

Meyler
Campbell | **20**
Celebrating 20 years

20 FOR 20

Voices from the
Meyler Campbell Community



20 for 20: Introduction

The community is at the very heart of Meyler Campbell, so what better way of celebrating our first 20 years, than by hearing some of their voices, in this collection of brief essays.

The Reflective Essay comes towards the end of the Mastered programme, as participants begin to integrate their learning. For many, it becomes a deeply personal account of their journey. Others consider a business application, or an aspect of leadership coaching they feel strongly about. Many can't be published - too personal; too commercially sensitive - but each year some are shared, with permission, in the alumni area, Connected. This year to celebrate our 20th anniversary, we are for the first time sharing publicly, pieces from across two remarkable decades.

They are as originally written up to fifteen years ago, not updated or tweaked (except where a few details were changed to further protect confidentiality.) For that reason, they don't represent the full diverse, inclusive community we see today – how much the world, and we, have changed. (And there is so much still to do – for which, see the next part of our 20th anniversary schedule!)

So, here's a small taste of our remarkable community: warm, strong, courteous, with an *astounding* range of experience. Fortright too, even provocative; but if we stand for clear thinking, we must be open to challenge.

Welcome to 20 for 20.

Catherine Devitt
Meyler Campbell CEO

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2005

On Setting Goals

Jules Goddard

In coaching, or in being coached, the notion of a goal is typically a critical part of the dialogue. I shall recount the source of my own discomfort with this idea.

Do Journeys Need Destinations?

The construction of personal goals that are worth pursuing features strongly in many coaching sessions. Indeed, the art of coaching is sometimes construed as the skill of helping others to achieve their most important objectives. The GROW model, for example, implicitly presupposes that the choice of a goal comes first. It is the choice of goal that shapes the ensuing dialogue and gives it direction, purpose and momentum. The selection of a goal is assumed to precede the method of its attainment. In business terms, we would say that the corporate purpose logically precedes the strategy of its realisation. There is the famous saying that, without a destination, any road will take you there. By “rationality”, we normally mean that actions are designed explicitly to serve a clearly prescribed objective.

An arch proponent of the primacy of goal setting is Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He defines one of his seven habits as “beginning with the end in mind”. In other words, first frame a clear statement of what you want to achieve and only then work back to options and methods for attaining it. There is assumed to be a gap between desire and reality. The effective person, so the theory goes, is one who knows his own desires and then focuses his energy on closing the gap.

I’m not so sure. I prefer the sentiment lying behind Edith Wharton’s observation that, “If only we’d stop trying to be happy; we’d have a pretty good time.” All too often, desire is the cause of, not the cure for, a sense of anomie and meaninglessness. Reducing one’s future to a set of carefully crafted ambitions, training one’s gaze exclusively on these goals and then cultivating the skill to focus relentlessly and effectively on their achievement is, from my experience, a self-deluding and self-defeating practice. For me, a crucial part of the power of coaching is the skill of weaning people off the need for “life goals” or “career targets” or “personal objectives”.

In the Preface to the 1992 Edition of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl frames the following maxim:

*“Don’t aim at success – the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; **it must ensue**, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one’s dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one’s surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: **you have to let it happen by not caring about it**.”*

I find myself strongly in agreement with Frankl. And I believe that what is true of the pursuit of success is true also of the pursuit of any goal, whether it be happiness, power, fame, friendship, wealth, or the love of others. Too direct an approach to any of our aspirations is likely to be self-defeating. Too much ambition is invariably counter-productive. And too much thought and care given to one’s own goals jeopardises their achievement. Truly successful people would seem to cultivate the habit of not caring about their own success. One of the fundamental precepts of Buddhism is that desire is its own enemy.

If Frankl's theory is valid, then many everyday, seemingly sensible, business practices are rendered not only impotent, but perhaps toxic as well: practices such as long-range planning, managing by objectives, focusing on outcomes, setting milestones, establishing key performance indicators, measuring progress, controlling for variances, and so on. And it certainly challenges any method of coaching that prioritises the setting and direct pursuit of explicit goals.

Frankl sees happiness and fulfilment as by-products of service to a cause outside oneself. Perhaps the notion of a cause should replace that of a goal in coaching discussions? But this too has its dangers. "A human being is not one in pursuit of happiness," suggests Frankl, "but rather in search of a reason to become happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation." Too often, discussions of goals, causes, purposes and the meaning of life take us away from the "simple" appreciation of the here and now. When Christ admonishes those who fret about the future – contrasting them with the lilies of the field – I believe he is expressing the same concern. Perhaps coaching should bring people back to the present.

Is Selfhood Discovered or Invented?

One of the goals to which the theory of coaching has been traditionally attached is what might be called "truth to self". This is the idea that personal fulfilment has its source in self-knowledge and self-expression. An apt motto for this belief might be, "Know thyself" or "Be thyself". In other words, we are most likely to experience authentic happiness when we are most fully ourselves. The assumption, of course, is that there is such a thing as a self to be known and expressed. A second assumption is that coaching can help with the discovery of this self. A powerful version of this theory holds that fulfilment is at its strongest when our talents are most fully in play. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has given the name, "Flow", to this particular state of being.

Personally, I feel uneasy with the advice to "know myself". I don't see the process of living as a continuous effort to discover – or "uncover" – my true self. From my perspective, my "self" is the outcome of a design process for which I take full responsibility. In other words, the self is not something to be discovered and brought forth from within, but something to be invented and designed from without. I believe that we "import" who we are through judiciously putting ourselves in the way of diverse experiences, making conscious choices of how we interact with these unfamiliar circumstances, and then appropriating the meaning we give to these experiences as material for the construction of our personal identity.

Matthew Parris, the journalist and author of *Chance Witness*, tells a story from his childhood that illustrates this point very well. At boarding school, aged only 10 or so, he found himself confronted with an opportunity to be exceedingly brave in front of other boys much bigger and seemingly less cowardly than him. And he recounts how he came to the decision to take his life in his hands and demonstrate courage. Essentially, it took the form of committing himself, in words that were heard by his mates, to this dangerous course of action. Once the words were spoken, he couldn't back down. Having made this calculation, he had no choice but to act upon it. In the event, his bravery was spontaneously rewarded by the admiration of the other boys, particularly Bill, the boy whom he most wanted to impress. This is how Parris came to interpret this childhood incident:

*"Many, many years later I saw on a professor's desk at Yale a translation of Aristotle from the ancient Greek: **'It is by acting bravely that we become brave.'** This put into words an idea whose core had appeared to me [at the time of the incident] with Bill: if a desired human quality does not seem to be coming naturally then the answer may be to stop fretting about how we might get it and instead ask what things we would do if we already had it; **and then do them.**"*

Qualities that come naturally to us are likely to emanate either from our genes or from our upbringing. It is the qualities that do not come naturally but that we purposefully set out to make our own that best define us. The truly individuated person is, in my view, the one whose character and identity are mainly the result of choice and self-design. Parris became a brave person purposively – through a conscious act of free will.

What I want to convey is the importance of recognising that, within certain self-evident constraints, we can be the person whom we want to be – provided that we have the strength of will to follow it through. Bravery comes from pretending to be brave. Leadership skills are acquired by enacting the behaviour of leaders. We act our way into the person we become. And the effective person is likely to be someone for whom this process of continuous and playful self-design is natural. As persons, we are the outcome of joyful experimentation rather than the expression of a genotype. Is coaching perhaps the activity of inspiring in others the acknowledgment that they can be who they want to be?

Are We Defined by the Causes We Serve?

Fretting about objectives and their achievement – sometimes called “target mania” – assumes that one of the most interesting and differentiating aspects of individuals are the goals they set themselves, or more grandly, the purposes they have chosen to serve. We are fascinated by the trajectory of each person’s life. We are curious about their desires and wants and dreams. In business, we habitually use surveys to classify one another by what motivates us. As coaches we try to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic goals. “Where do you want to be in 5 years’ time?” is taken to be an interesting and meaningful question.

Contrast this line of thinking with an observation made by Antoine de St Exupéry, the aviator and author of *Le Petit Prince*:

“What separates us is not our aims – they all come to the same thing – but our methods, which are the fruit of our varied reasoning.”

This has echoes of Aristotle’s maxim that, “When we deliberate, it is about means, not ends.” For St Exupéry and Aristotle, the aims and ends of life are generic and self-evident. The vast majority of people prefer success to failure, happiness to sadness, wealth to poverty, friendship to loneliness, and so on. But not everyone achieves what he or she wants. And this is the important and interesting question. How do we account for failure and disillusionment?

In being coached, I have found it more productive to talk about the assumptions that underpin my current choices than the destination to which these choices are supposed to be taking me.

Jules Goddard

September 2005

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[Editor’s Note: For more, see Jules’ book, *Uncommon Sense, Common Nonsense: Why some organisations consistently outperform others*, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Uncommon-Sense-Common-Nonsense-Organisations/dp/1846686024>]

2010

'A Family Affair'

Will Browne-Swinburne

'...the dark, uneasy world of family life – where the greatest can fail and the humblest succeed.'

Coaching for Family & Family Business

A basic truth is that families are complicated. One's that aren't are rare and one's that aren't and enjoy ownership of a successful family enterprise are even rarer. The process of succession in family concerns often brings out the very worst in people. Why is this? Why does this often powerful and incredibly fortunate segment of society so often fall into ridiculous self-defeating, selfish and ultimately pointless conflict?

To answer that question with a single hypothesis and then cure it with a single remedy would be a challenge as no two families have the same issues. That said there are some commonalities where families and their family businesses are concerned and so the focus of this piece is to identify those and demonstrate how with the right 'non directive approach', coaching can start to build bridges over waters apparently far too troubled to breach.

Observation 1. The poison that is 'Assumption'.

Because families are of the same blood and have invariably lived close to one another the natural view would be that they understand each other well. Experience with family business often shows the exact opposite: whilst members of families feel qualified to make assumptions along these lines they are often the wrong ones. One case demonstrated this admirably where, a parent assumed the daughter was doing so well in her banking job in London that she wouldn't dream of taking over the family firm. The daughter assumed that her mother and father thought she was a wild little gadabout who wasn't responsible enough for such a role. Nothing was said. Resentment grew into anger and the business was very nearly sold. Luckily a row over something completely different brought everything to the surface and the daughter is now responsible for a family business that goes from strength to strength.

Observation 2. The Head of the family

Less is done and more is lost by the reverence that the 'incumbent' often instils in the people he or she most loves. There is an aura around the head of a family business that prevents the potential successors from really getting 'stuck in' and having a point of view let alone actually suggesting they take over. Nothing is said. The Incumbent thinks that no one cares, the successors think that their involvement isn't required. Resentment grows and the business and the family suffers.

Observation 3. The Baggage of Legacy

In successful family concerns there is the inevitable reverence and homage paid to that family legacy. Invariably, to the future managers of that legacy it is a daunting prospect. Basically they don't want to be the ones to screw it up. Nothing is said. The burden grows, assumptions creep in and the rot sets in.

These are three observations. There are a few more but limited words allow only these for the moment. The commonality between the three is simple. It is that 'nothing was said'. Communication within family groups, particularly families with successful business, is often dreadful. Staggeringly the stakeholders, when asked about their own families, rarely identify internal communication as an issue.

The Small Things Matter

A 'non directional' approach to helping families work towards smoothly moving a concern to the next generation is one way to achieve any success without embroiling the outsider with politics and relationship issues that he or she cannot possibly solve. The moment a consultant or coach starts to package up the issues and try and deliver a solution is the moment they are rumbled!

Working with the family as a group or individuals is only feasible if the contract clearly points out that it is the family that will solve these issues and the 'outsider' is only there to facilitate that. The amazing fact is that the single most important step in finding a solution is the signing of that contract. It is a decision that all the stakeholders have made on their own terms (the outsider must have sold the concept of his/her involvement to all stakeholders individually) and in some cases it is the first thing they have agreed on in years! It is a catalyst to communication. Even if they don't sign the contract they have had a discussion and that discussion may have been a small but vital first step.

The Historic Houses Association, which realized that the point of succession was the point at which many great houses were lost from private ownership, used to arrange cocktail parties for young successors. They would be asked to come and listen to venerable speakers. The invitations were always addressed to both the successor and the incumbent of the houses concerned. After a number of these events over the course of a few years that invitation was identified as being the single most powerful element of the event. It simply gave both parties an excuse to talk about the subject of succession which both of them had been too embarrassed to mention. Aren't we Brits amazing?

Cards on the table

Although this sounds easy enough the coach can help enormously simply by making sure that **all** the stakeholders are involved. In some cases people (often the wife or husband of the incumbent) don't see themselves as stakeholders as such but as background players. These people must be included.

One family planned and executed a highly professional and tax efficient succession plan for the family estate. On the sad death of the responsible and communicative father the heir discovered that his step mother had the right to live in the house and enjoy an income from the estate for the rest of her life. She lived to 102 which left the heir's family living in a small farmhouse down the road for 15 years. Furthermore she spent the money that would have covered the inheritance tax on her death and sadly the whole place was sold. No one included her in the plan and she knew her rights.

Setting the Goal

Facilitating a goal setting exercise is an obvious next step. In this case, particularly in family group discussions the goal should be about the family and not the business. The beauty of being involved with families and their business concerns at this level is that one is concerned with delivering a solution that sustains the family and not just the business. In reality solving the family issues will inevitably lead to a better business. No lawyer, accountant or even management consultant would be able or wish to be involved in this area.

If approached in this way the group can generally have a constructive discussion about the family without shareholdings, cash or dividends coming into it. Armed with the knowledge from the research stage the outsider can keep a careful eye on the discussions and slowly start to dash assumptions as they appear.

Breaking Eggs

Eggs have to be broken and the well informed non directional approach can help make this part more comfortable and constructive than it might otherwise be. The fact is that there will be winners and losers but if the whole exercise can be couched in the goal of sustaining a great family then the losers can voice their woes and possibly get to a better place emotionally and financially without a shouting match or a family rift. With any luck the eggs will be broken in stage one and two, everything will be aired and the dust will settle. It doesn't always work like that and people do get hurt but in the non directive environment families wound and families heal.

Hard Tacks

There is a solid return on investment rationale to all this. Family lawyers and accountants state that succession planning is generally a simple affair if the 'real family issues' have been clearly defined and hopefully sorted out. They can prepare a strategy and tax plan that is absolutely watertight but the project will not work if the right stakeholders are not in agreement. Money wasted in the offices of lawyers and accountants is money that could have been spent on sorting out fundamentals within the family and the relationships therein. These relationships deliver the values that make family business such a huge part of global commerce. Focus on them and you focus on the crucial element that provides sustainability in these enterprises. Successfully handing a business over to the next generation is an achievement but doing so and sustaining the family is a triumph.

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Business Coaching and The Value of The Firm

Stephen Mayson

1. Introduction

The title of this essay is not a misprint. There is widespread acceptance that business coaching will be of value *to* the firm, and that it can improve both personal and organisational performance. My contention is that it can also improve the value *of* the firm.

I have a longstanding interest in the valuation of businesses (and of law firms in particular¹). The methods for computing the value of a business are now well established. Although there are several different approaches that can be used (such as discounted cash flow, capitalised income or excess earnings, or a multiple of revenue or profit), if they are each applied correctly, they will all result in the same valuation. This is because, despite the different approaches, they all use the same fundamental elements. On analysis, therefore, they can all be shown to revolve around two principal issues:

- (a) the amount of the firm's 'economic income' (usually revenues or cash flow); and
- (b) the perceived sustainability or persistence of that income.

The first is largely about effort and performance, and creating a flow of income. The second concerns managing the investor's perception of the risk relating to that flow of income over time and how long it will take to secure a sufficient return to justify the investment. My belief is that business coaching can contribute to both of these in ways that I shall elaborate later.

2. Valuation and capital

Without going into the detail here, my proposition is that, far from valuation being driven by just the two forms of capital found in a firm's accounting documents – financial capital and physical capital (usually in the form of fixed assets such as premises and equipment) – there is in fact a richer mix of capital at play.

The additional forms of capital that I identify are human capital, social capital and organisational capital. Human capital is becoming a recognised resource, comprising the 'package' of knowledge, skills, experience, aptitude, attitude, motivation, and so on, that each individual brings to the workplace. Social capital is the network of relationships that people have within and beyond the firm, combined with the values and beliefs, norms and reciprocal obligations that arise from those relationships. In many senses, social capital 'oils the wheels' of social and organisational life.

Organisational capital is often under-recognised and under-developed in organisations – particularly in professional partnerships. It relates to either or both of the *method* of delivering the firm's products or services (such as teams, knowledge management, and routines or processes) or the *context* for that delivery (such as reputation and brand, culture, contracts,

¹ See Mayson, S.W. (2007) *Law Firm Strategy: Competitive Advantage and Valuation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press), where the valuation concepts and methods necessarily summarised in this essay are explored in depth.

structure and strategy)². Organisational capital encapsulates the resources and artefacts that, apart from the firm's other visible manifestations (staff, premises, and equipment), are its essence.

The performance and valuation of a firm are affected by all five forms of capital. The stronger the capital, and the stronger the interrelationships among them, the better the firm's performance and valuation will be. Indeed, one or more may be needed to create or acquire another (such as financial capital to acquire equipment, or to hire talent; and human and social capital to create an organisational culture and play a significant role in developing the firm's reputation).

But here's the ultimate challenge: although the firm's financial and physical capital undoubtedly belong to it, its off-balance-sheet capital is different. Of this other capital, only organisational capital belongs to the firm: human capital belongs to the individuals concerned, and social capital (being bound in at least two-way relationships) belongs to no-one. Human and social capital are absolutely vital to an organisation's performance and value, and yet cannot be owned by it. The firm must secure access to them, it must encourage their development and deployment, and it will benefit from them, but it cannot acquire them.

Without human beings, their talent and their relationships, there is no organisation. But when we talk about 'valuing the business', we assume that there is an entity (the firm) that is capable of being valued. Without an organisation, there is nothing to which we can attach a valuation. This circularity is intriguing. When we value a business, we are attaching a number to a social construct. We have invested this construct with an independent existence, and yet its being – and sustainability – is dependent on two necessary and fundamental forms of capital (human and social) without which it cannot exist, but which it cannot own.

For me, organisational capital becomes a key factor in valuation. More than the other forms of capital, it is the one which most defines the firm as an entity in its own right. Its strategy, culture and reputation give it independent purpose and identity; its structure, systems and routines provide substance and offer continuity. Where it is effective, organisational capital provides the binding force which attracts, retains and mobilises human and social capital for the good of the firm. It strikes me that, when people talk about 'goodwill' (usually as the difference between the price paid for a business and its balance-sheet value), they could in fact be referring to the value attached to the firm's organisational capital (albeit supported by and dependent on human and social capital). If so, we now have a better understanding of the elements of a business that could drive the value attached to goodwill.

3. Valuation, capital and coaching

Better performance by individuals is clearly capable of raising the revenues, profit and then cash flow of the firm. Business coaches understand the connection between coaching and performance. I therefore don't dispute that raising the performance of individuals will almost inevitably contribute to the value of the business overall, whether we think about valuation or not. This is because raising the firm's economic performance contributes to the first principal issue of valuation (the amount of economic income). However, I seek to make two further points here, which are related to the second principal issue (the perceived sustainability or persistence of that income).

Sustainability requires that the firm's income is maintained. This will usually arise from a flow of orders and work, which in turn is dependent on contacts and relationships (social capital) and on the firm's reputation (organisational capital). It also suggests some stability in those earnings,

² The forms of capital are explored in detail in Mayson (2007): see footnote 1.

which might be dependent on such things as diversification of the business's activities to smooth out variations in the economic cycle, product or service life-cycles, or locations. These result from strategic decisions contributing to organisational capital. Stability is also dependent on business development (based on relationships and reputation – as above – plus the human capital skills and experience of marketing). Finally, stability of income will be improved by the stability of the workforce. This can be encouraged by 'embedding' and connecting staff to the organisation by managing the appropriate mix of organisational capital (such as structures, roles and teams, knowledge management, employment contracts, and culture), as well as the physical capital that creates an attractive and effective working environment supported by reliable equipment.

The sustainability of the firm's income might also be thought to depend to some degree on the sustainability of the firm itself, as manifested by its own longevity. This will be apparent from a sense of the organisation as a separate entity in its own right³. This can arise from an organisational identity (a common understanding about who 'we' are as an organisation), and is carried by the firm's culture, its organisational knowledge and memory, its routines (that encourage consistent and persistent behaviour), and its structures (roles and departmental arrangements). These are all elements of organisational capital, contributing to the perception of sustainability that is so vital to a positive valuation.

As I observed above, without these facets of organisation, there can be no 'separate' entity capable of valuation. Without conscious and collective effort – founded on individual behaviour – there can be no organisation. Individual contribution and performance therefore need to be directed not just to the development of the individual's human capital, but also to the development and maintenance of the other forms of capital that are critical to the overall health and wealth of the organisations within which they work.

