

June 2003

COACHING ... ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN?

I was invited recently to speak at the Annual Conference of the eLearning Network (ELN), an organisation that promotes best practice in all aspects of learning technologies, writes **Mike Duckett**.

The theme of the day was 'Coaching and Mentoring in e-Learning' and supported the proposition that training is not the only option for plugging the skills gap. Its objective was to explore how coaching and mentoring works alongside instructor-led training in an e-learning situation.

The organisers were also keen to widen the awareness

of ELN's members of the nature of coaching and mentoring and whether they are the same thing as tutor-support or something completely different.

I hope the 60 plus attendees had their horizons widened ... I certainly found the event quite an eye-opener. Although, as an experienced coach, I am only too

well aware of how coaching differs from training in its

many forms, the experience of presenting alongside other professionals really brought it home to me that, while we all talked about 'coaching', we all meant something different by it.

Tutor, mentor, trainer, teacher, guru ... were all words used in the context of coaching.

But the true coach is none of these things. What differentiates coaching from all other

forms of intervention, if we can use that term, is that the coach isn't the one with the answers.

My clients don't learn anything from me in the traditional sense... although I think they would expect to do so from all of the people I mention above. The key to coaching is that it enables the client to find their own answers,

by removing the psychological and behavioural barriers that prevent them from achieving their potential.

I recently heard Tim Galwey (author of The

Inner Game series of books) say that over the years he had been coaching, including when he was a professional Tennis coach, he had come to realise you could sum up Performance Coaching in the formula $P=p-i$. Here performance (P) = a person's potential to perform (p) – the interference (i). Note the

missing input from the coach – only the opportunity to take away (the

interference!) This neatly sums up our belief that coaching allows clients to tap into the answers, knowledge and potential skills they already have.

To find out more, call us on 01494 473504.

For further information on the eLearning Network visit their website: www.elearningnetwork.org.



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$$P = p - i$$

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

As reported in *The Psychologist* (March 2003) and quite widely in the general media, champion international bowler Margaret Johnston refused to play in the Irish squad recently, claiming that she had won her numerous titles 'without all this nonsense'.

What she was referring to was the use of sport psychologists and relaxation exercises to aid team performance. According to Ian Cockerill, Chair of the BPS Sport & Exercise Psychology Section: "A mistake often made is that when it comes to team sports, one size fits all ... as psychologists, we are of course very aware of the wide range of individual differences that exist between the members of a team.



"Team talks and squad meetings can only progress things so far. There is no substitute for one-to-one sessions in dealing with the many performance-related issues that confront athletes in all sports."

Ed: Ian Cockerill makes a good point – group work has its limitations. In the end, performance is always down to the individual and it is at the individual level that coaching works to deliver optimum performance both in a sporting and commercial environment.

Perhaps the final word should go to Margaret herself. Commenting on being asked to 'lie on towels for an hour' in relaxation sessions, she quipped: "If I am going to lie on my back for an hour, I expect to be enjoying myself." *Ed: no comment!*

WANT TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE?

... you need to understand what makes you tick

Are you really applying what you've learned in all those training courses you've been on? Is there something stopping you from using your new, or even old, skills? Have you forgotten what's fun about your work?

Staying focused

Take for instance time management. I've no doubt that you could reel off half a dozen techniques you've been taught. But the real key to successful time management is staying focused on what matters to you and understanding and acknowledging your 'career anchors'. Coaching can help you define what is meaningful work for you, as a unique individual, and then set some goals that



enable you to fulfil them.

But just as important as identifying what to focus on is being aware of what might distract you from achieving your goal. For instance, your new palm top might be a fascinating new piece of technology that you've spent quite a lot of time playing with, but is it actually improving your performance?!

Useful beliefs about rejection

Let's take a look at another key skill: selling. For instance, are you as effective on the phone as you could be? If not, what's getting in the way – could it be fear of rejection?

The truth is that it may be more productive a) to believe that one sales appointment is worth 99 rejections and b) to accept without question that if

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you don't ask for somebody's business, you'll never know whether there was ever really any business to be had. Coaching can help you establish more useful beliefs about rejection.

