



Meyler Campbell

**Graduation 2013
Reflective Essays**

Foreword

Congratulations to the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Graduates 2013 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 2013 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. Third, this is the second year we have introduced more explicit formal marking schedules, and a full First and Second Marking system, with a highly experienced External Marker, I do hope that process will add further value to your learning experience. Thank you for raising your game yet again to work with us with this new level of rigour.

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 heartfelt congratulations to you and to your world-class Faculty on all your hard work.

Sincerely,

Anne Scoular
Editor

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Should men and women be coached differently?

Joanne Anderson

Many coaching models have a similar approach to what coaching is and how it works:

- The coach must believe that the coachee has untapped potential.
- The coach must:
 - establish the boundaries and rules of the coaching relationship, remembering there are circumstances when coaching cannot or should not be used¹
 - direct a process (most likely based on the GROW model) which allows the coachee to develop a focused and realistic goal, consider all relevant information and create an action plan;
 - really listen to the coachee, following their interest with genuine curiosity; and
 - ask questions that increase the coachee's awareness and challenge the coachee to help unblock limiting assumptions;
- The coach must not:
 - be directive as to the content of the coaching sessions. Instead they should allow the coachee to work things out for themselves; or
 - judge the coachee.

This approach is appealing as it is simple (if difficult to follow in practice) and appears to offer a one-size fits all approach (albeit one that always has to be individually tailored to fit the individual coachee). However, I have found myself wondering about gender differences. Although many of the coaching books refer to gender issues as *context* for coaching, few suggest a different *approach* for men and women. And in my experience of coaching men and women, I have not found the need for a different approach, although I have noticed that my male coachees tend to take a little longer to open up and talk about feelings and are more reluctant to express self-doubt. So it would seem you don't need to coach men and women differently. Or do you?

As Peltier (2010, p. 257) says, although we are all human, we are all unique, but possess characteristics associated with our gender.

Men and women clearly differ biologically and this includes the brain. Gurian and Annis (2008) found that men are more likely than women to zone-out in meetings as their brains are designed to enter a "rest state" more easily than women. They also found that women tend to go off topic before returning to the task at hand because their brains are made for multi-tasking. I find it useful to know that female coachees may be biologically prone to talking about several topics and to remember the useful question "And how does this relate to?" Male coaches may need to

¹ When:

- the coachee is not receptive to being coached because:
 - they don't want to change;
 - they do want to change, but prefer a different approach;
 - they are not "more or less sane".
- there is a lack of chemistry between the coach and the coachee.
- there are contextual issues such as:
 - culture issues;
 - a hostile context.

develop an awareness of a tendency to zone-out during a coaching session – although, in my experience, this applies equally to female coaches!

Another area where men and women differ is conversational style. Conversational style is a framework for understanding relationships by reference to linguistic patterns. These patterns may be affected by the country you grow up, age, ethnicity and class, as well as gender. According to Tannen (1994), boys and girls grow up learning different conversational styles while playing in separate groups. Tannen says these different styles continue into adulthood and can lead to misunderstandings. She explains that part of the problem is that we might not notice some conversations as being ritualistic – for example, “How are you?” is not a literal question. Further, when a conversational style belongs to a group of which we are not a part, it is easy to misunderstand it. She gives an example from the Philippines where the question “Where are you going?” is a cue for the answer “Over there” and nothing more specific or intrusive.

I set out below some of Tannen’s examples of different male/female conversational styles (which, of course, do not always apply):

- Some women apologise to keep conversations balanced. (“I am sorry”). When men hear “sorry” they tend to hear that the person apologising has made a mistake.
- Women sometimes ask for an opinion as a way of showing consideration and respect, even when they have no intention of using that opinion. Men may find this confusing and interpret such opinion-seeking as manipulative or as a sign of weakness, indecisiveness or disrespect.
- Women use “troubles talk” as a way of building rapport. Because troubles talk is more common among women than men, men may take the statement about a problem as a request to solve it. A man who attempts to solve the problem is likely to be viewed as lacking empathy and as not listening or caring. Tannen illustrates this difference in style using an example of a conversation between a nursery-age boy and girl:

Girl: Hey Max, my baby’s not feeling good.

Boy: So sorry. I’m not the person who fixes sick babies.

Girl: I wasn’t telling you to fix her, I was just telling you.

Tannen says that because the male style is usually seen as normative in a work context, it is women who tend to be disadvantaged and are faced with having to change.

For me, Tannen’s work is a useful reminder:

- To listen carefully and ask clean questions using the coachee’s own language, lest I use a communication style that the coachee does not understand.
- To ask questions which increase the coachee’s awareness and challenge their assumptions. If the coachee is struggling with a relationship with someone of the opposite sex, it might prove useful to ask questions around what is actually being said and what they might be assuming. (I have also found it effective to challenge a coachee on what their responsibility is for a difficult relationship.)
- To be non-judgmental. A coachee of the opposite sex may describe a difficult situation with which the coach may be familiar, but from the other side. The coach must be able to suspend their personal experience and judgment.
- When coaching teams, to be aware of how conversational rituals may be at play.
- That men and women may build rapport differently. I think this is particularly pertinent to chemistry meetings.

Another area where gender issues may be relevant is the nature of the coaching relationship. Coaches should be aware of the unconscious processes that may be at play in coaching session such as transference (where a coachee may subconsciously project onto the coach and the coaching relationship patterns and assumptions from earlier relationships) and counter-transference (where the coach does the same to the client). A male coach may remind a coachee of their authoritarian father and an older, female coach may create an expectation of mothering. In addition to simply being aware of these phenomena (which may not be gender-based), a coach could challenge the coachee perhaps using a hypothesis (such as "Is it possible that I remind you of someone?") or awareness-raising questions (such as "In what ways I am different from...?").

Regarding gender issues as *context* for coaching, I think the following are important:

- Research on how men and women fare differently at work. For example, according to the Cranfield School of Management's Female FTSE Board Report 2013, women are underrepresented on the boards and executive committees of the top FTSE companies. It says women account for 5.8% of FTSE executive directors. This is despite the findings of Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger and Baumgarten (2007) suggesting that companies with a higher proportion of women in top management perform better. The Cranfield report has prompted the UK government to say it might impose quotas if there isn't an improvement.
- Gender differences in leadership style. Peltier (2008, p.271) says that women tend to be more inclusive and participatory, seek consensus, share information and ask for information before they act. They are less likely to value domination or hierarchy.
- According to Buckingham and Clifton (2005) the Clifton StrengthsFinder themes do not vary significantly according to gender (race or age).
- Career patterns. Ibarra (2004, p. 166) says "across cultures and occupation groups, it is still more acceptable for a woman to say she is taking time to 'find herself'."

To conclude, there are significant differences between men and women in general that are relevant to coaches both in terms of the coaching itself and the context for coaching. However, I think that overall getting the basics of coaching right will guide a coach through individual differences. A person's uniqueness is far more important than characteristics associated with their gender.

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Jo Anderson

Jo is Head of Editorial Operations at Practical Law Company, now part of Thomson Reuters, and also takes up two external clients a year. Clients value her warmth, and varied background of leadership roles in technology and in the legal sector, including as Partner at a leading international law firm.

Tel +44 (0)7841 434457

Email joanne.anderson@thomsonreuters.com

Coaching and Consciousness

Ralph Auchincloss

The Origins of Coaching

The Inner Game of Tennis, (Gallwey, 1986) was the starting point of coaching as we know it. At one level it is about improving the performance of tennis players. At a deeper level it is about operating at different levels of consciousness, Self 1, Self 2 and Self 3, with '*The Goal of the Inner Game: The discovery of Self 3*'. Gallwey describes Self 3: 'It is the very source of all our potential; it is the seed from which our lives grow...' 'It is the origin of every experience we have ever had of love, truth or beauty and ... it can be experienced directly...'. 'When the player of the Inner Game has searched for and found his way to the direct experience of Self 3 he gains access to the catalyst capable of finally stilling his mind. Then his full potential as a human being is allowed to unfold... He is free'.

Ancient Wisdom

This insight resonates with the wisdom of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (Shearer, 1982) recorded some 2,300 years previously: 'Yoga is the settling of the mind into silence; when the mind has settled we are established in our essential nature, which is unbounded consciousness.'

In *Coaching for Performance (Fourth Edition)* (Whitmore, 2009) John Whitmore states 'Few in western culture know of the wealth that is hidden within us, despite the traditions of ancient wisdom.'

Whitmore's Recent Thinking

When first published in 1992 *Coaching for Performance* was widely accepted as the definitive work on business coaching following six years of collaboration between Whitmore and Gallwey. The Fourth Edition has significant additions covering areas not included twenty years earlier. Specifically, there are sections on leadership, transpersonal coaching and the future of coaching.

Psychosynthesis

These sections draw strongly on developments in transpersonal psychology and the work on psychosynthesis by Roberto Assagioli. Assagioli believed that 'Authenticity' was the major prerequisite of a good leader and 'to achieve authenticity is an endless journey. When we find it this place is known as the 'I', who we really are, our Authentic Self.' The "I" is 'a place inside of pure consciousness and pure will. This is the ideal state for a leader to be in most of the time. It is a very powerful, fearless, authentic consistent state that few people attain without being deeply invested in their own development.' Whitmore equates the "I" with the conductor of an orchestra: 'the conductor is known as the 'I' and is described as a center of pure consciousness and pure will. This equates precisely with awareness and responsibility, so you can now see that the core purpose of coaching is building the qualities and the presence of the "I".'

EQ to SQ

Whitmore also describes the latest developments in transpersonal coaching: the growth of the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) from Daniel Goleman which was soon challenged by the development of Spiritual Intelligence - SQ. According to Elisabeth Denton SQ is 'the basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one's life and to live an integrated life.'

Wisdom

In a two-dimensional growth model used in psychosynthesis, the horizontal axis represents material success and psychological integration and the vertical axis represents values and spiritual aspiration.

The horizontal axis can be equated to knowledge, the vertical to spiritual growth and wisdom. 'Wisdom lies beyond knowledge and is deeper.'

Transpersonal Psychology

One tool Whitmore uses to help illustrate and understand the relationship between the different parts of the human psyche is an egg diagram. This consists of several layers with the pinnacle described as '... the self or the soul which is both of the individual and of the universal at the same time. It is very rarely experienced, but if it is momentarily, it is the glorious oneness of the universe'.

Positive Psychology

A study by Katherine Dahlsgaard quoted in Martin Seligman's *Authentic Happiness* (Seligman, 2004) showed a remarkable consistency of what we humans value as virtues across history and culture. These are: wisdom, knowledge, courage, love, humanity, justice, temperance, spirituality and transcendence.

Mindfulness and Meditation

Barbara Fredrickson in *Positivity* (Fredrickson, 2011) recommends us to become more mindful in order to achieve greater positivity and happiness. Fredrickson's experience of learning mindfulness is interesting: 'Yet despite my seeming success in learning mindfulness on my own through books and intermittent practice, I can attest that formal instruction makes an enormous difference.' Whitmore echoes this 'while... work can be done at home through self-reflection, meditation and visualization... it is probably best done with the help of a psychosynthesis-trained coach'. Martin Seligman recommends an older method of meditation 'Transcendental meditation is the most easily available of the techniques... I can recommend it as an effective mindfulness technique.'

In *Success from Within* (Marcus, 1990) Jay B Marcus quotes numerous scientifically controlled studies showing the benefits of transcendental meditation in a business context.

Flow

In 1988 a contemporary of Martin Seligman, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and his wife Isabella Selega published *Optimal Experience, Psychological studies of Flow in Consciousness*. This study leads to them defining the conditions that lead to some people enjoying optimal (or peak) experience in their lives. They call this 'flow', but according to Martin Seligman 'His books on flow describe who has flow and who does not, but nowhere does he directly tell his readers how to acquire more flow'.

Philosophy

Whilst eastern philosophical traditions have known for millennia that by transcending thought and intellect higher states of consciousness can be achieved, western philosophy has tended to dismiss such notions. An important challenge to this orthodoxy is the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Bertrand Russell described the *Tractatus* as 'an important event in the philosophical world'. Written in 1922 by Ludwig Wittgenstein the *Tractatus* arguably changed western philosophy forever. Wittgenstein realized that language and symbols, the tools of the philosopher, could only be descriptive of what we perceive, but since the answers to the big questions of philosophy lie beyond our perceptions (otherwise we would be able to see or calculate the answer) then the philosopher must accept he cannot provide the answers.

'There is indeed the inexpressible.

This *shows* itself; it is the mystical.'

'The solution to the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time',

'It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics is transcendental.'

'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'

The PERFECT model

Anne Scoular in *Business Coaching* explains the 'PERFECT model' as proposed by Carol Kauffman. The model is a pyramid shape that provides a mnemonic to assist the coach remember what to do and in what order. The seven levels of the pyramid in ascending order are Physical, Environment, Relational, Feelings, Effective thinking, and finally Transcendence. Scoular warns that for some coaches transcendence may be a bit too 'airy-fairy...' 'But there is gathering evidence in science that performance is enhanced when goals are intrinsically rather than extrinsically motivated i.e. when they are linked to what the person deeply values'.

Neuroscience

Norman Doidge reveals in *The Brain that Changes Itself* that the brain exhibits extraordinary neuroplasticity, having the ability to change its own structure and function to cope with even the most extreme neurological abnormalities and conditions. Just as extraordinary are recent claims that there exists in the temporal lobes of the brain 'The God spot' which according to Danah Zohar could be 'a crucial component of our larger spiritual intelligence'. Jenny Rogers in *Coaching Skills - A Handbook*, devotes a chapter to this subject and raises some profound questions 'What does individual identity mean? What is reality? What is human consciousness?' She states 'We are working with clients to increase their self awareness'. 'Your aim is to create awareness of awareness. ...don't be shy about showing clients how relaxation techniques work.....' 'These have been familiar to the human species for 2500 years and probably longer. They have been a feature of all Eastern philosophies...'.

Intuition

In *Co-Active Coaching – Changing Business Transforming Lives* Henry Kimsey-House et al devote an entire chapter to the importance of intuition in coaching. They propose 'Instead of insisting there is only one form of knowing, let's suppose there are two. Conventional, observable knowing is one form; intuition is the second. Together these two dimensions give depth to any issue'. 'Another way to think of intuition is to regard it as a kind of intelligence.....One of the interesting things about intuition is its elusive quality'. But how to develop intuition? Kimsey-House et al suggest: 'You might post a note on your phone or wear your wristwatch on the opposite wrist. You could try standing up if you usually sit down'. These methods may work but seem a little implausible.

Conclusions and Future Action

There exists a body of literature and wisdom from many fields supporting the idea that a greater understanding of consciousness may be an important or even essential element in the future development of effective coaching. It is my intention to explore these issues further and to incorporate them in my own particular style of coaching which could be described as Consciousness Based Coaching.

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Ralph Auchincloss

Entrepreneur Ralph has 30 years' experience of International manufacture and marketing as co-founder and CEO of a world leading biosecurity company. Following a successful sale to chemical giant DuPont, Ralph now enjoys coaching ambitious entrepreneurs and leaders of SME's from varying cultures.

Email ralph@auchincloss.co.uk

The Power of the Mind

Salwa Bowyer

Without hesitation, the most significant discovery for me on the Meyer Campbell 'journey' is the realisation of the power of the mind (and the coach's ability to facilitate access to this power). This has not been simply a learning process on the complexities of the mind and the many theories or approaches that surround this subject. It has been much broader than this: for example, connections to personal experiences in the past and awareness of the many influencing factors that have stopped us thinking 'purely'. In my view, the power of the mind sits at the core of what coaching is about and whilst this may be an obvious statement it is fascinating how unconscious we are of these complexities in our every day thinking. For me, this coaching programme has heightened my awareness of these factors to the extent that not only can I now coach others effectively; I can also extend this to 'self-coaching'. So this essay will explore some of the 'enlightening' moments for me that have contributed to this journey.

Firstly, and perhaps most profoundly, let me share the moment that a learning module on the course triggered a whole new context to a personal experience which took place many years ago. During the summer, I attended an MC coaching 'fishbowl'. The subject was focussed on Nancy Kline's coaching technique, outlined in her famous book 'Time to Think'. I had not at this point read the book, but know now that the principle is based on creating a 'thinking environment' which actively facilitates people thinking for themselves, accessing the *power of their minds* which, in turn, facilitates intelligent, quality thinking. As Nancy Kline explains, it ignites the human mind to think with "rigour, imagination, courage and grace". I think it is worth taking a few moments to remind ourselves of the components of this 'thinking environment' that create such an impact. They can be summarised as:

- *Attention* to the 'client'. Probably the most critical point and based on the view that the quality of the coach's attention is reflected in the quality of the 'client's' thinking.
- *Incisive* questioning. Not too many questions, but clever questioning can increase the intelligence of the mind.
- *Equality*. A basis for any coaching in my view. The coach and the 'client' are thinking peers.
- *Appreciation*. This must be "genuine, succinct and concrete". People think better (and are more open minded) when they are feeling positive and confident.
- *Ease*. Creating an environment of 'no pressure' in terms of time, pace, style.
- *Encouragement*. Creating an environment to think which is devoid of any sense of competition. A competitive coach inhibits quality thinking.
- *Feelings*. Allowing emotional release is important; being upset can stop thinking. Being able to express those feelings can then re-ignite thinking.
- *Information*. The coach is allowed to provide information to create awareness of the reality of the 'topic' of discussion in a way that does not damage the thinking environment for the 'client'. I like this point. It accepts that the client's thinking can sometimes be wrong or disruptive.
- *Place*. Creating a physical environment which tells the client that they matter.
- *Diversity*. Helping the client to remove any inherent prejudices they may have so that their thinking is not inhibited by these prejudices.

We now return to the fishbowl - remembering that I had not studied the Nancy Kline process and its principles at this stage. I sat for 45 minutes and observed an experienced coach practise the 'Thinking environment' technique on his practise client. Not understanding the ten components above, I found it an uncomfortable experience and a frustrating one. My mind was rushing through questions and assumptions: why was the coach not responding to the lack of interaction, the coach is not facilitating or contributing anything, where is the skill in that?! I sat and thought deeply on what this could be about, thinking patiently and reminding myself that these were experts demonstrating their craft. There must be something I was missing! And suddenly it hit me. I felt a familiarity with a situation I experienced 15 years ago. It was one of those situations in life which had the most amazing impact on me personally, but I have never been sure why and it has always puzzled me. The situation required me to make an extremely difficult personal decision, perhaps the most difficult in my life to date, and I recognised that I needed to make it without the influences of family and friends. Most importantly, I also needed to go through this decision-making process in a way which did not compromise my 'performance' as a mother or in my work. It was likely to be highly emotional and quite complex. I needed to be clear thinking and maximise my chances of making the right decision with the minimum of disruption to my life and those important to me. So I took steps to seek help from a counsellor of sorts. I cannot recall how she positioned herself: life coach, psychologist, counsellor...? I had had no previous experience of seeking this type of external help, so I had no idea what to expect. I simply hoped that this person would help me to think the matter through, would objectively guide me in what to do and would keep me strong.

I recall arriving at the 'coach's' house for the first time: a small rambling cottage in the countryside. She was a middle-aged lady, very unassuming and quiet but she had a gentleness about her and my intuition told me she was trustworthy. Her 'office' was a small cosy room with big soft arm chairs and a serene, intimate ambience. We sat down and she looked empathetically and intently at me, waiting for me to speak. It felt a bit awkward, there was an uncomfortable silence (for me, but she seemed very at ease with the situation). Finally, she asked me "How are you feeling?" Without going into endless details, I recall this lady not saying a lot whilst I did all the talking - and crying! She would wait patiently for me to finish and then wait again, or on occasion, she would prompt me with another short question.

And that was the pattern of our meetings which went on for eight months every two weeks. I recall always feeling strong after the meetings, despite the fact that they were emotional and hard work for me. I also know that I went on a thinking journey over the months. The result was a clear decision which I felt huge responsibility for but I was confident that it was the right one. I had made it with little input or guidance from anyone - just the odd quiet question from my coach. I also remember feeling that I was not sure what I was paying for, but that at the same time, the sessions were my life-line during a very difficult period. Friends and family have always told me that they believed I showed incredible strength and independence of thought during that period. Over the years I have looked back and felt proud of how I managed it, but have also been very clear that what I called my 'counselling' sessions played a fundamental role. I had not one day off work, a huge focus on my children who were young at the time, and very clear belief that I had arrived at the right decision from all angles. And I carried through the actions that were necessary following the decision. I quote John Whitmore- (1991) 'Coaching for Performance' - "when we truly accept, choose, or take responsibility for our actions, our commitment to them rises and so does our performance".

After the fishbowl session I set to reading Nancy Kline's book to understand more. My conclusion is very clear: whilst I did not realise it at the time, my management of that very difficult personal situation all those years ago was down to the facilitation of a skilled coach who created a 'thinking

environment' for me to perfection. With the context of Kline's book and my other learning on the programme, I am now completely convinced of the power of the coach to create the 'thinking environment' which in turn facilitates the individual's ability to think deeply, clearly and independently.

Nancy Kline's uniqueness comes in her strong and specific beliefs on *how* to ignite the power of the mind. Why, if the mind is so powerful, and there are means of accessing that power, do we not consciously utilise it more effectively? I think one factor is to do with how we develop in society and the complexities of the external influencing factors such as capitalism, competition and the search for success. Our whole experience of thinking as we grow up, particularly in the family environment, education and then work, is around building knowledge, and this tends to take the form of being told rather than thinking for oneself. The competition generated in the school environment and the work place, for example, can drive good thinking, but it can also stunt confidence and 'free' thinking. How many times for instance, have we been in the class room or in meetings, and have refrained from sharing our thoughts in fear of being wrong or embarrassed? Nancy Kline refers to the mind's limiting factors – the impact, for example, of assumptions such as "they might think I am stupid". So, to an extent, we have forgotten how powerful our minds are, or at least, we have got used to not reaching deep to exercise our thinking capability. We have been influenced into a way of being which looks elsewhere for the answers and shies away from using our thinking capability. Our minds create their own patterns of thinking influenced by these external factors.

There are also internal factors which influence our thinking. The principles of neuroscience, explained by Jenny Rogers ('Coaching Skills') state that the emotional centre of the brain drives human behaviour first (before rationality). This is why it is so important for the coachee to trust the coach and to feel warmth, acceptance and liking. Timothy Gallway ('The Inner Game of Tennis') refers to the games our minds play and the bad habits and patterns of thinking that can inhibit our thinking and performance. It is not just the coachee who can experience these limitations; the coach also needs to be conscious of such unconscious processes. Jenny Rogers quotes one example which she refers to as 'projection': we all have dark sides which we can project onto the coachee, or positive projections where we fantasize an ideal onto the coachee. Being conscious of these inhibitors and establishing a way of removing them from our thinking can be achieved by creating a state of relaxed concentration which simply focuses on the actual reality and the positives. It is not so different from the views outlined by Jenny Rogers when she talks about relaxation and mindfulness. Her view is that relaxation techniques create 'awareness of awareness' and that a trance state creates greater 'receptivity'.

And I could go on and on about the complexities of the mind... but one thing for sure is that it has huge capacity and capability, which can only be maximised if we are conscious of the various dynamics at play – both positive and negative. These dynamics have the ability to limit our thinking and/or to ignite our thinking. As a coach, we hold the keys to helping clients access the power of their mind; it is a privileged position to be in.

Salwa Bowyer

Salwa is Head of HR for the Chief Operating Officer groups at Fidelity Worldwide Investments, a global asset management firm. She has 25 years' HR professional experience in both Compensation specialist roles and HR generalist roles across a variety of market sectors. Salwa holds an MSc in Human Resource Management and is a member of the CIPD.

Tel +44 (0)1737 836857
Email salwa.bowyer@fil.com

My Journey, Your Journey, Our Journey

Jenny Chapman

As I attend the third property viewing of the evening, my hopes are fading yet a glow of optimism remains. After five flights of stairs I enter the flat to see a sloping roof, a bright pink bathroom and a cooker which could have been mistaken for a tardis! "I'll take it", I announce as if I were purchasing a bar of chocolate from the corner shop. The estate agent looks relieved, if a little perplexed. Nervously, he asks, "Could you tell me why?" It was one of the easiest questions I had been asked in a long time, "Because I see potential".

The search for potential is one of the key things that attracted me to coaching: the opportunity in some small way to help people identify and explore their own potential, consider areas they may want to change or move on from a situation that they have held onto. I am fortunate enough to have been coached before and I gained such deep personal value from the experience that I wanted to be able to provide the same experience for colleagues, within the organisation, and coachees I was yet to meet.

After completion of the sale of the flat, I start the process of change and begin the short listing for a builder. I soon realise that whilst cost is an important factor I am making my decision based on trust. Who do I feel will help me, what affinity do we have, will they challenge my ideas and overall, who am I prepared to trust with the keys to all I own?

I reflect on how I am building the relationship of trust with coachees at the initial chemistry meeting. I realise I am using the check list as a driver, ensuring I am covering all the points in detail. I consider what I can give of myself and I instinctively know I can give more by focusing just as much on 'how' I am engaging with coachees as well as 'what' I am saying.

I start making changes to my coaching style with each potential client. I connect with each person, embracing the business focus, whilst appreciating the interdependency with personal life. I understand that most clients are apprehensive about their new journey but I underestimate the fear some clients have of the unknown. I am reminded that coaching is a very personal, perhaps 'risky experience' and I am asking for considerable commitment. I am asking coachees to give of themselves, to share thoughts and vulnerabilities that they may not have felt comfortable to say out loud before. I am struck by the differences with coachees from within the organisation and coachees whom I am meeting for the first time. With coachees from within the organisation I find myself working harder to ensure my own perceptions and experiences of the individuals they discuss are not reflected. I ask coachees to describe people to me as if I had never met them, which becomes much more natural, as the relationship builds.

I select my builder and begin talking about the vision I have. I talk at pace, arms moving frantically as if I were conducting an orchestra, rather badly I might add. I quickly realise that I am not clear on many of the component parts and I am certainly not sure how to get there. I see the same parallel with some of my coaches; often ideas are flowing in abundance but clarity on the goal and vision is something which we revisit. It becomes clear that establishing a robust goal truly enables the session that follows.

I ask myself why I am hesitating to articulate the goal for my personal flat project. Is it because I have not given enough thought to it? Or am I outside my comfort zone? I decide it is both and

wonder if I am giving the time to really consider the art of what is possible. I want to be bold, yet I look to the builder for direction.

What struck me in the coaching relationships was the desire from coachees to elicit my perspective was the same relationship that I had with my builder. The questions ranged from "What do you think?", "Is this the right path?", "Have you heard this before?", "Is it normal?" to "I really want your view!" Whilst the lines between coaching and mentoring are drawn, managing this dichotomy, in my experience, is a challenge. My desire to help was clashing against the pull to stay silent, to keep the ownership with the client, to be there in the moment. This took time to adjust to but I found something very powerful in silence.

The flat is stripped back to the shell. It looks different, almost as if it had been beaten in a fit of rage. The cracks are visible, the holes where the plaster used to be are gaping and ugly, like a sore. Despite this, the light shines through the flat. I wonder if this is what it feels like for some coachees during coaching and how much of a personal decision it is to start the journey. I reflect on the ups and downs of the coaching journey for each coachee and my own personal journey, in particular the times when the flow feels stilted, versus the moment that you see a thought resonate or a demonstrable change in an individual.

I am persistent with the builder asking when it will be finished, suppressing my irritation as he provides vague answers and talks about delays. The journey for the renovations is longer than I expected, and rather than enjoying it I am looking to the end, keen to have the finished result. I notice I am at times taking the same approach to coaching, keen to get to the options and commitments. I start to relax the GROW model, with more time given to understanding, listening to the words, watching the non verbal clues and sharing what I notice. I am learning that the biggest pieces of gold are during the most unexpected moments.

I arrive back at the flat late at night, ready to move in, excited to see the improvements. My face drops as I see no toilet, bath or heating, and the dust fills my lungs. I call the builder but realise I am no longer listening to his words.

The next day I am coaching and it dawns on me for the first time I am distracted. I pull myself up on it and make a note, striving to keep focused for the rest of the session. I consider ways to remove the noise and create my own plan to address, for I want to make sure I am picking up the subtleties of what is being said through voice or body. I am astonished about how much more I observe in people's faces when I truly listen.

The following week I share my concerns with my tutor about constantly 'being in' the conversation. I am asked whether I am being hard on myself and the question resonates. I try to explain that I want to be excellent at what I do. Even as the words are tumbling out I realise this will be an on-going journey, evolution not revolution.

I commit more to the ending of the coaching sessions and ask for feedback. I pull the strands together and adapt. I am relieved that as the flat progresses, alongside so do my coachees and I. In all cases changes are made, sessions become more relaxed, the experience fulfilling. I use my intuition mixed with my new skills, to be bolder and with my coachees' agreement I try different styles and tools.

The flat is finally done, the new carpets laid and covered with my possessions that have been out of sight for years. I start the ruthless art of filling the charity bags. In clearing out I am undertaking the

same with my coaching, removing the 'files' I had on my interpretation of coaching and myself as an individual. I consider the change in my clients and the different possibilities they see for the future. I decide to continue to be bolder, to enjoy the silence, to take great lessons from my past and ensure I also grab hold of the future, as that is entirely up to me to own.

Jenny Chapman

Jenny is currently the Director of Transformation for Bupa UK Business Services, with a varied career history in both the public and private sector, covering HR, Operations, OD, M&A, Talent and Customer Service. Jenny's career to date has predominantly been internationally focused, living and working in Europe, Australia and Asia to develop HR best practice, whilst focusing on growth plans through mergers, acquisition and integration.

Tel +44 (0)7415 322802

Email Jennychap1@gmail.com

Choice - The Prospect of Taking Control

Phil Cousins

This essay considers the concept of choice in the context of coaching. The proposition is that effective coaching enables coachees to choose the actions which will address the changes they wish to make. Three coaching theories/models are used to highlight some key themes together with a brief overview of some potential supporting techniques. A case-study is summarised to illustrate how this impacted on someone who felt unable to take control of her career choices. As will be shown, whilst there are well established views suggesting that an individual's approach to adult life is pre-determined and relatively fixed, there are persuasive arguments to support the assertion that coaching can help clients take control of their life and make their own choices to achieve changes, irrespective of their personal histories.

The genesis of this essay was Jenny Rogers' assertion that "We may not always be able to choose what happens to us ... but we can always choose how we respond" Rogers (2012) p.7. Whilst it is uncontroversial to suggest we can sometimes choose how to react to circumstances, it is surely controversial to suggest that we can *always* do so. If the answer is "yes we can", then this provides the prospect of hugely powerful outcomes for coaching. Rogers suggests coaching "... raises self awareness and identifies choice". She believes clients can face up to, and deal with, their own problems. A compelling illustration of this is Victor Frankl, an Auschwitz inmate. He took control of his situation, separating himself mentally from the nightmare surroundings; he "*chose to live*", see Rogers (2012) pp. 50-51. Frankl's decision to override such parlous conditions suggests a realistic prospect of taking control of most of the situations in which people find themselves.

Whilst there are numerous methodologies, this essay briefly considers the three theoretical approaches which, broadly speaking, underpin the most common coaching practices, namely psychodynamics, person centred coaching and cognitive-behavioural coaching.

At one end of the spectrum the psychodynamic approach sees deep significance in the quality of childhood relationships with authority figures, typically parents (e.g. John Bowlby's "attachment theory") and in the way that children experience key stages of their development (e.g. Sigmund Freud's psychosexual stages). Flawed relationships with key figures and/or imperfect progression through the key stages of childhood development are considered to have potentially important psychological effects. This may result in a *predisposition* which, for example, impairs someone's ability to form effective relationships in adult life. However this approach proposes individuals are not consciously aware of these problems and often, due to inner conflict, subconsciously employ "defence mechanisms", driven by emotional or biological phenomena, to deny their existence. The key to helping people is to try to unearth unconscious feelings and emotions so that clients establish coping strategies. However as Peltier summarises, this theory is "... long on inquiry and short on implementation". Therefore, as far as business coaching is concerned, it will not impress a corporation who expect tangible results and, as Peltier says "... it is unlikely that psychoanalytical principles alone could possibly be adequate for that challenge" - see Peltier (2010) p.76.

At the other end of the spectrum the person centred approach focuses on helping clients realise their potential. Clients are the experts on the subject of their own personal issues and coaches take a backseat in the coaching journey. As Dykes (2010) says, coaches must be "human and transparent: to risk being in a real relationship and to stay with 'not knowing' rather than being the expert" P.107. Carl Rogers believed that coaches should aim to enable clients to reflect without being

directive. The temptation to move clients towards solutions which are attractive or compelling to the coach must be avoided. This means coaching sessions are relatively unstructured, not based on fixed techniques. Rogers saw people as being in the process of “becoming”, capable of developing in the right conditions rather than being in a predetermined state. This aligns with Maslow’s views about self-actualisation. Rogers drew a parallel with his childhood memory of potatoes trying to grow when planted in poor conditions; “... the potatoes would begin to sprout pale white sprouts ... these sad, spindly sprouts ... would never become plants ... never fulfil their real potential. But under the most adverse circumstances ... would not give up” Rogers said this illustrated the “... underlying basis of the person-centered approach” (Rogers (1980) refers).

Arguably in the middle of the spectrum is the cognitive-behavioural approach which proposes that individuals’ cognitive processes drive their behaviour. Coaches show clients how they may be unaware of the ways in which their cognition is being affected. Perhaps a person bitten by a dog may develop a phobic reaction to all animals. Unhelpful behavioural patterns are embedded and reinforced by distorted cognition. Coaches seek to identify different behavioural patterns which, if adopted, could help clients make worthwhile changes. However, unlike the psychodynamic approach, this is done, broadly speaking, by eschewing the need to gain insight into the client’s background other than scrutinising behaviours/cognitive processes which require change. The emphasis is on collaboration between coach and client (research shows outcomes are worse where this is absent (Raue and Goldfried; Sanders and Wills cited in McLeod (2008) p.219 refers). To establish collaborative relationships coaches often share aspects of their own personality to strengthen rapport. As with the person centred approach, the agenda must be the client’s, albeit coaches may give more direction. Sessions are typically highly structured, designed to diagnose problems and agree specific measurable goals against which progress can be tracked. Techniques employed might include asking clients to reframe their thinking, e.g. seeing opportunities where, before, they saw problems and setting clients “homework”, e.g. practising new behaviours/cognitive strategies between sessions.

Returning to Roger’s assertion that coaching involves “raising awareness”, there are various tools and techniques available (too extensive to be covered in detail here) which can support this. This includes the empathic presence of the coach arising from skilful listening and questioning techniques which create a safe environment enabling clients to think out loud, see issues in front of them and identify their own solutions. There are tools to help clients understand elements of their personality and/or their natural tendencies/personal preferences, e.g. FIRO-B and Myers Briggs. Seeking feedback from colleagues may also be illuminating. Also tools and frameworks like Schein’s Career Anchors or the GROW model may help structure a client’s approach to finding solutions.

A brief case-study of “Linda” illustrates some of the above theories in practice. “Linda” was unhappy that her career comprised roles she had “fallen into” and/or represented “easy options”. She wanted to be more assertive and in control of the choices she made. Early in the sessions “Linda” said she had low self-esteem which prevented her securing her ideal role. She said she had never achieved *anything* worthy of merit. She gained decent academic results but did not value them. She could however see in hindsight these were worthwhile achievements but had not been celebrated by her parents (themselves very high achievers) and also that throughout her childhood she had been made to feel “second best” to her brother. She explained that her ex-husband belittled her achievements, e.g. giving her no credit for establishing a successful business from scratch (which ceased operation only when the family relocated to support her husband’s career). She accepted the adverse affect her parents’ and ex-husband’s attitudes may have had on her self-esteem but remained unconvinced she had accomplished anything worthwhile (her feelings were deeply entrenched). The sessions were loosely structured around using the GROW model which led “Linda” to decide to seek

feedback from people whose opinion she valued. The views which emerged painted a consistent picture of a very capable and well respected person. With self esteem surfacing she accepted a suggestion to use Schein's Career Anchors. She liked this and developed a matrix, comprising a modified version of the Career Anchors, which she is using to decide what career opportunities to pursue. In a nutshell she completed the coaching sessions in control of her career choices. "Linda's" case had elements of psychodynamics (her parents' unhelpful attitude) but her understanding of this was surfaced easily. "Linda" was seeking to continue to grow and had the capability to do so, which resonates with the person centred approach. The more structured cognitive behavioural approach was helpful with some small degree of direction, e.g. the GROW model and using Schein's Career Anchors. No single theory dominated but this eclectic approach demonstrated that "Linda" could indeed make her own choices despite her initial deeply entrenched views to the contrary.

In conclusion, the person centred approach (which sees that people have the constant desire to grow) and the cognitive-behavioural approach (based on helping people to develop alternative behaviours) resonate with the proposition that coaching enables clients to choose the actions which will address the changes they wish to make. The psychodynamic approach is based on a rather more deterministic viewpoint. As illustrated, an eclectic mix of all three approaches worked together well, enabling "Linda" to make her own choices.

