

CULTURE CHANGE, CONSULTANT'S DREAM OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S NIGHTMARE?

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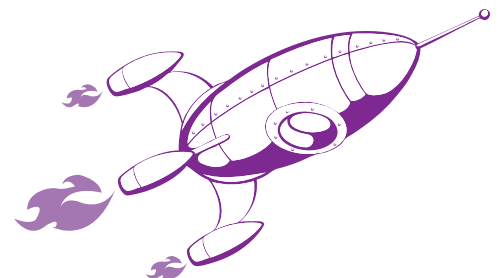
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One thing we've learned about setting up a debate for our dinners is that it's a bit like lighting the fuse of a rocket – the thing takes off but you can't predict where it is going to head!

Our dinner earlier this year at One Aldwych proved the point in style. It was a cracker of an evening with nearly 40 guests and very lively discussions on every table. Suffice to say that the several chief executives present and most others thought culture change was an opportunity rather than a nightmare. And they had hardly anything to say about the dreaming consultants...

However, some really heartfelt points were made:

- You really do need a sense of crisis to get started – even if you have to manufacture one
- The vision has to be compelling – not just intellectually – but brought to life in practical ways and demonstrated continuously by the leadership of the organisation
- It takes time. It's a long haul of sustained change in behaviour, sometimes relatively minor or apparently trivial
- Use the informal communication network as much as the formal one
- It will only stick if the leadership demonstrates integrity, trust and consistency throughout
- Never focus on the top slice of the organisation: 80-90% of the people want to do a good job and are willing to change. Give them a voice and encouragement. ■



COACHING FOR LIFELONG GROWTH!



Tanya Chakravarti has been an associate of ours for a couple of years on a major public sector programme. She learned her coaching on the BBC's highly rated internal coaching programme whilst a senior executive, and then went on to study for the I-Coach Academy's post-grad certificate, accredited by Middlesex University. Tanya had to undertake a piece of original research and we happily sponsored this work. A number of our previous clients across a wide cross section of business sectors and functions kindly offered to be guinea pigs. What follows is an extract from an interview with **John Keary**.

John: Why did you choose this topic?

Tanya: All my academic studies and coaching practice so far have focused entirely on the lead up to, and the actual coaching intervention itself - rather than the individual's experience beyond it. I was curious to learn more about what happens when the coaching ends - as it should - and what might help or hinder the effects of coaching over time.

JK: how different is your research from anything already out there?

TC: I searched the Web and the University of Middlesex's own electronic library using key words like "sustainability of coaching", "after coaching ends" and "longitudinal coaching research" and was astonished to find nothing relevant. So, to the best of my knowledge, this research into factors sustaining the longer term benefits of coaching is quite novel.

I decided to use the structured interview method because it would offer a richness of detail and yet allow people to be flexible in the way they responded. It proved to be a good choice: the respondents were generous with their time and appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

JK: What did you find were the key factors that helped sustain coaching?

TC: The most significant 'helping' factor reported by the clients was the ability to

self coach. Putting it another way, the client was self reliant by the end of the coaching programme and dependency on the coach was avoided.

Other 'helping' factors included support from family, friends, colleagues, peer groups and managers; development opportunities; taking care of oneself; positive achievements; and openness to, and willingness to engage in, the coaching process.

"Hindering" factors included excessive workload; variable or lack of support from the line manager or others in the organisation; and organisational change

JK: What else did you discover?

TC: Everyone believed that they and their organisations benefited from their coaching. One said that as result of coaching:

"I went from expert analyst to a nurturing and empowering, visible leader as shown by improved 360 degree feedback."

Other individual benefits included better relationship management, increased self awareness and empowering/coaching others. For the organisation, these included more drive for results, better organisation capability e.g. through their coaching and feedback to others, and their increased confidence in making a greater impact on the organisation as a whole.

One respondent said:

"...my ability to drive results is much improved because I'm more aware of others' strengths and what motivates them to do their best"

All the respondents said that the benefits were still continuing at the time of interview.

"Hindering factors included excessive workload; variable or lack of support from the line manager or others in the organisation"

JK: Any surprises?

TC: Several respondents said that they would have liked their organisations to take more interest in, and evaluate, their coaching programmes. The implication here wasn't that organisations were not getting value from the coaching but that they didn't bother to gather data to show that they were. A huge opportunity missed...

JK: Did coaching make people more mobile or ambitious and open to new opportunities?

TC: Four respondents had had a significant, subsequent, job change that they attributed to their coaching. One respondent said:



“As a result of coaching I had absolute confidence that I would find the right job. I used a number of coaching techniques to clarify my thinking about what I was looking for. The revelations and insights gained through coaching shaped my next move e.g. how best to manage and communicate upwards and how best to promote myself.”

