

Keary Harper LLP

21st Birthday Newsletter

Looking back - looking forward

Life is strange. At the end of 2020, we were looking ahead to 2021 and thinking about our 21st birthday as a business, in April. The first thought was a celebratory dinner at One Aldwych for all our friends and colleagues over the years. Our formula of good conversation and good food had always worked! But the twists and turns of the pandemic soon swept that idea off the table. So, we decided on a special newsletter, inviting clients and colleagues old and new simply to recall their experience of working with us. We didn't know what to expect: perhaps general observations and maybe a few amusing memories. *Photo: 'two new kids on the block', Rosemary & John, Summer 2000!*



What we have received has knocked us out! You have provided a unique view of what the users of business coaching value and want. *En route*, you offered some superb insights into leadership. This is so valuable because, in our view, the coaching profession can be a bit introverted: too engrossed in qualifications and models and processes, but not looking outwards to what business people actually want from it!

Here is a series of brief quotes within main themes; you can follow links to see the full comments on our website. As you may know, we have coached many individual executives over the years, in many countries. We have also coached project teams, operating boards, and statutory boards. The business context has changed considerably but some of the themes are familiar:

Confidence

One of the most significant themes to emerge from our clients' responses is **confidence**, often linked to **authenticity**: For some, especially those recently promoted, it has been about growing into the role, managing the often-tricky transition from colleague to boss, creating the right impression with new peers and feeling confident to contribute to peer meetings. This has been particularly the case with functional specialists promoted to the 'Exec Committee' and wanting to contribute strategically and take on the collective accountability for leading the organisation. Many were very keen to do this while remaining true to themselves – not acting out how they thought leaders should behave.

"I've understood what I stand for, the power of authenticity, and it has given me the confidence to get my message across." Gyorgyi Szantner, finance director, aviation sector.

"I am sure that my authenticity of being the leader I am today has been helped and improved by my coach knowing when I am kidding myself and making sure she holds that mirror up." Rebecca Churchill, director, education sector.

"...it helped to build my confidence and articulate more clearly my key achievements and the value that I personally brought to my department." former senior civil servant.

"With their help I developed a greater awareness of how I was seen by others and how to make a greater impact." Chris Hope, COO, airline.

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21st Birthday Newsletter

Clarity and focus

Many of our coachees, individuals and teams, found it difficult to step back from being embroiled in the day-to-day and 'urgent'. They needed support and space to really assess the big issues - the ones which would really make a difference to the success of the organisation. Our coaching gave that space, a process, and constructive challenge to work at this higher level.

"...helped me to step back from the turmoil of every day and properly assess my priorities and goals, in the most gentle and non-judgmental way possible." **former senior manager, BBC.**

"Coaching gave me clear structure and guidance that enabled me to use my time most efficiently. This then allowed me to focus on the key areas and people I needed to enable me to succeed." **board member, aviation.**

"She was on hand to help me identify the core issues and provide guidance on how best to navigate and challenge in the board room." **Anne Bradley, non-executive director, finance.**

"...using analytical tools to assist me in thinking about the effectiveness of my leadership, his gentle but probing questioning and his ability to cut through lots of detail and get to the point were invaluable..." **Mike Cunningham, former chief constable.**

"The methods, style and content of KH make you see more ways of making things constantly better." **senior executive, petroleum.**

"... I saw bigger and bigger picture and that is crucial for establishing successful strategy." **Miroslav Sole, entrepreneur.**

Working relationships

We coach senior people. As people advance to increasingly senior levels, actively managing relationships and understanding how, who and when to influence, becomes more and more critical to success. For many of our clients over the years, the recognition that logic alone is not the sole reason for business decisions has been a constant in our discussions. Managing relationships skilfully and professionally has become a major success factor:

"...ability to dig into your personality, helped me in improving my standing, my self-confidence and find a better way to collaborate with colleagues in a more constructive manner, managing even the most complicated situations." **Gherardo Bisi, head of marketing, petroleum.**

"...really helped me to improve my upstream management in my organisation." **financial services specialist.**

"...it was a great chance to explore and enhance my leadership style, building on relationships on both personal and professional side." **Vincenzo Maniaci, group technology director, petroleum.**

"...coaching experience with KH has been extremely useful, giving me the opportunity to deeply rationalize on myself and my relationships with others in the organization." **business development director, petroleum.**

"... 1-2-1 coaching has helped me contribute to improvements in communications, working relationships, and change, in a complex business where genuine organisation performance gains are hard to achieve." **HR Manager, rail industry.**

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21st Birthday Newsletter

Career

Not surprisingly, this has been a constant. Individuals arrive at the need to take charge of managing their career, either because they feel unfulfilled, or have great ambitions for the future - or because they want a complete change of direction. For some, it is the recognition that their career is too important to leave to the organisation to manage; others want to understand how they can make themselves the visible candidate for promotion and excel at interviews.

"...the coaching I received from KH over a number of years helped me to progress in my career and take on new and exciting roles." former People Director, IAG Global Business Services.

"...when I was overwhelmed with career frustration and not sure what to do next, she offered a listening ear, helped me analyse and clarify my options and offered practical advice on the way forward. This helped lift the fog. I did not look back." former senior civil servant.

Teams and the organizational dimension

Team performance is a fast-growing theme. Sometimes it is about working with individuals to improve their team leadership. More often, it is about working with the whole team to understand the collective and individual added value, develop trust, and perform at the highest level.

"Her coaching skills have helped create higher performing top teams who are better able to work in an open, honest and non-defensive way as a result of her input and ideas." Andrew Cleaves, former CEO, public transport and higher education sectors.