The two further points that I wish to make are therefore as follows. First, with an understanding of the implications for valuation, coaches can work explicitly to connect an individual's performance and contribution to capital-building that will enhance the long-term value of the firm. For example, in developing a manager's confidence in dealing with employees, a coach can potentially improve the performance of that manager in raising the performance of the employees (human capital) and their relationships with colleagues (social capital). More than this, the coach also contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of the teams within which the manager and employees work, the success of their working routines, and the culture of the organisation overall (organisational capital). These developments will have a positive influence on the firm's bottom line and its sustainability.

As coaches, we are used to focusing a client's attention on a range of broader issues and implications. So, we might invite a client to explore the effect of a decision on colleagues and other stakeholders. A valuation perspective takes that view a step further to include the capital interests of owners, partners or shareholders. By considering the long-term best interests of the organisation (and balancing short-term and longer-term consequences), we can now make explicit choices between short-term revenues (profit and loss) and longer-term capital (balance sheet), and between profit extraction and investment for sustainability. When we explore with clients the extent to which potential decisions are consistent with personal and organisational values, we can also invite clients to assess the impact of those values on 'organisational culture' and of culture (as an element of organisational capital) on the firm's valuation.

³ Professional services firms are often weak on this element, preferring to see the firm as a manifestation of themselves as individuals – and dependent on them for clients and work – rather than as a distinct entity that is independent of the people who at any given moment are engaged by it.

Second, as part of the sales process for business coaching, a case can now be made to the firm's owners and senior managers that coaching will not only improve personal and organisational performance, but will also contribute directly to the capital value of the business overall. This moves the perception of coaching beyond the idea that it is 'a good thing to do', or in line with contemporary HR practice and the principles of learning and development, to a business case that will enhance both short-term profit and longer-term capital returns.

Finally, I would wish to observe that, although this essay (in its focus on valuation) has necessarily emphasised a commercial firm, I believe that the principles, and their application to coaching, are also relevant to public, charitable and third sector organisations. The idea of the 'off-balance-sheet capital' of human, social and organisational capital – and the appropriate mix and function of it – can be just as readily be applied elsewhere. Not having a market to realise capital value does not negate the wisdom of building these forms of capital through coaching in order to create an inherently stronger, better performing, and 'more valuable' organisation.

4. Conclusion

The valuation of a business is dependent on income and a perception of the sustainability of that income. These, in turn, are supported by five forms of capital: financial, physical, human, social, and organisational. By knowingly extending the context of business coaching beyond individual performance towards creating or improving one or more of these forms of capital, the business coach can make a direct contribution not just to the effectiveness of an organisation but also to its underlying valuation and realisable worth.

Stephen Mayson

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Chamber Music and Coaching - A Congruence

Dena Merson

In April, I returned to the scene of my musical childhood to play the cello in a memorial reunion chamber orchestra concert for our late conductor, John Fisher. John had been a wonderful bear of a man who inspired a love of chamber music in all of us and a sense of harmony that extended well beyond the music we performed. I had been struggling to find a theme to my “reflective essay” that was congruent with the person I was before Meyler Campbell and the coach I had become as a result of the programme. On that sunny, poignant day, a number of things fell into place. Foremost amongst these was the knowledge that much of what I had learned as a child musician, now informed the adult coach I have become. There was a congruence between chamber music and coaching which helped explain why coaching someone had felt natural and instinctive from the outset. It is the nature of this relationship that I decided to explore in more depth.

In the midst of Britten’s “Simple Symphony”, I smiled to myself and took a peep at my friends in the orchestra. I was in flow, I thought, and safe in the sublime knowledge of it, as I heard someone play a wrong note. To my horror, I realised it was mine and flow had been rudely interrupted. Worse still, I had not got a clue where I was in the music. What conditions of coaching did this remind me of? As I struggled with these notions, my fingers and bow attempted to reach some semblance of understanding and I bit my lip and pulled a contorted face. It was the same face I found myself pulling when I had stopped listening to a client and was working out where we were going next, wondering how many coaching hours I would need to perfect my level 2 listening. A viola string snapped and the ensuing coffee break gave me the time to reflect on what was happening.

Let’s start with “Flow” as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. How many of the nine conditions had I satisfied? “*The balance between challenge and skill*” was satisfied by the music we were playing: the Simple Symphony belies its title. The music defined the goals and the conductor and our musical sections, the boundaries. We received immediate feedback, the sound we made. Our concentration was “*so intense*” that there was “*no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant*”, “*or to worry*”. Once I had received the feedback of a wrong note, my concentration had lapsed. I started to worry and became deeply self-conscious. How many other wrong notes had I played? I was thrust back into the present and the timeless feeling of being in a flow state had disappeared. The “*autotelic component of playing*” had been replaced by an unnatural, conscious approach. Optimal performance was no longer possible.

As a musician, I move in and out of flow. As a child, the more challenging the conditions, the better I would perform. A concert performance would promote challenge to its highest state and my concentration would be at its most intense. I became lost in the experience of playing. As a teenager, this changed. I would find my mind wandering and I had a more defined consciousness of self in my playing. I became aware of where I was. This is analogous to my coaching. When I am at one with clients, time is suspended. I am immersed in their voice, their body language, the “vibes” in the room. I listen and I understand. Response is not always necessary because rapport obviates the need for it.

In Whitworth, “level 3 “*global listening*” is like a “*radio field*”. “*The radio waves are entirely invisible, yet we trust that they exist because we hear music coming from a radio*”. She talks about musicians and actors having the ability to read a room instantly and monitor how it

changes in response to what they do. *"These people have the ability to read their impact and adjust their behaviour accordingly...performers develop a strong sense of level 3 listening"*. Chamber music is, in Goethe's words, *"four natural people conversing"*. Davis Waterman of the Endellion Quartet talks of how a chamber musician *"needs to balance assertiveness and flexibility. Good rapport is essential. In mid-performance players often do things spontaneously requiring other players to respond in real time"*. He could equally be talking about coaching. Coaching felt a familiar process to me, because that is exactly what it was. My first chamber music concert came at the age of five. The innate skills and techniques of musicians are honed every time they play chamber music. They watch, they feel and they listen in the moment.

In *The Inner Game*, Timothy Gallwey quotes from *Zen in the Art of Archery*: *"Childlikeness has to be restored with long years of training in self-forgetfulness"*. He goes on to say, *'great music and art are said to arise from the quiet depths of the unconscious'*. His notion of Self 1 and Self 2 are integral to achieving a *"quiet mind...where one begins to trust the natural processes which occur when the mind is less and less active."* As we returned after our coffee break a need to fall back on that "trust" of "natural processes" became apparent. I looked at the music and having not seen it for twenty seven years, realised I could not read it. To be more precise, I could not describe the notes in front of me, I could not work out what key we were supposed to be in and the Italian musical commands might as well have been hieroglyphics. I froze. The more I looked at the music, the less I could make sense of it. What was the value of a crotchet or a quaver? The fall of the conductor's baton broke my thought and triggered my fingers and bowing arm into action. I wasn't watching the ball, I was watching the baton. I was playing instinctively and by heart. The cello was playing, in rapport with the musicians around it and so, by definition, was I. All I could hear was the sound of the orchestra and it was truly exhilarating, a moment of *"peak experience"*. I had moved from the stress of conscious incompetence to a serene unconscious competence in one childlike leap.

As a child, talking came much easier to me than listening. Many would say it still does! My desk partner Stephen was the opposite. "Listen to the birds, Dena", he once told me as we walked down a dusty lane on tour in Malta. I stopped to listen and the experience made a profound impression on me. I have noticed and cherished the sound of birdsong ever since. As a young cellist, I listened all the time. However, I was tuned into my own performance. As a chamber musician, I learned to tune in with other instruments; in effect, to achieve rapport. I stopped consciously listening, it became intuitive. John Fisher used to talk of listening with our "inner ear". We learned to listen in an open, non-judgemental way, to be in harmony with one another. The harder we listened, the more in harmony we became. Nancy Kline might have said we were paying attention to one another: listening *"to each other... requires discipline and the most profound attention for each other"*. Before, I read *Time to Think*, I actually thought that if I finished somebody's sentence I was doing them a favour. In music, this would have been anathema. When playing chamber music, coming in early, or interrupting, is a discourtesy to your fellow musicians. By interrupting, you limit the potential of the music; you do not allow it to express itself. In coaching, you limit the potential of your client. I had learned the value of listening, of pauses, of silence through music at an early age. To gain efficacy as a coach, I only had to allow myself to remember those early lessons.

That evening in April, we concluded our performance with Elgar's "Serenade for Strings", a moving testament to a bygone era. As we played the final chord there was a silence that seemed to last an eternity, as we individually and collectively reflected on times past and a man who had shared the gift of chamber music with us. We exulted in the sheer joy of making music together again. Time was suspended. I asked myself one final question: why had it taken a reunion concert for me to play the cello again after all these years? It was at that moment that the final piece of my jigsaw fell into place. For me playing music alone was not enough. I needed to be part of a chamber music ensemble to experience the joy of performance. This was not merely an expression of type, it was more fundamental to who I was. Chamber music had bestowed an

early gift on me and unknowingly prepared me for a coaching journey. Coaching had helped me articulate the value and purpose of the gift and was the medium for sharing it with others in the future. The congruence between chamber music and coaching was indeed real.

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Need a coach? – get a dog

Celia Gaffney

Two things happened last summer – my enrolment on the Mastered programme and the arrival of a new puppy in our home. Both had been long thought about, both I knew were top notch. It was hard to decide which had the better pedigree: the Meyler Campbell programme with its stellar faculty, its links with Harvard, its good humoured and vibrant network, and its comprehensive well signposted map through coaching's broad landscape. Oh and formal accreditation for those who graduate. Or the Brogenslade Bandit (aka Corby) our handsome working cocker thoroughbred pup, son of Meadowsage Crusader and Glyn Du, descendant of Field Trial Champions galore, his eye sweet and bright, his nature willing, his coat sleek and black as a crow's wing.

And the parallels did not end there. Both came with reading lists. For someone like me this was heaven, speaking directly to my belief that the written word puts the truth within reach. Whitmore¹, Rogers², Ibarra³, and Knight⁴, sat shoulder to shoulder on my bookshelves with 'How to be your Dog's Best Friend'⁵ and 'The Perfect Puppy'⁶. I had the handbooks. And there were tools. The GROW model⁷ et al., the collars and leads of the coaching world. Simple structures that set the framework for good practice. I had everything at my fingertips. How hard could it be?

Our first syndicate meeting is the first time I leave the puppy 'home alone' for an extended period, and I spend a good part of the session wondering how much he is missing me. (I am already used to friends saying 'You worry too much. He's just a dog'.) I am hardly aware on that first day how my fellow syndicate students will evolve into trusted and steadfast companions over the weeks and months (and I hope now years) ahead as we make our way together through the Programme. How much I will value their perspectives, their counsel, their ideas.

I go home. The puppy is pleased to see me, but not excessively so.

The next few months are about applying what I am learning on the Programme. Practice clients are recruited, both parties (me and them) grateful for the contracting of space and time to learn and develop. The GROW model looks simple enough, a fact I find in truth a little disappointing. I was hoping for something more complex, more mysterious somehow. So I resist it. My tutor illuminates: part of the point is that the model is simple, and that its simplicity does not deplete but reinforces its power. I persevere. I copy out good GROW questions and have them ready at the start of each practice coaching session. I divide a page into sections before dutifully setting out the G, R, O and W, prefaced by a T, to bring structure to my coaching. I notice around this time I have become increasingly bossy with the dog. The puppy training books advise a few short (5-10 minutes) fun training sessions a day. I assume double quantities will speed his learning. There's no question, on both fronts I am putting in the effort.

I complete a session with a practice client with a sense of triumph. I have managed to stick to the GROW model throughout, even remembering, when the time came, what the W stands for, something that in the early days eluded me frequently. I lean back in my chair and confidently ask my client for feedback. They report the session was useful, (they have politeness in their DNA) but that it appeared to lack structure, and that we seemed to jump to action planning prematurely towards the end of the session.

I go home. In supervision, amongst other accurate insights, my tutor suggests that I stop trying so hard. I nod down the phone at him. Later, I do some training with the dog. It is becoming clear that he thinks his name is 'Sit'.

Time moves on. In our syndicate we do practice coaching. Today it is my turn. I coach one of my fellow syndicate members. They talk. I listen. Actively. Which in my case means nodding a lot. I listen and I interpret and push my colleague to a place they have not asked to go. The air rings around us. My colleague is composed. I am unnerved. Afterwards my tutor gives thought-provoking and honest feedback, including the recurring suggestion I could stop trying so hard. I nod in agreement but I still don't really know what that means.

I go home. The house is quiet. I break the rules and allow the dog up onto my lap. He is surprisingly heavy. He leans into me and is still. We sit looking out of the kitchen window together. We do not speak. I do not have a name for this moment. I bend down and kiss the top of his head. He looks up and washes my left ear. The following day my syndicate colleague sends a warm, strong and generous email. It has healing properties.

The Programme rolls on. A breakthrough occurs. False dawn or green shoots? I am gathering up my papers at the end of a practice coaching session. I cannot see the path the session has travelled. Apropos of nothing my client says unprompted that the process has value to him because it is like having a three dimensional conversation with himself. He can walk round the topic and look at it from several angles. Without looking up I say 'that's good' and think what a lovely image he has conjured up.

I am in the garden. I am calling the dog. He has not come to me. I know from the puppy manuals that 'a good recall' is essential for one's relationship with one's dog. Fear rises within me. There are several places in the fence where he could squeeze through, and out of the garden and into danger, roads, cars, people who don't like dogs. I call him again. I hear my voice; it has gone up a notch. Feeling a slight pressure against my foot I call him again. I am shrill now. I hear my own panic. The pressure against my foot increases. I look down. My puppy, who has evidently been there for some time, is sitting tucked close against me, looking up at me, his head cocked to one side, clearly wondering what it is I am asking him to do that he has not already done. Sometimes, I reflect as I give him a surprisingly (for both of us) large hug, what you are looking for is right at your feet.

We had our last syndicate meeting a few weeks ago, the day after the dog's first birthday. The distance travelled over the last year has been one both of time and of learning, but for me I hope also of understanding. And now this, what should one include in a reflective essay? The task is typical of the Meyler Campbell approach. Makes you think, gives you the best and then makes you work at it. Gives you rigour and expects it back. Won't make it easy for you. Trusts you to work it out.

And what are my reflections about coaching I ask myself? Well, these are the things I write to myself: My private desiderata of coaching:

- The value of coaching is the process, not you;
- Listen to your client;
- Listen to the small things they say;
- Follow where they lead;
- Be present with them, not ahead of them anticipating them, or behind them, judging them;
- Consider: How can you possibly have the answers they need? You can't. They will;
- Respect them. Allow them the space to think and breathe;
- Trust them;
- Trust yourself;

And then,
Wait,
Wait.
Be still.
What they need will come.

In life, events coincide and parallels can be drawn: embarking on a new programme of learning; life with a new puppy. That's where this essay began, with the neatness of those things. It ends less certainly around coaching for me. Is this the start of a coaching career? Can I really do it justice? I realise now that throughout my participation in Mastered the question I have been asking of it all the way through has been, 'Is coaching for me?'. I reflect now that a better question might have been, 'Am I right for coaching?' Because it can't be done by halves. Do it properly or don't bother. For the clients who come before you. It must be taken seriously for the work that it is, not for the options it presents.

It's early in the morning when I write this. Soon the dog will be up. We don't do much formal training nowadays. We've both prospered by relaxing the regime a little. We have the basics. Rather, now we live side by side, and work to understand what's needed in the moment. Him for me, me for him. It works somehow.

In a minute he'll trot briskly out into the garden, the spring in his step shaped by seeing creation each day as if for the first time. From the back door I'll watch him stop at the corner where the path curves and opens up, where the lavender spills over the low wall, and he'll look back brightly at me over his shoulder, and I'll hear him say, 'Come on. Come and see the new day'. Ridiculous, of course. He's just a dog, right?

Celia Gaffney

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2015

The Private Equity Industry – a coaching opportunity

Paul Fletcher

From a small boutique segment of the financial community the 'Private Equity' industry has grown in the last 20 years to be a truly significant, important and influential part of the economic fabric in many parts of the world. It is estimated that over 40% of the British retail industry are companies owned by private equity firms; globally the industry invests approximately \$25bln per annum. It is reasonable to expect that the leadership of these firms operates to the same standard that we expect to see in more traditional and more visible publicly quoted businesses. There are several reasons why coaching has made limited inroads into this industry and yet the need for intervention is high.

In the UK alone there are more than 500 private equity firms. Nearly all of these firms are partnerships. Partnerships by their nature create a set of dynamics in terms of economics, length of service, entrance and exit terms, and personal obligations that set them apart from normal company structures.

The key essence of the industry that these partnerships operate within is that it manages capital for a fee (revenue) and a share in the potential upside return (carry) in the investments when sold. The capital (from institutional investors, family offices, endowments, sovereign wealth funds) is most typically committed to the PE firm for a period of ten years. At the heart of the decision that an investor will make when making a commitment is a belief that the PE firm will produce investment returns consistent with the past. They spend a huge amount of time and effort establishing comfort or otherwise with the individuals and the whole team at the PE firm. They endeavour to isolate who exactly are the 'star' investors and to ensure that there are sufficient legal (keyman) and economic provision to provide continuity for the life of the fund. There is a clear and unambiguous alignment of interest between investors and PE Fund Managers that star performers should be the centre of management focus in terms of motivation and retention.

The long term nature of PE funds and the need to provide continuity and stability creates an environment where sharp, cliff like changes in the membership of the partnership give rise to concern and uncertainty. The ideal picture of any change in team should be one of gentle curves where the shape of the team changes imperceptibly over time.

An important characteristic of the industry is its relative youth, where most firms are still run by the first generation of Partners and indeed dominated by the original founding partners. These are 'proprietorships' as opposed to the relatively few 'institutional' like partnerships. The success of the first generation of leaders masks the challenge of succession. There is little evidence that there has been the attention and focus on developing leadership and management talent in the next generation. Indeed the relationship between founders and the next generation is characterised by dependency. Dependency to make the major strategic decisions, to manage key relationships, to be the final investment decision maker, to manage organisation design etc. There is a challenge to pass on leadership to individuals who have had no other experience than operating in such an environment.

The structure of the industry creates its own challenges in terms of developing high quality management and leadership skills in addition to providing stand out investment professionals. It is rare for management skills to be found in a star investment professional. The 'star' will

have spent his entire professional life being encouraged to be an 'individual contributor'. He will, of course, always work with a deal team but yet the value system of all firms will be to maximise the special individual skills within a small team. There will be little personal growth in terms of increasing management complexity over time, exposure to broader strategic issues and leadership generally. However, the success of these firms lies in having a senior group that indeed does have these skills. The irony is that the investment professionals who have made a career out of backing management teams in their investee companies very often do not recognise that they have glaring gaps in their own capabilities.

This is a significant area of opportunity for coaching. The step change for a partner in a PE firm to be a business head in a multi-asset firm or regional head or indeed the CEO is an unusually big step given the industry's structure.

Specifically, the industry faces wholesale generational change in the next 5-20 years. This is disruptive in the best of firms but is likely to be more so in partnerships where firm succession is not well practiced and has the potential to upset the delicate balance of the eco-system that has worked out a status quo to accommodate the often fragile egos of the stars and sets store by team stability. It is likely that the most successful outcomes of leadership change will come with thoughtful long range planning, engagement with the top team, culminating in a robust and trusted process. Coaching the incumbent CEO, and indeed potentially his senior team, can be a positive impetus to this transition process.

The extension of this is of course coaching the potential candidate(s). As I described earlier there is unlikely to have been an effective 'apprenticeship' for the top job so outside help may be of considerable impact both before and after such a transition.

Given the high stakes in terms of ensuring stability, continuity and yet achieving leadership change it is, I believe, inevitable that the leadership of PE firms will reach out for any tools that can assist them.

The closer to the industry with a working understanding of its specific characteristics the more likely it is that a coach will be selected and succeed. Understanding the dynamics at work in a partnership and understanding the star culture are keys to personal credibility. Once engaged, coaches will no doubt be surprised to see, for a group whose core competence it is to monitor and evaluate other management teams, how lacking in self-awareness senior PE professionals may be. The introduction of a coach may well engender the opportunity for a genuinely insightful 360° review. Partners openly and honestly giving each other feedback is a rare occurrence. Keeping each other happy dominates their thinking. For a group quite used to being 'aggressive' in pursuit of professional success they are very often conflict averse. Indeed aggression can be seen as a way of avoiding conflict or more specifically a means by which the core underlying issues within the partnership can be avoided.

The coach may well seek to use a psychometric tool. A preferred one is Birkman (<https://www.birkman.com/services/the-birkman-method/>) which gives feedback as a comprehensive narrative. Taken together the establishment of the 'reality' is critical to moving forward.

Given the real interdependence between partners for their collective success I believe 'ad-hoc' coaching assignments within PE firms where the contract will be with one individual, will be sub-optimal. Far better to be tasked with providing coaching to the 'CEO and his top team'; whilst this maybe a mix of team intervention and direct one:one coaching the opportunity exists for a holistic intervention that could yield significant results.

