and discovery (within the client) can be the way to allow the client to make sense of the "whole", or find the missing gaps. He also comments that "curiosity results from attention to an information gap". I believe this can also be represented as learning for a client.

What's the value of being curious for a coach?

When you are curious for the client you exclude being an expert and are facilitating the client's thinking, key to being non-directive. When I am curious in my coaching, the value for me is an improved flow to the interaction and less focus on "what's my next question?" The result is an authentic feeling of being beside the client and exploring together. As discussed in Co-Active Coaching Chapter 5 (Kimsey et al) "curiosity opens doors and windows for clients". Unlike the probing and deducing questioning style of the expert (data gathering to problem solve), curious questions can invite personal exploration for the client.

There are good examples in Chapter 5 Co-Active Coaching (Kimsey); I have found it helpful to every now and again use the phrase "I'm curious" as a preface.

What was the most important learning point of all this for me? Be curious for the client and not for yourself as the coach!

How do I get in a curious state of mind when I am coaching?

So how can one learn to be more curious? I experimented with some approaches. In the book Difficult Conversations (Patton, Heen and Stone) there is a description about the stance of curiosity and how to "listen from the inside out". This means negotiating with your internal dialogue to get to a place of curiosity by bearing in mind the potential nuances of the stories of everyone's lives. The advice is not to turn off your internal voice. Instead, turn it up and get it to ask questions more aligned with rekindling curiosity than in your own positioning. I used this and it does work well.

I also reflected on the subject of attention and its relationship to curiosity, in Lowenstein's paper he states that "curiosity requires attention, which is a limited cognitive resource". In coaching I find it important to stay focused and use attention appropriately. To develop attention and focus, we can look at Ciskszentmihalyi as a source of advice. He describes in his book (Flow in Sports) how one can practice concentration and direct attention with the use of concentration routines. In the case of coaching I find the focus of attention is on the client; staying absorbed and interested without seeking to guess where the conversation might go.

Co-Active coaching (Kimsey) also has an exercise observing people in a coffee shop and asking yourself questions such as "I wonder what they value?", "what empowers them?" to support developing curiosity. I haven't tried this too often!

I also used some of the following to good effect, on reflection it is still a conscious effort at times:

- Being curious for the client not curious for myself as the coach (otherwise you drop into "data gathering")
- Being open to learning, not "having all the answers"
- Being open to other perspectives
- Preparing in advance to use a preface such as "I'm curious…" on occasion as a trigger for myself

I found that being in a state of "not knowing" stimulated curiosity and exploration. Finally, I also looked at the use of "clean questions", as described by Sue Knight in NLP at Work (an attitude of curiosity). In this she comments "to be clean in the context of modelling excellence is to be naïve, present, open, not knowing, alert, eager to learn, selfless". The "clean" question is non-judgemental, mirrors the client's language and encourages discovery – curiosity?
Having experimented, I found that for me curiosity is a "state of mind" and being fully focused on the client enhances the ability to be curious and stay with the conversation for the client.

Can you "over- do" it?

Whilst appreciating the value of curiosity in the coaching interaction, I do also believe that being constantly curious may not help the client. At points the interaction can take a different route, where the coach can venture into off -limit conversations or where there is an intervention or "technique" to discuss. The paper referred to by Lowenstein also refers to a "U-Curve" which is the point at which curiosity can reach satiation point.

What happened when I experimented with “being curious” in my coaching?

To describe one experience, I took a coaching meeting where I had prepared myself to be curious, even consciously knowing I would have a “trigger” such as the preface “I’m curious…”

Having got over the “expert” role expectation (the clients and mine!), I kept my curiosity going and was able to check in with an intuition with my client. I was curious as he described his issue with sales leadership in his start up business, should he recruit, outsource, etc.

During the conversation, his enthusiasm for sales was palpable and using the phrase “I’m curious…” we wondered who the “Chief Sales Officer” might be in his start- up. The thought that emerged was that it was him.

This created an entirely different thought process for the client, which on reflection I felt happened because I stayed curious with him and for him.

In my mind, however, a set of stock phrases that indicate curiosity don’t work. It is more an authentic and generous interest in joint exploration with the client of where they want to take their thinking; with perhaps the occasional steer to stay on track with expressed goals.

Summary

Curiosity is an investment of energy; there is a trade- off between being bored (with little demand on energy) and being curious and investing yourself in the conversation. I view it as a state rather than a trait. I do know, however, that I don’t have the energy fund to be curious all of the time! I find when you are curious as a coach your questions can indicate a direction for exploration for the client. This allows them the opportunity to find new areas for thought or new ways of looking at things. As stated earlier, one of the most important reflections for me is that curiosity is for the client’s direction and not for the coach to gather information. You are curious for the client, not for yourself. Curiosity is a great mode to be in for those of us more used to being knowledgeable experts, like myself. Finally, my reflection is that developing curiosity takes practice. It is developed through awareness. We can help the client find answers from within by being curious for them and with them. Curiosity “for the sake of the client’s discovery” (Co-Active coaching, Kimsey et al) is an important state to be in when coaching. I intend to continue working on this powerful aspect to coaching practice.

References

1) Flow in Sports - S.Jackson; M.Csikszentmihalyi
2) Difficult Conversations - D Stone, B Patton, S Heen; Harvard Negotiation Project
3) NLP at Work - S Knight
4) The Psychology of Curiosity; A review and reinterpretation; Psychological Bulletin Vol116 1994 - G Loewenstein.
5) Co- Active coaching - H Kimsey-House; K Kimsey-House, P Sandahl, L Whitworth

Yatin Mahadru
Yatin works for Capgemini -Sogeti (Consulting, Technology and Outsourcing); working as a senior VP across Europe in business development on strategic opportunities, coaching senior executives and high performing teams. His coaching is non –directive; facilitative and challenging and he aims at contributing his international business experience to support his clients in achieving the outcomes they want from coaching.

Coaching to thrive in a networked world

Essie North

We operate in a fast-paced world of constant change, open information flows, endless choices and greater interdependence than ever before. An environment that has as many opportunities as it does complexities. Stress and burnout at work are symptoms of a deeper problem – the need to balance our ability to do well, be well and work well with others.

In such a fluid environment it is no longer enough for individuals, teams or organizations to work well in isolation – it is the connection between the parts that allows for agility and sustained performance. This networked world impacts how we coach both individuals and organizations to navigate the complexity with confidence and clarity.

I see business coaching as having three key roles to play in such a fluid and complex environment:

1. **The opportunity to find stillness in the madness** – the world around us is not going to stop moving, we need to step back and create the space to think clearly and make the right decisions.

2. **Permission to define our own version of success** – the goals that we set ourselves drive our behavior and decision making, however too many of us are not clear about what we truly want.

3. **The ability to work effectively with others** – none of us operate in a vacuum, and nor should we, our success will be driven by our ability to identify, partner and collaborate with those in our broader ecosystem.

The opportunity to find stillness in the madness

One of the key roles of the coaching relationship as I see it is our ability to help our clients step back from the complexity of their day to day roles and achieve a sense of clarity and confidence in their decision making. It is with this space and perspective that we are able to identify, and work through, the assumptions and habits that we easily get stuck in by being go-go-go all of the time.

The act of taking a step back and developing a sense of presence (vs being led by habits of the past or worries about the future) is a muscle that can be developed through coaching and taken forward by the coachee into their daily life. Through journaling, 360 feedback and in-session coach questioning the coachee can develop a heightened level of self-awareness that will help them quickly catch themselves in the future and make decisions from a conscious vs habitual place.

The need to define our own version of success

More often than not we fail to give time to what it is that we are actually trying to achieve. We may know the things that others are hoping for us to achieve but this is not always the same thing! Through the GROW model and targeted questioning we can help clients to think beyond the obvious in terms of what it is they truly want, thus aligning their energy and that of those around them to achieving it.

Through coaching we can help clients to look holistically at success – not just the performance target they want to hit, but the implications to themselves and their network of hitting it. For example, you might want to increase impact by 10% but do it in a way that means you still have your

health/sanity, engaged employees, a happy network of suppliers and a spouse that will still talk to you at the end of it!
By taking a balanced scorecard approach to goal setting we can help the coachee to clarify and focus on the different factors of success from the start, and make course corrections should success in one area is having a detrimental affect on others. What is often the greatest challenge is the most important element to get right – if we don’t take the time to be really clear at the stage of goal setting a lot of energy (both the client and others) will get lost along the journey.

The ability to work effectively with others

No individual or organization can achieve their goals in isolation – we are all part of a system, a network, and must think about how we can best work within that system to make it work for us. In the same way that we must think about the network impact during goal setting, it is imperative to think about what role we vs others play in execution.

1. **Define your network.** The first step is to know who your ecosystem includes – to map the different stakeholders involved in achieving your goals. Working with the client to put this to paper can shift their mindset – both in terms of the dependencies to manage but also the support system they have.

2. **Know your strengths (and weaknesses).** A system or network works best when everyone is focused on the areas where they add value and gain energy. Coaching and the use of psychographics can help build a clients’ awareness of their strengths and the humility to know when someone else would be better at a task.

3. **Get the best out of others.** Understanding the motivations, learning styles and communications preferences of those in your network is critical to partnering and helping them to give their best. By working with the coachee to understand their own preferences we can help them to see the importance, and arm them with the tools, to do the same with their own teams.

The core elements of coaching – helping the client achieve clarity and confidence in their goals and path to achieving them – are more important in the current environment than ever before. I would argue that an increased focus in coaching sessions on network performance – both in goal setting and in action planning will help further improve the effectiveness, sanity and wellbeing of clients and their networks alike.

