

The Value of Coaching

Clients are drawn to our work because they want something to change. They wish to become more effective, and to learn something new they can take back to their organisational lives which will enhance their performance. In short, they wish to change or adapt their behaviours.

Research, and experience, show us it requires a series of steps, often over a protracted period of time, for people to change their behaviours. The ways in which we relate to people, present information and even view the world, have been crystallising inside us over decades. Our parents, our teachers, our home environment, our peer groups, our culture, perhaps even the ‘clouds of glory’ that Tennyson suggests we trail at our birth, all have deep, formative and lasting impact on how we do things. So to change is no small feat. It requires time, commitment, and focus. Coaching is an invaluable resource on that journey.

Often in organisations, with the inevitable resource constraints, we only ever take a first step. We go on a training course for maybe a half-day or a day and we learn. On a good course we can learn a lot. And we leave with the best of intentions, keen to put our learnings into practice. Sometimes the learnings have been so effectively facilitated, and the insights so poignantly landed, that we do actually change how we think and act when we go back to work.



At other times, the decades of conditioning kick-in and we resort to our familiar patterns.

That's where coaching comes in.

Coaching will help to both personalise and deepen your learning, so that the chance of real behavioural and attitudinal change is significantly increased.

What is coaching?

Arguably it was Sir John Whitmore who introduced coaching to the UK over a decade ago as a means of improving executive performance. John had enjoyed a career as a Formula One racing driver and had also worked with professional golfers where, in common with many sports, coaching was a more familiar part of the scene.

Some time ago, John showed me a short film that highlighted the difference between coaching and instruction:

Two novices are being taught how to play golf. They are learning how to use a 5-iron to play to the green. One of them is being instructed; the other is being coached. The instructed novice is, not unnaturally, being given instructions: ‘Hold the club like this. Swing like this. Follow through like this’. He certainly improves his game and hits the green more often than before, but there is some noticeable resistance in him and he doesn’t seem to be having that great a time. The novice who is being coached has a very different experience. He is encouraged to pick up the club and have a go. ‘How did that feel? What else could you try? Good idea! Let’s see what happens when you try that

grip ...' Not only did this man have much more fun (and was, therefore, much more likely to continue to practice) but his results were also better. He hit the green more often than the first guy.

The key to coaching, then, is to develop two things:

AWARENESS + RESPONSIBILITY

The golf instructor may have lots of evidence-based research to validate the efficacy of his instructions, but the student will not own the results. They will not feel this is 'really me'. They will simply be responding to instruction and not owning their successes or failures.

By contrast, when a coach, through the use of effective questions, helps a person to develop their own self-awareness and links that to their own sense of responsibility for the choices they make and the actions they take ... hey presto! I did it myself. I feel good that I have discovered this. I want to do more of this.

Had the famous high jumper, Dick Fosbury, had an instructor not a coach, the Fosbury Flop (in which the jumper 'flops' over the bar backwards) would not have existed. During training, Fosbury discovered that his natural trajectory took him over the bar backwards (rather than through the more orthodox straddling of the bar) and the coach, with great curiosity and an inquiring attitude, encouraged him to see what happened if he developed that approach. Result? At the 1968 Mexico Olympics, Fosbury took the Gold Medal and set a new Olympic Record. By 1980, 13 of the 16 Olympic finalists used the style. The Fosbury Flop is now by far the most popular high jump technique.

How does coaching work in practice?

Most coaching is based, either implicitly or explicitly, on the GROW model and involves the coach asking open questions (what? when? where? who?) and probing questions (how much? how often? how do you feel now?) to elicit:

- Goals
- Reality
- Options
- Will

Goals

The coach will start with some goal setting, for the session and for the longer-term issue at hand e.g.

What do you want from this session? What does success look like? When do you want to achieve it by? How will you know you've succeeded?

Reality

The coach then moves on to explore how the coachee is experiencing the current reality of the situation e.g.

What is happening currently? What have you tried? What's going well? What's going badly? What happens to you when things don't go the way you hoped?