If the door is not open to such a broad based relationship then there still remains significant opportunity. Competitive pressures are increasing as the industry matures. Beyond the early phase where first mover advantage conferred a strong strategic position the leadership of all PE firms must grapple with the uncomfortable reality that there will be winners and losers and the underpinning to that outcome will lie in the managerial and strategic leadership competence of the most senior Partners.

To summarise: Coaching is not widespread within the PE industry. The need however is significant and there is a major opportunity for coaches to have a material impact working with individuals and teams who are faced with the very different challenges of team and firm leadership in addition to their competence of being skilled investors.

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Time to move on from Myers Briggs

Tim Johns

My relationship with Myers Briggs has undergone a transformation. Since my first exposure to it over 15 years ago, I have gone from being a true believer to sceptic, and from sceptic to seeing it as irrelevant. Jung himself said that every individual is an exception to the rule and that sticking labels on people was "...nothing but a childish parlour game." However, I've stopped seeing it as irrelevant and now think of it as dangerous. It is often seriously misused and is, in my view, potentially harming the coaching profession.

I had taken similar tests before Myers Briggs, but they had only given me a name. Myers Briggs was a revelation. It gave me a whole new understanding of who I was and how I thought. It seemed to confirm my status as a rare and special maverick, fundamentally different from the run-of-the-mill mortals who tended to work in businesses. It took on a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: I needn't be concerned with my inability to concentrate, or to be bored with detail. My personality (brain wiring?) didn't need to worry with the minutiae of life; my destiny was to bigger and better things. I now understood, and perhaps had an excuse for, my inability to ever open a bank statement. I exaggerate, of course, but nevertheless I wore my four letters with pride.

Scepticism came later. The first chink in the armour appeared when I started to work globally. As I travelled and spent more time working with groups in different countries I found that I was less able to recognise distinct M-B types behaviours in other people. More importantly, I realised that these types were of little use in understanding either behaviours or attitudes. This was especially the case in the Middle East and Asia. Culture and custom seemed to be the key drivers. Inclinations, temperament, perspectives, and mind sets all seemed to be hugely influenced by the context in which people were operating.

The second revelation came when I re-took the test a decade or so after my first attempt. My results were similar but different. They were similar enough in that my four letters hadn't changed but they were significantly different in the weightings. Most strikingly, I seemed to have gone from being an out-and-out extrovert to a closet introvert. At this point, I merely filed the information away, stopped evangelising about Myers Briggs, and became a sceptic. And then I started coaching. It quickly became apparent that for nearly all coaches in nearly all circumstances, Myers Briggs is an essential service.

The reality is, however, that Myers Briggs is not a scientific test. To be scientific it has to be replicable over time. It isn't. In fact, research shows that as much as 50% of people find that they have different results after retaking the tests. It also has to be the same across the world. It isn't. And it has to be based on scientific research based on controlled experiments and data. Again, it isn't. In fact, even Jung himself warned that his personality types were no more than approximate tendencies that he'd observed rather than scientifically tested classifications. By contrast, the speed of light is based on consistently repeatable tests, provable data, is replicable over time, and is the same in different parts of the world. The speed of light, therefore, is a scientific fact.

Myers Briggs also uses false binaries. Real data shows that most people are not "either" "or" but show characteristics of both. As Jung said: "There is no such thing as a pure extrovert or a pure introvert. Such a man would be in the lunatic asylum." The fact is that most people are in or around the middle of the bell curve; few are on the extremes. Dan Pink, in *To Sell is Human*, says that we are basically ambiverts. Yet the labelling is absolute. In discussing the standard error of measurement, David Pittenger said: "...the differences between the two-letter categories are not as sharp and clear cut as it would appear. Because the MBTI uses an absolute

classification scheme for people, it is possible for people with relatively similar scores to be labelled with much different personalities.” (1)

The test claims that it measures how people perceive the world and make decisions. Yet it does not explore how the key drivers of such attitudes and behaviours are formed. There is no distinction for gender or age, yet our observation of workplace behaviours would suggest that there can be fundamental differences along these lines. There is no attempt to understand values or beliefs; and yet a belief in, for instance, destiny or God can hugely influence decision making.

Psychology and other disciplines including behavioural economics, are finding the unconscious to be a fascinating area for research. Freud, it seems, is making a comeback. Humans tend to make a significant number of decisions without understanding why. This is not the same as the SvN, TvF, and JvP distinction. The self-scoring method of Myers Briggs means that the results are what the person taking the test likes to think is the case rather than the reality. Decision making is far more complex and is subject to a greater degree of both unconscious and external factors than can be covered in a 88-question test. Social norms, corporate culture, and even day-to-day events greatly influence how we think and process information whether we are consciously aware of it or not. In organisations, peer pressure, group behaviour and flow, and emotional contagion and the need for a sense of belonging and conformity can all play a significant role, regardless of anybody's particular four letter score. (Solomon Asch's famous 1951 experiment, on the length of a line, is a great example of the unconscious need to conform on our behaviour).

It is never entirely fair to criticise a movement merely because of the uses to which it has been put. There are many die-hard Marxists who complain bitterly that the revolutions in Russia and China, for instance, don't reflect the true thinking of communists and that we shouldn't judge Marxism by what was done in his name. Similarly, Myers Briggs enthusiasts will say that only properly trained and paid-up members of the club can be relied upon to interpret effectively the true implications of any one person's results. The reality is somewhat different. Companies are hiring for specific behaviour traits. Recruiters ask for people's type and write it down in ink. Organisations are creating teams that reflect the whole spread of characteristics. People are being promoted on the basis of their scores. This is all madness and the coaching industry must stop being complicit in such nonsense. IQ, EQ, experience, values, attitudes, global views, are all, for instance, what makes someone the right person for the right role at the right time. It is a curious blend of hard and soft, tangible and intangible attributes that allow different people to make different contributions at different times. Type casting is of no value whatever.

The real reason that I feel that Myers Briggs is dangerous for the coaching industry is not so much that it is unscientific but because of what it forces coaches to do. Coaches who use Myers Briggs tend to judge their clients. They may not do so pejoratively, but by seeing them as a type they make certain assumptions. In fact, many turn to a reference book which indicates how to “coach” the various types of person. No ambiguity, no uncertainty, merely a four letter approach to painting by numbers. True coaching is about listening and questioning to find the true person, and helping that true person to be comfortable in owning who they are. It is about helping them to understand their values and motivations. It is about challenging their assumptions and helping them to reframe their context and their place in it. Clients today live complex lives with pressures from many competing areas. The coach's role is to help clients understand those competing pressures and to find a pathway that enables them to navigate their way through that ambiguity. Self-knowledge is critical, but self-knowledge is a journey. It cannot be something that is arrived at after having merely taken a 15-minute test.

All tools can be both helpful and unhelpful. Coaches need to be aware that Myers Briggs has the potential to make them both judgemental and closed. Listening and questioning can only be

effective if they come from a place with no assumptions. Real change comes from the client finding out who they really are and how they can make sense of and thrive in their place in the world. Coaches need to work on helping to uncover the roots rather than focus on the leaves and branches. Telling people how they think and process information can close down more than it opens. True self-awareness comes from challenging one's own thoughts, values and assumptions, and in learning to be comfortable with who you are. Labelling should not form part of that process. As Carl Jung said himself in *The Undiscovered Self*: "There can be no self-knowledge based on theoretical assumptions." (2)

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Further reading:

<http://bit.ly/1HH48eq> (1)

<http://amzn.to/1psZrtq> (2)

<http://read.bi/1HH45iR>

<http://bit.ly/1qctoTH>

<http://huff.to/1iDjHEM>

<http://bit.ly/1z24LOf>

<http://bit.ly/1btigvk>

<http://bit.ly/1HIdIVm>

<http://bit.ly/1EFAeYT>

[Editor's Note: For more, see Penny Moyle & John Hackston (2028), "Personality Assessment for Employee Development: Ivory Tower or Real World?" *Journal of Personality Assessment*, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2018.1481078>]

‘Changing isn’t easy’ – Why unlocking senior executive potential is easier said than done

Jonathan Skan

It has become fashionable for large organisations to create cadres of so-called ‘high potential’ executives and then to focus resources upon their personal and professional development. Today, Boards and even Investors want assurance that there is adequate ‘succession cover’ underneath an Executive Committee, leading to ever more pressure upon business coaches to deliver.

During 2014, a colleague and I were asked to conduct assessments of twenty senior executives across a very international FTSE UK plc, (average age, early forties). The aim was to clarify true levels of future potential and then to work with each individual on a plan to address areas of personal development, whilst also helping them to maximise areas of strength. Where business coaching was an appropriate support tool, we subsequently played a role in delivering this, along with other providers.

Assessing something nebulous like potential is tough for organisations to undertake on their own, particularly without external ‘benchmarking’. It also not helped by an understandable reluctance to give valuable people bad news, never mind the challenge of gaining consensus on upward trajectory, in the face of different agendas. Ultimately, we concluded that only around 15% of those we evaluated were genuinely ‘high potential’ – the company’s starting hypothesis was closer to 30%.

With the remaining 90% of the group, mostly categorised as ‘medium potential’, most had the capability to progress in time to Executive Committee level, but (in our view), had at least one significant behavioural development challenge that would impede them, unless they could overcome it. Whereas this came as no great surprise, we were nevertheless struck by how deep-rooted many of the issues appeared to be and thus how challenging it would be to address them, even with the help of a good coach – especially as about half of them had already worked with a coach in the last two-three years.

The challenge of getting down to the ‘root causes’ of these issues, prompted me to reflect upon what the Harvard academic, Bob Kegan, termed ‘Immunity to Change’ in his 2009 book on the subject. In a nutshell, he concluded that achieving adaptive behavioural change is usually impossible without addressing the ‘barriers’ to change that he believes many of us have (sub-consciously) constructed, as a form of self-defence mechanism to combat individual fears. He calls these barriers, ‘Hidden Commitments’ and he believes that without tackling them and the so-called ‘Big Assumptions’ that underpin them, a sustainable behavioural change is almost impossible to achieve. I was initially sceptical of Kegan’s theory - it is somewhat convoluted - but his approach provides a helpful ‘framework’ for some of the more challenging coaching assignments.

By way of an example, a development need we uncovered in around 25% of this group, was a tendency to be too accommodating. Not being able to say ‘no’, often coupled with a reluctance to delegate, led time and time again to someone becoming over-committed, working unsustainable hours and being unable to stand back and think more strategically, not least about their own next career step.

An unwillingness to confront people, is one issue here, but subsequent coaching conversations have also indicated that a deep fear of not being ‘needed’ lay at the root of this. Put simply, these people viewed being very, very busy as a vital way of proving their self-worth and without addressing this ‘Hidden Commitment’ (as Kegan would call it), not being able to say ‘no’ will

continue to stop these individuals fulfilling their potential. Getting to the heart of this and delivering a measurable improvement is likely to take more than the standard six months coaching intervention we often see utilised within large companies.

We uncovered other instances where ‘learnt behaviours’ had become a ‘roadblock’ and where the root cause went deep. One finance professional, for instance, was viewed as hugely capable, but also as lacking gravitas at Executive Committee level. In our coaching dialogue, she has revealed that she had spent the first 15 years of her career in a large financial services business, where she had had to blend in with a ‘testosterone culture’. Although she recognises the need to adapt to a much more sophisticated environment, this has not proved easy, despite plentiful feedback – and a reasonable level of self-awareness. Getting to the ‘Hidden Commitments’ that lie behind this is taking time; meanwhile, the company is losing patience with the result that she is being ‘pigeon-holed’ into her current role, despite her talents. Were she to leave she would be very hard to replace.

This inability to learn new behaviours was also visible in another individual we evaluated, an ex-Partner from one of the major accounting firms. Although bringing technical capability, he has struggled to adapt to corporate life. The underlying issues appears to be his high need for status, coupled with a lack of ability to influence effectively across a multi-dimensional matrix, where there is ambiguity overlaid with organisational politics. Our hypothesis is that this person has a deep-rooted fear of not being ‘in control’ and that he will fade rapidly unless this is addressed. The organisation has left it up to him to decide whether to have an external coach and, so far, he remains unreceptive to the idea – probably because he fears it will be viewed by others as ‘remedial’.

One more example of the challenge of addressing ingrained behaviours, concerns an individual, who was widely seen as being a ‘poor communicator’. Our assessment revealed that her team often struggled to understand what she wanted, something not helped by her tendency to intellectualise everything and to do much of her thinking in public. Since then, our coaching dialogue has revealed that she grew up surrounded by intellectual debate and argument and was thus conditioned to participate in this as a means of gaining acceptance. After a number of coaching sessions, we are making some progress; she is now much more conscious of the need to rehearse what she says before major meetings and actively tries to use crisp, non-contradictory statements when influencing. That said, we have yet to get deeply enough into what is really blocking her – (in my view) a deep seated fear of not being right. It’s taking time; something she’s short of, given the huge demands of her role. Also, as is very common in busy environments, her boss is better at describing the problem than helping her address it.

Some of those we met, don’t just need to make a behavioural change – they need to address something else first. To our surprise, a significant issue, (affecting about one quarter of those we appraised), was related to social background. Put simply, most of this sub-group were the first in their family to go to university (usually Oxbridge via a top Grammar School). A strong work ethic coupled with an obvious intellect has been enough to power their careers up to now but, to varying degrees, their trajectory had tailed off. One reason appeared to be a relative inability to identify with a role at the top of a large company, perhaps due to the lack of a family ‘role-model’ showing the way. Where someone’s spouse shared their early background, this was even more evident. Although not short of ambition, many of these executives admitted to feeling a bit ‘lost’ at this particular point in their career; “I’ve done so much better than I expected; but what happens now... and do I want it?” was a typical sentiment. The key behavioural ‘gap’ here tended to be a relative lack of the sophisticated influencing skills needed at Executive Committee level and coaching will doubtless help this, but the intervention will also need to help them identify fully with bigger and more demanding roles and the lifestyles these imply.

Furthermore, this group from more modest social backgrounds, were often less willing than others to discuss areas of weakness openly – despite their obvious potential. This was often coupled with a relative lack of self-curiosity and a vague sense that ‘soft skills’ were much less important than simply working hard and meeting objectives. This is a significant coaching challenge, given that one of the key features of those who rise to the top of organisations is a thirst for self-insight and an ever greater understanding of personal development priorities.

Finally, in the case of two of the group we assessed, we came across one or two altogether much deeper issues. One had been badly bullied at school and another had endured a difficult family environment during his formative years. In both cases, issues (we suspect to do with self-esteem) had surfaced decades after the event, resulting in a relative inability to handle workplace conflict today. Often confrontation was avoided at all costs or, instead, dealt with ‘head on’ in a way that damaged peer relationships and labelled them as ‘difficult’ or ‘emotionally volatile’. Addressing this doubtless extends well beyond ‘traditional’ coaching, but we found that the firm was reluctant to suggest counselling or even psychotherapy as a support tool, despite agreeing with our conclusion that it would help. This was still seen as a ‘taboo area’, even with the Learning and Development specialists. However, without such support, our sense is that both individuals will simply become frustrated, not least because they won’t understand what’s holding them back.

In conclusion then, if we assume that this group of twenty ‘high potential’ executives, is broadly representative of the senior talent pool across many FTSE companies today, this raises concerns. The subject of ‘potential’ is still approached through a somewhat ‘rose-tinted’ lens and authentic discussions about likely career development remain relatively rare. Crucially though, many organisations do not appear to have a sophisticated enough understanding of what it really takes for someone to achieve adaptive behavioural change in the face of deeply-rooted and often opaque ‘barriers’. Ever more complex and pressurised working environments make this even more challenging. Coaches need to be realistic with clients about the likely psychological ‘depth’ of intervention needed to make a difference and the amount of time this is likely to take.

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2016

Coaching Donald Trump

Richard Hytner

[Editor's Note: This was written and submitted in mid-2016, *before* the US Presidential Election that year.]

Coach: Can I play back your goal for this 4 session coaching programme?

DT: Get on with it.

Coach: "To increase your chances of becoming the next President of the United States of America"?

DT: Right.

Coach: *[Satisfied that this has the hallmarks of a Whitmore SMART, PURE and CLEAR goal].* And this is a goal shared by your organisation? *[He has to ask, having contracted with the Republican top brass, anxious that their nominee is blowing his – and their – electoral chances].*

DT: Yes.

Coach: When did you start thinking about this Presidential ambition?

DT: When I got fed up doing Real Estate deals and TV Shows.

Coach: Not before?

DT: Why do you ask?

Coach: I just wondered why the Presidency is important to you.

DT: You're kidding me, right?

Coach: *[Silent. Still. Inviting]*

DT: Well, I'll be the most powerful man in charge of the most powerful country in the free world, so I guess that would mean something, right?

Coach: *[Nods encouragingly, recalling Jenny Rodgers' 'Whose goal is it anyway?']*. So, working towards that goal what objective would you like to address today?

DT: To plan for the biggest landslide in American history.

Coach: And the landslide is important because? *[Pause]*.

DT: Because, after the Democrats' vicious, mean attacks on me at their Convention, I don't just want to win, I want to win big.

Coach: [*Coach reminds himself to meet the coachee where he is without judgment*]. And, today, specifically, in the next 90 minutes, which part of the overall plan would you like to focus on?

DT: Killing Caine.

Coach: [*Hearing the coachee's vivid language, seeing his predatory shift to the edge of his chair, Coach envisages a tiger moving in for the kill. Working through some discomfort, he opts to echo the coachee's language, knowing from NLP at Work that this may help to win trust*]. Killing, you say?

DT: I want to taste Timid Timothy's blood.

Coach: [*Overcoming the briefest of flirtations with his own prejudices, Coach continues with the coachee's agenda to which he must give absolute primacy*]. And what threat does Mr Caine pose to your Presidential dream?

DT: His 'Mr Nice Guy' routine. It sure doesn't fool me. But if you believe the polls, - which I don't, they're just pathetic, - his humility is playing well not just with Bernie Sanders' ageing hippies, but with some idiots in the GOP, too.

Coach: You seem surprised.

DT: Aren't you surprised?

[*Coach says nothing, stays present*].

DT: It's ridiculous. Who wants to follow a humble nobody?

Coach: [*Feeling the need to pull focus back on coachee*]. So, if not humility, Donald, what do people want to see in their President?

DT: Someone who tells it to them straight; a charismatic, leader who cuts through the crap; someone to rescue them from their Obama-inflicted, sad, pathetic lives. Hillary Clinton, their saviour? She is the devil incarnate. The zero to my hero.

Coach: [*Coachee smooths back his hair, as if in front of a mirror, admiring his own reflection. Coachee's grandiosity and tendency to unproductive narcissism need work in Sessions 2-4*]. I'm curious. The goal for today is to explore how to diminish Tim Caine's impact on Hillary Clinton's campaign, yet your energy seems to increase when you focus on Hillary. Are you happy to stick with the goal as you had it, or might you prefer to focus on...?

DT: [*interrupting*]. Yeah, the real goal is to heap humiliation on Hillary.

Coach: The positive impact of which would be?

DT: By September, when people are back from vacation – who takes vacations, no wonder America has gone to hell in a hand basket – I want to see clear blue water between me and Hillary.

30 minutes later

Coach: Might I suggest we move on from your forensic assessment of Mrs Clinton's character?

DT: It was meant to be an assassination.

Coach: In our remaining 60 minutes together, you might wish to explore what strategies could advance your lead against Hillary Clinton.

DT: Sure.

Coach: What might they include?

DT: 1. Go nuclear with the smear campaign. 2. Pay Lewinski to dish new dirt on Bill.

Coach: *[Pauses. Encouraging coachee to fill the silence with more ideas. Pauses some more. Coachee appears to have run out of steam]*. Beyond this focus on personalities and their vulnerabilities, are there other initiatives you might take?

DT: I could ramp up the fear around Muslims and Mexicans.

Coach: And?

DT: Cuddle up more to Putin. That would create more headlines.

Coach: *[Grasping for inspiration, Coach pulls a question out of the Nancy Kline top drawer]*: How much further can you go with this thinking, Donald?

DT: Not much. *[Coach senses avoidance]*. If you're so smart, why don't you tell me what you would do?

Coach: I could, of course, but you and I are very different people – you are running for President, with the courage to be ultimately accountable; I am simply here to help you to think aloud. Let's explore what your inner voice might advise you.

DT: Inner voice? I have no inner voice. I just say whatever is on my mind.

Coach: How about the voice of someone – anyone - you admire? *[Coach notices coachee looking away as if to some faraway place]*. Reviewing the Lifeline you sketched earlier, time spent with your father seems to be associated with peak contentment.

DT: 'You are a king, Donald', he used to say to me. Even when I got shipped off, aged 13, to the New York Military Academy for some discipline, he believed in my greatness.

Coach: *[Giving soft focus to the whole person that is Donald Trump]*. And what might Trump Senior advise his son to consider?

DT: 'Bend the rules to your advantage.'

Coach: Sticking with the rules for a moment, what drove the Fred Trump advantage, do you think?