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Phil Cousins

I am currently the HR Director for DAC Beachcroft, an international law firm with a c£200m turnover. I have been with the firm since 2000. The firm employs some 2,200 employees and has some 120 equity partners. My team of 35 carries out the "usual" range of HR processes from recruitment, pay & benefits, employee relations through to learning & development. I am personally heavily involved in partner performance and remuneration, an aspect of the role which will continue to grow.

Tel +44 (0)20 7894 6032

+44 (0) 7713 103768

Email pcousins@dacbeachcroft.com

Four Disparate Reflections - A Personal Journey

Mark Dailey

Unlearning

It sounds bizarre to suggest that the key thing learned was to unlearn. Or more accurately to unlearn to enable new learning. But the idea is that to become a coach, you need to first empty the vessel of what you know about effective communications.

Buddha's exhortation that "*you cannot travel the path before you become the path itself*," is a good place to start. I found I had to unlearn a great deal in order to begin to take on the mantle of a coach.

As a journalist being analytical was everything. Clever listening and questioning skills were needed to prove a hypothesis that was mainly contrived *before* talking to anyone else and information was extracted from subjects into a shape *you* could use.

Thirteen years in corporate communications then added layers of risk and reputation management, carefully calibrating words and parsing meaning to produce the "correct" effect.

Being a consultant didn't improve things. With the relentless focus on growth and value – offering to give clients "time to think" (Nancy Kline ¹) and adopting a holistic approach (Jenny Rogers ²) would get you shown the door.

And so to coaching and a very different *modus operandi*: responsibility for process not content; the designed alliance; suspended judgement; non-directive and the slightly ruthless GROW (Whitmore³) where discussion takes an optimal path towards enlightenment and a session action plan.

The good news is it really works. Coach as skilled enabler of performance enhancement and awareness-raising is miles away from clever communicator. But it was hard work re-aligning around non-directive, trying for level three listening and using silence for inspiration.

But just as you feel your vessel emptying of *those other habits* and your proficiency beginning to improve – a funny thing happens. You begin loosening up. A client organically re-arranges GROW. You flirt with other models (CIGAR⁴). You trust yourself to reflect back without needing to understand everything. For me, the biggest transformation was putting aside note-taking and giving 100% attention to the client (it worked wonders).

In the end, what happens mirrors the trajectory of mythic stories. We begin to perceive that what we had all along was useful. The natural curiosity, the rapport and relationship skills, and the ability to recognise meaning and see the real issues.

This re-integration of self after the hollowing out is profoundly humbling. And so in equipping ourselves for the path, we must become the path...

The Importance of Context

I feel reality is the undervalued cousin in GROW. The ability to put yourself in your client's shoes, to enquire about the situation and to help them understand what is really going on – is disproportionately important.

In the literature (Whitmore⁵, Scoular⁶ etc) it is often GOAL that takes on holy-grail status. Learner coaches are exhorted not to give in too easily in the effort to help the client discover and hone a goal that is SMART and achievable in one session.

But what I've found clients find most beneficial is coaches helping them understand the nuances of their situation. And they put a premium on our ability to deeply engage in this search-for-the-truth, especially with senior clients – often the goal comes after the situational analysis and is uncovered in stages rather than stated at the outset.

But there is more about context that is vitally important. I was struck throughout the programme by the importance indicated by clients themselves – in understanding more about their own operating environment. This can be their work environment where approaches such as Carol Kaufmann's PERFECT model⁷ (explores various key work factors) and Ryan and Deci's autonomy, competence and relatedness matrix⁸ (gauges depth and quality of engagement at work) are hugely useful.

Context is seen plainly in the efforts to understand the personality of the client (MBTI); her interpersonal style (FIRO-B) and what others think/feel about the person (360 degree feedback).

But it can also apply in a more holistic, whole-life sense as well. Appreciating where a client is in their career path (Ibarra's *Working Identity*⁹), in their readiness to change (Prochaska's Stages of Change Model¹⁰), in their dealing with grief (Kubler-Ross¹¹) and even in their life stage (James Hillman, *Force of Character*¹²) may all be absolutely critical in being able to help the client more fully understand their own context.

My experience has been that it is this stage of the GROW process that tends to throw up more "light-bulb" moments than any other. Provided the Reality is harnessed to the other three and particularly seeks to apply the insight gained to effect tangible action, and is not just a round-robin discussion – it is here that the real value lies.

The Hybrid Hydra

I am also interested in what I see as the breaking down of the purist walls of coaching. At the strategic consultancy where I work, increasingly clients are asking for a hybrid of training and coaching – often integrated within the same session.

This mixing of role plays, exercises, coaching sessions and some theory is a variation on the dictum that training works better when followed-up with coaching.

But even with pure coaching sessions, my feeling is there will increasingly be growing pressure to show some elasticity in the model. Here's why:

Senior business clients I have coached have voiced opinions such as:

- don't stay detached, uninvolved and non-committal
- bring some meat to the barbecue
- I'm happy to take charge of my content and choices – but I don't want to just talk to myself.....

Now received coaching wisdom would say there is nothing new here. This is what a really good session should feel like: real engagement that leaves both partners exhausted.

But I think there's more to it than this. In 2012, our consultancy produced a report called "The Changing Communications Landscape." Based on a year's research it sought to clarify key trends affecting communications and the effect of Generation Y (18 to 32 year olds) on these trends.

We found Generation Y was characterised by a predilection for collaboration, networking and connectivity. And that technology was a second skin and drove expectations of speed, flattened hierarchies and a blurring between social and work worlds.

My feeling is coaching will come under pressure to:

- be more collaborative and mix directive with non-directive (Gen Y is the most mentored group in history and craves feedback)
- make more use of technology (by offering SKYPE, Facebook and even text or Twitter coaching sessions)
- offer bite-sized, coaching-on-the-go sessions, perhaps even in real time

This may be fanciful, but the basic drivers we identified in our research – loss of command/control, addictive randomness, personal branding, comfort with ambiguity, collaboration and a sharing of proprietary knowledge – all point to a changing landscape. And although coaching can be seen as the ultimate sanctuary for an individual, it is doubtful that it can remain unaffected by these seismic changes.

Liberation Theology

Finally, I've been struck by how life-affirming and essentially liberating a good coaching session can be; clients talking about burdens having been released and feeling the energy that comes from moving beyond a limiting belief.

My sense is that clients deep down really know what they want, need to do and are doing and that effective coaching provides a platform that gives them permission to move through the three core stages they need to get through to fully activate their plans, namely: forgiveness, verification and transformation.

A deep exploration of the Reality phase gives permission for clients to hunt fearlessly for the truth to enable an understanding of what has happened and needs to happen and the client's role in both. Again my sense is that for many clients this phase is marked by a profound need to set the record straight and to absolve others and themselves of what can be fairly primal emotions such as guilt, regret and anger. Having the courage to recognise the truth paves the way for forgiveness and for the essential verification of themselves – of their worth, value and actions – and of the idea that the truth is perhaps surprisingly better than they may have feared.

Most people are their own worst enemies and are far too hard on themselves. It is by setting the account straight that the third stage – the ability to transform is activated.

There is not the scope in this short paper to talk about the future of spiritual coaching, but I believe it is a potential growth area for coaching and that unlike counselling, mentoring or psychiatry, coaching has perhaps an unrealised depth in this area – because the insight is generated from within and by the client herself.

Finally, that “light-bulb” moment in coaching needn’t come with any metaphysical meaning or be attached to the person’s psyche or soul – but it is uncanny how often the most transformative moments seem to happen at that level – and we are privileged to be present at the creation.

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Mark Dailey

Mark Dailey is a dynamic and empathetic coach specialising in helping senior executives drive change and differentiation and enhance their leadership, awareness, authenticity and impact. Mark draws on 30 years’ global experience in journalism, government, consultancy and banking in offering a unique mix of communications acumen and coaching effectiveness. He is a partner in a London PR firm, has an MBA and is married with two children.

Tel +44 (0)7920 770544

Email mark.dailey@madano.com

High Performance Relationships

Anne Deering

“It is a joy to be hidden, and disaster not to be found” (D. W. Winnicott)

January 2013. Jonathan and Keith are Chair and CEO of a technology start up¹⁾. The key to the success of their business is to establish themselves as first entrants into the market, securing access to channels and building relationships with the market’s major customers. By early 2013 they had funding and were moving into profit after a period of investment. Some important customers had been signed up and their technology was beginning to deliver the outcomes promised, securing a positive reputation in the market. But there was one problem – their relationship was at rock bottom.

- *Jonathan: “He is a nightmare to work with. He underestimates what it takes to implement changes to the business. He is intimidating and just gets angry – he speaks as if his is the only truth”*
- *Keith: “It is so frustrating working with him – he is too cautious, too sceptical. We very nearly wrecked the business through missing a critical acquisition due to his resistance and bureaucracy”*

Jonathan and Keith’s problems with one another were hidden under a veneer of business discourse and civility. Both felt this was necessary to keep the business on an even keel. They recognized that they had issues to address but did not link their inability to have an authentic, constructive conversation with one another to the blockage in the business. The coaching intervention helped them build mutual respect and an understanding of how to get the best out of each other and therefore out of the business.

- *“We have both moderated our behaviours. We know that we need to articulate how we are feeling – we had forgotten each other as people. We need to put an arm round the other and ask how are you doing?”*

This essay outlines what I mean by high performance relationships and their potential impact on businesses. It explores the approach I took in coaching in this context and describes some of the informing theories that helped guide the work.

High Performance Relationships: why they matter and why businesses pay so little attention to them

For me, high performance relationships focus on excellence in delivering business outcomes, on what can be done next to enhance the business rather than on what has happened in the past to constrain it; power and trust are effectively deployed and are not barriers to achievement; and they are characterized by high levels of self-awareness, self-management and authenticity – bringing the whole person in service of the business outcome.

Some colleagues and fellow coaches expressed their discomfort with the title of this essay in its conflation of notions of performance with relationships: *“it brings together two philosophically contradictory worlds”*; *“smacks of overachieving parents”*; *“performance is business, relationships are*

from the private sphere". However, I believe that relationships matter, that businesses need to perform if they are to survive and prosper, and that therefore business needs to find ways to build high performance in critical business relationships to ensure business outcomes, just as they would focus on driving the performance of their manufacturing plant, technology infrastructure or business unit financial performance.

"It's hard to do someone a favour when their finger is sticking in your eye" (Lead IT provider for major public sector programme talking about their customer)

In my consulting experience I have come across countless critical business relationships that simply were not working, to the severe detriment of the business, and with little or no effort being undertaken to manage or improve them. At best they were ignored in any discussion on how to effect change in the business, as if this was not an appropriate subject for debate and change management efforts, even where it was clear that the lack of a positive working relationship was severely impacting outcomes.

So why is such an important business asset given such paucity of attention in today's organizations? It is hard to distinguish cause from effect; however I propose two main drivers:

- I believe that, despite the learning from research over decades²⁾, businesses continue to focus almost exclusively on individual performance³⁾. While the individual remains the primary unit of analysis within organizations, the relationships between individuals are as good as invisible, and are not valued in a world where the individual and his or her performance is considered the main lever to enhancing business outcomes. As a consequence any notion of building higher performance in critical relationships remains a neglected area, with almost no tools for analysis or improvement in a culture where the individual is king.
- Relationships remain an uncomfortable and unfamiliar concept within the typical leadership discourse. In order to build effective relationships, it is essential to bring the whole person to bear. In so many businesses, the cognitive self plays a critical role in the business persona, and yet the feeling, relating self is often absent (*"I feel as if my manager is 'pared down' – just dealing with the mechanics of the business, not its heart"* – business executive). As long as business leaders continue to operate without their full selves, it is highly unlikely that they will notice the impact of flawed relationships, or indeed have the language to articulate relational issues and address them.

The Coaching Journey

1. A Safe Space

Drawing on Nancy Kline's work⁴⁾, I felt it was essential to create a safe space in which each individual could, independently and subsequently together, be listened to non-judgmentally and articulate their perspectives, which I could then distil and replay to them, also serving the purpose of taking the inter-personal conflict into a more objectified, external place.

2. Valuing what we have

Adapting approaches from research on appreciative inquiry⁵⁾, our conversations focused on what was working well, and on what each person most appreciated and valued in the other. This focus helped build a positive and trusting atmosphere in which each felt able to be more authentic in their interventions and more constructive in their reflections and suggestions.

3. Straight talk

In moving to action, our joint session focused on using the language of commitment and request⁶⁾, supporting each executive in building their skills and level of comfort in articulating what they needed from the other without fear of angry outbursts or negativity.

4. Building on our strengths

We used the Realise2 strengths analysis⁷⁾ to further support a positive exploration of how each could help the other to be the best they could be, and to reveal more information to help them get to know each other in a safe and constructive space. Sharing of the Realise2 feedback was extremely valuable in opening a new frame of reference and deeper understanding between them.

Reflections

The two executives in this case study entered into the coaching relationship from an extremely difficult place. They appeared trapped in primal responses – almost paralysed by their emotional reactions to one another in a form of amygdala hijack⁸⁾ and unable to move beyond that to a more considered and reflexive business relationship. I feel that the biggest difficulty facing a coach in this type of situation is how to move beyond the deletions and distortions⁹⁾ of a client's interpretation of their situation that serve to reinforce their worldview and to block any shift or improvement in the situation. According to the Thomas theorem, *"if men define situations as real they become real in their consequences"*¹⁰⁾. How then to create a context in which new information can be received rather than simply integrated into pre-existing interpretations? How can a coach overcome relationship paradigms and expectations that hold a difficult situation in place without triggering defensive responses? I would propose three possible keys to achieving this:

1. Build a new room – Nancy Kline maintains that *"attention, the art of listening with palatable respect and fascination"* creates a new environment for the client, one in which *"giving good attention makes them more intelligent"*⁴⁾. Providing authentic listening in an area that, as stated above, gets little or no attention in a typical work environment can begin to lay the foundations for new insight.
2. Reverse the focus – I believe it is the coach's job to supply what is missing for a client – in this case a new frame of reference or mirror that created insight into an aspect of doing business together that had previously not been a focus of attention, namely the way they created and sustained their working relationship. This new frame was established through a focus on appreciation, strengths and an explicit exploration of unfamiliar territory using different vocabulary and tools.
3. Tilt the balance¹¹⁾ – Where clients are stuck in a situation, a coach needs to shift the terrain if the client is to alter their position. A client may feel safer maintaining his or her perspective but in doing so is giving up any opportunity to improve the situation. Reframing, challenging beliefs and assumptions, drawing on anecdote and metaphor can all serve to 'tilt' effectively. In the case described in this paper, tilting also involved tipping the power balance so that the less powerful/dominant voice of the CEO could be heard more clearly.

In conclusion, I hope that the performance of business relationships will become established as a bona fide focus of attention within organizations, driving and enhancing business performance. I believe that this will entail deploying new perspectives and tools in the workplace – a new

generation of analytical approaches and improvement techniques addressing issues of power, attentiveness and voice¹²⁾.

Notes and Sources

- 1 Details have been changed to protect client anonymity
- 2 For example, *The New Economics for Industry* W.E. Deming 1993; *The Wisdom of Teams* J.R. Katzenbach, D.K. Smith 1993
- 3 For example, 80% of attendees at Ashridge Executive Development programmes believe leaders promote, monitor and reward individual performance
- 4 *Time to Think* N. Kline 1999
- 5 *Appreciative Inquiry* F.J. Barrett, R.E. Fry 2005; *Collaborating for Change: Appreciative Inquiry* D.L. Cooperrider, D. Whitney 2000
- 6 The language of commitment and requests as used in the work of leadership coach Woody Buckner among others (www.woodybuckner.com)
- 7 www.cappu.com; *Positive Psychology: An introduction* M.E.P. Seligman, M. Csikszentmihalyi 2000
- 8 *Coaching Skills* Jenny Rogers 2004
- 9 *NLP At Work* Sue Knight 1995. Typified in the story quoted by Robert Dilts: 'There is an old story about a patient who was being treated by a psychiatrist. The patient wouldn't eat or take care of himself, claiming that he was a corpse. The psychiatrist spent many hours arguing with the patient trying to convince him he wasn't a corpse. Finally the psychiatrist asked the patient if corpses bled. The patient replied, "Of course corpses don't bleed, all of their body functions have stopped." The psychiatrist then convinced the patient to try an experiment. The psychiatrist would carefully prick the patient with a pin and they would see if he started to bleed. The patient agreed. After all, he was a corpse. The psychiatrist gently pricked the patient's skin with a needle and, sure enough, he began to bleed. With a look of shock and amazement the patient gasped, "I'll be darned...corpses DO bleed!"' (www.nlpu.com/transbelief.htm)
- 10 *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs* W.I. Thomas and D.S. Thomas 1928
- 11 Building on concepts of altering and tilting from *Impro for Storytellers* Keith Johnstone 1999. Keith Johnstone describes in detail how this tilting works in an improvisational theatre context, as impro artists fight to maintain balance in a scenario at the expense of comedy. A coach is in a very similar position to the director of impro as described by Johnstone in the sense that they are unsettling previously maintained positions in a safe environment to support higher quality outcomes.
- 12 For example, approaches being developed by The Right Conversation (www.therightconversation.co.uk)

Anne Deering

Anne is an executive coach with 25 years business experience in Europe and North America, primarily in the areas of leadership development and change management. She coaches individuals and leadership teams in a variety of corporate and not-for-profit organizations. Prior to becoming a coach, she was a partner with A.T. Kearney Management Consultants, leading the Organisation and Transformation Practice in Europe. Anne served on the board of A.T. Kearney and is co-author of *Alpha Leadership* and *The Partnering Imperative*.

Tel +44 (0)7929 301337

Email anne@deering.co.uk

Packing away the Wonder Woman suit

Rachel Donath

During a group supervision session I described the dynamic between me and a client. The client was lacking in confidence and not fulfilling her potential in a new role. I described our conversations and my concern that I was intimidating the client in a way I couldn't quite identify. The group were then asked to share their thoughts. One question opened up an interesting avenue: if my client and I were going to a fancy dress party, which costumes would feel appropriate? Rachel as Wonder Woman came one of the answers. This metaphor really resonated. My desire to help people, make suggestions and provide solutions gives me a strong sense of personal identity. However it can also be overpowering. The desire to swoop in and 'save the situation' is often destructive in a coaching situation. My journey as a coach has been to discover a different way of offering help.

As a learning and development manager for a law firm, I design and deliver training. I provide expert advice. And in a law firm, the overriding principle is to find an expert to advise you on your problems. As an internal coach, non directive coaching therefore needs some careful introduction and contracting. It feels new to the lawyers. They want your advice and counsel. They are often suspicious that there is a 'right answer'.

Finding my own rhythm as a coach has meant experimenting with when to step in and when to step back. Part of this for me has been holding onto a mental image of being shoulder to shoulder with the client, learning how to offer observations or input in a far more neutral way. Sometimes my desire to help intruded in unexpected ways. My brain was busy formulating the next question rather than listening, I mean, really listening to what was being said (or not said). If a client said 'I don't know', Wonder Woman panicked and stepped in with a suggestion or an idea. I was focusing on being 'a great coach' as opposed to focusing on the clients.

I am learning to trust my clients to solve their own problems, to more confidently challenge their thinking and focus on helping them to access their own inner resources. What they are thinking is far more important than what I am thinking. Laura Whitworth's¹ explanation of homeostasis provided some comfort. I was midway between the old way, offering advice or expertise, being undone, and the new way, being non directive and encouraging coachees to solve their own problems, being embedded. I sought out some new inspiration in unlikely places: the BFG² with the extraordinarily big ears and a gentle quiet manner; Mr Miyagi, the mentor from the Karate Kid films, who focuses on heart and mind, trusting the hands to follow.

The following personal commandments keep me on track when coaching.

1. Don't dive straight in

As a coach I wanted to prove myself. I wanted clients to see quick results and so initially I would pounce on the first issue that was presented in the session. I was working with senior lawyers who wanted to be partners. We talked about everything while sidestepping the elephant in the room; wannabe partners have to win new clients. My observed coaching session brought this into sharp focus, as the client described everything she already knew. I needed to be less accepting of first answers. I needed more questions at my fingertips to dig much deeper; *'what is the most*

¹ Whitworth, L.(2009). *Co-active Coaching*

² The BFG is the Big Friendly Giant, a character created by Roald Dahl

intimidating part of this role for you?’ or ‘what is the thing you know you should do to make this happen?’.

2. Get comfortable with silence

As a raving extrovert, silence is a challenge. I had to learn to recognise the power of giving people time and permission to think. Watching Nancy Kline³ in action brought this home in a powerful way. I watched the client’s face closely as she patiently asked at least four times ‘*What more do you think, feel or want to say?*’ Each time I expected him to say, ‘Nothing’ and for Nancy Kline to get to work. Instead, the client kept exploring new avenues, opening up possibilities and pushing himself forward. Nancy Kline faded into the background and I was spellbound by the brain origami in front of me. Nancy Kline showed me how to have more faith in your client and trust them to think for themselves. I stopped thinking about the next question and learnt to be more in the moment. I stopped stepping into the thinking space.

3. Explore the reality

Wonder Woman likes a solution and she likes it fast. I discovered I tended to skip through the reality stage of ‘GROW’ and motor forward into options. I felt comfortable generating action points and looking at possibilities. However, this led me to collude with clients; accepting everything that was presented to me as fact. I now spend much more time in ‘reality’. NLP⁴ really helped me from a language perspective to spot opinions expressed as fact, challenge interpretations, generalizations and assumptions. Gallwey⁵ helped me understand the power of the mind and how it talks to itself.

I helped one client to recognise how her mind had interpreted a difficult conversation with her boss. She had raised a concern about the team’s workload and now felt she had been labelled as someone who couldn’t cope. She was angry and aggrieved and with typical ‘F’ force, was withdrawing from the relationship. We talked about other ways to interpret her boss’s response and subsequent actions. She walked away feeling lighter and more positive.

Probing reality proved much harder than I expected. Challenging people’s thoughts and feelings can provoke strong emotions or defensiveness. Wonder Woman wanted to smooth these over. I had to learn to make clients ‘comfortably uncomfortable’ and hold the space while their brain was at work.

4. Match pace

Self exploration has been an important part of the process of becoming a coach. My pace of life is fast. I am a doer. Action orientated. Pragmatic. When coaching someone desperate to escape the daily stress of being a lawyer, I realised that I was driving the sessions at my pace rather than his. His speech is slower and more considered. His energy levels are more measured. I needed to slow down and match his pace. I often make quick decisions and this client made me recognise how my expectations around pace and change could destroy the rhythm of a session.

With this client I also put Ibarra⁶ to the test: we mapped out potential future selves; we talked about existing and new networks; we explored his desire to change and what was holding him back.

5. It’s a journey not a destination

Watching a fishbowl with Bill Critchley, a Gestalt coach, he explained his desire to make a difference rather than achieve an outcome. He argued that changing how clients feel or approach a situation creates the will to then take different action. This really helped to focus on probing the client’s

³ Kline, N. (1999). *Time To Think*.

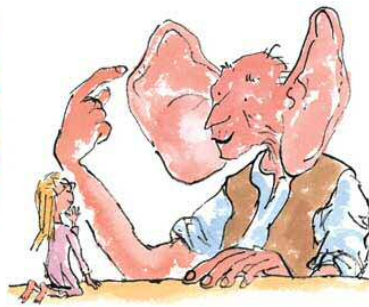
⁴ Knight, S. (1995). *NLP At Work*

⁵ Gallwey, W.T. (1986). *The Inner Game of Tennis*

⁶ Ibarra, H. (2004). *Working Identity*

thinking and their approach, avoiding my natural inclination to ask *'So what will you do next?'* Questions that help me check in with clients during sessions are *'So what have you taken from this conversation so far?'* or *'What stands out from what you have heard yourself say?'* Mr Miyagi in practice, focusing on the heart and mind.

Some of Wonder Woman can stay. My ability to empathise has created some profound conversations. I have a wide range of tools in the toolkit, so am not wedded to one approach. I can build high levels of trust with clients. I think this journey will be a lifetime one and I imagine my commandments will shift and role models come and go. I can't wait.



Rachel Donath

Rachel is Learning and Development manager for Mills & Reeve, a top 50 law firm. Having spent many years coaching in professional services firms KPMG and McKinsey, she's now back home in Birmingham working with lawyers on career development, leadership and management skills, personal impact and business development.

Tel +44 (0)121 456 8384

Email rachel.donath@mills-reeve.com

“It’s coaching Jim but not as we know it” – My journey to the unknown

Tony Dutton

Learner Coach or Learned Coach?

When I first embarked on the notion of becoming a qualified or certified business coach, I was under the distinct impression that I was already a reasonably proficient coach – after all I had been coaching for most of my executive career – hadn’t I? Well nobody had told me otherwise therefore I must have been coaching. In fact some of my ‘coachees’, former leadership team members and colleagues had been, and still do, come back for more support and advice, even though we are no longer working together and, in some cases, living on the other side of the world – so it must be true.

From the time when I stepped up to my first line management role, as a Marketing Manager, to my most recent, senior executive positions as a General Manager, I have been coaxing, managing, mentoring, leading, directing, encouraging, forcing, manipulating and facilitating – well that’s coaching - isn’t it? Well that’s what I would have called coaching so when I decided to take up the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme I was well positioned to learn how to do ‘it’ even better.

Are you sitting comfortably? Fasten your seat belts!

With great enthusiasm and confidence I eagerly attended my first tutorial when, very quickly, I started to come to the realisation that coaching, per se, comes in many different shapes and sizes and that the definitions or assumptions I had made about coaching were somewhat outdated and simplistic.

So coaching is not about providing leadership and direction, nor is it necessarily about sharing wisdom, expertise or experience. In fact, I learned there are nearly as many definitions of coaching as there are coaches! So my comfort level soon started to erode and I found myself asking more questions about coaching than I thought possible – and no, I no longer felt as though I was sitting comfortably with this new definition and this new perspective on coaching. So providing solutions to clients, offering them perspectives and insights based on years of experience was not necessarily the modus operandi for a truly non-directive coaching methodology – had anyone told our clients that?

The bumpy ride with Practice Clients

So where to begin? Well, faced with the apparently daunting prospect of finding and working with four Practice Clients over the following ten months, I eagerly set about finding my four as quickly as possible. Task: find Clients and get them on board as soon as possible. As proud as punch I managed, through my network, to find three willing clients really quite easily – perhaps too easily for my own good. Did I reflect on client type? No, not really. Did I try and stage when the clients would come on board? No. Did I take a long term perspective of when to start and with how many? No. I quickly set up Chemistry Meetings and took a very short term perspective: get the clients on board,

grab them while you can and crack on. This was an interesting and early insight into my MBTI preference ie. strong 'P': *Preferring flexibility and spontaneity* – 'plunge in', 'bursts and spurts', present focused'. Yes, that's definitely me! There was no need for this haste. Key learning – better to stagger when you start working with your practice clients in line with your tutorial learning – grow your confidence and expertise in line with your client's experience! With each tutorial and with each practice session there were insights, perspectives and skills to bring to the party with the next client.

That said, every client session, in spite of this apparently rather haphazard approach, has been a powerful learning experience. The initial sessions were not just uncomfortable for me though, the going got tough for my clients too, especially when I asked open, non-directive questions which didn't come laden with suggestions and solutions. That's when the discomfort levels would rise and, at least on one occasion, I received the following type of repost: 'I'm not sure this is the *type* of coaching I need'.

On reflection, at the initial Chemistry Meetings, I needed to be much more explicit about the type of coaching I would be providing – namely non-directive. Well I thought I had been but, with hindsight, I should have worked harder at managing the expectations of my initial clients, none of whom had ever been coached. In spite of my attempts to outline what my approach would mean to them and how this might not necessarily fit with their expectations, there was an implied assumption that I would be mentoring and consulting to them.

So in early sessions there were certainly shades of the 'blind leading the blind'. This was particularly evident as I tried desperately to cling to the *GROW* framework but often found myself unable to shift out of first gear - the Goal - and into second gear. Much of the shared angst was driven by the almost obsessive search for that elusive crystal clear Goal and the regular revisiting and reframing of the goal as the journeys shifted the client into a new space. Another key learning: Goals come in many guises and have the curious ability to morph from being specific and measurable to vague and wishy washy with alarming ease and stealth!

One of the most frustrating aspects of my gradual reincarnation as an executive coach has been the growing realisation that your clients will regularly change their appointments with you. Coming from a corporate position, where my team members generally stuck to their commitments, this has been a somewhat humbling experience. The frustration of session postponements is something you just have to accept and try to address through tighter contracting. That said, clearly there is the need to ensure that there isn't too much of a time gap between sessions otherwise the momentum of the assignment will drift and you end up re-treading familiar ground at the start of the following sessions. In particular, familiarising yourself with the Goal.

Don't blame the Practice Clients

By the time T3 comes along, the notion of multi-stakeholder goal setting and organisational contracting really resonated with me. The rather uncomfortable ride for my initial clients, in their early sessions, was significantly influenced by my lack of awareness of the importance of contracting-in and ensuring alignment of the assignment goals with those of the client, the organisation and my own. Put a different way, getting clarity on who exactly is contracting with whom and to do what? What are the explicit deliverables? It all sounds terribly obvious but for me it was a blind spot that hindered progress with and commitment from clients.

Learning New Skills – the hard way

Of course the Meyler Campbell programme is not just about working with clients, helping them to travel on a journey towards clearly crafted goals; it's also designed to help you acquire new skills which you can put into practice immediately – in the classroom too. From the reading list, class discussion and trial and error in class coaching sessions, the following are the most pertinent and impactful skills I believe I have acquiring over the past year:

Listening: no, *really* listening, not just being aware of stuff and giving the impression of listening whilst drifting off and being distracted by what happened last weekend or what's for dinner. Listening intensely to the client giving them my full and absolute attention. The power of listening which was so brilliantly illustrated to me in Nancy Kline's Fishbowl session.

Asking powerful, paradigm shifting questions: sounds easy, not a bit of it. Asking the telling question at the right time and without preloaded assumptions I have found particularly challenging – that's when I tend to resort to question stacking or multiple questioning as I struggle to ask the killer question with clarity. A real skill I am learning – there's a long way to go!

Working with and trusting your intuition: much of the reading and in-class supervision has brought out the notion of intuition. I particularly appreciated Gallwey's insights around trusting and believing in yourself and positive thinking. I think Whitworth puts it well with '*listening below the surface*'.

Models and metaphors: understanding and having a toolkit of models and metaphors is one thing, the skill is in knowing when and how to use them. I tend to get hung up on using them at the right time and wanting to fully understand them before using them. The key learning though, from Sam our supervisor, is that these are often just facilitators to get the discussion moving or started. They bring colour, energy and alternative ways of looking at an issue. Yes, they can be diagnostic but I've learnt to be more relaxed and experimental about using them. These have been my most frequently used this year: Prochaska's Stages of Change; Kubler-Ross's 5 Stages of Grief; De Bono's Thinking Hats; Johari's Window; Ibarra's Working Identity; Schein's Career Anchor's; Myers Briggs Type Indicators.

Journeying into the unknown - learning about myself – ouch!

The journey has also been a journey of understanding into what makes me tick. What are my preferences and how do they affect my coaching and learning style? Feedback from Sam in calls and class, along with feedback from class mates have all contributed to a heightened self-awareness. Specifically, I can be arrogant at times – thinking I know what the client's problem is and the required solution. Clearly not letting the client have the space and being in their space, collaborating, co-actively. I fight with myself coming over as judge and jury! My preference is towards conservatism, pessimism and self-criticism. Not a revelation to me but the impact on my ability to coach with an open, positive mind is certainly affected and I need to understand how, when and why that might be happening.

The journey to keep learning new skills

Over the coming months my goals are to accelerate the learning, in particular with respect to:

Psychometrics: I feel this is a black hole I need to work hard at opening up and building a degree of understanding and comfort about. I have attended a Psychometrics workshop but need to go deeper.

NLP: I really want to build my confidence and understanding of NLP techniques. I want to build my confidence in identifying and working with the core themes around filters, deletions and distortions.

Myers Briggs: such a powerful tool and usually the cornerstone of preference profiling. I really need to get under the skin of MBTI. Not to achieve certification but to be able to help clients with interpretation and implications.

Goal setting: after a year of working with practice clients and in class, I still need to work at goal setting and assignment mapping. I struggle to get my clients to satisfactorily crystallise their assignment and session goals, undermining the effectiveness and efficiency of our sessions.

In addition to these goals I have embarked on an Improvisation course and intend to pursue the development of Improvisation skills both for personal and professional reasons. I am seeing a powerful connection between coaching and improvisation techniques which I believe can help me bring a unique dimension to my coaching experience. Specifically, Improvisation encourages creative thinking, spontaneity, techniques for positive relationship building and confidence building – a toolkit with potent parallels to coaching techniques.

Where to from here? The GROW journey set to continue

In conclusion, as I progress along the journey from ‘*novice coach*’ to ‘*not-quite-a-novice coach*’ I’m struck by the notion that the more I learn about coaching, the more I realise how little I really know about coaching and how widely and deeply the subject can be studied and practised. So there’s much to do and I am increasingly appreciating that the Meyler Campbell programme provides the opportunity to no more than scratch the surface. It provides a breadth of understanding, frameworks, platforms for experimentation and insights into diverse approaches. It does not produce the finished article which in coaching terms, of course, never exists.

In this respect, a key message from Sam has been to decide on where to focus rather than on trying to be a ‘jack-of-all-coaching’. To narrow it down then, my aspiration is to coach senior executives in multinational organisations who lead organisations across transnational boundaries. I believe my international, corporate background will bring me credibility and empathy with those senior executives facing the challenges of their own and their team’s career transition and performance opportunities. There’s a long way to go and networking both within the coaching community and the target population will be key as will building on the foundations laid out along the Meyler Campbell journey.

Tony Dutton

Tony has held country leadership positions in Novartis’ Consumer and Animal Health businesses. He has lived and worked in Switzerland, Brazil, Australia and the UK and has recruited, led and developed senior commercial and technical executives. His coaching business supports leaders with the challenges of international career development, virtual teams, and organisational isolation.

Tel +44 (0)7775 440849

Email tony@kennedyhouse.co.uk

Web www.kennedyhouse.co.uk

Can We Take the Non-Directive Aspect of Coaching and Better Apply it In Other Areas?

Paul Fisher

"It is the client who knows what hurts, what directions to go, what problems are crucial, what experiences have been deeply buried" - **Carl Rogers**

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it" - **General Dwight Eisenhower**

One of the biggest challenges in my business coaching journey over the past 12 months has been the discipline of trying to be non-directive in my coaching. Having worked for the past 18 years as a communications specialist running my own company - providing specific advice on what a company or a person should or should not do - this has required a pretty radical change in both mindset and my style of interaction with people.

Yet, while it has stretched my self-discipline to the limits at times (especially when coaching individuals who work in a similar field to me), I now feel confident that I can hold my own within a coaching environment without slipping into 'consultancy mode'.

One of the key reasons why I have managed to achieve this is by clearly seeing how truly transformational non-directive coaching can be. Through subtle and nuanced questions and through focused listening, it has been a revelation to me to see how coachees can come up with and take ownership of their own solutions with a much better chance that they are likely to be implemented and lead to true behavioural change.

Yet, can non-directional coaching and the non-directional approach in general be better used in other facets of business?

Too often, today's organisations are characterised by a 'command and control' culture. In the words of General George Patton: *"Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way"*.

The same is the case in the consultancy business where after a cursory listening to what the client does, we are all too ready to leap in with advice telling them how we think things should be done and seeing these recommendations as the principal justification for our invoice at the end of the month.

This essay will examine how, through listening and understanding and the adopting of a more non-directional approach in our day-to-day interactions, we can be more effective as leaders and in, my case, add greater value to my clients as an external consultant.

The Case for Directive

Firstly, it's important to stress that there's clearly a case for direction – even in coaching.

There are times, for example, where the client needs access to information that can only be imparted in a directional manner.

Law, accounting, high finance, communications....these are all areas where clients expect to access and pay for information and advice. The same is the case in organisations where a directional approach – normally from managers downwards – is needed to ensure that everyone is moving in the same direction.

I also believe that there's a case for direction in coaching.

One thing I noticed about the Business Coach Programme is that while two thirds of the tutorials embed you with the notion that you as a coach should never be directional, in the last third of the course there is a relaxing of these parameters and a move towards celebrating and acknowledging what you bring to the table as individuals.

If you don't allow the coach to tap into this knowledge and past experience in albeit a subtle non-directional way, you are essentially destroying value. As John Donne put it : *"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."*

Yet, while there has to be some element of direction, have we gone too far? How can we encourage a more non-directive approach while still keeping these directive elements?

Non-Directional – Where Are Such Approaches Being Used?