All the respondents said that they thought and acted differently as a result of coaching, for instance by making a conscious effort to empower others, and by being willing to give and receive feedback. For those who undertook coaching to support their development as part of a leadership cadre, they felt that their organisations benefited from their new experiences.

JK: Does your research suggest any ways to improve the way we coach?

TC: Most of the respondents thought that an extra coaching session after their coaching had ended would be of great benefit. Their reasons for such a session can be summarised as the

“I think we need to spend less time worrying about whose model of coaching to use. As I become more experienced, I feel confident about going with the client’s own agenda and using my own coaching process that seems to suit the client’s.”

“4 Rs”: an opportunity for reflecting, reviewing, reinforcing and refreshing the learning they had acquired during coaching. Most respondents suggested that the best time for such a session would be 6 months after the coaching programme had ended. This is something we can and should offer immediately.

JK: Anything else?

TC: Well, I think we need to spend less time worrying about whose model of coaching

to use. As I become more experienced, I feel confident about going with the client’s own agenda and using my own coaching process that seems to suit the client’s. However, I think we should concentrate even more on encouraging our clients to try out and develop their ability to self coach. Finally, during coaching and at the evaluation session we should explore fully the factors that will help sustain the benefits over time, including active support from the organisation.

Good coaching should work like learning to fly – one day you will be ready to go solo and the skills will stay with you for life! ■



The Maturing of a Young Profession

Executive coaching as we know it started back in the 80s, but it is only recently that it has emerged as a profession with standards and accreditation for practitioners.

One of the pioneers in this country was the EMCC founded by Professors David Clutterbuck and David Megginson. It is a pan-European organisation aiming to bring together providers and buyers of coaching as well as academics operating in this field. It has worked to establish quality standards for coaching and mentoring courses and will launch its own version of individual accreditation for coaches in 2009. We have been members for several years, and in December we will be giving a paper at the

annual conference in Prague on organisational transformation and coaching.

In 2004, Patti Stevens and John O'Brien founded APECS specifically to set the highest possible standards for coaching and coaching supervision. Also a not-for-profit organisation, APECS focuses entirely on executive level coaching and is UK-based and oriented. It currently has 70 accredited members, and 9 supervising members. Rosemary Harper and John Keary joined the ranks of accredited members earlier this year.

There is also a growing list of APECS corporate members: Aon Limited, AXA IM, Barclays, BBC, BT, Channel 4 Television, Diageo, Ernst & Young, Fujitsu, Hess Corporation, HSBC, KPMG, Merrill Lynch, Nestlé, Pearson, Pfizer,

Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Reuters, Schroders, Scottish Power, Shell UK Ltd and the Unipart Group of Companies.

There are other bodies who accredit coaches and, as a reader, you may be wondering where all this is heading. One reassuring bit of news is that the UK Coaching Roundtable consisting of the Association for Coaching, the International Coach Federation, EMCC and APECS has made a major breakthrough by agreeing a 'Statement of Shared Professional Values'. This should lay the foundation for consistent good practice across the coaching profession. ■



Business Talk 2.0

In our last newsletter we criticised some of the weird or sloppy jargon that has invaded business communications. We took particular aim at *going forwards* – unfortunately, 6 months later we seem to be going rapidly backwards as an economy!

However, more and more gems are emerging. One organisation has banned the use of *brainstorm* because it might have negative connotations and they now take *idea showers*.

Problems morph into *challenges* and *detail* grinds into *granularity*. Drops in share values

slide into *negative territory* and a *private chat* sidles into an *offline*. *I've got you in my radar* is a euphemism for "I know I should respond to you properly but I've got so many bloody emails/voicemails/papers that I haven't a chance in hell of doing so – and hope that you give up and go away".

In this space is a flabby new filler, for example, "How can we help our customers in this space, going forwards?" Or, "We are still optimistic things will feed through the sales and delivery pipeline". In other words, we haven't actually sold anything to anyone yet but live in hope. On a more metaphysical plane, is it really possible to *pre-plan* and what exactly is *360-degree thinking*?

Amid more gnashing of teeth by those poor, quaint souls who love the English language

'Problems' morph into 'challenges' and 'detail' grinds into 'granularity'.

One organisation has banned the use of 'brainstorm' because it might have negative connotations and they now take 'idea showers'.

we find nouns becoming verbs e.g. *conversate* and *it was auspiced by*. Perhaps they haven't got enough skin in the game, stepped up to the plate or spotted the paradigm shift in impactful business talk 2.0! ■

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Keary Harper was founded in 2000 by John Keary and Rosemary Harper. We are full-time coaches with decades of experience. All our consultants are business people first and last, but are also well-versed in psychometrics. All of us have led at a senior level.