DT: Hardship. When my grandmother was pregnant with my father, she and my grandfather Friedrich were stripped of their German citizenship and put on a boat to the United States, Deported from their own homeland. Can you believe it?

Coach: And, in effect, therefore, outsiders, down on their luck, given their chance by the "land of opportunity"?

30 minutes later

Coach: We have 10 minutes to run. Having explored all your options, which idea best supports your overall coaching goal – the Presidency - and today's reframed coaching goal – to create blue ocean in the campaign, by the end of August?

DT: The Mexico masterstroke.

Coach: To land that idea, what needs to happen?

DT: I need to deliver a game-changing, triumphant performance on prime time TV.

Coach: With what narrative?

DT: "I have reflected on the enormous good fortune bequeathed from my father, and the compassion he and my grandparents were shown by the great people of America. Tonight, Donald Trump recants his position on Mexico, announcing the removal of the wall around Mexico."

Coach: Any potential pitfalls?

DT: The wall's not been built yet, I guess.

Coach: Any others?

DT: Hillary will say my granddaddy made his money from prostitution, booze and stealing land.

Coach: Let's say you were advising someone else in this position, what would your advice be on how best to pre-empt this kind of likely response from Mrs Clinton?

DT: Play the humility card with a capital 'H'. Tell the people you got the Wall idea all wrong, you just wanted to stoke a debate that needed to be had. Tell 'em there is a place in all Americans' hearts for compassion and forgiveness. A nation that gives those who've fallen on hard times a helping hand. A nation that invites all comers to its shores. Only the devil would deny a Mexican an opportunity in the land of plenty.

Coach: How does that advice sound to Donald Trump?

DT: Brilliant.

Coach: Permission to play devil's advocate?

DT: [Grunts approval].

Coach: The devil reference may not fly. According to academics, replacing negative judgment with empathy, and self-justification with personal accountability are more effective strategies.

DT: Okay, axe the devil. Donald Trump just became Mr Nicer than Caine Guy. Bye bye, Hillary Clinton, too, Trump's said Mea Culpa.

Coach: How does this feel?

DT: Feels like an opportunity to test a new Donald Trump. Perhaps I have been held back by my 'Self 1', forbidding my 'Self 2' its chance to perform freely?

Coach: [Mindful of his inner critic giving him a hard time for assuming DT was not part of the Meyler Campbell community and would not have known about Tim Gallwey's model]. Would it help to write down this new narrative as a commitment to yourself to act on your intention?

DT: [Scribbles a note and signs it. Coach notices he has written in bold the headline **The new Donald Trump Declaration of Independence - For immediate release**].

Coach: I look forward to our next session when we can review the impact of this plan on your overall coaching goal.

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[**Editor's Note:** Moving beyond the imaginary, see Richard's book, *Consigliari*, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Consigliari-Leading-Shadows-Richard-Hytner/dp/1781250464>]

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The Positive Leader:

Applying Positive Psychology to Create Happy, Successful Teams

Jan Mühlfeit

Introduction

Since undertaking the Mastered Programme and putting its lessons into practice, I have become potently aware of how much our world is obsessed with weaknesses. Individuals and organisations think that fixing faults and flaws is the only way to make it to the top of their game. This preoccupation with weaknesses is the biggest illusion of our time and a huge waste of the most valuable resources we have as human beings—our unique **strengths**. I believe that a positive and authentic approach to leadership, one that is driven by effective business coaching and positive psychology, is the antidote to this fallacy. In consolidating the knowledge gained from the coaching programme with my own leadership experiences at Microsoft,¹ I have been inspired to create my own integrative model of positive leadership (the **4Ps of Positive Leadership**). Based on the key principles of strengths, purpose, energy management and happiness, this model aims to help leaders and teams unlock their full potential and find greater meaning and happiness in what they do.

The Engagement Crisis

According to research by Gallup, a staggering 87% of the worldwide population is not engaged at work² and 50% of workers choose to leave a job to get away from their manager.³ Furthermore, Deloitte's 2015 Global Human Capital Trends survey of 3,300 leaders from 106 countries reports that 'employee engagement and culture' has risen to become the No. 1 challenge companies face around the world.⁴ While a growing number of executives and businesses see a clear need to improve leadership skills and employee engagement, most have yet to develop tangible ways to tackle this goal. Today, I see many leaders floundering due to 'performance tunnel vision', where they focus exclusively on chasing the next target and use their position of authority to push their teams as hard as possible. In doing this, they turn themselves and their teams into stressed out slaves of success. Through my time spent coaching clients and revisiting my own personal leadership experiences, I have uncovered four key ways that leaders frequently go off beam, both in how they manage themselves and manage their teams:

1. **They target weaknesses, not strengths.** Misguided leaders waste vital time, money and energy grappling with defects and failures rather than recognising and leveraging people's natural talents. The result? Disengaged and dissatisfied teams.

¹ Editor's Note: Jan was Chairman of Microsoft Europe.

² Gallup (2013). 'The state of the global workplace: Employee engagement insights for business leaders worldwide', at <http://www.gallup.com/services/178517/state-global-workplace.aspx>

³ Gallup (2015). 'State of the American manager: Analytics and advice for leaders', April, at: <http://www.gallup.com/services/182138/state-american-manager.aspx>

⁴ Deloitte (2015). 'Global human capital trends 2015: Leading in the new world of work'. *Deloitte University Press*, at: <http://dupress.com/periodical/trends/human-capital-trends-2015/>

2. **They fail to 'have a dream'.** A leader lacking a clear, inspirational purpose or vision will have a tough time rallying people in a unified direction. Accomplished employees do not just want any old job; they want meaning and the chance to contribute to something bigger than themselves.
3. **They manage time, not energy.** Facing non-stop demands in the workplace, leaders cram their diaries to the brim believing that they're skilfully maximising their time. Instead, they are recklessly abusing their energy, diluting their focus and heading straight for a burnout.
4. **They put success before happiness.** When leaders set their sights only on the material trappings and tangible accomplishments of life, such as money or metrics, they ignore the deeper connections and meaningful activities that produce long-lasting success and happiness.

Positive Psychology at Work

Though I have followed positive psychology principles for some years, my training in the Mastered Programme has been a tremendous help in grounding my knowledge on this area and refining my ideas on what it means to be a successful yet authentic leader. In particular, the works of Harvard professors Shawn Achor (*The Happiness Advantage*⁵), Tal Ben-Shahar (*Happier*⁶) and Clayton Christensen (*How Will You Measure Your Life?*⁷) have helped to reshape my entire perspective on the subject of happiness and how it relates to business success. So many people still believe that if they graft hard enough and land that coveted promotion, bonus or qualification, they will be successful in the eyes of the world—and only then will they become happy. However, recent discoveries show that happiness actually fuels greater success and achievement, not the other way around. You can have success without being happy, but if you are happy and optimistic to start with, you tend to be more successful in whatever you are doing. This has fantastic implications for the workplace. When people are happy, improved organisational performance comes naturally; it does not have to be forced. This 'happiness-before-success' formula is one that I have adopted within my coaching sessions and as part of my speeches and workshops, with great feedback and results.

Helping individuals achieve clarity on their strengths and build their career around them is the starting point to creating happy and successful teams. The founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, emphasises that it's through applying our 'signature strengths' that we are able to thrive and excel.⁸

⁵ Achor, Shawn (2010). *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles that Fuel Success and Performance at Work*. New York: Crown Business.

⁶ Ben-Shahar, Tal (2007). *Happier: Learn the Secrets to Daily Joy and Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

⁷ Christensen, Clayton M., Allworth, James and Dillon, Karen (2012). *How Will You Measure Your Life?* New York: HarperCollins.

⁸ Seligman, Martin E. P. (2003). *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Strengths profiling is an essential part of my leadership coaching approach and materials like the StrengthsFinder 2.0⁹ and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) have been invaluable in this regard. A strengths focus has long been a positive force in my own career. When I first inherited the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) division at Microsoft, it was an average team in terms of its performance ratings. Using a strengths-driven approach and being greatly helped by Helen Duguid (formerly Microsoft, now a Meyler Campbell Faculty member), I re-shaped and re-organised the team to match people's roles to their natural talents, and switched attention to maximising their effectiveness rather than fixing their weak areas. In doing this, I was able to make each person's strengths count in a more profound way; and within just a year we became the best-performing region worldwide for four years running.

Meaning and Purpose (UGROW)

While on the programme, I have become more convinced of the value of purpose as a core component of business coaching. Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*¹⁰, had a profound influence on my belief system about what it is possible for us to achieve as human beings. A deep sense of purpose acts as a source of guidance and inspiration, and can get us through even the most challenging of circumstances. I sincerely believe that if we have meaning in our lives then every 'no' is just the beginning of another 'yes'. With this in mind, I like to use my own variation of the classic GROW model developed by Sir John Whitmore¹¹ for balanced coaching sessions. My version is called UGROW, where U stands for **Uniqueness** (as in your personal uniqueness and purpose). It is unfortunate that people try to plan aspects of their lives and solve problems without first taking time to identify what their personal uniqueness is. Before exploring a client's goals, I try to guide them in conducting an honest and genuine self-assessment of themselves and their life purpose. A person's uniqueness is tied to what inspires them most and sets the stage for finding fulfilment at work.

The 4Ps of Positive Leadership

Throughout the course, I was able to evolve my own personal mission, which is to help people, teams and organisations find their personal uniqueness (purpose) and unlock their full potential. I now articulate this as a system for positive leadership, one that is easily adaptable to any kind of leader or organisation.

1) Positive PEOPLE.

Building Strengths—The 'Who'.

Understand who you are. Identify and play to your strengths to release your full leadership potential. Nurture talent and build top teams by showing you care and by paying attention to what people are good at, not their shortcomings. Be authentic.

⁹ Rath, Tom (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press.

¹⁰ Frankl, Viktor E. (1985). *Man's Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press.

¹¹ Whitmore, Sir John (2002). *Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

2) Positive PURPOSE.

Personal Mission & Ultimate Vision—The ‘Why’.

Your purpose is to add value to the world and be happy in the process. Strike out on your own meaningful mission by leveraging your unique **strengths, values and passions**. Inspire and be inspired by setting your sights on the highest vision for you and your team...and perhaps even achieve the impossible.

3) Positive PROCESS.

Energy Management—The ‘How’.

Manage energy (yours and other people's) to achieve outstanding feats without running out of steam. Become a Chief Enthusiasm Officer (CEO), where Enthusiasm = Energy + Inspiration (EI) and set the right example to marshal the collective energy of those you lead. Avoid classic burnout by taking care of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual resources.¹²

4) Positive PLACE.

Success vs Happiness—The ‘Where’.

Follow your heart instead of the rat race to the place where success and happiness are in balance. Happiness breeds success. By putting happiness first, you can learn strategies for positive living that bring meaningful rewards to you and your team, while also delivering bottom-line results. Help others and use your position of authority to make a difference in the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that the Mastered Programme has helped to crystalize my thoughts on positive leadership, allowing me to develop my own authentic coaching approach. As well as introducing me to new insights, it has created a sound structure around the existing knowledge gained from my long executive career. If we understand who we are and know our strengths, then we can figure out our true purpose based on our uniqueness, and we can use energy and inspiration as an engine to drive a happy and successful life.

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Editor's Note: for more, see Jan's book, *The Positive Leader*:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Positive-Leader-Energy-Happiness-Top-Performing/dp/1292166150>

¹² Loehr, Jim and Schwartz, Tony (2003). *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

The Curious Incident of the Coach in the Day-Time

Deborah Samuel

“Sometimes we get sad about things and we don't like to tell other people that we are sad about them. We like to keep it a secret. Or sometimes, we are sad but we really don't know why we are sad, so we say we aren't sad but we really are.”

- Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

It would happen in corridors. Sometimes in canteens. On rare occasions, in the car park. Always when I was on my own, or we were on our own; when the request could be masked or the approach turned into a mistaken turn or passing of a non-existent message. Some told me later they felt they didn't have the right to ask. Others admitted they were nervous to approach, and that was understandable given the company I kept (I work closely with CEOs). Nobody wanted me to let on that they'd asked.

So I'd agree to meet, either then or later, and we'd find a quiet room. Or sit in their car. Or stand in the kit room on a construction site. They'd talk. I would listen. Really listen. No phones out, no laptops, no notebooks, occasionally a pen, gripped, and with which they'd fidget, but never write. They'd be whispers, tentative crackles of a voice, widening eyes, relaxing of muscles. Speech would often quicken with excitement at times; and they'd be silences that weren't awkward. Juggling family life with work, job dissatisfaction, career disappointment, a bullying boss, deep longing for change, trying to solve a work issue, wanting promotion, secret longings to do something else entirely, wondering what to do next, wondering what to do with a draft resignation letter, being disorganised, getting older, boardroom clashes, procrastination: the variety of topics was wide, heartfelt and important. Board directors, receptionists, graduate trainees, architects, building site labourers, accountants, COOs, FDs, marketing assistants, surveyors, company lawyers, designers, PAs...

Then often, tears.

The almost invisible fighting back kind that comes with frustrated blinking, the streaming kind that comes with gulps, on one or two occasions the devastated kind that comes with exhaustion and release. The quiet watering that answers a quiet question.

What have been these unplanned conversations in which - if I were to measure number of words I spoke, points made, answers given, concerns stated, advice given - I said hardly anything? But if positive impact, insight, realisations, discovery and clarity were the measures, I seemed to have said a lot?

In July 2015, I was told these conversations were a form of coaching. That I'd been coaching for over a decade and probably didn't even realise it. And the person who told me this was Meyler Campbell coach and psychologist Jon Stokes, whom I'd seen in action in a coaching Fishbowl a few weeks before.

I'd turned up thinking this was a little like an open evening for people considering the programme, which I was. I'd read an interview with Anne Scoular in which Meyler Campbell was described as the Rolls Royce of coaching. Being a bit partial to Rolls Royces and always intrigued by anything that is described as the best in any sphere, I checked them out, drew a blank as to who was Meyler and who was Campbell, and turned up to this event to see how it's done. The audience all seemed to know each other, there were happy greetings and a strong, good energy filled the room. There was a robustness, a presence of expertise. I watched Jon create a gentle, relaxed, productive conversation, a change in thoughts and beliefs of the coachee and the development of a plan of action with checks of commitment along the way. The coachee had light bulb moments. There was very visible and audible progress. I wanted to do that. So I called on Jon.

For the last 15 years I have been an advisor to CEOs, mostly matters of corporate strategy and operations. I have been in telling mode, they've been in asking, and in nearly every conversation there is the expectation that I will provide the answer. This dynamic does things to the other person, me, the conversation and the results; I started to wonder if there could be a better way.

So here I am, writing this in the morning before T8, our final syndicate meeting (ahem, the self-coaching of the last minute rocket-like productivity issue is still in progress...), and yesterday's Business Panel enjoyed and done. And here I am, doing far less telling, crafting intelligent questions, still struggling to stop myself asking Why?, listening wholly in the present and loving the zen-like state of just listening, and only at times planning my response to just keep the conversation on track as a guide, rather than the expectation that I better say something smart here because that's what they're paying me for.

Here I am, coaching. I use coaching and coach in a variety of ways in my life – and I use that term deliberately, as it's gone beyond my working life. I now use coaching-type questions to have better conversations in my existing work as a CEO advisor, conversations that are not in my capacity as a coach but as an advisor, still telling, but getting to telling and finding the answers in a different way, a more powerful way, and the telling doesn't feel or sound so hard. I am asked to coach explicitly from these conversations, and then of course I have my practice clients with whom I have been working throughout the Meyler Campbell programme. Friends too have noticed a difference, as have I. So coaching has permeated my existing work, created a whole new career too and perhaps made me a better friend.

So that's all fine and dandy. But mistakes are important too. Failure matters. We should make mistakes, we need to make them, we should be able to talk about them, learning needs them, we can't ask "And what would you do differently this time?" without them and Gallwey couldn't have written *The Inner Game* if people did not make an awful lot of them when simply trying to send a ball across a court.

So let me share a mistake I made, with you. A case study, if you like. About 10 years ago I was asked – unusually and my first time – by an outgoing highly regarded Chairman to “mentor” (now I realise this was a type of consulting/coaching quagmire) a new Chairman who was also really going to be the CEO – let's call him 'A' - through the first 3 months of his tenure. Let's also say the firm of a few hundred people was in the creative/design/professional services space.

A previous look at succession planning by an academic leadership expert had concluded that nobody in the firm had the qualities to be the next CEO/Chairman and they should look outside. So they locked this report away (I kid ye not) and decided they would look only inside with the criteria being: who's been here the longest?

I didn't know this, of course, until much later; Mistake 1: I didn't know exactly who and why I was coaching/'helping' this individual, nor the important backstory that gave it context.

'A' had been present at the initial meeting, had his say in my selection, and had expressed a willingness to receive help; Mistake 2: no, he admitted later, he didn't want any help and went along with the offer of support to quickly firm up his appointment. After an embarrassingly unsuccessful meeting with clients in our second week, after which I suggested some industry briefings by experts that could prepare him better for next time, he said "No, I don't need anyone else's help and nobody can teach me anything."

Mistake 3: After he said those words, I should have ceased then and there.

I didn't understand the difference between mentoring and coaching; Mistake 4: I couldn't mentor this man, I'd not been a Chairman nor CEO. I could guide, share experience and give insight of working alongside CEOs all the time against his 30+ years of knowing only a couple of them in his sector, I could support etc. I could have even coached if I knew 10 years ago how to effectively, but that would have been a different remit.

Mistake 5: The grounds for engagement had not been set for my involvement nor was there an answer to *What was I really there for?* How would this practically work? We didn't clarify this murky soup of roles I was being asked to take, and that I took on of my own volition.

It's basic and I feel a bit silly looking back, but Mistake 6: we didn't even book regular sessions or have a framework. I sat outside his office like MoneyPenny, he'd rush out of his office and bark or shout and call me in. Tension filled every encounter. A client had said when he walks into a room he sucked all oxygen out, and I was struggling to breathe already from the moment I walked through the doors each morning.

Mistake 7: wrong place, wrong environment, wrong results. I should have said no to the desk they gave me. Wisdom has shown me that having me as a constant presence on the other side of 'A's glass office would have made him feel even more uncomfortable. Did he effectively growl and bark so much because he felt besieged by a guard dog sitting outside his door? Is that why he would stand over me with his hand outstretched hovering just above my head?

I should have walked away countless times later; Mistake 8: blind optimism may be positively optimistic, but you still can't see what you're doing or where you're going. Incident upon incident happened but I think I have given you enough of a taster; talented staff resigned, tensions rose, he stopped communicating with me and other senior staff, yet the Chairman asked me to stay on "because 'A' desperately needs help". And I did. We should have sorted it out and started again, or finished it.

Mistake 9: What the Chairman said was true: 'A' needed help. But coaching, consulting, mentoring or a mixture of all of it is not therapy or psychiatry. I sought the help of a psychoanalyst to try and understand him, the situation and our dynamic. But by then I could not be the person to try any techniques with 'A' at all.

I ploughed on and didn't review from whom I take briefs; Mistake 10: I carried on with the actions I thought were necessary to meet the brief of my sponsor. Offering guidance – that wasn't wanted by 'A', making recommendations – that 'A' didn't want to hear, bringing issues to the board's attention – that 'A' didn't want to look at, and coaching-type sessions with staff just as I described at the beginning – that angered 'A'. 'A' disengaged from me and others; I reflected this and disengaged from him but not the company or my sponsor. I should have stopped the engagement.

Ten mistakes, 10 years ago on my first coaching-type assignment. I have learned a lot from the above case over the years, but I have a much deeper insight into what happened and my role in making it worse during the last year with Meyler Campbell. I would never handle a coaching brief like that. My mistakes are glaringly obvious now, and I hope not to make them again in any similar 'helping' situation.

Good business coaching is so powerful, as Anne says, that if it were a drug it would be illegal. I hope what I've written may be useful to all readers, including those who – like me - are nearing graduation too and are reading this as an example essay as you work out what you might write, and as we all enter the world as wonderfully powerful, still legal, Meyler Campbell coaches.

"Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

Gregory: "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

- Arthur Conan Doyle, *Silver Blaze*,
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

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Female leadership:

How women overcome limiting thoughts and build the self-confidence to propel themselves into leadership positions

Rachel Farley

In 2011, the Institute of Leadership and Management in the UK conducted a survey in which they found that around half of the women in their study reported feelings of self-doubt about their performance and careers. Only one third of male subjects responded the same way.

My hypothesis is that there would be a higher level of female representation in senior management in UK organizations if women were coached to increase their self-confidence by identifying and overcoming their limiting thoughts. Whilst limited female representation in leadership is a result of many societal and organisation factors, women's self-confidence and limiting thoughts are the focus of this essay.

I have drawn on multiple sources, including observations from my 11 year career in executive search, working with my female coaching clients, interviews conducted with female leaders, and my personal experiences of limiting thoughts. This essay illustrates how women in leadership positions have managed their limiting thoughts, and provides coaching tools that can be utilised to improve self-confidence.

Self-confidence can be defined as a feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities and judgment. These feelings encourage an individual to take the positive actions that are a prerequisite of successful outcomes. However, self-confidence can be eroded by limiting thought patterns. These can prevent women from taking risks, seeking new challenges, envisioning their careers and fulfilling their career potential.