Essie North
Essie works with social entrepreneurs, and organizations driven by a social purpose, to achieve their bold ambitions – helping them do well, be well and do good. She combines a coaching approach with a background in psychology and 10 years’ experience with CEB, advising leading global organizations on best practice in leadership and stakeholder engagement to drive change. Essie challenges perceptions and boundaries enabling people to clarify their strengths, sense of purpose and discover ways of working and collaborating to exceed their own expectations.

Poacher or gamekeeper? The rewards and challenges of coaching as an insider in an organizational environment

Kenneth McKellar

When approached by the senior management of Deloitte Consulting in the Middle East (where I am a partner) to coach twenty-four of our most promising managers, senior managers and directors, I found the prospect exciting and daunting.

The rewards

The excitement came first from a feeling of achievement; management had recognized in me someone with the necessary attributes to contribute strongly to the personal development of its most valuable talent. Then there was satisfaction: I would have a real opportunity, from a position of seniority, to change the corporate culture of my Firm sustainably and for the better, as I had promised to do when rejoining Deloitte over three years ago. Finally there was the sense of my own destiny; I had wanted for some time to transition my career from consultant and adviser in a big professional services firm to full time coach safely and over a period of time. The opportunity to coach in an organizational environment gave me this first step.

The challenges

The prospect of coaching as an insider in an organizational environment was also daunting though. I would be highly visible to a very wide range of people. I had no formal experience of setting up and then running a coaching programme, particularly not on this scale. How would I design the outputs of my coaching in a way that was measurable and seen to add value to an organization which is strongly output-driven?

And these were just the challenges of designing and executing the programme. There were others. How could I effectively conclude a three-way contracting process, where the coachee had effectively very little say in whether he or she wanted to be coached? How could I educate my fellow partners (few of whom had much experience of being coached, let alone coaching) to choose the candidates that were most appropriate for our "performance coaching" programme? What about confidentiality and how could I keep the coaching programme separate from our better-understood annual assessment and counseling programme? How could I keep up my stamina and interest levels when many of the coachees might have the same ambition: to be promoted to partner in our Firm? Finally, how would I be able to coach people from different cultural backgrounds in an organization that is especially diverse?

At the time of writing I am still in the middle of our organizational coaching programme. While it is too early to predict the outcome and outputs of the twenty-four candidates, initial signs have been very encouraging. The programme has been greeted with great enthusiasm by the coachees themselves, and the overriding sentiment has been one of gratitude – that the Firm is finally paying attention to their personal and career development.

I have been able to meet all of the challenges above to a greater or lesser extent. I am by no means the perfect coach – I don't think that anyone can be. But the joy of coaching for me is the constant learning about people and me that comes from interacting with people who are different and have equally diverse problems.

Meeting the challenges

Running a high visibility programme required confidence in me and my ability, as well as good stakeholder management before the programme even started. If the project were to fail, I wanted to make sure that everyone knew the various risks involved and the downside to the Firm of failure.

Luckily I knew I was already respected as a senior partner within the Firm and known for integrity, hard work and a strong interest in our people. The Meyler Campbell business coach programme was a great area of support, giving me the tools, methodologies and structure I needed to be confident when dealing with all parties.

I was careful and lucky to select assistant coaches who were already good consulting project managers in their own right with a keen interest in coaching and mentoring. They were able to help me design the programme together with a very enthusiastic H.R. manager who herself had experience of coaching.

I had to discipline myself though, to make the coaching strongly output based, in line with Deloitte's results-orientated culture. Although I felt this quite limiting at first, I soon turned it to my advantage and realized that good outputs could guarantee the longevity of the programme. At an individual coachee level, this meant building a personal brand and skill set in an area that the Firm had not yet exploited, and exploiting the clients and revenues in that area to create added value for the Firm and the individual.

During the conversation with their line partners on the selection of coachees, I had to challenge my peers on their selection basis to ensure that the coachees were selected for altruistic reasons and not just as a reward or as a last ditch effort to stop someone from leaving. This would be a complete waste of resources on all sides and disingenuously against my principles. These discussions were tough in some cases, but by sticking to my principles, I believe I gained respect and credibility from them.

Another challenge was confidentiality. I had to push back on partners who sought details of specific conversations with the coachees during our sessions. I had to discipline myself to ensure that any feedback to the partners or H.R. would be high level only, and to seek prior agreement from the coachee on what information could be divulged. Getting the coachee to open up in the sessions was also initially hard, so I had to break the ice by offering a few war stories of my own, naming specific people and projects.

Dealing with the separation between the annual assessment and counseling programmes was one of the more challenging obstacles that I had to face. Many partners and coachees thought that the two were linked – absolutely not – and so I had to embark upon an education process to persuade them otherwise. I deliberately did not rule out the need to approach counseling partners in the course of coaching if any points of detail needed to be clarified.

One of my concerns – which soon proved to be unfounded - was that all of my coachees would have the same objectives and needs from the programme. Whilst there is no doubt that some of their objectives were similar, I was delighted gradually to learn that the starting point of each coachee was quite different and driven by their own personal backgrounds and desires. This was the key factor which has guarded against the "sameness" which I thought would prevail in an organizational coaching environment. On the contrary, my experiences with each coachee have been quite different!

We talk a lot during the coaching programme about suspending judgement. This is particularly important when coaching people from different cultural backgrounds. Although I did observe that certain nationalities and cultures do exhibit particular characteristics, I have simply borne these in mind rather than using them as a starting perspective in coaching. All of this has led me to conclude that people are really the same the world over, with all of their aspirations and fears.

Reflections on the wider effects on me of organizational coaching

My overall reflection is that I now want to coach full time in the next couple of years, preferably within (but if necessary outside) Deloitte. I have developed my own coaching style which can easily switch between mentoring and coaching as the need arises, so as to give the client the optimal benefit. I have realized that I have many organizational experiences which are more valuable than I originally thought. I am particularly at ease in coaching women (something to do with my three grown up daughters no doubt!) and would like to make this a key element of my coaching style.

I have found many direct and indirect benefits to me in my daily work as a result of embarking on this journey of organizational coaching. My interpersonal skills have improved, particularly the ease of being around other people, and especially those senior to me. I am a better listener, with more confidence, I have a healthier work balance as I take a more holistic and long-range view of the world. I make more mature decisions, especially around big issues. I have been told by others that I now hold a privileged role within Deloitte. I am able to step into another peoples' worlds, and gain more insights into our business than I would have ever seen otherwise. I am definitely becoming a better leader because I am seeing more and more situations from my coachees' standpoints. I am asking more powerful questions of my clients and am starting to approach them more on equal terms, establishing myself as a trusted adviser in practice, rather than in theory. Coaching so far has been nothing less than life-changing.

Ken McKellar
Ken McKellar is a Deloitte Partner and Middle East Energy Leader based in Abu Dhabi with over 30 years' oil and gas experience in professional services, investment banking and industry. He has advised clients in the Middle East since 2000 and has lived in the Gulf since 2009. Ken is a graduate of Cambridge and Strathclyde Universities and a Scottish Chartered Accountant. He holds dual British and Swiss nationality and speaks German, French and Arabic.

Ageing dogs can learn new tricks

Richard Pavesi

I have always enjoyed working with and supporting our consultants and clients at a personal level. Of course the consulting job needs to get done to the right quality, budget etc. but seeing people stand up to 'stretch' challenges and then helping them to find a way to prevail while growing personally, has always been the most rewarding aspect of my job. Although I do have many years of consulting and mentoring to my name, I had never had exposure to 'proper' business coaching before embarking on the Meyler Campbell programme.

I was at an offsite meeting a while back, when an experienced consultant and a fellow partner presented a thought provoking session on what business coaching was all about, bringing to life the potential role it might play within our firm and with our clients. I was inspired by that brief presentation and through it I got a glimpse that there might be something different and powerful here for our firm, for me personally, and for the talented people that we recruit. I quickly volunteered and was lucky to be included in a pilot syndicate along with another partner and the consultant who had first championed the concept.

As a career management consultant of 27 years, my whole raison d'être has been to 'take a view', to 'have an answer', to 'know the way forward'. I was well practiced and definitely more comfortable 'putting in rather than drawing out'. I'll admit that at first I had reservations about the value and efficacy of a strongly non-directive coaching approach. And at a personal level I was more than a little nervous about whether I could break the old habits and adapt to a quite different way of engaging with people.

As an engineer by background I am a structured thinker and assess my learning style as a mix of *Pragmatist* and *Theorist*[1]. I feel the need for some over-arching structure to provide orientation but I am also strongly influenced by seeing things working out in practice and getting hard results. Scoular's Guide to Business Coaching[2] provided an accessible whistle stop tour across the coaching landscape, stopping off just long enough at each topic to set out key concepts and to pique the interest for what would in time be covered in greater depth. The strong emphasis on coaching 'actual people' from early on, while an alarming prospect(!), provided the excellent practical experience and the rich feedback loop (mostly positive) that the pragmatist in me demanded.

