

# Coach & Mentor

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# Editorial

Ed Parsloe

## Real World Coaching and Mentoring – how to make it work

On the 27th November 2015 our founder and my father, Eric Parsloe, died. Since retiring from the business in 2008, his health had been slowly deteriorating and the last couple of years were quite difficult for him and for my family. He was present at my wedding last summer which gave both him and me great joy but sadly declined fairly rapidly after that. Death is never easy but we all took great comfort knowing that he was ready to leave this world and that the man we knew and loved had an incredible impact on many people's lives.

That impact was obviously most keenly felt in the world of coaching and mentoring. I



"I'm sure in my mind," said old Eric  
 "That coach-mentor is truly generic.  
 In all but the name  
 The two are the same..."  
 As they carried him off quite hysteric.

Professor David Clutterbuck

was blown away by the number of personal messages and tributes I received from people who had been coached by Eric, had trained with us or had worked with him over the years. The stories people shared made me laugh, cry and occasionally blush in equal measure. However, my overriding emotion was one of great pride.

His biggest legacy has to be the creation, with others, of the EMCC and all the work he did in those early years to drive professionalism, develop standards and help create a stable footing from which our industry has been able to flourish. He was always challenging and sometimes (well quite regularly actually!) his confrontational style was not well received. However, his driver was always to spark informed debate and challenge preconceptions in order to reach a pragmatic consensus, usually for the benefit of the wider coach-mentoring community, albeit sometimes for his own too.

One initiative I am delighted he was aware of before he died was the creation of the Eric Parsloe Scholarship, whereby The OCM funds the training for someone who would be unable to do so otherwise. We had some really fantastic applicants, so many that we decided to award two Scholarships this year. Irfan Zaman is a young man working with disadvantaged youths in Manchester who aims to help improve their career opportunities through coaching. Ashley Brooks is a leukaemia survivor who has become a patient champion in the NHS. His goal is to

support improved leadership in the NHS to help create better patient outcomes. Two fantastic candidates; I know Eric would approve.

Finally to this Journal: another of Eric's legacies, now in its 16th year. I know for a fact that he would approve of our theme this year – coaching in the real world – as '*keeping things simple*' was one of his mantras. Many of his most opinionated outbursts would be against what he saw as unnecessary complications in theory or practice. He always focussed his attention on what worked in reality, viewing the rest as superfluous.

As we support our clients in this increasingly volatile and uncertain world, keeping things simple and focussing on what works is as sensible an approach now as it was when Eric began. But just because it's simple, it doesn't make it easy. He was certainly right about that.



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# Making the case for strategic investment in coaching

## Coaching – well meaning but ineffectual?

As coaches we are often seen as worthy, well-intentioned folks by our clients, and justly so. Most of us decided to become coaches to make a positive difference to others' working lives. But we are often faced with the challenge of justifying why an organisation should invest in our services.

Few buyers of coaching would expect that investing in coaching would do much harm (though there is of course the potential for harm to be done via unintended consequences of coaching). But buyers are often unsure what the benefits would be.

They may take too narrow a view of the potential benefits of coaching, or they may be sceptical about the ability of the coach to deliver the benefits that they seek. They may even view coaching as a very expensive investment where better results could be obtained through another, cheaper, intervention.

With these challenges in mind, here are some perspectives on how to help others to make the decision to invest in coaching.

## Return on Investment – the solution?

Many buyers of coaching view ROI as an important measure for any investment. And rightly so – coaching is intensive, and relatively expensive compared with other

development interventions.

Mary Beth O'Neill<sup>1</sup> suggests that for coaching to be taken seriously, both by the buyer and by a senior coaching client, we need to tie the measures into a financial return.

She suggests using a simple equation/ formula to set clear goals at the start of coaching, and ascribing a financial value to the achievement of these goals:

$$\frac{\text{FACTOR 1: Business results (in pounds)} \times \text{FACTOR 2: \% Impact of executive coaching}}{\text{FACTOR 3: Cost of executive coaching (in pounds)}}$$

I have used this to great effect when coaching clients on certain kinds of issues.

for coaching to be taken seriously, both by the buyer and by a senior coaching client, we need to tie the measures into a financial return.

A few years ago I was working with Eve, a Chief Executive in the UK's National Health Service. Eve needed to get her team to make significant savings within her organisation – a reduction in spend of c. £20 million pounds, when the original target for the year had been a reduction in spend of £17 million.

Finding this extra £3 million was one of Eve's principal goals for the coaching. She needed to organise and engage her team around this, and get them working together to share the goal (rather than 'playing games' and passing responsibility onto each other).

This was a complex issue – and whilst the coaching would have helped, it was only

one of many things which would have a bearing on her ability to achieve this goal.

At the start of our coaching, I used the equation to show Eve how our coaching work could have a real impact on achieving the extra cost savings required. This helped us focus the discussion on the things that would have the biggest impact on her organisation – and crucially, made the case for her to invest her time and money in coaching. Fast forward to the end of the year's coaching contract: we looked at the results and we were able to demonstrate a sizeable return on investment for the coaching.

So here's how the equation worked out:

**FACTOR 1: Business results:** £3 million in additional savings achieved

**FACTOR 2: % Impact of executive coaching:** 10% (Eve's estimate based on her view that the coaching improved her ability to lead the team, set visionary, challenging goals and to promote highly collaborative working)

**FACTOR 3: Cost of executive coaching:** £8,200 for a year's support (including expenses etc.)

Let's put these into the equation:

$$\frac{\text{Business results (£3 million in additional cost savings)} \times \text{\% Impact of executive coaching (10\%)}}{\text{Cost of executive coaching (£8,200)}}$$

This yields a very healthy **return on investment of 36.5 times the original investment.**

Sounds great, right? Let's use this every time we do coaching, right? Well, not quite. As is often the case for us coaches, when we explore the issue further there is more to it than meets the eye.

**Limitations of Return on Investment to make a case for coaching**

The ROI equation worked brilliantly when I was working with Eve. She had personal responsibility for a large budget. She had a clear, measurable financial goal. Most importantly, Eve was confident and well-informed enough to make a realistic estimate of the percentage impact of coaching on her goal. And even if Eve had over-estimated the coaching impact by as much as a factor of 5 (only 2% of the results being attributable to the coaching), the ROI would still have been a very healthy 7 times the original investment.

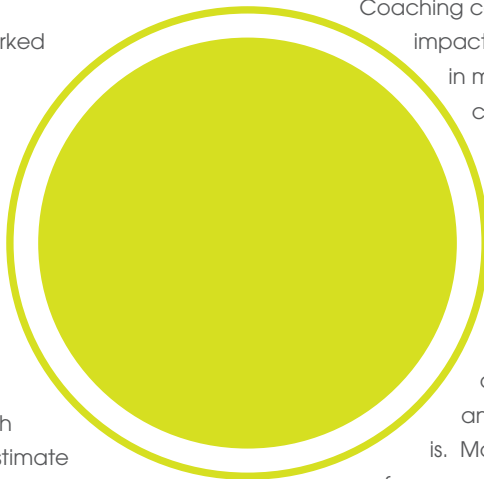
This example brings into sharp relief some real limitations on using ROI in coaching – in its strictest form at least.

As coaches – or as buyers of coaching – we can probably all think of times when coaching has had a truly transformative impact on someone. But in a lot of cases the positive financial impact on the wider business may be hard to measure – or may take years to manifest itself. In these cases, someone with a strict view on ROI would therefore contend that the coaching was worthy but unnecessary.

**Should we ditch ROI?**

So, should we avoid talking about ROI because it doesn't apply equally to all coaching situations? In my view NO – unless we don't want to sell much coaching! The ROI equation does provide us with some useful parameters: it's just that we need to take a broader view of each of them to really make a case for coaching to solve strategic business issues.

**EQUATION FACTOR 1: Business Results**



Coaching can have a positive impact on the business in many ways, and as coaches we need to be better at articulating these. To put this into context, let's start with some key measures of how effective an organisation is. McKinsey have a framework with two key concepts:

1. Performance – directly measurable business results
2. Organisational health – “the ability of your organisation to align, execute, and renew itself faster than your competitors... organisational health is about adapting to the present and shaping the future faster and better than the competition... Healthy organisations don't merely learn to adjust themselves to their current context or to challenges that lie just ahead; they create a capacity to learn and keep changing over time.”<sup>2</sup>

In my view, this holds the key to making the case for coaching. Enlightened leaders know that both these concepts are critical. But a relentless focus on business results – directly measurable and relatively short-term – often

overwhelms plans and initiatives to improve organisational health.

Great coaching promotes business performance, and also helps build capability in individuals and teams to grow the 'health' of the wider organisation.

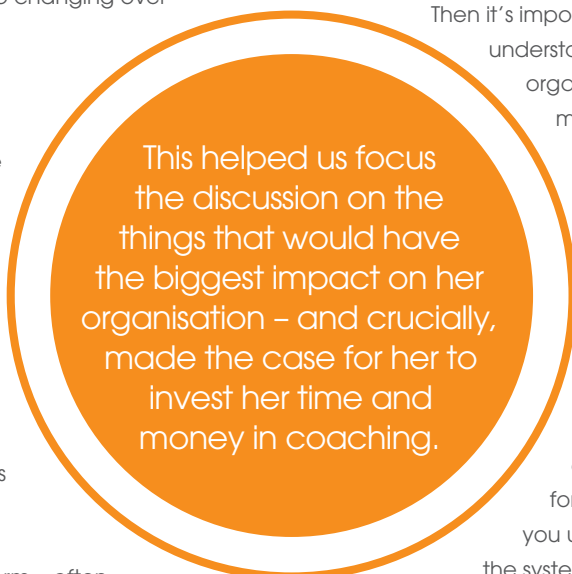
Key for us as coaches is that drivers of performance and organisational health are different for different businesses. We need to understand our client organisations in order to make a case for coaching. Borrowing a few basic techniques and models from management consulting or business schools will help here.

**i Understand their business**

It helps to have an idea of the fundamentals of your client's business – how they make money (business model), the business strategy, how they are organised in order to execute the strategy (operating model) etc. A little research will help here but a lot of information is available in annual reports or elsewhere in the public domain.