The main thesis of *The Confidence Code* is that career success is correlated more closely with confidence than competence¹. The writers demonstrate that confidence is what psychologists call volitional², i.e. under our control. The best way of exercising this control is through personal development work such as coaching. Ideally, this coaching process starts early on in a woman's career, setting a strong foundation from which a woman can grow her self-confidence. Having a better understanding of typical limiting thoughts at a young age can help women mitigate them sooner. Tim Gallwey describes this as³ "the Inner Game, played against internal mental and emotional obstacles for the reward of knowledge and expression of one's true potential".

I have concluded from my research that the following limiting thoughts are the most prevalent in women: reduced expectations, dwelling on perceived failures, and reluctance in self-

¹ *The Confidence Code: The Science and Art of Self Assurance – What Women Should Know* (2015) Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, Harper Collins.

² Volition or will is the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action. It is defined as purposeful striving and is one of the primary human psychological functions.

³ W. Timothy Gallwey (1974/1986) *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Pan Books/Macmillan, London

promotion. I shall illustrate these three themes with observations taken whilst coaching female clients.

Women's reduced expectations for their career

Women can hold a self-limiting vision of what is possible for their career. This leads to reduced levels of expectations for themselves compared with men, particularly with regard to financial compensation⁴. Two of my coaching clients, Hazel and Kimberley can identify with this.⁵

Hazel was promoted to MD UK after our third coaching session. The promotion was a total surprise. It was her boss that had recognised Hazel's potential and asked her to step into her new role. It made me reflect on our coaching sessions and wonder whether we could have gone further in pushing the boundaries of what she could achieve, rather than focussing purely on how she could optimise her existing position as divisional Director. What I do know is that Hazel felt that the coaching sessions had allowed her to open up her thinking and truly explore the right course of action. This was recognised by Hazel's boss who told me how quickly she was developing during the coaching.

Kim, another client of mine, had originally planned to work towards being a CEO. However, after four months of coaching work on her life purpose, Kim realised she had been holding back on her dreams and actually wanted to become an entrepreneur. Through the coaching she realised that her fear of public speaking had reduced her overall level of confidence. Since this time she has launched an app-based product that aids professional women in optimising their sleep and energy levels.

Dwelling on perceived career failures and future potential mistakes

Women can have a propensity to dwell on their own perceived failures and catastrophise about future scenarios. This can stop them from having the courage to take the career risks necessary to achieve their objectives. Jenny shared her experience of this.

Although Jenny held the position of European MD in a large pharmaceutical company, for many years she was haunted by voices saying she would fail. Over the years, through coaching and self-coaching, Jenny learnt to manage her limiting thoughts. Rather than letting them take over, she learnt to work with them, negotiating with them to find solutions that reduced her fear to move forwards. My interview with Jenny helped me develop Tool 2 (detailed below) which seeks to negotiate and interact with the voices, rather than ignoring or fighting with them.

Reluctance to ask for what they want

Women can be more reluctant than men to articulate key strengths and successes, and to ask for what they want. KPMG uncovered that 1 in 4 working women report that not asking for what they want held them back from advancing their career.⁶ This is a challenge Penelope experienced and overcame.

⁴ Research from a study by Dr Chris Dawson, Senior Lecturer in Business Economics, Bath University. "If low female expectations in terms of pay is fuelled by a pessimistic outlook, then even without discrimination and progression-related issues, women will continue to underestimate themselves and continue to inadvertently accept pay inequality."

⁵ All names have been changed.

⁶ KPMG's Women's Leadership Study, "Moving Women Forward into Leadership Roles", <https://home.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/ph/pdf/ThoughtLeadershipPublications/KPMGWomensLeadershipStudy.pdf>

Penelope, a successful UK based Finance Director originally from a more conservative country, was reluctant to ask for what she wanted because to her, as a woman, it didn't seem acceptable. Over a period of months we worked together in a coaching partnership and she finally asked for a promotion. She mentioned that our coaching partnership had allowed her to realise that asking for something was 'ok', and she was comfortable with the possible failure that might follow. It emerged that there was a significant intercultural aspect to this situation. Penelope felt considerable uncertainty as to whether a woman being direct and asking for things would be considered appropriate and acceptable.

The next section presents three models selected from a set of ten that I have developed for professional women keen to build their self-confidence. They can be used in coaching sessions or for self-coaching. This online 'tool box' covers all angles of building self-confidence. The idea is that this tool box is constantly updated with new ideas, models and community support. Women can use these tools throughout their careers, providing them with on-going support.

Tool 1 – Finding a sponsor, mentor or coach

It is clear from my research that working with a sponsor, mentor or coach can help women envision how 'big' their career can be. They need to work with a partner to explore what 'big' means to them, and how they can drive their career to achieve this vision.

Tool 2 – Working with Self 1 and Self 2

As Tim Gallwey shared in *The Inner Game of Tennis*, it is important to become comfortable with the two dimensions of self; Self 1 being the critical voice ('Gremlin') and Self 2 being the real self that is not held back by self-doubt. Becoming more familiar with the Gremlin and understanding what gives it the licence to be there is essential. From there it is possible to mitigate its negative effects. As Dr Steve Peter notes in *The Chimp Paradox*, "If you can recognize these Gremlins then you can remove them." Self 2 can then take over and allow the individual to live life to its full potential.

Tool 3 - Career visualisation

Working with a coach using visualisation and NLP allows one to envisage what you would be feeling, doing and experiencing if you were living to your full potential, with no self doubt about your ability or the possibilities available to you. In *NLP at Work*, Sue Knight states that⁷ "You can spend your life being busy. But if deep down you don't believe you can succeed, then no amount of work is going to make a difference. If, however, you believe you can succeed no matter what the situation, then you are likely to act in a way that will lead to success."

The future – Virtual Reality Self-Confidence Retreat Experience

In the future, I envisage a virtual reality application designed to guide women through a coaching experience covering all of the topics associated with building self-confidence and visualising their future. Informed by continuous feedback (possibly via biofeedback wearables), the app would guide its users through a variety of safe or challenging situations as appropriate.

To enhance this experience, women would be encouraged to go away for a couple of days into an environment that provides them with peace and inspiration, allowing them to explore their different personas and identities in different virtual situations, in a physical setting free from any prior psychological baggage.

⁷ Knight, S. (2013) *NLP at Work*, 3rd. edn., Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

In summary, if organisations want a higher percentage of women at executive level, it is vital that women have awareness of their confidence levels, and proactively manage them. Whilst women need to take ownership of this process, it is also crucial that their organisations support them in this endeavour when required⁸. I will be using my research for coaching purposes; it will also inform me when asking potential corporate clients whether they are aware of the issues discussed in this essay, and how they are supporting their women on this topic. My objective is to provide coaching to their emerging female leaders with a view to tangibly successful outcomes – more women being promoted and retained in their organisations.

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⁸ KPMG found that 53% of women indicate that receiving praise most influences their perception of themselves in the workplace, over and above pay rises and promotions.

8 Comparisons between a long sports career and a shorter business one

Matthew Pinsent

I spent 20 years being coached in a high performing sports environment by a handful of truly exceptional coaches. It was most commonly in a team but my learning and reflection with Meyler Campbell has really posed the question, would business coaches learn anything from sports coaches or indeed vice versa?

1. CONTRACTING

In sport the contracting is crystal clear, both the coach and the coachee know what the roles are and are willing and dedicated participants. This is sorted out right from the beginning without fear or hesitancy. Indeed the clarity is a keystone for the relationship going forward. Start as you mean to go on.

Far too often a difficult conversation is deflected to be had by a business coach and yet it's vital. The key building blocks would be trust and belief in each other's ability to combine to make something special happen. Without either the relationship is trying to build a castle on sand.

2. GOAL

The huge advantage we used to have in sport was our goal. The goal or gold medal, winning a competition was public, binary and self evident. To all the stakeholders the added value was clear for all to see. But the goal of an Olympic gold medal might be four years away. What we became very good at was goal setting on a micro scale on the journey to winning a race that was the overall target. Great questions for an athlete were - What do I want to change by next month? If I know I want to be faster then where do I start? What does my opposition think my weaknesses are? For each and every training session we could go through a quick checklist, plan the time and pick targets, do the session and try and execute them, review and reflect.

Done well this can take minutes – we would plan by picking three or four targets (at most) for a 90 minute session. These might be adjustments from yesterday's targets or a new challenge. Then go out onto the lake and try to hit them – no changing or adapting the goals as we went (poor goal setting would be a learning for next time! Little time wasted in moving the goalposts mid effort!)

Then finally a review – next to zero time in self congratulations – the real improvement lay in what was hard, what was just out of reach or what we might try next time.

The repetitive nature of the process was seldom boring because the challenge was never the same.

3. EXPERIENCE

A central tenet of a business coach mindset is - it isn't mentoring and it isn't advisory. So many of us struggle with the "what do I know?" and "I haven't been in this situation before". Sport has never had such qualms. Coaches in sport have seldom if ever been in the situations that

their athletes are about to face. Name one great sports coach – in fact name as many as you can – none of them I wager will have been outstanding performers in their own right. In fact the vast majority of them will have been mid level achievers. But they all have a thirst to bring out the best in others and a desire to be the best in their field. My own Olympic coach was nothing more than an average student oarsman – not once did I look at him and think “you haven’t tried to do what I’m trying to do”. I find myself sitting opposite talented and accomplished coachees and thinking – “I don’t know what this is like for you”. But the coaching works.

4. PLACE AND FREQUENCY

Sport is terrible at coaching places – cold, hot, sweaty, dirty, hungry, argumentative – I’ve been coached in all those states. The priority for us was not the setting, it was the immediacy to the action, and the focus on the coaches would have been total. If we couldn’t resolve an issue we’d remove to a space where we could be more considered. Was it always as good as it could be? – no. But frequency – there we had another advantage – we could be coached three times a day if needed. So the challenge for a business coach is how to be as effective once a month as a sports coach might be once a day. This means forward progress and practice not just on a periodic basis but gleaning the ingredients to change and inserting them into a daily routine so that they become ingrained and instinctive.

5. LET IT HAPPEN RATHER THAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

Sport and especially rowing is a balance of power and grace, effort and relaxation. A motto when we were most under pressure in a competitive environment was to let it happen rather than grit your teeth and try harder to MAKE it happen. The best coaches that I have witnessed in fishbowls are a study in the combination of driving the session forward and at the same time listening intently and obviously (as has come out in the Q&A afterwards, making decisions about where to go next or to delve deeper into). Many times in coaching sessions I have found myself getting worried about a missing Goal, a client wandering “off subject” or the time ebbing away. The ex sportsman in me demands action, traction and lists. But I quieten the strident voice and let it happen. Let rather than make it happen.

6. DIRECTIVE RATHER THAN NON DIRECTIVE.

Sports coaching is in large part directive but that’s a sliding scale where most direction is in the learning and mastering stages of the process. By the time an athlete is at the top echelons of achievement and technical accomplishment the palate is quite distinctly different. The best athletes are all too aware of what has gone wrong (note the tennis player frustratedly replaying the forehand that has just gone long over the opponent’s baseline). The coach is there to unlock the decision about what to change and on occasion how. The answer is often simple and instinctive but the coach is still able to refocus the mind on the appetite to change rather than coming up with the answer themselves. I was coached by the same person for nearly fifteen years; the reality was that I had the capacity for learning and change inside me all along and he was skilled at getting it out, often under intense pressure.

7. TRUST

I trusted my coach with my sporting life – which at times in the furore and cauldron of an Olympics felt like my totality. He trusted me too and never once gave me the impression that he doubted me. Looking back that was a process that we seldom discussed but of course his career was inextricably linked at that time to mine. Whilst I stood on the podium he moved onto

another set up. How did we build it? Hard to answer and it happened imperceptibly, but it had little to do with friendship. He didn't need me to like him and on many occasions we argued about my motivation or my mindset or my desire to change. He was uniquely able to hold my feet to the fire. Did we like each other yes but it was respect rather than friendship that got us results.

8. MENTAL REHEARSAL

The sportsperson is very good at the simple relationship of process and outcome. When the outcome isn't what we would have wanted we can play with the ingredients that led to it then establish what we want to change. In a period of calm and planning you then focus in on what the new improved ingredient list has to be. It avoids the habitual, lazy or sub optimal. Then try the new and improved and see the result. The reality is that winning huge sports events is not doing something new that is untested and untrusted. It is repeating (sometimes under the pressure of millions watching) the habits that you have practiced away from the cauldron of the event. The sports psychologist calls this 'process over product'. Everyone imagines that all the focus is on the trophy, the medal, or the opposition. Far from it! It's on the mental and physical steps – most of them tiny and ingrained, that make a complex outcome a series of process steps.

Sport benefits hugely from the simplicity of outcome and the overwhelming drive to achieve it. But I believe that that same drive can be found in many, many people in all sorts of walks of life. The desire to be better oneself and to be better at doing something, is universal. Coaches of all persuasions need to be good at unlocking and ultimately that, when done well, is a simple, pure process.

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Leo Tolstoy's *Natasha in War and Peace*: The world's first coach?

Richard Stoneman

Introduction

Part I below was originally penned as my first reading review. Despite it being very short, my tutor was so taken with it that he suggested it would make a “terrific” reflective essay. I reflected...., not least as I could now avoid an essay crisis, but decided I really should develop the thought further! Apart from some references and editing, I have left Part I the same as the original book review. Part II draws out some further reflections, based on what I have learnt and on where my coaching journey now seems to be taking me.

Part I: A happy coincidence

As I prepared for my first tutorial of the Mastered programme, I was also reading *War and Peace* when, in one of life's uncanny coincidences, I reached a passage¹ that had a momentous impact on me. The passage largely speaks for itself, so I took copies to that first coaching tutorial, where indeed it successfully spoke for itself! It is not only redolent of wonderful coaching, even though presumably unintended, but also happens to be the climactic passage of one of the world's greatest novels.

I have reproduced the passage as an appendix below, highlighting in bold excerpts that could come from a coaching handbook, except they are much better written, even in translation. The richness and depth of this passage and its relevance to coaching can be summed up as follows²:

- How the empathetic questioning of Princess Maria, and particularly of Natasha, drew out Pierre;
- How Pierre and Natasha became completely absorbed and entered “Flow”³;
- How Natasha's attention and occasional exclamations and very brief questions drew Pierre to reveal things he had never revealed to anyone, not least himself⁴;
- How Pierre went incredibly deep and learnt new things;
- How Natasha's completely undivided and continuing attention, which made the questions “what else” or “any further thoughts” supernumerary, led Pierre to continue even after he thought he had finished. He verbalised a life changing lesson from his

¹ *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy, Penguin Popular Classics, London, 2009 (Revised 1978 translation by Rosemary Edmonds). The excerpt is taken from Part 4 of Book 4 and is pages 1430-1432 on the Kindle facsimile.

² Tolstoy's excerpt fulfils virtually every one of Nancy Kline's 10 Components of a Thinking Environment in *Time to Think*. Natasha's level of attention and deep listening go without saying but questioning, equality, appreciation, ease and encouragement are all present. As for feelings, the emotional release and deep thinking build in waves.

³ I have not found any examples of “Flow” in the coaching literature that come near to matching this passage. Nothing comes close in *The Inner Game of Tennis* by Gallwey or in Csikszentmihalyi's books, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* and *Finding Flow* or in Seligman's books, *Authentic Happiness* and *Flourish*.

⁴ Natasha's questioning, body language and natural coaching skills bring out the messages and techniques developed in books such as *Coaching Skills* by Jenny Rogers and Whitmore's *Coaching for Performance*.

story and, given the concluding chapters of *War and Peace*, one by which he clearly lived his life thereafter;

- It demonstrates the power of non-directive coaching⁵.

The timing of my reading of this passage, during my preparations for my first tutorial, was pivotal. Yet, re-reading the passage one year later - and as someone who now hopes he knows a bit about coaching - has not lessened its impact. The style of coaching that I have developed, particularly my use of silence and grunted interjections and my originally conscious effort to focus all my attention and listening on the client, seems to owe something to Natasha.

War and Peace is, of course, one of literature's great love stories, as well as much else besides, and this passage is where the penny finally drops for both Pierre and Natasha. Whilst that is not directly out of the coaching play book, it nevertheless highlights a crucial ingredient of coaching: good chemistry is essential. Whilst the coach should not love the client as such and needs to be measured and avoid taking the other's responsibility, the more the coach shows care, respect and appreciation for the human being in front of her, generally the better the result.⁶ The coach, of course, needs to maintain her judgement and independence but real empathy can take her a long way. In that sense, as her character suggests, in many other less dramatic and intense passages describing her interactions with other people in *War and Peace*, Natasha would have made a wonderful coach. Princess Maria was certainly aware of this, as Natasha had done so much to help her. It is little wonder that she was intrigued and delighted and "looked from Pierre to Natasha with a gentle smile" as Pierre's story unfolded. She was conscious of where this particular coaching session was headed much earlier than either of the participants!

Part II: Some further coincidences

A few weeks later, with only the reflective essay to complete, I can see that Tolstoy has inspired my coaching journey. As I sit in the study of my dacha (country cottage) staring out into the deep and endless Russian silver-birch forest, that much has become obvious. To begin with, I have developed further my signature style of coaching, noted above in Part I, to encourage my clients to develop their thinking more deeply without interrupting their train of thought. It now feels natural and intuitive, owing much to Natasha, though refined by Nancy Kline⁷ and others. Letting myself rely on such soft and non-interventionary skills is very new to me - and revelatory. Although I have regularly been told that I have good people skills, I have been too much a slave to logic and hard facts, and the imperative to argue them, for most of my career. I now realise that had I infused a soupçon more of coaching skills into my earlier activities, I would have been much more effective.

There was a further coincidence when I was last in Moscow in early 2016. Just after I arrived, I discovered that London Business School was putting on an event at Moscow's leading hotel.

⁵ Non-directive coaching is central to Meyler Campbell's approach and is introduced very early in the programme. Several of the main textbooks discuss it in detail, not least *Business Coaching* by Anne Scoular. The technique originated with Carl Rogers, one of the forefathers of coaching, and was originally described in his book *Client-Centred Therapy*, published in 1951, which he expanded on in *Freedom to Learn*, published in 1969.

⁶ See: Scoular (*op. cit.*) and *The Trusted Advisor* by Maister, Green and Galford.

⁷ Nancy Kline, *Op. cit.*

Andrew Scott, who later in the year gave the Meyler Campbell Annual Lecture⁸ concerning *The 100 Year Life*, was in town to talk about the world and Russian economies (I was already well acquainted with his research behind *The 100 Year Life* because it was one of the factors that convinced me to become a coach, as I wanted to make a very late career change). I went along assuming a few people would turn up - and perhaps some of the economic reformers I worked with in the 1990s - to find about 200 fellow alumni gathering for the talk. When networking with some of them, I learned that there are reckoned to be 5,000 alumni in Moscow! A few months later, and when I was immersing myself in the Meyler Campbell programme, I realised that this provides a serious coaching business opportunity.

In fact, Russia is a country in great need of coaching. The need is both existential and practical. At the existential level, the challenges and dangers Russian people face make those of a post-Brexit vote Britain seem minor by comparison. Although we do not fully appreciate the depth and sophistication of Russia and its culture in the West, the overnight collapse of Russia's empire in 1991 has resulted in an angst that my generation of Britons ought to understand. After all, our own lives have been lived through a gradual and rather tortuous post-colonial adjustment that remains incomplete to this day. At the practical level, and not surprisingly given this existential angst, running organisations in Russia is very, very difficult. I know as, at the turn of the century, I tried!

Consequently and, as I develop my coaching business, the idea of spending a week every month back in Moscow doing some coaching is gradually taking shape. A further coincidence has helped. By an accidental and circuitous route, I ended up with a Russian practice client in London. He is the young founder and CEO of a rapidly growing tech start up, reliant on regular injections of angel and venture capital funding. This means the business is in constant flux and provides a wonderful coaching opportunity. At the same time, the CEO is a fascinating character, very open to coaching and, after an initial career with a world leading strategy advisory firm, on his own for the first time. We have developed a coaching relationship where we seem really tuned in to each other and I know our sessions have been useful for him. They have certainly been useful for me. Having initially covered all manner of issues in this fast-changing business, we have recently focused on his leadership and on building his team. We both did a strengths assessment⁹ and then reviewed his carefully. I am due to do feedback sessions with his key staff, with some team coaching planned for later. This has encouraged me to develop my reading into some new areas, not least various excellent books on leadership¹⁰.

I know my Russian client would be delighted to introduce me to his many contacts in Moscow, so it appears Tolstoy may be helping shape my future as well as inspiring my coaching. Or perhaps these coincidences were fated because I was filled with something of the Russian soul when I spent long periods in Moscow in the 1990s and early 2000s! Whichever it is, and as I develop my main coaching business in the UK, I am very hopeful that my journey over the last eighteen months will enable me to become a successful early adopter of the ideas in *The 100*

⁸ *The 100 Year Life* was the title of the book he co-authored with Lynda Gratton. I had already attended a lecture at London Business School on the research behind the book and later took part in a webinar as well as the Annual Lecture.