Options

Here the coach creates a broad and open canvas on which many ideas and options can be painted, suspending immediate evaluation to ensure more radical ideas are not 'screened out' e.g.

What options do you have? What else could you do? If you were to think out of the box, without any restrictions, what might you come up with?

Will

Now, towards the end of the session, the coach focuses in on which options feel right for the client, helping them to choose precise and achievable next steps e.g.

Which options really work for you? How will they help you meet your goals? What help might you need to carry them out? Who will help you with that and when? On a scale of 1-10 how committed are you to doing that? What would help to increase your commitment to a 9 or 10?

While every coaching session is different, and no theory will ever encompass the wonderful diversity of human experiences and interactions, effective coaching sessions will incorporate these four stages in one way or another. They are, indeed, archetypal stages and those of you familiar with the model of archetypes we work with in our Inspirational Leadership (Henry V), Ethical Leadership (Macbeth) and Four Faces of Leadership programmes will be able to identify this overlay:

Goal - *Good King*: the place of boundaries, focus and logic

Reality - *The Great Mother*: the place of connection to how we feel about the situation, the people involved, our experience so far

Options - *The Medicine Woman*: the place of generating new ideas and approaches

Will - *The Warrior*: the place of action. What will I do as a result of all this?

How does mythodrama coaching work?

At OMA we offer two types of coaching. While there may well be overlap, there is value in distinguishing the two:

Performance Coaching:

Designed to help people increase their impact in any important communication they need to make, from a small group meeting to a large set-piece event and may include: presenting a vision or strategy; creating a sense of urgency; or motivating de-motivated people.

Case Study

I have been working with a woman in a major bank in London for the past 3 years. We meet for 90 minutes every two months. When we first met she was a very nervous, somewhat reluctant and pessimistic line manager of half a dozen people in a part of the business she was not particularly passionate about. Our work started with looking at her negative belief systems, her nervousness and her pessimism. She developed sufficient trust in me to share examples each time we met of where she felt she had not inspired her team, or where she had done things she didn't really believe in. We worked on creating some 'antidotes' for some of her 'Inner Critics' - for example a particularly persistent inner voice that kept telling her she just wasn't good enough! We discovered numerous examples where her work had been excellent and used these to create an imaginary 'Inner Coach' that offered reminders of her skills; and reassurance when the old doubts surfaced.

I remember one particular occasion when she used the session to rehearse a PowerPoint presentation she was due to give to the Board. She seemed flat and nervous doing it, and confessed that she didn't like doing PowerPoint presentations. She much preferred just talking to people. Using the potential of the coaching session to be a rehearsal space she did just that. She put aside the PowerPoint and just talked to me. She was transformed. All of her heart and passion was suddenly available. We then decided to add in some practices for 'grounding' - taking time to 'arrive' in the room, breathing

deeper, slowing down, focussing some awareness on her feet and the contact they make with the ground - all ways to develop the Earth Body and the physical presence that help to carry a convincing message.

Next time I saw her I asked her how it went. "Great!" she replied, "I ditched almost all the PowerPoint slides, just leaving a few for reference; did that breathing thing; remembered to smile; and had a great time!" "That's terrific", I said, "How was the feedback?" "Oh, they all loved it," she said, almost casually.

This same woman has now found her niche in the business, heading up the bank's drive to sustainability, and is a happier, more fulfilled human being. She still has her moments of doubt and fear, and her pessimism rears its head from time to time but now, she says, "I see them coming; know how to deal with them; and send them on their way."

Executive coaching:

Designed to help people think through the problems they face, understand what might be blocking their attempts to resolve them, work to remove the blocks and generate creative ways forward, and finally to create a clear plan of the actions to be taken.

Case Study

The coachee was a senior manager in a large multinational corporation. He was male and in his early forties. We conducted six coaching sessions over a nine-month period.