**ii Understand external and internal pressures**

Then it's important to understand the organisation's marketplace, customer environment and internal and external pressures. Using basic tools like SWOT, PESTLE and Porter's 5 forces will help you understand the system in which the



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# Making the case for strategic investment in coaching (cont.)

organisation as a whole is operating – and some of the pressures which could be impacting on individuals and teams.

Depending on your relationship with the client organisation, there may be people you can ask who can give you some more insight into these areas.

iii Understand what organisational health looks like for them

This is where it starts to get really interesting. An organisation’s strategy and situation have an enormous impact on what performance and health look like for them.

Making a business case often involves showing that coaching (in all its various forms) can impact on performance and on organisational health, both in the shorter term and in the longer term. If you have



a sound understanding of the business and its unique situation, it’s much easier to make the case for coaching interventions to address them.

In the table below I have listed some examples of aspects of organisational health and performance which could be relevant to a large consumer business. Clearly these will be different for different industries and markets.

When trying to make the case for coaching, the more specific you can be about the aspects of performance and health which you are trying to address, the more likely the buyer and the ultimate client will buy into your suggestions.

Linking to a balanced scorecard

Another option is to think about a balanced scorecard of objectives and

measures which will be key to achieving a business’s strategy. Linking coaching to these can help make the case for coaching and can broaden the discussion out from purely financial measures, as per Kaplan and Norton, 1992<sup>3</sup>.

### EQUATION FACTOR 2: % Impact of Coaching

Demonstrating the extent to which coaching can improve performance and health is just as important as showing that coaching can have an impact on these issues.

Usually, this is not an exact science. Even with the example of Eve above, the 10% impact was an estimate. In a lot of cases, it’s not possible to accurately estimate even a range of percentages.

However, this needn’t mean we can’t be bold about the potentially transformative impact of well-delivered coaching.

Table 1 – Example issues and corresponding coaching interventions

Example organisational issues	Simple examples of coaching interventions to address them
Risks to delivery of a multi-disciplinary project	Team coaching intervention to establish shared goals, ways of working and contingency plans to deal with conflict
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 improve perception of employment proposition
Reduced customer retention and loss of market share	Coaching for sales teams around customer understanding and engagement
Poor knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing	Structured mentoring programme, including training and ongoing support for mentors

In larger organisations, coaching interventions are often commissioned as part of a broader suite of measures which fit into an HR / Talent strategy. Understanding this – and linking into it – will take you a long way because you can show how the coaching contributes to achieving the strategic objectives.

Equally, there are times when coaching for teams or individuals is commissioned in a more ad-hoc way. In this case you often need to broaden the conversation to show how coaching both addresses the presenting issue and also offers benefits to the business's performance or health beyond this. At its best, coaching solves the immediate issue and leaves the wider business stronger and more capable at the same time. Coaching can also 'de-risk' an organisation in a number of ways, including reducing attrition, improving decision-making, and improving the quality of conversations within companies, and with external parties such as unions, customers and the supply chain. As coaches we should not be afraid to emphasise these 'added extras'.

When an organisation systematically invests in coaching it demonstrates that it is interested in the well-being and development of staff. There are likely to be concomitant benefits to employee engagement where coaching is used fairly as a strategic tool to build capability.

Furthermore, a series of coaching interventions can often improve the quality of formal and informal internal coaching and mentoring conversations within a business. This often leads to a range of benefits in my coaching organisation.

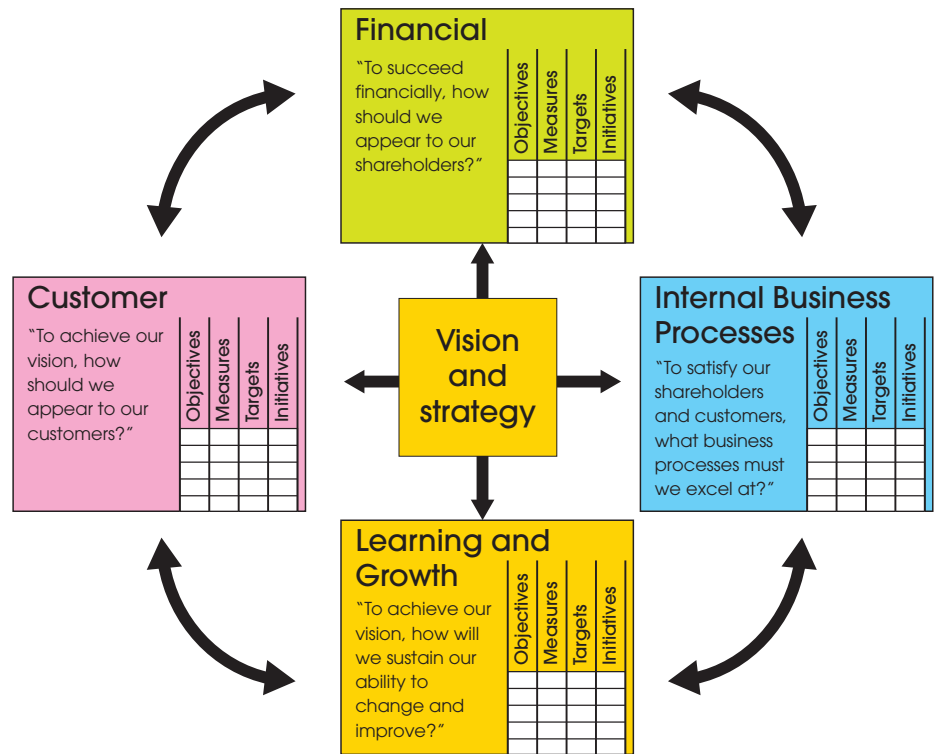
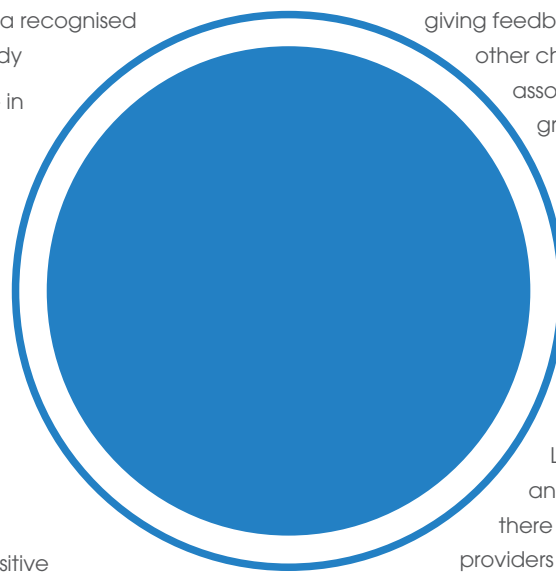


Fig 1 The balanced scorecard framework<sup>3</sup>

Clearly there are many factors at play here, and I have listed some of the principal ones below:

- Qualifications – and demonstration of expertise in a range of coaching methods
- Membership of a recognised professional body
- Ethical stance – in conversation it is critical to demonstrate how you will best represent the needs of the client organisation as well as the coaching client(s)
- Demonstrated evidence of positive impact – testimonials, case studies etc.

- Supervision
  - Experience – relevant to the industry and coaching specialism required to deliver the desired impact
  - Your personal impact – authenticity, empathy, support-challenge, listening, giving feedback and all the other characteristics associated with great coaches.
- EQUATION FACTOR 3:**  
*Cost of Coaching*
- Coaching is often funded from squeezed L&D budgets, and of course there are many providers of other services who are keen to secure some of these budgets.



# Making the case for strategic investment in coaching (cont.)

There is no right or wrong answer around what to charge for coaching, or indeed for any other professional service. As a minimum though, you need to know the costs associated with delivering your service and have a good idea of where you sit in relation to the market. If you have done a good job of showing how your intervention can improve performance and health – and by how much – then your conversation will be more about value than cost. This makes it easier to demand a fair price for your services.

## Helping others make the case for coaching on our behalf

Several parties often contribute to the decision to invest in coaching. As much as possible we need to get a good idea of the 'buying landscape' in our client organisations. As a coach we can help buyers to understand this stakeholder environment and – where necessary – to make the case in different ways to different stakeholders.

This is a big topic in itself but an approach such as one proposed by Miller-Heiman<sup>4</sup> can add some discipline and rigour to how we do this.

## Post-coaching evaluation

Future coaching work often comes from a thorough evaluation of the efficacy of previous coaching. There are many ways of evaluating coaching but Kirkpatrick's model is a good one. Combining Kirkpatrick's approach with the ROI equation described above is a

powerful way of showing how coaching interventions contribute to business results as well as some of the less tangible measures of success.

## Conclusion

Making the case for coaching is something we are all called upon to do almost daily. We need to challenge ourselves to make sure we are emphasising the direct and indirect benefits of coaching, and to show how coaching contributes to organisational performance and health. This isn't always easy and it requires a disciplined and structured approach on

the part of us as coaches. But if we aspire to be true business partners, this is what our clients need from us.

Over time this will make it easier to introduce coaching to more people who can benefit from it – but only if we link it back to specific business issues. If we can do this, our clients will thank us for it, and will put more coaching work our way in the future.

## References

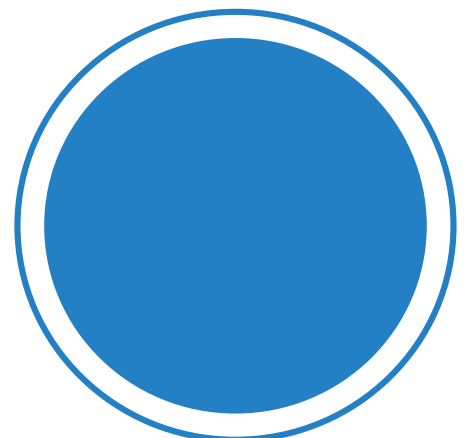
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## Further reading

"Does coaching work and does anyone really care?" Briner, R. *OP Matters* No. 16 November 2012

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# Coaching and mentoring in the service of change

Diane Newell and  
Alison Williamson

Coaching and mentoring is always in the service of change; change in individuals, in teams and in organisations. Whether in service of major transformational change or healthy adaptation, coaching and mentoring catalyses new ways of thinking, new confidence and new ideas.