The art of communication

Communication via the written word (be it in a letter or an e-mail) is still a core skill. And an effective written communication will be one that uses words and phrases that meet your reader's aspirations, not yours: helping them to achieve their objectives, or perhaps avoid a particular problem. Coaching can help you recognise your own 'filters' – the way you see the world, the language you use – so that you can suspend them, and use your readers' instead!

A holistic approach

Working with a coach can help you establish the right state of mind for success – just like an athlete about to launch off the starting blocks. But a complete coaching programme should take a holistic approach to what affects personal productivity. Low mental energy (dictated largely by physical energy) can seriously compromise productivity levels and many of us operate in highly stressful and often noisy and unhealthy, air-conditioned or overheated environments ... with a few minutes break for a sandwich at lunchtime if you're lucky.

Become a corporate athlete

In fact you could be treating yourself as a 'corporate

athlete': set yourself up for the day with some physical exercise (a workout, a run, a cycle-ride, whatever you enjoy), make water and fruit pit-stops every 90 minutes, take regular short relaxation breaks every hour (listen to music for a few minutes or even power nap) and take some exercise, such as a short stroll, during the day.

I'll never get any work done, you'll say. Actually the reverse is probably true if you adopt a new approach to your working life.

Working with a coach to analyse your very



individual approach and to understand what really matters to you in your working life, will enable you to use the skills you already possess, set meaningful goals

and rejuvenate the feelings and emotions that make work fun.

THE KEY TO A GOOD LIFE

Iiona Boniwell and **Philip Zimbardo**, writing in the May 2003 issue of **The Psychologist**, argue that a balanced time perspective is an ideal foundation for leading 'a good life'.

An individual's Time Perspective (TP) – focusing on various time frames when making decisions and taking actions – is one of the most powerful influences on virtually all aspects of human behaviour and affects our quality of life in particular. (*Ed: Time is a psychological construct and as such is both personal and cultural. Traditional time management courses miss this point.*)

TP is determined by five main factors, so, for example, past-negative TP is associated with a focus on

enjoyment of the present with little concern for the consequences. And a person with a future TP is concerned with working for future goals and rewards, often at the expense of present enjoyment.

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Ed: A key coaching point is often reached when a client becomes aware of where, in time, their thought processes are linked to in a given performance situation. Coaching them to be more flexible in using past, present and future thinking is often liberating ... current ways of decision making might be based on past learning that is no longer appropriate.

People with a balanced time perspective are capable of operating in a temporal mode appropriate to the situation they find themselves in: when they take a day off, they get involved in recreation rather than feeling guilty about the work they haven't done. Laughing when it's time to laugh ... working when it's time to work ... these are the possible keys to unlocking personal happiness.

*Ed: Time-line coaching can enable clients to stay focused in one temporal dimension ... and to 'switch off' when they need to. In fact, successful people are those that can actively 'switch **on**' to an alternative focus.*



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

One way of developing management leaders is to spot talented junior managers and promote them early, writes **Roger Eglin** in *The Sunday Times*. But beware the prematurely promoted executive who, lacking experience, finds the pressure too much.

So when Capital One Bank decided to select its best managers, it also devised a 'high potential executive development programme' to support them, that included tailor-made individual coaching on a vast scale – at any one time, this may involve more than 500 company managers.

One high-flyer (let's call him Tom), who took on management of a department of 500 at the age of 33, had to develop a range of different leadership

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skills in this 'stretch' role, where before he had relied on his specialised knowledge.

Tom was surprised that his coach came from outside the company. "It was incredibly beneficial," he says. "You can talk off the record and get a different perspective on things."

Capital One's coaching programme also involved senior executives and the employee's own manager, whose commitment is seen as essential to the programme. According to HR Manager Tim Price, it is essential to manage coaching closely. "We want to know how best we can help. Some companies



just light the blue touch paper and stand clear.”

And the result? Capital one had 1 million

customers in 1990 and in just over ten years grew that base to 36.5 million.