When researching the non-directional approach and how prevalent it is in society and business, I found that it remains relatively niche, centred around therapy, counselling and, of course, coaching.

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, for example, defines counselling as *"a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. It does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action."*

American psychologist Carl Rogers' humanist-based non-directional focus takes this underpinning and bases his approach on three fundamental principles – i) genuineness and the need to share feelings honestly; ii) unconditional positive regard for the client and the need to accept them for who they are; and iii) an empathetic understanding where the therapist can act as a mirror of the client's feelings and thoughts. In this way, therapy can help clients become more self-aware and change their behaviour through self-direction.

Abortion counselling is another area where non-directive counselling is embedded. Even anti-abortion organisations, such as LIFE, stress that non-directive counselling should create an environment *"for the client to flourish"* where *"counsellors should be non-judgmental and provide an empathic understanding of the client."* With abortion being for many people such a 'black or white' issue, being non-directive is no mean feat!

With organisations, such as LIFE, being very clear as to what they advocate (Life not abortions), there are echoes of the Dwight Eisenhower quote where there is a focus on *"getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it"*.

Move into business and organisational development, however, and that's where the non-directional approach seems to be less prevalent and, outside coaching, I found very little research or methodologies in this area.

The Business Context

So how effective would such an approach be in a business context and why hasn't it been more prevalent to date?

There's no doubt that in many cases management has started to move on from the top-down, 'we know best' model of management – a model that failed so spectacularly during the global financial crisis.

Instead, it is starting to be replaced by a need to encourage individual accountability and nurture skills further down the organisation. Managers today are more adept at encouraging critical thinking, getting people to think about their situations, and pointing people to find the answers within.

And as the quote from Dwight Eisenhower at the outset of this essay puts it so well, if people 'want' to do something, they are much more likely to do it. A non-directional approach which empowers people and where the motivations come from within is crucial here.

Yet, despite these developments, there is so much more that organisations can do in taking the non-directional ethos of coaching and embedding it within a day-to-day organisational environment to help individuals move from just compliance and doing what they are told to actual long lasting commitment.

Furthermore, this need for non-directive management will be exacerbated even more as younger generations enter the workforce with their own ways of working and very different demands. A warning sign is a recent survey from the UK Chartered Institute of Personal Development which found that the group with the lowest job satisfaction ratings are employees aged 18 to 24.

The Consultant's Viewpoint

From a consultant's viewpoint and looking back at how I have interacted with clients over the last few years, a non-directive coaching approach could manifest itself in a number of ways in my day-to-day activities. These might include:

Applying the GROW Model

As in coaching, the GROW model is highly effective in a consultancy relationship and an important means of ensuring that the relationship goes in a direction you like without resorting to being too directional. This again links in to the skill of getting people to do what you want done because they want to do it.

For example, embracing the GROW model in my consultancy role would help better define what the goal is from the relationship and when we will know it has been achieved ('What does success look like to you?'). I can also use the GROW model to get buy-in and commitment at the 'W' stage ('How can we share responsibilities? When can we commit to getting things done?'). It is tools, such as the GROW model, that can help me fulfil my role as an external consultant without coming across as too directive.

Asking Better Questions

Coaching and the non-directional approach have also taught me how I can ask better questions of the client. A useful technique here would be to develop action-oriented questions where the onus is

on the client to answer and where their actions are very much part of the solution. For example: 'What steps do we need to take to move this forward?' and 'How can I support you in achieving your goal?'

Have Greater Empathy with the Client.

Undergoing business coaching has also encouraged me to improve my empathy with the client. This includes adapting my style of language and even body language to ensure a closer and harmonious environment. Trying to get an improved insight into the organisational context within which the client is operating would also be useful here.

Don't let the Client off the Hook

As in coaching, it's also important that the client or the coachee does the work. They need to 'dig deep' and be fully immersed in the process or the coaching or consultancy engagement is unlikely to work. Too often in the past, however, I have perhaps let the client off the hook encouraging them to just let me get on with it. They need to do the work as well!

Using to Positive Effect

I have already actively started using these skills in my consultancy work to positive effect. For example, I recently held a kick-off meeting with a new client. Such meetings can often be uneasy affairs with both sides figuring each other out, some individuals all too ready to hand over communications activities to the outside consultant, and the clock ticking past two or even three hours.

Yet through a focus on goals and a mixture of empathy, questioning, listening and non-directional focusing on what the client perceived their needs to be, the meeting lasted less than an hour and a half with everyone engaged, collaborative and committed as to what needed to be done.

My non-directional and coaching behaviour had helped draw the best out of the participants who, in turn, demonstrated similar characteristics themselves.

Taking the Business Coach Programme has been a richly valuable experience for me in terms of learning coaching techniques and building up my confidence to start on a new career.

Little did I know that it would give me an important new perspective on my existing career as well!

Paul Fisher

Paul has spent the last 12 years running his own communications consultancy, working with international institutions, such as the World Bank, through to blue-chips like BT, Emerson and IBM (Meyler Campbell is another client). Now, with business coaching under his belt, Paul will be providing a complete consultancy and coaching service that leverages his expertise in both areas and ensures high value results all round.

Tel +44 (0)7733 224850

Email pfisher@axiomcomms.com

The Quiet Ones are the Worst

David Foster

During my 30 odd year career as a divisional director in multinational manufacturing corporations I have seen both good and bad examples of leadership style, from the downright autocratic to probably the best example I have seen, a managing director who commanded huge respect but who usually spoke softly and rarely gave direct instructions. In other words he was coaching his managers to achieve their best. These differing styles of leadership were driven by beliefs, experience and type of personality.

One observation during practice coaching of clients has been that although the literature gives insights into the theory and practice of coaching, it is not a 'one size fits all' affair; the approach to each client depends on the type of personality looking at you expectantly across the table. There is, for example, a personality type that tends to see the negative side of a situation, (glass half empty), and another personality type that will tend to look for the positive, (glass half full).

In this paper I look at the specifics of personality type as recognized by the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

The influence of Introversion and Extraversion on the style of coaching

The MBTI 'score' starts with splitting the world into two camps; introverts and extraverts. A grasp of whether your client is an 'I' or an 'E' seems essential if you are to succeed in coaching successfully and, when considering the approach to coaching, is the most important personality trait to understand early on.

The definition of whether a person is an introvert or an extravert revolves around where they get their energy from. An 'E' will increase his or her energy from being in an energetic environment, whilst an 'I' might recover energy by lying down in a quiet corner. The outward sign of the obvious 'E' is that they seem at ease in company, possibly as the centre of attraction, and are happy making their views heard. An obvious 'I' on the other hand will tend to prefer to be out of the limelight, a listener and an observer rather than a talker.

One observation from my coaching is that the 'E' has been concerned with how he is perceived by the outside world, whilst the 'I' has been concerned how to deal with it. This could be interpreted as the 'E' types wanting to make sure they are accepted into the world as much as possible, whilst the 'I' types are just as keen to keep everyone at bay.

If a client is working on a particular issue, as most are, then an extravert will tend to jump straight to the action without too much analysis; this implies that the coaching has to challenge any proposed actions to ensure the reality is taken account of, and all options have been explored. An introvert on the other hand may need to be pushed towards action, tending to dwell for longer than needed on exploring options, and showing a reluctance to commit to action too quickly.

The obvious implication for coaching is that clients have very differing ideas of what they want from coaching depending on personality. This can be brought out in questioning of course, but an early assessment of which camp the client sits in will inform the coaching enormously.

A second observed contrast between the two types was that the 'E' was happy to engage in a debate, give details of background, answer questions and be challenged, and one of the concerns I had during my early days of practice coaching was how to get permission to stop one particular client talking for long enough to be able to ask a question. On the other hand 'Time to Think' is much more relevant to the coach of an 'I', because part of the art of coaching very quiet individuals is coaxing information out of them, and letting them think before answering is essential.

The influence of perception type

The second element of the MBTI type is how we perceive the world around us, and is broken into those who use Sensing (S), who are mainly interested in the practical, i.e. what they can see or hear, and those who use Intuition (N), who have a preference for theorising and thinking of what might be.

Coaching is of course predominantly about the client's need to change. The MBTI booklet 'Introduction to Type in Organisations' classes the first two elements into four preference groupings, and highlights how clients will tend to recognise the need for change:

IS - Thoughtful realist, for whom change comes from seeing what should be preserved and what could be changed, and tends to prefer continuity. In other words, if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

IN - Thoughtful innovator, who tends to visualise a future and look for change from that.

ES - Action-oriented realist, who sees the need for change from the need to be more effective.

EN - Action-oriented innovator, who is keen to try different things to see what works.

This grouping therefore takes the split between the introvert and extravert a stage further by informing the coach of the preference for action, or a preference to theorise, of the client.

The difference between these two types is that the former will often be happy to act without being in possession of all the facts; I have seen many examples of managers in business who tend to act and then seek forgiveness later, rather than wait for permission to act. The second type however will tend to want to be very sure of their ground before moving, a definite case of look before you leap. Both approaches can be useful of course, but in coaching it might be wise to be aware of a client's tendency in this area and to look for, and challenge the client appropriately on, over or under caution when actions are being planned.

The influence of temperament

The final two elements of the MBTI type are how we make decisions, split into thinking (T) and feeling (F) types, and how we look at the outside world, whether judging (J) or Perceiving (P).

The thinking (T) type can be cold and logical, tending to prefer facts for decision making rather than the feelings of others, whilst the feeling (F) type will prefer to work in harmony with others, perhaps looking for consensus and finding it difficult to handle conflict.

The judging (J) type is task oriented, doesn't like surprises and expects others to pull their weight, whilst the perceiving (P) type enjoys flexibility, is adaptable and expects others to be flexible too.

The MBTI booklet outlines the importance of each element in combination with others, and pays particular attention to the strength of each personality element within an individual, which may be different depending on the combination of the four elements in the client.

The booklet highlights the following groupings when looking at the overall temperament of the client:

SJ – dependable but possibly bureaucratic, needing a clear plan of what is required of them.

SP – spontaneous, but prone to taking short cuts, prefer to be free to decide on action as they proceed.

NF – able to lead and inspire, but perhaps too idealistic, need to see the value of what they are doing.

NT – like to be experts but can be competitive, like work that is challenging.

Conclusion

My practice coaching, as well as debate during our coaching tutorials, led to me to conclude that to be a successful coach to all types, one needs as a minimum to use the 'chemistry' meeting to assess the type of person the client is, to enable some pre-planning of the overall approach before the first coaching session. It may of course be that the client already has a personality type profile, or may be willing to undergo an assessment, but if not then some initial observation of the client is needed to assist planning.

Be aware during coaching that an introvert may tend to be more cautious in expressing himself, which by definition means the language is chosen more carefully. The body language of an 'I' may also be less expressive, and more difficult to interpret. An extravert can often be more comfortable expressing himself, and more open in his thinking.

I emphasize the influence of the introvert/extravert split on the approach to coaching, because that can be the most obvious trait to observe, and tends to be a major influence on overall behaviour although of course the greater the knowledge one has of one's client, the more informed the coaching will be.

Me? I'm an ISTJ....Thoughtful realist, prefers continuity and a clear plan, not surprises. Should have started this essay sooner, then....

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David Foster

Following a career as an FD with international manufacturing groups and in Private Equity, David now coaches male and female business executives on such challenges as managing across international borders and moving a business into Private Equity ownership. He also coaches managers on stepping up into more strategic roles and on challenges facing women in business.

Tel +44 (0)7760 557634

Email david.foster@enhansis.co.uk

A Unified Life

Henry Ford

My path from the City to fulltime business coach has been a journey of discovery, fulfilment and liberation.

Coaching enables me to live a life of unified actions and principles.

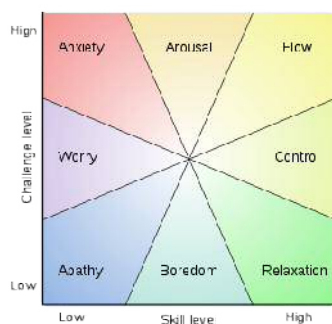
Discovery:

I want to understand everything. That knowledge-seeking NT within me has always searched for the immutable laws of the universe. The elegance of Newton's $f=m \cdot a$ explained the motion of the moon and putting his law into practice enabled man to walk there. Maxwell, Einstein, Bohr and others refined our understanding of the physical world and while Crick and Watson revealed the chemical miracle of living organisms, I still sought to understand Life, with a capital "L". Immodestly, half my life ago, I had posited my own "Five Laws of Life" in order to help make sense of what is a messy and confusing world. It seemed that while all circumstances were "explained" by The Five (Life isn't fair, Life isn't easy, Life is short, Life is a process and Life is great!), they provided no direction around the existential abyss, only explanation and consolation for the fact of Buddha's first Noble Truth which points to the suffering in Life. It is a cold, cruel, bloody world out there!

Although I firmly believed that there must be ways to find happiness and fulfilment, my quest for a happy life was thwarted by two major dichotomies in my work within the City. Coaching has enabled me to unlock them, to understand that there are three types of Happy Lives and to live a unified life.

Dichotomy Number One:

Coaching training has taught me that we all have strengths and weaknesses and unrealised strengths, as well as learned behaviours. My mathematical strengths enabled me to work on deals worth billions. However, to succeed on Wall Street and in the City I needed to learn de-energising behaviours to earn the means to achieve the first Happy Life, Seligman's Pleasant Life¹, which left me materially entertained, but unfulfilled in work. Dichotomy Number One was the relative material success I enjoyed without Flow (Csíkszentmihályi)². Unfulfilled within the competitive and confrontational world of international finance, my first step towards the coaching path was to redesign my job to become a manager, mentor and inspirer of world class talent. This helped to satisfy my NT quest for understanding of human motivation, leadership and Life. I relished the reading research, and the literature which began to fill a box entitled "Next Career."



Within the City, I found myself in violation of my own "Talent Rule" created to ensure that any new hire's role would form a rewarding "Next Chapter" in their life. This would position our new professionals to move from Arousal to Flow with the challenge to acquire and develop higher skill levels. Those in "Control" can be unchallenged, uninspired and unhappy. I had known what it felt like in that "Control" sector and not moving towards Maslow's "Self

¹ Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realise your potential for lasting fulfillment*. New York Free Press.

² Seligman, M.E.P. & Csíkszentmihályi, M. (2000). *Positive psychology: An introduction*. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5–14.

Actualisation”³ through my own work. [N.b., I would suggest that this “Talent Rule” is particularly important today in the City when the current economy has placed so many qualified (and over-qualified!) professionals in the market.] Every manager wants his/her people to succeed. While the most successful people love what they do and do what they love and Flow, I was not flowing and not happy.

Dichotomy Number Two:

While a career in the City can provide the means to live Seligman’s Pleasant Life⁴, for me it was enervating. For example, an ability to visualise geometry proved a great strength in creating financial structures, however when this was rewarded with responsibility for final sign-off on all financial figures in a global business, I needed to learn the behaviour of diligence and attention to massive amounts of minute detail. I would shut my office door, put on the music, get my head down and pore over the figures, always “translating” them into geometric shapes in my head to confirm their correctness. In every sense it was work.

In the combative environment of investment banking, my ability to “get into the zone” and Flow was fractured by the stress promulgated by the NUTS permeating the City. Dr Sonia Lupien⁵ formulates the perfect recipe for stress, NUTS: Novelty, Unpredictability, Threats to the ego and the Sense of loss of control. Stress can predispose what Daniel Golman named the “amygdala hijack”⁶ when, if signals to the brain are matched to the pattern of a fight, flight or freeze situation, the amygdala triggers the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal sequence which swamps rational brain processes. On a football pitch or a sinking yacht, this may be appropriate. In a suit and tie, performing detailed financial analyses, being hijacked annihilates Flow and limits the faculties which can be brought to bear on client’s issues.

Whence Happiness?

I found the most satisfying part of my work in the City was the professional development, mentoring and coaching which formed a sizable portion of my day. I liked it because I enjoy helping people and it developed my understanding of how we humans work. Importantly, rather than sitting on the “other side of the table” from a competitor, in-house coaching put me on the “same side” with colleagues helping them to navigate Buddha’s cold, cruel bloody world in there. And it provided glimpses of Seligman’s third and Meaningful life of happiness.

Seligman’s work posits three Lives of Happiness: the Hollywood (or Pleasant) Life, the Engaged Life and the Meaningful Life. The Meaningful Life comports with the “holy life” espoused by most religions. As a scientist, I fall more into Dawkins’ camp⁷ on the issue of faith and resonate with non-theistic Buddhism, which prescribes the Noble Eightfold Path to the cessation of suffering, anxiety, stress and dissatisfaction. While the Buddhist moral compass directs towards mindfulness and to the Path away from suffering: right mindfulness, right effort, right livelihood, etc., it does not point towards the holy grail of Happiness.

My coaching training led me to discover scientifically sound (random assignment, placebo tested, statistically significant and replicable) research which supports the thesis that happiness derives from the use of signature strengths in work, life and love. (Seligman⁸) For me, this was an important discovery which puts the arrow on the compass rose pointing towards Happiness.

³ A. H. Maslow (1943), *A Theory of Human Motivation*, Originally Published in *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.

⁴ Seligman, Ted Lecture, http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html

⁵ Sophia Lupien, (2012) *Well Stressed: Manage Stress Before it Becomes Toxic*, John Wiley & Sons

⁶ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amygdala_hijack

⁷ Dawkins, (2007) *The God Delusion*, Black Swan Press

⁸ Seligman, Ted Lecture, http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html

Further hard research (Linley, et al⁹) revealed that using strengths promotes goal progress, which progress in turn is associated with both need satisfaction and well-being. They conclude that “strengths use offers an interesting and reliable avenue for pursuing self-concordant goals.” While it may seem quite obvious to some that making progress toward personally relevant goals by using authentic strengths can help one to feel more positive and have a greater sense life satisfaction, for me, this recent research provided a pointer up Maslow’s hierarchy and now comprises a central principle in my coaching practice.

The scientific conclusion that using strengths can promote a sense of well-being both a) through goal progress and b) through the psychological need fulfilment associated with achieving goals gave me the basis for a working paradigm to help the client to achieve their goals and happiness, broaden client awareness of their strengths, facilitate the generation of options to use authentic strengths to achieve self-concordant goals and imbue the client with the responsibility for making the right effort to attain those goals. Research by Sheldon and Elliot¹⁰ (1999) and Sheldon and Kasser¹¹ (1998) showed that goals that are personally valued and associated with growth, connectedness and autonomy are specifically associated with greater wellbeing.

The alloy of the scientific principles of Positive Psychology and the moral compass of the Eightfold Noble Path forms the foundation of my coaching model to help clients act authentically, maximise chances of achieving their dreams and improve their sense of well-being. The coach can help clients to become aware of their strengths and their ability to design work styles which utilise them, simply stated, “bloom where you are planted by fertilising performance with your signature strengths (or change jobs!)”

The Right Livelihood

Like many leaving the accredited Meyler-Campbell Business Coaching Programme, I am childishly excited about being able to help coachee clients to achieve their authentic goals and maximise their chances of enhancing their personal well-being. Coaching provides the opportunity to learn and to develop my understanding of how everything works, especially those most fascinating of all: Humans.

Clearly, as a novice I am not in Flow in the coaching sense, standing between Flow and Anxiety within Arousal: highly challenged and moderately skilled, facing towards Flow as I develop my coaching practice. Business coaching provides me daily opportunities to improve my understanding, attain a Pleasant Life economically and earn a Right Livelihood.

A Unified Life

Hence coaching as a profession offers an opportunity to unify my life, to be that same person at work and at home. The study and practice of coaching provide rich arenas to satisfy my thirst for discovery. My passion for understanding drives me to build my coaching library and allows me to indulge in CPD. As a practitioner of yoga for many years, mindfulness shall form a cornerstone in my practise and the Meyler-Campbell Business Coaching Programme has broadened my own self-awareness and granted implicit permission to bring the practise of pranayama into coaching sessions.

⁹ P. Alex Linley, Karina M. Nielsen, Alex M. Wood, Raphael Gillett & Robert Biswar-Diener, *The Australian Psychological Society Ltd, Interest Group in Coaching Psychology, International Coaching Psychology Review*, Volume 5 No. 1 March 2010, pp. 6-15

¹⁰ Sheldon, K.M. & Elliot, A.J. (1999). “Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The Self-Concordance Model.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 482–497.

¹¹ Sheldon, K.M., Elliot, A.J., Kim, Y. & Kasser, T. (2001). “What is satisfying about satisfying events? Testing 10 candidate psychological needs” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 325–339.

I feel the excitement of unifying my own path to mindfulness within a new career: a chance to love what I do and do what I love.

Developing Right Understanding, fostering Right Thought, exercising Right Speech, inspiring Right Effort, encouraging Right Mindfulness, and maintaining Right Concentration while earning a Right Livelihood are positive steps along the Eightfold Noble Path.

And while they might soon come up with the holy grail of physics, the so-called Grand Unified Theory or GUT, I feel in my gut that one could spend a few lifetimes trying to understand human behaviour. For me in this lifetime, coaching offers the greatest chance of living not only an Engaged life of happiness, but occasionally, if I am able to skilfully apply the coaching craft for the benefit of clients, a Life of Meaning as well.

I feel liberated.

Dr Henry Ford

Dr Ford's first career spanned Wall Street and The City within Investment Banking and Private Equity as MD at Citigroup and Director to the Investment Committee of a €10B PE fund. At 17 Henry was rescued mid-Atlantic after abandoning a 38' wooden gaff cutter built in 1910.

Tel +44 (0)7768 446424

Email henry@captainmomentum.com

The simple joy of detachment...

Hilary Gallo

"The eye of desire dirties and distorts. Only when we desire nothing, only when our gaze becomes pure contemplation, does the soul of things (which is beauty) open itself to us." – Herman Hesse

Hesse's words, from his Essays on Life and Art contain an essential truth that underlies many of the questions we ask in life. There is a foundational concept wisely shared here and Hesse's later thoughts go on to expand that idea. Perhaps as a result of this bedrock effect, I keep coming back to Hesse's words and finding yet more applications for his thinking. The latest of these applies to the non-directive question in coaching. My thought is that our need to provide direction is our desire, in Hesse terms, externalised. I hypothesise that we direct to fuel a desire. If that is true, this particular bedrock may be able help deal with the question of non-directive at a different level.

I am conscious that the direction to be non-directive sits at the centre of coach training and remains a delicate juggling act. At some point though, we each find our own balance; stimulating and guiding without over providing the answers. Yet in a world full of positives, non-directive sits as a negative. I realise now, that this negative directive-ness of non-directive has always been a key problem for me. In a world of positive thinking it is very much out of place. Not doing something all the time is not something we'd usually recommend to our coaching clients.

The next challenge is its nature as technique and concept. What is it actually in practice? It sits potentially slightly out of grasp. If most of your working life consists, in the converse, of an absolute requirement to be directive, this is particularly difficult. So, to make it real I need to work out what I do with it, or don't do with it. Alternatively I need to turn it into a deeper way of behaving, at a different level than just a technique. This is a very personal journey however.

Is the question of desire the solution then? Desiring nothing of a situation or person is an improvement for me but it is still a negative. It is almost as if we have a linguistic conspiracy towards active, directive words. This is the bind. Simply not doing what mostly we do is going to be tough and unlikely to succeed as a strategy to change an ingrained habit. So a change in direction, a move to the other side of the mathematical equation, is required perhaps. This is the point at which I generally grasp at something else from left field.

At Buddhism's core is the idea that suffering is caused by wanting and that the end to suffering is detachment. Wanting and desiring are bound up together in a complex web of needs and feelings. Detachment itself is a similar idea to the desiring of nothing but it's firstly a positive and, secondly, it's starting to get closer to actionable way of working. I can see a way in which being detached from what I might place in front of a coaching client, really starts to help.

Providing an hypothesis in a coaching situation is an example of taking a detached view. The words used to frame a hypothesis need to satisfy the test of detachment. Does the coach have any real attachment to the idea that has just been shared? If the idea is given as a gift to take as one chooses then it seems to work best. If there is any desire for approval, correctness or indeed any real need for it to be picked up, then it seems to work less well.

A classic example of this is played out by Chance the Gardener in Jerzy Kosinski's novel "Being There". In the film of the book, Peter Sellers brilliantly plays Chance, a character who has grown up

cut-off from the world, tending a garden for an elderly employer who has now died. Chance is a detached observer whose only connection with the world outside is through TV. In a bizarre turn of events Chance ends up questioned by the US President on questions of the economy. Chance cannot understand and simply responds with what he knows: that in the garden there are seasons and that growth will come. He responds with his observation, achieved through pure contemplation. By chance, his comments fall on fertile ground and as a result he is quoted by the President and lauded by the press and people. This is the power of a detached view that connects. Chance has his power because he has no desire and no attachment. People want to know more.

This idea came back to me with a thud, just recently. A friend of mine had sold her house. That itself is not unusual. What struck me is how she got to that decision. "You planted the seed" she told me. "Really?" I said, slightly lost for words. Apparently I had simply asked her, in roundabout terms, whether she'd ever thought of selling her house. At the time, the idea of selling something that sat at the core of her recent labours and which she loved would have been heretical. Three months later she had sold the house and was changing her life. She told me that what she so valued was the way in which I'd asked the simple unloaded question at the right time and then retired. As a result of this exchange the seed idea is germinating.

Metaphor is a great help and one that is natural and has a particular appeal. Taking the seed metaphor allows me to think of a coaching situation in physical terms, as ground, structure and fertile soil. The topic and goal become a focus on a particular area that might need some action. Part of that may involve poking at what is there and stimulating it to the extent that a firm recognition of a need for action develops. At that point what is required is care. It would be too easy to suggest a plan for a set of buildings that one already knows and approves of. My desire for speed, certainty and a solution would be met by the suggestion of a gleaming spire but my eye of desire would have distorted and dirtied the possibility.

Instead the metaphor increasingly leads me to dig at what is there and investigate the ground. Does it contain the desire for growth? What sort of ground is it? Is this a good time? Is this really the place? Is there some environmental support? Questions like these build awareness and responsibility before any answers start to emerge. In the house example I didn't plant the seed, I simply asked a question, which was one of a series. Although my friend thanked me for planting the seed, the truth was that I had no idea that that is what had happened. In practice the question simply came at the right time and fell onto prepared ground. As a result, it germinated and grew. The conditions and the choice to take it and let it grow were all hers.

Detachment was key in this example but also important is the change in approach, which applies more generally and is more fundamental. I have stopped myself from always questioning whether I am truly being non-directive and have moved to a more particular focus on a client's outcomes, situation, capacity, tools and way forward. If the focus of my intent is firmly on their situation, in their "garden", with their tools; then I have to think less about the technique with which I do it. This is a big shift: from technique to questions of intent.

The detached approach in practice allows situations where I can offer a seed or a tool that the other person might find of help but do so in a way that is easier on the relationship. The idea of detachment is thus part of a journey towards a purer underlying rationale and mode of operation towards coaching relationships. It is also probably true that this approach delivers either a truly non-directive approach or one that at least feels that way.

All these concepts can come together to help build a clearer model for behaviour and action. The question of non-directive and directive has a part. In a world that is constantly demanding an

appropriate way to harness our knowledge and ability; alternative and potentially deeper ways of thinking are required. Ensuring a genuine, good intentioned detachment from our inputs can help us build stronger relationships and help us achieve the difficult balance of applying some small gems of our insight towards genuine, home grown growth in our client's garden.

Hilary Gallo

As a strong believer in the importance of relationships, Hilary puts people and the maximization of their collective energy first. He has worked at Clifford Chance, Accenture and most recently at BAE Systems Detica as Commercial Director. As well as being a coach, he is also a sailing instructor and runs a primary school mediation project.

Tel +44 (0)7798 518730

Email hilary@gallo.co.uk

Mindful Inquiry and Business Coaching

Mathieu Gerardin

“Inquiry is a relational process – you are listening and talking to another human being, who may sometimes be experiencing strong feelings (...). Use your mindfulness practice to be totally present for them, listening with care and attention to what they say, and being open to however the process unfolds. Inquiry is a journey you and the participant take together – you have more knowledge of the terrain, but neither of you knows where you will end up.”

J. Soulsby and E. Gold¹

Introduction

A few years ago I found myself under a great deal of stress. I would not have called myself burnt-out – but I wasn't far off. Two things kept me from cognitive bankruptcy: having a great coach and starting a regular mindfulness practice. Both processes were transformational. I was actually so impressed by the combined effect of those practices that when, later on, I got into the Meyler Campbell Business Coach programme, I also decided to become a mindfulness instructor, convinced that this combination could be useful to my clients.

While facilitating my first mindfulness programmes, I became fascinated by a process called *inquiry*, the investigative dialogue led by the course facilitator after a practice. Inquiry provides an interesting perspective for a coach. After introducing mindfulness (A), this paper describes the inquiry process (B) and highlights the attitudinal qualities necessary for an established mindfulness practitioner – the instructor – to successfully lead a session comparable to non-directive coaching (C).

A. Mindful coaching

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment. Originally a religious practice, secular versions appeared in the 1970s, like the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme (MBSR)². Through practical exercises, individuals are encouraged to focus on their inner experiences – their breathing, bodily sensations or thoughts - or to pay attention to their external environment – sights and sounds, to develop mindfulness.

Benefits

Numerous studies have found that mindfulness training confers significant benefits for health and well-being³. In the workplace, participants in mindfulness programmes report being more engaged in their work, more energised and less anxious after the course⁴. Neuroscientists recently confirmed it:

¹ J. Soulsby and E. Gold, 2007 (rev. in 2011 and 2012), in *Hand-out of the Teacher Training Retreat Level 1, CMRP*

² For more information on MBSR, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, see: <http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress/index.aspx>

³ UK Mental Health Foundation's *Mindfulness Report*, 2010

⁴ M. Williams, 2006, *Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) in a worksite wellness program* (in R. Baer, *Mindfulness-based treatment approaches: clinician's guide to evidence base and applications*, San Diego Academic Press)

mindfulness practice seems to develop the brain regions involved in self-awareness, decision-making and learning⁵.

Mindful coaches

There is some fascinating research on how mindfulness training can improve coaching. In his book, *The Mindful Workplace*, Michael Chaskalson presents several studies suggesting that mindfulness is beneficial whether it is received by clients⁶ or by psychotherapists⁷. In particular, mindfulness can help coaches to:

- Deal with stressors before a session;
- Maintain focus during a session; and
- Remain emotionally detached⁸.

Mindfulness practice contributes to the formation of what Sufis might call a “special organ of perception”⁹ that is a new possibility for the mind to monitor itself – a fundamental point for coaches who have to maintain attention both inwards and outwards.

Coaching and inquiry

Inquiry is yet another way of linking mindfulness and coaching. Here we are looking not only at the benefits of mindfulness practice for coaches, but at how mindfulness instructors are expected to facilitate a process close to a coaching intervention.

B. The inquiry process

Description

In a mindfulness programme such as MBSR, inquiry takes place just after a meditation practice. It is an investigative process where the programme’s facilitator encourages participants to name what they noticed during the previous practice as a way to explore their direct experience.

Inquiry is a three-layer process:

- 1) The first layer consists of questioning direct experience
e.g. *What did you notice in your body?*
- 2) The second layer is a dialogue between the instructor and participants about how this direct experience makes sense for them
e.g. *Were there any emotions that seemed connected to the sensations you noticed?*

⁵ B. K. Hölzel, 2011, *Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain grey matter density*, *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging* 191 36–43, Journal of Psychopathology Behaviour Assessment

⁶ For cognitive-behavioural solution-focused coaching see G. Spence, 2008, *New directions in evidence-based coaching: investigations into the impact of mindfulness training on goal attainment and well-being*, VDM, Saarbrücken

⁷ On psychotherapists in training, see L. Grepmaier et al., 2007, *Promoting Mindfulness in psychotherapists in training influences the treatment results of their patients: A randomized, double-blind, controlled study*, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*

⁸ J. Passmore and O. Marianetti, 2007, *The role of mindfulness in coaching*, *The Coaching Psychologist*

⁹ Shah, 1964, cited by K. Speeth in *On Psychotherapeutic Attention*, 1982. See also Gestalt’s awareness exercises as described by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman in 1951

3) In the third layer, the instructor links previous observations to teaching points e.g. *So, by being with your thoughts and bodily sensations, you noticed that they were constantly changing.*

Functions

One of the main functions of inquiry is to learn to discriminate the elements that make up our direct experience: bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Once the intellectual concepts have been *explicitly* validated by first-hand experience they gain weight. Change then happens more easily than when learning is based only on cognitive processes¹⁰.

Dialogue

During the inquiry phase, participants learn from direct interaction with the facilitator, but also by hearing others describe their experiences. There are a lot of similarities with Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment here – respectful attention, ease, space for emotional release, appreciation, and support – although participants can choose to remain silent.

Questions

In terms of questioning, the guidelines given to facilitators are usually very general¹¹ – e.g. use open-ended questions, ask permission before taking the inquiry deeper. The emphasis is put on the qualities teachers are expected to embody.

C. Developing the right attitude

Embodying the practice

According to the mindfulness literature, inquiry depends on the facilitator's *attitudinal qualities*. The seven qualities described by Kabat-Zinn¹² for mindfulness development are used as guidelines for the inquiry's facilitator:

- **Non-judging:** as best as possible, suspend judgement and bring a warm, friendly interest to the experience being described, whatever it is;
- **Patience:** accept that the process emerges in its own time and that it cannot be hurried; to that end, remain open to each moment;
- **Beginner's mind:** engage with participants with curiosity and freshness, free of expectations based on past experiences;
- **Trust:** convey a sense of trust in the individual's expertise in relation to their own experience, cultivate humility;

¹⁰ For more details see for instance Z. Segal, M. Williams, J. Teasdale, 2002, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: a new approach to preventing relapse*

¹¹ See for instance the University of Bangor's Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice (CMRP)

¹² J. Kabat-Zinn, 1990, *Full Catastrophe living*

- **Non-striving**: refrain from wanting to fix problems, but simply raise awareness of participants of what is here. Avoid attachment to insight;
- **Acceptance**: gently attend participants and experiences as they are in the present moment, without struggling to change them;
- **Letting go**: let go of preconceived structure to accommodate with the participant's experience in the moment, not limiting the exploration by guiding the inquiry towards a particular outcome¹³.

Cultivating the right attitude

It comes as no surprise that mindfulness instructors and business coaches – and in particular Rogerian business coaches - cultivate very similar attitudes.

Kabat-Zinn's attitudinal qualities, listed above, all relate in one way or another to the nine areas identified in Meyler Campbell's Personal Evaluation Tool (PET).

They are perfectly compatible with Whitworth's five contexts¹⁴: Listening, Intuition, Curiosity, Forward and Deepen, and Self-Management.

As Bruce Peltier puts it, *Rogarian coaches have to be Rogerian*¹⁵. To do so, they have to be able to establish a genuine relationship with their client, achieve accurate empathy through unconditional positive regard and acceptance, and to really hear their client. Leading a mindfulness inquiry might be a practical training for coaches who want to be more Rogerian.

Conclusion

Freud instructed therapists to develop a panoramic attention, "maintaining in regard to all that one hears the same measure of calm, quiet attentiveness of evenly hovering attention"¹⁶. Inquiry and business coaching are different. Contexts and objectives are different. But I find that facilitating inquiry works like a cross-training: by developing specific qualities it boosts the coach's ability to sustain this special kind of attention, so important to Freud.

Mathieu Gerardin

Mathieu became fascinated by the combined power of business coaching and mindfulness practice while doing an Executive MBA at Cambridge University. Based in Portugal, he leverages his 15 years of international management experience to coach executives across Europe in English, French and Portuguese.

Tel +351 916 613505

Email mat.gerardin@gmail.com

¹³ D. Blacker, M.L. Byrnes, F.L. Mastaglia, G.W. Thickbroom, 2006, *Differential activation of frontal lobe areas by lexical and semantic language tasks: a functional magnetic resonance imaging study*, Journal of Clinical Neuroscience

¹⁴ H. Kinsey-House, K. Kimsey-House, P. Sandahl, L. Whitworth, 2011, *Co-active coaching*

¹⁵ B. Peltier, 2010, *The Psychology of Executive Coaching*

¹⁶ S. Freud, 1900, cited by K. Speeth in *On Psychotherapeutic Attention*, 1982

Is there any value to be gained by creating a 'Thinking Environment' for my clients?

Cheryl Gowdie

Within weeks of signing up to the business coach programme, my box of a dozen books arrived. Being an avid reader, I quickly thumbed through each book then selected 'Time to Think' by Nancy Kline. On reflection, this was an excellent choice.

In the following paragraphs, I will reflect on the elements of Kline's work that have influenced my practice as a coach. It would be fair to say that these elements are in no way ground-breaking; however they have had the effect of refining some of my coaching skills thereby helping me to become a much more effective coach. It is worth pointing out that this is not a critical analysis of Kline's work.