In last year's Journal – in an article looking at the need for greater questioning in contracting – I suggested that a narrow view of 'coaching' or mentoring as something that happens in specific meetings and in specific occasions is unnecessarily limiting. I asked whether we might add more value by encouraging a 'freeing up' of coaching and mentoring in organisations.

In the two short examples below, my colleague Alison Williamson and I wanted to show how powerful coaching and mentoring conversations can be when integrated into 'the way we work'. In the first example we are sharing an experience of integrating coaching conversations into an organisational change programme. In the second we are sharing our experience of developing a new approach to training called 'ELECTRIC' coaching that focuses on enabling individuals to use coaching and mentoring conversations skillfully in a range of settings: peer to peer, an account manager with a client, an HR professional with a Director, a team member with a new graduate recruit or a line manager with their direct report and vice versa.

In both examples our experience has highlighted to us the particular power of coaching and mentoring conversations not only in catalysing change but also in making our working relationships productive and

effective. In the organisational change example 'Changing the Customer Experience', teams recognised the impact that making time for purposeful, skillful and authentic conversations was having on 'revitalising' their relationships in a busy, target-focused environment. And feedback from the first pilot of ELECTRIC Coaching™, confirmed that even people who thought they were already having quality conversations at work, have taken value from the skills development and very quickly made some changes back at work that had surprising and very positive impacts.

## Example 1: Changing the Customer Experience

*An FMCG (Fast-moving Consumer Goods) organisation was working with its major accounts sales teams to make a shift in how they impact and are perceived by their client partners (Diane Newell)*

Like many FMCG organisations, our client needed to respond to rapid shifts in their customers, who are the major grocery retailers in the UK. Led by a change project leader, Lisa, the senior sales team had created and defined a clear description of the behaviours and mind sets that would be required. Lisa, who had a background in talent development before joining the Sales function, was convinced that team leaders needed to offer effective coaching support to their teams to enable and embed these behaviours and so allow the investments being made in describing, defining and training to deliver the customer impact intended. Our first conversations were focused on how to develop those coaching skills in leaders in a way which was relevant to their agenda; and

to give them the support and confidence they needed to use those skills to give clear feedback to their teams against the new behaviour model and to engage in effective 1-to-1 coaching with them.

The conversation progressed into thinking about how the teams themselves could support this change – moving away from the idea that coaching was 'only' from the manager to their direct reports. We joined with Lisa and senior sales leaders in designing and developing a series of team meetings for the first wave of teams participating. In those meetings we explored:

- What is the change we need to make?
- What is a coaching conversation – and how does it support that change?
- What skills and behaviours make coaching conversations impactful?
- How can we use those – with a series of exercises and opportunities to work with each other – to practise and share learning?

Reflecting on how our joint understanding developed and progressed it has struck me how quickly everyone involved recognised the value of coaching conversations in all of their interactions with each other, and how valuable they found the opportunities some structured team meetings gave them to 'practice' having those conversations with each other. The questions and challenges from the teams were not about 'what is this coaching thing for?' and there was little debate about when it might be valuable. This is because it was embedded into a need to support each other in making a jointly desired shift in behaviour and impact. Giving the team an opportunity to explore how they had conversations in service of that shared goal created insight, in particular into:

- the power of reflection – especially shared reflection time
- the importance of balancing support and challenge – in particular the power of

teams recognised the impact that making time for purposeful, skillful and authentic conversations was having on 'revitalising' their relationships in a busy, target-focused environment

# Coaching and mentoring in the service of change (cont.)

conversations around how someone could use a skill or strength more widely as well as addressing 'gaps'

It also allowed teams to recognise the impact that making time for conversations was having on 'revitalising' their relationships. In a busy, target-focused environment with demanding customers, it's easy to forget to make time to talk to each other! And the teams were able to think together about their interactions with others, how they might use the skills and insights they had gained as they worked with other teams and functions in service of creating a more effective customer impact.

The teams in the first wave challenged us around the labels we were giving these conversations and skills – Lisa and Angela Keane together reflected on a sense that us calling these 'Coaching Conversations' was in some way separating them from the purpose to which the conversations were being put. As a result, on later team days, which Angela delivered in partnership with Lisa, we talked instead about conversations 'in service of change'.

As well as describing these conversations as skillful and effective we also looked at the need for them to be Purposeful and Authentic – with clear signaling

about desired outcomes and stances. In particular we described two kinds of purpose of conversations:

where you are seeking or offering advice and feedback to another

- where you are seeking or offering support to another in exploring the changes they need and want to make
- This gave us an opening to discuss the responsibilities of each partner in those conversations as well as the skills and frameworks that might support them and make them effective.

It's early stages yet – but so far this intervention has been sufficiently successful to get the attention of other parts of the business as a way of embedding coaching as a catalyst for change in their groups.

As we considered our learning from this I have come away with four key lessons about how this allowed coaching to get 'out of the box and in to the business':

1. The importance of our relationship with Lisa, and her relationship with senior functional leaders. Because of that we were always part of their change project – not something separate, labelled 'coaching'.
2. The importance of working to 'beta test' what we offered with the business leaders who own the change we are in service of – it was a real and positive creative partnership in which we had to be willing to let go of some ways of thinking as well as willing to challenge the clients' assumptions at times.
3. Rooting coaching (and mentoring) in 'conversations' – something that we all have abilities in (especially sales people), so that this becomes an extension of existing capabilities, used in particular ways rather than as a new and 'different' skill.
4. The value of providing ongoing coaching-mentoring support for team leaders as they adopt and role model giving feedback and coaching around the behavioural shifts needed – as well as offering support in making those shifts themselves.

**Example 2:** *From Spark to Finish: "ELECTRIC Coaching™" – a new way of embedding a coaching approach (Alison Williamson)*

Given the increasing importance of productive relationships in today's complex organisations and ambiguous and uncertain environments, the opportunity for training in simple and practical coaching skills and approaches to enhance conversations in the workplace is truly enormous. After supporting several thousand candidates through our qualifications in the last 18 years, we've got to know a lot about the whole journey from our candidates' perspectives.

Taking a look at our existing accredited Foundation Level Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring, we realised that whilst it's ideal for creating effective internal coaches,

we may be offering more than is actually needed for some people. Many Foundation candidates have told us they needed to use a coaching style, rather than having formal coaching sessions, which ultimately made us question whether we could offer a new qualification with a very different approach. On reflection we felt we should and could.

Our starting point was, as you would expect in a coaching context, the end:

- What do people actually need from an introductory level coaching qualification?
- Who are they and in what jobs/roles would they use the skills development?
- What coaching skills do they need and in what context would they use them?
- What's essential to include and what's not?

Instinctively we knew this new programme should be for:

- Anyone who has the opportunity to have coaching style conversations to develop others at work, whether they have line management responsibility or not.

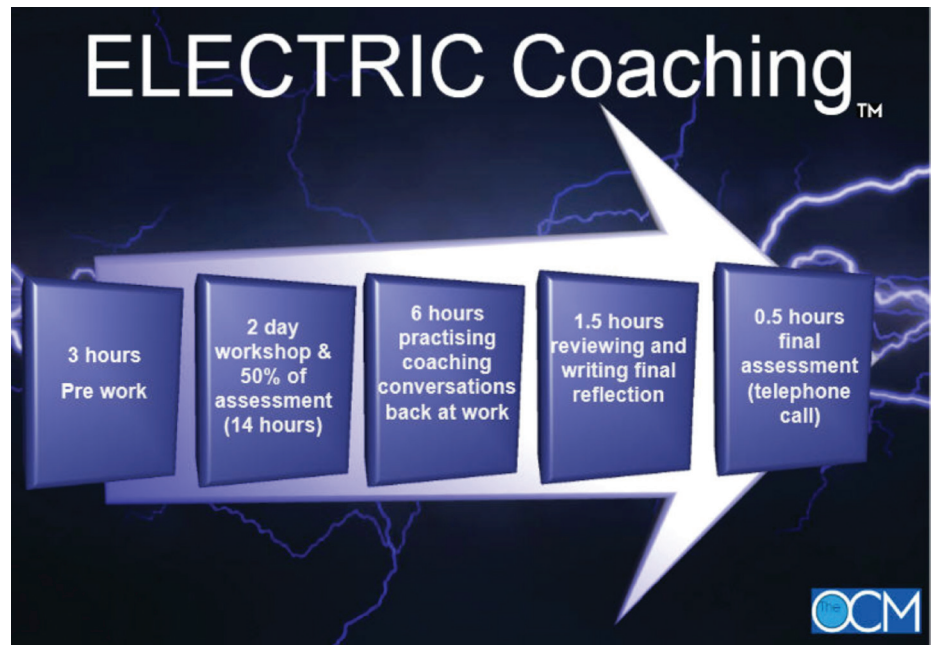
It also allowed teams to recognise the impact that making time for conversations was having on 'revitalising' their relationships

- Anyone who wants to develop a coaching approach in their workplace conversations with individuals and groups/ teams.
- Anyone who's looking for a way of helping others to take responsibility for their jobs, rather than waiting for direction or approval.
- Anyone who can think of good things they'd like to do with their time if they could just find a way to spend less time telling and fixing stuff for others.

With a blank sheet of paper and one eye on the EMCC Foundation competencies, we knew that tweaking any of our existing products was not an option; we really did need to start this design from scratch and question everything. The aim was to design a brand-new programme, which did all it needed to, quickly and efficiently, without cutting corners. Time is precious – our candidates have told us that so many times. With this in mind, every element and every minute of learning had to count; if something didn't absolutely meet the overall outcomes it couldn't be included. Naturally, everything that we regarded as essential for having great coaching conversations had to be present.

The focus was to take a candidate from their initial programme 'welcome' to being able to embed a coaching approach at work and see real results in just 6-8 weeks. We also felt it was possible to use some new and different approaches, for example, in the way we assess candidates.

A 25-hour programme began to evolve, that could be achieved quickly whilst being packed with learning, as well as being both practical and straightforward to complete.