John (name changed) held a position of significant responsibility, and knew that an even more senior job abroad was likely to become available in the next year or so. He wanted coaching because, although successful by many standards, he knew that he was not operating to his full potential.

Specifically, he felt he:

- Relied too exclusively on logic in his decision-making
- Had difficulty in establishing trusting relationships at work, both with peers and subordinates
- Was not having the kind of inspirational impact he wanted to have
- Wanted to get clearer about his sense of purpose at work - his core motivation

John worked with great determination and courage to change what were deeply-ingrained patterns within him. His emotional self was an almost complete 'no-go' zone at the beginning. Yet, with practices suggested by the coach, such as journaling at the end of each day, and practices of presence that brought him more self-awareness in his encounters at work, he made very steady progress. By the third session he was writing in his journal most evenings, noting different feelings he had experienced during the day.

He also began to work very consciously on the quality of his relationships at work. In one of our sessions he came up with the brilliant idea of treating every encounter, from the 'good morning' to his PA, to longer meetings with his staff and his boss, as an 'event'. He committed diligently to this practice, and reported by the fourth session that it was making a remarkable difference (even noticed by his wife!)

We also enquired rigorously into his motivations, his core drivers. We looked back over his family history, and he understood for the first time how much his father's death, when he was a young boy, had affected his personality. This awareness - a true 'light-bulb' moment - enabled him to start separating out the ways in which he was still unconsciously locked into behaviour patterns stemming from that early event. He began to be able to notice them when they arose at work and exercise much more choice about some of them. He also gained clarity about his deep values, what he believed in, the kind of team energy and ethos

he was committed to creating, in short, about what really mattered to him.

Lastly, in important communications to his team, John started to trust himself more, and rely less on notes and PowerPoint. He began to trust the power of his authentic communication, which he practiced during the coaching, and again reported that this was making a significant difference.

We met for a follow-up check-in one year after his final session. He had decided not to take the job abroad, mainly for family reasons. He reported that he was still using many of the practices we had developed together, almost as second-nature by now. He looked back at the coaching as having been an invaluable, and in many ways pivotal, experience that had enabled him to step into a higher level of leadership performance and impact.

OMA coaching is undertaken by accredited members of the Guild of Mythodrama Practitioners (see end of article) who are supported by regular supervision and training. Both performance and executive coaching can take place in two principal settings; Individual coaching in small groups and one-to-one.

Individual Coaching in Small Groups:

On programmes with a duration of 2-5 days, there will be at least one and sometimes two, three or four coaching sessions in which individuals have 30-60 minutes to work on their particular issue.

The coaching takes place in small groups of 5-6 people and, while the session is clearly led by the OMA coach, the other participants are well placed to offer constructive feedback and suggestions. Agreements about confidentiality help participants to be open and take risks and can generate ongoing trust and mutual support.

One-to-One Coaching:

One-to-one coaching may be taken up after an OMA training session to embed and deepen learnings and insights that have arisen during the programme. It can also stand alone should you wish to create a private and confidential space to explore issues you are encountering on your journey towards authentic leadership. Initially sessions are face to face but are often followed up with telephone coaching, they can last from between 90 minutes to 3 hours.

The OMA coach will be recommended to you from our Guild of Mythodrama Practitioners or, if you have already met and worked with a particular coach you can, of course, choose to work with them. While all OMA coaches are skilled at developing rapport with a wide range of individuals, it is important that you feel a 'fit' with the coach and that you work with someone you feel you can trust and be open with.

One-to-one coaching may be short or long-term. It may start as one or two sessions and develop into a longer standing relationship. It may start with a focus on some key organisational objectives and become immeasurably richer by surfacing deeper questions of meaning and purpose. The goal remains the same: to help the individual maximise their effectiveness at work.

It can be extremely helpful to have somewhere - outside the line management system - to try out new thinking, gain feedback, and work on issues that you might feel cautious and vulnerable about exploring within your organisation. Rehearsing an important presentation, or how to come across most effectively in an interview or in a particularly important meeting with the CEO, can be excellent focuses for short-term one to one coaching.