To provide some context, in her book 'Time to Think' Kline puts forward the concept of the Thinking Environment. The Thinking Environment is *'the set of conditions under which people can think for themselves and think well together. They make it possible for people's thinking to move further, go faster, plumb insights, banish blocks and produce brand-new, exactly needed ideas in record time'*. It consists of ten components which include attention, incisive questions, equality, appreciation, ease, encouragement, feelings, information, place and diversity.

For the purpose of this exercise, I will focus my attention on five of the ten components. These include attention, incisive questions, ease, information and place. These components help me to engage with my clients at a deeper level and based on feedback received this results in a better learning experience for them. In addition, I will reflect on my experience of watching Nancy Kline coach and its influence on my coaching practice.

In the context of the Thinking Environment, attention is *'listening with respect, interest and fascination'*. It encompasses interruption, your face, your eyes, infantilization, co-dependence and quiet. As a coach, I have always appreciated the need to listen to my clients at a deeper level so that I can hear what they are verbalising and what they are not. However, this is an area of continuous development which was included in my PET at the commencement of the business coaching programme. Kline puts forward the view that we should listen in a manner that demonstrates to the client that we are always present, interested in and genuinely fascinated by what they are saying. Her belief in, and subsequent application of, the power of listening provided me with a greater appreciation and confidence to listen to my clients with much greater ease and depth and this has enabled me to positively influence my clients' learning experience. I am satisfied that I am making good progress in this area as evidenced by feedback from one client that I appeared to be 'hanging on his every word'.

Another area of influence is incisive questions. According to Kline an incisive question *'crafted with precision and lustre, is any question that removes limiting assumptions from your thinking so that you can think again'*. As a result of this, I now appreciate that although there is power in the open question, by itself it is not enough. The right question needs to cut through the barriers which may be hindering the creative thinking process enabling the client to get to the core of the issue. This is still work in progress for me; however my appreciation of the benefits to my clients, who appear to

'shift gears' in their thought process once the limiting assumptions are challenged and positively reframed, have given me the motivation to keep improving in this area.

Based on Kline's work, '*ease allows the mind to broaden and reach*', this appears to imply that the absence of ease restricts the mind of the coach and client. Given the choice, I would give myself as much time as is necessary to ensure that I am at ease before commencing a coaching session. However this is not always possible, because I am constantly juggling my commitments and on occasions fire fighting. This situation means that there are occasions when I am not sufficiently at ease with myself at the start of the coaching session and this has the negative effect of influencing how quickly I am able to put my clients at ease. Kline's work has served to heighten my awareness of the negative influence of unease in the coaching relationship. This encouraged me to implement more rigorous self-management strategies, such as those that stimulate positive emotions in me e.g. by reflecting on my strengths as a coach as well as actions I completed to an exceptionally high standard. These strategies have helped to ensure that I better prepared to put my clients at ease.

Kline believes that information should be supplied conservatively, in a manner that does not '*assault the thinking process*'. In the early stages of my coaching career, my role as consultant was often conflicting with my role as coach, particularly the challenge of managing the overwhelming urge to freely give information when the client is seeking to resolve a challenge that relates to an area in which I have some knowledge. I have to constantly remind myself that as a consultant I am seeking to 'put in' information to inform my client's decision making process whereas in the coaching relationship I am seeking to 'pull out' information to inform my client's thinking and ultimately their decision making process. By highlighting the potentially negative impact of the coach supplying too much information during the coaching interaction, Kline's work has helped me to be much more considered about how and when I provide information and having seen her put this into practice during one of the coaching sessions, I am constantly working to achieve the optimum balance. It would be fair to say that this balance will be refined with experience. However, the awareness provides a useful level of restraint, thereby ensuring that my clients' thought process is not unnecessarily disturbed by the supply of too much information.

Kline believes the place in which we interact with our clients says a lot about how much '*they matter*' to us. Over the years, I have come to appreciate the influence of the environment on my clients' ability to achieve breakthrough during their interactions with me. However, Kline's work has served to remind me about how critical this aspect is in the coaching relationship. I often reflect on the early years of my practice as an internal coach. During those days, there was always a scramble for rooms and on occasions I had no choice but to coach clients in whatever space was available. Now an independent coach, I am in the process of identifying a suitable location for our Coaching Practice and the *place* remains an essential part of my selection criteria. On a recent trip to one of the potential premises it became evident that although all the other criteria would be met, clients would end up looking out into the car park. I concluded that the location was unlikely to help to create the right environment for my clients to think creatively.

My learning experience was about to transition from '2-D to 3-D' when I learned that Nancy Kline agreed to facilitate one of Meyler Campbell's Fish Bowls. I was very interested in attending the session because of the influence that her book had (and continues to have) on my coaching practice as well as my desire to see if she 'practiced what she preached'. To my amazement I was asked to introduce Nancy Kline at the event, and being the typical introvert I was delighted but petrified about the prospect of standing in front of a group of colleagues and introducing such an experienced coach. I reflected on the offer for a few days then decided that it was too good an opportunity to pass up.

It would be fair to say that the session was one of the most insightful learning experiences I had during the business coach programme. It was mesmerising to watch Nancy Kline practise her skills with gentleness and professionalism. She asked very simple yet powerful questions, such as 'What do you think?', 'What do you feel?', 'What would you like to say?'. These questions led to the participant divulging more and more information about the situation he was seeking to resolve and slowly but surely he unravelled the challenge without any suggestions. At the end of the session I concluded that it was useful to read Nancy Kline's thought but it was much more powerful to see how she applied them in practice. Although I believe that it is not possible to pursue this approach in every session, the experience provided me with greater confidence to use these skills during my interaction with clients.

In conclusion, the answer to my original question is yes there is value to be gained by creating a 'Thinking Environment' for my clients. Without a doubt, the application of these simple principles have increased my confidence as a coach and helped my clients to achieve better outcomes than might have been the case without this increased awareness.

Cheryl Gowdie, MBA, BA (Hons.), FCIPD, FlntLM

I am an Executive Coach, Consultant and Principal of Accezy an international Coaching & Change Management Consulting practice based in the USA. I work with individuals, organisations and companies to facilitate exceptional performance, particularly during periods of change. Prior to this role, I was Managing Director of Buzzacott Human Resources Consultancy providing business coaching and human resources consulting services to clients operating primarily in the financial, professional and non-profit sectors in the UK, other parts of Europe and the USA.

I acquired considerable strategic leadership and change management expertise and was for several years Director of Human Resources and lecturer on various master's degree programmes including Managing Change & Consulting at the University of London. My detailed understanding and application of leadership and change management models together with my practical and business focused approach provide a unique and valuable dimension to my work.

I studied English and European Community Law (BA Hons.) at University then went on to complete a Master of Business Administration (MBA). I am a Founding Fellow of the Institute of Coaching Professional Association at McLean Hospital, a Harvard Medical School affiliate; Member of the International Coach Federation; Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; Member of the Society for Human Resources Management; Fellow of the Institute of Leadership & Management and Associate Member of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council.

Tel (+1) 239 628 3677

(+1) 954 708 7659

Email gowdiec@gmail.com

Web www.accezycoaching.com

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/cherylgowdie/

Coaching across different cultures, a little bit of wisdom...

Vio Ivanova

The question

It all started with my mother (71) asking me over the phone: 'So ... what is this course you travel to London for once a month all about and what will you be when you graduate?' A rather sensible question to ask, I thought, when you are investing time and money in something you have little or even no experience in.

Some background

Before I continue, I should perhaps point out that my mother lives in Bulgaria which is also the country where I was born, before moving to Luxembourg a long time ago. I remembered the saying that if you know something and you are able to explain it to a 6-year old child, then you actually know it. Well in this case, I had to explain to my mother, in Bulgarian, what Coaching really means. Whilst I managed to convince her that this was serious and very interesting stuff, and that time and money were well spent, I also realized that there was no word for Coaching in Bulgarian. It basically is the same word only written in Cyrillic. And then I realized that there is no word for it in French ...or in German ... or in Luxemburgish which are the languages that I have been coaching my practice clients in since the beginning of this year. This rather disturbing discovery made me pause and reflect – so why is that? Granted, there are many other words which are the same in a number of languages but in this case the word was not as easy to explain as 'restaurant' or 'computer' or 'hamburger'.

So what did this actually tell me?

That the term 'coaching' is universal?

That everybody should understand what it means, naturally?

That it actually means the same thing for all those people, regardless whether they live in Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Belgium, Russia or Hong Kong which are the countries where I have been fortunate enough to have lived and/or worked in?

I doubt one could make the assumption that the answer to all of those questions is yes without falling into a trap which might lead to fundamental misunderstandings.

My approach

I was rather intrigued and I decided to explore this idea a bit further to try and understand whether coaching can be universally applied and whether a certified (business) coach has all the tools to do a good job regardless of where the assignment takes them. I discovered that, because of my work experience to date, I had the huge privilege to have met a lot of people easily traced back through wonderful professional networks. To my big surprise, I also discovered that many of those HR professionals had in the meantime become certified coaches themselves in as many places as

Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, Hong Kong and Australia. I decided to ask them for a little bit of their wisdom, whether they had a specific approach, some tips or a favourite question that would make their coaching sessions worthwhile, a bit like the super-useful magic questions that **Jenny Rogers** describes in her **Coaching Skills** Handbook.

My findings

As the replies started pouring in, it was truly interesting to see what the content was of each of these emails from around the world for which I am deeply grateful.

The majority of responses highlighted the paramount importance of trust; that it was vital for the coach to be able to create a safe environment and clearly this could only be achieved by coach and coachee building a strong relationship. In this context, it is worth remembering that 'safe' does not necessarily mean 'comfortable' as described in **Co-Active Coaching**. Indeed, I have observed in my practice coaching sessions that recognizing the fact that certain things need to change can be very painful but it actually is the beginning of that journey that the coachee hopefully strives to embark on, guided by their coach.

Some responses suggested that coaching, because of its origins, was sometimes too 'American' in the sense that some acknowledgements, as suggested by **Kimsey-House**, did not always achieve the desired outcome because they didn't come across as authentic enough to generate a true sense of progress with the coachee. In European cultures it would sometimes be more helpful to be more specific when making statements meant to convey encouragement for the coachee e.g. simply saying 'you are amazing' can sound a bit hollow and often needs to be backed by more tangible facts.

Some other questions were more focused around feelings, around exploring self-imposed boundaries, thinking of possible options, realizing that one has the ability to make choices in life; questions helping people clarify their perception of reality; questions meant to be used like a magnifying glass focusing the attention on an important aspect; questions bringing one's values to the forefront; questions helping people visualize their desired outcome in work or life; questions allowing coachees to really boost their confidence and overcome fear that might in many cases be self-limiting; questions allowing the coach 'to hear the coachee think', which reminded me very much of **Nancy Kline's** desire to create a thinking environment for all ... the list was long and really fascinating !

Some theory

Before we look at what my conclusion is as to whether, from my humble point of view, coaching can be universally applied, it might be just worth highlighting the difference between *human nature*, *culture* and *personality* as described by **Hofstede**. *Human nature* is universal and innate, so the broadest common denominator for us all, *culture* is specific to a group of people and is acquired; *personality* is specific to the individual and is both innate and acquired. This would suggest that for coaching to be effective, it would need to take into consideration these 3 levels which make us the unique human beings we are. Another interesting source for me were **Hall's** discoveries with respect to Context, Time and Space which clearly show that when working across cultures, you need to pay attention to high and low cultures through the actions of others.

Some observations

One thing all these findings had in common, though, was the fact that they were meant to help coachees maximise their potential so the aim of coaching seems to be universally recognized. However the ways to get there might differ. Finding the best way was the secret to success!

Since we are talking about business coaching, I would say that having a multi-cultural background when working for an International organization is clearly a differentiating factor. It contributes to a better and faster rapport building with people who might need coaching. It equips coaches with the ability to recognize if 'yes' does truly mean 'yes' or whether there is more beneath the surface that needs to be brought to light.

Should a multi-cultural coach rather be a translator, a catalyst, a guide or a counsellor? Well, ideally it should be all of the above combined with the emotional intelligence to recognize the inter-dependencies between human nature, culture and personality and how the latter two can or cannot be influenced by helping the coachee become more self-aware.

My conclusion

I would not dare to claim that a couple of pages are enough to do justice to such a complex topic but for me personally this was absolutely worth reflecting upon – is coaching truly universal and if so, why? Well, I came to the conclusion that it can be universally applied as long as the coach has a very well developed cultural awareness and of course speaks the languages well enough to be able to not only, as **Fritz Perls** suggests, 'listen to the content of the bullshit of what the patient produces, but to the sound, to the music, to the hesitations'. Therefore, as suggested in **Co-active Coaching**, 'it is not for the faint of heart'. It needs a trustful relationship fuelled by a lot of energy and a belief in human resourcefulness where 'the coach is like a perfect mirror that absorbs none of the light; what comes from the client is returned'.

In addition to hopefully becoming a certified business coach, I have become much more aware of my interactions with people around me, be they my colleagues, my friends, my family and last but not least, my husband. So my mother's question was definitely worth asking and finding an answer to. In this context, **Nancy Kline** would say: 'I would like people not to surrender to the cruel comfort of cynicism' which is more or less developed in various human beings but that would be a topic in its own right for another reflective essay or at least for a chat over a good glass of red wine by the fire-side!

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Special thanks to my practice coachees (they know who they are) for having allowed me to test my skills on them!

Special thanks to my tutor for many interesting discussions!

Vio Ivanova

Based in Luxembourg, Vio has been working for Fidelity Worldwide Investment since October 2011 and is responsible for HR for Continental Europe, covering 13 countries. Prior to that, she worked for Allen & Overy, JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley and Regus. She spent 3 1/2 years working in Hong Kong, covering the Asia Pacific region and developed a particular interest for this part of the world. Vio graduated in Hotel Management in Brussels in 1990.

Tel +352 25 04 04 2254

Email vio.ivanova@fil.com

Coaching and Confidence

Lorraine Jones

Thirty-eight years in the corporate world of Human Resources and Development (HRD), with at least twenty years at the top of my game, is enough for anyone - time to hang up my boots?

I have worked in manufacturing, academia, professional services including accountancy and law - mostly male dominated environments- and have met my fair share of neurotics, and even narcissists and psychopaths- but I have survived to tell the tale albeit with a little scar or two!

I have been described as "not your normal type of HR person", as business driven, formidable as well as professional, loyal, committed, warm and caring. Throughout my working life I have remained true to my values- trust, loyalty, integrity, confidentiality and mutual respect- but that has not always been easy.

I have been a trusted confidante to many senior people. One CEO has said, "You are my coach, there isn't anything I wouldn't share with you". Another one has said, "I shall miss our chats, I won't have any one to talk to now". As at least one eminent writer has said and I will choose Jon Stokes at the Faculty Clinic on Leadership, The Reality, "the role of the CEO is often very lonely, they have no one to talk to".

So do I sound like a confident person? Someone who speaks their mind and tells their CEO just how it is? A shrinking violet or a fighting tiger?

The decision to take "early retirement" (note the word "early") was an easy decision for me. I wanted and needed to spend more time with my family particularly my disabled husband and aging mother suffering with dementia and I was also tired, may be a little burnt out – possible consequent of fighting with a highly senior psychopath?

The announcement of my 'early retirement' was met largely by surprise by those who knew me – "You won't stop working", "This I have got to see". I was due to finish in April but stayed on to June 2012. Just in time for the Olympics and I celebrated every "gold" with a glass of bubbly!

It had always been my plan to gain a reputable qualification in coaching, to add another string to my bow. Along came Meyler Campbell in September 2012.

Was I, this confident, experienced person all set to go? Here I was in a different environment without the shackles but also without the support of the corporate environment. Was I ready for it, had I allowed myself sufficient time to rest, to accustom myself to my new life and ways of working? Tutorials were good and I started searching for practice clients. I had some great contacts but things were either slow to take off or didn't take off at all. In early 2013 I had no real practice clients under my belt...was there something wrong with me, was I not as good as I thought?

Fortunately, things did start to change and I started to "fly" with some great practice clients including a Main Board HR Director of a large plc, a partner of one of the big four accountancy firms, a GP and an aspiring female in wealth management- not bad. The chemistry meetings went well and with each coaching session common themes were emerging. Emotions and experiences were shared.

The GROW model was being followed and I was getting good at being non-directive and exploring coaching tools.

But there was this one practice client where I had a “wobble” with that thing called “confidence”.

What is confidence? The on-line dictionary definition reads as follows:

“Belief in own abilities; faith in somebody to do right; secret; trusting relationship.”¹

This definition sounds good to me, one I can relate to.

But with this client... A clear goal had been set, options explored and an action plan developed yet I felt I was not adding value and became uncomfortable and anxious. The client read me well and provided me with some constructive feedback:

“I think Lorraine has been worried about how she is performing and has at times come over as lacking confidence.”

Shock and horror! What was this all about? A case for supervision and an introduction to the “imposter syndrome”.

“The impostor syndrome...is a psychological phenomenon in which people are unable to internalise their accomplishments. Despite external evidence of their competence, those with the syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved. Proof of success is dismissed as luck, timing, or as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent and competent than they believe themselves to be.”²

It is the “fear of being found out”. It was once thought to be particularly common among women who are successful in their given careers. However, it has since been shown to occur for an equal number of men. According to Anne Scoular³ it can have positive benefits for “insecure overachievers” driving them to work and achieve at almost super-human levels. But for others, lack of confidence holds them back from achieving their full potential.

Anna Philips, my supervisor, encouraged me to research the imposter syndrome. My fear was about inferiority, failure and not providing a solution. Would this client think me incompetent and report back to the person who had introduced me to them? Anna made me focus on the positives that had come out of all my coaching sessions - my strengths- that ability to establish rapport and trust; my warm, positive and enthusiastic approach; those excellent listening skills and my non-judgmental manner. Anna also encouraged me to focus on what I had achieved in my career and how much knowledge and experience I had to offer if not to this client then to others. I also needed to consider if this was the type of person I wanted to coach in the future.

I also had the advice and guidance of another supervisor, Mary Watts. She listened to how I was coaching the client and encouraged me to get my client to tell me what “lack of confidence” looked and felt like to them. Mary suggested that sometimes individuals try to turn their own lack of confidence on to others. Interestingly, it was very difficult for my client to explain what “lack of confidence” looked and felt like.

¹ Google on line dictionary

² Wikipedia

³ Business Coaching Anne Scoular p95

So what did I do to help me with my confidence with this client? In many ways I have adopted Carol Kauffman's "4 steps to confidence"⁴:-

1. *Reverse the Focus*
I focused on my achievements and the wealth of knowledge and experience I have to offer. I should not under-estimate this.
2. *Enhance Positive Emotion*
I prepared for my coaching sessions in a positive frame of mind.
3. *Play to Strengths*
I made sure I recognised what is unique about me and used these strengths in my coaching sessions.
4. *Develop Hope and access Flow states*
I did not give up but with support looked at a number of options or pathways to achieve my goal.

I also re-contracted with the client about what coaching I could offer. I was not there to provide a solution but to help them think through their issues.

There were at least three lessons for me from this experience. Firstly, I must not under estimate my knowledge and experience. Ringing in my ears are words that colleagues and friends have said to me, "You don't know how good you are". Secondly, I need to move things on and not keep asking questions when an issue has been exhausted but draw a line under a topic. Thirdly, work out a strategy for dealing with referrals from colleagues to avoid putting myself under pressure and giving the impression of lacking in confidence.

This experience has also helped me to coach my other clients. One in particular is a classic case of "imposter syndrome" and we have been working on the "4 steps to confidence." We have focused on their achievements to date, keeping a diary of when there are feelings of lack of confidence/fears of failure, identifying their strengths, and how to prepare to be in a positive frame of mind. The client has also had difficult relationship experiences, possibly a narcissist or maybe a psychopath!

Many of my practice clients have experienced difficulties in working in male dominated environments and my knowledge and the toolkits that I have been exposed to over the past twelve months has been invaluable particularly helping individuals to understand and appreciate their strengths, how to work with different personality types (including psychopaths and narcissists) and the application of various coping mechanisms.

For me confidence building is at the heart of coaching and this together with my interest in helping individuals, particularly females in male dominated environments, to overcome feelings of inferiority and fear of failure will be a key part of my offering moving forward. This, and identifying coping strategies for dealing with possible neurotics, narcissists and even psychopaths I hope will differentiate me in the business coaching market. I will need to keep up to date with research in the field of social psychology, personality disorders and confidence. The work of Oldham and Morris, Adrian Furnham and Carol Kauffman will be invaluable.

⁴ Business Coaching Anne Scoular p96

Finally, I hope my HRD consultancy “Trusted HRD” will be seen as synonymous with my values and offering by my clients.

Lorraine Jones

Lorraine is an experienced HRD Director, Executive Coach and Mediator, with a track record of developing people and as a trusted confidante to senior executives including CEO.

In ‘Trusted HRD’ Lorraine has a particular interest in helping individuals, notably senior females working in male dominated environments, cope with challenging behaviours and “tricky” personalities.

Lorraine’s approach to coaching is underpinned by: a strong commitment to nurturing and developing others to enable personal & professional growth; core values of trust, loyalty, integrity, confidentiality and mutual respect; and an open and honest style, not afraid to speak the unspoken and deal with uncomfortable moments in the interests of reflection, learning and action.

Tel +44 (0)7976 182034

Email lorraine.jones78@gmail.com

The client as coach – how Meyler Campbell distilled my experience into a vision

Meirion Jones

The general counsel leaned forward, narrowed his eyes, and said, "I'm sick of looking across the table at a lawyer and wondering if they're listening to me or just waiting to speak."

"Tell me how you'd like them to behave," I said.

"I want my lawyers to show a genuine interest, in me as much as my business," he said. "I want them to ask questions and not feel ashamed at appearing ignorant... I want them to listen to my answers, not try to dump pre-packaged solutions on me... I want them to build mutual trust out of truthfulness and authenticity and not try to impress me with their expertise."

These comments, which came during a feedback interview I undertook with him on behalf of a law firm client in late 2011, have echoed with growing force during the past ten months of the Meyler Campbell Business Coaching programme. In essence, this GC wants lawyers to bring the same curiosity and absence of ego, the same agenda-free questioning and active listening, that we have been encouraged to develop as coaches.

My consultancy business, Client Critical, advises professional services firms on strategic client development initiatives such as key account management and consultative sales programmes, industry sector segmentation and leadership. Above and beyond this service range, though, the Meyler Campbell programme has shown me that the single most powerful thing I can offer my clients is, simply, to help them to become coaches.

In this piece I highlight three examples of how the Meyler Campbell programme is helping my business offering to evolve. It looks at how the rich learning and insight of the course is transforming the way in which I help my clients – in the consulting and training work I do, as much as the actual coaching. And it shows how, by encouraging partners to use coaching tools in their client interactions, coaching creates greater interpersonal impact and commercial success.

GROW in action

June 2012 – between T1 and T2.

Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Approach sets the coach two key challenges: to create empathy, openness and trust with the coachee; and to teach the coachee to do the same with his or her own clients.

I am training a small group of senior partners on key account management skills using an immersive client simulation. They are at the point in the exercise where they meet the head of legal of the fictional client – played by me as a thinly disguised version of our GC. The partners immediately adopt highly directive behaviour, hogging the conversation, turning any comment from the client into an opportunity to promote their expertise – no matter how tenuous the link – and using dictatorial language: "You need to do this"; "You should be aware of that".

One partner starts to ask a question, explains why he asked it, rephrases it, explains the context in which he asked it, answers it himself, asks another question, diverts into an exegesis of a new regulatory development then offers to send me a detailed briefing note on the regulation. "What was your question again," I ask and the partner admits he cannot remember.

I conduct a debrief using the GROW model to shape the discussion. What was your specific objective, I ask. To get a business mandate, one explains. How could you do that without discovering what the client's needs were, I ask. What is the client's reality – his challenges and concerns; his relationships with other advisors; his purchasing criteria? How is the business responding to these challenges? What are the client's options?

The partners concede that their approach set themselves up to fail. The Goal is restated, this time as "to encourage the client to talk about his key issues of concern." I set the partners two extra challenges: to ensure that their questions are open, have no subordinate clauses and are no longer than ten words; and to agree to a concrete next step.

This time there is a dialogue. By using simple but powerful questions they encourage the clients to talk at length about the issues that occupy him. They pick up on clues in the client's language and probe further to reveal a set of specific legal needs. The ensuing discussion about the partners' relevant expertise and experience in these areas feels natural, unforced and tailored to the client's agenda.

Afterwards the partners are euphoric. "It's obvious, really," says one. "But I feel under so much pressure to perform that the idea of asking simple questions, and respecting the client to answer in his own time feel counter-intuitive."

Time to Think

October 2012 – between T3 and T4 and two weeks after the Nancy Kline fishbowl.

I am hosting a training session with a group of partners of another client firm, this one focused on honing their networking skills. They listen politely to what I have to say but their manner is passive. I ask for their thoughts on all the things running through their heads when they walk into a room full of strangers, and capture their comments on a flipchart.

Ordinarily I would move onto the next topic but, inspired by Nancy Kline's 'Time to Think' and her recent fishbowl, I ask instead what other thoughts they have. There is a deep, heavy silence in the room and, as I count the passing seconds, I feel a growing sense of self-consciousness. Nancy would say that the participants are processing my question and that the silence is enabling them to reflect more deeply on their experiences. The reality is I fear the partners are asking themselves why I've stalled the training with such a fatuous question.

Then one partner speaks: "The trouble with networking is that it makes me feel so small and unimportant. I feel cut down to size and I hate it." This is the trigger for the others and, within moments, there is an energetic and candid discussion about their doubts and insecurities, a discussion which, in collective recognition of shared doubts, dissolves into the laughter of relief.

Evidently, as useful as the content of my training is, the greatest value of this session has come from giving them the time and space to reflect, to acknowledge their concerns and to recognise them for what they are: limiting beliefs.

Coaching

February 2013 – between T7 and T8.

I have an initial coaching session with a newly arrived lateral partner. His new firm, my client, has high expectations of him and he feels under pressure to bring in work. We talk for a while and it is quickly apparent to me what the problems are: he doesn't believe in business plans; he is used to working in a firm with an outstanding reputation in his field so that clients come to him; he had a mentoring senior partner who fed him with referral work. In 45 seconds I have diagnosed his problems and am mentally preparing a solution for him – a laundry list of actions that he needs to undertake to build his practice. I even justify it to myself: the partner is a private equity lawyer – he's the kind of man who'll appreciate my direct, task-driven approach.

But I say nothing. One of the great gifts of the Meyler Campbell course is that I have become sensitised to inclinations like this – almost as if I have developed an allergy to directive behaviour. So, instead, I draw on the gentle, but firm and incisive questioning models of Jenny Rogers and the NLP meta model and probe at the filters and beliefs under-pinning his behaviours.

Over the course of our conversation he reveals the pressure he feels under and admits that he has resisted drafting a business plan for fear of committing to targets that he might fail to achieve. By the end of the conversation he is impatient to return to his desk so that he can get started on his plan.

To be honest, this is exactly the outcome I hoped for ninety minutes or so previously. Had I simply told him that this is what he needed to do how would he have reacted? Politely agreeing that it was a sensible approach, no doubt. Would he have done it? Probably not. The value of coaching him is that he owns the solutions, is engaged by it and wants to do it.

Conclusion

I have 25 years-worth of professional services experience behind me in various strategy roles and, as much as it pains me to admit it, I have not been as effective as I could have been. Peter Drucker said, 'Culture will eat strategy for breakfast' and I know now that coaching provides something that strategy planning cannot – it gives me the tools to engage with partners' values and beliefs, so that the skills being conveyed in my training become deeply rooted behaviours. So that business advisers become coaches.

Meirion Jones

Through his consultancy, Client Critical, Meirion helps company directors, management consultants, and partners from leading professional services firms to develop outstanding relationships. In his coaching he employs a blend of NLP, storytelling and roleplay. He is also a writer and illustrator and his first graphic novel is published at the end of 2013.

Tel +44 (0)7515 389925

Email meirionjones@clientcritical.com

Reflections on Listening

Charles Lewis

As a young member of the Bar, newly called, I was taught that I should never ask a question in cross examination, unless I knew the answer to that question. The reason for this was for fear of explosions which might expose and cast light on hitherto invisible and unwanted difficulties. The reasonable mantra was: "don't make it any worse". The purpose of the cross examination was to further your case and elicit information and colour that information to support your case, which it was your duty to put. In order to cross examine it was essential to listen precisely to each and every important word and to note it.

Since ceasing to practise as a barrister, I have travelled on a road, less travelled by many, which has led me through aspects of psychology, to self awareness, self responsibility and freedom to choose. These concepts of self awareness, responsibility and freedom to choose correspond to many definitions of coaching and fundamental to these, in the relationship between coach and coachee, is the ability to listen. They are equally important to coach and coachee for a successful coaching outcome.

I shall reflect upon the areas that have been at the forefront of my learning about listening as it applies to coaching.

Nancy Kline (1) has been profoundly influential. She describes listening- the quality of people's attention for each other- as the core of her method.

In creating her thinking environment she puts forward ten components which in summary provide for attention, positivity, relaxation, encouragement, safety (including expressing feelings) and choice. Everything depends on thinking for yourself. She supports the non directive approach, she writes "listen, listen, listen. Don't rush with advice even when it is needed". She is firm about the dangers of interrupting and completing sentences for coachees.

Thinking for yourself is a radical act. In fact it is the only reliable road to safety, happiness and respect. This is not easy to achieve because there is great pressure to conform from a very young age and that continues throughout life; she instances an oil giant who told her he liked people who did what they were told, and formal religion; the status quo is safer.

Attention, the act of listening with palatable respect and fascination, is the key to a thinking environment. When you are listening in that environment much of the quality of what you are hearing is your effect on the listener. To further that attention she refers to the importance (in our western culture) of eye contact and of controlling our well established facial expressions.

I empathize with and adopt what she writes; this is in stark contradistinction to the listening in contemplation of cross questioning that I practised professionally which was almost entirely destructive.

Jenny Rogers in 2012 (2) gives emphasis to authentic and genuine listening with a rapport and congruence with the coachee born from an unconditional acceptance of the client, and vividly describes three levels of listening, ranging from the coach being self absorbed to being seamlessly absorbed in intensely concentrated conversation at both an emotional and intellectual level.

Carl Rogers in the 1960's was of the view that just being deeply listened to is enough for many people to resolve their problems without more.

To listen and to listen at the most attentive level can accordingly be sufficient.

It is however essential to recognize and appreciate that there are methods of furthering the listening process which are at the disposal of the coach. Nancy Kline recognises this as part of the Thinking Environment (1) that incisive questions are central to the effectiveness of that environment. They remove limiting assumptions, freeing the mind to think afresh. She describes them as "indisputable beauties in this world". If behaviour is adversely affected by the coachee's limiting assumption that for example they are stupid, they can be helped by the incisive question, starting with a positive assumption –if you knew you were intelligent would you be able to achieve your goal? Unlike a statement which requires you to obey, the question requires you to think, the mind prefers to think. The question frees you from the negative assumption and allows you to pursue your goal.

Nancy Kline (1) is however clear and draws attention to other pitfalls for the coach when they enter the arena with questions and seek to give advice. These areas are of great significance. She refers to infantilization, treating someone like a child and telling them what is best for them. This can be a subtle balancing between the "nurturing parent" and the "critical parent". It smacks of control and of making them dependent. This will not stand with proper coaching or the giving of profound levels of respectful attention. She also cautions against Co-dependency which she terms as an addiction to pleasing people. Co-dependency is everywhere; it is rampant in any structure requiring conformity, including companies. A coachee who is co-dependent will resist thinking for themselves through fear that they will lose everything if they detach from their co-dependent's mind and think for themselves.

Our learning from the course is that there are four key areas of questioning (Resources and Scoular Business Coaching 3)

- Focusing attention;
- Following interest;
- Raising awareness;
- Generating responsibility

And that to pursue non-directive coaching, listening to understand, it is important that the coach

- Has a belief in the client's ability to help themselves;
- Follows the client's agenda rather than his own
- Does not judge the client;
- Is comfortable with structuring the session
- Asks open questions
- Moves beyond needing to have an answer to be right

It is in the arena of questioning that comparisons with my profession as a barrister are most pertinent. In the key area section, above, they can be of great assistance. In the adversarial arena of a court room with an umpire that is keen to move on, and swiftly, it has become second nature to get to the point and to dig deep on it, which is helpful. There is a difference in "following the interest" because the coach is following the coachee's interest alone. This is in juxtaposition to the advocate representing his party within the limits clearly laid down by Court rules and procedure. Raising

awareness, in the sense of amplifying what the coachee has said, presents no divergence from the aim of the advocate and neither does generating responsibility for obvious reasons.

It is otherwise with the position that the coach should adopt to achieve non-directive coaching. I mention first the leading question; in cross examination it is incumbent upon the advocate to lead the witness, so far as he properly can, in the direction of his client's case. For similar reasons, three of the four other points do not correspond with the advocate's duty.

The exception may be that the client (or witness) is not judged. Even this is for very different reasons. In coaching it is to help the coachee; as an advocate it is because it is for others to make that judgment of the witness. It is for the coachee to make judgment of themselves and the coach should avoid so doing.

I have been both surprised and delighted by my experience with practice coaches, and I have tried to be non-directive and to let the client set the agenda.

The surprise has come when my coaches have experienced an awakening, an electrifying moment when they have spoken of something that was entirely new for them and unexpected by both of us. Neither of us knew where it had come from. This was totally removed from my experiences in court where there was careful planning.

There are many other areas which can help the coach in listening and which he should be aware of.

At the top of the pile is the use of the Smarter GROW model to provide structure to the coaching session and to show a measure of effect and coaching performance to all the contracting parties.

Mainstream neuroscience and contemporary psychology play their part. Feelings are important as neuroscience shows us. The amygdala closes the prefrontal area with cortisol on stress. This results in an inability to think properly and coaching won't work because the client feels under attack. We should be aware of the teaching of social and other psychologists in assessing our clients. The use of psychometric testing and strength inventories can help with our listening. Neuro Linguistic Planning, the study of excellence, the Johari window, visualisation and perceptual positions all have their place as aids to listening.

In conclusion, the ability to listen is fundamental to the relationship between coach and coachee. It is a central tool and key to non directive coaching. It is the antithesis of what I was advised and trained to do in cross examination. That was listening without hearing and listening without understanding and in order to respond. It is vital to remain with the coachee in the moment. It is vital for both coach and coachee to be willing. I am more at peace listening fundamentally as a coach than setting my own agenda to achieve an outcome.

References

1. Nancy Kline. Time to Think, Listening to Ignite the Mind (2011);
2. Jenny Rogers. Coaching Skills (3rd edition 2012);
3. Anne Scoular. Business Coaching (2011).

Charles Lewis

I come straight to the point, and dig deep on central issues. These skills were developed from years of experience as a cross-examining advocate, and allow clients to see the way forward clearly and quickly.

My empathetic perspective and enduring interest in psychology has been born of years of prison visiting, property management, and negotiating with state bureaucracy and protective institutions. These experiences enable clients to acquire novel approaches to negotiation and business strategy. I try to control my humorous cynicism.

Tel +44 (0)1604 407189

Email charleslewis3000@gmail.com

An epiphany and revelations on the Business Coach Programme

George Lynn

This graduation essay is a personal recollection of a journey through a learning process which has been both powerful and eye-opening. The process occurred over a period of time during which I took early retirement after many years in a senior business role and moved into a new independent role as business coach (this was possibly a set of circumstances similar to others on the course). As a Chartered Accountant I would normally be associated more with numbers than with people but, with a degree in psychology, I have always had an interest in how people work.

I came to this programme with some pretty clear ideas about what sort of coaching practice I wanted to develop. Having been a finance director in banking and asset finance businesses for over 25 years, my observations were that finance professionals had many similar work-related issues and that these were frequently reflected in the frustrations and arguments that ensued with boards and stakeholders. Working with private equity businesses, I had heard similar comments by shareholders and investors about the gap between what they expected from the finance professionals and what they received. Coaching and developing my teams to “step-up” was a big part of my previous roles. I had the confidence and experience to do this as I had benefited from coaching in the past.

My initial practice clients, who were finance professionals themselves, reinforced my hypotheses about the connectivity of issues they face, namely with:

- Communication
- Getting out of the detail and communicating the big picture
- Making finance accessible to other executives
- Recognising that networking and how one deals with others is very important

Surely I would be ideally suited to coaching and supporting finance professionals with a level of understanding and empathy based upon common shared experiences and technical knowledge? I was aware of the theoretical dangers of the “expert” approach and the potential to stray into mentoring. I had read books by Myles Downey and Anne Scoular before the course and so I was clear that non-directive coaching was not about advising or mentoring. But with hindsight I was clearly quite judgmental about what I was trying to achieve.

The false affirmative that I developed during the first third of this course was about seeing similar issues in clients, and developing a hypothesis that these were a standard set of problems and I could work with the clients to solve and fix these problems in a common format. I assumed I would be able to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with finance clients, and work to coach around some of these common issues for finance professionals and executives. It all seemed to pan out very logically.