We wanted to create a framework that would encourage everyday conversations to become more effective – that would improve engagement and motivation. We felt that existing models were often too prescriptive and we wanted to equip candidates with an easy and memorable reference point, rather than a script to follow. So we developed a brand-new coaching model which we've called "ELECTRIC" and this has formed a key part of our predictably named ELECTRIC Coaching™ qualification.

In a coaching conversation, the intention is always to assist the other person to move forward in some way, in their thinking and actions. The coach is there to listen, to ask questions that get the other person to think and to provide challenge and challenging feedback where appropriate. Let's just pick up this idea of challenge...coaching someone involves acting on the need to deliver honest feedback in the conversation that might

feel challenging to receive. Nevertheless the test as to whether or not to give the feedback has to be about whether it will in some way, help the other person to receive it. In ELECTRIC Coaching™ we help people to give honest, useful feedback without judgement and with no agenda other than to help someone move forward.

Conversations between people at work often adopt a familiar pattern; one that can settle into a complacent rhythm with both people contributing, but with ill thought through questions that generate poor answers or even restrict thinking altogether. Coaching works on the premise that the other person has the ideas, the solutions, and the answers even if they don't know it. Insightful questions, asked by the coach, become the mechanism to create a space for thinking and free up all that potential. It tends to follow that the better the question, the better the quality of the thinking, so in ELECTRIC Coaching™ we help people to ask great questions in their conversations.

Listening has become an essential skill in the workplace, so much so that you'll find it in any leadership or coaching book. In ELECTRIC Coaching™, our focus is on helping delegates become skilled in active

Coaching works on the premise that the other person has the ideas, the solutions, and the answers even if they don't know it

# Coaching and mentoring in the service of change (cont.)

listening. We believe that active listening is not a passive activity or a sustained pause; it takes skill, concentration and effort. It involves staying present with someone for the whole duration of the conversation and keeping mind and body focused on them. Coaching is not about telling people what to do; it's through actively listening and asking insightful questions that the coach in the conversation helps the other person to think and develop their own ideas and plans.

## The pilot

ELECTRIC Coaching™ was piloted in November 2015 and from the pre-work starting with an online module a couple of weeks before the workshop, to the post-workshop assessment, the whole process took 8 weeks. That's it: fast, effective and pain-free, but still robust. The pilot programme showed us it worked really well.

## Impact and Outcomes

Delegates from our ELECTRIC Coaching™ pilot have described the value they've discovered, not just for others but also for themselves. In making time to think, using our ELECTRIC framework for reflection and self-development, they have reported some rapid and immediate improvements to their own contexts.

Ultimately, we are confident that ELECTRIC Coaching™ will continue to enable people to improve the quality of their conversations at work, enable others to find and keep responsibility and grow. Plus we've uncovered the very welcome truth that it really does create time and space for those things that we hadn't yet found time to work on.

Our pilot programme delegates have been very generous with their feedback. We've been truly delighted with the overwhelmingly positive response to ELECTRIC Coaching™ and the impact it's had already.

We asked delegates: "What would you say to others about ELECTRIC Coaching™ –

Everyday Coaching Skills?" and here's a selection of feedback:

*"It's a fantastic course with great content and some real skills that can be taken away and applied immediately in your day-to-day conversations. The course itself has a great balance of presentation, discussion and practical application. Be prepared to commit a few hours to your pre-work in order to get the most out of it, failure to do so would make the experience poorer."*

*"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."*

*"I would say to others that the ELECTRIC Coaching™ framework provides a structure within which conversations can happen where the person being coached is the centre of attention; where they are encouraged to explore their ideas/thinking/ challenges in a non-judgemental, open and supportive way; and where they, as the person being coached, have the time to think through and articulate what they might do differently in the future to deal with the matter at hand. The framework then encourages commitment to review specific actions over time to ensure the discussion leaves a pragmatic and lasting legacy – hopefully delivering a sought-after change for the better. I would also say that the framework is useful, not just in a work scenario, but may be used to structure helpful conversations with one's friends and family. It also helps the coach to listen and be patient, allowing the thoughts of the*

*person being coached to take centre stage rather than them being given a solution or being 'told' what to do."*

## What next?

We are delighted to say that every one of the nine people who took part in our pilot have successfully completed the programme. We have just heard that our application for EMCC accreditation at Foundation Level for ELECTRIC Coaching™ has been approved by the EMCC International Panel, which is terrific news.

We already have three further in-company ELECTRIC Coaching™ Programmes running in the next few weeks. We are also offering open programmes in London, Oxford and Birmingham from April onwards.

Even at this early stage, ELECTRIC Coaching™ has proved our hunch to be true: that by offering just what people need and dispensing with the non-essentials, we can offer something that really helps delegates to embed a coaching style in their everyday conversations.

We're proud to have created our very own coaching model (featured on Day One of the workshop) that actually works so effectively! We hope ELECTRIC Coaching™ will continue to inspire people to use coaching approaches and have coaching conversations to add value and new thinking to the coaching world.

**Diane Newell, Managing Director Coaching Services, The OCM**

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# Implementing in the real world – the T-Systems story

We all start a new adventure full of hope, anticipation and big dreams but what happens once the initial excitement wears off and it all begins to feel a little, well, normal?

That's when the role of champion comes into its own. The person whose belief in the required change is unshakeable and their dogged determination to see the vision become reality for everyone else pushes through, galvanising stakeholders and employees alike.

Implementing coaching as part of an overall culture change feels like a long series of ups and downs, with a few moments where you need the strength of purpose to hold you true to the end goal – the time when a champion can provide much needed energy and support.

At T-Systems we started from a point of little formal coaching within the business and an unspoken view of, "It's not for me...but I know someone else that it will help..."

It was our mission to embed coaching into the way we work so that it is 'how we do business'.

Offering coaching as part of a blended learning approach, we looked to foster and embed coaching in our conversations and see coaching behaviours in our day-to-day

working patterns. Coaching was built into our leadership programmes and 1:1 coaching offered to our high performers. Through all these means we started to hear a different chatter: "Why not me, why haven't I got a coach?"

This was a critical turning point, but how to capture this moment and have enough momentum to keep moving forward? Especially in light of a different voice that started to grow in popularity: "Everyone who needs coaching has been 'done' now."

So while on the surface the uptake of coaching was reducing, a spark of interest was just beginning to glow and grow within the organisation. This was the first time the role of coaching champion proved decisive in not letting coaching slide from the agenda.

Working in partnership with The OCM for new and compelling ways in which to engage with the stakeholders and leaders, it became apparent that managers simply didn't have the capacity to follow the traditional 1:1 coaching model.

What was needed was a way to bring the coach and client together that was convenient for both, as well as effective and efficient. In a fast-paced and dynamic workplace, the biggest barrier was diary time that fitted around customer operations.

The innovative solution was to offer Embedded Coaching.

## Embedded Coaching

Two highly experienced and respected coaches from The OCM were selected to work directly alongside the business leaders, investing their time and energy in a long-term relationship with T-Systems. By dedicating their time for one day per month at a fixed location they were able to offer coaching series or one-off coaching 'surgeries' to leaders, thereby breaking down the barrier of "Where and how do I find a coach that will quickly understand the environment I work in?"

Ian Day, The OCM Associate Coach-Mentor, said: "Working with T-Systems in this way has provided an invaluable feeling of the 'heartbeat' of the organisation. Embedded coaching has had a significant impact on the engagement, performance, and motivation of a large number of people. Coaching and a coaching style of leadership is now the way of being within T-Systems."

Now on our third embedded coaching series we have been able to increase the number of coaches, extending the offering to include line managers and specialists. However, to say that the path has been a smooth one would be misleading. Yet again, the role of the person who champions coaching at the highest levels to keep the investment a priority and provide the impetus for leaders to fight to keep people's time free proved invaluable.

My personal approach to team coaching is to provide the space to cultivate high performance and release the resourcefulness of the team.

# Implementing in the real world – the T-Systems story (cont.)

At this time it would have been easy to interpret any missed coaching sessions as a lack of interest or need rather than the symptoms of an organisation adjusting to a new way of working. It took courage and conviction for the end goal, keeping people focused on the benefits and sharing the success stories to keep the momentum.

While the development of 1:1 coaching has gained a foothold with managers and is now seen as an integral part of how we do business, the other important and major step in maturing the coaching offering at T-Systems has been Team Coaching.

## Team Coaching

My personal approach to team coaching is to provide the space to cultivate high performance and release the resourcefulness of the team.

Those of you who caught my presentation at The OCM CPD event in 2014 will have seen how this worked with one of the senior leadership teams.

Commissioning and contracting with the team I interviewed every member, asking what they thought a team coach would bring them. They were clear on what was needed, if not entirely clear on how a team coach might work. The overriding response was, 'we are a team who need to work better together to achieve our stretching goals and meet customer expectations'.

It is no mistake that team coaching is described as so much more complex than 1:1 coaching. This complexity extends beyond the dynamics of the interrelations of the individual team members, to

the team's position within the wider organisation and further again to the external stakeholders, whether they be customer, suppliers or sponsors.

Having initially built on the team's purpose to develop a meaningful common goal, that made sense in the context of the wider organisation and could be easily understood to gain employee buy-in, much of the early team coaching work focused on the development of the team's understanding and awareness of each other's roles and associated pressure points.

This inevitably meant that focus was taken away from the day-to-day business operations and this at times proved

frustrating to some, while others felt that more in-depth work was needed to build on and embed the learning before moving on. In these cases, the team coach needs to balance the needs of the individual team members while keeping true to the objectives of the coaching contract.

Ultimately, the success of this early team coaching experience in T-Systems was to open the door to further learning and more opportunities for teams to benefit from team coaching. We are still at the very beginning of understanding what team coaching can offer but we are seeing a growing demand for team coaching services across the business.

I am reminded of an old summary of teamwork by Henry Ford:

*"Coming together is a beginning  
Keeping together is progress  
Working together is success"*

**Achieving together is excellence**

"We have been working closely with The OCM for over two years now as we have been defining, shaping and implementing our approach to optimising coaching within our business," says Sarah Sandbrook, HR Director, T-Systems Limited. "We have benefited not only from their deep knowledge of the subject but also from the very practical and pragmatic approach to embedding coaching into a very busy operational environment."