My personal Meyler Campbell journey has been enlightening and enjoyable from start to finish but from all the things that I have learned along the way, the following have made the deepest impression:

- ***Trust underpins everything*** - in all our important life relationships, trust is a precious commodity that needs investment and nurturing. It takes time to build up and yet remains vulnerable to any hint of neglect or abuse. In the context of a coaching relationship I see trust as absolutely pivotal. We are, after all, asking for so much connection and openness in what is often quite a short period of time. Rogers' view that trust is built on honesty, predictability, commitment and reliability[3] made real sense to me and I have endeavoured to weave these threads into each of my coaching relationships. A good 'chemistry' session and a thorough contracting process have worked well for me in creating sound foundations for trust to grow quickly. As my coaching relationships have developed, I have been amazed and humbled by how quickly a deepening level of trust has enabled the coaching process to reach the most sensitive aspects of a client's personality, ambition and anxieties.
- ***The client has to take ownership of the problem and the solution*** - Whitmore's assertion that developing the client's sense of awareness and responsibility is the essence of good coaching[4] resonated strongly with me. I am someone that likes to make up my own mind about what is right and what needs to be done, and I then take the commitments I make very seriously. I recognise how much less engaged and committed I become when I am just 'doing as I am told'! I could see immediately how this simple but powerful concept

could shift the emphasis of the coaching dialogue, and it is something that I have observed making a tremendous difference as I have worked with my coaching clients.

- ***Spend the time to crystallise that Goal*** - the concept of goal-setting is of course well established. I know from personal experience that the *SMARTer*[5] the goal, the more effective it is in driving my behaviours and ultimately outcomes. I found though that the 'G' in Whitmore's GROW model[6] helped to take things to a completely new level that powerfully engages the wider senses – what do you want to achieve here and now? what will success really feel like? why is so it important now? Taking the time to crystallise the goal for a session, bringing it to life, making it real, generated a terrific energy and focus for the coaching discussion.
- ***Deep attention and really listening can transform*** - before starting the programme I actually thought I was quite a good listener. I could gather information quickly, and always have the next question in mind. While listening to the voice in my head I could anticipate answers and form conclusions – all at the same time. Oh dear! Appreciating the difference between 'listening to understand' and 'listening to respond'[7] and then connecting with Nancy Kline's thesis that 'the act of listening with palatable respect and fascination is the key to a Thinking Environment'[8], has made a huge difference for me. Although still work in progress, I feel that I can now operate at Level 2 Listening[9] for most of the time with my sights set on achieving Level 3 at least periodically. Satisfyingly this has been the area of most significant personal development and improved feedback during the programme.
- ***Questions, questions and more questions*** - I was familiar with the mantra 'open questions good, closed questions bad', but I see now that this was another relatively under developed skillset for me. I was often guilty of asking questions that that were too much about me! Me needing to know more, me needing to demonstrate my knowledge, me using leading questions (subtly I thought) to express my view of what was right. Oh dear again! The programme quickly showed me how much I had to learn. I now understand and use questions that focus attention, that follow interest, that raise awareness or that generate responsibility quite comfortably. Less developed perhaps are my use of Nancy Kline's 'incisive questions' and 'clean language' but I recognise their power and am confident that unconscious competence will come in due course.

So, has it all been worth it? Has it made a real difference to me and to those I work with? And will the learnings really 'stick'? To each of these questions I can answer an enthusiastic and resounding 'YES'.

Through the Business Coach programme I have learnt a powerful set of complementary skills. My style has become much more non-directive and as a result I am able to focus on the individual and their learning experience rather than on 'the answer' inside me, bursting to get out. Of course there is still a place for the more directive approach – especially in consulting – but I am much more aware of where I am on the continuum between these extremes, and I feel more instinctive about how to adjust my style to suit any given situation.

While the coaching skills I have learned are predominantly for use within our firm, I have found that they are highly relevant and transferable to my consulting clients, and can be a hugely valuable for individuals that have taken on challenging 'stretch roles'.

An unexpected but deeply rewarding outcome has been the opportunity to 'give back' through coaching individuals within the not for profit sector. These talented and highly committed people do fantastic work, face many of the same management challenges as private sector clients, and do so with very limited support and resources. I have found that the opportunity to use a mix of coaching and consulting in this sector to be a really energising way to make a small contribution to their amazing work.

But will it all really stick?

In some senses only time will tell, but I am confident that the change that has been wrought in me is deep and permanent. The clever way in which the programme has used a coaching style throughout, has bred in me a level of awareness and responsibility that I have not experienced through any other episode of personal learning.

References

1 Meyler Campbell (2012). *Business Coach Programme*: T1 Resources p3
2 Scoular, A. (2011). *FT Guide to Business Coaching*. London: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall.
3 Rogers, J. (2008). *Coaching Skills: A Handbook* (2nd Edition). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
4 Whitmore, J. (2009). *Coaching for Performance* p33 (4th Edition). London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
5 Scoular, A. (2011). FT Guide to Business Coaching p70. London: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall.
6 Whitmore, J. (2009). *Coaching for Performance* p55 (4th Edition). London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
7 Meyler Campbell (2012). *Business Coach Programme*: T3 Resources p5.
8 Kline, N. (1999). *Time to Think*. London: Cassell Illustrated.
9 Whitworth L., Kimsey-House H., Sandahl P. (2011). *Coactive Coaching*. London: Nicholas Brearley

Richard Pavesi
Richard is a Partner at the Berkeley Partnership. He has over 25 years of management consultancy experience working across a wide range of organisations and business sectors. His work spans the definition, mobilisation and delivery of major business change programmes. Richard specialises in assuring and 'troubleshooting' critical initiatives and in this capacity, he frequently works to support teams and individuals in stretching and high stress situations.

Adversity as a driver of enduring change

Mark Pearson

Mark Seery [1] has written that "cumulative lifetime adversity is … associated with optimal well-being" and has identified an "adversity-derived propensity for resilience that generalises across stressors". This is the latest in a trail of research projects that derives from work by Rutter [2] in 1985 which identified a correlation between the capacity to transcend adversity and higher levels of IQ. The search was then on to identify other correlants with this transcendent capacity: Hetherington [3] suggested gender; Fergusson [4] thought it was extreme childhood adversity; Jenkins makes a case for external affiliations [5]; Bradley [6] argues that it is strong parental bonding with the child; whilst Davis suggests peer factors [7].

What interests me is resilience as a sustainable characteristic with adversity as an emotional toughening up *over time*, just as Fergusson demonstrated in survivors of adolescent leukaemia.

This is not just an academic question: in my work as a career coach, I am often confronted with the impact of traumatic events. Sometimes the coachee has just been made redundant and feels a profound sense of rejection. Very often the circumstances of transition provide an opportunity to explore alternative career options and scenarios. How can we extend the half-life of career coaching which Adrian Furnham described in his 2013 Meyler Campbell address as so depressingly short? My premise is that structure and rigour can tap the emotional energy released by very difficult situations to unleash enduring change. What then are the key drivers of a successful outcome over time?

One important definition in this context is what constitutes a successful outcome. My response is that it is an outcome that is embraced with enthusiasm by the coachee: sometimes that means doing the same executive role in a different company; sometimes it can involve a shift to another sector, another activity, another set of challenges. Success comes with an openness to consider options, a determination to move on from an often bruising chapter in an otherwise impressive career. 5 years later the coachee will say that the definition of success is really their capacity to welcome each new day of their reoriented career with relish and enthusiasm.

What predictors are there to a successful outcome when it comes to career coaching?

I propose the following correlant phases in the emotional journey of the coachee: first, a willingness to reflect on their career to date; second, an awareness of what is possible going forward; and third, a practical plan that is implemented over a period of multiple years. In a coaching context, what are the activities which optimise these correlants? In each of these three phases, the career coach needs a structure.

To get the first phase going, I would suggest an Ibarra [8] inspired conversation about the coachee's past successes coupled with a free format lifeline [9] which maps out moments of achievement, difficulty and stress. The coach's questioning goes to wherever the lifeline directs and very often explores patterns, formative relationships and influences. Very often the lifeline shows a "career pulse" which suggests regularity in the occurrence of key career changes. It also shines light on the past. One coachee explained his drive to succeed in business by describing his parental disinterest in his schooling; another attributed his inability to engage in the business environment to his upbringing in Northern Ireland during the troubles. With this process – which is judgment free and can last up to 3 weeks – comes trust. During my own Meyler Campbell journey, I have become much more comfortable with the use of incisive questions during this initial phase of exploration with a coachee; I have also used silence much more as a means of getting to the second and third level of discussion that is not initially volunteered. Invariably this is much deeper and more intimate than the initial comments before the silence. The coachees who have come through adversity – be it parental rejection, illness, early career setbacks or unexpected death in the family – tend to have a richer conversation around these themes. One coachee who had been a child actress in pre-war Kosovo had to rebuild everything that mattered to her on arriving in the UK as a refugee; knowing this had a fundamental effect on our subsequent career coaching conversations and the level of financial security that she sought.

The resulting trust makes the second phase – building awareness of what is possible – easier and deeper: to have a meaningful conversation around possibilities requires agility and openness to market data. In practical terms this means talking with more than a dozen people who know the coachee well in a work setting as peer, boss or direct report. The consequent unstructured 360 feedback focusses on what she does well, what she might do differently and finally what she might do next. The Meyler Campbell program has made me more comfortable to include data from whatever source in this conversation, be it Myers Briggs, Belbin or other diagnostic tools. Armed with all this information, the exploration of career possibilities can be free-ranging across time, aspirations, financial needs, family requirements and desired legacy. Some coachees bring a very explicit vision to this discussion and care deeply about legacy for example; others, particularly in Generation Y, find the concept off-putting. Again this approach has evolved during my Meyler Campbell studies with a much more confident use of the GROW model and a willingness to experiment with questions about feelings, learnings and the use of a 1-10 scale to measure potential impact. In parallel, I have learnt that individual coachee styles will dictate varying pace at this point.

