Coach & Mentor

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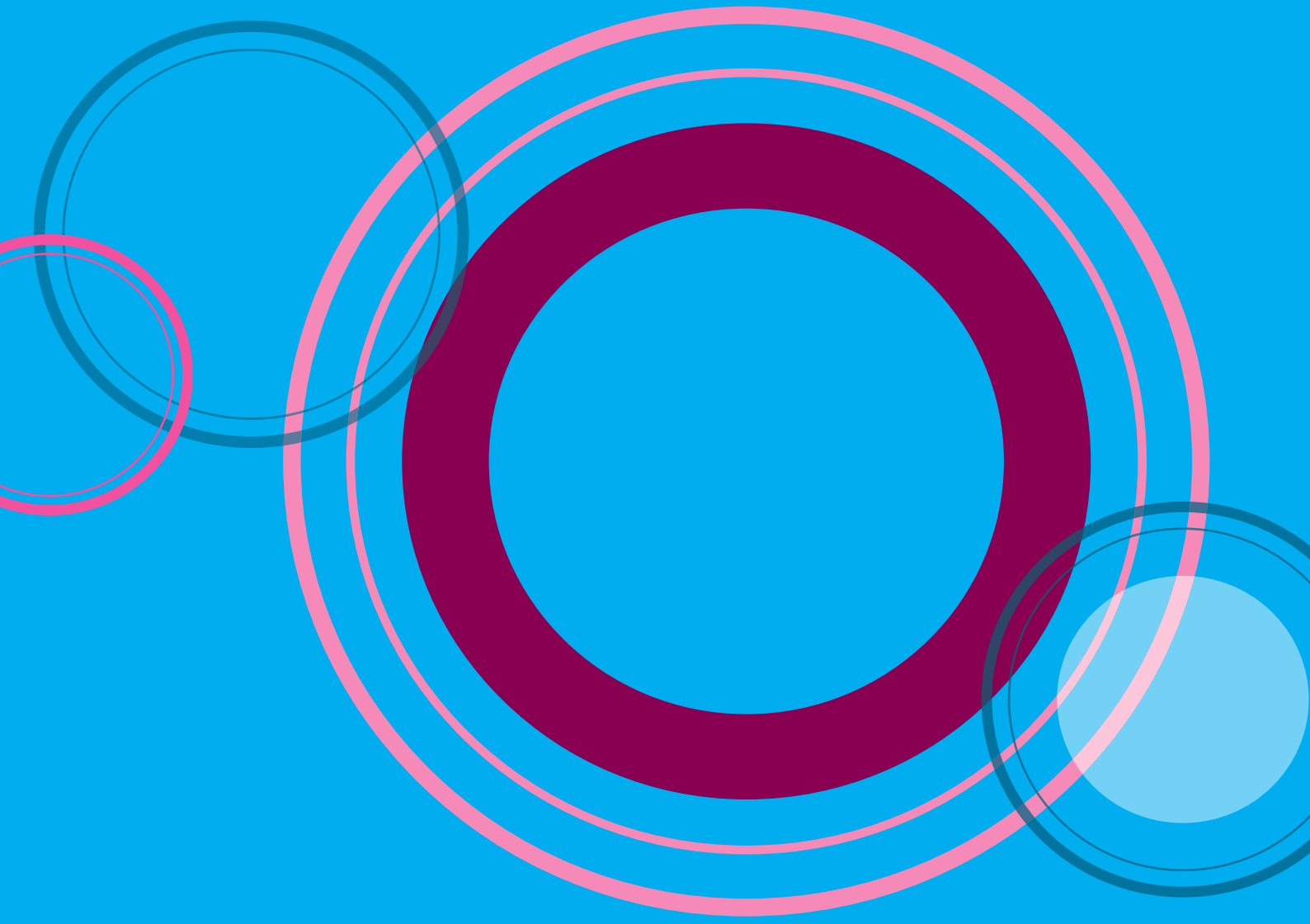

FROM THE LEADERS IN COACH-MENTORING www.theocm.co.uk

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Editorial

Ed Parsloe

Thriving in uncertainty

When did everything get so uncertain? Of course, every generation's perception of the change occurring in their lifetime is that it's somehow different or unique compared with what's gone before. This argument is not without merit - think of the mass upheaval in the post-war years or the seismic social changes of the 1960s. That said, I do believe that in the West we are now living and working in a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

The social and political norms that we have taken for granted, the bedrock of our societies, are being slowly eroded and there is nothing coherent to replace them. And I'm not just talking about Brexit, Trump or the ongoing financial malaise. The 4th Industrial Revolution - described as the onset of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, and impacting all disciplines, economies and industries – has only just begun and threatens to disrupt the world order in ways we are barely able to conceive.

This tsunami of change will be perhaps most keenly felt in the world of work. The acronym VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Chaotic, Ambiguous) has been in our collective lexicon for some time and given the events described above, it's definitely here to stay. Coaches, mentors and the wider profession have been adapting to the challenges presented by this new world but we need to do more if we are going to be able to properly support individuals and organisations through what's emerging on the horizon.

Which brings me to the focus of this year's Journal and Conference - "Making an Impact: delivering GREAT coaching and mentoring consistently and effectively in an uncertain world". In our new book (available to buy from the Kogan Page website!) we describe great coaching and mentoring as "aligning the performance improvements of individuals and teams against what is needed to deliver the strategy of the organisation whilst seeking to develop behaviors, skills and mindsets that will help future-proof the organisation".

I passionately believe that it is only by delivering this kind of great coaching and mentoring that we will be able to meet the challenges as they unfold. To work in any other way just will not cut it in this new era. Therefore we must continue to adapt the way we work and develop new skills that enable us as coaches and mentors to move from good to great.

This Journal and our Conference in the summer aim to kick start this process by catalysing your development in areas that will become increasingly important. For example, exploring resilience, developing mission-critical teams, engaging in transformative supervision and working with Millennials will be important to individual coaches and mentors as well as the organisations they work with.

We cannot predict the future but we can ensure that we strive to deliver truly great, impactful coaching and mentoring, consistently and effectively to help future-proof our clients. If we do that, we will be consistently adding value and, I wager, our worlds will be a little less uncertain.

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Rooting Coaching and Mentoring in your Organisation

Diane Newell

There's a parable I remember learning at school about a farmer sowing seeds. Some fall on shallow, rocky ground and, although the plants quickly spring up, their roots are not secure and so they fail equally rapidly and are wasted. Others fall into tilled earth, put down strong roots and flourish, withstanding drought and fierce sun. We see the same thing in organisations in regards to talent initiatives and investments in people. Some seem to be a 'flash in the pan' and are rapidly discarded when things get tough or a new flavour of the month comes along. Others are rooted in the organisation's culture and flourish, providing a wonderful harvest. Coaching and Mentoring (CAM) is no exception.

So what is the equivalent of tilled earth? What's the key to making your investment in CAM deliver fruitfully? One key factor is genuine and sustained support from senior leadership.

Getting and maintaining senior sponsorship for Coaching and Mentoring investment

> *"The most important enabler of any coaching/mentoring programme is consistent sponsorship and support from the organisation's leadership team."*
>
> *"Developing and sustaining a coaching culture requires concerted effort over time, driven by visible support and a clear vision from senior leaders. Moreover, it requires senior leaders voluntarily to cede a certain amount of power and control to leaders and employees at lower levels in the organisation, and to do this for a sustained period of time."*

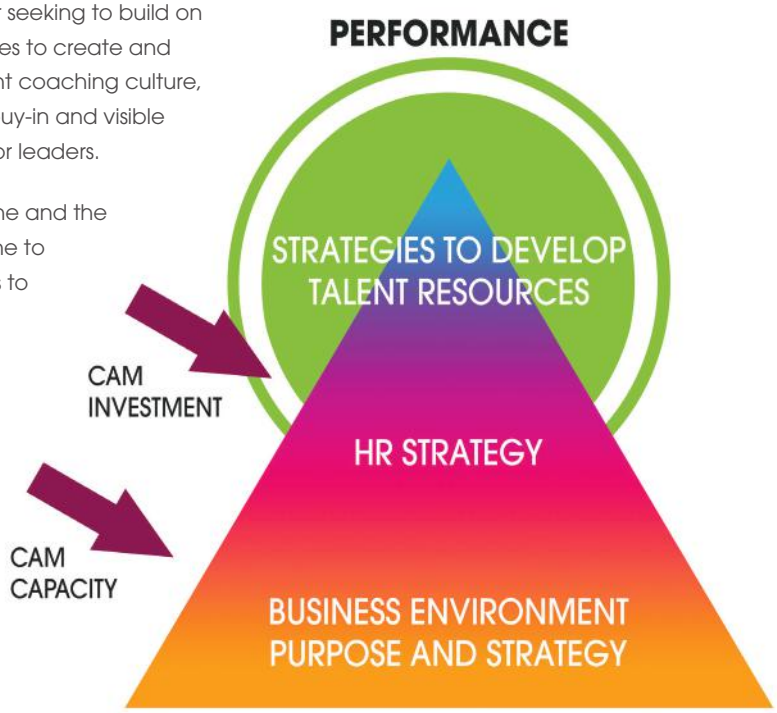
These are quotes from the recently released third edition of *Coaching and Mentoring*. Simple to state, but definitely not easy to do. ("Just because it's simple doesn't make it easy" is a bit of a catch phrase for us!) When the opportunity arose to work on a new edition of this seminal book on coaching, we wanted to share the knowledge and experience that The OCM team have gained in working with clients to successfully implement CAM in organisations. And so we added additional chapters doing just that. One of the key issues for any agent of change is how you can get and maintain the required level of organisational commitment to CAM investment. For this article I've taken some of the ideas from the book on this issue and summarised them.

Whether you are setting out on the first steps to embedding CAM within your organisation, or seeking to build on existing structures to create and sustain a resilient coaching culture, you need the buy-in and visible support of senior leaders.

Rule number one and the foundation stone to achieving this is to link investment of any kind in Coaching and Mentoring back to the talent/HR strategy as well as to the organisation's larger strategy. Without this link the programme is likely be seen as another well-meaning HR initiative of peripheral importance and will be vulnerable to cuts and shifts of focus as the organisation responds to change and new challenges.

In setting up that strategic link it is important to be as specific as possible in terms of the investment you want to make, the expected impact this will have and appropriate measures for determining results. It's also important to make sure that key sponsors have a sense of clarity and ownership of that investment and its outcomes.

Here are the four key ingredients to achieving this, which I've assembled from three of the new chapters that feature the third edition of *Coaching*



and Mentoring: Practical Techniques for Developing Learning and Performance:

1. Understand what "future potential" means for your organisation and find a sponsor.

2. Consult and involve stakeholders within the organisation in defining anticipated benefits and key measures of success.

3. Link outcomes to strategy and define success factors and measures for your investment.

4. Invest in finding and maintaining senior sponsors.

1. Understand what future potential means for your organisation and find a sponsor.

Future potential is the capacity of an organisation to learn and constantly adapt to the rapidly changing, complex and increasing volatile world in which we operate. And to do so whilst continuing to deliver on the business strategy and purpose. When trying to make the case for coaching, the more specific you can be about the opportunities and risks you are trying to address, the more likely you are to be able to identify and engage with a senior stakeholder who really cares about that potential to be your champion and create buy-in for your investment. The table below lists some scenarios that could be relevant to a large consumer business.

2. Consult and involve stakeholders within the organisation in defining anticipated benefits and key measures of success.

Having dentified the effect you wish to have, you need to engage with the main stakeholders to secure their buy-in. As discussed below, identifying a senior sponsor for your CAM activities will have a significant impact on the likelihood of success. But don't ignore other players in the system. Engaging with them and understanding their drives is just as important to the overall success of your plan.