As Sarah describes, we have made progress and are working on how success can become sustainable.

It is now that the role of Coaching Champion is needed again, to support the coaches to keep coaching fresh and relevant, drawing deep on the determination and conviction that captured everyone's imagination at the beginning.

My greatest observations during this period have been that:

- It takes enormous patience and belief to fully implement coaching as a true business tool aligned to and part of the business strategy.
- It takes considerably more time than anyone first thought to embed coaching in the fabric of the business, to make it part of how we do business.

Implementing in the real world calls for a steady nerve, a lot of resilience and a partner or champion who can keep you true, provide support and advocacy, and above all, keep the fun and excitement alive.

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# Increasing coaching agility

Angela Keane and  
Hélène Cooper

*"To boldly go where no man has gone before."* (Star Trek TV series)

*"The important achievement of Apollo was demonstrating that humanity is not forever chained to this planet and our visions go rather further than that and our opportunities are unlimited."*

Neil Armstrong

Can creativity and agility enhance the coaching experience and outcomes?

## Angela's story

I had a supervision session in January with Angela Hill, one of my OCM colleagues who is a qualified and experienced Supervisor. I had suggested in advance of our call that given the time of the year as well as the fact that I am celebrating my 10th year as a qualified and practicing coach, it would be a good idea to review my journey thus far. I was keen to reflect on and celebrate what I believe I do well in addition to identifying areas I am less happy with in order to give focus to my ongoing development.

Angela asked me to think of a metaphor or image that might help my reflection. I'm not sure whether I was prompted by Tim Peake's recent space escapades or just that I am fascinated by astronomy, but the metaphor I chose was 'the universe' – certainly big picture stuff. This prompted thoughts and discussion about reaching my potential – a most appropriate theme I felt, full of excitement, possibility and the

unknown. Watch this space!

This is a small example of how taking an unconventional approach to a standard supervision session yielded invaluable and quite novel insights. Note that the supervisor had made the metaphor suggestion in advance of the session, which gave me time to think about it ahead of our discussion. I have a (limiting?) belief that I am not a very creative thinker. However, this approach gave me a sense that my usual thought pattern was somehow set free – released and liberated – unrestrained by any limitations, boundaries or preconceived notions.

## Hélène's story

A few years ago, I was coaching someone who felt very stuck with a particular problem. As this person was a seasoned coach she had tried on herself traditional approaches but without success. To be honest I felt at a loss as to what to do next. So seeking inspiration, I suggested we stood up and look out of the window. In the moment I did not have a clue why I made the suggestion, but felt movement might help.

Being high up in a building in London, we had an amazing view. So whilst admiring it together I just asked: "Looking at the view, is there anything here that represents your issue?" The answer was instant. "Yes, this building here. It is so big it blocks my view." Without thinking I just said: "What happens if you walk around to the other side?" Silence fell and then suddenly she said something like: "Oh my God, the building is shrinking." Taken

aback, we both fell about laughing.

"What do you mean the building is shrinking?" I asked. It transpired that for her in that instant the issue melted away. She had found her way forward.

I was already an experienced coach at the time, but it was the first time I had used resources beyond what might be considered as standard coaching techniques. I had increased my capacity as a coach and so had the person I was coaching. The experience opened my mind to an exciting world of more creative approaches in coaching.

## Mike's story

Some years ago, I had the exciting opportunity of coaching a Country Managing Director from Israel. He had just been promoted and seen his leadership role extended to cover Eastern Europe, too – a real clash of cultures and styles!

My client was sceptical about the impact of coaching on performance and though he agreed to a coaching programme with me, he wanted it to be memorable, challenging and stimulating.

We contracted that he would choose different locations in his new region for each of our conversations and I themed each coaching session objectives around the chosen venue. For example: Warsaw ('taking the old into the new'); Barcelona/La Sagrada Familia ('it is OK for me to be an unfinished leader'); London; and even

"What do you mean the building is shrinking?" I asked. It transpired that for her in that instant the issue melted away. She had found her way forward.

# Increasing coaching agility (cont.)

Bletchley Park ('cracking the code of change in my new role').

The creative approach was such a success that I now use 'different spaces' for all of my coaching sessions. In addition to a coaching programme's focus on outcomes and performance, if the way in which the coaching is delivered is more engaging, inspiring and memorable for the coachee, it ensures that their learning is embedded. I have found that there is an energy and excitement about this new learning, which they are eager to quickly take back in to their role. The simple act of thinking whilst walking – being on the move – makes the process more enjoyable for all.

### Why bother to be creative?

Becoming a qualified coach is challenging. Assuming the learning journey is undertaken with a reputable provider, the course should at some point mean that we are jolted out of our comfort zones and encouraged to consider different, new ways of doing things.

There are countless reasons for doing so in coaching and supervision. The most obvious is that each coachee presents us with their own unique set of characteristics and life experience. It seems only right and proper then that we coaches honour that uniqueness and respond with a tailored approach to suit them as individuals: one size does not fit all.

Another good reason might be that we coaches can easily get into a familiar pattern or approach of coaching. This can happen for many reasons – doing things the same way can help us gain confidence as a new coach; or perhaps it's because we don't allow ourselves sufficient preparation time ahead of each session; and/or our 'standard' approach seems to be working, so why change it! There's a distinction here between developing one's own style of coaching, which I believe is to be encouraged as it strengthens the authenticity and sincerity of the coaching relationship, as opposed to repeatedly taking the same approach.

A common benefit/outcome of coaching is enabling coachees to develop the capacity to view situations from a variety of different perspectives. We coaches can lead by example by being open to coaching in different ways. At the simplest level, we need to tailor our approach to meet the different learning preferences of our coachees. We can use visuals or a variety of random objects to induce different reactions in the coachee. Consciously allowing silence for thinking time will be appreciated by our more introverted coachees, or the use of metaphors might be helpful for illustrating a point to someone who prefers pictures to words.

There are many different learning style models. According to Wikipedia, one literature review identified 71 different models. Whether this review is accurate

or up to date, one thing we can agree on is that, as coaches we have the opportunity to bring a great variety of insight generating tools into our practice.

Walter Burke Barbe proposed VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) routes to learning; in other words, learning through using our three key senses: sight, hearing and touch. The reader will recognise these in some of our examples. Personally, I have yet to explore taste and smell in my coaching practice, but recall how the smell of madeleines (a delicious small French cake) dipped in tea took the author Marcel Proust to a different time and space in one of his novels.

### Another example from Hélène

"Christmas morning and the first object I get out of my stocking is a magnet stating 'Do not regret ageing; it is a privilege many are denied' on a backdrop of an elderly hand holding a baby's. This simple little present stopped me in my tracks. It provided me with a new perspective to observe a looming big birthday with new eyes. Reflecting on it, I remembered how a small stone, handed to me at the beginning of a CPD day, simply opened my mind to new understanding and new possibilities, even though I had not even chosen the stone myself."

Words, objects, pictures, sounds, and smells – even selected at random – can instantly connect us with unexpected thoughts and feelings, shine a light on a

Words, objects, pictures, sounds, and smells can instantly connect us with unexpected thoughts and feelings, shine a light on a blind spot, allow a hidden memory to re-emerge.



blind spot, allow a hidden memory to re-emerge.

It's important too to be conscious of the different levels of energy in coachees themselves as well as that generated between coach and coachee. Consider that holding a coaching session in a standard meeting room, perhaps without any natural daylight, could stifle or dampen any sense of creativity or positive energy being generated. Consider instead taking a walk around the block.

Our associate Katherine Long frequently undertakes her coaching sessions whilst walking in the city or the countryside, encouraging the coachee to look around them – to notice their surroundings and pay attention to any reaction those surroundings might engender within them.

### Neuroscience can help us understand what's going on

When we think about creativity, there is much to learn from neuroscience. The latest research involving MRI technology supports the view that the brain is 'plastic'. In other words, the brain has the capacity to change through experience and learning, which is great news for us as coaches and for our coachees. The more we use a neural pathway, the more developed it becomes – this is how habits are formed.

We all have 'good' habits and 'bad'

habits. What neuroscience tells us is that through the process of neuroplasticity we can replace bad or unhelpful habits with good and helpful ones. This is where creativity and novelty come into play. By adopting a different approach, by encouraging our client to take a new perspective, envision a different future, try something novel or perhaps challenging, we are helping them form new neural pathways. These potential neural pathways can then, with practice, be developed into default habits and behaviours.

In evolutionary terms, the 'oldest' part of our brain (limbic system) is programmed for fight or flight – an early warning system that alerts us to danger. In stressful situations, the body and brain flood with adrenalin and cortisol, making it difficult to think, create or choose. Daniel Goleman (1996) described this phenomenon as an 'amygdala hijack', where the amygdala (which plays a key role in processing emotions) takes control of the brain.


When this happens, our impulses override our rationality, our creativity is stifled and we risk making poor choices. As coaches, we can help our clients move from limbic reaction to re-engage with the network of brain regions responsible for creativity and divergent thinking. The good news is that neuroplasticity tells us that the more we practice, the easier it becomes.

### Beyond the brain

Others argue that the brain alone is not enough as a resource and that both body and system need to be used too. Quoting Katherine Long again: "We are at a very different place in human history... more than ever we need to nurture spiritual, somatic and systemic intelligences (in combination with all that the virtual world can offer) in order to comprehend and deal effectively with the challenges we face.

Our bodies are incredibly sensitive and accurate radars when it comes to understanding what implies health for the whole. Learning how to tune into what we are sensing and to hold that data in balance with all the other data at our disposal must certainly be a critical competence for the leadership of the future. Somatic approaches in coaching are therefore not a quirky 'fun to have', but a serious capability which enables our clients to lead into the future with humanity."

Whether in the role of coach, mentor or supervisor, the power of somatic coaching is impressive, when appropriate and welcomed by the client. It allows access to different, deeper meaning or simply in getting from A to B much faster. An example that springs to mind: a facilitator invited us to think about something in our work/lives that we were about to do. She suggested that as we think, we should also observe our posture, and consider how we were feeling about that event. We were then invited to change something in our posture, observe our new posture and reflect on how this had



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# Increasing coaching agility (cont.)

changed how we now felt. Most if not all of us noticed a difference and for some the difference significantly affected how they perceived that immediate future.