Case Study

A client based in Europe and working for a major US multinational, along with other European colleagues, often felt powerless. HQ were very target driven and he had become very disillusioned and cynical. He found it difficult to bring in his vision and his idealism about leaving the world a better place, and also felt unable to challenge decisions that he felt would not be in the long term interest of the company. In this particular instance there was going to be an amalgamation of two business units which our client felt sure would not be a good idea. He thought it was better to leave them as two separate units.

To see if he could have more influence with HQ, the coach invited him to map the networks he was and wasn't part of, their relationships to each other, and where there were holes that needed to be filled if he was going to be able to get to anyone with power. It looked like spaghetti junction and it also looked impossible for him to access the decision makers. He knew, however, that two executives from the US were going to be in Europe later that month, and was wondering how he could get time with them. Suddenly he said, "Linda!" The coach asked who Linda was, as she had not appeared on the network map. She turned out to be the person who manages the diaries of senior executives when they come to London. She worked in London, and so he could easily contact her. She was the gatekeeper that he could influence, in order to get access to the people he needed to reach. A way forward had appeared, alongside the realisation that power does not only lie within the formal hierarchy. Our client had more power than he thought.

In summary:

Coaching will help to both personalise and deepen your learning, so that the chance of real behavioural and attitudinal change is significantly increased. Coaching provides a space in which you can identify and overcome what is blocking you from living and working from your highest potential. You can try out new ways of working, new approaches, new ideas and receive constructive feedback and encouragement. You can unlock hidden reservoirs of wisdom, and retrieve and enjoy capacities and aptitudes that have been long buried. By building awareness and responsibility with you, your coach will help you drive a process that will build on your desire for change and maximise your effectiveness. Coaching carries the potential to link you even more deeply to a working life imbued with real meaning and purpose.

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If you are interested in coaching either as part of our longer programmes, or as stand alone individual sessions, please contact:

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> Guild of Mythodrama

The Guild of Mythodrama Practitioners was established in 2006. Its formation was inspired by the trade guild systems of medieval Europe. The main purpose of our guild is to promote and maintain a high sense of “quality” and professionalism within our organisation. Each of our presenters and coaches is accredited and ranked using the ancient guild notations of “Artist”, “Master” and “Fellow”.

As well as providing a forum for inclusive peer group learning; every year, according to one's notation, a clear guide is given as to what is expected in terms of engagement in our syllabus of continuous professional development activities. Our training is rigorous and cross-disciplinary, weaving together strands of learning from the major elements of Mythodrama; Theatre, Psychology, Philosophy and Organisational development. The theatrical strands include Michael Chekov (psychological and archetypal gestures); Grotowski (freedom in choice and action); Peter Brook (the empty space); text work and improvisation. Psychological approaches include Archetypal Psychology (particularly James Hillman and Robert Moore); Organisational Psychology; Pessio-Boyden Psychomotor System (theory and practice) and Positive Psychology. Philosophical inquiry includes the deeper meaning in Shakespeare; meaning making; cross-cultural spirituality and post modern thinkers such as Ken Wilber, Laurence Kohlberg, Andrew Cohen, Barbara Marx Hubbard and Joanna Macy. Organisational development experts we study and work with include: Charles Handy, Otto Scharmer, Michael Watkins and David

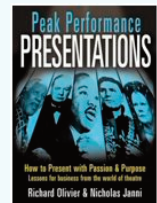
Whyte. The Guild also supervises the training of all associates in the specific coaching protocols that have been created for each Mythodrama programme; and holds annual Best Practice fora for review, action learning, research and quality control.

Useful Reading:

Peak Performance Presentations

How to Present with Passion & Purpose Lessons for Business from the World of Theatre

By Richard Olivier & Nicholas Janni

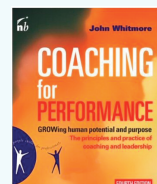


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GROWing Human Potential and Purpose - the Principles and Practice of Coaching and Leadership

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