Example organisational opportunities and risks	Examples of coaching interventions to address them
An opportunity to deliver a key multi-disciplinary project.	A team coaching intervention to establish shared goals, ways of working and contingency plans to deal with conflict.
The upcoming retirement of mission-critical technical staff.	Coaching training and individual coaching to promote knowledge sharing and collaborative working between employee groups.
Retention issues in mission-critical talent pools.	Individual coaching for team leaders to improve leadership capability and engagement.
Falling Customer satisfaction in major buyers share.	Coaching for sales teams around customer understanding and engagement; coach training for sales leaders.
Growth: recruitment of new technical professionals requiring a substantial knowledge transfer	Structured mentoring programme, including training and ongoing support for mentors.

Rooting Coaching and Mentoring in your Organisation (cont.)

Here are some examples of questions that you can ask your senior stakeholders to identify those specific changes that will be of real value, and which CAM can help with:

- What do you want your people to be doing differently so that they can better deliver the strategy?
- What capabilities do your people need that they don't already possess?
- What is the potential within your business that you would like to unlock? What is getting in the way?
- What part might CAM play in helping people to have better conversations and make better collective decisions within the business?
- How might CAM progress people through the organisation in a way that isn't happening now?
- What sorts of measures would give you confidence that the programme is adding value?
- What might some of the other benefits be? For example, could coaching help people to work across silo's?

3. Link outcomes to strategy and define success factors and measures for your investment.

You need to make sure you have **specific and concrete** answers to these questions. It's important for the resilience of the investment to document what the organisation's aspiration is, and to give tangible examples of what you might see people doing differently as a result. And then to link this back to the organisation's strategic objectives as well as the HR strategy, talent strategy and Learning and Development (L&D) strategy.

After the initial consultation, clearly communicate a set of key success factors that the programme will need to deliver and link these back to the findings from the initial consultation.

Where possible, success factors (and measures) should link back to the strategic objectives for the overall business. Where that isn't possible they should link to the L&D strategy or HR/talent strategy.

An example key success factor:

In year one we will train a cohort of twenty internal coaches using a formal training course. The course will accredit these coaches at foundation level. These coaches will each undertake two coaching assignments in the engineering talent pool, to be commenced by the beginning of Q3. In the short term this will help our engineers manage the current pressures which the engineering function are facing; in the longer term this will help ensure we build the leadership capability that is needed within the next generation of engineers.

In linking investment in CAM to changes in the capacity, talent and performance of the organisation, you can create real commitment in stakeholders. In measuring and demonstrating that impact you make that support resilient.

Measurement costs money and time, and different organisations have different metrics that they measure regularly. Ideally, when seeking measures of success and return you want to choose one that already exists.

Metrics to look for in your organisation to assess the impact of great CAM:

- **Business process and production metrics —** there are numerous approaches out there (Six Sigma, Lean, Quality) and CAM could well affect your ability to improve your scores;
- **HR systems data —** many organisations have reliable data on retention, absence, talent management, employee satisfaction surveys and learning attainment. CAM is great way to support strategy in these areas and can be relatively easily measured;
- **Target, audit and compliance data —** many of us work in a highly regulated environments, so shifts in an organisations ability to meet and exceed these requirements are often highly prised strategic goals;
- **Psychometrics —** if you're seeking to change behaviour in individuals and/or groups, psychometrics are a great mechanism of analysing and demonstrating impact;
- **Performance dashboards —** many organisations link and monitor individual KPI's through performance management systems, which could be a useful source of data to

Developing a coaching culture requires concerted effort over time, driven by support and vision from senior leaders; the more specific you can be about the opportunities and risks the more likely you are to be able to engage with senior stakeholders

benchmark against;

- **Improvements to compliant ratios** — particularly relevant for many organisations given the recent recession and its consequences for the financial sector;

- **Training costs and impact** — using CAM to support a 70-20-10 approach can be a highly effective way of improving the 'stickiness' of training helping to reduce the overall training budget;

- **Internal promotions and talent pool** — some organisations have complex business models and prefer high quality internal promotions to external appointments, minimising risk and reducing fees on search agents;

- **Industry recognition** — many businesses apply for an Investors In People (IIP) award or other such schemes and CAM is potentially a way to significantly improve scores in this area.

4. Invest in finding and maintaining senior sponsors.

Clearly, when planning to invest in CAM you want it to have a lasting, positive impact on the individuals and teams who are trained and/or coached, and on the wider organisation. For this to happen, the related activities need sustained support and funding over a period of years. This in turn requires support and sponsorship at senior levels across the organisation, not just within HR. Too many programmes start out well with good intentions from senior people in the organisation, only to have that commitment eroded over time. This can happen because the organisation comes under different pressures or due to changes within the organisation's structure.

For this reason it's critical to have a very senior-level sponsor within the business who is prepared to provide long-term support and overall sponsorship to the programme. Ideally, this is the Chief Executive or COO, or another member of the leadership team. This sponsor should be in addition to the Chief HR Officer/ Group HRD.

The sponsor should be someone who has had a positive personal experience of coaching and/or mentoring — typically someone who has seen coaching and/ or mentoring as being instrumental in his/her success to date. This means that even when there are pressures to reduce support for the programme, there is still a pull from the top to ensure that the programme endures and thrives. And, of course, your clarity about the planned and delivered impacts of the investment will make it easier for you to engage with and get the support of those senior people.

For example, the project team of a mentoring programme for a Fortune 500 company enlisted the support of the Group CEO. Having been mentored earlier in his career and experienced the benefits, he put his weight behind the mentoring programme. This led to a very significant uptake in the business which would not otherwise have happened and and ensured that the programme retained senior executive team support over a five year period.

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Whether you are just starting out with a small pot plant of CAM on the office window sill or planning some serious cultivation, I hope that these simple guidelines will be of use to you in making sure your effort pays back to you and your organisation. At the OCM we are deeply saddened by the loss of talent and waste of potential that so many people, teams and organisations endure. We know, as do you, that CAM can change that. It can have a real impact on performance, potential and satisfaction. It gives us at The OCM real satisfaction to partner with organisations such as T-Systems, Mars RWE and Sedexo to make a real change through CAM. I personally get a sense of having made a real contribution when I can look back with partners over a few years of work and effort and see how far we've come together! I hope that you too will be looking at the fruits of your labour with pride this time next year.

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From technical professional to leader — the role of emotional intelligence

Anna McLean

Over the past two decades, organisations have seen a fundamental shift in leadership style. Organisational cultures are less autocratic with fewer levels of management. A key element of successful leadership in today's increasingly complex and uncertain world is getting work done through other people. Yes, technical or specialist knowledge is important, but self-awareness, self-management and social awareness are critical factors too — some suggest even more important than technical know-how.

The Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) estimates failure to transition into leadership roles is a staggering 38% – 50%. In many cases, these are professionals who have demonstrated consistent success in their careers to date; they have intellectual acumen, demonstrate initiative, and have specialist knowledge. So why is the failure rate so high? The CCL suggests this is because new leaders don't take into account their changed circumstances. Instead, they fall back on strategies, behaviours and ways of working that used to serve them well.

What is EI?

The psychologists Salovey and Mayer coined the term 'emotional intelligence' in 1990, describing it as a "form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action". Daniel Goleman became aware of Salovey and Mayer's work, and this eventually led to his book, *Emotional Intelligence* (1995). Goleman argued that it is not conventional intelligence (as measured by IQ) that predicts success in business, rather it is emotional intelligence (EI). He described emotionally intelligent people as those who demonstrate four characteristics (Figure 1):

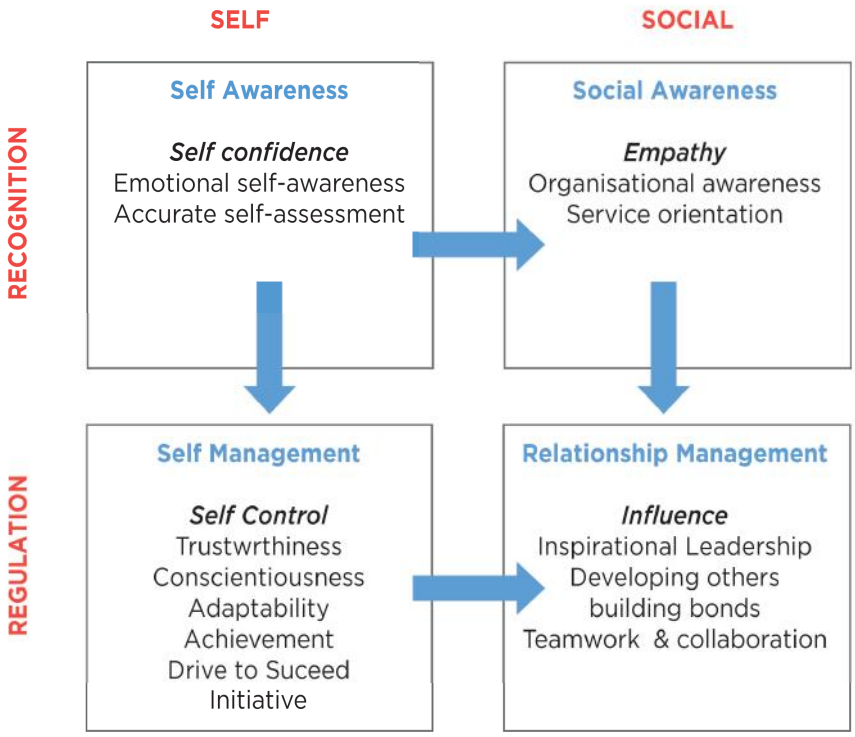

Figure 1: Goleman's four domains of emotional intelligence (1995).

Emotionally intelligent people are:

- good at understanding their own emotions → *self-awareness*
- good at managing their emotions → *self-management*
- empathetic to the emotional drives of other people → *social awareness*
- *good at handling other people's emotions → social skills*

Given its importance, can EI be learned? Probably the biggest contributing factor to the popularity of emotional intelligence theories is the assumption that, unlike IQ, it can be developed. This is not a universally accepted view, but research does support the idea that emotional intelligence competencies can be significantly improved over time. This is good news for technical professionals and coaches.

The challenge for technical professionals

The value of technical professionals (TPs) to organisations is typically viewed in terms of the skills and expertise they contribute. What can be overlooked is the unique view of the world they bring: their creativity and ability to innovate. However, they are not always best placed to articulate their ideas to the decision-makers in the wider business. TPs are used to operating in an environment where the language, culture and behaviours are similar to their peers. The culture is one of a 'club' or silo with an inward focus. As such, the skill sets and

qualities required in technical roles are often polar opposites of those required to lead people:

• Detailed, specialist work vs big picture, systems thinking.

• Working alone vs high levels of interaction with others.

• Influencing others through knowledge/direction vs adopting a coaching approach to enable others.

With a preference for a pacesetter style of leadership, TPs set high performance standards and expect the same from those around them (Goleman 2003). Their demand for excellence can overwhelm others and morale suffers. Such leaders also give little, poorly positioned, or no feedback on how others are doing, instead jumping in to take over when they think people are lagging. When TPs leave, people feel directionless as they are so used to the 'expert' setting the rules.

In order for TPs to be at their best and contribute fully, they need to recognise the part they play in the wider system. While technical knowledge and expertise are a given, the ability to start, nurture, influence and manage relationships are key too. This means finding ways of engaging with their teams, connecting with others in the business and externally to customers. Extensive research suggests that the best performing TPs and leaders possess something more than technical competence. What makes a difference is EI: the ability to listen, adapt, collaborate, empathise and build trust so that they, and their teams, are enabled to perform at their best.

How can coach-mentoring help?

At the heart of EI is self-awareness. We know as coaches that if a client or coachee doesn't understand their own motivations and behaviours, it's difficult to develop an understanding of others. A lack of self-awareness can also limit their ability to think rationally and apply technical expertise. TPs tend to be process- or goal-oriented, work in a linear fashion and value technical skills above all else. Their experience of lengthy periods of academic study will have placed little or no emphasis on managing or getting the best from others. However, TPs generally have an appetite for learning and can (and do) develop into exceptional leaders.