## Contracting is key

Successful coaching relationships start with clear 'contracting', outlining how the coach and coachee will work together. It is a critical part of building trust and rapport and enabling the coachee to feel that they are in a safe and confidential space. When the coach is keen to try a new approach, something that might strike the coachee as a bit 'way out' or risky, it is even more important to contract carefully around what might happen, to help allay any fears the coachee may have.

## Conclusion

Coaching is all about change. So why not consider changing how we work as coaches too? Who knows what benefits might accrue for the coachees and ourselves and our practice?

We hope that by including all these examples, we can succeed in challenging you, the reader, to reflect on the extent to which you are accessing a deeper level of self-awareness for yourself and can help those you coach to observe, notice and learn from a wider palette of tools.

We have shown how impactful coaching in this way can be. We have noted how

these tools and techniques tap into a range of theories and how neuroscience helps us understand how they work because of the brain's neuroplasticity.

Now we would like to throw the ball back to you and challenge you to reflect on some of the questions below, either on your own or in a group:

- You already have resources you may not be aware of or use consciously – how can you 'rediscover' them so that you can begin to introduce them in your coaching work?
- What are you assuming that is stopping you from making the most of those resources?
- What might entice you to 'have a go'?

## How can we help?

Hélène and Angela will facilitate a creative coaching session at The OCM CPD day on 30th June. Why not join them and see what you can uncover? If you would like The OCM to run a creative coaching session in-house for your organisation, please contact: Lucy@theocm.co.uk

With thanks to the following for their contributions to this article:

Katherine Long is an Associate of The OCM.

Mike Clark is an APECS Accredited Executive Coach and an Associate of The OCM.

Anna Mclean is a Professional Coach-Mentor with The OCM.

## Additional resources:

Allen, D. & Kingdon, M. (2002) *Sticky Wisdom*

Rock, D. (1996) *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* Bloomsbury: London

Claxton, G. (2015) *Intelligence in the Flesh: Why your mind needs your body much more than it thinks*

Kusek, D. & Leonhard, G. (2005) *The Future of Music: Manifesto for the Digital Music Revolution*

Kaparo, R. (2012) *Awakening Somatic Intelligence: The Art and Practice of Embodied Mindfulness*

<http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/a/left-brain-right-brain.htm>

Lecture by Susan Greenfield "Outside the box: the neuroscience of creativity" at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuTyxBxkWW8&list=UU2XCIBiVj3WocsOzu\\_PFI7Q&index=82&feature=plcp](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuTyxBxkWW8&list=UU2XCIBiVj3WocsOzu_PFI7Q&index=82&feature=plcp)

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# Psychometrics in executive coaching – essential development or unnecessary distraction?

*"It's such a simple framework but I keep going back to it. It really helps me to understand the choices I make and to think about why other people may see the world differently from me."*

Quote from Divisional MD in a FTSE 100 engineering company about a psychometric used in coaching.

Psychometrics have certainly earned their place in the coach's toolkit. As the quote above shows, they can offer many coaching clients insight into their own needs and preferences and can provoke deeper thinking about others. But there is a bewildering array of tools out there in the marketplace – and it's not always clear how and when it's appropriate to use them.

This article will shed light on how to make psychometrics work in real-world situations – what psychometrics to use, how to use them and how to use them strategically in organisations.

## Are psychometrics always the answer?

I'm an occupational psychologist and I have long held a geeky fascination with psychometrics. I've always been amazed that we can measure something as amorphous and seemingly subjective as personality in a valid and reliable way. I can remember the 'eureka' moment in my early 20's when I first completed the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and had the results explained to me by a wise old psychologist. So much about my own preferences and the choices I'd made

suddenly became clear.

Over the years I've often incorporated psychometrics into my coaching. And when reflecting on my own practice I realised that whilst many clients experienced transformative moments of clarity, a few found the psychometrics merely interesting, or sometimes even quite forgettable.

The first important question is "Whose needs would psychometrics serve – the client's or mine?" Psychometrics need to offer a short-cut to insight and clarity so that the client can achieve their goals more quickly and effectively.

I have sometimes supervised coaches who have come to use

We need to challenge ourselves to make sure that we are using psychometrics to help the client become stronger and more capable, rather than to make the coaching easier for ourselves.

psychometrics by default, sometimes even as a 'crutch' because it gives a language and

a model which the coach finds comfortable and familiar. We need to challenge ourselves to make sure that we are using psychometrics to **help the client become stronger and more capable**, rather than to make the coaching easier for ourselves.

## What do we mean by psychometrics anyway?

Before we look at how and when to use them, it's worth taking a brief look at what we mean by the term 'psychometrics'.

Not all psychometrics are created equal. There's a continuum. Some psychometrics are focused mainly on 'selection' – helping predict how someone will perform in a job to select the best candidate for a particular role. Examples of these could include ability tests (such as the ABLE test) and personality tests such as the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ). Others are focused principally on 'development', offering insights into an individual's needs and preferences but without any implication of a right – or a wrong – personality profile (examples here include MBTI and FIRO B). And of course there are some tools which cover a broad spectrum, having use in both selection and development situations (including Talent Q Dimensions, Hogan and 16PF).

180/360 tools are a related class of diagnostics which aren't strictly psychometrics but which have an important place in helping coaching clients to understand how other people see their performance, and how the client has an impact on others.

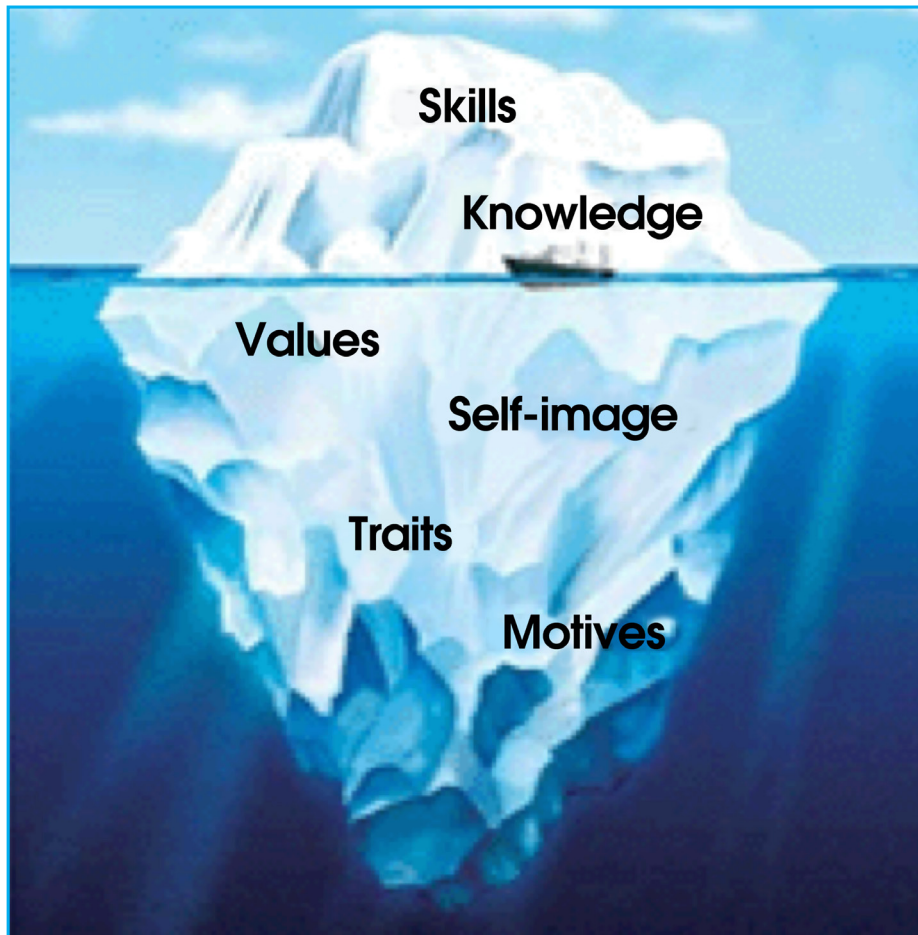
## What is the right psychometric for my client?

Possibly the core coaching skill which we coaches need to have is the ability to determine what approach will work for a particular client, in a particular situation with a particular set of goals.

### Situation:

To settle on the right tool for the job I would recommend considering the overall goals for the coaching intervention first, and then working back towards what would then work for this particular client.

# Psychometrics in executive coaching – essential development or unnecessary distraction? (cont.)



As we all know, coaching goals vary widely. But there will nearly always be some sort of shift in behaviour that the client wishes to achieve and which we are trying to facilitate as coaches.

The Iceberg model is well-used in coaching, and with good reason. If we identify the level at which someone needs to change, and the enablers and blockers to that change in themselves, this helps us to work out what psychometrics will work best.

The iceberg is multi-faceted and is a useful coaching tool in its own right.

But the main principle is that the aspects of personality which are deeper in the iceberg are harder to change – and people are also less likely to be consciously aware of them.

Skills and knowledge are relatively easy to develop and change and they are much more visible to ourselves, and to others who observe us.

In contrast, motives are deep-seated and largely unconscious and change very little over our lifetime after childhood.

For example, if a client is looking to understand what career moves will give them meaning and purpose, then tools which give insight into Motives (deep-seated needs and preferences) will help. Hogan and Firo B are tests which get at these kinds of existential questions around

“What do I want from life?” and “What unspoken needs must my life and my work meet within me?”

As another example, if someone is taking on a larger role, it is possible that one’s values and self-image may need to change. Following a promotion, a client may need to move from the role of an expert to the role of a leader and strategic thinker. A psychometric is needed which helps a client understand how they currently see themselves and their contribution in the workplace. The coach can then ‘hold a mirror up’ to the client, showing that they need to re-frame how they view themselves and what their work requires of them.