Finally – and crucially – we come to a practical and clear plan which can be dynamic but which equally provides an acid test against which to judge options. Again the Meyler Campbell toolkit is valuable in managing this process: I have become much more comfortable in creating a space for coachees to share where they have got to in implementing their plan and will suggest data to facilitate their actions. To make this real, a coachee who had determined that his next role for the coming 3 years needed to be as a CFO in the oil and gas sector could be steered firmly away from a premature discussion of non-executive opportunities; these might however be just what he should be considering for years 5-10 of his career plan. He discovered as a consequence of our coaching that he knew this himself and was able to recalibrate the sequencing of his executive and non-executive searches over time.

In this final phase of implementing the plan, responsibility for outcomes is now much more firmly with the coachee: prior to my Meyler Campbell training I would have worried about the lack of a coachee's progress in implementing a plan in terms of what I should be doing better; now we work much more in a partnership to tell the story in a more impactful way, to be better prepared and above all to be clearer. Actions and accountabilities are at the heart of a good plan to overcome a challenge and the career plan is no exception.

There is a crucial coda when it comes to implementing multi-year plans to generate resilience and maximise the half-life of career coaching. First, there has to be a contract that allows the coachee to resume at whatever level is useful. Second, the level of trust established en route to the current role can be leveraged into more classical coaching activity to optimise effective integration, create strategies for targeted stakeholder management and put together change hypotheses in a safe and confidential setting. And finally the plan itself has to be a dynamic document, capable of adjusting to changing circumstances and contexts.

What have been my learnings along the way? The career coach is in the privileged position of working with a range of talented people who have come through adversity. Such adversity may be transitory, a moment of difficulty to be managed, or more deeply-rooted in past struggles and experiences. It always requires some degree of emotional toughening if not to the traumatic level experiences by Fergusson's adolescent leukaemia survivors. My experience suggests that some of my coachees who have been forced to leave their companies are struggling with a deep sense of rejection and that a healing process is required. Very often the coachee will realise that the best step is to spend more time with family who have been short-changed in terms of time and commitment by the ambitious executive. That can be part of the healing process.

What predicts a successful outcome in overcoming career adversity is not IQ but an intellectual, emotional and deeply-held curiosity about what is possible coupled with a willingness to map out what is actionable. Then it is all about making it happen and realising that patience matters. Circumstances will sometimes mean that taking time is hard, but there are many coachees who have come back to affirm that the investment of time at this stage has helped them make good decisions. The half-life of career coaching can be extended by including the coachee in networks of people who have navigated similar journeys and by maintaining the focus on a multi-year career plan.

Observationally resilience in this group of professional managers derives from their ability to tap into the adversity that confronts them, suspending their disbelief and embracing a structured process with confidence that the outcome will be optimal. Coupled with clarity of storytelling and a rigorous plan, the career coach can predict outcomes!

Bibliography

1. Mark D Seery et al (2013), An Upside to Adversity, Psychological Science
2. M Rutter (1985), Resilience in the face of adversity: protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder, British Journal of Psychology, 147
3. EM Hetherington (1989), Coping with family transitions: winners, losers and survivors, Child Development 60
4. DM Fergusson and LJ Horwood (2003), CUP
5. JN Jenkins and MA Smith (1990), Factors protecting children in disharmonious homes…, Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry 29
6. RH Bradley et al (1994), Early indicators of resilience and their relation to experiences in the home environments of low birthweight children living in poverty, Child Development, 65
7. C Davis, G Martin, R Kosky, A O'Hanlon (2000), Early intervention in the mental health of young people: a literature review, Canberra, The Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Young People
8. H Ibarra and K Lineback (2005), What's Your Story, Harvard Business Review
9. Attached AGM Transitions document (2014)

Mark H Pearson

Mark brings passion to the challenge of coaching people through career transitions towards higher levels of performance. He has worked in Europe, Asia and the US and has facilitated far-reaching change/integration projects. He has built high performing teams and managed successful businesses. Mark also brings a deep knowledge of HR best practice and hands-on experience in the financial services, retail, FMCG and manufacturing sectors.

LIFE LINE REVIEW

Take a large sheet of paper and draw a line on it to represent the length of your life.

Mark the left hand end with 0 and then mark on the line at the appropriate age any significant events which you remember. Do this over a period of a few days as sometimes the memory buries events, even though they are extremely significant.

When you have put in as many as you can remember, then annotate the entries as follows:

∆ Peak experience

∩ Trough experience

! Learning - did I learn from this experience?

R Risk - did I take a risk in doing this?

√ X Choice - was I able to make my own decision to do this?

Stress - how stressful was this experience at the time on a scale of three
S
SS
SSS

When you have completed the line and the annotations, please answer the following questions:

- What does this account of my life say about me and how I have lived my life so far?
- What do you notice about the peak experiences? Is there a pattern to them?
- Is there a pattern or theme to the trough experiences?
- When did you feel that you were really achieving; you really felt good about yourself?

What is the goal of a goal?

Teresa Ramos

"Having a conversation which adds value to the individual is more important that being precious about any particular model."- John Bailey quoted by P. Shaw & R. Linnecar
"There are no rules and you need to know them all"- Miles Downey quoted by Anne Scouler
"Break any of these rules sooner than saying anything outright barbarous"- G. Orwell [1]

Introduction

This essay covers my reflections on the GROW model, questioning the need of setting a goal at the beginning of each coaching session. It also reflects my thoughts on whether using the GROW model indiscriminately is for the benefit of the client or to give the coach a sense of control and structure.

What is the goal of a goal?

I first encountered the GROW model in Anne Scoular´s book "Business coaching". It is mentioned there as one of the "Big Five" coaching skills. As part of the model, setting a goal at the beginning of each session will ensure that the client walks out with a clear set of actions and a timeline to implement them. The clearer the goal is defined, the more likely it is to produce a realistic plan that the client will commit to. The definition of a clear goal is a crucial part of a successful coaching session.

Once I started practicing coaching, I successfully applied the GROW model to every session. The model was structured, neat and simple (although not necessarily easy). It did fit in nicely with my background as IT project director: one session, one goal and one action plan at the end that will take the client forward in his development journey.

Further reading on coaching, like Whitmore's "Coaching for performance", J. Roger's "Coaching skills" and even Gallwey "The inner game of tennis" with its "clear image in your mind of the game you want to reproduce", confirmed the usefulness of the GROW model and helped understand how to better define goals that the client takes ownership of and subsequently acts on.

It all fitted together until one day some things did not anymore. I had clients who seemed to only "want to talk". I always managed to get a goal out of them but it was extremely hard. I felt frustrated even though these clients gave very positive feedback, seemed ecstatic with the coaching process and always scheduled the next session.

This situation made me feel uncomfortable. It seemed that the basic coaching structure was missing and I was depriving my clients of high quality coaching. I kept feeling my sessions needed to fit into the GROW framework. It was fine to provide clients the opportunity to "think out loud" but surely this should be done within the GROW model and stating a goal clearly. Or should it?

One day, waiting to start a session with one of these clients, I suddenly felt like a Christian in an ancient roman circus, waiting to be thrown at the lions i.e. the clients, who would not produce a goal for the session and still claimed they benefited greatly from coaching. The big cats are daunting and my only protection against them is my GROW model. It makes me feel confident that I can face the danger and come out victorious (I wonder what an NLP expert would make of this metaphor…).

[1] Orwell G. (1950) *Politics and the English language- Rules for effective writing*

A question suddenly formed in my head: do I stick to the GROW model for the benefit of my clients, to help them become more aware and take more responsibility and flourish? Or is it to have a framework that gives me a sense of security as a coach? What is really the goal of setting a goal?
I looked back at my own experience of being coached. I remember going into every session hoping to get some answers and a sense of purpose and direction. I remember my coach asking questions and, now I know, trying to get me to state a goal. This frustrated me. I used to think "I know how to brainstorm options and make a plan!! This is not what I need. If I knew what I wanted, I would not be here. I would be out there working to get it. The problem is that I do not know or understand what I want!!"

My coach's efforts to get a goal out of me were not only useless: they left me demotivated and frustrated.

Coaching theory and common sense advocate the usefulness of setting a clear goal at the start. However, my own experience as a coach and as a coachee told me this is not always the case.

Considering Prochaska´s stages of change model[2], a lot of exploring and thinking has to be done before a person is ready to take any steps towards change. Out of his 7 stages, only one involves action. The rest are "thinking out loud" stages and also vital in the change process.

Considering this, how early in the coaching process does it make sense to bring a goal into the picture?

A lot of awareness needs to be raised before a client can articulate and commit to a goal. He needs first to go through the previous stages, to think out loud and explore.

Based on my personal experience, sometimes setting a goal before all the previous stages are covered can be counterproductive, creating stress and resistance. It can force the client to mould into a framework that may not be the best for his particular circumstances.

In favour of the GROW model, it could be argued that the goal in this case is a learning one instead of a performance one.

But then, how likely are "thinking out loud" clients to say "I want to learn" or "I want to understand"? Are they even aware of this? Should that not be implicit in the fact that they are taking part on the coaching process? My "thinking out loud" clients did not come with a goal that was just waiting to be unearthed: they needed a gentle invitation to share their stories (something like Nancy Kline's thinking environment) and the safe space and attention that coaching provides, to see where their stories take them, to open new doors and explore new possibilities.

I am not questioning the usefulness of setting a goal; I am arguing that sometimes clients are not yet in a place where they can envision the end of their growth journey, let alone articulate clear goals. Insisting on setting a goal at this point could be counterproductive and make the coachee feel frustrated. Setting goals could then be reserved for a later stage in the coaching process.