If a client doesn't understand their own motivations and behaviours, it's difficult to develop an understanding of others

When we are coaching TPs what do we need to stay alert to? TPs typically respect expertise and value knowledge. As a result they may place less value on 'soft' skills. How we position coaching, therefore, needs careful consideration. This starts with conveying the message that EI is as important to their leadership journey as their specialist skills. TPs value fact-based approaches and want to test ideas, viewing things as either 'right' or 'wrong'. Introducing the concept of brain science and neuroplasticity (if appropriate) might be helpful here. Importantly, conveying the idea that we have the capacity to replace unhelpful habits and behaviours with helpful ones.

As coaches, we should not underestimate the important part we play in role-modelling behaviours such as developing rapport and building relationships. By using accessible language, listening without diagnosing, and giving and receiving constructive feedback we are demonstrating skills that broaden the TPs repertoire and ultimately increase their flexibility in terms of how they interact and communicate with others. The TPs pacesetter style of leadership may have served them well in the past. However, understanding that by adapting their style as the situation demands (while staying true to themselves) opens new perspectives.

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The potency of coaching and mentoring — a personal and professional reflection on the bandwidth of the coaching voice

Angela Hill

Significance — what and why?

The significance of the Zen phrase 'turn around to move forward' was brought to life for me during a particular journey home. I witnessed, with some trepidation, a young boy steering his pony and trap, which had been spooked by dogs, down a steep slope. Slowly and intentionally, he turned the horse and trap around 360 degrees, before moving forward carefully past the dogs and down to the open expanse and freedom of a windswept beach. A parallel with coaching and mentoring (CAM) came to mind.

My fear is that the potency and inherent transformational power of CAM has actually been diminishing year on year, despite more and more companies engaging with it. I have felt an increasing sense of déjà vu in response to the illustrations and experiences of so-called management coming through in my coaching and supervision sessions: bullying, a hot issue in the late 1990s, lives again.

A reduction in the power of CAM to deliver real lasting change for the benefit of the organisation and the individuals within it may have various causes. For example: rigidity over austerity policies and economic uncertainty; depleted vision and thought leadership; or anxiety and work indignities increasingly being accepted as normal.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has questioned in the past how much coaching was being used as a panacea due to its focus on individuals rather than collective needs or business outcomes. Today, against an increasing tide of insecurity in work, communities and society in general, are any constructive and challenging messages from coaching and mentoring actually getting through? Are providers now changing those message to have a more acceptable tone?

Against this backdrop, what might we achieve again in coaching and mentoring, if we can slowly turn around in order to move forward? I would suggest that we need simple and consistent messages, not necessarily loud but clear, set like shining beacons that reach out far and wide, free from interference. The system's honest feedback on talent, leadership, process and performance will encourage or warn. We must ask how these amplified messages 'to speak truth to power' might add to competitive advantage or reduce business risk.

Have I, have we, individually and collectively the will and courage to make that turn? Or are we as spooked as the horse in the scene described above?

The learning – so what?

My journey home was to visit family graves, to show respect for those who have gone before. It was a joyful, comforting journey and a chance to be grounded again. Taking this as a potential invitation to explore another parallel, I found myself drawn to a dusty book, long overlooked: *Effective Coaching* by Myles Downey (2003). And there it was, as clear as a bell, the space and bandwidth for more potent coaching and mentoring

Bridging the years, as music can, we are reminded that the organisation is the client; that CAM is about learning and creating positive change. Simple sounds in a complex, discordant world. Here are some timely sound bites, both from the distant and more immediate past, that may illuminate our current world:

- there are many ways to coach;
- reducing interference is the focus of CAM (see Gallwey's potential minus interference equals performance equation in *The Inner Game of Work*, Tim Gallwey (2000));
- people have more potential at all ages but some are less inclined to stay;
- an individual's reality (including the coach's) is not reality itself;
- we are responsible for the results we get in life or, in other words, joy and fulfilment are within our own hands and heart: "Effective coaching is empathic but does not hide from reality." (Downey, 2003)

There are other parallels. In my scene the young man and his horse are energetically connected, aware of the environment and their inner state, working together to move beyond fear and obstacles. Who wouldn't want to be in that flow state in their work and life generally?

And yet other voices at the scene delivered in disapproving looks — dog walkers, open public space, children, etc. In the world of coaching and mentoring, of global markets, fierce competition, USP's and the need for personal differentiation, voices are easily lost in the melee. The customer's voice especially is being drowned out.

We can add to that the interference of weakness, selfishness and the clamour of different tribes seeking to dominate at work, between coaching trade bodies, on the news and on social media.

How much is coaching and mentoring responsible for the impotence of its own voice at this time?

Application to coaching and mentoring — now what?

With the business or organisation as the primary client of coaching and mentoring, how does all that interference (white noise) impact on individual or business performance and potential? What opportunities for innovation are being missed?

The first step to tackling these questions is to take some time out to examine and review our coaching and mentoring practice through deep reflection with another/others in supervision or through a rigorous accreditation process. This helps us to hear the interference in our own work, externally and internally. We need to challenge ourselves to notice what has become the norm and re-tune our practice.

As coaches, how much are we accepting of the perceived helplessness that arises from a power imbalance within systems? Is our own energy depleted by the effort involved to coach well in discordant systems? What are we failing to notice about how a minor irritation can shift imperceptibly (except to the person on the receiving end) into passive aggressive behaviour and bullying, functional 'working to rule', or all out warfare?

All these challenges and issues can be discovered and explored in the quiet calm of the supervision space. And then what? How can coaches and mentors acting as a collective add potency to their feedback to the primary client? What shared wisdom from delivering effective feedback, is filtering back into the wider CAM world?

'Turn around to move forward''; Potential minus Interference equals Performance: P – I = P; What do you need to act on to increase the potency of your coaching voice?

In some countries, communications are controlled, censored or blocked. Yet, some messages still get through. To increase the potency of our collective CAM voice, we need to find our own channel and medium in order to open up an honest dialogue with the relevant people about what is happening in organisations.

Ask yourself, what feedback have you delivered and at what level within a business over the last year? Like me, you could say none, although you may have experienced much associated angst. You may, as I have, searched the bandwidth for an opportunity to speak, dabbled ineffectually in other broadcasts, or sought other voices to join with as a professional coach chorus.

So, how does an individual or a coach collective find and stay tuned to our own strong signal as coaches and mentors?

Step 1 — Individually and within organisations, set up and speak through a feedback channel (protecting individual sources, of course) on themes and trends arising in CAM with direct relevance to the business. Target listeners who will act on the information. Take care you are not unwittingly transmitting to a listener employed directly or indirectly to spin messages for the system being questioned.

How will you know? You may never know for sure, so open up channels to at least three different stakeholders at a senior level. Be very clear in your contracting and re-visit this over time, clarifying expectations. Remember, permissions and commitment may shift over time.

Step 2 — Lobby your chosen trade body to report objectively and regularly on organisational themes and trends. Some focus their energy and minimal resources on quality and standards, others on making a difference. Ask for tangible evidence of what they actually do to challenge malpractice in organisations in broad terms and with appropriate partners (like the CIPD). You will then know that you are not paying as a member for marketing spin, but for a supportive body genuinely aiming for professionalism in CAM practice across all contexts and countries.

The potency of coaching and mentoring — a personal and professional reflection on the bandwidth of the coaching voice (cont.)

Alternatively, explore your planned feedback in supervision before transmitting to ensure you are connected with organisational purpose and not overly influenced by the system or any one individual.

Step 3 — Keep your own records of shared themes and trends with the CAM sponsor, with your supervisor, trade body and any actions you or they have agreed to.

Step 4 — Be prepared to walk away from or cease coaching in systems that continue to abuse their power and authority over people. Not to do so is to collude or to cover up poor practice, which generates its own interference and diminishes the potency of coaching and mentoring.

As you look to increase the bandwidth of the coaching voice, remember to work on your reflections by yourself or in supervision to bring into play voices as yet unheard — maybe the end user, other stakeholders or support functions — and to turn down the volume on the dominant discourses.

Step 5 — Work on using your own voice to open up and develop dialogue, listening in order to understand and to act, whether in your day job, with your team, with your supervisor, or within a coaching initiative or assignment. Your own voice may need additional support if you have experienced a family or cultural system where your voice was belittled or silenced. At the same time, notice if you have a voice that tends to organise or control. For example, in my work role, at a distance and in supervision, I am working on "holding the power of my own voice and encouraging the voice of others". (Carroll 2014)

The wrap

We are all familiar with the unspoken rules that encourage silence or apparent agreement within systems. These are mostly fear based or political. An inauthentic voice or self-censorship is common when we are new, uncertain about work security or have unpredictable leadership. As coaches and mentors, encourage the leaders you work with to seek out other voices, whether one-on-one, mystery shoppers, 'go look sees', or regular off site or client site visits.

What do you need to act on to increase the potency of your coaching and mentoring voice?

From experience, I might propose:

Courage — There is always individual risk as systems self-protect, but the potential gains are inspiring.

Challenge — Keep an eye out and be prepared to challenge what is taken for granted (they are never an immovable right) as well as your own assumptions and beliefs; always turn to yourself first to uncover any of the 'ists' we readily notice in others, e.g., the racist, ageist or populist.

Determination — What brought you into coaching or mentoring and what keeps you here? Are you congruent in your being and doing at all times? Let honesty and humility power your determination for the collective good.

Free Choice — Know when to *turn around, slowly and intentionally, in order to move forward*. Build in space and quiet time to listen in to the voice of your own 'rider' at the centre of yourself and the deeper wisdom of what it means to be human.

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Uses & Abuses of Resilience — is it time for less resilience, not more?

Graham Clark

Resilience has been a topic of interest to coaches and to the wider Learning and Development community for at least the last 15 years. It's an important and enduring subject which, as coaches, we'll often be asked about. I believe that as coaches we can offer insights that few other professionals can.

What do we mean by resilience?

Resilience is the quality that allows some people to suffer "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and come back from the experience stronger than before. Resilient people are able to deal with uncertainty, failure and challenge, and while they might not enjoy the experience, they are not overcome by these adversities. And as we know the business environment is more complex and changeable than ever before. We might describe the business world as VUCA these days, but Shakespeare's description of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" is more poetic.A It also shows that the need for resilience has been around for a while and is unlikely to go away any time soon.

What makes an individual resilient?

Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make someone resilient. Among them are a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate one's emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback.

In particular, resilient people are able to handle uncertainty in a proportionate way. Anxiety and stress are natural responses to uncertainty, but some people are able to handle this uncertainty more effectively than others making them less anxious and more resilient.

Psychological research suggests that the concept of 'safety' is crucial in this. If people feel safe they are much better able to handle stress, pressure and uncertainty: "Despite these adversities, I will find a way to make things work and it will be alright in the end."

However, if someone lacks a sense of safety things will be quite different: "There are so many different things going on and it's all up in the air. I'm so worried about how it will all turn out." Put someone in a highly uncertain situation over a long period of time where they feel unsafe, and they are likely to suffer stress, anxiety and maybe even burnout.

As we know, some people are more prone to anxiety than others. People with naturally lower anxiety levels have an advantage when it comes to resilience in that they naturally perceive things as 'safer' for the most part. But there is hope for those with naturally higher anxiety levels too.

What can coaches do to help our 1:1 clients?

A lot of training in resilience is focused on helping people perceive uncertainty in a more positive way and on developing a stronger sense of personal safety. As coaches we can help our clients to develop these traits too.