⁹ Gallup's Clifton Strengths Finder 2.0

¹⁰ I have focused on two books and written reading reviews on both. These are: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team – a Leadership Fable*, by Patrick Lencioni et al. and *Primal Leadership – Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman et al.

Year Life. I certainly should, as I have developed further what that book calls transformational assets¹¹ to make it a success.

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Appendix: Excerpt from Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace

'Pierre acknowledged that this was true and, thus started, **allowed himself to be drawn by Princess Maria's questions, and still more by Natasha's, into giving them a detailed account of his adventures.**

At first, he spoke with the light irony which he now always used towards others and especially towards himself; but when he came to describe the horrors and sufferings he had **witnessed he was unconsciously carried away and began speaking with the suppressed emotion of a man re-living in imagination experiences** which made an acute impression on him.

Princess Maria looked from Pierre to Natasha with a gentle smile. In the whole narrative from beginning to end she saw only Pierre and his goodness. **Natasha, leaning on her elbow, the expression on her face continually changing with the story, watched Pierre without taking her eyes off him, evidently living with him through all that he was telling them. Not only her look but her exclamations and the brief questions she put showed Pierre that she understood just what he wanted to convey. It was plain that she understood not only what he said but also what he would have liked to say and could not express in words.** The episode with the child and the woman whom he had tried to defend and so got himself arrested Pierre related in the following manner:

'It was an awful sight – children abandoned, some of them in the flames.... I saw one child dragged out.... There were women who had their things pulled off, their ear-rings snatched....'

Pierre coloured and hesitated.

'Then a patrol arrived on the scene and all those who were not looting – all the men, I mean – were arrested. And me with them.' 'I am sure you're not telling us everything – I am sure there was something you did...' said Natasha, and after a pause added: 'something fine.'

Pierre continued. When he came to the execution he would have passed over the horrible details **but Natasha insisted on his leaving nothing out.**

Pierre was going on to Karatayev but stopped. (By this time, he had risen from the table and was walking up and down the room, **Natasha following him with her eyes.**)

'No, you just can't understand what I learned from that illiterate man – that simple creature.'

¹¹ Broadly speaking, transformational assets are those that help people make successful transitions in terms of skills, roles and identity. They include self-knowledge, diverse and relevant networks and an openness to new experiences.

'Go on, go on,' urged Natasha. 'What became of him?'

'They killed him, almost before my eyes.'

And Pierre went on to tell them about the last part of the retreat, and about Karatayev falling ill (his voice shook continually) and then his death.

Pierre recounted adventures of which he had never told anyone, which he had never thought of before. He now saw as it were a new significance in all he had been through. Now that he was telling it all to Natasha he experienced the rare happiness men know when women listen to them – not clever women who when they listen are either trying to assimilate what they hear for the sake of enriching their minds and, when opportunity offers, repeating it, or to apply what is told them to their own ideas and promptly bring out the clever comments elaborated in their own little mental workshop; but the happiness true women give who are endowed with the capacity to select and absorb all that is best in what a man shows of himself. **Natasha, without knowing it, was all attention: she did not miss one word, one inflection of his voice, no twitch of a muscle in his face nor a single gesture.** She caught the still unspoken word on the wing and took it straight into her open heart, divining the secret import of all Pierre's spiritual travail.

Princess Maria understood his story and sympathized with him but she was seeing something else that absorbed her entire interest. She saw the possibility of love and happiness between Natasha and Pierre. And this idea, which struck her now for the first time, filled her heart with gladness.

It was three o'clock in the morning. **The footmen appeared** with sad, forbidding faces, bringing fresh candles, **but no one noticed them.**

Pierre finished his story. **Natasha still gazed intently and persistently at him with shining, eager eyes, as if wishing to read the portions of his story that he had perhaps not told.** In shamefaced and happy confusion Pierre occasionally glanced at her and cudgelled his brains what to say next to change the subject. Princess Maria was silent. It did not occur to any of them that it was three o'clock in the morning and time to go to bed.

'People talk about adversity bringing suffering,' remarked Pierre, 'but if I were asked at this moment whether I would rather be what I was before I was taken prisoner, or go through all that again, my answer would be: "For heaven's sake give me captivity and horse-flesh!" **We imagine that as soon as we are thrown out of our customary ruts all is over, but it is only then that the new and the good begins. While there is life there is happiness. There is a great deal, a great deal before us. I say that for you,**' he added, turning to Natasha.

'Yes, yes,' she murmured, answering something quite different. 'I too would ask for nothing better than to go through it all again from the beginning.'

Pierre looked at her keenly.

'No, I could ask for nothing more,' Natasha repeated.

'No, no!' cried Pierre. 'I am not to blame for being alive and wanting to live – nor you either.'

Suddenly Natasha let her head drop into her hands, and burst into tears.

‘What is it, Natasha?’ said Princess Maria.

‘Nothing, nothing.’ She smiled at Pierre through her tears. ‘Good-night, it’s bedtime.’

Pierre got up and took his leave.

2018

Coaching as a process and a social engagement: a preliminary hypothesis on the role of difference in coaching

Sheldon Daniel

The issues of gender and race are quite alive in the contemporary cultural and intellectual space. The reasons for this are debated but the rise of nativist political agendas on the backs of “austerity backlash” (e.g., Donald Trump, Brexit) across the globe and ‘minority’ activist movements (e.g., #metoo, Black Lives Matter) have brought gender and race to the fore of the social and political debate. It is unclear how this impacts the discussion on business. Issues of the role of women in business have a higher profile as demonstrated by the recent submission of pay gaps data at a firm level.¹ This gives visibility to the problem although the “solution” is less clear. For the matter of race, there is less visibility, but the gap is just as real. In research focused on FTSE 100 companies, around 12.5% of the UK population are Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) – yet they hold just 6% of top management positions.² Ethnic diversity within the private and public sector in the UK remains a significant issue.

Given that the social issues of gender and race are gaining prominence within the business sector in the UK, and the challenge this represents, it is essential to ask how coaching is impacted by this broader discussion of “difference.” It is appropriate for the immediate response by the coaching professionals to be that if the “process” of coaching is rigorously followed then this question has limited relevance. In this case, the client is considered supremely resourceful, and the coach assumed to be non-judgmental and non-directive - but still challenging and supportive - exhibiting curiosity through insightful questioning to help the client achieve clarity. There is little room for difference to “intrude” in this formulation.

In such a response, the focus is on the “process” or the method of coaching. However, Page and Haan, in their broad survey of the state of research focused on coaching effectiveness, found that “the strength of the coaching relationship or working alliance between client and coach is the most powerful predictor of coaching outcomes. Spending time building a strong relationship with a client is critical for successful and effective coaching, and it is perceived this way by both coach and client alike.”³ (Page & Haan, 2014).

However, if the relational element is so essential, we then need to acknowledge the “social” component of the coaching engagement. With this acknowledgment, it is critical to, therefore, establish the extent to which – and how – social differences between the coach and the client might impact the coaching relationship.

The scope of a discussion on this issue is vast, but in this short essay, I will attempt to introduce how I see “difference” impacting the process and relationship of coaching.

Before proceeding, I would like to clarify the terminology of difference as used for this essay. Difference between a coach and client refers to many dimensions. Gender, race, nationality,

¹ For example, see Topping, Alexandra, Barr, Caelainn and Duncan, Pamela 2018. ‘Gender pay gap figures reveal eight in 10 UK firms pay men more’, *The Guardian*, [online] 4 April 2018.

² Beech, PNH, Cornelius, N, Gordon, LJ, Healy, G, Ogbonna, E, Sanghera, GS, Umeh, C & Woodman, P 2017, ‘Delivering diversity: Race and ethnicity in the management pipeline’, British Academy of Management and Chartered Management Institute, London.

³ Page, N., & De Haan (2014) ‘Does executive coaching work?’ *The Psychologist*, 27, 582–587.

regional/national difference, industry experience, sexuality, social background and physical abilities. We will assume (and it is a simplistic assumption) that the greater number of these dimensions that the coach and the client differ on, then the greater the degree of difference between both.

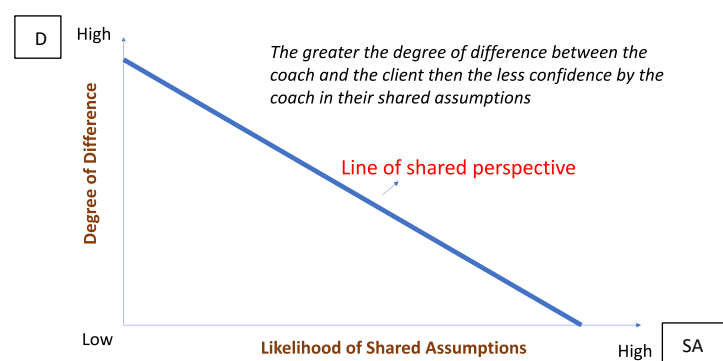
So how does “difference” get transmitted in the coaching relationship? I will use as a theoretical basis (again in a very rough way), the frame for understanding how, as humans, we relate to people as put forward by Professor Geoff Bird in a presentation to the Meyler Campbell Faculty development day.⁴ In his talk, he highlighted the propensity of our brain to make *predictions* quickly about what it **will** see, hear, think and feel. Professor Bird then asserted that because of this propensity, we mainly experience what we “expect the world to be” (predictions) rather than conduct the costly (from a brain perspective) task of constantly undertaking the rational analysis of environmental information to make sense of the world. While we regularly make these predictions (snap judgments), we are bad at doing it. However, we believe that we are good at predictions and as a result, we tend not easily to see evidence to contradict our prediction. We have to assume that these predictions are in part shaped by our experience of the world as well as our “natural” neurological predispositions. In relating this to coaching, according to Bird, the task is to work with the client to erode the confidence that they have in their predictions they make of the world.

However, there is another aspect in which this relates to coaching. Since, by Professor Bird’s logic, coaches – like all humans - will be making “predictions” of the motivations, intentions and even potential of the client - and this will be a function of the coach’s background. It is in the predictions that we make as coaches, that makes “difference” a relevant area of consideration for the effectiveness of the coaching process.⁵

The chart (Figure 1) below attempts to map the relationship between difference and the coaching process. Specifically, it suggests the nature of the algebraic relationship between the degree of difference between the coach and client (D) and the likelihood of shared assumptions (SA). In this relationship, the “line of shared perspective” illustrates the inverse relationship between D and SA – the greater the difference, the less likely that there will be shared assumptions – and the difference in emphasis on the “process” and “relationship” of coaching.

Figure 1: Coaching and Difference: The Line of Shared Perspective

Difference in coaching: Confidence in shared views



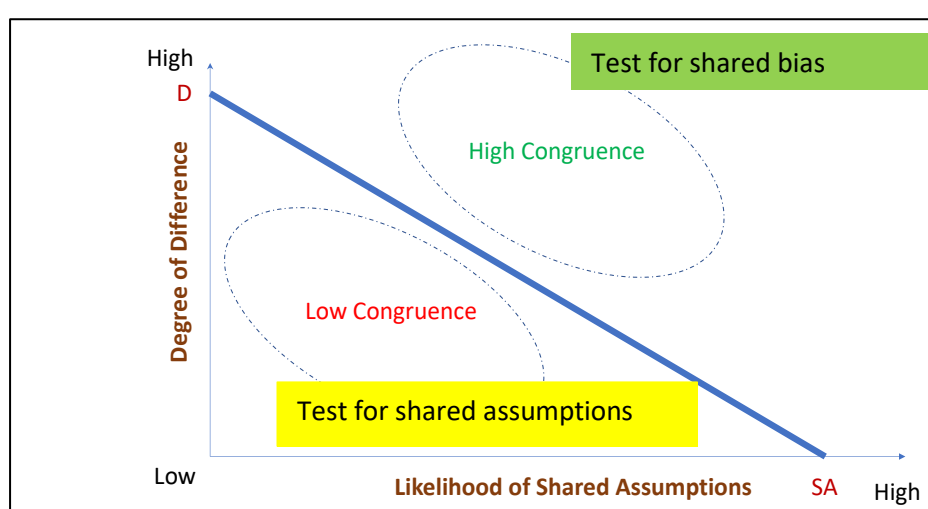
⁴ Professor Geoff Bird, Presentation on Brain, Judgement and Perceptions and the Impact on Coaching, Meyler Campbell Faculty Development Day, May 10, 2018.

⁵ I must acknowledge that some of my thinking on this was shaped during an insightful supervision session with Keith Krasny on May 16, 2018.

The implications for coaching is that the greater the differences between the coach and client then the less likely that the “predictions” of the coach will be relevant – or will be similar to those made by the client.

If this is true, then there are implications for the coaching relationship. Specifically, the coach and client will either be in a condition of **high congruence** – where there is a limited to moderate degree of difference and a fair to high level of shared assumptions. Otherwise, they could be in a state of **low congruence** – a situation in which there is a high measure of difference between the client and the coach and in which the level of shared assumptions is low. In areas of high congruence, the key risk will be **shared bias** – and this needs to be constantly tested in the coaching engagement. For low congruence situations, the main focus should be to test for **shared assumptions**. The figure below demonstrates the areas of congruence as it relates to the “line of shared perspective.”

Figure 2: Areas of Congruence



Such an analytical frame has practical implications for the coaching process. I have used the “Big Five” coaching skills as outlined by Scoular (2011) as a basis for analysis.⁶ These are summarised below:

TABLE 1: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENCE ON COACHING USING THE “BIG FIVE”

IMPLICATION FOR COACHING	LOW CONGRUENCE Test for shared assumptions	HIGH CONGRUENCE Test for shared bias
Contracting	- Raise “difference” explicitly and explore the implication with the client for the coaching relationship; - More time might be needed to explore and understand the worldview of the client – might be required for a first session.	- Be mindful of blind spots shared with the client; - Ask explicitly if the lack of difference is relevant to the issues of the client; - Agree that in some instances a coach with low congruence might be needed.

⁶ Scoular, Anne, *The Financial Times Guide to Business Coaching*. Harlow: Prentice Education Limited, 2011. pg. 61

Listening	- Rigorously test for meaning: Agree that the coaching sessions will have many questions for clarification – "can you help me understand what you mean by that"?	- Listen for commonality in and constantly reflect on whether this shared assumption – helps or needs to be challenged to support the client's insight
GROW Model	- Take time to focus on "reality" – as a way of understanding the issue from the client perspective.	- The "goal" should be tested from the perspective of "the other."
Questioning	- Use of language is very critical – test words carefully making sure that the meaning is the same for the client as for you.	- Really focus on questioning assumptions by taking on the perspective of the primary "audience" of the client, i.e., the employee, the boss, the peer, the Board.
Non-directive	- Less intervention is better since the client's view might not be apparent to the coach.	- Can be more interventionist, especially to push in directions that make the coach "uncomfortable."

The above discussion is very preliminary and can only be considered a very high level, exploratory analysis on the issue of "difference" in coaching. In my view, this sets up a research hypothesis which can be subject to further empirical investigation and validation. However, if we agree that coaching is both a process and a social engagement, we need to begin to have a more data-rich conversation about the impact and the power of difference in the effectiveness of coaching. This will become even more pressing as the business environment is increasingly called upon to address issues such as gender and ethnic equality – and more general issues related to fairness. The coaching industry should have a critical review of the role 'difference' plays in the coaching process.

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A Perspective from Japan

Peter Kilner

As I sat on the train from Kamakura to Tokyo I reflected on the day's upcoming coaching session. My coaching engagement was relatively new – I had had a chemistry session with the coachee the previous week and today would be the first coaching session proper. My coachee was Reo Sato¹, a Japanese manager in his mid-40s who had recently joined a US multinational's Japanese subsidiary and reported to the American managing director in charge of the Japanese operations; while his English language was fluent he had only spent a year overseas and had previously worked for a Japanese company.

In our chemistry session Sato-san² had been somewhat reserved, revealing little about himself, and very formal in his bearing and style of language, referring to me as “Kilner-sensei” (“sensei” being the honorific added to names of teachers, doctors and lawyers in Japan); I had the impression that he was looking to me to provide the answers to his issues.

Sato-san was finding some difficulties in his new role, principally with his boss (these had taken some time to tease out of him, and he had phrased the issues very indirectly). Specific examples included:

1. Sato-san and the other (Japanese) members of the management team were having problems communicating effectively with their new boss
2. Sato-san felt that his boss takes decisions without considering the broader circumstances involved.

Sato-san was looking for coaching on how to deal with his boss and how to adapt to working in an international company. It seemed to me that there were probably some cultural aspects that Sato-san and I needed to explore in addressing these issues – and also some cultural aspects that would probably have an impact on our coaching relationship.

While there are various models that can be used when looking at cultural differences³, the one that I find most useful is that developed by a professor at INSEAD, Erin Meyer, and explained in her book *The Culture Map*⁴. Professor Meyer has developed a model which shows how cultures vary in a number of key areas along a spectrum from one extreme to another. The scales include:

- *Communicating*: low-context vs. high-context
- *Leading*: egalitarian vs. hierarchical
- *Deciding*: consensual vs. top-down
- *Trusting*: task-based vs. relationship-based
- *Disagreeing*: confrontational vs. avoids confrontation⁵

¹ The name is fictitious, naturally.

² I will use the convention for non-Japanese in Japan of referring to Japanese people by their family name with the honorific “san”.

³ See for example Moral Foundations Theory; Culture dimension according to Edward T. Hall; Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory; The GLOBE Project: Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research; Trompenaars' model of national culture differences; and Rosinski's Cultural Orientations Framework, as usefully summarised in the International Coach Academy's Research Paper; Coaching in Japan by Lionel Bikart (<https://coachcampus.com/coach-portfolios/research-papers/lionel-bikart-coaching-in-japan/>)

⁴ Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures* (PublicAffairs™, International Edition 2015). This builds on work by Edward T. Hall, Geert Hofstede and others.

⁵ *The Culture Map*, pp. 15-16.

One of the useful things about the model and the research behind it is the culture maps that can be generated comparing where different cultures are on the map. Most helpful for Sato-san and our coaching is the Japan-USA map (see Figure 1) and the Japan-UK map (see Figure 2); the former as it relates to the relationship between Sato-san and his boss, and the latter as it may give some insight into the coaching relationship between Sato-san and me.

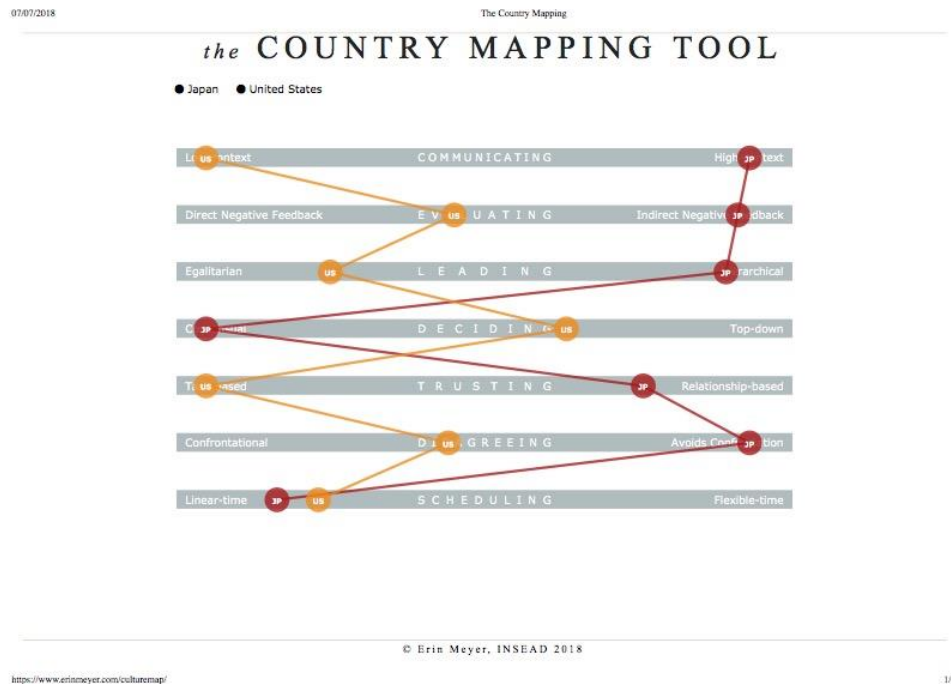


Figure 1: The Culture Map: Country Mapping Tool; Japan and the United States

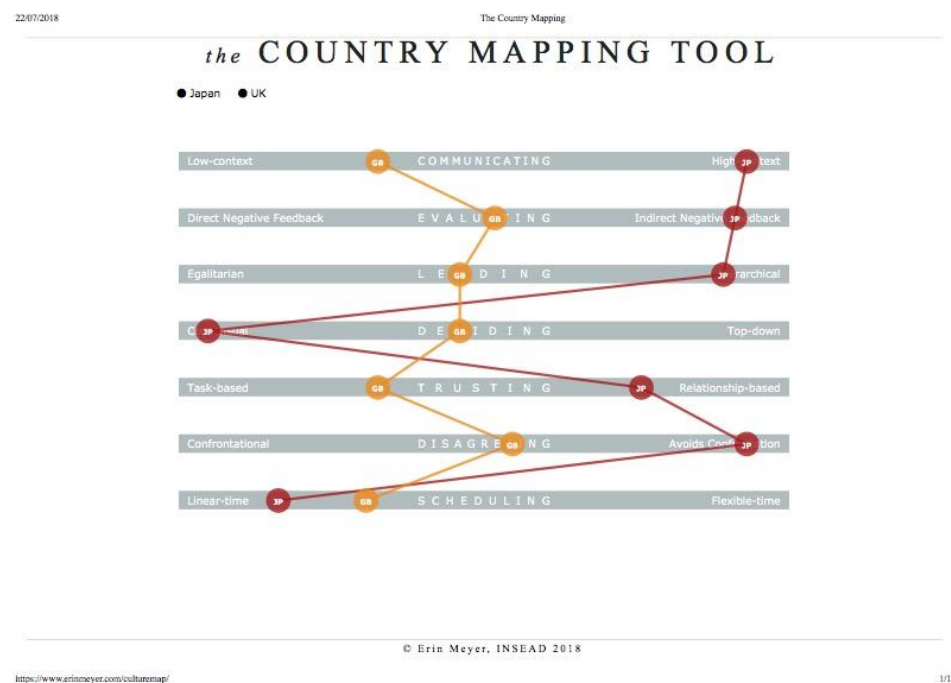


Figure 2: The Culture Map: Country Mapping Tool; Japan and the UK

The model recognises that there is a range of acceptable business behaviour in any culture, and the points on the map indicate the centre of a curve where the majority of reported behaviour

occurs. Of course, everyone is an individual and the model is simply a place to start when looking at the interaction of cultures. However, areas where cultures show significant differences are useful ones to explore in coaching.