*Comments **Richard McPhee** at **Coaching for Success**: “Promotion on the basis of technical skill is still very common, but can be disastrous if that person is not equipped with the broader skills they need to manage effectively. This example shows just how valuable coaching can be. Its role in releasing the potential to develop new skills – for example in the area of leadership – is very powerful, and its impact on top-line results isn’t bad either!”*

A PASSION FOR COFFEE ...

Sahar Hashemi, co-founder of Coffee Republic, was the subject of a fascinating interview by **Richard Cree** in the **January 2003** issue of **Director** magazine.

“No-one is lucky ... luck is where preparation meets opportunity”,

“Creating something out of nothing” and “making things happen” is what she describes as the “entrepreneurial drug”. And luck, apparently, doesn’t come into it: “No -one is lucky ... luck is where preparation meets opportunity”, she says.

With a successful legal career behind her and following the sudden death of her father, she spent some time in New York where she “fell in love with the coffee shops”. She cites having passion for your product as being key to making a sustainable brand, but the business wasn’t an overnight success.

“People think we hit gold straight away, no-one ever knows how long it took.”

When success came, Hashemi faced the same difficulties described by several other entrepreneurs. According to her brother and co-founder, her impatience and passion and the qualities that make her a great entrepreneur don’t make a good manager. And when the pair stepped down from the board, in 2001, she admits to being initially at

something of a loss:

“When you’re used to having something in your life that you’re passionate



about, it creates such a void when it’s not there.”

Ed: Creativity, optimism, passion, the ability to make things happen – these are all key ingredients for the successful entrepreneur and valuable attributes to develop in any employee. Coaching can help people identify, and perhaps rekindle, what really excites them about their work, stimulate a real desire for success, release creativity and retain a positive focus. Interestingly, Sahar Hashemi’s success followed a big event in her personal life – these are often the triggers for opening up new horizons.

LIFE'S A.....

Alan de Botton's book *'The Consolations of Philosophy'* takes several problems of every day life and asks what famous philosophers have had to say.

On the subject of **unpopularity** Socrates was renowned for walking round Athens, interviewing the populace and courting unpopularity by challenging societies' received wisdom. He challenged widely held, fundamental beliefs, the kind that we come to absorb from a company culture through a kind of osmosis.

Botton says Socrates would have naturally conceded there are times when we are wrong and should be made to doubt our views, but that he would have recognised that errors in our thought and way of life can *never* be proven simply by the fact that we have run into opposition.

What should worry us, says Botton, is not the number of people who oppose us, but how good

their reasons are for doing so. "We seem afflicted by the opposite tendency: to listen to everyone, be upset by every unkind word and sarcastic observation ...although, under the influence of passing moods, our critics may have fumbled to conclusions... using status and prejudice to ennoble them."



Ed: What beliefs do you hold that are limiting and remain unchallenged? What beliefs about yourself have come from some remark made unthinkingly? One client we worked with realised that his belief that he was a "quiet, shy person" came from a remark a teacher had made way back in junior school. Believing this to be true, he had spent the rest of his life living up to that definition of himself."

Next issue: what the philosophers have to say about ... not having enough money



Coaching for Success Ltd.

Releasing your potential

Sheldon House
3 Plomer Hill
Downley
High Wycombe

Phone: +44 (0)1494 473504

Fax: +44 (0)1494 473504

Email: coach@coachingforsuccess.co.uk

Web:
www.coachingforsuccess.co.uk

About us

Coaching for Success provides executive and personal coaching that helps individuals perform to their maximum potential.

Our corporate client list covers a range of industry sectors, including pharmaceutical, retail, finance and construction, and high profile names such as Laing, AstraZeneca, KPMG, The Bank of New York and Marks & Spencer.

Our coaches work with company personnel, on a one-to-one basis, enabling them to recognise the choices and opportunities available to them, to make decisions about career and personnel development and then to create and implement a plan of action designed to achieve success.

We deliver a comprehensive coaching service by combining approaches in three key areas:

- Personal change techniques – Cognitive psychology, hypno-visualisation and NLP
- Counselling – careers, stress management and change management
- Advice - health, fitness and nutrition