Some clients have a more empirical, data-driven way of thinking. Many people find it easier to accept feedback if they know it is based on a fully-researched model, with statistics around reliability and validity and a robust norm group. Moreover, some people feel more able to be open with their coach about their inner-most feelings when they have some graphs and a framework to catalyse that discussion. Without these reference points, some people don’t feel comfortable discussing their emotions, needs and drives.

Moreover, some clients are more self-aware than others. Clients who are not in the habit of self-reflection may benefit from a relatively simple psychometric from which they can build their insight

about their own – and others’ – needs and preferences.

180/360 surveys are useful in many ways but can play a particularly important role when a more challenging coaching stance is needed.

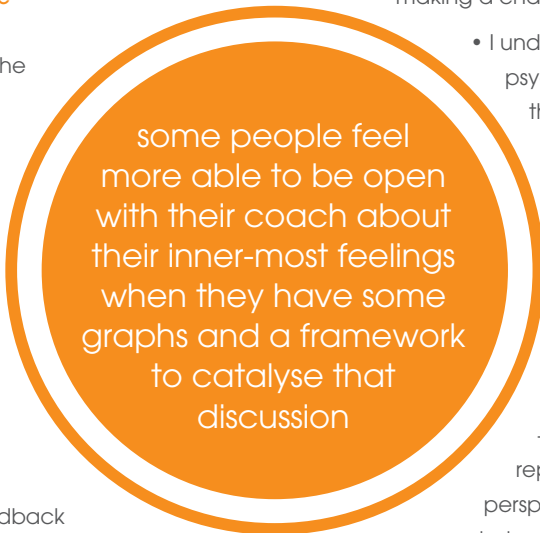
**How to give feedback on psychometrics**

There are many books and guidelines on how to give feedback. Most psychometric test publishers require practitioners to attend a course, which usually incorporates some practice sessions in giving feedback.

Nevertheless it’s worth reflecting on some basic principles to guide conversations with clients to get the most from psychometrics.

**Feedback must be**

1. Specific – over the course of the feedback session, the coach needs to help the client to relate the psychometric data to the goals of the coaching.
2. Timely – the feedback should happen relatively soon after the psychometric has been completed; this is particularly the



case for 180/360 tools.

3. From a credible source – the client needs to see the coach as knowledgeable about the psychometric as well as his/her own situation and goals.

By the end of the feedback session, the client should have:

1. Awareness of the data – what it means and its implications.
2. Responsibility for doing something with the insight from the session.

**How to ensure the use of psychometrics with a client leads to lasting change**

Psychometrics can provide insight which leads to lasting change - the coach has an important role in ensuring that this happens.

Here are some things which the coach should ensure that the client experiences when using psychometrics:

- I understand the data and I want to refer to the data regularly as part of making a change.
- I understand the psychometric tools themselves – the underlying model and the different dimensions.
- I understand the limits of the psychometrics – that they represent a useful perspective but not a whole and complete picture of myself as a person.

- I own the data – I have a clear, thought through plan for how I’ll apply it.
- I incorporate the results into my sense of self and my goals for myself.
- I have a safety net – I have a fall-back plan if I don’t initially manage to use the psychometrics in the way that I’ve planned.

**Psychometrics can be useful because**

- They enhance people’s self-understanding.
- They give a shared framework for discussing one’s needs, goals and preferences.
- They appeal both to visually-oriented and data-driven people.
- They are a shortcut to insight that may emerge later.
- In the case of 360 surveys they can bring issues to life in a way that 1:1 conversations would not accomplish.

**But they also have their limits**

It’s easy for a client to go away from a feedback session feeling better informed, but without wanting to do anything about it.

People can dismiss the feedback because the tool is not a complete picture of reality (no psychometric ever can be).

People can typecast themselves, defining themselves by a framework which doesn’t actually do justice to the richness of their personality.

It takes skill to both understand the feedback and to help the person to apply it.

# Psychometrics in executive coaching – essential development or unnecessary distraction? (cont.)

## How to avoid these pitfalls

Key is to use the feedback to help the other party to feel stronger and more capable as a result of the feedback.

This might not involve making sure that someone understands every nuance of the tool – rather, it is about explaining what is being measured and asking the client to interpret the data that they see. It is also useful to ask prompting questions.

You should correct totally incorrect statements, but allow people to interpret things using their own mental maps and concepts.

Ask: “How do you see this playing out for you in real life?”

## Psychometrics with teams

Strategic use of psychometrics within an organisation as part of a broader coaching strategy can provide a structure of interpretation for people, a shortcut to insight and knowledge.

And if others in an organisation are using the same tests, you have a shared language as well as insight and data about people en masse.

However, other tools can also give people that same structure of interpretation and insight. For example, you can use the pictures technique (multiple photographs, choose one etc.) or looking at the metaphors and language that people choose to express themselves.

## Let's challenge ourselves as coaches

A major challenge for psychometrics is the source of one of their strengths. They contain objective, observable criteria and they are constructed on the basis of large sample sizes and statistical validity. This necessarily means that the underlying models are simplified representations of reality which incorporate ‘normal’ ranges of personality traits. Some of the richness of the human experience is therefore lost.

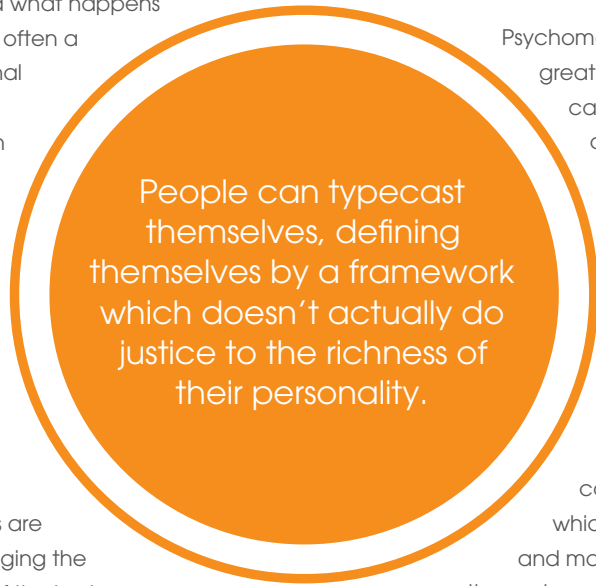
In contrast, in coaching we have a ‘sample size of 1’ – one unique individual with their own unique way of seeing the world. So we need to be able to use what works for that client at that moment. And what happens in coaching is often a deeply personal change and transformation which doesn't always rely on the rational, cognitive aspects of brain function.

Psychometrics are great at engaging the rational part of the brain to reflect on things which may be happening in the limbic / emotional brain. But deep change comes from a cycle of learning and reflection where a person gains insight into the particular workings of their own personal limbic brain over time and over repeated cycles.

Psychometrics can be a catalyst to facilitate this process, but the coach needs skill and insight to work the

psychometrics into the cycle of learning and reflection.

As a final thought, let's focus on a concept which is central to the use of psychometrics: predictive validity. Even the best psychometrics struggle to get predictive validity figures of 40%. In simple terms, they leave 60% of someone's behaviour unexplained. There is therefore a lot of every individual's personal experience which cannot be explained by psychometrics. As coaches, let's be comfortable with helping our clients to explore the limits of their self-knowledge and insight, to accept that minds are complex, sometimes contradictory and often ‘messy’.



Psychometrics are great tools which can anchor the coaching conversation and give structure to it. But their use should not be at the expense of an exploratory conversation in which people learn and make insights for themselves.

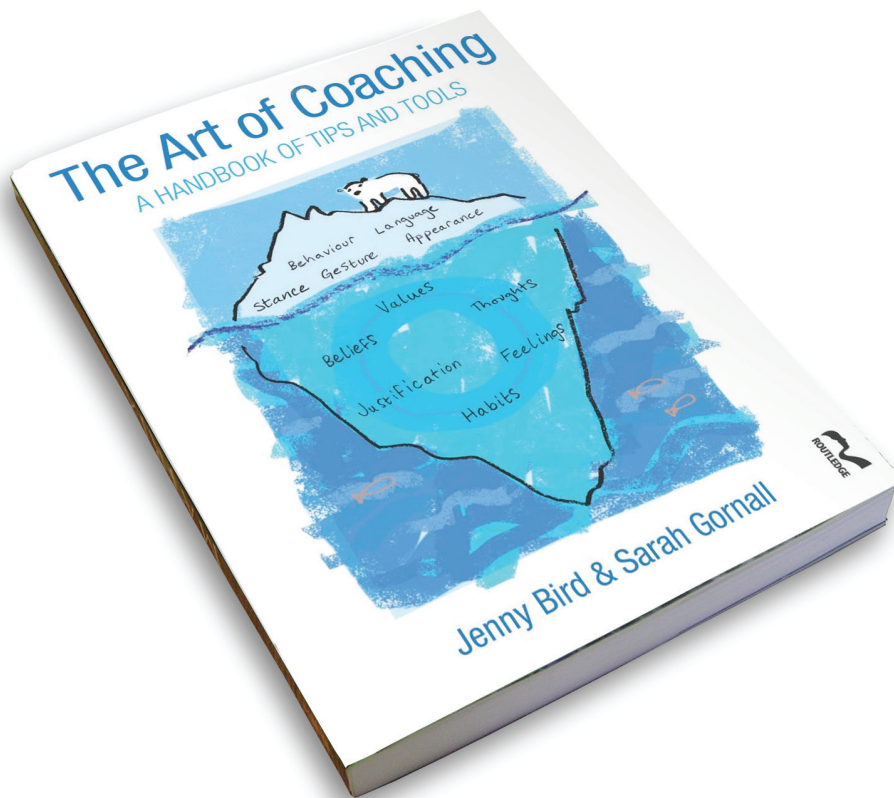
That is where the power of coaching truly rests.

**Graham Clark, Director of Coaching and Consultancy, The OCM**

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## Book review

### The Art of Coaching – A Handbook of Tips and Tools (Jenny Bird & Sarah Gornall, 2016)



serve two purposes – to explain how the concept or model works, and to provide the coach with a means of representing and exploring these with their client. As Bird and Gornall describe in their introduction “...using diagrams sometimes enable us to go to places where words would not take us.” As such, this book taps into the visual (spatial) learning style and to some extent Activist (Honey & Mumford, 1982!) preference of our clients.