Before I considered Sato-san's specific issues, I needed to focus on our coaching relationship, particularly in three areas. The first was to work out how to develop an effective coaching relationship with him – a partnership of equals rather than a teacher-student relationship. As can be seen from the culture map, Japan is a hierarchical culture and, as such, Japanese coachees are likely to defer to someone who they regard as being in a superior position, for example a teacher, and are less likely to voice their own opinions than individuals from more egalitarian cultures. The second was how to get the real issues on the table; to understand Sato-san's real feelings (*honno*) as opposed to his public face (*tatema*)⁶; this would hopefully become easier as our relationship deepened. The third issue in our coaching relationship related to the fact that, since Japan is a low-context culture from a communication perspective, indirect communication is often preferred, with an expectation that the recipient of the communication will implicitly be able to understand what is being said (or to “read the air” as the Japanese say⁷).

I thought the most difficult of these areas was likely to be the development of our coaching relationship. My approach to coaching is that it should be:

- a partnership of equals
- with unconditional regard for the coachee
- confidential
- a trusting relationship
- non-directive
- while bringing to bear my experience where appropriate

I thought back to a coaching session I had done the previous week in the UK as part of my Mastered course. It had certainly worked from the coachee's perspective and, as well as ticking almost all of the above boxes, I remembered that it had very much suited my coaching style – I had listened intently, allowing pauses to be filled by the coachee, asked a few simple questions, kept my eyes locked on the coachee and encouraged him to delve deeper with “anything else?” on numerous occasions. Comparing that – arguably ideal – situation with my upcoming session with Sato-san made me realise that a number of the elements that had been present in the earlier session were probably not going to be there today, particularly the depth of the relationship and (at least from Sato-san's perspective) the equality of the relationship.

Developing our relationship as a partnership of equals as opposed to that of teacher/student would therefore be key. However, to do this – and to have a better chance of Sato-san disclosing his real feelings (as opposed to his public face), I would need to work on deepening the relationship itself.

Business (and many other aspects of life) in Japan is generally built on trust⁸ and is relationship based; building relationships is very important⁹, more so than in the USA and the UK. While time spent in formal settings such as meetings is important in creating relationships, it is often more the time spent in less formal settings (lunches, coffees, drinks, golf, karaoke ...) that

⁶ See for example Sue Shinomiya and Brian Szepekouski, *Business Passport to Japan: Revised and Updated Edition* (Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2008), 141-2

⁷ In Japanese the phrase *kuuki o yomu* (reading the air) is used, and someone who cannot read the air is described as *kuuki yomenai*

⁸ See Isao Takei and Jon P. Alston, *Japanese Business Culture and Practices: A Guide to Twenty-First Century Japanese Protocols* (iUniverse, 2018), Chapter 1 (Kindle location 907)

⁹ See for example *Business Passport to Japan*, 126-131,

strengthens the bonds between individuals in Japan¹⁰. While karaoke was probably not the path to take here, some time spent with Sato-san in some other less formal surroundings, perhaps over lunch or at a coffee shop, might therefore help.

But what to do for our initial session(s) while the relationship was developing? If it seemed as if we were making insufficient progress, perhaps I might need to adopt a more directive, or mentor-like approach at first. It would obviously depend on the circumstances, but that may be an option, although clearly there would be a risk that it would then be difficult to move to a more non-directive approach as the coaching progressed.

Focusing next on the third potential issue in the coaching relationship, that of being attuned to the indirect communication style of the Japanese, it seemed to me that applying my listening skills (hopefully at level 3!) should get me a long way there. In addition, my experience of working with and managing Japanese for nearly 10 years, would help me to be able to “read the air”.

Finally, it occurred to me that I would probably need to adapt my coaching style somewhat – for example prolonged eye contact is regarded as impolite in Japanese culture¹¹ and Japanese are much more reluctant to discuss feelings than individuals from the USA or the UK.

Bringing it all together, my plan was therefore to do the following:

- (although I had been through this in our chemistry session) spend some of the time in our first session explaining again my understanding of coaching and my approach, and hopefully getting Sato-san’s buy-in to this
- invite Sato-san to lunch the following week (at no additional cost – I would have to remember in future to factor in the time and cost of these informal sessions into my price for coaching engagements!)
- possibly coach in a more mentoring style in our initial sessions
- acutely listen for implicit messages
- adapt my coaching style somewhat for the Japanese culture

Moving then to the issues Sato-san had mentioned in our chemistry session (and assuming that these were the ones he wanted coaching on), it seemed to me that one way forward might be to introduce him to some of the cultural differences between the Japanese and US Americans (some homework could be to read relevant sections of *The Culture Map*, and *Business Passport to Japan*) then discuss with him the extent to which he agreed with what he had read – what feels right, what feels wrong, and what else might be going on that he is not aware of. Hopefully we could then progress in a normal coaching manner.

As the train pulled into Tokyo station, I felt prepared for the day ahead.

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¹⁰ See for example *The Culture Map*, 188 and *Japanese Business Culture and Practices*, Chapter 5 (Kindle location 3734)

¹¹ See for example *Business Passport to Japan*, 183; *Japanese Business Culture and Practices*, Chapter 4 (Kindle location 3499)

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Values, behaviours and the need for a coaching culture in management – the case for the financial industry

Christine Graeff

In the decade since the financial crisis, banks have paid more than \$300bn¹ in fines related to misbehaviour, more than 40% of their pre-loss earnings. The single highest liability for each and every financial institution has been linked to employee misconduct. In addition to the fines, trust has been lost to such an extent that the financial services industry is one of the least trusted industries overall.²

Regulators are increasingly demanding that banking leaders demonstrate a deeper understanding of the drivers of conduct and a more active approach to shaping the culture of their institution. Moreover, it is in the banks' own best interest to define values and beliefs that will drive different (desired) behaviours, and that these will be displayed consistently at all levels, thus establishing a new organisational culture.

Values and behaviours drive the culture of an organisation and if one is to believe the famous quote of management guru Peter Drucker "culture eats strategy for breakfast", they are the foundation of an organisation's success.

Very recently, on 4 June 2019, Mr. John Williams, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, emphasized in a speech³ that the "industry, the regulatory agencies and the banks need to take culture seriously, now".

Since then, various supervisors, including the ECB⁴ highlighted that practices implemented by a firm's leadership have a determining effect on its culture and therefore on the behaviour of its employees. In coaching terms, this would be called the alignment model⁵ where all dimensions of culture, leadership behaviours, strategy commitment, customer value proposition, structures & processes, KPI's and incentives need to be aligned for the organisation to be successful. McKinsey developed a specific model called 7s, looking at Structure, Strategy, Skills, Staff, Style, Systems and Shared Values.

Myth of bad apples

The public explanation in the aftermath of various financial scandals has often pointed to "bad apples" i.e. a few 'rogue employees' compromising an otherwise virtuous bank. Research by Principia⁶ shows that this is a more often a myth than reality. In the same speech, Williams also

¹ London School of Economics and the CCP research Foundation, "Conduct costs"

² Edelman, Edelman Trust Barometer, 2019

³ Conference "Building Cultural Capital in the Financial Services Industry: Emerging Practices, Risks and Opportunities"

⁴ Single Supervisory Mechanism of the ECB, the European banking supervisor

⁵ McKinsey 7s framework

⁶ Principia, Paper prepared for the Bank of Ireland, February 2018

remarked⁷ that this myth is often used as an excuse not to do the hard work of cultural reform. While causes for misconduct are multiple, their common denominator is usually a fundamental misalignment (see 7s). Employees may not understand what is expected of them if the values of the institutions have not been clearly translated into desired behaviours – both Do's and Don'ts. For example, employees are often incentivised to deliver on short-term individual goals linked to profitability rather than to align with customer value proposition and the organisation's underlying value system long-term. In fact, employees may even feel that they are only expected to pay lip service to corporate values whereas achieving short-term goals will drive their pay and advancement.

A new case of “broken windows” theory?

The ‘broken windows’ theory was first introduced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling.⁸ Under this theory, an ordered and clean environment, one that is maintained, sends the signal that the area is monitored and that criminal behaviour is not tolerated. Conversely, a disordered environment, one that is not maintained (broken windows, graffiti, excessive litter), sends the signal that the area is not monitored and that criminal behaviour has little risk of detection. Both appearances will send a very different message. A broken window signals the community's defencelessness and vulnerability and represents the lack of cohesiveness of the people within.

The same analogy can be applied to the banking industry. Take a bank where management turns a blind eye to existing rules being broken. Misconduct in the pursuit of profit is tacitly tolerated, condoned or even applauded. This signals the management's misalignment with the values of the organisation and its lack of either desire or capability to understand and deal with complex issues. Lehman is a case in point with both its culture and its reward structure often cited for its demise, not to mention for the global financial crisis it subsequently partly caused. According to various insiders⁹, excessive risk-taking, well beyond business practice, was openly lauded and rewarded handsomely. Individuals making questionable deals were hailed and treated as “conquering heroes.” On the other hand, anyone who questioned decisions was often ignored or overruled.

While Lehman is an extreme example, the broken windows theory explains how an environment that tolerates much more minor transgressions can put an organisation at risk. Coaching will help leaders understand that they themselves need to make decisions and display behaviours in line with organisational values, even when dealing with “small” and seemingly negligible issues. This means that not only do they have to act at the first signs of misconduct observing others, but all of their decisions need to be aligned with the organisation's core values.

In a so-called “VUCA”¹⁰ world, such decision-making is ever more complex and requires self-awareness and self-regulation. It will be optimized in a culture of open discussion, debate and dissent where people are empowered to hold each other accountable, independent of hierarchy and status.

⁷ John C Williams, President and CEO Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Speech given on 04.06.2019 at the conference “‘Building Cultural Capital in the Financial Services industry’.

⁸ Article titled "Broken Windows" published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982.

⁹ See e.g. Vicky Ward (2010) *The Devil's Casino*, John Wiley.

¹⁰ VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous.

The benefits of coaching

The Principia model¹¹ identifies nine drivers, assessing the ability of an organisation and its people to make responsible decisions in line with established values and principles. In essence, these refer to impact and (self-) awareness, decision-making, goal-setting and communication. All of these can be systematically and dramatically improved through coaching when working on the following aspects:

Impact

To improve self-awareness and self-regulation capabilities of leaders, coaching will help a leader to understand the impact he or she has on others through behaviours and actions (including verbal and nonverbal cues). It will also help them understand their inherent drivers, motivations, attitudes and typical behaviours. Various tools exist that a coach can use for this purpose, such as self-descriptive personality assessments like MBTI, DISC etc, or predictive analytics of typical behaviours, motivations and attitudes like Chally.¹² A coach will also be instrumental in guiding leaders to their own insights about any cognitive and cultural biases they may have that could be self-limiting in their behaviours, attitudes and decision-making.

In essence, coaching is indispensable to make the leader pause to reflect. As the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl said: “Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response, in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Decision-Making

The quality of reflection and subsequent decision-making will be further enhanced when the coach helps the leader to improve listening skills.

Two observations by Nancy Kline highlight how the deliberation element of the Principia model and listening can be the most important role of a manager. She noted that “everything we do depends in its quality on the thinking we do first” and also the “quality of a person’s attention determines the quality of other people’s thinking.”¹³

Establishing a coaching culture can lead to an atmosphere of constructive exchange where a real discussion and debate can take place. Following Kline’s model, this should ensure that a ‘Thinking environment’ is created, where one of the key rules is attention and real, “active” listening. For example, in meetings listening should be structured in a way so that everyone has a turn to speak without interruption. In practice, this would mean that from board meetings to day to day meetings, everyone would have an opportunity and a duty to speak (the often lost points of views of introverts would be heard) and a new sense of respect would emerge through the lack of interruption. Not only does such listening improve the quality of our thinking, but it also improves our understanding just as any interruption is an assault on the thinking process.¹⁴

¹¹ Principia, Culture, Ethics and Conduct, 2018

¹² <http://chally.com/solution-suite/predictive-assessments/>

¹³ Nancy Kline (1999) *Time to Think*, Ward Lock, London.

¹⁴ *Time to Think*, Nancy Kline.

Goal-setting

Many hours are spent in meetings, some hosted or at least influenced by a manager, some stipulating mandatory attendance where no influence on agenda and outcome is possible. It seems to be a generally accepted insight that the meeting culture in international organisations is getting more extreme, i.e. much more demanding on time management. Many of those meetings could result in more valuable outcomes if they had a clear goal, either defined by the agenda or by the goal being clearly stated at the outset of the meetings. Models such as the one developed by Sir John Whitmore, the GROW model, could be used in almost any meeting interaction. Understanding the purpose and the goals of a meeting would, if carefully crafted, avoid many misunderstandings as well as subsequent tensions and possible disputes through “territory marking”. The other elements of the model, namely Reality check, Options and Will (or commitment) , when carried out in a coaching manner, would lead to the employee feeling empowered and able to ask questions while going through self-defined options which would address some of the issues arising from responsibility, capability and motivation. In addition, if the goals were clearly defined, employees would be able to check if these supported the values and the desired behaviours of the organisation.

Conclusion

Only 28% of time is “alone time” for CEOs¹⁵, and they want and need more of it to reflect. Coaching could be the answer as this would enable the CEOs to actively take the time to do so. Coaching has a demonstrable impact on values, hence on the key drivers of behaviours. If both values and behaviours are decided based on critical, self-aware and self-regulated reflection, an organisational culture can and will change – for the better. That way, culture can leave plenty of time for strategy at breakfast.

Looking at more recent regarding fines related to misconduct, it would appear that a lot still has to be done. The time may be ripe to make coaching for leaders compulsory, thus creating a virtuous circle where literally everybody wins.

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¹⁵ ‘The Leaders Calendar’ , Michael E. Porter, *Harvard Business Review*, July 2018.

Coaching Through a Strategic Development Process in a Charity: integrating individual and group coaching with team process to drive change

Julian Stanley

[Editor's Note: Some details in this case have been changed to protect anonymity.]

**"There are three essentials to leadership: humility, clarity and courage."
Fuchan Yean, Cha'n master (A Japanese form of Zen)**

Introduction:

This essay is a reflection on the impact of coaching a group of three senior female health sector charity trustees. The work took place during a strategic development process where I was a consultant, and resulted in behavioural changes at board level which led to the charity reinventing itself and introducing major governance changes. The insights I gained informed my training as a coach, which began during this period.

Background:

The initial impetus for coaching the three trustees was born out of their desire to find ways to have their voices and ideas fully heard on a male-dominated trustee board. They also came forward to express their support for the vision I shared with the Chairman & leadership to modernise the charity, make it more relevant to a new and wider audience of health sector employees and secure its long-term future.

The Chair, in the final year of his tenure, recognised the trustees were mired in various conflicts of interest and loyalty, due to the strong affiliation to the various trade unions who nominated and appointed them. To be an independent charity free from political interference, required a new approach.

Two of the three women who came forward were retired and in their mid-seventies. One had forty years expertise in early years health education, the second, fifteen years' experience as a clinician & the third a university academic & medic with significant experience of trusteeship gained as a NED. All three women were union activists. Behaviourally, two of the women often fell silent in meetings, vocalising their frustrations outside of the board room. The third, although vocal in meetings, was considering leaving the board due to an unwillingness on the part of several trustees to make difficult decisions. My proposal for a detailed business review of services, people, processes and to explore the options for developing each of the business entities in the group had recently been agreed. The need now was for a strategic plan to address a mid / long-term funding gap. Change was in the air.

The three women trustees accepted my offer of two individual coaching sessions each between six group sessions. The Chair and I joined for the final hour of each of the group sessions (which were led by a different coach). We used this time to plan our approach to implementing the business review, keeping the consultants on track, and to consider how to report progress and shape board agendas to ensure momentum.

During the individual coaching sessions, the trustees decided to focus on the following themes:

- Personal presentation of self
- Developing a confident and authentic leadership style

The themes in the Group sessions were:

- Exploring ways to lead, facilitate & chair Board, SLT and stakeholder consultation meetings
- Creating shared values, developing a positive culture, good behaviour, productive discussion & meaningful debate
- Developing informed decision-making processes.

Trustees and staff reacted with a mixture of excitement & doubt. Their initial negativity was overtaken by a sense of relief people were addressing ways to work together productively. Well researched, clear reports and short thoughtful presentations resulted in growing levels of optimism about the ability to create the conditions necessary to flourish.

The first success was gaining board approval for the formation of a development committee to scrutinise and discuss recommendations of the executive and reports from our external business advisors. The three women offered to lead the new group. The Chair showed considerable courage by openly explaining to the board that they had come forward because they felt marginalised. He urged the board to capitalise on their drive. All three were elected unopposed - an unexpected turning point.

In Daniel Goleman's *Harvard Business Review* article in 2000 he suggested there are six core leadership styles that are likely to be used: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pace-setting and coaching. He states: "the more of them a leader has mastered the better". The new board 'leadership' group, motivated by a shared goal, quickly realised all six of these core leadership styles cited would need to be brought into play at various times to break through resistance to change.

In *Time to Think*, Nancy Kline speaks of the ten behaviours that generate the finest thinking environment as being: Attention, Equality, Ease, Appreciation, Encouragement, Feelings, Information, Diversity, Incisive questions, Place. As the coaching sessions began, we consciously attempted to use these behaviours to change the dynamics in the room. Our biggest challenge lay in finding ways to listen to each other and allowing space for reflection. As senior consultant and as a board we all tended to move instantly towards solutions. This often prevented us from fully exploring a wider range of ideas and options. The cultural shift was slow, but discernible. It was marked by a growing willingness to be more concise, more honest and to reduce our reliance on union protocols which curtailed free flowing discussion. A lightbulb moment for me was the recognition that for several board members an unspoken issue was the fear that they might lose their places on a body that was as viewed as prestigious in union circles. The severing of important social and professional connections would be a significant loss for several trustees. We discussed this at length in a group coaching session. I began to appreciate the need to be sensitive when proposing changes to the governance model.

The group coaching offered some challenge to the usual approach to problem solving. It encouraged people to break the habit of rushing to solutions, an idea akin to the concept of "Peak Performance" discussed in Timothy Gallwey's *Inner Game of Tennis*. Participants began to see the need to stop criticising and judging the past behaviour of board members. We ceased trying to find "the right answer" in favour of picturing desired outcomes, being willing to trust ourselves more and take the heat out of our emotions. This freed up our capacity to think and helped us to become less controlling.

The next breakthrough was the board agreeing to work with a modified version of David Clutterbuck's "Seven Steps of Coaching Intervention", from *Coaching The Team at Work*:

1. Identifying the need to improve/change
2. Observing and gathering evidence
3. Getting motivated by setting and owning personal improvement targets
4. Helping to plan on how to achieve the targets we set
5. Creating opportunities to practise the desired skills
6. Observing ourselves in action and giving objective feedback
7. Agreeing to work through setbacks

We endeavoured to build a shared language and develop greater trust. We contracted with each other about the behaviours we wished to eliminate by adopting the behaviours we wanted to display and emulate.

Another powerful, simple and effective idea was printing the quote below on A3 colour posters and displaying them around the meeting room. Its power stemmed from the fact that every board member had at some stage during their careers been involved in primary care or health education. The words resonated. They prevented unproductive behaviours and generated much greater levels of mutual respect.