This can be a hard approach for coaches. We cannot then rely on a pre-established framework. We must go bare handed into the coaching session. We need to be in the moment and trust our intuition and experience. We need to engage in a dance with our coachee like it is described in Kimsey-House's co-active approach. One of the first decisions would be to evaluate what stage in the change process the client is in and whether to apply the GROW model. Challenging? Maybe. But "Coaching is not for the faint hearted" (J. Rogers "Coaching Skills")

[2] Prochaska J. (2012) *Stages of change model*, Business Coach Programme Notes, Meyler Campbell

Conclusions and Future Action

My conclusion and starting point for further experimentation is that the GROW model could be classified as another tool to help structure the coaching session. It should not be used as a default but with caution and when the client is ready to take action in his personal road to change.
Going forward it is my intention to keep experimenting with the GROW model and further explore its optimal use in coaching. This will hopefully add more flexibility to my own style of coaching. It will also remove an important safety net and is likely to make me feel a bit insecure about how the session will run. Again, coaching is definitely not for the faint hearted (J. Rogers “Coaching Skills”)

Bibliography

Gallwey W. T. (1986) *The Inner Game of Tennis.* London, Pan books.

Kimsey-House H, Kimsey-House K, Sandahl P and Whitworth L. (2011) *Co-Active Coaching, Changing Business Transforming Lives.* Boston. Nicholas BrealeyPublishing.

Kline N. (1999) *Time to Think, listening to ignite the human mind*, London, Castle Illustrated, part of Octopus Publishing Group.

Orwell G. (1950) *Politics and the English language- Rules for effective writing*

Prochaska J. (2012) *Stages of change model*, Business Coach Programme Notes, Meyler Campbell

Rogers J. (2012) *Coaching Skills – A Handbook.* Third Edition. Maidenhead. Open University Press.

Shaw P. and R. Linnecar (2007) *Business Coaching, achieving practical results through effective engagement.* Chichester, Capstone publishing.

Scoular, A. *The Financial Times Guide To Business Coaching*. Harlow, Prentice Hall

Whitmore.J. (2009) *Coaching for Performance, Growing human potential and purpose. The principles and practice of coaching and leadership*. Fourth Edition. Boston. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Teresa Ramos
Teresa has more than 23 years international experience working as a senior manager in high technology and telecommunications companies worldwide like British Telecom, O2, Vodafone, Siemens and Telefonica. Clients value her outstanding listening skills, empathetic style and high energy presence. Her coaching focuses on client´s strengths, providing a structured approach to search for pragmatic solutions. She works with senior executives, top managers, and high potentials in English, Spanish and German.

Coaching for (work) transitions
"Live your questions until one day you will live into the answers"

Hein Schreuder

Personal introduction

In the first half of my working life, I chose the academic route. While I had intended to join the business world when I chose Business Economics as my study, I had caught the 'academic virus' during these formative years and I was keen to explore how far I could progress along the academic pathway. In the next 15 years, I held a variety of academic positions and at the age of 33 became a Professor of Business Economics charged with setting up a new Faculty of Economics. That task required my full dedication and all of my energies for the next six years. By that time it was clear that my colleagues and I had succeeded in building an innovative, international Faculty of Economics and Business. In the best academic traditions I was granted a 'sabbatical leave' of one year to recharge my batteries and reflect on the future. This reflection encompassed not only my working life, but also my personal life. My first marriage had not survived these hectic years. What was the rest of my life going to look like?

In the early part of that sabbatical year I was approached by a top-rated business school, a premier consultancy organization and a multinational firm with job offers. At first I felt elated. What an array of opportunities! What an external confirmation that I was on a successful path of personal development! But then a strange thing happened: I became gloomy and rather lethargic in making up my mind. I spent months on the couch turning over the question in my head: *what* should I choose? But time alone was not sufficient to answer the question. What was needed was a change of perspective. The necessary change was the insight that I was asking the wrong question to start with. Underlying the *what* question (*what* should I choose?) were two more fundamental questions: *who* am I? (at this stage of my life) and *why* would I choose one option over the other? The necessary change of perspective was that I had reached a *transition point* in my life, where the 'old answers' to existential questions needed to be re-examined, while some new questions were arising. A transition point marking the evolution of one life stage to another. In essence, I was experiencing an (early) 'midlife' examination of my values and experiences so far. Only if the underlying questions of *who* and *why* could be answered satisfactorily, would I be able to address the *what* question with any confidence. As it turned out, I spent the second half of my working life in business and enjoyed it tremendously.

With hindsight a coach could have been very helpful to enable me to reach this decision sooner. I wish I had had one. This experience was one of my motivations to enroll in the Business Coaching Programme. The other motivation was that after 'learning' and 'earning' it was time to start 'returning' in this third half of my working (portfolio) life.

The life stages perspective

The book that helped me come to the insight that I was experiencing a 'midlife transition' was *The Seasons of a Man's Life* by Daniel Levinson. This book was a bestseller in the late 1970s and 1980s. I later found out that it was a prominent example of a stream of literature that attempts to provide a developmental perspective on stages of adulthood. The belief that individual human development progresses in stages has very early roots, for instance in the Talmud, the writings of Confucius, the Greek philosopher Solon and the Romans.[1] Surveys of modern research usually identify Freud as the pioneer of conceptualizing early human development in stages while later researchers and writers

[1] The Romans identified five life stages (Puerita, Adolescentia, Juventus, Virilitas and Senectus) and the Greeks ten, each of seven years.

have extended the 'life stage' concept to adulthood.[2] While the demarcation of the life stages and the exact formulation of the existential questions at each stage differs somewhat between these writers, the overall perspective is remarkably similar:

- Human individual development progresses in stages
- Each stage is characterized by its own biological/physical, psychological, social and spiritual/religious 'developmental challenges' (which are to some degree inter-related)
- There are 'transitions' between the stages, where 'old answers' to existential questions may lose their appeal and 'new questions' arise.
- By and large there is consensus about the timing of these transitions, e.g. in the late twenties / early thirties (Archetypical theme: Is my career or lifestyle what I truly desire?), the early forties (Does my life have a meaning and direction according to my values?), middle adulthood/ fifties (Having an impact and leaving a legacy), and late adulthood/sixties (Coming to terms with decline and death / Last chance to develop what has remained under-developed?)

These 'transition themes' are all well-represented in the case studies of Jenny Rogers, Herminia Ibarra, Bruce Peltier and Henry Kimsey-House, albeit without explicit recognition of the life stage perspective.

Transition themes in my coaching practice

Two clients are females in their early thirties. Both have pursued an 'intellectual dream' to push the boundaries of their academic development as far as they could. One has been disappointed along this route, not so much because of her own shortcomings, but much more due to disillusionment with the academic environment. She wonders how to re-direct her life in a direction that will truly satisfy her. At the same time she ponders work-life balance and the question whether it is time for a baby. The other has determined that an academic career is what she truly desires: her challenge is how to take the next steps toward a Professorship. This is her primary focus at the moment; private life is satisfactory. For the first client it really helps to see her questions as inter-related aspects of an 'early thirties transition', re-examining the choices made in your twenties and questioning whether the initial answers will provide fulfillment in later life. For the second client the initial answers have been re-affirmed: her desire is to move to a next stage of academic achievement.

Another client is a man who has had an excellent career as a functional specialist within a large company. His career has advanced due to his mastery of 'content'. Now in his early forties, he wonders whether he should continue on that path or vie for leadership positions of a more generalist nature. He would also like to give his family the benefit of experiencing other countries and cultures. However, he feels that applying for 'expat' assignments entails significant risks both professionally and personally. Is he willing to take that step? A female client would also like to make up her mind whether to continue with her current work as an independent consultant or to switch to working for a company again. This is not unrelated to her private life with a new relationship and a daughter in the final years of secondary school. Both clients face typical questions of midlife transitions and middle adulthood.[3]

Reflection on the literature

I have truly enjoyed reading the literature for the Business Coaching Programme which provided me with many new perspectives to explore and apply. In particular, I have come to see the value of the non-directive approach and I have experienced that asking good (and simple) questions leads clients to the only answers that are satisfactory to them: their own. From my own personal and coaching

[2] Examples are Charlotte Bühler, Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and in The Netherlands: Bernard Lievegoed
[3] For sake of brevity I will not discuss examples of clients at later transition points, but my remarks cover these stages as well.

experience, as sketched above, I would propose that it would be valuable to add literature on the concept of 'life stages' (and the typical themes at transition points) to the package. It would provide an explicit perspective that is now implicit in a number of the best books provided. For example, Jenny Rogers recommends in *Coaching Skills* (chapter 5) to devote a first session to a client's autobiography and lifeline. First of all to establish "*that you are interested in the whole person, not just the work person."* (p. 107). But perhaps more importantly because this can lead to the client's realization that "*This is how I've been until now. That was then, this is now. I can choose to be different."* (p. 110) This is a typical 'transition point' insight. The life stage perspective can help to come to this point.

I have similarly enjoyed Ibarra's *Working Identity*, which conceptualizes career change as a transition process.[4] She positions her book as for the 'mid-career professional' (p. xiii). Although one would then assume that her recommendations would therefore apply to the mid-life stage predominantly, I have found that her approach can help at both the early thirties transition and at the late adulthood / retirement phase as well. I believe this is because she describes a way to experientially find out what your own particular transition process is about. Seeing possible selves, crafting experiments, learning-by-doing, shifting connections and making sense are useful ways to approach transitions in many life stages. For the sense-making aspect, the perspective of life stages could be really useful.