Ruth Simpson, an OCM Associate who specialises in resilience, has identified two key areas that she focuses on with her coaching clients:

1. An open mind and sense of objectivity in order to see the reality of the situation.

2. Confidence in one's self and one's own ability to handle the situation.

These make intuitive sense. When people have the inner freedom to see they are safe and that there is no threat as well as the confidence in themselves to deal with whatever comes up, they can switch off their default response and so feel less anxious and stressed.

Much of the related coaching work focuses on exploring the client's generalised sense of a lack of safety as it is often based on beliefs that are not serving the client's current situation. Developing an ability to explore and question the 'unsafety' (perceived threat) alongside rebuilding confidence in one's self and one's abilities allows the client to relax and perform more effectively.

Over time, a skilled coach can be extremely effective at helping individuals to develop resilience. But in my view, this is only half of the story.

What's the catch?

Over time, as the concept of resilience has become more widely known, many organisations have placed more and more emphasis on having resilient staff. And that's a good idea in some ways. There is a lot of merit in encouraging people to solve issues themselves and to adopt a can-do attitude to challenge and adversity. Plenty of research shows that people who believe that they can shape their own destiny and who view challenges with relish are more effective and more satisfied with their work than those who see their lives as shaped by external forces beyond their control. This contrast between 'internal locus of control' and 'external locus of control' is an important part of resilience training and coaching.

But there is a danger that in this search for ever more resilient employees, leaders and leadership professionals lose focus on what resilience truly is. Healthy resilience as we defined earlier (an open mind and objectivity, combined with confidence in one's self and one's own abilities) could very easily give way to the development of a superficial, false form of resilience in an organisation. This is particularly the case if the organisation's culture values

Uses & Abuses of Resilience — is it time for less resilience, not more? (cont.)

resilience without offering people support to develop it in its more healthy form.

Someone who shows 'false resilience' seems tough and stoic in the face of adversity, but is actually not coping with it effectively at all. We can all think of people we know who seem like resilient 'tough cookies' on the surface, but in fact are suffering internally with chronic stress and handling it in unhealthy ways. Such people invest a lot of energy in 'impression management': keeping up the appearance of being resilient whilst, in reality, suffering for it and in danger of burnout. Or there are people who seem tough and able to cope with anything but who are unaware of the impact that they are having on others. They may feel fine themselves, but they are taking the pressure out on colleagues.

So, an organisation which champions personal resilience above all else risks creating people who are "brittle": acting tough but suffering in silence. And, more insidiously, it risks creating and rewarding people who act in "toxic" ways: getting the job done but leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. Both types are harmful to the long-term health of any organisation and need help and guidance to manage themselves more effectively.

Is the problem with people or the situation they're in?

Perhaps the fact that there's currently so much focus on resilience indicates a deeper problem. After all, to play devil's advocate for a moment, it's much easier for senior leaders to tell people to be more resilient than it is to address systemic issues which are causing the workplace stress in the first place.

The worst-case scenario is that by focusing on personal resilience, unscrupulous and out of touch leaders are in effect telling people to 'suck it up' without taking responsibility for the conditions in which people work.

The reality is that it's always a bit of both. Senior-level leaders don't often need coaching on resilience, but do often need help to see the systemic issues that may be holding their people back. So if we're coaching senior leaders who feel their people aren't rising to the challenge of the workplace, we need to help them to understand the system that they are creating and to take their responsibility for improving it seriously.

> As coaches we need to help our clients build organisational resilience

And if we're helping mid-level executives to gain resilience, we also need to help them consider the systemic challenges that they are facing. Crucially, they need to develop a realistic view of what they can and can't change. As the old prayer says, we need to help them gain the "serenity to accept the things (they) cannot change, courage to change the things (they) can, and the wisdom to know the difference." (Reinhold Nibuhr).

Tools like spiral dynamics, integral coaching and Peter Senge's systems thinking are highly effective when deployed alongside coaching for resilience.

Organisational resilience

In my view, as coaches we need to help our client organisations build organisational resilience: resilient individuals working in a dynamic, appropriately flexible organisation.

There are two aspects to this:

1. Leaders at all levels need to develop a more healthy view of what personal resilience actually is. This means moving from the unhealthy 'tough cookie' view we described earlier, to a more healthy view of resilience being all about having an open mind and objectivity, combined with confidence in one's self and one's own abilities. Tough cookies are to be helped, not revered.

2. Senior leaders and team leaders need to develop the habit of reflecting on the system that they are creating and perpetuating, in particular those aspects which cause unproductive stress and unnecessary challenges. This requires leaders to have genuine, open conversations with people about what is getting in their way, and a willingness to act on what they find.

As coaches we are uniquely well placed to advise, guide and challenge our clients to play their part in developing personal and organisational resilience.We also have a responsibility to challenge outdated and unhelpful views of what resilience means.

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The Value of Team Worth

Jackie Elliott

Show me a team with a sense of true worthiness — a team that believes they are worthy of the respect and support of others, who have the courage to be imperfect and the power to make meaningful connection ¬— and I will show you a high performing team.

A team that measures and values their worth understands the importance of good conversations and connection. A team that is confident of their value and respects each other has psychological safety; they can listen to build connection and can afford to be open and vulnerable, to be trusted and trusting.

So, what is your team worth? How do you measure this vague and often intangible element that is the magic that enables a high performing team?

A team's worth can be broken down into several measurable elements that galvanise not only the team itself but also its stakeholders and the organisation around them.

Value — what is the value that only this team can deliver?

All organisations require their teams to meet certain set deliverables, but what ignites the passion of a team is what they uniquely can bring to the table. What is it that this team delivers that no other team in the organisation can? Right from the start of a team's formation, this question should be foremost in the team leader's mind; it is a compelling vision for the team's success and a guide for decision-making. Members of a team that can clearly articulate their vision and success are freed up to think creatively together in a way that brings true value to them personally, recognition to the team collectively, and positively influences the teams around them.

> The ability to create and sustain meaningful connections is the key to competitive advantage

Usefulness — what unique capabilities and expert competency does this team hold?

Is the team taking full advantage of all their collective knowledge and talent? All too often I work with team members who feel frustrated and undervalued because their full experience and knowledge is not being put to use Every team member should regularly ask themselves and their peers "what more can I/you usefully bring to this team?". In making this a routine challenge the team will gain access to areas of expertise that otherwise would be have been left 'on the shelf' under the headings, "I did something like that but it was so long ago, it's probably not worth mentioning" or "I've studied that but everyone else seems know a little about it so I won't speak up in case I look patronising". The ability to utilise all of a team's resources not only provides a competitive edge, but, critically, motivates the team members who feel valued and gain intrinsic inspiration from the ability to demonstrate their unique skills and mastery.

Merit — how does this team outperform the expectations of its stakeholders?

What do the stakeholders say about this team behind closed doors? How does this team strive for excellence? All successful teams have protocols and standards that guide their work and direct their focus, but utilising these robustly so that they act as the foundation from which the team can outperform is not easy. A team focused on worth will assess all areas of their working practices, checking that they are efficient (timely) and effective (deliver against requirements) and they do this routinely. Applying the old check point of 'Stop, Start, Keep' is a good quick reference and, done well, makes a habit of team reflection and learning. Doing this as part of a routine of high performance allows the team to refocus and check, "what is important to our stakeholders — what will be deserving of accolade and recognition?" and in doing so, guide the focus of their effort, spurring them on to achieve a higher performance level.

Reward — how does this team celebrate its success and failures?

Everyone wants to be recognised and rewarded for their contributions and this applies both for individuals and for teams. The heightened sense of worth a team feels when their leader take just a few minutes to let them know that they are doing a great job and that their contributions are appreciated is invaluable in terms of engagement and buy-in. Drawing the precise connections between what has been done and how that led to a desired outcome, helps establish shared learning. Celebrating

The Value of Team Worth (cont.)

this together builds rapport and a sense of belonging. The pleasure of being part of a smoothly operating team — one that recognises each other's abilities and achievements while supporting each other's failures — is drawn from a sense of empowerment and autonomy. Valuing and measuring how a team recognises and rewards itself builds strength of character, an open learning culture and ultimately an inherent resilience to bounce back from failure.

In looking at how to measure the worthiness of a team through understanding its Value, Usefulness, Merit and Reward we have not answered why it is so difficult to achieve and why it often feels just beyond reach of teams?

Or indeed, if it does happen why people are not entirely sure how or why it happened, what caused 'this' team to 'flow'?

To answer these questions, you need to look at the human element of a team and power that comes out of building a sense of belonging and purpose. The glue the binds Team Worth together is deep meaningful connection.

At a time where more and more teams are matrixed and virtual, made up of members who are part of multiple teams, the ability to create and sustain meaningful connections is the key to competitive advantage.

In order for these connections to happen we have to allow ourselves to be really seen and to open ourselves up to others. However, to take this kind of risk in the workplace, for many of us, can feel very threatening. Building a team on the principles of worthiness means that each member of the team must feel free to express themselves and to show a high degree of vulnerability.

So how can you gauge how safe your team members feel?

"Psychological safety is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmondson 1999). Psychological safety describes how an individuals' perceives the consequences of interpersonal risk in their work environment. It consists of taken-for-granted beliefs about how others will respond when one puts oneself on the line, such as by asking a question, seeking feedback, reporting a mistake or proposing a new idea. One weighs each potential action against a particular interpersonal climate, as in, "If I do this here, will I be hurt, embarrassed or criticised?". A team with a culture of psychological safety encourages open discussion and nurtures contrasting points of view.

This can be achieved when:

1. Team members know that work is uncertain and frame it as a learning problem.

2. Leaders say: "I may miss something. I need to hear from you."

3. Leaders model curiosity and ask more questions.

However, many leaders find it almost impossible to achieve and sustain psychological safety given the constraints of the overall culture and system the team exists within. But team coach-mentors can help by creating and maintaining a safe space for learning to happen.

To build a self-sustaining team with a capacity for learning a team coach-mentor looks to draw out:

1. What is authentic to this team?

o What gives it purpose and meaning?

o How does this team connect: with each other, with their stakeholders, with other teams in the organisation, with the wider system?

2. How does this team converse?

o Does this team create clarity and understanding for themselves and those they interact with?

o Does this team demonstrate civility and use supportive language?

3. What support mechanisms does this team have?

o How does this team solve its problems?

o How do the team members hold themselves accountable for both success and failure?

o Are the able to argue with respect and agree to disagree?

A team coach-mentor should use the measures of a team's worth outlined above to help the team enhance their conversations and build good relationships. This will not only nurture the team's development, but potentially provoke long-term transformational change within the organisation.

The coach's ability to create an inclusive environment of psychological safety is crucial, one where team members can express themselves freely. They should be able to transfer this learning to the team themselves, so that it becomes a natural part of their team culture to: listen, connect and not judge; to be clear about their strengths and open about their vulnerability in service to achieving exceptional high performance.

One final question to leave you with when you consider `what your team is worth?'.

Is your team the best team in the world, possibly not, but are you the best team in your world?

There is something truly compelling when a team is fully aware of their own worth. They become a beacon of inspiration to others that shines out beyond the boundaries of the team,

When a team is delivering to the maximum of their capabilities, confident in each other and their ability to tackle whatever difficulties are thrown their way, they are a team worth being part of and a team every leader wants to have in their organisation.

A team focused on worth will assess all areas of their working practices, Is your team the best team is your world?

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Why organisations are wanting to create a mentoring culture and how to create one

Katherine Ray

Let's start with why

The world of work has changed and is changing constantly, this isn't new news. This has resulted in organisations needing to find new ways of attracting, developing and retaining people. Mentoring is as popular as it's ever been because it can directly address these thorny organisational challenges. There are many examples of organisations changing the way they approach their traditional people processes and the underlying enabler of this change seems to be moving to a more `conversational' type culture.

For example, Accenture and Deloitte are two well-known professional services companies who are moving away from the annual performance review process and moving towards a more regular monthly check-in conversation approach. There are many other organisations out there who are challenging the traditional ways of attracting, development and retaining people and doing a good job of it.