My epiphany emerged, not in a blinding flash, but as little nuggets of insight through the learning process and tutorials of the course. I was developing a new level of understanding about mindfulness and allowing oneself time to think and reflect about the people whom I was working with, and slowly a different set of ideas started to form.

It started as a relatively simple, and obvious, revelation - namely that finance professionals are people as well, and not just functions. The issues that I had observed were often common symptoms for people working in that field, but that did not mean that there were common solutions or ways for

people to resolve these issues. I have seen that one of the enjoyments of coaching for finance personnel is helping the person to detach themselves from their structured role and reconnect with themselves as a person.

I reflected on my past experiences and observations from a life working in a highly pressured environment : delivering high quality output on time and against difficult deadlines, working teams as highly efficient and effective numbers staff, and realising that there was little time (or encouragement) to treat staff as individuals. Goals were very clear and immovable. The reality was that failure was not an option; to achieve a successful outcome invariably meant long hours of hard work, and then, with little time for respite, onto the next finance deliverable.

With the help of my tutorials it became clear that I was really just continuing my solutions-based thinking into coaching. What did I think that “I” could do for clients – after all they have the resourcefulness and capability? Realising this, removing the “I” and reflecting on others was the major light-bulb moment from this course. But the challenge was now how to build upon this realisation?

This learning process has been much more about the practical and pragmatic ways of developing coaching techniques. Initially, the materials, thoughts and ideas felt a bit light and superficial. Surely there is more to coaching than this? How does this technique get the client to solve his or her problems? What more is Nancy Kline getting at with her “Time to Think” and operating in a “thinking environment” - isn’t that just obvious?

Slowly, and rather unsteadily, and with the tutorials, readings and interaction with other members of the group we could see and feel the nuances of this approach. Re-reading the course materials and readings through new eyes, small but deep insights started to appear. An initial conclusion was that this was much more a practical apprenticeship than an accumulation of knowledge. But we did not operate on the factory shop floor, and the apprenticeship analogy implied a too mechanistic approach. These processes were not about intellectual knowledge and what was in books, or what you could learn in a classroom; they were about being mindful of feelings and senses, and being totally interested and involved with not just what the other person was doing and saying, but getting closer to and connecting with their feelings.

As these personal revelations developed, there were feelings of excitement and discovery but also some fear and trepidation. Observing others, there was a realisation that for some, skilled coaching seemed just a fine-tuning of their natural abilities and inclinations. Being mindful of my natural tendency to swing into problem-solving mode, determination was needed to avoid developing a programme of learning strategies to bridge the gap. But one has to learn to trust in your own feelings and senses, otherwise how will your clients ever get to trust your authenticity?

Could that development and growth be achieved by oneself? No, that is why you need continuing support and supervision from other experienced coaches; and probably some need more than others. Some coaches must have a natural ability and ease to connect with people and to help them explore their issues. Our tutor said that it becomes easier and feels more second-nature with experience. Continual practice and experience will be essential, but the capacity to reflect and self-monitor one’s continuing development is a fundamental skill that needs help from others.

So at the conclusion of this course and this reflection of the process, where do the next steps lead? Has it been disheartening to realise that the course helped me learn and appreciate how complex and deep the practice of coaching is? No, not really, because to learn and appreciate what one does

not know is an essential stage to internalised learning. To be able to learn more and continually develop will need time, practice, and companionship with others. The ability to tap into the Meyler Campbell community does provide a strong feeling of back-up and support – and better appreciated now than at the start of this process.

The performance issues and problems that can be observed in business are still there and are real. However, whether they are so associated with a particular branch of professional approach is probably not as relevant as once we thought. Everyone is different, so however many people you coach and experience the next person will still be unique and will have different issues. They may reflect similar symptoms but there is no magic solution for all. Maybe similar tools and approaches will help, but how finance executives develop their own solutions and ways forward will be unique to them.

George Lynn

George is an experienced CFO from the Asset Finance & Banking sectors and has worked with several private equity investors. With a B.Sc. (Hons) in Psychology, he offers a unique blend of human resource insight with substantial financial management experience. He is a Partner in Crawford Lynn Ltd where his core focus is coaching senior finance clients.

Tel +44 (0)1223 208548

+44 (0)7767 672770

Email georgelynn@crawfordlynn.co.uk

Web www.crawfordlynn.co.uk

Reflections - My Coaching Journey So Far

Ava Madon

On starting the Meyler Campbell course I had very little idea of what to expect. I had never undertaken any formal coaching or been coached. I had however read about coaching whilst studying for my MBA and I wanted to learn more. I was excited to receive the books from the prescribed reading list and lost no time in dipping into the ones that looked most interesting.

Listening to help, not impress

Nancy Kline's "Time To Think" was the first book I read and I was immediately interested in her comments on listening. As a lawyer I had always thought that my listening skills must be above average because of the nature of my job. However, on reflection, I realised that I never really listened with a quiet mind. Instead it was second nature for me to formulate an answer in my head while the other person spoke. That way I could make sure that I always had a polished answer ready and waiting. I also realised, a bit ashamedly, that it was common for me to say to a colleague "I'm listening..." while I continued with whatever I was doing at the time.

Kline's¹ statement that "When you are listening to someone much of the quality of what you are hearing is *your effect on them*" (original emphasis) made me wonder about whether this could be true. When colleagues came to my desk to discuss matters I began taking a different approach. I stopped what I was doing and asked them to sit down. I then looked at them and gave them my full attention. As recommended by Kline, I kept my eyes on their face regardless of whether they maintained eye contact. I also stopped telling them what to do and instead waited for them to come up with thoughts and ideas. I only put forward my ideas or advice if really necessary. After a while I noticed that the quality of my conversations with colleagues had improved. In addition, when we agreed on actions to be taken, these actions were carried out more effectively than usual with less intervention being required from me.

I believe that Klein is right in saying that allowing people to access their own ideas is "real help" as opposed to simply advising or directing them. This authentic listening is something I continue to work on - it's not second nature as yet. I also find that it's easier to use Kline's approach within a formal coaching session when I am in "coach mode". It is more difficult to achieve in day to day interactions, when reverting to my old ways - especially when busy or stressed - can happen all too easily.

Whilst all the books I have read on coaching stress the importance of listening, I have noticed that others also consider listening to be an important skill. In 1937 Dale Carnegie² described Sigmund Freud as being one of the "great listeners of modern times" He related a story told by someone who had met Freud. The description (below) of how Freud listened correlates closely to what Kline advocates.

"His eyes were mild and genial. His voice was low and kind. His gestures were few. But the attention he gave me, his appreciation of what I said, even when I said it badly was extraordinary. *You've no idea what it means to be listened to like that.*" (Original emphasis)

¹ Kline N. - *Time to Think- Listening to Ignite the Human Mind*

² Carnegie D. - *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

The need to be listened to is strong and instinctive and has always existed. In my view much of the power of coaching stems from the coach being able to satisfy this need.

Choosing the right client

One of the biggest problems I had initially was finding suitable practice clients. It made sense to start by asking friends and colleagues. However I didn't really examine whether they had a genuine need for coaching. I soon realised that when my practice clients were doing me a favour by being coached, the chances of a successful session were diminished. I have tried to understand the reasons for this and Rogers³ throws some light on the issue for me. She explains that a fundamental need for change is the driver for a successful coaching agenda. If the gap between where the client is and where he wants to be is too narrow then there is no real desire for change. It becomes difficult to set goals and you tend to go round in circles in the session with both parties ending up feeling dissatisfied. I have experienced exactly this scenario and the importance of making sure that the client genuinely needs coaching has been brought home to me.

I am now very careful about choosing my practice clients. I utilise the initial chemistry session more effectively and actively evaluate how strong the client's desire to be coached is. A big step for me occurred recently when a potential practice client indicated that she would be prepared to "give it a go" but admitted that she was not that keen on being coached. Previously I would have proceeded regardless, hoping to change her mind, as on paper she was a good practice client for me. However, due to my previous experiences, I felt that it was more appropriate to suggest that coaching may not be the right course of action for her at this stage. We left it that she would contact me again if she ever felt that coaching would be of use.

Opportunities to practice

Both Whitmore⁴ and Scoular⁵ mention that coaching does not always need to take place within a formal coaching session and that informal conversations can also provide opportunities to coach. Whitmore mentions that "coaching can occur spontaneously in a minute or an hour long session". He talks about coaching as "a way of being" and relating to each other. These views gave me the confidence to try out coaching techniques in a variety of situations ranging from informal conversations by the coffee machine to more formal work appraisals.

Rogers⁶ describes how the concepts of coaching - such as open questions, allowing silence, summarising and goal setting - can be applied to facilitating groups. As a result I realised that the meetings that I facilitate at provided me with opportunities to practice many of the basic coaching skills I had been reading about - without anyone even knowing.

Being able to practice my coaching skills in these small and often subtle ways has been an invaluable form of learning.

³ Rogers J. - *Coaching Skills*

⁴ Whitmore J. - *Coaching for Performance*

⁵ Scoular A. - *Financial Times Guides: Business Coaching*

⁶ Rogers J. - *Facilitating Groups*

Questions

Effective questions form the bedrock of coaching and some of the books I have read provide lists of questions which can be used in appropriate situations. As a beginner I have found these lists incredibly useful. They provide ideas about the type and style of questions that are effective. In her book "Coaching Skills" Rogers talks about keeping her list of "magic" questions in front of her when she coaches. I have resisted trying this as I don't want to become dependent on following set questions in a specific sequence.

I feel that the quality and timing of the questions asked by a coach reflect the uniqueness of that coach. However getting the questions exactly right is a much harder skill to learn than I expected. What I have found though is that the deeper the listening on my part, the better the questions. I am hopeful that with time and practice formulating simple effective questions will become easier.

Moving forward

In this essay I have reflected on some of the most important components of my learning so far. I know that there is so much more to learn and experience and I am looking forward to it tremendously.

Ava Madon

Ava is a Partner at Penningtons Solicitors LLP and has an MBA in Legal Practice. In addition to her transactional work she is responsible for the development of the Firm's international strategy. She believes that, in the right hands, coaching can help bridge the gap that often exists between strategy formulation and implementation.

Tel +44 (0)7986 215732

Email ava.madon@penningtons.co.uk

Taking the Medicine

Peter Mumford

1. What from coaching in medicine could be of relevance in law?

I have supported, encouraged, challenged, facilitated, and coached between 1500 and 2000 doctors in the last 25 years. My primary goal from the Meyler Campbell Programme was to explore whether this experience would be relevant in the legal sector, where I have wanted to expand my practice. In medicine the focus has been individuals taking on management roles and groups of doctors wanting to improve the way they work; in general practice, in clinical departments and across whole hospitals.

Ten years ago coaching requests were more remedial ('please sort out this badly behaving doctor'). Now the emphasis is on supporting individuals into roles that are proving very demanding (however well established the individual is in their professional practice) and call on unfamiliar skills, approaches and competencies, seemingly far removed from those they employ day to day in their professional practice.

When working with doctors, a number of themes have consistently surfaced for those wanting to make sustainable transitions into management roles, and include:

- **The impact of the profession on the way an individual established in that profession thinks and behaves and the impact on their attitudes towards their own kind and those outside.** Joining a profession, and being schooled in particular practices and attitudes, can have a profound effect on an individual's work personality and identity, often unseen by the individual but visible to others. This schooling is often key to successful and sustained core professional practice, but it can become an obstacle to being effective in management roles, in running teams and departments, and acting strategically. It can undermine the best of intentions, create impossible demands and foster deep disenchantment.
- **The challenge to working identity and relationships with peers.** The process of professionalisation includes the process of socialisation. How members behave in a given context is key to acceptance, affirmation and reputation in the group. The move into a management role usually requires the individual to do some hard thinking about their identity within their profession, their relationship with their peers, and the nature of their profession's practice ¹.
- **Developing an individual's capability to manage across professions and cultures and to think and act strategically in a wider political setting.** The core teaching in a profession equips the individual to work with peers and other professions sufficiently to get the core professional activities completed. A management role widens the range of relationships critical to success, works on longer, more open-ended time frames, brings greater complexity, realigns power and authority and disrupts the familiar positions of professional status and hierarchy.

¹ Ibarra, H. 2003. *Working identity*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.

- **Managing transitions from expert competence to role competence.** Being an excellent and well regarded professional may help get an individual appointed or elected and may initially open doors, but it won't sustain or develop the individual as an effective management role holder. Role competence calls on a subtler and contingent repertoire of skills and behaviours to get things done, which in turn benefit from understanding of self and how others experience the individual. New skills and behaviours will need to be learnt (the 'conscious competence' learning model from psychology is often helpful here ²).
- **Introducing important but unfamiliar activities to a diary full of well-established professional activities.** Doing what you have been trained to do well and using your expertise is rewarding, affirming, and reinforces a sense of worth; where possible the work diary is filled with opportunities to conduct familiar and rewarding activity. Management roles tend to have longer, unpredictable pay back and rewards; they expose the individual to unfamiliar and unpredictable situations and risks, and require the application of new and unfamiliar skills and behaviours. To introduce and sustain activities associated with the management role usually requires attention to personality, motivations and practical skills to give diary management a chance.
- **Management role exposure to significant legislative and societal change with implications for professional practice and services.** Professions prize and defend their practice and their independence. External challenge to the profession has very personal implications for the individual practitioner, disturbing their identity, worth, independence, livelihood and leading often to defensive reasoning ³. Management roles expose individuals to these dynamics and the challenge of working constructively with peers in an industry under conflicting pressures.
- **Life and career transitions.** Reflections on wider life and career transitions are often triggered by, or coincide with, work transitions and frequently become a very significant part of the landscape within which effective business coaching takes place with individuals. Often business coaching provides 'the first opportunity in years' to 'think things through', 'take stock', 'get head space' in a busy, stimulating, competitive, tiring, activity-filled professional work life ⁴.

2. Comparisons between medicine and law

As I gather experience of coaching lawyers, barristers and barrister's clerks, some of the distinctive features of each profession have become clearer:

- Professionalisation manifests itself in different ways; each profession has its well-schooled defaults, which can become a serious impediment in management roles. Examples: spotting errors (lawyers); waiting for instruction (barristers); defending a solution in the face of perfectly reasonable alternatives (doctors).

² Gullander, O. E. 1974. Conscious Competency - The Mark of a Competent Instructor. *The Personnel Journal*. Baltimore, Volume 53, PP538-539

³ Argyris, C. 1991. Teaching Smart People How to Learn. *Harvard Business Review*. Reprint 91301.

⁴ Kline, N. 1999. *Time to Think*, Cassell Illustrated. 1999

- The freedoms to act available to lawyers and barristers are a world away from the strictures and constraints of a heavily professionalised, monopolistic, universal-service-providing public sector.
- The professional jury is still out in medicine as to the legitimacy within the profession of leadership and management roles, in contrast to law where the legitimacy is largely there, but the challenge remains to build the roles into the conventions and expectations of professional practice.
- The status and use of business coaching in medicine has mirrored that in law over the last decade; it is still evolving and is used successfully by a relatively small proportion of those who could benefit.
- The challenge of incorporating new, leadership role-related activities into day-to-day professional practice. In medicine the structure of the week is largely prescribed by clinical sessions. In law, responding to instruction, representing a client, hitting deadlines and accounting for time, provide distinctively different backdrops and constraints.
- The topic of career options, alternatives and ambitions surface more readily in law, a profession where constraints on individual enterprise are considerably less than in medicine in the NHS and where also security of employment is significantly lower.

3. How does this affect the way I approach business coaching in law?

In the initial conversations, where coach and coachee are exploring the potential, limitations, assumptions and expectations of business coaching, I have found three particular questions helpful in clarifying the nature of the work ahead.

i. What is the nature of the challenge you face that brings you to coaching?

In law, as in medicine, the focus of most business coaching is to support established and successful lawyers and barristers take on unfamiliar and challenging management roles and transitions, which take on two distinctive guises:

- **Well established transitions within the profession:** e.g. application for silk; lawyer to partner; lateral hires; fixed to equity partnership; business development; senior leadership and management roles; team leadership; preparation for retirement
- **Uncharted change:** e.g. supporting barristers to develop new sources of income, new business models and new business partnerships; supporting a legal practice to rethink business plans and implement a revised strategy; supporting a barrister's clerk develop and implement a marketing strategy in collaboration with set members; career reappraisals.

Uncharted change is becoming more prevalent in business coaching as changes in the legal industry bear down on established business models and professional practice, and as professionals see the contribution business coaching can make in this domain.

ii. What level do you think we will need to work at to achieve the desired change?

In law, as in medicine, many of the skills required to make a successful transition to management roles can be named and explained. The challenge is to incorporate these skills in authentic, credible, integrated (and successful) ways into the practice of a well established professional, with well-established identity, behaviours and attitudes.

As a coach I see experienced professionals making successful and sustained transitions when all these factors are up for consideration, along with their relationship with their profession and their short and longer-term motivations and aspirations.

iii. What do you think it is going to require of you to make a success of the changes you seek?

Those taking on management roles in medicine in the UK have long recognised perseverance as a key requirement, particularly for those wanting to introduce improvements to clinical practice, as they face the complexities of the NHS, public scrutiny and their own profession.

Becoming adroit at any new skill, behaviour or way of thinking takes time to take root, and will need to run the gauntlet of unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence and conscious competence before arriving at unconscious competence. This requires particular perseverance for those in a profession that puts high value on competence, mastery, getting it right first time and clear payback for work undertaken ⁵.

4. Is the experience in medicine proving relevant in law?

I derive great satisfaction from seeing people prosper in their chosen field of employment and particularly enjoy the challenge of coaching able and experienced professionals. I set out with Meyler Campbell to explore the potential of the legal profession, and I have been agreeably surprised to see that what began as an exploration is already becoming established as part of my coaching practice. The evidence from those I have coached in the legal profession is that my experience of business coaching in medicine has direct application in law.

Clients have also talked of the value of being coached by someone 'outside' their profession. Being from 'outside' brings objectivity, and allows a fresh and sometimes challenging appraisal of the distinctive ways an individual is approaching their work. It has helped clients establish fresh approaches and priorities and has led to substantial practical progress with the challenges they face.

There is much still to be learnt and applied from working across the two professions as a business coach, and I plan to continue this exploration in the years ahead.

Peter Mumford

Peter has 15 years' experience as a business coach and works with senior professionals (in medicine and law), academics and board level executives. He has extensive experience of supporting individuals facing significant personal and professional challenges and supporting people leading strategy and change in professional organisations. His interest is in seeing people prosper at work.

Tel +44 (0)7930 372918

⁵ Bridges, W. *Getting them through the wilderness*. William Bridges & Associates. 2004

Email peter@epiassociates.com

Web www.epiassociates.com

Executive Coaching – enhancing the Head Hunter’s value proposition

Martin Noakes

The global head hunting industry is mature and most probably in long term slow decline. This is partly because of social media which is dis-intermediating the industry’s core ‘access to talent’ value proposition and also due to better human capital strategies by large organisations. This has already started in the US, UK and other advanced economies, with the advent of in house recruiters who mine Google/LinkedIn to identify, approach and hire suitable candidates; their key performance metric being (*head hunter*) cost avoidance. Major Global search firms are thus being forced to consider their options and some have invested heavily in assessment services (Heidrick & Struggles and Korn Ferry have both made big purchases in this space in the last 18 months) to ‘beef up’ what they can offer to their ever more discerning clients.

Coaching, to date, has not generally been packaged as part of the search assignment. This is because head hunters aren’t skilled, qualified or simply aware of it or its impact and relevance and besides, clients usually buy it separately and for different reasons. However, the case for combining the two is compelling, especially when there is a little-publicised but well known fact that up to 40% of senior executive hires fail in the first 18 months (*referenced widely including Harvard Business Review – Jan 2005*). Of course, it is this very attrition which fuels the distress purchases which fill the head hunter’s book of business.

Accordingly, the sales message which suggests that the best head hunter in town is the one who will not only find the right person but who will then materially help the ‘new star’ integrate and excel, is compelling to the more strategic and discerning of clients. At current market fee rates, the commercials stack up too, coaching being comparatively inexpensive compared to head hunting. So, for only a modest additional cost, this integration or transition coaching can materially reduce the risk of failure due to poor integration.

Furthermore, extending the head-hunters value proposition in this way will usefully act as a differentiator in the all too common pitch or beauty parade scenario thus helping the core transaction product (the search work) to be won. There is clearly synergy between the two offerings especially as one leads nicely to the other, and just as likely, vice versa.

So what and where is this Coaching sweet spot?

The principles of Positive Psychology (*per Seligman, Rogers et al*) are highly relevant to scenarios when high calibre executives change jobs, pushing themselves up the leadership ladder, excited by bigger and fresh challenges. They’re good already, that’s why they were hired but they are human too, and they will have anxieties and concerns, conundrums and unfamiliar pressures in the new work environment. And all this remember is going on whilst they are under the microscope and expected to perform with great confidence and skill. (*48% of coaches are hired to develop high potentials or facilitate transition - Harvard Business review – January 2009.*)

Strengths based and non-directive coaching delivery when it is set within a peer to peer relationship is perfectly matched to these situations, the mandate being to help the very good person to perform and exceed beyond everyone’s expectation, especially their own. Again, commercially this stacks up

since investment in strengths is proven to yield a better return on investment than attempts to diminish or eliminate weaknesses (the latter being where classically the greatest proportion of executive training budgets are spent, usually to no avail in terms of positive outcomes and the authority for this proposition).

And what message does this send to the newly appointed executive?

Well, providing it's provisioned through a sponsor who is supportive, it will come across as great news. *"They really want me to do well here. I have developed a great relationship with the head hunter (who is now my coach) since he/she supported me through the hiring process as my new employers trusted partner. He/she knows my CEO, peers and the company culture well so they are already up to speed with my challenges."*

In practice though, the best time to engage in this type of integration or transition coaching is perhaps after the initial honeymoon period is over, when the induction process is finished and the real job of actually performing in the new job starts. (This is certainly the writer's experience through coaching sessions involving talented fast track executives). It's at this time (in the *conscious incompetence* part of the classic *learning curve*), when non – directive coaching in pursuit of crisply defined goals has a real impact on the performance of the now 'not so new' high flyer. This is especially the case for the first time Board member (again, the writer's personal experience from practice coaching) who feels uncomfortable discussing issues with colleagues, the CEO, or a direct report, for fear of coming across as not quite as good as they are supposed to be or worse still, just plain weak. Image and profile are paramount at this juncture and simply having a safe place to think with someone who 'believes in me' and is undeniably supportive and totally non-judgmental, is a unique and invaluable resource. Don't forget the head hunter in this scenario who is constantly thinking of good reasons to get in front of clients in order to be front of mind (in case that exciting search assignment just happens to be around the corner). The coach is already granted frequent access in the client organisation and is being paid (at least monthly) to keep the brand visible and current.

And for the Sponsor?

The search partner clearly demonstrates a more vested interest in the real success of the appointed candidate and providing the coaching contract is set up correctly (especially where boundary management is concerned – reference Peltier's *Psychology of executive Coaching*, 2nd edition Chapter 17 and The European Mentoring & Coaching Council's published *Standards and Ethics policy* at http://emccaccreditation.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/EMCC_Code_of_Ethics.pdf), with the coachee acting as the feedback axis, expectations become more closely matched with adjustments to objectives, easier to negotiate. More positive and open relationships unfold due to the greater confidence, self-awareness and the clear results that coaching always delivers.

Recruiters at C suite level always remember who found them the last really successful leader and with 'performance coaching' now empirically proven (referenced severally but especially in *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research* 2008, Vol. 60, No 1, 78-90 + variously, Alex Linley, Michael Lindemann, 'Arnott & Sparrow' and 'Delichte & Evers-Cacciapaglia' - 2010) to improve retention, engagement and productivity, it would appear to be a 'no brainer' to buy it as an essential part of an overall talent management strategy. As such, the new norm might well become that all senior level executive career movers are offered 6-12 months of coaching support to help them engage, excel and progress more quickly. Once the coach has added value and enabled the

new 'star' to shine, undoubtedly, other coaching opportunities will follow; as a result the service becomes more established and independent of the head hunter for the initial sales opportunity.

So where is the catch?

Cynics might say that this extended service proposition forgets that search and coaching budgets (to date at least) are usually held separately in the HR function (if they are held centrally at all that is) of larger organisations and that increasingly, clients want absolute specialist suppliers for each segment of the talent management agenda. Ethics and probity around confidentiality are also a concern for some and certainly the head hunter-come-coach needs to convince the sponsor that there is no hidden agenda. Research records that only 2% of buyers of coaching believe that having a background in executive search is important (*Harvard Business Review – Jan 2009*) and on the surface this is an alarm bell. However, it certainly demonstrates that the two skills are very different and independently valued.

These may be valid push backs although the writer's experience to date, in pressure testing this brand extension proposition, suggests that the benefits are attractive and convincing providing the new look coach-head hunter can demonstrate credibility (with experience, qualifications and accreditation) in both fields.

It's a no-brainer!

In conclusion, this enhanced service proposition set within the mature executive search industry will help propel the Business Coaching profession towards its rightful place in the human capital value chain (whilst also keeping the head hunters in business at the same time). The new hybrid Coach-qualified Head Hunter also develops a much deeper relationship with clients with whom they will establish and maintain an ongoing/annuity service, as opposed to an occasional/transactional, partnership. Everyone would appear to win here (even the budget holders who will enjoy the long term savings associated with better talent retention).

The elevator pitch that **helps clients to attract, retain and optimise the performance of their talent**, is thus a genuine no-brainer.

Martin Noakes

25 Years in head hunting with a focus in the Technology and Communications industry, recruiting at leadership level. Coaching for performance improvement, and the relevance this adds to clients in key parts of their talent agenda, is my sweet spot as a non-directive coach. My methods are underpinned by the principles of Positive Psychology which I believe in passionately. This is most attractive to fast track senior executives who are at, or approaching management board level. As such, **I help rising stars to keep rising.**

Tel +44 0)7711 234557

Email martin.noakes@odgersberndtson.com

The Road Less Travelled

Monika Pakulska

The road I took last December with Meyler Campbell was the start of an incredible journey. It's been a time of not only learning coaching skills, but also of learning more about myself: who I am, who I want to be, what hurts me and what motivates me.

For clients to develop, they need to be aware of where they are, who they are and where they want to get. The role of a coach is to support the client in raising this awareness. This sounds easy, but in fact is a huge challenge since a coach needs to be fully aware of him/herself in order to guide clients in their paths.

How to do it? How to get there? Question after question and the answers to them seem almost impossible to be found.

Awareness has been one of the most important factors of my journey with Meyler Campbell because a better awareness leads to change and development. In December 2012, it felt as if I was trapped in the middle of a dark forest, surrounded by hundreds or thousands of trees. I could only hear them rustling "do this, do that, there is little time, you need to hurry, you won't manage to cope with it all; run, Monika, run!" I very well remember writing to a friend of mine that it felt as if I were on a train -- one of those super-fast trains, covering incredible distances in the blink of an eye so that you almost cannot see the view through the window. And inside this train, I kept running myself. I could not sit and try to breathe inside or enjoy the moment, but with my heart pounding and my eyes wide-open I could only run to try to arrive at my destination even quicker. But where that was, I did not know.

I've always been very committed to what I do and commitment seemed to me to involve doing as many things as possible and dedicating as much time as possible. But is it really? I had my first wakeup call while reading Eugene O'Kelly's testimony in Chasing daylight.

*(...) I had to come to wonder about the true nature of commitment. In fact it's **not** about time. It's not about reliability and predictability. Commitment is about depth. It's about effort. It's about passion. It's about waiting to be in certain place, and not somewhere else. Of course time is involved; it would be naive and illogical to suggest otherwise. But commitment is best measured not by the **time** one is willing to **give up** but, more accurately, by the energy one wants to **put in**, by how present one **is**.*

Have I ever been present? No. Did I want to be? Yes, without the least bit of doubt and without the tiniest amount of hesitation. So, yes, the road that I took last December with Meyler Campbell turned into an incredible journey of getting to the very depth of who I am and whether I truly need to run.

Is there one and only one concept that spoke directly to my heart? Is there any special, unique, "earth-shattering" idea that I will rely on in the future? No, there is definitely not. There have been a few milestones I'd like to share, however.

Whitmore. For him, building awareness and responsibility are fundamentals of good coaching. Whitmore asks questions to raise awareness, especially – as he was a sports coach – self-awareness

of the body, its movements and sensations. Once coachees are aware of themselves, they can take responsibility and decide what to do.

For Whitmore, the most striking questions to raise awareness and generate responsibility are the ones beginning with "what", "where", "when", "who", "how much" and "how many." There is no "why" question on the list as it may imply criticism and cause defensiveness. Isn't "what are the reasons" much more objective?

- Why do you keep running, Monika?

And a million answers come after "because" – *because of* this and this and that.

- What are the true reasons you keep running?

And there you get a helpless look, silence and a calm whisper: 'I really do not know'.

Whitmore writes in his book Coaching for Performance: *I am able to control only that which I am aware of. That which I am unaware of controls me. Awareness empowers me. No two human minds or bodies are the same. How can I tell you how to use yours? Only you can discover how, with awareness.*

Wow, how powerful is that? And it is **me** and only **me** who has that power. There is only **one** person who can change how I feel and that person is **me**. I have the influence on what my tomorrow will look like and what I need is to be aware, be in the moment, be with quality and not quantity and be "one" with myself.

Whitmore worked very closely with Gallwey and I cannot overemphasize the impact that Gallwey's concept of the inner game had on me: *The opponent in one's own head is more daunting than the one on the other side of the net.* If so, then a primary goal of coaching is to eliminate the internal obstacles to performance, learning and enjoyment. I am the one making it impossible to stop. It's the voice in my head. It's not my boss, those are not my responsibilities, not even the e-mails piling up in my Inbox. I, and only I, am responsible. Me and this inner voice whispering *more, faster, better*. Me and my expectations, the impossibility to stop and enjoy the moment.

- Where do I want to get to? What is the goal? Will I stop when I get there? Or am I just running for the sake of running.
- No, I am definitely not! I want to stop, but the circumstances won't let me.
- Really, Monika, are you sure that it's the circumstances? And what about when your coachees tell you the same thing? Will you believe them?
- Of course not!
- So why try to fool yourself?

Change for the better takes place when we stop trying so hard and trust our capacity to learn from our own experience. **Less is more**. How can less be more – that is ridiculous! But isn't coaching exactly about these kinds of paradoxes? Isn't life about them? Just let go and it will come. Stop holding on and it will stay. Stop searching and you will find. How powerful and life-changing is that?

How powerful are Gallwey's principles: non-judgmental awareness, trust in your loving inner voice, belief that the change will happen and that you will make the right choice, the one that's best for you, for yourself.

Don't we all have too many expectations of ourselves and too little love? You should work more, you should have more of a social life, you should be less tired, you should go out more often, you should eat less, you should exercise more, etc., etc., etc. You should be this, you should be that. Expectations, expectations, expectations, with the most destructive ones coming just from inside you. The persistent voice repeating like a mantra: "you are not good enough, you need to try harder". But do I really? How can I try harder and run faster if I am already at the limits of my strengths and breath? *Trust yourself*, says Gallwey. *Stop punishing yourself and cure yourself with love* – whispers Morgan Scott Peck in his The Road Less Travelled – *as love is a driving force behind growth*.

Peck also mentions discipline, which includes the ability to delay gratification, accepting responsibility for oneself and one's actions, a dedication to truth and balancing. The discipline that he mentions is not tough and demanding; on the contrary, it is based on love.

This all sounds very esoteric, intangible, even spiritual. It is something that you feel deep in your heart and is like a hidden vocation of the soul. But how do I help myself, and, consequently, how do I help my future clients discover their true potential? What are the best ways to get where I want to be – to live in the moment and appreciate the journey, not the goal that is at its end? We can say that less is more, but how to translate that into the language of a powerful managing director, who, like Eugene O'Kelly, finds himself in an endless race?

The answer comes from Tony Schwarz and his incredible book, Be Excellent at Anything, Four Changes to Get More Out of Work and Life. The same was then repeated by Juan Coto during one of the Meyler Campbell Faculty Clinics. We have four primary needs that have to be fed in order for us to be energized and effective in what we do. The rhythm goes between activity and rest. We fulfil our needs – sustainability, security, self-expression and significance -- by moving rhythmically between activity and renewal in four corresponding dimensions – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

You need to take care of yourself, Monika, in these four dimensions; otherwise, you will never stop running. Do I do it? Yes, I've started. Am I perfect in it? No, because I no longer have to be. This is a journey and I am enjoying it, a journey that started in December 2012 together with Meyler Campbell. I could have just settled for the coaching skills. Get the information, read the books, prepare for the tutorials, get the certificate. I chose to approach it differently, however. I chose the more demanding and challenging path of self-exploration and raising my self-awareness. As Robert Frost wrote:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference.

Was it worth it? Like nothing else in my life so far.

Monika Pakulska

Monika is a lawyer who has switched to a career in HR management, currently with White & Case in Poland. She has extensive expertise in all aspects of human resources, especially in the professional services environment. Monika has worked both as an independent contractor and as an internal HR person with local and regional responsibility in global firms.

Tel +48 22 50 50 302

Email mpakulska@whitecase.com

Coaching Women Lawyers to Make a Difference

Carol Patterson

I began to consider coaching women lawyers as my next career when as managing partner of Baker & McKenzie's five offices in the CIS countries I attended the 2011 policy committee meeting of the global firm where the results of a survey of our 2000+ associates around the world were presented. One of the survey questions was whether the associate aspired to be a partner. The survey results showed that significantly more of the male associates aspired to become partners than the women associates. In my own Moscow office the gap was even wider than the global average. This disparity in apparent ambition shocked me. That, and the realization that more than 30 years after women started to graduate in large numbers from law schools, we still comprised less than 20% of the partners at big corporate law firms.

When I graduated from law school in Canada, we knew that as the first group of women who had comprised more than 20% of the class that we would be pioneers. However, I had always believed that over time the percentage of female partners in big law firms would mirror the percentage of women who had graduated from law school 8 -10 years earlier. This hasn't, in fact, happened.

Why do many young women lawyers (and we now account for 50% or more of law school graduating classes in most countries) either not want to, or think that they can, "have it all"? Further, as a managing partner, I also wanted to know what could be done to retain and fully develop more of this female legal talent which we have attracted and invested in.

I decided to start addressing this issue in the five offices that I managed. Business coaching gradually presented itself to me as the best way in which I could make a contribution.

As a managing partner I had been invited a few years earlier to attend leadership training, which included psychometric testing, 360 degree feedback, and one on one coaching. I had definitely found that the 360 degree feedback was very helpful in making changes and improving my effectiveness as managing partner. The coaching helped me define more clearly my priorities as managing partner.

While I had always been conscious of special challenges that women faced in our very time-intensive profession and had for some years been the only woman partner in the Russian offices, I did not feel comfortable in presuming to act as a role model for our women lawyers (all of them Russian, Ukrainian, Azeri, Kazakh and all of them at least 20 years younger than I). As a North American "women's libber" from the 1970s era, I wasn't sure I would be "in touch" with their thinking. Nor was I originally comfortable proclaiming that women needed special help with their careers.

But the two sets of statistics described above, arriving together, shook me into action.

Coaching was not the first step that I took as managing partner to address the situation. I first convened a lunch meeting of all the women associates in the CIS offices at our annual retreat. The enthusiasm, candour and amazing ideas which were put forward by the young women convinced me that indeed they wanted to be counted and they were energized by being encouraged. They themselves identified lack of confidence as the main barrier. They demonstrated an understanding of law firm realities in proposing as their first initiative a business development effort aimed at getting to know our women clients better.

The next suggestion coming from a woman non-equity partner was that we follow the example of a London-based law firm that was offering its non-equity partners business coaching. When I researched this, I was impressed by the approach. At the same time, a global initiative paper that our own global firm committee brought forward also prioritized business coaching for our high potential women lawyers. That is when I enrolled at Meyler Campbell to be trained myself as a business coach.

What Have I Learned?

It is still a challenge to explain and sell “business coaching” to the Russian and Ukrainian markets as it has not yet made any significant inroad in the CIS countries as opposed to the London law firms, where it is very prevalent. The reason that resonated most clearly with the partners in our offices was that a coach would have law practice and management experience similar to theirs, but would have the time to listen to and brainstorm with the individual lawyers being coached. Time is in short supply for busy partners and they often use the “directive” method of supervising, while recognizing that their associates will show more initiative and come up with more ideas if patiently encouraged, which is what coaching essentially is.

I have found in practice coaching six women, mostly lawyers in Russia, but also Canadian senior businesswomen, that they for the large part prefer a very collaborative working style with their juniors, and are very hands-on in trying to train juniors, but they are sometimes frustrated with what seems to be a lack of recognition of their authority and experience. This was a common theme running through my sessions with three of the coachees. They reported that just being able to talk through their frustration enabled them to come up with an approach they felt comfortable with in addressing their subordinates.