Coaching for (work) transitions

Of course one has to be careful that "because I have a hammer, I start seeing nails everywhere". Nevertheless, I believe that it has been helpful in my coaching practice to be aware of the life stages perspective. I see four particular advantages to being aware of this perspective:

1. In line with Jenny Rogers it helps you see the client as "a whole person, not just a work person."
2. It helps the coach to identify good, simple questions that help a client become aware of the work (and life) themes that are associated with a particular stage of life.
3. It helps the client to reframe the initial work-related *what* questions in a broader (work-life) perspective that also includes the underlying *who* and *why* questions.
4. In addition, clients often feel comforted by the insight that (a) the individual issues they agonize about can be interpreted as part of a 'normal' transition process that many people go through at this point in their lives and (b) this transition process will take some time to complete.

References

Erikson, Erik H., 'Identity and the life cycle', *Psychological Issues*, vol. 1, 1959.
Ibarra, Herminia, *Working Identity*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004
Levinson, Daniel J, et al, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, NY: Ballantine Books, 1978
Rogers, Jenny, *Coaching Skills: a handbook*, 3rd ed, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2012

Hein Schreuder
Hein Schreuder was for 20 years a top executive at a large Dutch multinational company. Prior to that, he was a Professor of Business and Director of a research institute. Nowadays, he leads a portfolio life with a number of Board positions, consultancy activities, time to think and write, time for family – and coaching. In his coaching he likes to work with individuals who feel they are approaching a transition phase of their (working) life.

[4] Ibarra references both Erikson (pp. 170-171) and Levinson (p. 124) briefly.

The Coaching Road Well Travelled (or only just begun)

Julia Sherlock

The Beginning

My trip along the coaching road started four years ago when I was facing some challenges at work. I had always enjoyed success at all the jobs that I had had, but owing to a merger I found myself with a new boss who, while very supportive in many ways, always made me feel as though I fell short of his expectations. I couldn't seem to do anything right and couldn't understand why. I asked for some coaching and that was when my coaching road trip began.

It is only in hindsight, and having nearly completed the Business Coach Programme (BCP), that I can reflect properly on the benefits the coaching gave me. I believe that the experience of having been coached myself, together with the skills I have learned on the BCP, will make me a more effective coach.

At the time, I had no experience of coaching and did not really know what to expect. I did not give much thought to the choice of coach either. I knew that there had to be "chemistry" between the coach and the client, but rather through luck than design, the added value that the coach I chose gave me was that she was American, but married to a Brit. I was working for a US professional services firm at the time and my boss was American. Throughout the coaching, it was invaluable to have a coach who had an understanding of both cultures.

The organisational context

The importance my coach placed on values was like a light-bulb going off in my head. It was not something I had ever thought about in the context of my job, but right from the start, my coach made me focus on my values and what was important to me, which made me come to the realisation that that organisation no longer aligned with my values and that, in order to please my boss, I was not being who I wanted to be, and, as a result, I decided to leave my job and take a career break. Kilburg's Introduction to Executive Coaching in his book "Executive Coaching" (pp3 – 19) explains that coaching is not merely an intervention between a coach and client, but must be put in the context of the dynamics of an organisation in which there are often unpredictable and complex behaviours. Kilburg correctly recognizes that there are "a number of core problems that present major challenges to everyone involved…" and that "These are challenges that consultants must surmount if they are to provide truly long lasting assistance to their clients". In my coaching, this will be an important factor to keep in mind.

Dipping my toe in the coaching water

Having benefited so much from the coaching led me to consider the possibility of coaching myself as this was something I had done on an informal basis as an HR professional. My career break gave me time to "give coaching a go". I enrolled on a two day Introduction to Coaching course, which I enjoyed and made me believe that it was certainly an option for the future.

Now I know that I was exploring possibilities as described in "Identities in Transition" in Ibarra's "Working Identity" (pp12-15), one of the books I recommend to my clients who are looking to change jobs or for a career change. A year later the opportunity arose to participate in the BCP - Ibarra refers to these as "Windows of Opportunity" (pp152-155) - and so my road trip with "The Six" began.

The Six

A word must be said about The Six. The Six, together with the amazing Anne, Eyal and Anna, have made the road trip for me one of the most rewarding and enriching experiences I have had – we, The Six, were all quite different and from varying backgrounds, but the learning experience has been enhanced by the mutual respect, support and encouragement each has shown the rest of the group as well as by the fun we have had along the way.

Presence, confidence and impact

These three qualities were what I was looking for from my own coaching and it has been interesting for me to see how these three qualities have been the key themes of my coaching with a number of my own clients – interestingly, all women. Peltier's chapter on "Coaching Women" (pp259-282) is an essential read for all coaches when coaching women on these topics.

One of the insights which I have had during my own coaching and coaching my female clients is how much the "inner voice" operates as a barrier to unlocking one's own potential and particularly where confidence is concerned. In the Inner Game of Tennis, Timothy Gallwey explores this phenomenon using the description of Self 1 and Self 2, Self 1 being the conscious mind and Self 2 being the unconscious, automatic doer. Gallwey's explanation as to how these two "selves" work together and his further development of this idea in terms of the need to let go of the human inclination to "judge ourselves and our performance as either good or bad" is a tool that I have used successfully with my clients to help them challenge themselves and go beyond their comfort zones.

Gallwey, and Carol Kauffmann's 5 Steps to Confidence, are useful tools, but through my coaching it has become apparent that the power of effecting change in a client in these areas comes through the coaching itself – the opportunity for the client to explore their anxieties, worries, fears in a safe environment and for them to be "given permission" to effect those changes by someone who believes they have the potential to overcome those barriers. Ultimately, coaching is merely the facilitator – the power lies with the client.

During my own road trip I have learned that, in order for a coach to help a client explore their anxieties, worries and fears, one of the most important things they do is just to listen.

The power of listening

The use of the coach as a "sounding board" cannot be underestimated. One of my own clients told me that they had found our sessions helpful as "it was the only time they could "disgorge" in a completely confidential manner".

Carl Rogers pointed out that just being deeply listened to is enough for many people to resolve their problems – without any other intervention –Scoular: Business Coaching (p.75). In today's 24/7 workplace with so many competing demands for one's attention, it can be difficult to "be listened to". That is why many clients find coaching to be invaluable, having the opportunity to have someone listen to them in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

Developing self-awareness and being non-judgmental

One of the other key revelations for me during my coaching road trip is becoming more self-aware and the importance of being non-judgmental.

I subscribe to the Rogerian approach to coaching. In his book, The Psychology of Executive Coaching, Peltier (p.104) says: "at its core, Rogerian theory requires that the coach listen with acceptance and without judgment, if clients are to change.", and (p106) " the coach must be able to "fully engage with the client, undistracted by personal agendas or roles…." Peltier goes on to say (p. 108) that Rogerian coaches should "teach these things to clients so that they can become more Rogerian in their work-setting and their lives". Through the BCP I have learned to be less judgmental in the workplace and try to see things, with which I may not agree, from the other person's point of view. This has taught me to "let go", be non-directive and give autonomy to my colleagues, which, I hope, results in a better outcome all round.

Non-directive

At the outset of the BCP, we were encouraged to develop a "non-directive" approach as a key part of our tool-kit. As someone who has been used to telling people what to do in my career, this has been one of the most difficult aspects to learn, but one of the best illustrations of the power of being non-directive is Ernesto Sirolli's TED Talk "Want to help someone? Shut up…..". Sirolli states: "You shut up, do not give your ideas" and is a good example that being non-directive allows people room for their own personal growth.

However, while being non-directive is optimal, what I have found is that clients come to coaching hoping for advice too. The coach must ensure that they strike the right balance between being non-directive and giving advice. My own approach is to allow the client to exhaust their own thinking first and then to ask them if they would like to hear some other options, at which point, if the client agrees, I offer some practical tips and advice based on my own experiences and those of others.

The coaching road well travelled (or only just begun)

My experiences during the last four years, as a client and now a coach, have taught me that coaching is one of the most powerful tools for an individual's personal growth and that, unlike some other interventions, the effects are long-lasting.

Having just embarked on a new and exciting challenge as Chief Operating Officer for a global consulting firm, I would like to use my coaching skills to enhance the performance of our senior leadership teams.

Whilst my road trip to becoming a qualified coach is almost over, the road trip to becoming an effective coach is only just beginning and I embrace that with passion, excitement and enthusiasm!

Julia Sherlock
Julia is the Chief Operating Officer – EMEA for a global consulting firm. Julia has extensive experience of working at Board level with leading global professional services firms in HR and operational roles. In her coaching, Julia focuses on helping senior professionals become effective leaders and working with high potential women to develop their confidence, presence and impact. Julia holds an LLB (Hons) from Exeter University, qualified as a lawyer with a magic circle firm and is a Chartered Member of the CIPD.

From tax lawyer to coach: buying in to "non-directive"

Stephanie Tidball

Before I became involved in training and development at my law firm, I knew nothing of business coaching (I had been a tax lawyer for many years). I recall meeting a coach at an L&D networking event about four years ago. When she told me what she was I asked what she coached in, and was amazed when she ran off a long list of things. How, I asked, could she be an expert in all of these? She laughed and gave me an explanation of the role of the business coach. (She may have mentioned Timothy Gallwey's "The inner game of tennis" but I don't recall; I would certainly mention it now if I met someone as uninitiated as I was then.)

Roll forward a couple of years and I enrolled in the Meyler Campbell business coach programme. I will confess to having been an open-minded sceptic: I'd never experienced coaching myself but was aware that it was a very popular tool and I wanted to know more and be able to speak about it with some knowledge and therefore authority.

I realised early in the programme that I would need to develop new skills if I was to be able to be a non-directive coach. As a lawyer, I was accustomed to giving advice.