It is well documented that a lack of career development and progression is one of the biggest reasons why people leave an organisations nowadays. Furthermore, a career and career progression look very different in today's world. Organisations are having to think differently about how they move people around, what opportunities they can provide, re-think job roles and create enough development opportunities to keep people satisfied. Those organisations that can offer people a varied and broad career journey are the ones that are going to attract and retain the right people.

The demographics of the workplace have also changed significantly. We now have many different generations of people in the same organisation. All of whom want different things out of work given the different stages they are in in their lives. From an organisational perspective, this is driving a greater need for knowledge transfer and cross-generational learning than ever before, which organisations want to capitalise on.

These are just three topical areas that HR departments and organisations need to address and mentoring can support all of them. We know there is a greater need for organisations to create the right culture and as a result we are now seeing a shift in what organisations want to do with mentoring. Rather than just design and implement a one-off mentoring programme, more and more organisations are asking how can they create a mentoring culture, a sustainable environment where conversations facilitate continuous individual and organisational learning.

What is a mentoring culture?

A mentoring culture continuously focuses on building the mentoring capacity, competence, and capability of the organisation". I would take this a step further and say that a mentoring culture is where an organisation is consistently and continually encouraging its employees to develop themselves and others.

Zachary says that there are eight hallmarks of a mentoring culture that build on and strengthen each other. All are present, at least to some degree, but they may manifest themselves differently depending on the organisation's previous success with mentoring. When each hallmark is consistently present, the mentoring culture is fuller and more robust. As more and more of each hallmark is found in an organisation, the mentoring culture becomes progressively more sustainable.

> A mentoring culture is a sustinable environment whre conversations facilitate continuous individual and organisational learning

Things to consider when creating a mentoring culture (based on the eight hallmarks):

Accountability

Accountability enhances performance and produces long-lasting results. It requires shared intention, responsibility and ownership. Accountability also involves very specific tasks: setting goals, clarifying expectations, defining roles and responsibilities, monitoring progress and measuring results, gathering feedback, and formulating action goals.

Alignment

Alignment focuses on the consistency of mentoring

practices within an organisation's culture. It builds on the assumption that a cultural fit already exists between mentoring and the organisation, and that mentoring initiatives are also tied to larger goals other than just initiating a programme. When mentoring is aligned with the organisation's culture, it becomes part of its DNA.

Communication

Communication is fundamental to achieving mentoring excellence and positive mentoring results. Its effects are far-reaching: it increases trust, strengthens relationships and helps align organisations. It creates value, visibility and the demand for mentoring.

Value and visibility

Sharing personal mentoring stories, role modelling, reward, recognition, and celebration are high-leverage activities that create and sustain value and visibility. Leaders who talk about formative mentoring experience, share best practices, and promote and support mentoring by their own example add to the value proposition for mentoring.

Demand

Demand for mentoring has a multiplier effect. When it is present, there is a mentoring buzz, increased interest in mentoring and self-perpetuating participation. Employees seek mentoring as a way to strengthen and develop themselves. Mentors become mentees and mentees become mentors. Employees engage in multiple mentoring relationships, often simultaneously. Demand spurs reflective conversations and dialogue about mentoring, adding to its value and visibility.

Multiple mentoring opportunities

In a mentoring culture, there is no single approach to mentoring. Although some mentoring activity goes on in nearly every organisation, usually for a particular target audience, most need to work at creating a culture that concurrently advances and supports multiple types of opportunities.

Training

Continuing mentoring education and training opportunities are strategically integrated into the organisation's overall training and development agenda. Existing training platforms support mentoring and vice versa. Opportunities for refresher and advanced skill training are available for experienced mentors as well as new mentors. Networking and support groups meet regularly to exchange best practices and promote peer learning.

When we work with organisations to help them design and implement their mentoring programmes, they always invest in some form of training for mentors, regardless of their level, as this is already seen as a must have. However, organisations rarely apply the same thinking to mentees. Mentees are usually left to their own devices with the assumption that they "will just know what to do". I believe that it is just as important to invest in training for mentees as well as mentors, because you want to equip both parties to be able to make the most of their mentoring conversations.

It is also important that line managers are fully briefed to understand what their role is and what to expect from anyone in their team who is receiving mentoring. While a simple briefing is usually all that is required, this is often overlooked.

Safety nets — mentoring supervision

Mentoring cultures establish safety nets to overcome or avoid potential stumbling blocks and roadblocks with minimum repercussion and risk to enable mentoring to move forward coherently. Organisations that proactively anticipate challenges are more likely to establish resilient and responsive mentoring safety nets than those that do not.

The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) defines supervision as "the interaction that occurs when a mentor or coach brings their coaching or mentoring work experiences to a supervisor in order to be supported and to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the mentor or coach, their clients and their organisations".

We are one of the few coaching and mentoring organisations that offer mentoring supervision to our clients. Historically, supervision has been reserved for coaching and coaches but we would

Why organisations are wanting to create a mentoring culture and how to create one (cont.)

argue that supervision is just as important for mentoring and mentors. Mentors should also be provided with a safety net and a safe space to discuss any issues or challenges that come up during their mentoring conversations.

Supervision has another crucial benefit: it can provide valuable organisational insights that HR and/or Learning and Development (L&D) can take on and address. For example, common feedback from mentors on mentoring programmes we support is that "mentees struggle to understand their career path within the organisation". This is invaluable information for HR and L&D, given that the average cost of recruiting an employee is estimated to be £30,000. Creating clearer career options and opportunities could save the company a lot of money.

Top tips for how to create a mentoring culture

1. Leverage what is already in place — this is really critical, especially for those organisations where informal mentoring has historically taken place.

In addition, it's important to integrate your mentoring initiatives with existing leadership development initiatives and performance development processes. In order to fully leverage your pre-existing processes, connect mentoring with all training and development efforts, making it part of an entire learning system. Whenever possible, connect people as learners and teachers and spread the benefits of mentoring to all areas of the business. Don't be afraid to use technology to help support mentoring within your organisation.

2. Think big and small — where possible push for enterprise wide, open enrolment mentoring initiatives as well as smaller, more focused initiatives. Diversity initiatives and high-potential programmes meet specific organisational and developmental goals. On the other hand, giving everyone in the organisation a range of options for developmental relationships encourages personal responsibility for growth, learning and development.

3. Think up, down and sideways — too often, mentoring dies a slow death in organisations because it is cast in an exclusive, hierarchical mould. To stave off this premature departure from mentoring, encourage a model that allows for traditional advocacy relationships, where mentors sponsor mentees and help them navigate career choices.

However, also encourage peer-to-peer coaching and information sharing relationships. And don't over-look reverse mentoring, which is when a more senior employee seeks a mentor who is his/her hierarchical subordinate. By opening mentoring up to all of these possibilities, you can create an environment where everyone has something to share and something to learn!

How will you know that you have created a mentoring culture?

Creating and embedding mentoring culture takes time and won't happen overnight. However, you will know when you have created a mentoring culture as you will regularly start to see and hear the following:

- People of all levels being generous with their time and willing to pass on knowledge, insight and expertise to others freely.
- Managers having regular conversations with their team about performance and development throughout the year.
- A move from a 'directive' to a more 'non-directive' culture.
- Employees at all levels having open, honest and supportive conversations including giving each other regular feedback.
- Employees owning and driving their own career development and progression, leading to the emergence of more career and development opportunities.
- Higher engagement scores around personal and career development.
- HR responding proactively rather than reactively to organisational learning and feedback with visible links between feedback and intervention.
- Senior leaders talking passionately about the benefits of mentoring and how it has helped them.
- Teams working collaboratively.
- Higher levels of trust within the organisation.

What organisation wouldn't want to be seeing and hearing all of those things? We know that integrating all of the above into an organisational culture isn't easy and takes time, but if organisations are going to tap the potential of knowledge transfer across a multi-generational workforce, tackle the main reasons why people leave organisations and respond to contemporary changes in the world of work, what better way to try than by creating a culture based on human conversation — one where mentoring sits at the heart and centre.

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Unconscious bias — its impact on the coach and the organisation

Angela Keane

"When you say 'we', who do you mean?" (Garton-Ash 2005, p.1) On first meeting someone, we may instinctively make certain snap judgements about them. And while it is our differences that characterise and individualise us generally, they can also be used as a filter for quickly categorising who belongs to 'us' or to 'them'. Crucially, we are so hardwired to spot and react to difference that we do so without really being aware of doing so or how it informs our initial perceptions of each other. These are our unconscious biases at work. As I ponder the question above, I would like to invite you, the reader, to do likewise, in the service of our ongoing development as coach-mentors.

Awareness of unconscious bias is important for coach-mentors

As individual coaches we are constantly meeting and starting new relationships with coachees. We know how important those first impressions are to building a warm, trusting rapport crucial to the success of the coaching engagement. However, research shows that those first moments of meeting a new person are particularly prone to influence from our unconscious biases. In coaching, we quite quickly plunge into what can sometimes be personal and sensitive conversations, and all the while there is a risk that our and the coachees' unconscious biases are in full unhindered flow because we are not aware of them.

'Micro-aggressions', a negative term suggesting hostile or derogatory behavior to a marginalized group, serves to alert us to those minute behavioural cues we all give to someone else, perhaps about whether or not you want to talk to them or whether their contribution has been valued. These may be completely unconsciously driven, and yet they strongly influence our behaviour.

What difference would it make, do you think, to conduct those same conversations with a more heightened awareness of your biases? I believe it is an important development step for us all to better understand them.

Unconscious bias in organisations

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the organisations in and with which we work take-on and show the effects of our biases. Research shows that diversity in teams leads to increased innovation and better decision-making It's not just because, for example, the member of a 'minority' contributes something unique, but that everyone does. Turns out, we feel freer to express something different when we are all different, but when we are all the same, we over emphasise the things that we have in common. This gives us a strong incentive to favour diversity in teams and organisations. However, it appears that we are still inclined, through our biases, to keep diversity at a minimum.

So, what is unconscious bias?

As the name suggests, these biases occur outside our conscious awareness — we are literally unaware of them and therefore insensitive to their influence and effect on us or on others. Crucially, being unaware does not lessen their impact but rather increases the risk of negative consequences. This poses its own unique challenges: if we are unaware, how can we do something about it?

One definition of a bias is "prejudice in favour of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair" (Oxford Dictionaries on-line). To understand how these prejudices have come about in our development, we need to go back in time to when we were hunter-gatherers a hundred thousand years ago. In order to survive — to enable us to eat and avoid being eaten — we had to develop rapid and reliable ways of detecting who and what was a friend or a threat. We became very accomplished at making these decisions and evolved to take mental short-cuts in recognising the presence or absence of danger. Our brains evolved to be highly proficient at taking these short-cuts; another aspect of survival in fact, because it would use too much valuable energy if we had to work out each decision from scratch each time. Hence, there is real energy and life-saving merit in being able to jump to conclusions based on experience and memory.

You could say that we make hundreds of biased decisions every day. Consider

Unconscious bias — its impact on the coach and the organisation (cont.)

the tens of millions of individual bits of information we are faced with daily: everything we hear, see, read, feel, whether consciously or not. However, it seems we only have the capacity to process about 40. The rest is handled by our unconscious.

Different types of bias

Cognitive scientists have named several biases that frequently occur in all of us. For example, apparently the first two things we generally notice when we meet someone new is their gender and their skin colour. This is an instinctive bias, also known as cognitive bias, stemming from human evolution and strongly linked to survival. As mentioned already, we are hardwired to immediately spot difference in order to decide in an instance whether or not we are in any danger. However, there is more here than just this mechanism of fast pattern recognition, specifically of difference. It is also strongly infused with learned bias. Learned bias refers to the assumptions and biases that we absorb imperceptibly throughout our lives from society, education, family, friends and so on. I believe it is important for us, as coaches, to develop our awareness of both our instinctive and learned biases, as our behaviour, the tone and topic of our conversation, and even the quality of our listening, can be compromised by them.