Coaching gives the coachee “room to think” in a supportive structure. That it is the coachees who are formulating the plan going forward, and are coming up with the ideas on how to proceed has been a bit of a revelation for me. I have learned slowly over the course of practice coaching to listen longer, and offer suggestions more rarely than I did at the beginning.

I do believe that the fact that I have been a working mother in a law firm and reached the managerial level gives me credibility and gives the women being coached the sense that they have a sympathetic audience, and someone who has lived through the challenges they are facing. But the solutions that we have discussed in coaching using the GROW model are very much the solutions that the women themselves come up with. The knowledge that the coach has listened carefully to their thinking aloud, made them consider alternatives, and urged them to commit to a definite plan, has given them added confidence to implement their resulting plan in practice.

The women wanted to learn specific skills – how to delegate more effectively, how to write a business plan, how to ask for a raise or promotion. In the sessions I have had with several women, they commenced by expressing reluctance to be perceived as too pushy, or too complaining, but eventually worked through an approach to having a discussion with their (mostly) male bosses that they felt would be productive and appropriate.

One theme that does seem to be borne out in my limited practice coaching is Sheryl Sandberg’s observation in her current best-selling book “Lean In” is that women employees tend to wait for acknowledgment and reward of their performance, rather than pushing for recognition. Some are

now coming to the view that they need to be aware of showcasing their contributions in order to feel fully appreciated and appropriately compensated or promoted.

Certainly as a coach I have learned to feel less responsibility for offering solutions, and fixing the problems than I always in the past had assumed. I now work closely with the individual to explore at length what they think the possible approaches might be. Indeed, on occasions when I have offered suggestions based on my experience, I have learned that indeed other peoples may immediately reject these approaches as something not suited to them. I've learned to offer fewer solutions, and to move on quickly if there is no interest in my proposed alternative.

In working with lawyers in my own firm, it has been useful for them to focus on their financial results and business development efforts, which I can confirm is what the partners are looking at. Putting their results in context has tended to make the lawyers more confident.

Not surprisingly, the best success has come from the individuals who are the most enthusiastic about coaching – and this includes a male lawyer who asked me if I could coach him. Less successful has been trying to coach or invite lawyers who are recommended to me for coaching by their supervisors but who are themselves sceptical or reluctant.

In summary, achieving greater numbers of women in senior roles in their chosen occupations is a complex issue, and one requiring careful thought and presentation, especially in countries such as Russia. I think that the women lawyers themselves are indeed the ones who will have to make the change and strategize their way into more positions of leadership, and that coaching will be instrumental in that. I look forward to making a contribution as a coach.

Carol Patterson

Carol Patterson is a Canadian corporate lawyer who practiced with Baker & McKenzie where she was the Managing Partner of the Firm's five offices in the former Soviet Union for the past seven years through mid-2012, managing 200+ lawyers. Based in Canada but travelling widely, Carol's coaching focuses on multinational business executives, lawyers transitioning to the managing partner role, and women executives.

Tel +1 902 832 0221

Email carol.patterson@gmail.com

Coaching in Law Firms

Richard Price

Coaching is for losers – right?

1. What has changed for lawyers?

If we believe the anecdotal evidence, the legal profession is the world's second oldest. For centuries it has provided its practitioners with status, respect, interest, independence and a decent income to boot. What's not to like?

The law has traditionally been one of the chosen established professions and attracted, for the most part, solid, middle-class, risk-averse, (perhaps cautious) individuals who wanted some autonomy but who maybe lacked some entrepreneurial flair or self-confidence but who sought stability in both their working life and their income. There is nothing more clubbable or collegiate than being part of a partnership of like-minded individuals all carrying on business together with a view to profit.

This quite cosy and perfectly acceptable living has been rather turned on its head in the past 25 years as a result of the most dramatic growth in the legal services market we have ever witnessed. During this time, law firms have become huge businesses, lawyers' take-home levels of pay have sky-rocketed and the cult of the superstar lawyer has occurred. Whilst one would think lawyers would be happy with this state of affairs – increasing earnings in a bull market – the reality is that lawyers are now ranked as some of the most depressed of all professionals¹.

The rise of league tables showing comparative earnings of law firms and the desire of firms to show themselves as top of the financial pecking order has, despite many firms claiming a continuing collegiate culture, meant the firms have taken a far more ruthless and business-like approach with regard to performance management of their partners. And the bare fact is that each partner's personal performance is, at least on some empirical metrics, pretty easy to measure – billable hours, fee income, WIP, hours, commitment etc - everything is recorded. Accordingly, it is not difficult to pinpoint differences between those who are perceived to perform or out-perform and those who don't – there is no hiding place.

Partners (whatever their current performance) are the prime assets of any law firm. Law firms spend tens (possibly hundreds) of thousands of pounds talent-spotting them, recruiting them, training them, providing a platform for the development of their practice and to "lose" a partner, perhaps after 20 plus years of building a practice, is a big loss on that investment. Lawyers are hired for their technical attributes and usually fired for their behavioural ones. Yet, curiously, despite generally being fairly progressive organisations in many ways, Law firms have been slow to recognise and assist partners in their careers – particularly in those "vulnerable" years when partners are in their late forties/early fifties and feeling the strain of keeping up a generating practice that their seniority (and profit share) demands. It is very easy to tell partners that the best of breed in any profession (e.g. Tiger Woods, Andy Murray etc) all use a coach but, in law firms, coaching is still seen as being part of the remedial steps or process that a firm just has to go through for the sake of good order before the inevitability of separation from the partner concerned. This perception leads to resistance

¹ Why Lawyers are unhappy – Seligman; Verkuil and Kang

by the partner concerned to accept any coaching which leads to a continuing downward spiral with the same inevitable result.

2. Are lawyers coachable?

Lawyers are in a profession where they are paid to be strong, to have firm and clear opinions, to give advice and take decisions and to be intellectually (and sometimes personally) adversarial in furtherance of their clients' best interests. Lawyers tend to deal in black and white issues and endeavour to minimise any blurred or fuzzy lines. Accordingly, culturally, lawyers find it hard to accept that coaching which is a softer, less directive way of approaching issues, would do them any good. A typical lawyer's response to coaching would be that "It didn't tell me anything I didn't already know" which of course would be to miss the point entirely. Lawyers are programmed to spot and pounce on weaknesses, inconsistencies, flaws or ambiguity in any argument or line of questioning and this perhaps is not the happiest basis for a lawyer to approach being coached for the first time.

Accordingly, there is clearly somewhat of an uphill battle in the fight to coach lawyers successfully both in terms of institutional and personal prejudice. Set against that (and particularly after the financial crisis where deals are scarce and fees are being driven down) lawyers are, a bit like actors, entirely lacking in self-confidence and often very unhappy and de-motivated with their careers even though they can't admit this either within their law firm or often to themselves.

3. How can coaching be introduced?

So, based on my 38 years experience of being a lawyer in private practice and zero years experience of professional coaching, I offer up the following as perhaps the start of how the mindset and cultural values of a firm might be changed to encourage (and even salute) partners to engage in coaching to improve their performance – and their state of mind.

- (a) ***We'll lead, you follow*** – the main problem to address is the unsaid feeling that "coaching is for losers". Therefore, the Senior Management must be the first to embrace a coaching culture both by having coaches themselves and visibly promoting a use of coaches and also possibly undertaking some form of "mini" coaching course to learn how coaching can assist and harness the power of an organisation. They must be volunteers, not conscripts.
- (b) ***Get the right coaching team*** – I have learnt very quickly that it is the chemistry between the coach and the coachee that provides the impetus and the success or otherwise of a coaching relationship. Of course, that is not to say the skills of a coach are unimportant (indeed they are very important) but without that fundamental trusting and respectful relationship it will never fly. Therefore I think it is incumbent upon the law firm to select a wide panel of coaches from all backgrounds (not just the law) to provide the increasingly diverse partners with a choice and a good natural fit or simply to allow partners to appoint their own coach.
- (c) ***Disprove a lawyer's scepticism*** – lawyers are trained to deal in fairly black and white win/lose arguments. Information is there to provide a concrete solution to their clients. They are not used to dealing with the softer edges of business or personal problems. Accordingly, my personal view (and it is only that) is that getting the lawyer's trust and competence in a coaching solution is probably best dealt with by undertaking some psychometric profiling and establishing a basis of understanding of the lawyer's natural temperament (which may

even surprise them) as a platform of trust to move forward. Speaking personally, my training as a coach was hugely accelerated by undertaking the Myers Briggs test and finding that (perhaps a little bit to my surprise) that my ESFJ profiling did indeed reflect what I thought of myself – it worked! I would also venture that lawyers would respond rather better to the more measurable coaching aspects (e.g. the GROW model) where they can segment and process and address the various issues affecting them in quite a disciplined and clear manner. Lawyers like to see and achieve concrete results!

- (d) **Create that “Thinking Environment”** - I suspect that, despite best intentions, I doubt whether Law firms promote many (or possibly any?) of the behaviours put forward by Nancy Kline² to create a genuine “thinking environment” which would allow and encourage partners in a collective spirit to think about their strengths and weaknesses and their business. This may be common of many fast-moving businesses but the time, space, generosity, courtesy and other considerations that are inherent in creating this thinking environment are either not recognised or deemed not sufficient or important. Some form of cultural change is required to allow all the partners to contribute. Again management needs to set the ground rules to unleash the hidden talent they have in their ranks.
- (e) **Make space in the calendar** – lawyers of course are attuned to accounting for every hour they spend in the office. However, in whatever terms one measures a partner’s contribution to the firm in terms of total time commitment, there should be a segment for personal coaching of the type described above. In this sense, Law firms have to create an environment in which being coached on a regular basis is part of what is expected of a partner, which is of value to the partner concerned, but more importantly, of benefit to the firm.
- (f) **Get the contract right** – lawyers of course are very strong on contracts and getting the contract right between the partner, the coach and the law firm is essential to maintaining the integrity of the system. In one sense, law firms are the least hierarchical of all businesses. All the partners “own” the business and, for the most part, all will have one vote and as has often been said, the management team only have their “power of gentle persuasion” rather than any control. Law firms are a democracy. Accordingly, I think in the case of law firms, the contract should be that the firm/management have no automatic right to see any of the coaching notes. Partners are by definition self-starters (even if they may have lost their way a little) and it is for them to take forward what they have learnt from their coaching to make them more productive.

4. Conclusion

Law firms have a long way to go to embrace a successful coaching culture. However, given the innate talent that they have in their ranks, I believe the benefits of coaching in harnessing and powering the intellect and resources of a law firm are potentially exponential.

However, it requires an enlightened and determined management team to drive the process and open the eyes of the partners to what is available to them by way of help and within them by way of unleashing their full potential.

² Time to Think – Nancy Kline

Richard Price

Richard Price has practised as a lawyer for 38 years in the City of London. He was, for nine years, the Senior Partner of a large City law firm which triggered his interest in the effective coaching of professionals stimulating him to undertake the Meyler Campbell coaching course.

Tel +44 (0)7973 955439

Email richard.price@cms-cmck.com

Peer Coaching

Judith Prime

With thanks to my 'Aspire' syndicate members and tutor who have taught me so much, and inspired this essay.



1

I remember at an early tutorial questioning what the hell I was doing there after my fellow syndicate members and I spent about two hours of the session trying to agree what 'confidential' meant. Could we tell others who we were in a syndicate with or not, could we retell stories from our syndicate sessions to our husbands and wives and so forth? How silly, I thought then, to spend so much time on defining one word. My normal response to such a meeting would be to return to my desk and 'download'. But as I'd just spent a large amount of time agreeing the finer points of what confidentiality meant within my syndicate, an outpouring would clearly be in breach of what we'd agreed. "Oh sugar". Now what? Keeping to a contract, understanding that confidentiality may well need to be carefully defined in a coaching context was the first of many lessons my syndicate taught me.

It's my syndicate that has inspired me most, not the reading list. It's been their opinions I've been most interested in hearing; they are the ones that have helped and supported me with this coaching experiment and are the 'team' with whom I continue to engage since our tutorials have concluded. This essay therefore seeks to examine:

1. What does it take for syndicate/peer coaching to work?
2. Why aren't there more conversations happening regarding the role of 'peer coaching' in continuous professional development (CPD)?

¹ They say a picture says a thousand words. One of our first tutorials began with us 'checking in' by picking a postcard that most reflected how we felt. When surfing the internet to 'pick a card' for this graduation essay this card spoke to me. Why? Mostly gut (I've learnt I do that a lot), but on closer inspection, probably because the picture reflects the three members of the syndicate and our willingness to observe, listen and hear each other. It's also a grouping that looks to be equal.

Does peer coaching work?

My personal experience is clearly 'yes it does'. In his paper written for the Training & Learning Forum 2002², Richard Ladyshevsky³ (who appears to be the most prolific academic writer in the area of peer coaching) argues that the benefits that emerge from peer coaching from the perspective of building mastery can be understood more readily by examining cognitive development theory. He quotes the work of Piaget, Sullivan and Vygotsky as demonstrating how critical cognitive conflict supports heightened performance and competency.⁴ The scenario is told of a leader, through deliberations with another manager, becoming aware of a contradiction in their knowledge base. This prompts the leader to question his or her beliefs and to try out new ones. The management of critical cognitive conflict appears to be more amenable between peers because they speak on levels which can be easily understood by one another (Damon, 1984; Foot & Howe, 1998). I think Ladyshevsky's conclusion that *"the informal communications between peers are less threatening than the advice from a superior because issues of evaluation and power are minimised."* is a critical observation in why peer coaching works.

Ladyshevsky has repeatedly shown that peer coaching delivers results, most recently in 2011. The study group were undergraduate physiotherapy students. He examined reciprocal peer coaching, whereby two learners support and coach each other throughout their studies. The outcomes of this research demonstrated that reciprocal peer coaching led to statistically significant improvements in performance compared with those who didn't have peer coaching. There were also additional benefits to learners including reduced learner anxiety and greater confidence.⁵

What ingredients does peer coaching require to ensure success?

I have observed the following:

1. Diversity – particularly in terms of personality type and experience.

Our syndicate benefitted from having different perspectives around the table. So much of coaching is about knowing how to trigger responses from others. With both deep extroverts and introverts present within the syndicate, we were able to 'put out there' our likes and dislikes, and find ways of triggering responses that crystallised learning in clear and profound ways.⁶ Critically, having different perspectives also promotes cognitive conflict as described above, which in turn enhanced the quality of learning we experienced.



2. Time with and without a supervisor/tutor.

The time spent with your supervisor can be intense. You are in awe of their experience, insight and wisdom. Time flies in tutorials. And undeniably, you are being evaluated and assessed, albeit in a highly supportive fashion. This inevitably adds a level of anxiety to

² Ladyshevsky, R. K. and Ryan, J. (2002). Reciprocal peer coaching as a strategy for the development of leadership and management competency. In Focusing on the Student. Proceedings of the 11th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 5-6 February 2002. Perth: Edith Cowan University. <http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2002/ladyshevsky.html>

³ Richard is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Business, Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology. Richard's scholarly interests relate to leadership and professional development and how coaching supports such growth.

⁴ (Piaget, 1977; Sullivan, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986)

⁵ Peer Coaching, a Strategy to Promote Problem Solving Skills by Richard Ladyshevsky, VDM Verlag Dr. Müller (29 Mar 2011) – see also Peer coaching: a constructivist methodology for enhancing critical thinking in postgraduate business education by Richard Ladyshevsky, published online by Taylor & Francis, Volume 25, Issue 1 2006.

⁶ The visualisation by a syndicate member of a house with windows flung open was a 'Eureka' moment in terms of finding a way of accessing thoughts/views not readily shared.

proceedings. When the supervisor is absent, the level of tension is obviously reduced – no one is concerned any more about impressing teacher, however consciously or subconsciously.

To start with, our group struggled to find its mojo. However, as we started to meet outside of our tutorials, something clicked. Perhaps it was the fact that we had 'reduced learner anxiety', were emboldened by our equality (inexperience?), were less time pressured and there to listen. In our non-supervised groups we practised techniques we had read about and discussed what we thought – about all things coaching and the course. Ultimately we began to do what good teams do, bond. So, whilst we clearly required – still require - supervision and expert input, time alone as a developing team is also invaluable.

3. Common purpose

*"A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."*⁷ I've begun to think of our syndicate as a team. It was clear from the off that we all had a common purpose – getting as much out of the experience/course as we could – and obviously graduating. This common focus has really held us together and prompted a level of discipline and commitment that we may not have had individually, particularly with regard to our ongoing development. Katzenbach and Smith comment that teams cannot create a 'common purpose' without effective communication and constructive conflict that in turn, depend on interpersonal skills. These include risk taking, helpful criticism, objectivity, active listening, giving the benefit of the doubt, support, and recognizing the interests and achievements of others. So, your syndicate/ peer coaching forum members need to have a common purpose and interpersonal skills. In our syndicate we have absorbed criticism and conflict – from insignificant debates to what order the agenda ought to be run in, to more fundamental objections to approaches, comments and feedback. As the syndicate's common purpose has begun to be realised (we've completed the course and nearly graduated) we must, as Katzenbach and Smith advise, revise our common purpose *"real teams never stop this 'purposing' activity"*⁸.

4. Is three plus supervisor the magic number?

There are a number of views as to the right number for effective team dynamics to exist. Most seem to agree that an odd number is useful⁹ because it prevents unhelpful ties being made. Sheila Margolis in her article on *'What is the optimal group size for decision-making?'* references research by Hackman and Vidmar (1970) on optimum group size for member satisfaction. They composed groups that ranged in size from 2–7 members to assess the impact of size on group process and performance for various kinds of tasks. Members of the groups were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the following two questions: Question #1– This group was too small for best results in the task it was trying to do. Question #2– This group was too large for best results in the task it was trying to do. Not surprisingly, few people in the dyad thought it was too large and few in the 7-person group thought it was too small. They dropped a perpendicular line from the point where the two lines crossed and discovered that the optimum group size was 4.6 members.

So, an odd number close to five looks to be pretty much a perfect group size! We had three in our syndicate and it certainly worked well for us – probably because:

⁷ The Wisdom of Teams, Creating the high-performance organization by Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith, Harvard Business School Press, 1993, p.45

⁸ The Wisdom of Teams, Creating the high-performance organization by Jon R Katzenbach and Douglas K Smith, Harvard Business School Press, 1993, p.50

⁹ Amazing Applications of Probability and Statistics by Tom Rogers, <http://www.intutitor.com/statistics/SmallGroups.html>

- practically we only had to consider the needs of four people (tutor included) in terms of diary collaboration – and that was hard enough!
- it's always your turn in a small team!
- there were enough, but not too many, views and opinions to be considered.

Conclusion

Peer coaching has been a hugely important part of the Meyler Campbell experience for me. It has been an incredibly rich, at times frustrating, but ultimately, rewarding experience. As I and my fellow syndicate members move forward as officially 'qualified' coaches my attention is being drawn to what CPD should look like for a coach. Reviewing the website of every school and accreditation organisation referenced in pages 55-59 of *Business Coaching*¹⁰, CPD can be translated to reading, blogging, attending events and being 'supervised'. Even Jenny Rodgers only gives the following superficial advice: *"We also need to seek out other forms of development such as training to update our skills and qualifications, attending conferences, reading and simple networking with other coaches."*¹¹

There's little mention of, or incentive, to form ongoing syndicates or teams that have a common 'not for profit' purpose of making each other the best coaches they can, possibly be by engaging in cognitive conflict and all the other 'good stuff' teams do. It seems to me that the accreditation bodies and schools of coaching might be missing a trick here by not doing more to promote, or indeed institutionalise, peer coaching. So what am I going to do about this? Discuss it with my syndicate of course...and establish a common goal...and then deliver it!

Judith Prime

Judith Prime is the Managing Director of Business Development at Europe's largest law firm, CMS. She has been working in professional services marketing for fifteen years and has worked with hundreds of partners during this time – helping them to achieve 'high performance' for their clients. Judith has been a core part of the team that has helped CMS introduce a new brand, Your World First. Your World First is about being client-centric and putting client needs first – a sentiment that chimes with Judith's coaching philosophy.

Tel +44 (0)7525 197659

+44 (0)20 7367 3419

Email judith.prime@cms-cmck.com

¹⁰ Business Coaching, Financial Times Guide by Anne Scoular, published 2011

¹¹ Coaching Skills by Jenny Rogers, Open University Press, New York 2004, p.214

Reflections on joining the Meyler Campbell Class of 2011

Clare Robinson

My participation in the Meyler Campbell Business Coach Programme (MCBCP) has been a hugely positive and personally rewarding experience. One of many ways in which my coaching knowledge and skills have developed has been through my involvement in the meetings of the Class of 2011 ("the Class"). This essay provides me with the opportunity to share my reflections on this aspect of my coaching learning and development and to formally acknowledge the support and kindness that has been shown to me by the Class.

A wide range of subjects has been covered in the meetings including the importance of contracting, how coaches are vulnerable to dependency on clients, group supervision, the use of assessment tools and the concept of mindfulness. There has been a real practical benefit in applying the learning to my coaching practice and the experience of learning within a group of like-minded people has been most enjoyable. I have enhanced my understanding of myself, other coaches, the coaching process and the ways in which coaching skills are developed and improved.

Joining the Group – the first meeting

Eager to begin learning something about coaching and the MCBCP, in June 2012 I accepted an invitation to join the Class. This was described in an email as *"a group of business coaches who have just graduated or who are due to graduate in 2012 and who get together outside of their tutorials, in a more informal way to share learning, discuss, debate, inspire and be inspired!"*

I first attended a meeting on a Tuesday evening in July 2012 at the rather grand offices of McKinsey & Co. From the correspondence received in advance, I knew that the Class had been meeting monthly for the last eight months, had a core of around six to eight frequent attendees and a well-articulated but flexible agenda. I was feeling somewhat apprehensive as I hadn't properly started the MCBCP (my first tutorial was the following week) and I had no formal coaching experiences to share. However, my concerns were short lived as I was made to feel very welcome.

My early impressions were of a group of people experiencing varying levels of activity and success in their early coaching careers post-graduation. The group dynamics at that first meeting were fascinating to observe. Given the emphasis on the importance of coaches developing good listening skills¹, the demonstration of real listening by those present was variable. As one of the implied benefits of participating in the MCBCP is to enhance one's interpersonal skills, it was interesting to observe how normal human differences and instincts could, at times, frustrate the way in which the coaches related to each other. Hence the importance of the Chemistry sessions used to put the syndicate groups together which are also a pre-requisite for effective one to one coaching. So the first real learning from this group was that this new environment provided an opportunity to practice my listening and interpersonal skills.

The importance of contracting

An approach used in the earlier meetings was for one or two members of the group to present a client issue, for example, where the client and the coach had become "a bit stuck", and ask the

¹ Kimsey-House (2011) *Co-Active Coaching*, Chapter 3; Kline (1999) *Time to Think* p37-38; Peltier (2010) *The Psychology of Executive Coaching* p 109

group to discuss ideas on how to move things forward. One of the key themes to emerge from this type of discussion and a learning point that remains with me, not only for coaching, but for other consultancy work, is the importance of the contracting process at the outset.² It seems that certain issues with clients can be avoided if the expectations of the coaching process are clearly agreed before coaching begins. It is easy to see, with the benefit of hindsight, how unclear contracting has hindered the coach/client relationship. It is less easy to be very clear when contracting what the “rules of engagement” are, especially when one is new to coaching in a business context. It is not easy to anticipate where things might get stuck. I have been able to apply this learning when contracting with my practice clients. Of particular note here is the duration of the contracting relationship and the way in which progress is reported to the sponsor within the organisation.

Dependency

The next theme to observe from the discussions was the difficulty that there seemed to be in coaches “letting go” of clients. Coaches were able to articulate through their case studies instances where they felt that the coachee might be developing a dependency on the coach. The dilemma, identified by the coach, appears to be that it is quite flattering to be “needed” by a coachee, especially when the coach enjoys coaching that particular individual. The coach can also become an emotional stakeholder in the client’s successes /failures and this is unlikely to be healthy for the coaching relationship. Often, the coach feels that by withdrawing the coaching (as per the stated contracting arrangements) they are potentially “letting down” the client. My learning from this is to try to maintain an appropriate professional distance from the client and to look for early warning signs of the client becoming too dependent. Also, the more the client is encouraged to develop the ownership of both their challenges and the solutions to their challenges, the less likely he or she is to feel a dependency on the coach.

Supervision

A key factor in ensuring high-quality coaching is rigorous professional supervision.³ The Class has experimented with how it might support members with some form of group supervision. As well as members discussing individual cases at some length, a condensed supervision method, made up of four distinct time periods of five to ten minutes each, was trialled. A coach spent the first period describing a case issue. This was followed by a second period dedicated to others present asking for clarification of the issue. The group then spent fifteen minutes discussing the case without any input from the coach. During the final period the coach then offered her reflections on what she had heard discussed. Observing this method in action helped me to appreciate the value that supervision can bring to a coach and also that supervision does not necessarily need to be on a one to one basis. Participation in this type of group supervision is also a learning opportunity, not only for the coach, but also for the group members.

Assessment tools

The benefits of assessment tools in coaching are well documented⁴ and the theory is covered in the MCBP tutorials. The Class discussed a variety of tools that we have actually used in our coaching practice. Of note were the different approaches to a 360° feedback exercise. We explored the advantages/disadvantages of acquiring written feedback compared to face to face/telephone feedback. Having recently completed a face to face 360° feedback exercise for a practice client, I

² Scoular (2011) *Business Coaching*, p 62-66.

³ Shaw and Linnecar (2007) *Business Coaching*, p59-60

⁴ Peltier (2010) *The Psychology of Executive Coaching*, Chapter 1.

was firmly in support of that method. However, the merits of how written feedback provided a less personal approach were highlighted for me and I now have a more rounded view of this type of process. Other members shared their experience in the use of Myers Briggs. This gave me an insight into the practical value this tool has within the coaching context and I am now considering whether to specifically train in this area.

Mindfulness

A concept that was new to me was “mindfulness”. Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing and yoga. It helps us become more aware of our thoughts and feelings so that instead of being overwhelmed by them, we’re better able to manage them.⁵ Two members of the group talked through their recent mindfulness training experiences which provided lots of resonance for coaching. A simple accessible tool described was the “one minute meditation” and we were all encouraged to try this for ourselves. The discussion raised my awareness on the concept of “noticing” – how in a state of mindfulness you will inevitably notice more that is going on around you. I have applied this learning in my coaching by asking a client what they noticed in a particular situation. The responses have, on occasions, provided the client with useful insights.

The benefits of group learning

The Class has provided an extra and welcome dimension to the learning journey that I have embarked upon inspired by the MCBCP. The common aims that bind all members of this group together are a willingness to share experiences and to learn from each other. The key elements that have contributed to the success of the Class are:

- enthusiastic and committed members, who are willing and able to meet up on a regular basis
- a sense of direction and purpose supported by an appropriate confidentiality framework
- simple administration processes to facilitate forward planning of agendas and topics
- a venue that provides a relaxed but appropriately private environment to enable freedom of discussion without distraction or interruptions.

I would thoroughly recommend to any participant in the MCBCP to join a “Class Group”. The membership of this type of group will be an important part of my future development and learning.

Clare Robinson

Clare brings a unique blend of business experience gained through private sector roles in finance, operations and change management and as a non-executive director in the NHS. Through “Clear Insights Consulting”, she enables clients to raise their performance and find solutions to their business challenges and problems. She is currently Vice Chair of an NHS Trust.

Clare’s personal coaching style is embodied within her business name, “Clear Insights Consulting”. Her analytical training and focussed approach is reflected in her perceptive questioning. Clients value her calm but persistent challenging manner. “I always leave my coaching session with an increased self- awareness and clear road map of what I am going to do next”.

⁵ Bemindful.co.uk (August 2013)

Tel +44 (0)7775 657472

Email clare@clearinsightsconsulting.com

Business Coaching and Fly-fishing - Thinking But Not Thinking - Getting Into Flow

Duncan Sanders

Introduction

I have noticed that some of my deepest and clearest thinking takes place when I am heavily absorbed in a physical activity which is occupying my conscious mind. In my case, this is most apparent when I am fly-fishing in a beautiful outdoor environment. As I began to question what might lie behind this observed truth, my initial theories centred on the quality of the thinking environment and switching off some of the front brain conscious thinking - 'thinking but not thinking'. But I wanted to go further.

This essay seeks to explore some of the deeper aspects of this phenomenon and understand how I might apply this learning to my new coaching business - 'Countryside Coaching'....'professional business coaching in a very different environment' (www.countrysidecoaching.com) . It examines the process of getting into a state of flow while fly-fishing, the inter-action between physical and mental activity and fly-fishing as a metaphor for coaching. It is hoped that the insights gained from this reflection will help me be as effective as possible while working with clients in my new business.

The state of 'flow' and enhanced performance

The mental state that psychologists call 'flow' is one of deep concentration.

The concept of flow is cited extensively in positive psychology literature but was first identified and studied by US psychology professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in the 1960's and 1970's. Csikszentmihalyi identifies ten components which are likely to be present when flow is occurring and I am struck by a number of these which seem to be particularly relevant to fly-fishing:

- clear goals that, while challenging, are still attainable.
- immediate feedback.
- the right balance between personal skill level and the challenge presented.
- feelings of serenity and a loss of self-consciousness.
- timelessness - feeling so focused on the present that time seems to pass very quickly.

It has been reported in the literature that examples of enhanced performance in the work context have occurred as a result of being 'in flow' but equally that interruptions can jolt you from this state.

It typically takes about 15 minutes of uninterrupted study to get into a state of flow, and the constant interruptions and distractions of a typical office environment will force you out of flow and make productivity impossible to achieve.

However, the theoretical aspects of 'flow' that I find most interesting and which also have a practical application to the Countryside Coaching business, are that:

- facing challenges that are slightly beyond a person's level of comfort also produces skill development with personal growth and;
- one experience of flow can lead on to the desire for more and so create a virtuous cycle of performance enhancement .

It is exciting to think that by introducing a client to the experience of flow in a 'bank day'² it might encourage and equip them to seek out this state in their workplace, both for themselves and for their colleagues in the teams that they lead.

The concepts of 'effortless concentration', the 'art of concentration' and 'getting it together - self forgetfulness and quietening the mind' espoused by Tim Gallwey³ also seem very germane to the discussion.

Thinking Environments

Nancy Kline in her book 'Time To Think'⁴ speaks of the power of creating a 'Thinking Environment' for our clients and lists ten conditions which are important to establishing such an environment. In her discussion of the importance of 'Place' in chapter 11 she asserts that *'Thinking Environments are places that simply say back to people 'you matter' and that ' for a physical space to be conducive to fresh thinking it needed to be the exact opposite of a boiler room (where she used to work with her students) - big, with windows all around and things of nature everywhere like real plants, and a view of the sky.'* Which made me think, how about no windows, being literally immersed in beautiful nature and no ceiling-blocking connection to the sky - what could that do for one's thinking?

I believe that it is this factor of environment, which contributes most to the power of the Countryside Coaching business and gives it its USP. When we move from the harsh , sterile , pressured and frenetic atmosphere of 'the office' with the constant interruptions of email , phone calls and the incessant round of meetings , to the stunningly beautiful , tranquil, natural and expansive environment of the river, something happens to our minds and bodies which, if harnessed effectively, can be transformative.



A Thinking Environment on the River Test- Hampshire

The river and fly-fishing as metaphors for coaching

The river and the art of fly-fishing both act as metaphors for coaching centred on free and expansive thinking. A river flows , scours rubbish, transports, challenges , has sections of shallow fast rippling rapids and deep slower flowing pools , circuitous routes and back eddies , which all seem to reflect different aspects of the coaching experience. Perhaps the strongest aspect of the analogy is the coaching relationship and process as a journey. Like the river the journey has different phases, sometimes seeming to skip along at pace and at other times becoming slow, deep and ponderous and even, on occasion, heading backwards in back eddies and side channels which don't seem to be contributing much but are part of the overall journey from the source to the sea. The fishing analogy is around marking a target or setting a goal, being acutely tuned in to what is going on around you and adapting tactics and strategies accordingly , remaining utterly focussed, reviewing options and choosing a favoured approach.

Looking at the magnificent trees lining the riverbank I was struck by the parallels with coaching ... a healthy tree which is strong and beautiful and planted by the river bank has the potential to grow by tapping into a limitless supply of life-giving water and nutrients which sustain and develop it whatever the immediate surrounding conditions. By accessing this resource, it is able to thrive and offer life, shelter and support to others. The coachee who learns to access and harness the power of their own thinking has discovered this same growth potential for the benefit of themselves and others, irrespective of their current circumstances. The roots it puts down serve two main functions, a conduit for water and nutrients for healthy growth and an anchor to hold the tree in place in the fiercest of storms. Good coaching develops roots in our clients which serve the same purposes.



Good coaching develops roots in our clients

Interaction of mind and body

It seems beyond doubt that becoming more aware and focussed in one's thinking has a hugely positive effect on our body efficiency... as Whitworth ⁵ expresses it ' body awareness brings with it automatic self-correction' , 'internal awareness increases body efficiency , which in turn results in improved technique' or in short 'awareness is curative' . I have proven this to myself recently when striving to master the 'art' of Spey casting with a double -handed 15 foot salmon fishing rod while wading up to my waist in fast flowing water in the River Tay in Scotland. Spey casting is a technically complex and quite physically demanding activity, even for an experienced fly fisherman; what I

noticed was that the harder I tried to exert my physical will on the rod and line (Self 1)₃ the worse the performance, but when I relaxed and learned to listen to the feedback from my body (Self 2)₃ and instead of trying to think harder, 'sensed the activity' there was a major breakthrough. I noticed a way of feeling/sensing which was associated with a 'successful' cast and simply sought to replicate the muscle patterns relating to this feeling. By doing this I found that I could produce a beautiful cast at will...which was immensely satisfying. Similarly, I have discovered a way of non-directive coaching which relaxes and has a certain way or feel about it which also seems to produce results and is hugely rewarding. With Spey casting, the rod itself has all the power but won't be bullied into performance by a 'telling Self 1'₃. Guided gently in the right hands with skill, care and most importantly 'ease and fluidity' the results are phenomenal which I think is a lovely metaphor for the non-directive coaching technique, harnessing the power and ability people innately have within them.

The corollary to the undoubted body efficiency produced by internal awareness and modified thinking, could be the benefits that a repeated challenging physical activity, such as casting a fly-line, have on our thinking. There is something very calming and freeing to the mind which is produced by physical activity. I might therefore, invite a coachee who was stuck in their thinking to get up and walk around with me in a coaching session if this was possible, appropriate and likely to be helpful.



Freeing up your mind by focussing on the job in hand

Managing emotions, quietening the mind and connecting with the ancient wisdom

While fishing recently in Scotland, I noticed a number of things which gave me deeper insights into my coaching practice. When I stepped into the river and began the process of fishing down the pool there was a huge level of excitement and anticipation about the prospect of catching a salmon, which was actually counterproductive to my enjoyment and performance of the task. It occurred to me that this was similar to the prospect of 'solving a problem' or 'fixing' a new coaching client. As I made a conscious decision to tune in and appreciate the beauty of my environment and switch off the multitude of frenetic signals emanating from the front part of my brain, it was as if I had opened up a portal into another dimension or world. I was aware of strong thoughts and feelings rising up from a deeper place, flowing more freely and a sense of freedom in being released from 'task' and being empowered into fully experiencing the moment. Clearly, this is something I would love to bring into my coaching practice more often and share with my clients; in other words, remaining consciously unattached to the outcome of the coaching but also being fully present in the moment and enjoying the experience and uncertainty.

Another thing I noticed was the connection with something deeper, of substance and lasting presence in the place of solitude and beauty. This process of connecting with something deeper seemed to be both from within as my mind quietened , opening hidden filing cabinets of thoughts, I didn't realise I had , but also from without , as I accessed an 'ancient wisdom' which is far greater than myself . I believe that the catalyst for this connection, is the beauty provided for us by The Creator which if we are open to it, acknowledging its origins and allowing it to fully impact us , drinking it in as it were , will expand our awareness and thinking to new levels . Travelling a journey of continuous revelation and deeper discovery is a theme I notice in common with both my spiritual development and my development as a coach. As the good book puts it so well...'be transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2).

Remaining Unattached to the Outcome

It's not all about the fish. Catching a salmon is landing a magnificent prize, thrilling in the chase and hugely satisfying in the accomplishment but if one is too obsessed with achieving the result it can detract hugely from its attainment and from the joy of fishing. Similarly, if I am too attached to the outcome of a coaching session I risk not being fully present in the moment and therefore being less effective in guiding the coachee through the journey to greater awareness and insight.

Connectedness

Being connected is a central theme of both fly-fishing and good business coaching. A good fisherman will be intrinsically connected to his environment noticing its components and subtle changes which occur, adapting his responses appropriately. A good coach will be the same and will help a client make greater and more pertinent connections in their own thoughts and establish stronger connections and relationships with those around them.