Intellectually, I was readily persuaded of the value of non-directive coaching. I was already familiar with research that shows that people gain more from experiential learning than from lectures. I could see that similarly coachees would be more committed to actions they resolved upon themselves as opposed to actions they were advised (told) to take. Jenny Rogers (in "Coaching skills: a handbook") says that a first step for a coach is to abandon advice giving. She gives an example of a conversation with someone who wants to give up smoking: the helpful friend gives advice but this is not likely to be followed – even though the smoker knows that the advice is good.

For me, the first step towards being able to coach in a non-directive way was to learn how to listen well. I was enchanted by Nancy Kline's "Time to think". The stories she tells of people responding to being listened to are very persuasive. I was entirely prepared to believe her when she said: "The quality of your attention determines the quality of other people's thinking".

In my early practice coaching sessions I concentrated on listening well. Although the adviser in me wanted to listen to formulate my next comment or question, I was aware that the sessions were not about me but about the coachees. They would think better if I listened well, and my questions would be more relevant. To my surprise, I found that, by really concentrating on what the coachees said, I could remember points they made and follow up on them when they had finished speaking. It was in fact liberating to be aware that my role was to facilitate their thinking processes rather than to give advice. Previously I was an avid note-taker. In a coaching session I take only minimal notes, and sometimes no notes. It feels almost discourteous to the coachee to take notes as he speaks: looking away to write breaks eye contact and devalues the attention I am giving to the coachee, and who wants to feel that they are being "recorded" as they reveal their innermost thoughts?

The other key skill of a good coach is questioning. I can now see that in my first attempts at non-directive coaching I was inclined to use leading questions (perhaps not surprising for a lawyer). As I have gained confidence in my ability to coach, I use leading questions only occasionally and when I feel that this is the appropriate way to offer an idea to the coachee. I am fascinated to hear about the questions coaches use, from the most basic open questions (such as Jenny Roger's "magic questions" and David Grove's "clean questions", as described by Sue Knight in "NLP at work") to more complex ones. One of my favourite types of question is the one that hypothecates: "if you did feel confident/valued etc, what would you do?" I have seen this sort of question get really good answers from coachees.

Once I was managing to coach in a non-directive way, I moved from being intellectually persuaded that it should be effective to being really convinced that it works. I have been astounded, and delighted, at the impact that coaching has had on some of my practice clients, even from the early sessions.

Most of my practice clients have been new to coaching so my explanation of coaching has been important. I have had to explain the concept of non-directive coaching and I think some of them have, at the outset, been unsure as to its value. I have found, however, that when the process works the clients experience a "eureka" moment. Witnessing this confirms my belief in the process, and gives me confidence to reassure new clients that the process is worthwhile. One practice client reported that she had, since she last saw me, implemented the advice I had given her. I hadn't given her advice: she had worked out her own action points and it was these that she had implemented (with success). When I pointed this out, she acknowledged that this was the case. This is very like a story Tim Gallwey tells in "The inner game of tennis": a tennis player comments on how much he has learned from Gallwey. Gallwey had given him no instruction but had watched him and allowed him to learn from his own experience of practising backhands.

I think that it is important to ensure that non-directive coaching is not without direction. It is not enough to listen well to a coachee: a good coaching session needs to move the coachee on. Incisive questions are needed. I have pondered whether, if a coaching session gives a coachee space in which to think, teaching people to self-coach would be more effective than using coaches. The answer in my view is that a coach will make sure that the coaching session has direction, by bringing the coachee back to the goal he set for the session at the outset and by following up on themes the coach observes and of which the coachee may not be aware.

In my early days of practice coaching, I felt as if I were playing a role: I was keen to present myself as a coach. I was conscious of keeping still, aiming for an air of calm during the session, and deliberately not expressing my own views. This was almost unnatural and, as I gained confidence, I allowed a bit of myself into the room. Now when I am coaching someone around an issue I have experienced or know something about, I let on that I understand where they are coming from but try not to push in or give advice. I feel that this demonstrates empathy and understanding. However, I fear that I don't (yet) always get the balance right: one practice client commented that I have strong views (ouch!) but this was fine as she shared these views (phew!). Memo to self: don't be seduced on encountering a like-minded coachee into forgetting whose thinking space you are in.

A technique which I have found supports the non-directive approach is that of reflecting back. Summarising what I have heard (or think I have heard) has so many benefits. It tells the coachee that I have been listening and paying attention – which we know from Jenny Rogers will improve the coachee's thinking. It sometimes allows me to stop the coachee wandering away from the issue at hand and bring him back to the main topic. It always requires the coachee to think about what he has been saying. One of my practice coachees described the process as like having a discussion with herself in a mirror but where the mirror [coach] would not let her disengage the brain. Confirmation, I'd say, that coaching helped her to think more deeply than she would have done alone. And strangely, I find that the words I use to reflect back to the coachee can (when I feel that this to the right thing to do) draw on my own views and experience. So, for example, when I say "What I hear you say is…" sometimes it is okay to include a bit of how I have responded to what has been said.

So, as a coach, when I am asked to describe my style of coaching, I will be proud to say that it is non-directive. No apology: non-directive does not mean that I have no view, that I have no advice to give; it means that the view that matters is the coachee's view and I will respect his ability to reach that view.

Stephanie Tidball
Originally a tax lawyer, Stephanie is Head of Knowledge & Development at City law firm Macfarlanes. One of her key roles is to provide non-legal skills training for lawyers, and to ensure that lawyers are fully developed and supported at all stages. She expects to make good use of the knowledge and experience she has derived from the Business Coach Programme.

Coaching High Achievers in Alternative Investment

Ana Maria Urrutia

High achievers are experts on GROW; they are expert goal seekers and goal achievers. So in coaching they work through it at speed and very quickly the coaching process evolves from goals related to work performance to goals related to *becoming a person*. I share Rogers' excitement in his findings that the therapeutic relationship permits the client to "become more like the person he wishes to be." [1] My inquiry has been to understand why and how coaching magic has worked particularly well with high achievers in finance, specifically in increasing their level of satisfaction with life and career and, dare I say, *happiness*!

I hereby attempt to formulate an explanation of how coaching can ease internal tensions and accelerate the process of what Rogers describes as the facilitation of personal growth through the therapeutic relationship. Over the last decade I have built an expertise in working with high performing investment professionals and what I have seen is that GROW and Rogers are at the backbone of generating results and based on a small sample of 15 clients coached over the last year I have found that coaching can be even more powerful in high achievers, even when they have already proven to outperform their peers in all performance measures. I found it thrilling to witness the magnitude and permanence of change that coaching has produced in some of my clients who came for added work performance and have left with a deeper more certain sense of self and a stronger confidence and belief in themselves. I have seen them become themselves.

For high school graduates the probability of landing a role in a private equity or hedge fund is less than 0.1%. Are they perfect? On the surface they appear to be a sequoia tree standing tall above the forest below, however inside they have an insecurity that drives them relentlessly for self-improvement. This drive for improvement many times results in an unbalanced self-sacrifice for career attainment and an external locus of control where all measures of success are external (pay, rank and early promotion). Cognitive behavioural therapists may refer to this as maladaptive schemas called "recognition seeking" and/or "unrelenting standards." So I've come up with a coaching toolkit for high achievers which whilst being non-directive, involves several exercises and questions. This approach came about partly in consequence to an assertion one of my clients made. This particular client who has the highest academic and professional track record, explained to me how coaching worked for him:

"I don't really feel ever like I'm number 1, even though I might well be on paper. Like a lot of high achievers I'm insecure and coaching allows me to maintain a healthy perspective on my own performance and ability, rather than descending into anxiety and worry (which can quickly spiral). Even when I do feel confident, I constantly want to improve my ability and skills. Coaching enables me to get where I want to be more quickly and more efficiently. Being coached allows me to apply 'science' to my career. Just as I would see a personal trainer if I wanted to accelerate results in the gym, I would see a coach if I wanted to accelerate results in the workplace."

The benefit of high achievers like him is that they tend to be flexible fast learners who can set new targets and reach them regardless of the obstacles they face. This flexibility in behaviour and thinking is an extremely valuable tool required to achieve desired outcomes, making them perfect coaching clients. The reason why the coaching relationship works so well with high achievers is that they are very curious individuals hungry to learn and courageous enough to try new things for their own development, including coaching. Therefore they dive into the coaching relationship with delight and they find themselves at ease in a place void of judgment, where there are no stupid questions and weaknesses exposed do not pose a risk, they can be unfiltered in their thoughts and speech and feelings can be expressed. As long as the therapeutic relationship has the three essential ingredients:

[1] Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person, A Psychotherapist's View on Psychotherapy*, Constable & Robinson, London 2004, p.36.

high degree of empathetic understanding, unconditional positive regard and genuineness,[2] the coaching relationship relatively quickly starts delivering the beautiful positive impact that Rogers describes in his essays of On Becoming a Person: self esteem and appreciation for the self; increased self-confidence and self-direction; and most importantly approach towards self actualization (moving from 'who I should be' to 'who I want to be').

What I was surprised to find and keen to understand is that in the coaching process, once high achievers have used all accessible external tools to gain a competitive edge, they start to look within themselves for answers. This is where the coach can help their client make a long lasting and deeper change that will release tension. How? My coaching approach for high achievers consists of 4 pillars. They are Perspective, Internal Locus of Evaluation, Motivation, and Love.

1) **Perspective:** Firstly, coaching provides high achievers much needed perspective, on how good they are, how much they are valued, how hard they work and often how critical they are of themselves and others. In just a couple of coaching sessions the client acknowledges that they have achieved many of the goals they set out for themselves in the first five minutes of coaching; so now what? Coaching then provides an opportunity for them to slow down, think, talk and listen to themselves looking at life from a bird's eye view.