Then there is confirmation bias. This leads us to discount or disregard information that disagrees with our assumptions, even if there are well-proven facts to the contrary and in spite of any risks associated with doing so. You may well have come across such irrational thinking in some of your coaching sessions. Cognitive behavioural therapy has proved to be an effective method in confronting confirmation bias, but it is not easy. It takes time and commitment to overturn.

Another bias of relevance to coaching is expedience bias. It tends to become active in situations where some concentrated effort is required of us. Rather than applying the effort needed — continuing to listen attentively and taking the time to explore and analyse information with the coachee — we tend to revert to familiar solutions.. This means that we have probably drawn conclusions without fully exploring the details of a situation, stopped listening without fully understanding, and jumped to a quick and familiar solution. This is a common problem often encountered in coaching, and not just by novice coaches. It becomes a question of whether to rely on our experience and accumulated wisdom, or to take a more logical and analytical approach.

Substitution bias plays out when we are asked a question to which we do not know the answer. Quite unconsciously we will substitute it with another question to which we do know the answer based on our prior experience. Has this ever happened in your coaching?

> The brain classifies almost every new person as a friend or foe based on the degree to which they seem like us

How does neuroscience explain unconscious bias?

With neuroscience providing us with new understanding of the physical changes and reactions within our brains on an almost daily basis, let's see what it can tell us about unconscious bias.

The amygdala lies deep within the centre of the limbic emotional brain. It's about the size and shape of an almond, but despite this small size, it plays an important role in relation to our survival needs. These include sex and emotional reactions like anger or fear. The purpose it serves is that it alerts us to potential danger. But in so doing, it means there is less mental resource available for reasoning and impulse control. If the threat is great, the prefrontal cortex will actually shut down which results in even less ability to process complex issues; we become less creative and less collaborative.

When we perceive people as being different from us, it is likely that our amygdala is playing a part. Our capacity to understand and empathise with 'out-group members' can be impaired as we tend to misread social cues and hoard information. "We generally tend to feel less empathy with out-group members", according to David Rock. He cites as an illustration that we may even experience pleasurable sensations in our brain when someone on the opposing team of a sporting event we're watching gets injured.

Given this instinctive capacity we have to react negatively in the face of difference, it would seem advisable for coaches to take steps to be on the watch-out for behavior stemming from this, both in ourselves and our coachees. It stands to reason that a strong reflective habit will go some way towards helping us here.

So what can we do to overcome and lessen the impact of unconscious bias?

Here are some steps to take, according to advice from Google, who are one of the companies leading the way in training their staff to be aware of unconscious bias.

1. Hold yourself accountable.

- The research is clear: we can make the unconscious conscious if we give ourselves a moment! Try to avoid running with the first decision that comes to mind.

- Question your first impressions.

- Justify your decisions: even if there is no pressure on you to do so, explain your reasoning anyway. If you are held accountable for your point of view, you will be less biased!

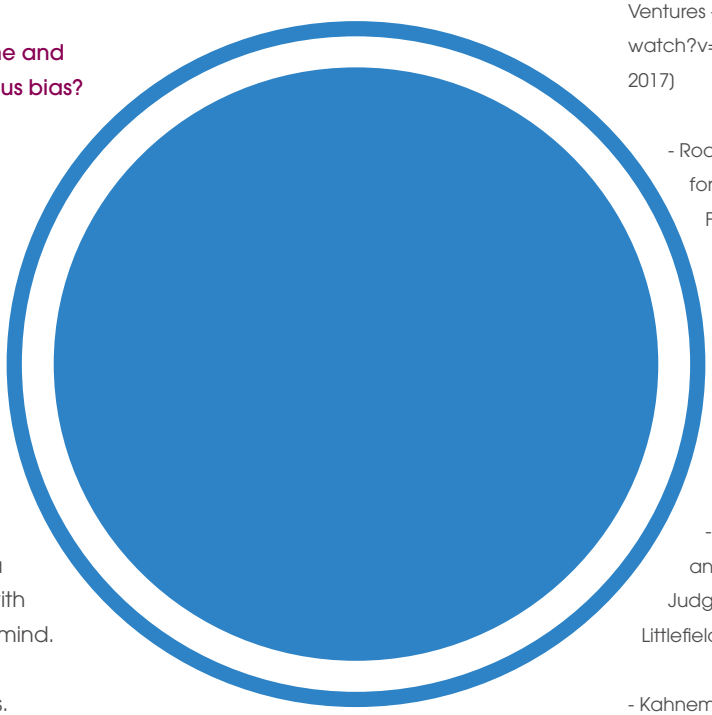
- Even simply writing down why you are making a decision can lead to less bias.

2. Create a culture where everyone is held accountable.

- Put structures and criteria in place that ensure decision makers are held accountable from the perspective of bias influence. This empowers everyone to watch out for bias, and this is critical to the success of policies to lessen it.

3. Ask for feedback.

- We're accustomed to doing this in coaching: "Can I just repeat what I heard you say?" But ensure you give others the opportunity to repeat what they've heard you say too. This gives them the chance to spot any bias in what you've said.



Already there are many organisations spending millions each year on diversity programmes and sensitivity training in order to support employees of all levels to watch out for bias in their work. It goes without saying that this is particularly pertinent within hiring and promotion. It takes particular focus, however, to ensure that this training actually transmits into a change in behaviour and less bias. If tackling unconscious bias is just seen as another compliance and regulation issue, then it is unlikely to have a real impact. It is necessary to hold individuals, managers and leaders accountable for their decisions, and for them to hold themselves accountable in the first instance, so that we develop the habit of scrutinising our decisions for bias.

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Supervision — what do coaches want?

Jerry Gilpin

At The OCM we're proud of the thousands of alumni who have qualified through our courses. And we're proud of the courses themselves, which are built firmly on reflective practice: to do well in them, candidates have to be able to notice and reflect on what's going on in their coaching practice; to celebrate what they've done well and understand what they might do better next time; to recognise the myriad different factors that are influencing their coaching, from the culture of the organisations that they're working in to the time of day or the amount of sleep they may have had. Graduates report that they have been formed as coaches and mentors by the course, but also that they have been transformed by the experience as they have begun to understand and manage themselves better. And in all this they have been enabled to understand and embody the transformational purpose of coaching and mentoring for individuals and organisations.

This is why the role of the coach-mentor-supervisor (CMS) is so important to our courses: the CMS is there to ensure that if you study with The OCM you get support, feedback and are challenged throughout, and we start to model what it's like to have someone to reflect with you as you develop as a coach.

But what happens once you're qualified? How can coaches continue to receive that support, development and challenge as they build their independent practice or become part of an internal coaching resource in their own organisations? How might we continue to enable that process of formation and transformation through what is usually (and perhaps not always helpfully, with its overtones of monitoring, evaluation and correction) called 'supervision'?

> Supervision "helps me think differently about myself and question my internal dialogues".

As part of our approach to continuous development as an organisation, a group of us — all qualified coach supervisors — felt we should look at how we might enable coaches to develop more fully and continuously. The OCM already provides supervision within some of our client organisations and trains internal coaches to become supervisors of their own teams of coaches. But what more might we be able to do? And most importantly, what's already happening and what do coaches actually want? We decided to ask our best resource: a group of our recent alumni and other coaches.

> "Supervision has the biggest effect on the quality and quantity of practice — it's like rocket fuel."

The research

We deliberately went for a smallish group whom we could interview in some depth. Of the 16 coaches (many but not all of them alumni of The OCM) we spoke to who were currently coaching in some capacity, most were not coaching full-time, but as part of a mix of work, either within their own consultancy or alongside their organisational 'day-job'. Most were coaching for between 4 and 30 hours a month. It's their words that are quoted in the boxes in this article.

Of our group, six had adopted a variety of patterns of one-to-one supervision; six received a mixture of ad hoc one-to-one or regular group supervision; and four had no current supervision relationship.

There was a fascinating balance in the ways in which this group felt supervision was useful. It was interesting that one coach questioned the benefit of supervision and wondered whether to replace a supervisor's 'intangible' benefits with a business coach: this in itself might indicate a limiting view of supervision's possibilities.

The majority focused on the normative aspects of a supervision relationship: someone to check in with to make sure I'm 'doing it right' as a coach in some way, whether with an eye to accreditation or to help them deliver better to coachees, to explore how to deal with 'awkward situations', or to feed back to the organisational systems in which they were working. There was a focus here on checking ethical standards and boundaries, and ensuring that the coaching was competent

> Supervision "helps me prepare more carefully for coaching".

and professional, and hence on the supervisor as a guardian of practice.

Five coaches focused on the restorative or resourcing aspect of supervision: a space with boundaries into which they could bring their questions and where they could receive support and challenge. They recognised the complex psychological issues involved in coaching others and the need to unpack these in safety, and hence the role of the supervisor as a wise and trustworthy developmental partner.

> "I want a balance — someone who can provoke me and hold a mirror up and have open conversations in a positive context."

Four coaches saw supervision as essentially formative: a forum in which they could continue to receive CPD and develop their practice by learning new models or observing others' practice, and thereby "ensuring I keep up with current thinking". Either in a group or one-to-one, supervision was essentially about continuing to learn and grow, and the supervisor's role moved more towards that of a teacher or enabler.

> "Supervision is a comfort blanket but it also makes me think, challenging me with difficult questions."

So far, so encouraging: coaches want to continue to develop and to practice professionally, safely and wisely, managing their own emotions and the coaching relationship to the coachees' benefit. But there were questions about supervision, too.

The learning

One natural area of concern is that of cost. This was frequently mentioned as an inhibitor of regular supervision, especially one-to-one, both within organisational contexts where budgets are tight and the dynamics and demands of coaching are not always well understood, and for independent practitioners whose client base may initially be small and who may be struggling to establish themselves. A second — closely related — is time. One coach mentioned the difficulty of giving herself permission to spend time on supervision, given its expense; another recognised how financial pressures in the system led to coaches telling rather than coaching, and supervision being seen as a 'luxury item'. It was seen as difficult to produce clear 'return on investment' (ROI) figures for the effects of supervision, even though subjective experience led them to be clear of supervision's benefits.

> Supervision is "a risk management space that adds disproportionate value".

We also found concern over the quality of supervision and supervisors once alumni got out into the world of professional practice and regular internal coaching and mentoring work, ranging from a lack of continuity between group supervisors, to a lack of personal confidence in the supervisor and the danger of supervision becoming a 'tick-box exercise': something that has to be provided but has no inner reality and genuine challenge. Two coaches also raised the question of ROI and uncertainty about the quantifiable benefits that supervision added.

Yet alongside these concerns we also found a huge sense of the potential for supervision to add value to coaches' practice and their organisations, including providing feedback to organisations on the patterns observed in the coaching experience. The quotations in this article are a small selection of the positive benefits of regular reflection, challenge and support that supervision offers.

So, two questions emerge for us:

- How can we continue our mission to form and transform both coaches and their and our organisational and individual clients?
- What might fit-for-purpose supervision look like now?

We have published the second part of this article, which focuses how to connect supervision to the transformational purpose and nature of coaching and mentoirnig. Please follow the link below:

http://www.theocm.co.uk/case-studies/supervision-new-principles-patterns

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A new framework for a changing world – the power of ELECTRIC Coaching™

Alison Williamson

In 2015, I returned to work for The OCM after a year's gap and this time into a brand new role, not coaching (as I had done for over ten years) but designing new content and qualification material.

In reconnecting with The OCM Board on my return, one thing that struck me was just how much the market for coaching and mentoring development had moved on in that year. Our cornerstone qualifications — our Advanced Diploma, Diploma, and Foundation Certificate — continued to be popular, but most striking was the increase in our work inside organisations and the requests that we support people with practical and high quality learning solutions to enable strong workplace relationships, communication and leadership. In short, we needed to respond to the market and our clients with some fresh approaches and ideas that would include short bursts of learning for those wishing to develop coaching and mentoring conversation skills inside a couple of months.