*Before you speak today, think:
Is it true, is it helpful, inspiring, necessary?
Is it kind?*

The idea underpinning this approach was to consider the language we used as a means to enable rather than to reinforce limiting beliefs (as discussed in Marion Way's *Clean Approaches for Coaches*.)

The team coach encouraged us to make use of visual aids to create timelines for decision making. Adopting a metaphor of a boat travelling along a river to describe how the process felt was enthusiastically embraced by the board. The trustees spoke of moving past mountains, overcoming various obstacles, rocks, boulders, and angry beasts and "traversing our way through the weeds to a sunny tree lined landscape which is now in view." An artist was commissioned to draw the boat as it sailed through choppy waters towards a new fertile island, filled with promise.

Other behavioural changes resulted by inviting everyone to say one thing they had learnt at the last meeting and one issue they wished to resolve in the current meeting. Meetings ended by asking everyone in turn to say what had worked well and what actions they were willing to take prior to the next meeting to find consensus. In retrospect, elements of the GROW model were being interwoven alongside various concepts – such as Appreciation - inspired by Nancy Kline.

Results and Learning:

- The coaching programme and organisational development techniques helped a moribund board find a new purpose
- Board members began to phone and meet each other between meetings to share ideas and concerns
- The board developed a code of conduct and feedback forms
- Sexist language and bullying behaviours were challenged
- A decision was reached to merge two charities and a trading company and launch a new charitable company
- A revised governance structure with open procurement procedures was established
- A new board was formed, and a new Chair appointed
- We celebrated the contribution of outgoing trustees and staff

The ideas described in John Whitmore's *Coaching for Performance*, concerning organisational change and personal growth in the workplace neatly sum up what I experienced and observed in my consulting role, and now inform my coaching:

“A listening, learning, coaching culture may provide the best chance of riding the unsettling waves of change that businesses are facing... [it] cannot be prescribed by some outside authority. Performance will always be at its best when staff, shareholders, directors and even customers share the same values. Before that can happen, staff need to be encouraged to find out what their own values are.”

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A Thinking Environment in Families

Some reflections from the trenches

Kevin Davidson

Introduction

That is exactly how parenting can feel sometimes, like warfare, desperate. Alone, lost, recovering from a battle, anticipating the next one and not just with your children but also your spouse. Everyone coming at things from different angles, talking (or shouting) over one another, forcing their point of view, demanding attention and trying to control the agenda. It is thankfully not always like that and, in fact, most of the time it is not. However, there are shades of this 'battle' in most family interactions, perhaps not with the intensity or the pain of the trenches but still with the forcing of wills, the inequality and the need for the things to be just the way 'I' or 'you' want them.

We have always been self-reflective parents and reading Nancy Kline's seminal work *Time to Think* was therefore not like reviewing a list of alien concepts. It did however impact me quite profoundly in its simplicity, its accuracy and its accessibility. It is a manual we should all be fully versed in. It seems so logical and so obvious when you have read it, but it takes real effort to put it into practice and an almost complete rewiring for it to become natural.

The following is a collection of thoughts and reflections on how her 'Thinking Environment' can improve family relationships and dynamics. The fundamentals of this approach are not just relevant to parenting but should apply to all of our interactions and be used as a tool for establishing more meaningful relationships, more powerful teams, better business and personal outcomes and generally an enhanced society as posited in the closing chapters of Kline's book.

The final section ties some of the observations back to executive coaching, emphasising the universal application of the fundamentals of the Thinking Environment.

The Thinking 'Family' Environment

At first glance, it is easy to assume we all apply the ten components of a Thinking Environment in our everyday interactions and our parenting. They are straight forward are they not? On deeper reflection, it becomes clear that most of us do far from that and actually find the true application of these components very difficult.

Just like the template our parents have set for us, societal norms, the pace of modern life and the evolving means of communication and human interaction make these basic principles further than ever from our natural reach but more important than ever to grasp.

1. Attention

When you hold a baby in your arms for the first time, the attention you give them and they give you is at its peak; no distractions, total mindfulness, total focus on one another. Infinite, unwavering attention – both ways. This pinnacle, from that point on, becomes increasingly more elusive. When we need to pick up babies and toddlers, we naturally take them to our face level and we connect, eye-to-eye. We rarely get down to their level and often find ourselves talking to the top of their heads. Eye contact is critical and the single most important indicator of your attention. We must give it to children as much as we possibly can and at their level, showing equality. They connect with us on a deeper level immediately when our eyes lock.

The intense look in the eye often comes at extremes of emotion when we are soothing a child or when we are scolding or reprimanding. We are very good at getting our eyes to their height at these times too. Making eye contact, sitting down on the ground and giving undivided attention for the regular exchange, just like the first time you met and held her in your arms still sparks a connection which is palpable and magical. We must do it as much possible.

2. Incisive Questions

One thing you learn very quickly about children is they are always listening! Their antennae are always up even when they are choosing to ignore you. How often do we really think about asking them questions beyond the functional and transactional? What do you want for breakfast? Have you washed your hands? How was school today? Boring! Our interactions are all too often in this vein or issuing instructions. One way and unequal.

Asking questions which enable children to tap into their emotions, think about a subject we may feel is beyond their intellect or reach or just think a little more deeply about a subject, triggers a noticeable response. They pause. You can almost see the cogs spinning and what ensues is a connection and a discussion, albeit very brief at times, which is immensely powerful for both child and parent.

Our six-year-old came home from school to report that “Anna says I am stupid.” The instinctive response is to say, “well you are not stupid, you are very smart so just ignore Anna when she says that or tell the teacher.” A simple and more incisive question is “Do you think you are stupid?” The answer may be “yes,” but it opens a line of discussion focussed on what she thinks and not what you think which is infinitely more powerful.

A child’s mind is electrifying in his pace and absorption of information and we spend most of our time simply trying to control their actions and be there to pick them up when they fall. One of the greatest gifts we can give them is the ability to think, think deeply, think for themselves and be equipped to help others to do the same. Simple, well timed and attentive questions asked often enough will deliver this.

3. Equality

Establishing equality across the family is not easy. Between parents we carry the unbalanced gender stereotypes of our parents’ generation and from parent to child rarely is there a sense of equality. This is also important between siblings with the more extrovert and dominant children commanding more attention. Family therapy is a rapidly growing field of clinical psychology and is generally dealing with the fall-out of ingrained inequities (real or perceived) within family dynamics.

The establishment of self esteem starts in the family and that comes from equality and attention and all the ten components of the Thinking Environment. Visualising your next conversation with your 2-year-old as being one of equals is hard to grasp but try it and try it again and again. They are of course not equal in physical or mental ability, but they are equal in humanity and helping them feel that way as early as possible will build the self-esteem they need for life ahead.

4. Appreciation

Praise five times more often than you criticise. Reading this was like a slap in the face. “Don’t do that! Leave your sister alone please! Come away from that; it’s dangerous! Stop, come back here! Your listening is very bad today!”

The five to one ratio makes sense but in practice it’s the other way around. To praise five times more than criticise (I have chosen to include instruct here as these instructions are generally

delivered as a criticism of something they should not be doing) seems impossible as you would have to praise 10 times per minute when you are in the trenches.

The easy way to get this ratio within reach is therefore to criticise less. Sure, you need to direct to keep children safe and secure, but instructions can be shaped differently and, even better, become questions. “You always make really good decisions, what do you think is the best way to handle this with your sister?”

5. Ease

Slow it down. Leave the phone at the door, take off your watch, go at their speed and see what happens. I remain guilty of keeping my phone at hand when I get in from work and when it is around, they know I am not fully focussed on them. This is what Nancy Kline refers to as CPA (continuous partial attention).

This should be the easiest thing to do, after all, what is more important in those couple of hours than connecting with your children. In our world of 24/7 connectedness, both to our professional and personal networks we rarely do ‘separate’ from the virtual world to be at one with the ‘physical’ one around us and, in this case, the most important one.

A simple discipline and a physical commitment to remove external distractions makes ‘ease’ accessible and remarkably enriching.

6. Encouragement

We all respond better to encouragement rather than criticism whether learning to catch a ball, ride a bike or master advanced calculus. As in the ‘Inner Game of Tennis,’ teaching our children to encourage themselves is a valuable skill and it starts with us, as parents doing exactly that.

7. Feelings

Don’t ignore them. In my family they were not to be worn too publicly and all too often used as tools to control and manipulate others. Not in a malicious way but almost subconsciously. Handling emotions and feelings in my children can therefore seem a little more difficult. When they are angry, I just don’t want them to be. I want them to calm down. When they are upset, I comfort them, but I want them to get over it pretty quick.

Give space, forget time, be attentive, ask questions, let them explore their emotions and feelings safely by being totally there for them. Witness the results. Again, not easy in the heat of battle but when handled this way the strengthening bond is tangible. This provides the security children need to be comfortable with emotions and therefore able to handle them as they grow and develop. The sense of solidarity with you and independent strength in themselves is a powerful combination.

8. Information

Children are very good at presenting one side of a story to defend their actions, explain their feelings or get what they want. In a positive Thinking Environment, questions which help them gather, express and acknowledge information around a subject, a feeling, a desire or an action will help them make better decisions and regulate their behaviours and emotions with broader consideration of other people and other viewpoints.

Having them formulate the information is important, even where the parent may know the other side of a story it is important to remain as non-directive as possible.

9. Place

In the heat of the moment this is not always easy to control. One thing I have learned not to do, is send a child to her room. If she needs some time, far better go with her somewhere and then turn on all of your Thinking Environment skills – be attentive, give space, ask incisive questions, don't judge.

This is not always possible if other children are around, but it is still possible to focus your attentions on one of them and let her know you are there for her in that moment, wherever it is, whatever the distractions. This is not at all easy but don't ever let the place not being ideal act as an excuse for not trying to create a Thinking Environment.

10. Diversity

It's okay to be different, to think differently, to feel differently to others. Others will act differently to you; some kind, some unkind, some positive, some negative. Being able to explore this with children helps them develop the inner fortitude necessary to be comfortable about their own differences to others and the differences between others.

Enabling children to be appreciate diversity in others is a gift which is granted by recognising, discussing, thinking about and appreciating all of our many differences.

Concluding Thoughts on Coaching

The Thinking Environment may seem utopian and it is certainly much harder to achieve in everyday life, particularly when parenting from the trenches.

Reflecting on each of the ten components of the Thinking Environment in the context of parenting proves to reinforce the relevance of each. It also enables one to devise simple tools to move our natural dispositions somewhere towards this model of interaction.

In coaching, the Thinking Environment should be easier to achieve where we can control the place and our external distractions much more. By establishing this framework in mind and visualising sessions being conducted in this way can bring the utopian closer to reality. It takes a lot of effort and focus but every time I read this book or reflect on its basic tenets the need to strive for the Thinking Environment becomes ever more obvious and pressing.

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Making the most of technology in executive coaching

David Lancefield

The executive coaching profession would hardly be categorised as a technology pioneer. Maybe for good reason. But what if it were?

Demographic and work changes are likely to increase the demand for, and sophistication of, coaching. A [100-year life](#) will require us to reconsider our identity and goals more regularly, find more learning opportunities, manage more career [transitions](#); the rise of virtual working will increase isolation and a sense of [loneliness](#) for some people too. In intense work environments, leaders will have to create the conditions for [psychological safety](#) to express our ideas, concerns and challenges more constructively and openly. All of this is fertile ground for coaching.

The efficacy of coaching is becoming better understood too, at the individual and [organisational](#) level. [‘Positive’](#) coaching activates “*networks and regions of the brain that are associated with big-picture thinking, engagement, motivation, stress regulation, and parasympathetic modulation*”; it activates the “seeking systems” of the brain, making people feel more [‘Alive at Work’](#) by encouraging them to show their best self. The practice of [reflection](#) also increases energy and [voice](#), both of which are critical to [performance](#). Through neuroplasticity, the practice of ‘mentalising’ and mindfulness also helps to build the capacity for strategic [leadership](#), which is critical for the [transformation](#) of organisations.

Technology innovation is already increasing the accessibility of coaching; until recently, coaching has been an elite activity, available to only [4%](#) of an organisation. Coaching “bots”, such as [Pocket Confidant](#) and [People Squared](#), offer lower cost solutions to employees looking for help. [Axa](#) and [IBM](#) are two corporate pioneers. Career transitions have been the most popular coaching topic. Employees can ask questions, take simulation challenges, do “drills” on core skills and play competitive games, with recognition. A person is replaced by a mobile app, designed using machine learning.

Technology is also making it easier to [find](#) a coach, do long-distance coaching (from Skype to [holoportation](#)), and manage [administration](#).

Technology can enrich the quality and experience of executive coaching

Technology can also increase the efficacy in a person-led coaching programme, by helping to recall information, interpret reactions, visualise progress and identify connections between issues. Some coachees may be willing to experiment too given how much they already use technology, particularly AI, in other aspects of their lives: watching [Netflix](#), using Facebook or shopping using Amazon; or improving [customer](#) service, [recruitment](#), [bookings](#) or [warehouse efficiency](#). Indeed, there are some [scenarios](#) where people prefer the judgement of algorithms.

Products and prototypes are already available that can help from beginning to end in the following areas:

- [Goals](#): set out progress against goals, comparisons with peer groups in visual dashboards. This makes it easier to assess the return on investment, an area in need of [improvement](#). Video capture of sessions (at the right time) can also show how people come across, and how they’re changing (in terms of their style, facial expressions); for example, the [LivingLens](#) product captures and analyses video recordings of conversations, translating what people are saying to how they are coming across.

- **Reality:** create a single view of the individual's context, capabilities and self-awareness, collating psychometric tests (e.g. MBTI, Firo-B), strengths finders, feedback and notes taken throughout the programme ([LeaderEQ](#) is one platform that provides this).
- **Options:** use virtual reality, with gamification, avatars and holograms to help the coachee visualise future scenarios, e.g. [Pro Real World](#). This is already being used in [sports](#) coaching. AI algorithms could also suggest lines of inquiry based on analysing previous recorded conversations, and those of other coachees (anonymised).
- **Will:** use 'nudges' to encourage and reinforce target behaviours through platforms like [LeaderAmp](#) and [Grohappy](#), which also distribute personalised recommendations on articles, podcasts, videos and events.

Technology can also increase the understanding of:

- The conditions that create “[flow](#)”: capture [moods](#), and then work out the underlying causes. Use wearable technology to measure heart rate variability and the Central Nervous and Autonomic Nervous system function (using apps like [First Beat](#) and [Omegawave](#)) and give personalised insights on stress, exercise and sleep. This approach is used in elite sports coaching.
- Self-awareness and [commitment to change](#): highlight physical changes that might provide insight on the level of commitment to change and self-awareness (e.g. blind spots in the Johari window). Think of this as the technology enablement of [Neuro-Linguistic Programming](#), using different perceptual positions. This could be through assessing the [tone](#) and volume of the voice, movements in their [eyes](#) (eye gaze, blinking and pupil dilation) or changes in pulse and/or stress readings through the use of [wearables](#), including [patches](#).

But there are potential pitfalls from using technology

There are two major problems from using technology: interference with the environment, and a risk of the coach or the app being too directive.

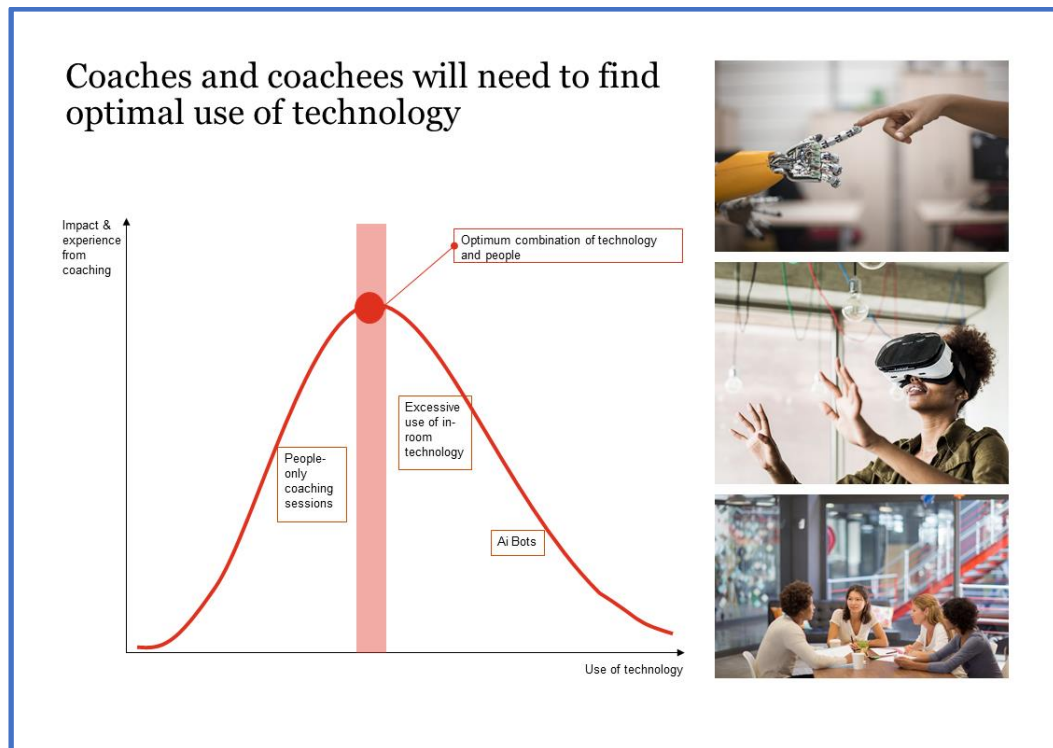
The physical environment plays a critical role in creating the conditions to reflect, [restore](#), think, get in touch with the senses. It can play an active role in the coaching process, offering [spaciousness](#) and stimuli (e.g. aspects of [nature](#)) that can be used to help an individual characterise how they feel now, and who they want to become. It's one of the ten aspects of a '[thinking environment](#)', which focuses on how we treat each other while we're thinking.

Technology could impede the attention we give, the clarity of incisive questions, ease and feelings – whether you're wearing or using a device, or just knowing that it's there in the background. The coachee might hold back, editing what they say and losing touch with their inner self, their [Inner Game](#). They might not trust how their data will be used – it feels more like an audit, or even a polygraph. Or they become overly dependent on the technology, suppressing their own resolve to use cognitive techniques for promoting positive (and reducing negative) [self-talk](#) and reducing their [space to think](#). The coaching tech becomes a 'crutch' rather than a time-bound intervention.

Likewise, the coach may feel over-loaded with information which could result in inertia or [confusion](#). The coach may become more directive, and dominant, moving away from a [co-active](#) relationship towards a more '[medical model](#)' of coaching. After all, AI algorithms are unlikely to

generate [breakthrough](#) ideas to solve the individual's issues, yet. And they shouldn't in a coaching relationship.

AI bots could become too directive as they guide an individual through a process using pre-loaded answers. They lend themselves better to '[process-led](#)' coaching, encouraging the coachee to find the bot's answer rather than find their own through 'client-led' coaching. Orai, for example, is a public speaking coach that listens to users as they make speeches and counts the number of filler words and pauses they use, along with tracking their speed, tone and energy level. Then it gives the user a report, complete with data on these metrics as well as advice on how to improve.



There are five ways – the 5 Cs - to harness technology effectively

To make the best use of technology, coaches should:

- Understand the coachee's current use of technology, and mindset toward it, as part of the contracting process. The same goes for the coach. Pragmatism is important – emphasising that some of the technology may be more helpful than others, and even with more insight and data the coach can't guarantee outcomes, mitigating the risk of litigation. **Contracting.**
- Explain clearly how the technology will be used, how it [works](#), to what end, and how the information collated will be used, shared and protected. **Clarity**
- Select the most effective application of technology at the most appropriate time in the coaching programme. **Curation.**
- Focus on the quality of the coaching environment and the coachee's experience to maximise the potential for the coachee to reach her goal. **Care.**

- Participate in the design and testing of future services. This will increase quality, mitigate bias and encourage the responsible development and use of the algorithms (using frameworks like [‘Responsible AI’](#)). They should also encourage their coachees to use these services, where appropriate, and allow others to use their anonymised data; this helps to generate reliable “training data” which is necessary to identify the signals that help predict the behaviours you’re looking to improve, and hence design the algorithms. **Creation.**

Conclusion – technology offers a great opportunity and responsibility for coaches

It will become harder to coach without technology. Coachees will expect it, based on their experience in their professional and personal lives. And the potential is too great to ignore.

Whilst much of the focus has been on the development of coaching bots, there’s a lot of potential for technology to enrich the executive coaching experience, leading to better outcomes. But it has to be used carefully, otherwise it will create interference and reduce the coachee’s investment in their finding their own answers.

Coaches have a great opportunity, and indeed responsibility: to shape the design of the technology, to curate the most relevant applications for their coachee and to create the optimal condition that bring the best of both humans and technology. In fact, their judgement, warmth and integrity become more important in this world of technological opportunity.

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[Editor’s Note: For more, don’t miss the hyperlinks in the above. A cartoon version of this essay is also available here: <https://connected.meylercampbell.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TECH-COACHING-STRIP5.pdf>]