Connecting with Phil Lazell, MD of Marsh Insurance (construction & Real Estate) during a lunchtime coaching session on the River Test Hampshire

Creating Time and Space

Fishing, like coaching will rarely happen spontaneously, it needs to be planned with time set aside for it. When there is pressure to complete the fishing or coaching in a certain time frame it detracts from the enjoyment and effectiveness. When totally immersed in the pursuit of a fish, time seems to slip by unnoticed, which is one of the indicators of being 'in flow'. Thoughts seem to well up almost

spontaneously with little effort in this state and it is this condition which I would seek to enable in my coaching clients, being careful to observe when it is present and not to do anything to interrupt it or cut it short.

Conclusions

In conclusion it would seem that both the action of fly fishing and the beautiful environment are conducive to getting into a state of flow which can be hugely beneficial to your thinking and business. Both the process of getting into flow and the output from it involve thinking of a different kind ... 'thinking but not thinking'. Focussing hard on an enjoyable engaging task, while performing a repetitive complex physical action, somehow causes the conscious mind to quieten or even switch off, which frees the sub-conscious mind to get to work on the tougher more challenging business issues we are grappling with - in other words we create a 'thinking environment' and enter a state of flow. If this process is combined with the skills and support of a professional business coach the results can be transformative, creating a virtual cycle of performance enhancement and lasting change.

The factors which seem to be important in creating this state of flow are: environment, physical activity, appropriate challenge, natural beauty, space, time, attention, awareness and connectedness. It's not all about the fish and the fishing rod, the power lies inherently in the coachee, who with careful support from the coach can be guided into a state of flow which can produce amazing results. Thinking without thinking, coach and coachee working together to narrow the gap between potential and performance.

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Countryside Coaching (www.countrysidecoaching.com)

At Countryside Coaching we serve business professionals who want to expand and deepen their thinking in a very different environment.

Professional business coaching on the river bank.

We believe the Nancy Kline assertion that *'everything we do depends for its quality on the thinking we do first'* and that the quality of our thinking depends on the thinking environment we create for ourselves. Time in the office with constant pressures and demands does little to cultivate fresh thinking. Take a day in the stunningly beautiful and tranquil setting of the River Test and gain space for fresh thinking and perspective - allowing you to focus and move forward.

The art of fly-fishing teaches patience, concentration and awareness of yourself and your environment. These skills are needed to outwit a wily trout in hiding, but are also critical to success in the boardroom and for your career development.

Our Bank Days combine a challenging yet supportive one to one coaching session, with an absorbing and enjoyable activity set in a beautiful natural environment. Our experience is that this unleashes the phenomenal power of the subconscious mind to process and resolve the most challenging of business dilemmas.

Duncan Sanders

'Everything we do depends for its success on the quality of the thinking we do first', Nancy Kline. 'Be transformed by the renewing of your mind', (Romans 12:2).

This thinking thing seems pretty important! What a privilege to help others do it better.

Tel +44 (0)7841 950632

Email duncan@countrysidecoaching.com

Web www.countrysidecoaching.com

A Journey travelling PPP class: Perception & Parallel Process

Pam Smith

The hum of the tube, the squeak of the brakes, the digital voice announcing stations, the odd cough, the sounds emanating from not so 'personal' headsets were just some of the sounds I could hear while I practised my skills for business coaching as I travelled towards a tutorial session early in the programme. I realised that I was able to screen out those sounds as I focused on my targets. To anyone observing me, it may have looked as though I was concentrating on the underground map located above the man and woman sat opposite me. I was however concentrating on listening to them without looking at them. My eavesdropping revealed that they were work colleagues; he was very much senior to her in their organisation and in age. What I observed in my peripheral field of vision suggested that she was less than comfortable with the intense criticism he made about their colleagues as she repeatedly crossed her legs first one way, then the other, punctuated with what sounded like nervous giggles.

There were many lessons for business coaching during this activity and not just in practising listening skills. I reflected on the possible pitfalls of making assumptions based on what I had heard and observed. Were the giggles characteristic of nervousness in the woman I had been observing or were they my interpretation based on behaviours I may have recognised in myself? This was an early indication of the parallel processes which played an increasing role during my journey into the world of business coaching; there was the learning about my clients and the learning about myself while involved in the process of coaching clients and in reflecting on those experiences and processes.

Looking, seeing, observing were all important and effective tools in my back pack as a consultant in leadership and management development. They were my staple and in this area I was challenged to think about how I looked at clients. I was ill prepared for being described as having 'hard eyes' during an early practice coaching session with a co-syndicate member. This set me off on another path seeking feedback from other practice business coaching opportunities where I received very different feedback. I learned of course that it was not about me and clients; it was about me and a particular client. The key was to look for the clues from each individual client whom I was coaching at a particular time. The co-syndicate member tended to look away rather than direct his focus at you while he was speaking and therefore felt more comfortable with a coach doing the same. I was pleased to have learnt an important lesson in business coaching but immensely relieved to know that I was not necessarily perceived as having 'hard eyes' which impeded conversation!

In my work I am challenged and stimulated by being seen as 'Ms Fixer' and of course I have conversations all the time to identify strategies and arrive at solutions. Learning the art of non-directive coaching soon fixed that. There was clearly a tension between my *modus operandi* and allowing the goals to emerge from the client. I was used to posing questions which moved the client towards what I saw as the solution to the challenge. I now needed to focus on using questions which opened up fresh possible lines of enquiry to facilitate the client to find their way towards achievable goals identified during the conversation. It was initially difficult to leave 'Ms Fixer' out of the conversation as I learned to focus on managing the process and not the content of the business coaching conversation.

Learning about 'powerful questions' began as a mixed blessing. I was really impressed by their huge potential and was excited about using them in coaching sessions. During early practice sessions, I was too excited about using them. I discovered that while I appeared to be listening to the client, I

was actually listening for prompts to pose powerful questions. The effect on the quality of my listening would be obvious. The interaction for a client could feel less like a conversation and more like a barrage of questions! I needed time to process the amount of new learning swirling around in my head but then so too does the client. In order to make the process more useful to the client, I needed to free myself of the pressure of remembering everything that was said. I also needed to free myself of the pressure of formulating the next powerful question. I needed to stop and to give myself and clients time. I found it was OK, indeed desirable to say things like: "I just need to pause there to reflect on what you have been saying."

I became more aware of my 'control freak' tendencies and the liberation of letting go and enabling the conversation to flow or not. I remembered the power of silence as I recalled Nancy Kline's excellent writing about the need to create 'Time to think' and it works. The most erudite comments have been articulated by clients following what may appear to be long periods of silence. It is during such silences that the real thinking takes place both for me and the client; tangible examples of the parallel process at work. As an expert, I realised that I had ascribed luxury to silence. As an aspiring business coach, silence was not a luxury, it was a necessity. It gives both client and coach time to think. It affords reflection time for both client and coach on areas such as the kind of terminology being used by the client. It allows me to reflect back to the client what I have seen and / or heard in a non-judgemental 'this may be something or nothing' kind of way which allows the client to accept, refute or ignore. I became increasingly stimulated by the realisation that business coaching conversations were about thinking aloud and thinking in silence.

During the coaching journey, it is surprisingly easy to lose who you are as your head becomes full of the experts from reading et al. I felt as though I had been turned upside down and inside out as I internalised copious amounts of new learning. Being authentic is of course how one wants to be. Perhaps some of the most powerful learning for me came during a time of intense personal challenges. This brought an increased empathetic view of business coaching. It also brought into sharp focus an examination of how I operate during such times. I become very task focused and rush into task activity as a way of offsetting extraneous thoughts. Increased self-awareness certainly fed the next step of doing something about it. There was really useful learning around the need to consider such behaviour in relation to the 'prize' versus the 'price' and Prochaska's stages of change. That it is easier to accept the current stage if one is conscious about that stage is something I learned about myself and was able to bring to business coaching clients. This parallel process brought deep and powerful learning for me which enabled me to recognise it in a business coaching context with powerful and liberating learning for clients. This was clearly illustrated with a client who came to realise that what he needed to do was to work part time following a period of long absence from work. He had however focused on a myriad of other considerations before reaching that conclusion.

'Don't rush, stop and breathe' has become a mantra in my business coaching back pack. Consistent with the parallel process which I am constantly aware of when coaching clients, it has also become a valuable strategy for clients who like me have come to realise just how long two minutes can be. I cannot under estimate the enormous benefits I have found in mindfulness minutes. For someone like me and many others whose head space can easily become cluttered, it really is the most effective decluttering process I have been introduced to.

I no longer feel the need to eavesdrop on tube journeys to hone my ability to filter out background sounds in order to improve my listening. I no longer feel the need to control interactions with clever powerful questions. I no longer feel the need to fill the silences during conversations. I have learned that 'Ms Fixer' has no place in business coaching. I have however learned to manage the process for the different type of conversation needed for the art of business coaching. I have certainly learned a

great deal about myself. I look forward to continuing to use the business coaching experience which like a branded lager, has the potential to reach parts that other conversational interactions may not reach. At certain times along the journey, I have certainly felt rattled and challenged. I am excited however at the prospect of using business coaching as a way of empowering clients to find solutions for themselves in becoming increasingly effective and successful in their work. I recognise that as I do so, I will continue to discover more about clients and more about myself. Travelling PPP class is certainly a 1st class experience.

Pam Smith

Pam's experience as a secondary deputy headteacher proved invaluable to her successful career as a senior education officer in local government. She now specialises in organisational improvement and management development. Pam has also developed an empowering approach to equality and diversity through developing intercultural competency, and has worked with a broad range of organisations from the CPS to TTS publishing.

Tel +44 (0)7958 734123

E-mail pamsmith893@btinternet.com

The 7 Habits of a Highly Effective Coach

Jo Stancliffe

Introduction

The more I reflect on this the more I see how 'simple but not easy' at all coaching really is. In fact how difficult it is to get anywhere near to being the effective, skilful and accomplished coach for our client that we all as coaches aspire to be. It's a bit like learning how to play tennis which I started about a year ago. It looks relatively easy and do-able when you watch the professionals playing but you soon realise when you're out there on the court how technical it is, how hard it is to put the right spin on the ball (or sadly in my case any spin at all), slice and volley the ball, ensure correct footwork and that you're in the right position and don't even get me started on how to serve! Apart from all the lessons I may be able to glean from Gallwey (we worry too much and don't concentrate very well, we need to learn to let go of self judgments, trust the (learning) process, quieten the mind, let it happen etc.) I'm starting to get how much of it is to do with grasping, developing and honing the right skills and attributes and practise, practise, practise until they become natural and deeply ingrained *habits*. So it seems to be the case with coaching skills. Getting in to the groove of the right habits, the habits that serve my client well, paying attention to the right stuff, being conscious of what the wrong stuff and traps are and duly avoiding those, and being the best coach for my client that I can possibly be. So what are these seven habits of a highly effective coach in my limited eighteen months or so's experience? They are, in no particular order, as follows:

1. ***The habit of understanding the real purpose of coaching***

The strongly held belief seems to be that coaching is about finding solutions to problems and then taking action, with many coaches concentrating their efforts on bolstering the resolve of their client to act. The purpose of coaching, according to Nick Oakley Smith in his 'Thoughts on the universe' blog, is not to generate action but it is, in fact, to facilitate learning, insight (literally inward sight) and new awareness. His view is that if the individual is not aware what is blocking them from acting any push for action will be unsuccessful. If there is no new insight, then any action taken will not change the individual's position. And if there is new insight, then the actions taken by necessity will not be the same as they would have been. If my focus as a coach is on action then, however subtly, I am taking responsibility for the motivation and choice of the individual rather than developing their ability to take on their own responsibility.

Self reflection: I agree with Oakley Smith's take on coaching's purpose and by adopting this lens my coaching practice has considerably improved. I realise that action is important but that it will follow from insight as a happy by-product and so generating insight is what I must habitually attend to. I think this insight has really resonated for me and has been especially pertinent because I am, by nature, very action oriented, decisive, love getting the buzz and the sense of progress and achievement of ticking things off the to-do list. My coaching has tended to be overly focused on action – helping my client to *do*, and not to see and as a consequence I have been running the risk of neglecting to focus on my client gaining real insight, new awareness and it resulting in a much more transformatory action.

2. ***The habit of investing in growing, learning, developing as a coach***

Learning to coach, seems to me, to be a lifetime's work. A recognition that one is never

quite there as a coach, that there is always an improvement or refinement that can be made, and as such a commitment to the habit of keeping up to date, deepening one's knowledge, staying fresh, learning new coaching skills and techniques is vital.

Self reflection: My coaching practice has generally really benefitted from me talking to, and sharing with, other coaches and, in particular, my career coaching skills have improved having recently read William Bridges book about transitions and having attended a one day workshop that focused on developing practical career coaching tools and techniques.

3. ***The habit of listening***

There are two insights about listening which makes this habit particularly key and if, as my daughter as a five year old used to insist 'a robber had a gun to my head forcing me to choose', the single habit that I'd recommend honing would be that of listening. Firstly, how everything in coaching seems to hinge on listening. Listening is, as Kimey-House & Sandahl views it, the "gateway through which all coaching passes". And secondly, how *really* listening in a truly, madly, deeply way, can 'ignite the human mind'.

Self reflection: Having seen Nancy Kline in listening mode – when honestly this was all she was doing apart from asking a number of times "Is there anything else you think, or feel or want to say?" I was blown away by the transformative and powerful effect that being and feeling listened to can have. The experience left me in no doubt that listening this way is indeed a 'radical act' and is a habit, above all else, well and truly worth mastering.

4. ***The habit of the other of Anne Scoular's 'Big 4' (contracting, questioning, GROW and non- directive)***

Worthy of a habit each, I exercise my right to artistic licence! The importance, usefulness and beneficial effects of good contracting, skilful questioning, the structure of the GROW model and that of the non directive approach are abundantly clear to me.

Self reflection: As an inexperienced coach and one that operates as an internal coach within my organisation I have fallen into the habit of rushing and generally not paying sufficient attention to being disciplined in contracting with my internal clients. In addition, while GROW provides a very useful framework to structuring the coaching conversation I have come to see that I need not be a slave to it. Similarly, while being non directive much of the time is the way to go I now see that a slavish approach here isn't always in the best interests of my client either, especially as an internal coach where I have organisational/industry/market experience and expertise that my client may find helpful to be able to tap in to.

5. ***The habit of getting out of your client's way***

This one is all about coaching being about our client and their agenda, not ourselves and our own agenda (e.g. keenly wanting to help, make a difference, make good progress, wanting the client to take action, being regarded and having the reputation of being a great coach). It incorporates a number of strands including not being attached to being right, not taking on our client's problem or taking on their responsibility and really believing in and trusting your client's ability to being resourceful, whole, responsible and knowing themselves what's right for them and having an innate trust of the coaching process..

Self reflection: I find honing this habit an ongoing challenge. Of course I want my coaching to be all about the client, their agenda and not to get in the way and to have my agenda at play in any sense but my deep desire to want to help, make a difference and to feel useful is something I need to be continually mindful of, remembering that while genuinely intended this desire is about me and not my client.

6. ***The habit of tackling limiting beliefs/assumptions***

Nancy Kline advocates the use of incisive questions to remove assumptions that limit ideas, by identifying the limiting assumption and then replacing it with a freeing one which gives the mind access to ideas not reachable before.

Self reflection: At the risk of falling into trap number seven I have been struck by how many limiting beliefs and assumptions are floating around and that people carry, seemingly unwittingly, about with them and have found Kline's formulae of: 'if you knew + freeing assumption + goal = incisive question' very instructional.

7. ***The habit of not being too attached to our coaching toolkit***

It's important that a coach has a trusty toolkit to make use of but that we don't fall into the trap of becoming overly reliant or attached to a pet theory, or constantly wheel out the favourite prop at any given opportunity.

Self reflection: I am aware that I am fond of Transactional Analysis theory, Gestalt's empty chair techniques, Kilman's conflict model, Karpman's Drama Triangle, the life wheel and am MBTI and Strengthscope TM trained. I need to be watchful that I don't turn into the girl with a hammer "who discovers everything is a nail that needs hammering"!

Conclusion

While my coaching as I hone these seven habits is bound to feel a little clunky and self-conscious, they will, in time, become an engrained and natural part of the way that I coach and through this process I will become that unconsciously competent, confident and effective coach I aspire to be.

Jo Stancliffe

Jo Stancliffe is a Senior Talent and Development Manager at Allen & Overy. She provides training and development to the global firm's Emerging Leaders and Partners. She has been with the firm since 2002, prior to which she was an HR Business Partner at Freshfields. Jo lives by the sea with her husband, two teenage daughters and cats, Ferdie and Elmo.

Tel +44 (0)20 3088 1483

Email jo.stancliffe@allenovery.com

Finding my 'Inner Hippy'

Paul Stevens

For 25 years I worked for big, 'proper' companies. My employers were members of two traditional industry sectors: energy and financial services. I had jobs where my success was evaluated by meeting quantifiable targets: I've heard the mantra, "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it" more times than I care to remember. My work has always been grounded in 'science': I've been a geophysicist and a programmer. The notion that I wouldn't have an answer to a problem, or be able to articulate a plan to achieve a goal, was unrealistic – and unacceptable. My final corporate job was for a division of Barclays (BGI). For my last two years at BGI my boss was a man called Rich Ricci: Rich went on to achieve infamy as Bob Diamond's right-hand man, finally running Barclays Capital for Bob before disappearing back to the US, on Bob's coat tails, wagging two fingers at the UK press and waving his vast bank book at his detractors. Rich valued facts and he valued action: he wasn't interested in 'focusing on the whole person', or 'evoking transformation'; and he certainly didn't have any time for the thought that he and I might be 'dancing in the moment' as we explored an issue together!

Then I left BGI, with the vague notion that I could be a different type of person, someone who focused as much on the people as the process. I started working for myself and, in my spare time, I decided to 'give back' by doing something for the community. I became a Samaritan. I learnt about being non-judgmental and I became familiar with the idea of not offering advice and solutions, but just listening to someone. I remember one very experienced 'Sam' telling us newbies that being with a caller was akin to walking down a long corridor, on both sides of which were many closed doors. Our jobs, as 'Sams', was to open each door for the caller and help them look around the rooms they found and to stay with them until they found a room they felt suited them. I loved this description - I got its power and purpose – but I couldn't quite get my head around the fact that this seemed such a **passive** way of describing problem solving: we 'Sams' couldn't give advice, but why couldn't we push the caller to find a solution? After all, what sort of problem-solving is it when you leave a meeting without even discussing a potential solution?!

Fast-forward half a dozen years. I'm sitting with my wife in a restaurant in Melbourne and we're discussing my future work plans. I run a consulting business: we've been going two years and we've had some success, with decent turnover and a roll call of big name clients. I like working and I like the work I do, but I'm frustrated by my partners and by our clients. I'm beginning to feel that I'm missing something in my life. I'm still trapped in a world where there are problems and every problem must have a solution and it must have it now and every time I fail to convince someone that I can help them find that solution I just feel, well, frustrated My wife looks at me and she says, "Look, you get on well with people, in general you understand what makes others tick, you like helping people to help themselves. You were a 'Sam' and you've been a mentor – and been paid to do it – so why don't you become a business coach?"

And right there, even though I have no idea what a business coach really does, I decide that's what I want to be. Except, I do have an idea what coaching is about, and some of it slightly worries me. The notion that a coach delivers value by listening and asking questions, without offering any personal perspective or advice at all, seems a little vague, New Age and, well, hippyish But I figure that there must be plenty of science behind coaching and so I resolve to get trained properly, so I'll know what techniques I can use to diagnose problems and help my coaching clients find solutions. And if I have to 'connect' with them, by practising 'active listening', well, I can do that – I was a 'Sam' after

all. So, after a period of researching the subject, looking for the sort of course that will help me understand what a coach does and what tools he uses to do it, I join the Meyler Campbell programme. And my journey to finding my inner hippy begins.

I start the course hearing the words 'non directive', but not understanding what they mean. I have this view that, no matter that a coach doesn't give advice, we help people by 'us', the coach, understanding 'them', the client. The coach must analyse and diagnose and propose, mustn't he? How else can he add value? How else can he demonstrate that he's worth paying money to? Without insightful ideas, questions and applying personal experience the coach is really nothing but a 'listener', and no matter how important all that active listening stuff is, why would anyone pay just for that?

But something magical happens and I begin to grasp the real essence of what it means to not be judgmental and not to direct: 'we', the coach, help people by helping 'them', the clients, to understand 'themselves'. I read about Carl Rogers and his three principles, or therapist characteristics (congruence or genuineness, unconditional positive regard and acceptance and accurate empathetic understanding) and I begin to understand that the true role of the coach is to be present for the client, "grounded in a way of being, in an attitude, not in theory, knowledge, or techniques designed to get the client to do something or to change"¹. I have a session with my supervisor at which we discuss my frustrations with a client who, I feel, needs to just get on with it – to "sh*t or get off the pot". My supervisor asks me why I'm frustrated and I'm transported back to my prior career, and the programming that I've had which insists that a problem must have a solution and that finding that solution is of paramount importance. And my supervisor asks me whether my client seems as frustrated as I am and whether he seems happy or dissatisfied with our work together, and the light goes on. My client is none of these things: instead, he's working through his issue, thinking around the problem, at his own pace and in line with his own expectations. He is happy with his progress. And I have added value; not by proposing clever options to him of my own design, or by posing challenging questions that push him to one or other of these options, but by simply being there for him – by walking down that corridor, opening the doors we come across and looking at what we find inside those rooms.

So now I'm at the end of the course. T8 is behind me and I'm about to graduate. What have I learned? That coaching isn't about the coach, it's about the coaching client. When a coach worries about the tools he should be using, the techniques he should be trying out, the analyses he should be making and the diagnoses he should be concluding, he is missing the point. The technical stuff isn't worth worrying about: it matters, but it isn't what matters most. Being yourself as a coach, and being with the client, quietly and with complete focus, is what will make the difference for the client. At a recent seminar on Cognitive Psychology that I attended, I heard a wonderful summation of coaching: it is an art, illuminated by science. I have learned to appreciate the science for what it is: a backdrop to a human relationship.

My journey to find my inner hippy has reached a point I never thought it would come to. I haven't lost my appreciation of logic and rationality, and nor have I lost my instincts for problem-solving and finding solutions: what I have done is discover an appreciation for a way of working that removes my ego from the equation and allows my clients to find their own answers.

¹ 'The Psychology of Executive Coaching' - Peltier

Paul Stevens

Paul has worked as a geophysicist and as an IT specialist in the investment management industry, serving as Chief Information Officer for JP Morgan Investment Management, Barclays Global Investors, Man Group and L&G Investment Management. Paul's coaching goal is to facilitate change, according to his clients' best interests: at their pace and aligned with their best outcomes.

Tel +44 (0)7791 028722

Email pstevens@parere.co.uk

Coaching to Leadership (or GROW and Growth)

Robin Stopford

Origins

I have been successful in my various careers, from engineering, through management consulting and then eight years as a business leader building corporate successes. Throughout all of these times there were all of the usual outward signs of recognition in terms of promotion, financial reward and job satisfaction. And yet, 18 months ago I found that I was redundant. It was all completely explainable and apparently not a reflection on my ability or value, but there it was. It was a fact.

Two days after my role disappeared at Doncasters, I was delivering my father's eulogy. All of the indicators were pointing to a "take a moment to reflect and really decide what you value" period of my life. During the eulogy I talked about the informal coaching that Dad had given me over the years, and the pleasure that we had both gained through this process. There were a number of the Meyler Campbell community listening and they convinced me that I had what it took to be a great coach: thus I was introduced into the world of business coaching.

I had been coached in the past and had found it somehow unsatisfying and unfulfilling. Perhaps my mind was not really engaging with the process; perhaps the coach was not very good: what was certainly missed was the initial contracting and expectation setting whereby these issues and more are put onto the table and openly discussed. This is an agenda that the coach has to lead, and without it the remainder loses much. As an emerging coach, this is not a natural process, but it is useful to remind myself of this experience, and make sure that I can really be with my client and make their coaching experience wonderful.

My jobs have always required a lot of informal coaching skills: it was a critical part of my role, and yet I knew that I had never really explored or understood the real power behind coaching, and often I felt ill-equipped to provide the best support that the situation demanded. I entered this course with two objectives: to develop my coaching skills and on that journey to figure out my own next steps. This essay is about that journey, the influences of some of the great coaching thinkers on my path, and how the resulting awareness could transform this strategist into a business leader.

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there"¹

As a relatively high-achiever I had rarely, if ever, really stopped to think about what I valued most of all. Much of my motivation had been on externalities such as titles, promotions and the trappings of success, rather than deciding what really mattered most to me, and what I really wanted to be doing.

The concept of authenticity is an important one in coaching. Was I authentic – I liked to think that I was, but how would I *really* know? I well remember my first stumbling, half-embarrassed efforts at coaching with the GROW model. Suddenly I did not feel authentic at all and I realised that this was going to take some application, but how? The door to this was opened by John Whitmore writing: "Awareness is knowing what is happening around you. Self-awareness is knowing what you are

¹ Lewis Carroll, paraphrased from *Alice in Wonderland*

experiencing”². Suddenly I could give myself permission to raise that self-awareness, and then I needed to know how to do this.

During the past months I have been exposed to, and experimented with, many tools and concepts. In one way or another this process has heightened both my awareness and self-awareness, to achieve greater balance in myself and enable me to coach people properly.

Sue Knight’s overview of Neuro Linguistic Programming was an important further step along this journey. Many of the concepts and implications of NLP are about awareness. How the techniques can be manipulated creates mistrust, but at a basic level it opened my eyes to a parallel world of data that supplements instinctive feelings both for me and for those around me. I was gaining access to a completely new language.

With NLP I could appreciate Nancy Kline more fully. Watching her coach, and repeating the same question seven times to create fireworks in her coachee was inspirational. I could see her absorbing all the data that I would never have noticed before: there was deep two-way communication in addition to the spoken words. As I studied her more, the steps of identifying blocking assumptions and developing incisive questions helped my development immensely. I understood the freeing concept that success depends on the coach NOT interfering in the thought processes, but appreciating and facilitating instead³. I felt as though I could see the bedrock of great coaching.

My engineering analogy is of two people fixing a car: I bring a set of tools and the two of us are standing together with the car bonnet raised leaning over the engine and working out how we can make that car go faster. The client can of course get his car working faster and better, but perhaps I can add efficiency and offer some new technologies to make it even better. For me as the coach, this requires a lot of trust, and then delivering on providing that support. After all, you wouldn’t let anyone poke around in the engine of a high performance car.

Along the way I have gained some awareness for the psychology that has to be a part of business coaching. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s theories in *Good Business* and *Flow*, alongside Galway’s theories about Self 1 and Self 2 in *The Inner Game of Tennis* (and others), provide wonderful structures to develop an understanding of really how to improve performance. If I am going to be a good coach, I have to know what I am good at myself, and then coach in a manner that is utterly consistent with that. The concept of flow is relevant: if I think too hard about developing the incisive questions I get stuck and stop listening. Instead when I live in that precise moment with my client we get there more often than not. Perhaps the confidence of *knowing* that we will get there is most important.

Coach AND Business Leader?

I am good at helping businesses grow. I know quickly how a business can outperform its competitors (indeed, if it can at all), what it will cost to get there and what the rewards are likely to be. I also have many of the technical skills and experience to make this happen. However, people are at the heart of achieving any of this. If I want to have a great impact then I have to be able to ensure that everyone can perform at or near peak performance, and I should be able to coach to make this happen.

² John Whitmore (1992): *Coaching for Performance*, P 35

³ Nancy Kline: *Time to Think* (1999)

Many of the great business leaders are recognised as great coaches, and their focus on the team around them therefore must be as great, if not greater, than their focus on the business that they work in. I now have a formal coaching aspect in my life, and am working with other coaches and actively coaching several people with whom I have no other interaction. I am becoming a coach. I am no more than a journeyman as yet, but am getting satisfaction from seeing success in others that ensures that I will continue to develop.

I had a seminal moment in understanding the role of coach relative to an advisor or consultant when working within my syndicate. We were working on business development and during the session the coach started providing a terrific set of frameworks to move the idea flow along. Just as the client was exploring these, the coach started populating those frameworks and the moment was broken. As we looked at that point in the meeting, we realised how much more powerful it would have been had the coach been able to remain silent, reserve judgement, and let the client explore alone. That is also true for any business leader managing his, or her, team.

One of the Meyler Campbell alumni said to me at a recent event "You cannot be a great coach until you have had the success that you want in your own life and can then focus on others". I believe that this really means you cannot be successful as a coach until you can focus on the process of coaching and the person that you are coaching rather than some external goal. The same has to be true of leadership. If you cannot focus on, and thrive, in the environment of growing people then creating long-term growth in a business must be fortuitous rather than repeatable.

I have discovered a new path and learned how to embrace my enjoyment of working with people. I believe that I am starting something that can have an enormous impact both on businesses and also on individuals. At the same time the big title does not matter so much anymore, NOT getting on long-haul flights three times a month is an advantage, and having a deep relationship with my kids is simply invaluable.

Robin Stopford

Robin is CEO of Chalcot Ventures, an investment and advisory business focussed on driving sustainable growth in technology and industrial businesses. He was Director of Strategy and Business Development at Low & Bonar plc (FTSE-quoted £400m industrial business) and then PE-backed Doncasters (\$1.3B aerospace and energy components firm). He has been published for due diligence, globalisation and new market development. Originally an engineer at Rolls-Royce, he took an MBA at Wharton (with Distinction) before joining Bain Consulting. Recognising that successful business growth depends on great people, Robin uses coaching to help business leaders and their often disparate teams fulfil their potential

Tel +44 (0)7887 544711

Email robinstopford@btconnect.com

Inspiring a Generation

Jill Storey

The Summer of 2012 can do more than inspire the next generation of sporting stars – it can inspire a generation of business leaders and create a new platform for business coaching.

Introduction – the 2012 Olympic Legacy

For those lucky enough to be in the UK during July and August of 2012 it was hard not to have been moved by the amazing achievements of some of the Team GB Olympians and Paralympians at the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Writing this paper in August 2013 on the twelve month anniversary of the games there is much talk in London of the legacy: “Inspire a generation”.

The Olympics represent the pinnacle of sporting excellence and achievement - years of dedication and sacrifice with competitors trying to extract that extra ounce of physical or psychological advantage in an environment where the margins between success and failure are miniscule.

Business coaching and sport

Given that the concept of business coaching “originated from sport” (John Whitmore’s book “Coaching for Performance” Chapter 1 “What is Coaching”) it seems that executive coaches can be making more of the Olympic legacy slogan to increase publicity for the profession and the appetite for coaching services. There is no reason why the “excellence” demonstrated by our athletes in the London Olympics cannot be used to inspire the next generation of our business leaders and entrepreneurs as well as the next generation of sporting stars.

There is an expectation that Olympic athletes and sporting teams will have coaches to bring out the best in the individual. In the past business coaching was sometimes associated with under-performers but business leaders are starting to recognise the benefit of providing coaching for their top performers to help them be the best that they can be.

The theme in coaching of inspiring excellence and helping high-end performers become the best they can be, whether they are sports stars or business executives, has started to gain greater interest. “Performance psychology” as it is known, typically involves engaging the power of the mind and mental skills training to enhance individual performance. By using positive psychology and performance psychology business coaches can inspire excellence in the same way that Olympic coaches do with their athletes.

Some retired athletes have moved into business coaching using examples from sport to serve as a source of inspiration. Where business executives liken themselves to athletes – “the corporate athlete” - they may be more open to exploring and developing their capabilities to their full potential.

By linking the Olympic legacy slogan “to inspire a generation” and “corporate athletes” it is envisaged that more business leaders will be engaged and enthused by the concept of business coaching and inspired to achieve excellence following the example of Team GB athletes.

Business coaches can incorporate some of the success factors for achieving sporting excellence into their coaching with business leaders and entrepreneurs to inspire them to be the best that they can be. Many success factors can be identified. Six have been selected on the basis that they can potentially have a significant impact and do not currently seem to be utilised to their maximum effect in business coaching.

1. Goal setting – clarity, longer term, learning goals

Jenny Rogers emphasizes that as a goal directs attention and hence behaviour the more explicit it is the more effective it will be. Dr Edwin Locke showed that specific and more difficult goals led to better performance than to vague easy goals. In sport goals are clear – “to win an Olympic gold medal”. In business there may be competing goals and insufficient time is spent clarifying the primary goal.

Business increasingly has a short term focus. Promoting an appreciation that success does not usually come easily or immediately to champion athletes may help encourage business clients adopt similar longer term development goals and show the same persistence in the face of adversity. Andy Murray went through many years of hard grind and painful defeats before he achieved his Wimbledon dream.

The best sports coaches tend to focus on learning goals rather than performance goals. It is better to play against yourself - you may win a match but being better than your opponent does not mean you have done your best job. Executives could do well to focus on their own learning goals rather than short term organisational performance goals based upon factors outside their control.

2. Dedication, focus and single mindedness

Olympic rowing gold medallist Ben Hunt-Davis assessed everything his team did in their 2000 Games preparation against the question “Will it make the boat go faster?” Those in pursuit of excellence need to focus only on what is relevant and to stay focussed for the duration of the task. In an over-stimulated world there is excessive multi-tasking creating a disruption of performance.

High performing athletes are typically set apart by their willingness and single mindedness to make the necessary sacrifices. Mo Farah won the 10,000 gold medal last week in the World Championships and he admitted to having not seen his family for two months.

The role of the business coach is to stimulate clarity, to understand where work fits in and help clients assess whether they have the drive and dedication to reach their goal. How would they feel if personal relationships are impacted?

3. Mental rehearsal and imagery

Einstein knew that “Imagination is more important than knowledge” and that mental images can exert a powerful influence on physical performance. Imagery is frequently used in sport. Sports coaches are aware that the brain does not make distinction between what is remembered or an imagined experience and an actual one - mental rehearsal is virtually as effective as real thing. Diver Greg Louganis mentally rehearsed dives 40 times prior to an actual event so that in the event the dives he felt as though he had done it all before.

Sports coaches focus on creating positive images using positive self-talk. For example in golf it is better to say “hit the green” rather than “do not hit the water”. In business it would be

better to say “stay calm and composed” rather than “do not get defensive and argumentative”. Virtually anything can be visualised in the mind prior to execution and covert imagery as a resource is still much under-utilised in business.

Video feedback is another technique used by sports coaches that is under- utilised by business coaches.

4. Confidence and self-belief

Unshakeable confidence and self-belief are frequently reported characteristics in high achievers both in sport and business. Henry Ford once said “If you think you can, you are right; if you think you can’t, you’re still right”. In business coaching more time can be spent helping promote self-confidence.

5. Optimal management of energy

Olympic and elite athletes rely on routines around sleep, nutrition and mental and physical preparatory rituals alongside recovery periods to maximize performance.

Similarly Loehr & Schwartz present optimal management of energy as key to optimal conditioning of the mind, body and spirit contributing to maximum business performance. Whilst this may be recognised many executives allow themselves to become run down and deprived of quality sleep.

6. On-going learning – curiosity

This component of excellence relies on the willingness of individuals to learn from every experience developing a culture of self-reflection. As the future is unknown and pace of change in business increasing, the ability to learn and adapt is likely to be an important predictor of future high performance. A core trait of the successful “corporate athlete” is one of continual renewal and reinvention.

Conclusion

Linking business coaching to the Olympic legacy message and the success of the Team GB athletes may enhance the attractiveness of business coaching to executives and hence increase demand. It can help more people to get to the point of being comfortable in admitting that they have or would like coaching as they liken themselves to “corporate athletes” wanting to be the best that they can be.

Given the close parallels between business and sport psychology it is surprising how until recently little attention has been devoted to the integration between the two. Linking to the Olympic message can have the further advantage of getting business coaches to increase the use of some successful sports coaching techniques as set out above such as spending more time on specifying tightly defined challenging goals, to using imagery and video analysis.

It is hoped that executives will be encouraged to have longer terms goals than those their organisations impose upon them, consider the importance of learning rather than performance goals, and decide to invest personally in business coaching in their careers rather than wait for it to be offered or provided by their organisation.

Business coaches themselves may equally be inspired by the athletic successes and the legacy slogan to help them find the motivation to be the best that they can be and keep increasing their knowledge and skill base.

In summary it is believed that the Olympic legacy message can be used more broadly and applied to business coaching with the aim of using it as a platform to inspire the next generation of business leaders and increase the demand and size of the UK business coaching market.

Jill Storey

Jill brings a wide experience to coaching having spent over 20 years in professional services 10 of which as a partner at KPMG, Deloitte and Andersen. Jill is a chartered accountant, has an MBA, is a non-executive director, was chair of a charity, has sold a website and founded a crowd-funding platform.

Tel +44 (0)7778 629447

Email jill@jillstoreycoaching.com

What really matters?