ELECTRIC Coaching Framework™ — a generic model for everyone, from day-to-day coach-mentoring conversations, to more formal coaching and mentoring

My design work over the following months centred on creating a brand new model, ELECTRIC Coaching Framework™, as it came to be. It felt both necessary and apt that we should create our own model of new qualifications and development programmes and this was my starting point before I commenced the design.

The market interest was moving towards coaching and mentoring 'conversations' (not exclusively coaching and mentoring 'sessions'), so a new model needed to reflect this in its design. I needed to come up with something that could, in effect, guide the whole conversation and act as both a sequence prompt and a skills check. ELECTRIC has done this. In fact, it has also served as a self-assessment or diagnostic for coach mentoring development.

ELECTRIC is an acronym, a simple reminder for the user to give attention and time to the following steps or stages:

Engage

Listen

Explore

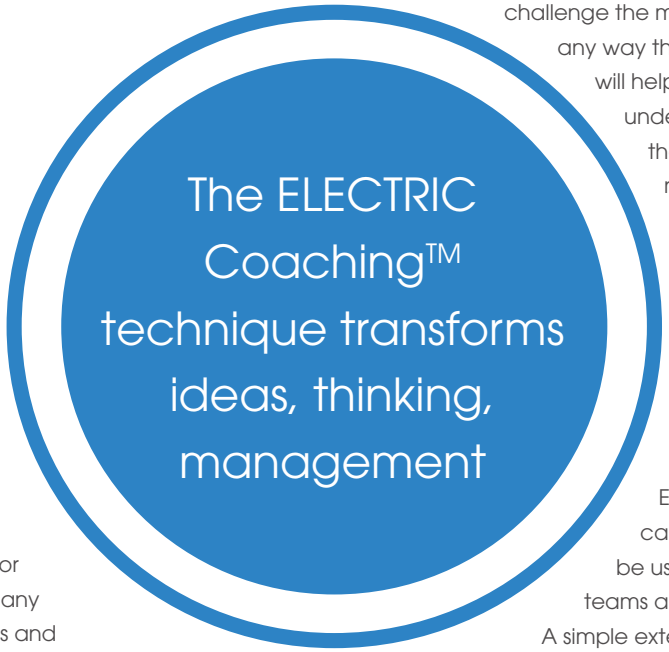
Challenge

Target

Review

Insights

Conclude

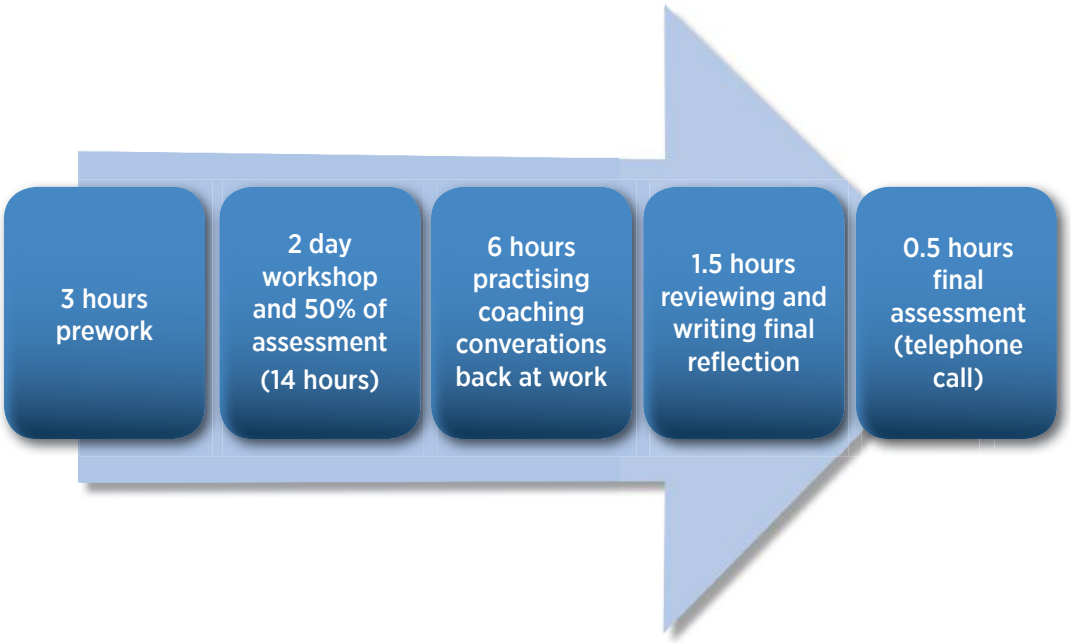


We remain committed advocates for the use of many other models and frameworks in the coaching and mentoring arena. ELECTRIC Coaching Framework™ just gives our clients and us something new which can be relied upon to guide anyone from a novice coach to an experienced practitioner through a whole conversation, rather than something that is inserted into the middle of it. ELECTRIC is flexible: it can be broken up into ELECT and RIC or the whole sequence can be used in one conversation. ELECTRIC is the whole conversation and acts as a reminder that all the elements are important and affect the quality of the client's experience. What I'm saying is, don't just launch straight into "what's your goal", before asking how the person is. How's their week going? What's happening for them? The first Engage element is a prompt to stop and connect as two human beings before getting into the true nature of the work as we'd know it.

I deliberately placed Challenge within the model because, let's be honest, it can get missed. What I mean by challenge here is not just the inclusion of exploring the scenario from some challenging sightlines, but explicitly giving permission and an expectation to the coach-mentor to challenge the mentee in any way they believe will help. ELECTRIC underscores that this is a necessary stage in the coaching and mentoring process.

ELECTRIC can also be used with teams and groups. A simple extension of the ELECTRIC Coaching Framework™ model gives prompts and suggestions for the coach when working with more than one person.

ELECTRIC has been in action for just over a year now and the positive feedback is powerfully strong. It's helping. People like it; well, actually, some people have told us that they "love it". People are using it not just in coaching and mentoring conversations but also elsewhere at work and in life in general. ELECTRIC is making a difference and sometimes a big one. Its success is way beyond what I imagined when I began to play with the letters and



sequencing at the beginning of the design process.

Since its creation, we have introduced ELECTRIC into our own new qualifications and some other bespoke in-company work, for example with a very well known brand FMCG client.

New qualifications

ELECTRIC Coaching™ for everyday coaching skills — a 25-hour EMCC accredited qualification

Electric Coaching™ was the first of our brand new qualifications, launched in 2016 on the back of the ELECTRIC model.

It was our response to the market appetite for a short burst of rigorous learning that would equip any business person with coaching skills for high impact in workplace conversations.

Essentially it's a very practical and focused 25-hour coaching programme that can be completed within 6-8 weeks. A large proportion of the programme is a two-day workshop; day one includes the introduction of our ELECTRIC model and a focus on the skills of listening, asking insightful questions and giving challenging feedback. By the second day, delegates have been used to putting their coaching into practice with peers. The workshop concludes with an observed coaching conversation, representing 50% of the overall assessment. Back at work, delegates are expected to practice and log six hours of coaching conversations, then to reflect on these and their overall application of ELECTRIC and their coaching skills in a final written reflection.

A 30-minute telephone assessment/sign off with one of our own coaches concludes the ELECTRIC coaching™ programme.

EMCC accreditation for ELECTRIC Coaching™

In March 2016 we were delighted to receive news from the EMCC that they had accredited ELECTRIC Coaching™ at Foundation Level. This validation provides our clients with the reassurance that they are buying a quality learning experience. The EMCC accreditation application was my first for The OCM. It was a good exercise in putting our own methods and processes under the microscope; you won't be surprised to know that the EMCC also wanted to be sure that as a provider we are meeting and delivering to their expectations. Our EQA (European Quality Award) was given without a single condition. We were also delighted that ELECTRIC Coaching™ was nominated for an annual EMCC award in December 2016, and though not a winner at the ceremony in March 2017, we are still thrilled with the external validation of our work.

The popularity of ELECTRIC Coaching™ drove repeat business of this programme for many existing clients. In a year, we have delivered three in-company versions of ELECTRIC Coaching™ (in the UK and internationally) as well as four open programmes in Oxford, London and Birmingham.

What people are saying about ELECTRIC Coaching™ ?

"Amazing! What a clever use of simple tools. Great to really see and experience how the ELECTRIC coaching technique can transform ideas, thinking, management support and really support others in feeling motivated and taking ownership of their dilemmas."

"The two day course felt really comfortable, allowing the group to get to know each other and providing plenty of time for discussion. The content was well balanced. The post-workshop elements of the course ensured learnings were put into practice and the final assessment was a great opportunity to reflect."

A new framework for a changing world – the power of ELECTRIC Coaching™

"The following is a review of a training programme which I recently attended. The review is based entirely on my own experience, and I have not received any incentive or recompense from the training provider.

I have been a little quiet again of late, as I have been spending my spare time and energies on coursework for a coaching qualification. The OCM's ELECTRIC Coaching™ is an 'Everyday Coaching Skills Programme', which seeks to equip leaders and managers with a highly pragmatic and user-friendly framework for structuring their coaching conversations. The course is also accredited by the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) at Foundation Level.

Compared to other Foundation Level courses, The OCM's offering is extremely time-efficient and cost-effective; both of which made it easier for me to gain buy-in from my manager and Learning and Development team. However, this does not diminish the quality of the learning experience at all — the course leaders were highly experienced and engaging coaching professionals who were genuinely invested in helping the course attendees achieve a deeper understanding of the coaching process. The course materials were very good, and the blended learning approach really helped to embed the skills and knowledge taught on the course.

Using the ELECTRIC model has improved the quality of all my conversations, both with my team and my colleagues (and beyond!). I have already seen the impact my improved coaching abilities are having on those around me, and I'm very much still learning and practicing. Probably the most useful piece for me was the introduction to the 'reflecting' habit — taking the time to reflect on what has happened in any given conversation, think about what that means and come to an understanding of what I should do in future.

In summary, this course delivers exactly what it says it will — it has clearly been developed to target the fundamentals of coaching, but without being overly purist. This is coaching for the real world of people management, and I can't recommend it highly enough." **Nicola Knight**

ELECTRIC Mentoring™ — another 25 hour EMCC accredited qualification

One of our clients challenged us to come up with a mentoring version of ELECTRIC Coaching™ so Kathryn Ray, Head of Mentoring and I created ELECTRIC Mentoring™, a bespoke programme, under the original framework of 25 hours with integral observed assessment. In November 2016 the EMCC awarded ELECTRIC Mentoring™ their EQA at Foundation level, after another successful application.

We envisage ELECTRIC Coaching™ being the mainstay of our short-burst qualifications, but it was a good opportunity to develop material solely around mentoring, which we would expect to appeal largely to clients wanting us to run this in house for them.

The future — a modular approach to qualifying

Designing the ELECTRIC model and the two sister qualifications of ELECTRIC Coaching™ and ELECTRIC Mentoring™ was a starting point for our plans for a new modular approach to coaching and mentoring development. During 2017, I plan to complete the design of other modular qualifications which can be easily assembled over a period of a few years (to keep the learning current and within life) to provide a route to qualifying at EMCC Practitioner Level. Delegates could begin this journey to Practitioner with a 25-hour ELECTRIC programme, then plan breaks in their learning of months or a year or more, before returning to formal learning. Our website and social media will have up to date information as these new products become live.

Learning

Being given a free rein by Managing Director Charlotte Bruce Foulds to devise a range of new qualifications for The OCM that would compliment each other and ultimately provide alternative routes to reaching Practitioner award, has been an enjoyable and creative experience. It confirmed my instinct to design from scratch rather than tweaking what we have, to really listen to the valuable feedback from our clients who were part of the ELECTRIC Coaching™ pilot, and to keep things as simple as possible while maintaining the rigour and quality that we are known for.