"...driving me to question my behaviour towards team members and stakeholders." Paul Vanrietvelde, Financial Planning & Controls Manager, Kuwait Petroleum (Belgium) N.V.

"The programme has proven to be immensely successful, particularly in a heavy industry and operational business ... where people were not previously familiar with being exposed to the coaching environment... John and Rosemary made a particular impression by their willingness to go out on site operationally and see how our team operate on the ground which really solidified their position with the team." Glynis Applebe, HRD, G & W UK/Europe

"She has also played key roles in helping Board members understand their role in an organisation that sits at the intersection between the private sector and central and local government, and in helping members of my senior management team to reflect on their own development in an environment quite different from their previous experience." Philip Cox, Chief Executive, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership.

"Working with Rosemary and John at KH was key to not simply keeping up but to actually growing and thriving as a young leader. Their wise and trusted counsel was crucial for me and my senior team" Jillian Lavender, former MD, publishing. Author.

"Boards of organisations in both the public and private sector have benefited from their team coaching which is tailor-made and structured to each organisation's needs." Christine Gaskell, Chair and non-executive director.

"Her philosophy of working pragmatically and thoughtfully with management teams, developing trust and helping others gain self-insight is a powerful combination." HR director, FMCG and industrial sectors.

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21st Birthday Newsletter

Our particular approach to coaching:

Challenge and support:

“The challenge with effective coaching of successful people is well known, and KH managed to jointly define the need for change, facilitate the creation of outcomes for the individual (and business) and support people through the pleasure (and pain) of the development process, in a human and effective way.” **Adrian Hallmark**, Chairman and Chief Executive, Bentley Motors Ltd.

“I can call it professional shadowing that enables developing leadership skills effectively”. **senior executive, petroleum.**

“They always demonstrated a professional approach and provided much valued challenge, support and insight for those who received coaching”. **senior HR director, Royal Mail Group**

Listening:

“...a combination of attentive listening and sympathetic questioning, as practised by Keary Harper, invariably paves the way to the considerable benefits which coaching provides.” **Sir Colin Chandler**, former FTSE-250 chairman, non-executive director.

Sustainability:

“I know they have helped me develop myself. I am a great supporter of what they have helped me achieve.” **Sir Terry Morgan**, former Chairman and CEO, public transport.

“This foundation and guidance allowed me to scale this up as I moved to more senior roles.” **board member, aviation.**

The KH Team

When we started in 2000, we knew independent coaches whom we admired and who had a similar approach; we kept in touch and invited them to our client dinners. This proved invaluable when we landed several large contracts involving coaching scores of senior executives – a couple in support of culture change. They helped us field a strong team and have remained good friends and colleagues. All had business experience and/or knew all about working in large organizations.

Tanya Chakravarti came from the BBC: *“...Rosemary asked me to join the team as they had won a major contract with the Home Office at a time when they had been publicly criticised as being “not fit for purpose”. It was a challenging assignment and Rosemary, and John took great care to offer supervision, support and advice.”* Tanya also valued the peer days where we brought the team together to share learning and think about the future of our young profession.



Nick Allen reflects that *“John and Rosemary’s steady hands on the coaching tiller has steered us through an objective and practical path, carefully selecting from the many themes and ideas that have been labelled coaching and blending them with more established coaching practices.”*



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21st Birthday Newsletter



David Smith joined the team from banking early on and remembers earnest attempts to define the overall business case for coaching: *“Now that is largely a ‘given’ and organizations are more interested in specific outcomes in specific situations”*.

Pam Billinge came from British Aerospace with a love of horses and is a successful author: *“As my own specialism of horse-led experiential coaching has blossomed (in addition to face to face and remote work) the Keary Harper family has helped me to nurture this different approach.”*



Richard Lowe, whose consultancy specialises in cross-cultural development recalls his experience at BA: *“my coachee arranged for me to see inside a Boeing 747 that was stripped down to a shell, with engines removed, for a major service. The sense of space inside was staggering. I was able to learn how the plane itself and all the component parts such as seats, ovens, coffee machines etc. are repaired and maintained. Of course, every nut and bolt had to be accounted for!”*.

There have been lighter moments:

Alison Willocks: *“Being asked to move my car away from the wall at Wakefield Prison in case an inmate tried to use it as a step to freedom - whilst doing the Home Office coaching - is one of my fonder memories”*.



Louis Beckett came to business coaching via acting and TV: *“...peculiar noises and much loud laughter used to escape the boardroom at 6, Porter St every time I was in (for voice coaching) but Rosemary, John and team were always discreet and despite a few quizzical looks no questions were ever asked!”*

John was visiting a senior BBC executive and stopped off for lunch: *“A summer day, I had a beige linen suit. Without noticing, I had dipped my cuff in the balsamic oil and smeared it all over my suit. Feeling like a tossed salad, I went to the meeting, and he launched into an intense discussion without batting an eyelid. Whether he was short-sighted, a fine actor or completely self-absorbed I will never know”*.

And Rosemary was coaching in Tokyo when managers were men, coaching was unknown, and women did the typing. The company booked a suite in a posh hotel and had each manager arrive every 2 hours. Rosemary: *“When the second man arrived, the hotel staff grew very agitated and wanted ‘to check the room’. It took furious reassurances from the company to convince the hotel that my business meetings were legitimate! “*.

As we look forward, we are reassured by the things that you value in our coaching. But we will keep our eyes and minds wide open for new approaches, and do as we preach:

Never stop learning, and not take ourselves too seriously!