2) **Motivation:** Once professional life is in perspective, the agenda tends to be directed to how to enjoy being in the 'here,' now. I make a point of asking my clients to define their personal measures of success and more importantly measures of satisfaction and happiness. "What do you want?" I ask. They know money is not everything, "you can have the best job in the world but if you can't find the meaning in it, you wont enjoy it, whether you are a movie maker or an NFL playmaker."[3] This pushes them to realise that they are in control of the medals they want to earn and that they are pursuing them for more than the money. Revive what makes them tick, work consciously at helping them defining their values and where possible align their work to bigger goals and the meaning that can be derived from it. This keeps the client motivated and energized.

3) **Internalise the locus of evaluation:** Given the opportunity to reflect in a safe environment, the client realises that the "locus of evaluation, the centre of responsibility, lies within himself"[4] moving away from having to live by the standards of others. By defining internal measures of success, external measures fade to the background and become less important or at least out of mind. This alone releases pressure.

4) **Love:** Who and what do you love? I ask. Are they spending enough time doing things they love with those they love? Research sought out the characteristics of the happiest 10% of people and discovered that the ONLY characteristic that distinguished them was the strength of their personal relationships. Shaun Achor, author of the Happiness Advantage, did a study with 1,600 Harvard graduates and social support was a greater predictor of happiness than GPA, income, age, race or gender.[5] Encourage your clients add Love goals.

Coaching has many elements that make people happy, it removes barriers, allows them to remember why they are doing what they are doing and helps direct their focus onto what makes them thrive. Coaching may not teach happiness but I have only seen it increase clients' happiness level. Coaching should be a perk and who else deserves it more than your team's high achievers?

[2] Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person, A Psychotherapist's View on Psychotherapy*, Constable & Robinson, London 2004, p. 49.
[3] Shaun Achor, *The Happiness Advantage, Positive Psychology at Work,* Random House, New York, 2010, p. 80-81.
[4] Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person, A Psychotherapist's View on Psychotherapy*, Constable & Robinson, London 2004, p. 55
[5] Shaun Achor, *The Happiness Advantage, Positive Psychology at Work,* Random House, New York, 2010, p. 176

Ana Maria Urrutia
Ana Maria has worked with executives in the alternative investment space for over fifteen years. After following a career in investment banking and private equity she now runs a search firm and is a business coach. She holds a degree in Economics (Columbia University) and is certified in aptitude and personality testing (University of Cambridge). She lives in London with her husband and two daughters.

CEO’s want to be coached, but do they really just want answers?

Lloyd Wigglesworth

“Why can’t they make up their minds?” I thought in exasperation. “After all those tests and interviews are they really having second thoughts?”

It was the autumn of 1997 and a few weeks earlier I had been offered a significant job opportunity after a lengthy interview process. It was to run a large wholesaling business with 50 depots, employing more than 3,000 people and a turnover of £2bn. It was a major step up in management responsibility with a position on a PLC Board, taking me into unchartered waters.

The Group HR Director, had just telephoned and said “we would like to give you a coach”. My initial reaction was “didn’t they believe I could do the job?” I thought a coach was someone who helped sports people, not business people. “Here are the names of a couple of people you might like to contact then you can make up your mind”, he said.

I was interested enough to arrange to see both coaches. On meeting the first candidate, I knew within 10 minutes that he was not right for me. For every question I asked, he responded with a question back to me. Non-directive to the point of frustration. I wanted some answers. However the second coach, Paul, and I clicked very quickly. “How can you help me?” I asked. “Well as a start I can stop you putting your foot in it in your first PLC Board meeting”. I was intrigued. “How can you do that?” I asked. “Well talk me through how you would approach that meeting and how you intend to be when you are there” Paul said. “How would I intend to be?” That really got me thinking. No one had ever asked me a question like that before.

I decided to sign Paul up as my coach for an initial 6 months. 2 years later our contract finally ended. Afterwards I really missed our monthly sessions.
Looking back on his style Paul definitely asked a lot of questions and made me do most of the work but he also knew when to give me clear direction.

The business coaching profession has become much better known, and become more popular, in the last 17 years. According to a 2013 survey by Stanford School of Business[1] “nearly two thirds of CEO’s do not receive outside leadership advice but nearly all want it”. The survey revealed that of those CEO’s who do receive coaching “78% said it was their own idea and 21% said it was the Chairman’s idea”. The value of coaching is now recognised by top leaders but there is still reluctance amongst the majority of business leaders to ask for it. It appears that the stigma I had attached to it back in 1997 hasn’t completely dissipated.

Having run a number of different companies over the past 28 years and seen many other CEO’s in action, I reflect on how much more effective we all could have been with more coaching support.

It can be a lonely place at the top of an organisation and it is becoming an increasingly challenging era for decision-making. The pursuit of short term profit to the exclusion of all else has become less acceptable. The internet and social media have changed the way most business work and now social purpose has entered the boardroom. There is a new generation of stakeholders asking CEO’s what the organisation creates beyond shareholder value. This is a tough mix for CEO’s to manage.

Is it any wonder that some CEO’s feel unqualified to deal with the complexity? Contrary to the outward confidence CEO’s are expected to show, many feel unprepared for the top job when they get there. According to Carol Kauffman in her Masterclass[2] ‘Coaching for Confidence', a survey of 1,000 CEO’s showed that the most common fear was “being found out.”

Linda Aspey's article on 'The spectrum of Independence in Coaching' in the AICTP Journal[3] says that many leaders are suffering from "decision fatigue". If there was ever a time CEO's needed more thinking space to put these conflicting priorities in order, it is now.

The idea that when leaders reach the top of the tree they arrive as a complete package, and know all the answers, is optimistic. Like any of us, they are on a journey and need to work out, then test, being the best CEO they can be.

Non-directive coaching can really help. I have one client who runs a very fast growing agency business, has a young family and drops the kids off at school every morning. Despite her busy schedule Jane hasn't once cancelled one of our meetings. In her last feedback form she said "my 2 hours per month with you are rare valuable occasions when I get the opportunity to really think for myself".

The biggest influence on my coaching style has been Nancy Kline's "Time to Think" [4] philosophy. Is it ironic then that when I had the opportunity to select my own coach I chose Paul because he was at the more directive end of the coaching spectrum? I am aware my clients of the future may select me as their coach because of my own experience of running companies. They may believe that I will provide the answers to their questions. However I know that it will be more powerful most of the time for me to help them to work out their own solutions.

I recently had the pleasure of coaching a particularly talented and young CEO. Peter came to our first meeting having just been thrust forward, unexpectedly, to the top spot.

He appeared, rather nervously, as we sat down with our coffees that morning. I asked him what would be most helpful to talk about. Peter said he already felt out of his depth as a CEO only days into the role. "What makes you say that?" I asked. Peter explained that he had never before managed a substantial team and now he was expected to lead more than 100 people. He said that he hadn't been trained for the role, everyone expected him to know what to do and he felt he didn't know enough about leadership. Maybe his promotion had come too quickly and he wasn't sure he could make a success of it.

"Tell me what DO you know about leadership", I asked him. Peter paused for a long time and then hesitatingly said, "Well I think that the leader should work out where the business is going". "And what else", I asked? "Involve their team in defining that direction so they work together on it?" "And probably the leader should share that vision with the rest of the business so everyone knows what we're trying to achieve". "Anything else you can think of?" I asked him. "Yes I think it would help if the leader clarified the roles of the senior team so they know what their job is and what's expected of them". "What else" I asked again? "I suppose the leader should be giving regular feedback to their team on how well they're performing against expectations". "Sounds good", I said but Peter wasn't finished "Also, I think the leader should ask their team what they want to do in the future and help them get there". "Anything else?" "Yes the leader should be clear about their values, live by those and expect other people to do the same". "Anything else" I asked? "Not at the moment", Peter said.

That took less than 5 minutes. At that point I told him that I thought it was one of the best descriptions of the role of a leader I had heard in all my time in business. "So how are you going to do that?" I asked him. For the next 90 minutes Peter put together his plan as a new CEO for his first 100 days in the job. It didn't need a lot of input from me, just a challenge here and there on where he saw the different priorities and his level of commitment to each. Peter walked away clearer and more confident with the scope of his role and how he was going to go about it.

That coaching session was almost entirely non-directive and Peter gained more from it because it was. He moved from nervous and unclear to confident in the presence of some simple questions. He also found out that he really did know the answers after all. So much more powerful than if I had just given him my own definition of leadership.

So what has been my own learning through the Meyler Campbell experience? Will I stay solely in the non-directive space when coaching business leaders in the future? Definitely not. There will be times when clients will ask for some specific advice or I will see how they are potentially going to "put their foot in it". I have learned that the role of the coach is to help their clients develop over time through their own learning but it is also to help them succeed (and survive) in the short term. In some cases giving straight-forward advice, based on our own experience, is exactly what we are being paid to deliver.

References

(1) Stanford Business School, Centre for Leadership Development & Research, 2013 'Executive Coaching Survey'
(2) Carol Kauffman, Meyler Campbell Masterclass, 'Coaching for Confidence', London 2008
(3) Linda Aspey, AICTP Journal, 'The spectrum of Independence in Coaching', 16 February 2013
(4) Nancy Kline, Time to Think, September 2002

Lloyd Wigglesworth

Lloyd coaches CEO's and those aspiring to become CEO. He has a broad business background having run companies over the last 25 years in marketing services, retailing, publishing, music & film distribution, wholesaling and printing. He has Chaired many divisional Boards & sat on PLC boards WH Smith, St Ives, Woolworths and Crest Nicholson. He has led several business turnarounds involving M&A, rationalisation and new product launches. Lloyd is the Founder of CEO Coaching Ltd