As coaches, we are used to advocating working from a blank sheet. This last year has been an exercise in just that.

Alison Williamson, Head of Quality and Design, The OCM

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Can early light-touch coaching unlock the potential of young people at the beginning of their careers?

Irfan Zaman

A graduate walks into the vast atrium reception on the first day of her graduate programme. With a combination of trepidation and excitement, she's shown to the room where the graduate induction will take place. Amidst the hubbub of small talk, she scans the room of bright eyed peers who are all eager to embark on the first step of the career ladder.

They are the future leaders who will drive innovation and growth, not just in that particular business but also the wider economy. Yet, they won't have access to executive coaching until they reach more senior positions. But, what if they could experience some form of coaching before that, perhaps by accessing online resources or engaging with self-coaching?

What if they were given an opportunity and space to explore their thoughts? To ask: What does a 'career' represent to me? What are my values and purpose? Who do I want to be? What do I need to get there? How do I take care of my well-being? What does it take to be resilient? If we can provide accessible models of coaching to young people at the beginning of their careers, then we can support them to deal with these kinds of questions earlier on, enabling them to be more efficient, productive and fulfilled in their day-to-day jobs.

When I applied for the Eric Parsloe Scholarship in December 2014, I already had nine years of designing and delivering employability programmes across the UK in educational and corporate settings. In my day job I'm the programmes lead for the north of England at the EY Foundation. The Foundation was set up by the professional services firm EY in 2014 with the aim of giving young people the best start to their working lives. We do this through our employability programmes and by leveraging the skills and expertise of EY colleagues.

The Eric Parsloe Scholarship has enabled me to deepen my understanding of the challenges and issues facing those at the beginning of their career, whether it's graduates or school leavers. Generally, I've tried to avoid sweeping generalisations of people based on their generational groupings alone. In many ways those who are on graduate and school leaver programmes today have the same ambitions and needs that their parents had 25 years ago: the need to have financial security and the good life that it brings, to be recognised and acknowledged, and to have the opportunity to progress and realise their potential.

That said, there are a number of themes which have stood out when coaching emerging talent populations:

Feedback is vital for them — For today's graduates there is more of an emphasis on being an all-rounder. With an ever increasing expectation on doing more with less and increasing demands from both managers and clients, today's new graduates are being asked to broaden their skill set, so the need for regular feedback on how they're performing on a range of tasks is more pressing today than ever.

The importance of the personal brand — With a dizzying array of social media platforms, today's graduates are their own brand. But personal branding is no longer the domain of freelancers and entrepreneurs. Approximately 18,000 graduates join the workforce every year, which means having a degree no longer makes you stand out. Even within their workplace, graduates are competing for promotion and recognition. In order to develop their personal brand, graduates need the self-awareness to really reflect on what their unique selling points are and what value they bring to the table over their peers. According to serial entrepreneur and author, Gary Vaynerchuck: "It's important to build a personal brand because it's the only thing you're going to have. Your reputation online, and in the new business world is pretty much the game, so you've got to be a good person. You can't hide anything, and more importantly, you've got to be out there at some level."

They want interesting and engaging projects — "Don't we all?" is the response I normally get here. But far from being the entitled Millennials that some commentators make them out to be, today's graduates have a measured and practical expectation of the work they're allocated. They don't expect a different project every week, but in service of their growth and development they do want exposure to varied projects at least once a month, even if that means shadowing a senior colleague at a meeting or being copied in to a high level email. Not only can these small, simple gestures make emerging talent feel valued, it also means they have a stake in the bigger picture; they can see how their work contributes to the overall success of the team. This transparency empowers them to innovate solutions and bring new perspectives to the organisation.

They value building relationships and diversity — Even the 18-year-olds I work with place a high emphasis on building relationships with new people as they recognise the mutual benefits of sustainable relationships for their own career. They value diversity in the workplace because they want to learn from people of different backgrounds, cultures and opinions. Particularly at the beginning of their careers they find this to be an enriching learning experience which helps them to see themselves in the context of wider society. I can confidently say their insights and outlook is precisely what our society needs right now, particularly as the social cohesion in our communities is being threatened in an unprecedented way with a divisive narrative taking hold of modern politics.

Can early light-touch coaching unlock the potential of young people at the beginning of their careers? (cont.)

They're more loyal than you might think — Millennials are often seen as job hopping chancers, who will leave for a better opportunity at the drop of a hat. In my experience, many are astute enough to stick with a good thing when they see it. If they're given opportunities for growth and development with a pathway for progression in a supportive network of mentors and managers, they're happy to stay in one place and find their purpose and fulfilment there.

They have a strong sense of social purpose — With every new graduate cohort, I see greater levels of involvement in community and volunteering activity. They have a real desire to make a difference and improve the lives of others. If you apply this to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (J Whitmore, 2009), many graduates are showing signs of self-actualizing needs much earlier on in their career. Certainly the graduates who have made it on to competitive graduate schemes, have, in the main, been involved in university clubs and societies, local volunteering, fundraising, or charity projects abroad. They want to continue this commitment to making a difference when they join the world of work.

"I think the younger generation, the people poised to dominate the workforce, are more socially conscious. They are more demanding in terms of environment and how that environment contributes to their life." Helmut Jahn

While coaching and mentoring is not a panacea for solving the challenges which companies have around retention, engagement, motivation and the performance of school leaver and graduate populations, my learning on the course, as well as the career coaching work I do at the EY Talent Centre, has led me to believe that a coaching approach certainly begins to address these issues.

In its current format executive coaching is not accessible to emerging talent populations, yet the advantages to employers and businesses of having self-aware and responsible employees, who are familiar with coaching techniques earlier in their careers, are huge. While it may not be financially viable for graduates, apprentices and school leavers to have one-to-one coaching, there are other approaches which companies can explore to ensure that their emerging talent populations have at least some access to coaching. This could include a combination of online resources and forums for the early talent cohorts, micro-coaching via social media networks, or short courses on self-coaching techniques.

As well as enriching my knowledge and expertise of emerging talent populations, I've also been on a personal learning journey and while there are too many insights to mention here, there are two that stand out.

Firstly, doing a coaching qualification on top of a busy day job and life in general is tough. It's taken a lot of determination and hard work to get through it. Of course, being passionate about something helps when you're burning the candle at both ends, but I've discovered an inner resolve which I didn't know I had. Either I cultivated this or I tapped into something that was already there. I suspect it was a bit of both. I've learned that the best results don't always come when you're motivated or 'in the mood'. Completing a course of self-directed learning means you have to dig in, concentrate and grind out those results even when motivation is a distant memory. When I was struggling with my reflection notes, my supervisor Angela gave me one of the best pieces of advice I've ever had. "You can't edit a blank page," she wisely said. If you're waiting for a bolt of inspiration, you'll never get started. It's been a valuable life lesson, which I now apply to most things.

For today's graduates there is an emphasis on being an all-rounder.; "It's important to build a personal brand because it's the only thing you're going to have.; "I think the younger generation are more socially conscious."

Secondly, the course has had a profound impact on my own self-awareness and personal responsibility. I've found myself using many of the techniques on myself and this self-coaching has created clarity on everything ranging from the quality of my personal and professional relationships to planning my next career move. Using the techniques and models on myself, before stampeding to use them on my learners, has made for a much deeper understanding and it actually enhances the skill and dexterity with which I can apply them in different contexts.

I'd like to thank Ed Parsloe and The OCM Board for awarding me the Eric Parsloe Scholarship. Sadly, I never had the pleasure of meeting Eric, but being the inaugural Eric Parsloe Scholar has been a privilege and a life changing experience for me. Every young person who learns from my coaching or my programmes, will be a direct beneficiary of Eric's gift to me.

Irfan Zaman is the first Parsloe Scholar who runs a social enterprise specialising in working with emerging talent. You can contact him at irfan@stellifycoaching.co.uk *or via twitter* @IrfanZaman

References

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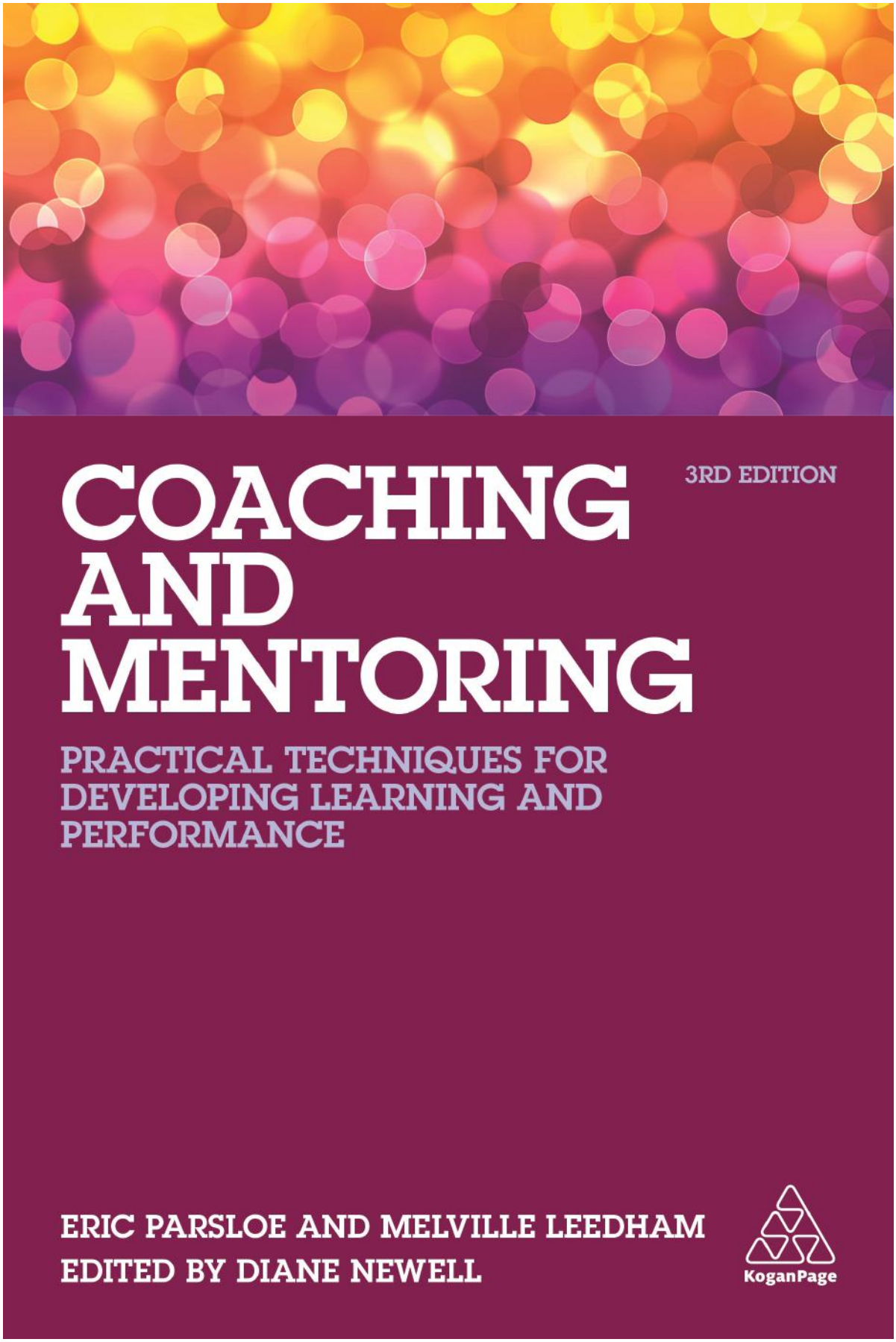

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