Cathy Walton

After 20 years of coaching and a profession as a business psychologist, the Meyler Campbell coaching course has provided an ideal opportunity to reflect on what really makes the positive difference in my coaching practice. Of course it is essential to have a toolkit and I have a tool kit that draws on all worlds in psychology; but I've learnt this is nothing without some core principles. The course has given me an opportunity to stand back and reflect on my practice; what works and what doesn't; where I feel validated in my approach and where I have got into bad habits. Ultimately I now have clarity and confidence going forward about what I stand for as a coach and the type of coach I am. More importantly I have a personal view on what is really critical in a coaching process based on both my extensive experience but also my learning over the last 18 months.

My six key ingredients are:

- Safeness
- Suppression of ego
- The Why
- The System
- Holding the Mirror up
- Worthiness
- Bespoke

In this essay I explore my reflections in each of these areas.

Safeness

This is particularly important the more senior a person is – as a senior editor on one of the national broadsheets said to me *'You are the only person I feel totally safe with'*. Creating a place where an individual can feel safe. Safe enough to be who they are; reveal who they really are; express their thoughts without censoring; experiment with change; be at ease; be vulnerable; face up to difficult dilemmas and unpalatable thoughts and embrace new opportunities. This has been informed by Nancy Kline's *Time to Think* and Kilburg's work as part of the MC reading; Brene Brown's research on vulnerability; the Polyvagal theory and the neuropsychology of our brain being in a Threat Circuit (Avoid rather than Approach). It is clear that we can't begin to help anyone as coaches if the individual doesn't feel safe and instead feels wary; assessed, watched, uncertain, judged. There are many aspects to creating a safe place: the actual physical environment; our warmth and compassion; the support we are perceived to provide; our tone of voice; our commitment; our cueing of our behaviour; our clear boundaries; our perceived agenda; our containing of emotion; our trustworthiness; reliability and consistency; our honesty and lack of judgement. The most important question to ask our coaches is what will it take for you to feel safe in this process?

Suppression of the Ego

As one is developing in one's career it feels important to make an impression; have a wow factor; want people to admire and like you and worse still, depend on you. I see coaches today who can't

help but let their ego get in the way of their coaching. This can be very subtle or more explicit but the process reflects them more than their clients. So what to avoid: wanting to be liked, which can lead to collusion and a lack of honesty and challenge; creating a dependent 'saviour' relationship where you enjoy 'being needed'; controlling as if a nurturing parent rather than an adult to adult dynamic (risking patronisation; infantilisation and belittling); showing how clever you are by having the last word; second guessing; jumping in quickly with your theories and models or owning a solution; owning the progress and taking the credit for any progress. It isn't about you. The MC course has allowed me to reflect on all these mistakes over the years and recognise how easy and subtle it is to fall into these traps especially with a lot of experience to draw on, which can lead to the risk of shortcutting, illustrating 'expertise'; and being directive!

The Why/The Theme

Often so much of what is presented is symptomatic of the same thing. I endeavour in the first few sessions to diagnose the 'why' someone behaves the way they do, why they have the attitude they have and who they are at 'their authentic core' - what drives them; to know how they measure success in their lives. Of course using a solution focused coaching does mean none of this is necessary but it can make for a much richer and potentially more transformative result if time allows operating a little more beneath the surface. Establishing someone's story and script takes a lot of navigating through education, upbringing, relationships, career, interests, motivations and ways of living. We have to listen to what's being said and what's not being said, where the energy rises and falls in their narrative and core patterns or themes that reappear irrespective of time, place and people. Sometimes it is the simplest theme, hypothesis or pattern which can lead to a light bulb moment and profound change. The Meyler Campbell course helped me reflect on this through the Peltier's book in particular and the course's exploration of how people change.

Worthiness

At the root of helping someone to be the best they can be or achieve their potential or any other cliché we wish to use is the importance of confidence and level of worthiness. The core belief ...I'm not... good /thin/clever/popular/respected.....enough then can lead to an individual not believing they are worthy of love, connection or success. I believe this is one of the hardest things to change as a coach but we can at least ensure someone is validated through our process by our compassion, by properly attending to them, our lack of judgement, our attempts to understand them and see the best in them. We can give them courage to be who they are, leverage their strengths, see the potential, and really recognise their value. And more importantly we can help them find the ways they need to affirm themselves; be ok with feeling vulnerable and have the courage to be kind and compassionate to themselves; and to connect fully with others. The MC programme helped me experience that personally as a result of the mutual coaching we benefitted from in the sessions.

The System

Being business savvy is critical in the business coaching world. If you can't understand your client's world, their jargon, their pressures and the complications of the system within which they have to survive, then you aren't credible to your client and your help is limited. In practice this means understanding their stakeholders, their goals and objectives, where they sit in the organisation, their purpose and role, their measures of success and how their business model works. It is critical to be rooted in the clients' 'real world' (both work and home) and the 'system' they are part of and not treat the individual in isolation from their real context. A systemic approach can help a client become wise and equipped to deal more successfully with both explicit and implicit organisational life.

Sometimes this is where a more directive or 'advisory' approach can be useful. Both the diploma I have done in 'psychodynamic counselling in the workplace' as well as exploring Kilburg's work through the Meyler Campbell programme has helped me reflect on how critical it is to focus on the individual but not underestimate the role of the 'system' within which they need to survive and thrive.

Hold the Mirror up

The MC course has reinforced my view that it is hard to coach without holding the mirror up and enabling someone to reflect on their impact on others. Collecting these data points can be through 360 degree feedback, appraisals, best reflected self, how you cast light or shadow, different selves, psychometric tools and most importantly 'here and now' feedback. But without holding the mirror up it isn't easy to coach effectively. The person you are presented with in the session can bear little resemblance to the person in the work place and it is easy as a coach who is confident they are perceptive to trust one's own impression of someone (recognising the coaching environment is very different from their day to day environment). Sometimes this doesn't matter nor is relevant to the goal but most of the time it is critical to understand someone's impact on others, especially in more testing and real day to day circumstances.

Equally someone's self talk can be so critical that they don't believe they are valued until they get some external validation and 'evidence' through feedback that illustrates their value and then we can start the real work of reducing the mismatch between how they see themselves and how others see them.

Firo B, MBTI, Realise 2 and Hogan Derailers are also all useful tools validated throughout the programme to help hold the mirror up in a way that can give a new language and new perspective to how someone sees themselves in relation to others but in a non evaluative way.

Bespoke

Ultimately despite many tools and frameworks the MC course has reinforced for me that there is no magic bullet or formula and that it really is about having a 'toolkit'. No two interventions are the same and interestingly through discussions of case studies it is clear something can be approached in many different ways, all of which have some validity. Using the ingredients described above I adopt an overall goal orientated and task approach and work hard to ensure that commitment to change is achieved through a level of dissonance: why is it worth going for/why bother? Then a clear understanding of the pragmatic routemap between current reality and 'what good looks like' helps break down the journey (using solution focused tools like scaling). Within that framework, a mixture of approaches all play a part: tactical v longer term; pragmatic and practical v conceptual and theoretical; individual v systemic; actions and missions v reflections and concepts; detailed observations v a moment of truth or a single word; a task approach v a relationship approach. Appreciating what level we need to work on is a key part of the process: is it Capability? Behavioural? Values and Attitudes? Belief? or Identity and Sense of Self or a mixture of more than one? But the most critical thing I've learnt is that the route through the coaching process can't be specified until the initial assessment stage is over and the goals are agreed. The MC course has reminded me how the goal setting part of the process is the most critical. If you can get that right then everything else follows but we need to give it sufficient time to formulate as it isn't as easy as it can at first appear.

In conclusion the Meyler Campbell Coaching course has caused me to reflect on my coaching practice and remind myself of what has worked and what hasn't. Both my experience and the learning I have done on the course and elsewhere have clarified what for me are key ingredients of a successful coaching intervention going forward.

Cathy Walton

Cathy Walton has 25 years of experience as a consulting business psychologist and executive coach. She helps leaders in business become more successful both as individuals and/or as part of leadership teams drawing on her broad toolkit of experience and qualifications rather than sticking to a rigid process or particular methodology.

Tel +44 (0)7974 355161

Email cathy.walton@virgin.net

Keep it simple, but do not make them feel stupid

Kevin Wheeler

Twelve months on from deciding to do the Meyler Campbell BCP, it is interesting for me to reflect on why I took that decision and whether the programme has lived up to expectations.

The challenge

Apart from being badgered by Anne Scoular (but weren't we all), there were two major changes happening in my business life that necessitated a different approach and which encouraged me to look at doing the BCP. The first was a recognition that after twenty-five years working with professional services firms (PSFs) advising on business development (BD) – managing and growing clients as well as winning new ones – and marketing, I had experienced repeated frustration as an 'adviser' due to many of the lawyers, accountants and other professionals that I had worked with failing to implement what I knew to be effective BD strategies and tactics. Secondly, the 2008 credit crunch and subsequent double-dip recession in the United Kingdom had seen most firms cutting their marketing and BD budgets, and the large, outsourced consultancy projects which I had made my living from for more than a decade dried up overnight. I needed a way to re-package my expertise into smaller monetary bundles and in a way which differentiated what I had to offer from the in-house marketing and BD teams who were now providing all the support to their firms.

The proposition

Having spoken to Anne Scoular and read her book the *FT Guide to Business Coaching*, the thing that excited me about coaching was the recognition that here was a more effective way to get people to do things, as they are more likely to implement solutions that they have discovered for themselves through the coaching process rather than by doing what I had told them. It also dawned on me that PSFs had invested huge sums in 'sheep-dip' BD training and most of this had been unsuccessful for the same reason. Coaching offered a tailored, one-to-one approach where the individual could formulate their own approach to BD, go out and apply their skills in real-life situations, learn from their mistakes with the coach's support and most importantly, not lose face in front of training room colleagues when things went wrong.

Therefore, my aim was to develop my coaching skills so that I could offer BD coaching to partners in major professional services firms. My secondary market would be offering to coach BD and marketing heads whose jobs have become increasingly difficult as their budgets and staffs have shrunk and the markets in which their firms operate have become ever more competitive. I hoped that my twenty-five years' experience, both in-house and as a consultant, combined with the market-leading reputation of the Meyler Campbell coaching programme would be a winning combination.

What have I got out of the programme?

Going into the BCP, I recognised that my direct, pragmatic and no-nonsense advisory style might not always be in tune with some aspects of the programme. I have little time for psycho-babble, academic theories, the 'touchy-feely' and flowery language. In business, I have learnt to keep things simple and to focus on the outcomes, which from a BD coaching perspective are always

going to be the top and bottom lines driven by the amount and quality of new business that a partner brings into a firm.

I love Whitmore's GROW model and can easily understand why it is the world's most popular coaching tool. Its simplicity and flexibility – it fits every coaching situation – are its appeal. Armed with a basic understanding of its structure and a list of suitable generic questions for each stage, I was using it with coachees within a couple of weeks of being introduced to it. Does this now mean that I consider myself proficient at using it? Of course not; with coaching you are always on a learning curve. There is still plenty that I can do to refine my questioning and listening skills, and in this regard I find the practicality of Jenny Rogers' book *Coaching Skills – A Handbook* the most helpful and best of the recommended books.

The most difficult aspect of coaching that I anticipated getting to grips with was non-directive coaching. As an expert adviser, I had got used to inputting my ideas and experiences, and clients had got used to expecting this. As a BD coach, I still expect to do some of this – my clients come to me because they want to draw down on these twenty-five years' of expertise – but as a trained coach I now understand the power of leading someone towards their own solution through penetrating questioning, or asking permission to suggest ideas, rather than 'forcing' ideas onto people.

Generally, my coaching experiences have surprised me because the situations have mostly been simple rather than complex. I feel that the danger in reading too many coaching manuals is that the authors tend to focus on over-elaborate 'case studies' with intricate dialogues in order to make an erudite point about "this questioning strategy" or "that coaching model". In fact, I often find myself engaging with coachees around very mundane, but for them very important and significant, topics. For example, the COO who wanted a better work-life balance and who realised in one of our sessions that by taking the train to work each day, rather than driving, he could free up a couple of extra productive hours in his busy working day. He was immensely grateful to me for having helped him identify this.

For this reason, I have chosen to title my reflective essay, 'Keep it simple, but do not make them feel stupid'. This is of course based on the KISS acronym - Keep It Simple, Stupid - but clearly in coaching the last thing you want to make your coachee feel is stupid.

Often, I find that coachees most value the opportunity to 'off load' onto someone who isn't from their organisation. The time to express issues and feelings in total confidence is often the most valuable aspect of the coaching for some. Obviously, as a coach, you need to ensure that sessions have a focus and that the coachee generates actions to deliver the desired goal(s).

What have I found less useful?

If a book doesn't grab my attention because it isn't easy to read and the ideas do not immediately sing out as being of use, I will put the book to one side. Unfortunately, many of the BCP recommended books did this and I have to admit to not having had the patience to plough through them. On talking to others who had experienced the BCP, I found that I was not alone. Will I come back to these in the future? Possibly, but it is more likely that I will re-read Rogers, Kline et al who grab the reader with their practicality. If anyone can explain Sue Knight's *NLP at Work*, I would be grateful, or maybe not.

My first coaching article

One of the things that I realised early on was the need to explain to potential clients what coaching is and how it works; in other words, a short, pithy explanation for the lay man. Not being able to find such a thing, I resorted to writing my own and the result has been an article published in August's edition of Law Business Review: *Upping Your Game*. Although written from the perspective of a lawyer wanting to receive BD coaching, it has equal value for an accountant or other professional looking to understand more about coaching and the process of being coached. It has been a great substitute for the standard coaching biog, which frankly after a while all begin to look rather similar and undifferentiated.

Has it been worth it?

Although time-consuming and hard work, there is no doubt in my mind that the BCP has added tremendous value to what I do. I have been able to reposition my existing business around a BD coaching proposition, which has already led to new clients including a Top 10 UK law firm and a Top 50 US law firm. Both of these clients had to be won in competitive pitches, so clearly my proposition is a strong one. In addition, the way I have priced my services means that I have effectively doubled my hourly rate compared with the pure consulting work that I used to, and still also, undertake. This has been the most unexpected and pleasant outcome of the BCP.

Kevin Wheeler

Kevin has spent his entire career advising professional services firms on marketing and BD, firstly in-house with Coopers & Lybrand and Nabarro Nathanson, and latterly as a consultant. He offers BD coaching to partners to assist them to manage and develop their existing clients as well as win new ones. He also coaches BD and marketing heads.

Tel +44 (0)1749 671101

Email kevin.wheeler@wheelerassociates.co.uk

Web www.wheelerassociates.co.uk

Listening for Success

Christine Wright

Embarking on the Meyler Campbell Business Coach programme I was sure of one thing: I am passionate about developing people. I get the most job satisfaction, energy and enthusiasm from developing people and I wanted to learn more. What I didn't realize when starting this course was that the most powerful way to develop someone was to simply listen. If you had asked me a year ago if I was a good listener then I would have said "yes, of course!" However I should have added "I am a good listener as long as I'm not already thinking of my response, forming an opinion, thinking about my next meeting, wondering what to have for lunch....' And so on, the list of distractions is endless.

Having come to my own realization about listening through the coach programme, I reflected on how much of an impact good quality 'listening to understand' versus 'listening to respond' would have in the general business world, both inside my organization and externally. If we took the simple concept of listening to understand in isolation how much difference would it make to the business performance of organisations and the development of individuals?

At this point I would like to say that you're now not going to read about how I've just spent the last six months doing a full research project to test out this theory nor am I going to borrow and quote from books, articles and theories. This is my reflection on my learning, both personally and through others, and the results. I decided to go back to basics and share my thoughts and practical experience in relation to listening which I have gathered through the programme reading and tutorials, and from 19 years of working in a people business and through coaching my direct reports.

Why does listening to understand have such a powerful effect on business and personal success?

A business cannot achieve its full potential and success without the right people; my own experience in business has taught me that and many CEO's are quoted as saying it. To have the right people you have to attract, develop and retain them. How do you know you are attracting the right people? How do you know you are developing them in the right way? How will you retain them? The simple way of answering these questions is to ask, listen and learn. Data and statistics all play a part too, but you have to actually listen to people when you're asking questions about people.

To attract the right people you have to listen to other stakeholders to get a clear idea of what the role demands in both technical and soft skills. You also have to listen to yourself: what are your expectations? At interview stage you need to listen to the candidate's responses to questions and speak for less time than the candidate to assess their suitability for the position. If you talk all the time how can you possibly know if they possess the soft skills and the culture fit for your team and organization, how can you understand and start to build a relationship with them?

When you have the right person in the role, regular reviews of their development needs and career aspirations once again involves listening with no assumptions. Everyone is different and what you think is the right career path or development need isn't necessarily theirs. Just taking time to listen can keep an employee motivated and performing. It also makes them involved in the process and more importantly accountable for the outcomes of their actions.

If we look to the retaining of talent this well used statement says it all: “A person joins a company and leaves a manager”. In the last three interviews with external candidates that I have conducted, one out of the three people were looking for a new job because they didn’t want to work for their manager anymore. Internally conducted exit interviews often (and should!) ask about the management, leadership and direction a person has received, and as a rule the individual has a strong opinion about their direct manager, favourable or otherwise. A person, who writes favourable remarks will often comment on feeling respected, included and appreciated as their manager listens and respects their ideas even if they don’t use them. The most common negative remark is “my manager doesn’t listen”.

For your personal development you need to listen to learn too, it doesn’t matter how senior you are. The day you think you know everything is the day you hit your ceiling. As we all know, the people we are coaching already have the answers, often because they’ve heard them from someone else – it’s just a question of helping them organize their thoughts or drag something out of their memory banks.

So what are some basic steps to start listening to understand?

In the workplace there are many ways to listen; in groups, one-on-one, formal and informal settings. And by applying the basics you get the best results. For me, the top four approaches to enable great listening are:

- Appropriate environment
- Questions not answers
- No assumptions
- Eliminate self-interest

The environment is essential; eliminate distractions. Use silence, patience and a trusted environment to encourage free thought. Ensure the person you are listening to is prepared and knows what to expect during your meeting or coaching session. A perfect example of this is the annual appraisal which, if done well, can produce a fantastic result with a long term impact.

Ask open and simple questions, and often answering a question with a question rather than voicing an opinion can be very powerful. Be a facilitator not a dictator.

Assumptions are dangerous. They also clutter your head, taking up the space you should be saving for listening!

Eliminating self-interest is an interesting one. People more concerned with their own development and getting a win for themselves rather than the individual often hit a ceiling in their own career. Ironically it’s the ones who focus on the job in hand and getting results for other people that end up with the most success.

How have my top four worked for me?

In the last year I have sat in many meetings, group or one-on-one, with leaders, stakeholders, my staff and in coaching sessions with clients. I have applied or discussed the four factors above, and seen the benefits of listening for myself as well as when the clients have applied these factors. I have retained my key talent, seen them develop as leaders themselves and seen much more positive feedback in their 360 degree reviews from their teams. My coaching clients have given feedback

that this awareness of listening has helped them build better relationships with their managers, peers and direct reports, plus my listening to them has given them a trusted environment to work through problems and come up with their own solutions.

Through the industry I work in I am fortunate enough to gain an insight to the business world in many different industries, organisations and particularly people on a daily basis. I have met a broad spectrum of people who could be evaluated on a condensed version of the 'Really Listening' scale of the Personal Evaluation Tool (PET). The three categories are: (1) true listener, (2) pretend listener, (3) non-listener. The ironic thing is that when people are talking to someone they seem to have more respect for a (3)type as they know where they stand as opposed to a (2)type which is often the one that offends the most. Type (1) is the most respected.

In my day job I'm trying to be a (1); I confess I still can be a (2) and sometimes I find (3) works just fine depending on the person I'm speaking to. In my coaching I'd like to be a perfect (1) all the time; I'm still working on that but I'm getting there!

Christine Wright

Based in Japan, Christine offers over 19 years' business experience in the UK, Australia and Asia. Currently she is the Operations Director for Hays responsible for the management and growth of the Asia region. Her greatest job satisfaction comes from the development of people, specifically at the senior management level.

Tel +81 (0)80 1248 9146

Email christine_wright71@yahoo.com.au

Joy and pain of establishing an internal coaching program

Gianluca Ventura

My reflective essay is based on my experience as internal coach in a company. One of my main objectives since the beginning of the program was setting up an internal coaching program within the company I work for as HR Director.

I have coached five different people during the last eighteen months. They were all senior managers in the company. The first challenge I had to face was the risk of conflicting roles between the two functions (HRD and coach).

Firstly the challenge has been related to my ability to suspend judgment about my clients who are normally the people I work with. I normally take decisions about their ability in performing roles, progressing with their careers and managing teams.

Resetting and literally erasing my expectations about them and their ability to fulfil their aspirations has been really a difficult exercise.

On the other side the task is not made simpler by the attitude of customers who see in the coach a very practical instrument of getting what they want by asking the HRD to take decisions and to influence other key stakeholders.

Building the right level of trust which allowed coaches to open up and speak openly with the HRD was also extremely complicated at the beginning.

Requests for my own views or more bluntly for support in career progression or conflict resolution have been quite frequent, especially during the first sessions and also in the remaining part of the coaching program.

I had to work on an effective approach to avoid the risk of multiple mistakes in handling the relationship with my clients and make the coaching sessions as effective as the ones with an external.

On the positive side I can say that the knowledge of the situation – once the risk of pre-judgment was reduced – has been quite helpful to establish a good coaching relationship.

As usual in some cases the coaching sessions have been quite successful since internal clients have kept on asking for support and the flow of the conversation has gone very smoothly and very openly. Some other cases have been less of a positive experience, especially for the client, and the coaching program has faded away slowly and gently but with an undoubtedly clear message.

I have tried to reflect on these experiences to build a structured approach to those types of internal clients for similar cases in the future and also to help other internal coaches in my company if the internal program will keep on being rolled out.

There are a few things which have been key in my experience for a successful coaching program with an internal client:

1. The type of people you are coaching internally. Handling colleagues who are high performers reduces the risk of misunderstandings and hidden agenda. It's a bit stating the obvious but it has been a key differentiator in the quality of the relationship between the client and me. Pre-assumptions, pre-judgment, lack of trust were much stronger when the coachee was someone with a more average performance (not necessarily a low performer). It was difficult for me to really believe in the potential of the person and it was difficult for the client to trust me as a coach when I had been part of his evaluation process. Probably experience in coaching will allow me to handle better difficult cases in the future but I definitely suggest starting an internal coaching experience with people whose starting point is a high level of trust with the company.
2. Investing time and effort in the chemistry sessions was another key learning experience. In most cases one single session was not enough. The first meeting was more a typical contracting session during which we were discussing roles, approach (non-directive) and confidentiality. Despite the clarity of the conversation most of my internal clients came out from meetings with the idea that they were still dealing with the HRD and they should leverage on this side of the relationship. A second session was then needed to prove that what was agreed previously was really valid and deep. I was therefore asking questions about the first meeting: feelings, clarity of roles and behaviours after the meeting and expectations about my contribution. In the case of Vittorio, one of my clients, I decide to rush into coaching sessions immediately. It was then very difficult to manage implicit assumptions and convictions so that it became almost impossible to continue our coaching relationship and we mutually agreed to stop it.
3. Location of meetings can play a big role in enabling a good relationship. Moving away from the "usual" office and, especially, keeping other colleagues away from the interaction with the client is a good opportunity to avoid any potential bias. I had some meetings in my office which has glass walls and allows everyone to see what's happening inside. I immediately noticed a different attitude from the client and a negative disposition in opening up freely.
4. Setting clear goals in coaching relationships is always key but in internal coaching becomes even more important to make sure that there are no interferences. Clients and I spent a considerable amount of time on goals definition in order to be very precise on what the client wanted to achieve and avoid any potential risk of interferences. I had to constantly repeat that the focus of the coaching program was clearly limited to achieving the client's goals and nothing else. Every time I had the feeling that some other topics or interferences were getting in the way I was asking again the question on goals and checking if the client wanted to start a different discussion or if he or she was simply getting distracted by the environment. Speaking openly about goals during each session if needed, was really helpful.
5. As I said at the beginning, the major issue was related to my ability to suspend judgment and work on clients' needs and potential. This was very complicated since it required a lot of discipline and honesty for me and my clients. Many times I had the feeling that my assumptions about the person I had in front of me were getting in the way. I found very useful having a very open discussion with the client about me and my feelings; sometimes. I was admitting my assumptions and discussing them with the person sitting in front of me. I had to do it carefully so that I was not opening the door to different conversations but it helped a lot in building trust and getting feedback from the client. It is definitely not an easy exercise especially if you have been working based on some models and patterns for many years. Getting feedback from clients was really helpful and, in most cases, effective

6. The last important point is about behaviours during the normal working relationships. Out of the coaching sessions we were back to normal working life and previous type of relationships. I had to demonstrate that the coaching relationship was not changing the working relationship. I have chosen not to talk to the manager of the client and I have made this clear in our initial contracting. This one can be a debatable choice but it helped me to build the trust and confidence with my client. I was asked several times about my opinion of the person I was coaching and I had to avoid expressing any judgment based on what I had seen during our sessions. Once more it required lot of discipline and a clear communication with other people in the company.

In summary, establishing a coaching activity internally has been much more challenging than I was expecting and more complicated than other coaching activity with external clients.

It requires a lot of preparation with the clients and all internal stakeholders and it requires a lot of expertise in coaching. If I could go back I would not suggest that a new practitioner start his experience in coaching with an internal program in which he or she is coaching colleagues. This becomes even more complicated if the coach has a leadership role in the company.

At the same time it has been an extremely enriching experience and it has been very helpful for me as a coach and as an HR professional. Many of my convictions were challenged and changed.

Learning how to master all the “interferences” is a very strong experience that can be useful in all future coaching sessions.

I will keep on going now with my internal program and it seems to go much better than in the starting phase.

I am very pleased with it as coach and as HRD.

Gianluca Ventura

Gianluca is an international HR professional with experience in different countries and industries from FMCG to Telecom. Since the start of the Meyler Campbell programme he has focused his coaching activity on career development and career transition. He enjoys helping people in making successful professional choices.

Tel +39 3487 600 884

Email gianvent@gmail.com

Career Transition-Reflections of an ex-Nurse

Jayne Young

When I was given the opportunity to participate in this programme, my entire focus was to develop a skill set crucial to my role in this dynamic environment that is financial services in the 21st century. However, the surprising element for me was the opportunity the programme provided for reflection on my own experiences, coupled with thought provoking reading and discussion, and how those experiences (both positive and negative) impacted on my understanding of coaching and my ability to coach successfully. One such area of reflection for me was my own experience of making a career change.

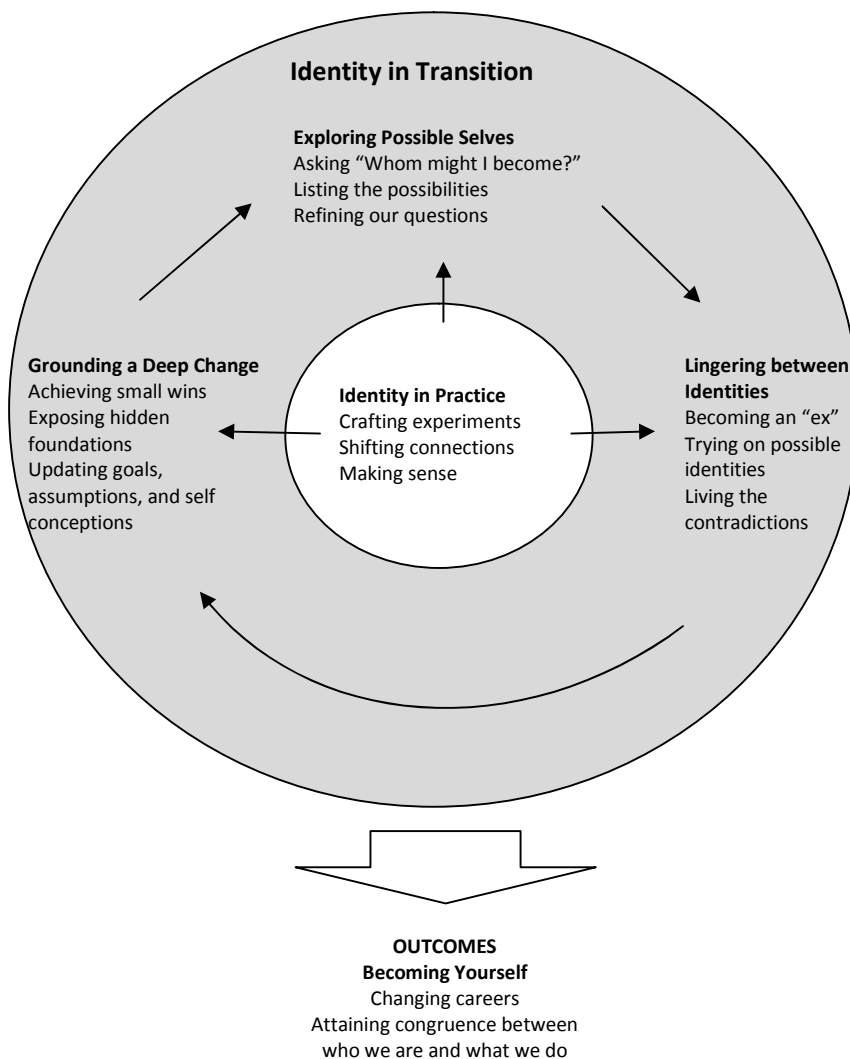
In the following paper I will set out my own experience of changing career. After reading Hermione Ibarra's book 'Working Identity' I was able to rationalise and learn from my career change in a way that I haven't been able to before. I will examine Ibarra's Career transition model and compare that to my own experience. In addition, I will reference William Bridges work on Transition verses Change and also bring in Nancy Kline's view on change in organisations. I will then identify the opportunities that it gives us as coaches to improve the change experience of individuals, with the right interventions, at the right time, concluding with my own 'Top 10 coaching essentials' to use when dealing with an individual experiencing change.

In my case I had an established career as a nurse, reasonably successful as a sister on a cardio thoracic intensive care unit in London, ear-marked for further promotion. I had worked in the army as a nurse during the Falklands crisis and with the flying doctors in Australia. Far from being stuck in a dead end role, I had experienced a rich and varied career with some terrifying and wonderful moments. However, I began to yearn to do something else with my life and found myself looking at people in other roles and wondered what it would be like to do that job. The day I found myself gazing at a traffic warden was the day I realised the time had come to do something about it!! This was the first day of a number of years of trauma and uncertainty.

When I read 'Working Identity' by Hermione Ibarra it finally struck me how significant a change I had made and what little support I had received in making the change. It also made me appreciate and understand the powerful tool that coaching is during any change process, given that change at an organisational level invariably results in change for individuals at a personal level. What an opportunity we have as coaches to impact on how individuals and ultimately organisations deal with change.

Nancy Kline in 'Time to think' states "Change is no longer the hot issue in organisations. It is endemic. It is now the pace of change that kills." Change isn't something that happens once and then we revert to a period of 'calm', change is a constant, so being able to deal effectively with that change is a critical part of the tool kit for successful individuals in modern organisations.

In Ibarra's book, which focuses on career change, she defines a process of transition and practices that promote successful change. This is described more fully in the following model:



She described the stages of individual change in a very practical way, which enabled me to make the connections easily between her model and my experience. She talks about 'listing the possibilities' which did bring back into sharp focus my musings over traffic wardens! I loved the fact that she described it as a messy trial and error process, as that was my recollection. In fact, I left my role as a nurse with no idea of what I wanted to do next. I was clear about one thing only and that was that I no longer wanted to be a nurse. I was faced with a dilemma on my return from working in Australia, to continue in a field that I knew and had been trained in, or to make a leap into the unknown? I decided on the latter, and much to the surprise (shock more accurately describes the reaction) of my friends and family, I went to work for Marks and Spencer on the tills. I just needed to do something different. I felt at the time that maybe a 'sensible person' would have waited until they were clear about where they were going. However I didn't, I moved into uncharted waters! For the first time in my life when I read Ibarra, I understood that my decision at this point had been correct. More importantly, I now believe that had I not made the decision to move at that point of time I would never have done so. Ibarra talks about the need for speed and turning the 'thinking before doing' principle on its head. She is an advocate for action rather than procrastination.

It was probably Ibarra's reference to 'Shifting connections' that resonated most deeply and caused me to reflect on how I support others through change. Shifting connections is about changing the relationships in our professional life and creating a totally new network. I guess some of this is about the type of person you are, how strong the relationships are and how determined you are to make the move. Ibarra's principle is that the people who should be most helpful and are closest to you, are probably the least helpful. This group believe they are acting in your best interests but don't in general provide the support required by individuals to move on. They remind you why you have achieved 'success' to date and what you will be leaving behind. Like you need reminding!! It made me smile when I thought about the hundreds of conversations with my friends and family during which they were really perplexed by my decision and counselled me 'not to do anything hasty' It was exhausting!! The reality was that I was supporting them to 'get their heads around' the change rather than them supporting me!! On reflection I guess it was a pretty dramatic change as I was also giving up my flat in London to move back to my parents' home in Chester. This was the only way I could afford to make the change (Please refer to career anchors by Edward H Schein!!) My parents interestingly didn't pretend they understood, they were very confused and told me so. However, they were incredibly supportive on a practical level and once I was set on a course, they never questioned my decision. But the sense of isolation and the separation from the people I had known all of my professional life was profound and came back to me very clearly when I read this section of her book.

We are all familiar with the Change curve as a model used widely to understand the stages of personal transition and organisational change:

Shock/Denial: Anger/Fear: Acceptance/Exploration: Rebuilding

However, another interesting comparison to Ibarra's thoughts on change is William Bridges Transition model. In his book 'Managing Transitions' his model examines the difference between change and transition. He defines change as 'what happens to people' and transition as 'what happens in people minds when presented with change'. His model has three distinct stages:

1. Ending, losing, letting go
2. The Neutral Zone
3. The New Beginning

Bridges says each individual will go through each stage at their own pace and those who are making a decision about themselves, about their career, *may* move through the stages quicker than an individual who is impacted by major organisational change, and/or has little or no control over the decision to change. But this is not always the case.

Ending, losing, letting go is about individuals accepting that something is ending before they can let go and move on. Failure to allow individuals to do this can result in resistance throughout the process.

The neutral zone is about individuals trying to rationalise the change, understand the reason for it and try and make sense of it. This is often with the backdrop of more work to do as the old moves to the new. Resentment and anxiety are often features of this stage.

The new beginning is where acceptance begins to kick in, often followed by a resurgence in energy and commitment.

This model seems much more relevant to individual experience than the traditional change curve. The descriptions at each of the stages prompt the type of support required without any further interpretation.

Nancy Kline in her book 'Time to Think' states that "change requires that people think for themselves", which is at odds with how individuals impacted by change often feel.... "Powerless" is a well-used description. I regained power when I made a decision to take a role outside nursing and this gave me the confidence to complete the journey.

So what can we do as coaches to put the control back to individuals and enable them to feel that they are in charge of their own destiny? What difference would a coach have made to me all those years ago? More importantly what am I going to do differently as a relatively new coach as a result of my reflections? Here are my top 10 coaching essentials:

1. Keep in mind Ibarra's compelling view that 'All transformation processes, in nature and in society, require a protected space for change'. As coaches, we have a role to play in providing that protected space.
2. Recognise that personal identities are tied up with working identities and they are not just changing a job! Therefore, the impact often extends to life and people outside the professional situation.
3. Appreciate that what may look like a small change from an external perspective may feel like a significant change internally.
4. Recognise that an external change may have been made but internal transition may still be happening.
5. Allow them to move through the change/transition process at their own pace but help them to make sense of what is happening and how they can gain control.
6. Allow them to step back, but not for too long.
7. Encourage some positive action (whatever positive action looks like to that individual).
8. Encourage them to explore all possible options; either potential careers, a different role in the same organisation or a different set of responsibilities.
9. Encourage them to develop relationships that will support them making the transition. Explore who these people might be. Explore why they may not be getting the support they need from their friends, family and existing network.
10. Listen, listen and listen.

When approaching this essay, my overriding thought was 'pew only the reflective essay to go and that's it!!' I wasn't quite expecting the personal journey and the relevance of this to my behaviour as a coach going forward. However, I have done some serious reflecting and the benefit for me far exceeds my expectations. On a personal level I have probably experienced some closure where I hadn't even realised that I needed to. On a professional level I don't think I will ever deal with anyone experiencing change in the same way again, either as an HR professional or as a coach.

Jayne Young

Jayne Young is Head of HR, Chief of Staff at Fidelity Worldwide Investment. Jayne joined Fidelity in 2004 following varied and diverse experience in HR in retailing. She is a Fellow of the CIPD and with experience in coaching people across different sectors she is a proponent of coaching as key differentiator for success. She is also a qualified Intensive Care Nurse.

Tel +44 (0)1732 777525
Email jayne.young@fil.com