Bird and Gornall suggest the illustrations be used

in a flexible way – primarily as a starting point or stimulus. For example, the coach might turn to the book to remind themselves of a classic model or seek

inspiration for a new take on an old problem. The client is encouraged to participate – to pick up pen and paper, tablet, or move to the white board to explore a concept or idea. Even those who don't consider themselves creative or artistic can be enabled and energised by drawing. Importantly, if the lines, shapes and colours our client produces reveal connections and create meaning for them, this is what matters.

#### What do you get?

The book is helpfully organised into seven themes – Coaching, Relationships & Communication, Learning & Personal Growth, Leading, Influencing &

#### What's in the book?

When I think about the theme of this year's OCM conference 'Real world coaching and mentoring – how to make it work' there is much to draw on (no pun intended) in this book. The authors have gathered more than 60 tools, models and frameworks on diverse topics ranging from communication to change, influencing to supervision. Inevitably, many of the

tools will be familiar while others are original to Bird and Gornall or have been adapted and further developed by them through their extensive coaching, mentoring, L&D, and supervision experience.

using diagrams sometimes enable us to go to places where words would not take us.

#### How is it different from other coaching books?

The clue is in the title.

Each concept or model is accompanied by an illustration or diagram (by Josie Valley). The illustrations

# Book review

## The Art of Coaching – A Handbook of Tips and Tools (Jenny Bird & Sarah Gornall, 2016) (cont.)

Motivating, Analysis, Choice & Change, Supervision & Team Facilitation, and Developing Creativity. Each theme or topic has a dozen or so tools that follow a reassuring and practical format – What this is, How we use it, and Put it into action.

Rather than burden the reader with lots of theory, the authors take a pragmatic approach – providing a short and simple explanation of the model and how it might be applied. The ‘light touch’ taken by Bird and Gornall can leave the reader wanting more. For those who would like to dig a little deeper, the chapter on References and Further Reading is a useful addition, providing much-needed background and links to other resources.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter on Developing Creativity (a topic explored in this edition of the journal by Angela Keane and Hélène Cooper on page 13.) Bird and Gornall suggest that the use of drawing and visual images encourage the client to ‘externalise’ the thinking process and help generate new perspectives. I also liked the idea that using illustrations need not be restricted to face-to-face coaching. Rather, the language of visual imagery might be used to help

clients widen the way they perceive things – as coaches, we don’t need to actually see the drawings our clients produce for them to have meaning.

I also valued the link to brain science. There is a growing body of evidence from neuroscience to support the idea that using visuals and imagery reduces the energy needed by the brain for processing information (Rock, 2009)<sup>2</sup>. Pictures use the visual cortex in the occipital lobe at the back of the brain – introducing diagrams and illustrations into our coach-mentoring sessions could, therefore, potentially free up space in the prefrontal cortex for higher-level thinking tasks and understanding complex ideas.

### Who is it for?

This book is very accessible and will have broad appeal. For the new coach starting out and building their skills there are the classic, tried and tested models together with confidence-boosting practical ideas.

It is also for the established coach who is looking for ways to refresh their toolkit – perhaps moving away from linear approaches by using images to generate visual layers

or maps that help explain the complexity of a situation, aid our client’s thinking and increase the chances of ‘breakthrough’ moments.

Do you need to be able to draw? I would suggest it helps – this said, the illustrations are simple and easy to follow. In many cases, it will be the client who has the pen in their hand. In other situations, investing a little time to practice sketching out the illustrations will help embed the learning and ease the execution when the time comes to introduce ideas spontaneously to a client.

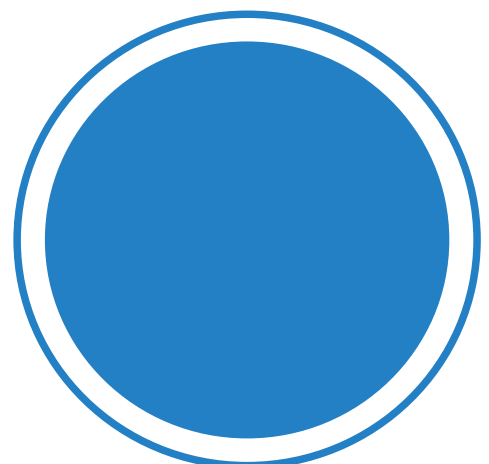
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1. Honey, P. & Mumford, A. (1982) Manual of Learning Styles. London: P. Honey
2. Rock, D. (2009) Your Brain at Work. New York: Harper Collins

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moving away from linear approaches by using images to generate visual layers or maps that help explain the complexity of a situation, aid our client’s thinking and increase the chances of ‘breakthrough’ moments.





# The Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme: how the CIPD are using mentoring to help jobseekers find work

Katherine Ray

## Introduction

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years.

It has more than 140,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development. In 2011, CIPD launched the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme, which offers jobseekers (primarily 18-24 year olds) one-to-one mentoring sessions with a HR professional (all CIPD members), to help them improve their employability skills, boost their confidence and find work.

Steps Ahead mentees are referred to the programme primarily by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, and other selected partners. To date, 73% of those who have completed the programme go on to find work or work experience – proof of the fantastic impact CIPD members can have! The programme is run by the CIPD (at no cost to the young people or Jobcentre Plus) with support from Nesta and the Cabinet Office via the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund.

Steps Ahead Mentoring is currently operating across the whole of England



with pilots in Scotland, Wales, and plans in place for a pilot in Ireland. CIPD also recently completed successful pilots of the programme with other groups including older workers and parent returners to work and hopes to extend Steps Ahead support to these more widely during 2016.

### How does The Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme work?

The primary referral route for Steps Ahead mentees is via Jobcentre Plus work coaches. CIPD provide them with guidance on how the programme works and criteria to help them judge which young jobseekers will be most suited to take part in the programme.

They will then talk through the Steps Ahead offer with the young jobseeker and provide them with details of how to sign up. The young jobseeker will then sign up voluntarily by completing a short

online registration form. The diagram below shows the process for how a mentee registers to be mentored as part of the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme.

Steps Ahead Mentors are required to be CIPD members, and therefore HR professionals,

to be able to sign up to the programme. They complete an online profile giving some details about themselves including:

To date, 73% of those who have completed the programme go on to find work or work experience – proof of the fantastic impact CIPD members can have!

# The Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme: how the CIPD are using mentoring to help jobseekers find work (cont.)

- personal details – to determine their geographic location
- employment and education background
- motivation for becoming a mentor – to determine why they want to become a Steps Ahead Mentor

Once approved, Steps Ahead Mentors can search for mentees in their local area who are looking to be mentored via CIPD online Steps Ahead mentoring portal. At this stage, only anonymised mentee details will be displayed e.g. locations available to meet,

length of job search etc. The mentor will then match themselves to a mentee and from there they will be able to access their contact details, get in touch and set up the first mentoring meeting.

All mentoring meetings are required to take place in a public space e.g. a coffee shop, and should be in a location that is reasonably convenient for both mentor and mentee. Sometimes, there may be a shortage of mentors or mentees in a particular geographical location. If this is the case, mentors can search for mentees to support in other locations that have confirmed they are also happy to be mentored remotely. This can also be very effective and CIPD has some good examples of where this form of mentoring has worked really well.

## Training and The OCM's involvement

The CIPD have been working with The OCM to help them enhance the existing mentoring training for mentees and mentors to support both parties in their

roles as well as ensure they get the most out of their mentoring relationships. As the programme expands and grows there is a greater need to ensure that both mentees and mentors understand what is expected and to provide mentors with some tools and skills for mentoring. Just because the mentors are CIPD members and therefore HR professionals doesn't necessarily mean that they know how to mentor.

Given the audience for Steps Ahead mentoring, the CIPD wanted to do something different for the mentees, most of which are unlikely to have had any previous experience of mentoring and may not fully understand what mentoring entails. With this in mind, the CIPD decided to take a more current and modern approach to the mentee training by creating an animation which covers the following information:

- What is mentoring?
- How will it help me?
- What is my role as a mentee and how do I get the most out of it?
- What is the role of the mentor and who might my mentor be?
- What kind of things can they help me with?
- What can I expect from a mentoring session?
- What do I need to do/prepare for?
- What happens next?

The CIPD and The OCM have been working with a London-based animation company to develop the mentee animation. Using animations as a means of communicating key messages is growing in

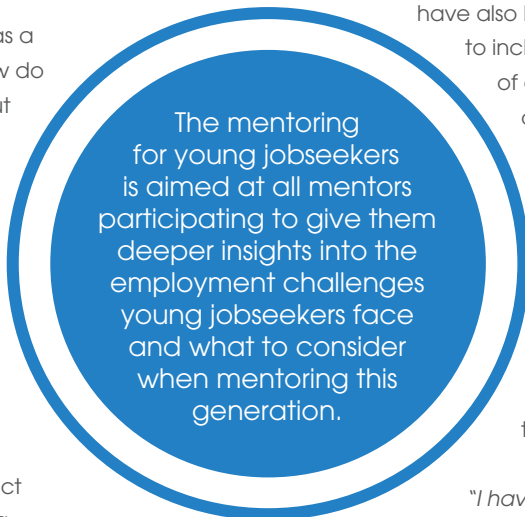
popularity and is seen as a more engaging approach for these digital natives.

Mentors on the other hand are offered a choice of two webinars to help prepare them for mentoring their young jobseeker: an introduction to mentoring and mentoring young jobseekers.

The reason for providing two different webinars was to cover all aspects of mentoring young jobseekers. The introduction to mentoring is aimed at those mentors who don't have much mentoring experience or those who are looking for a refresher. The mentoring for young jobseekers is aimed at all mentors participating to give them deeper insights into the employment challenges young jobseekers face and what to consider when mentoring this generation.

Both webinars have been designed to be highly interactive to ensure high levels of participation and engagement. They

have also been designed to include a number of different types of multimedia, whether it be videos demonstrating how to give feedback or a narrative about how to use a specific mentoring tool.



*"I have really enjoyed working with the CIPD to create the training content for the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme, as mentoring has been something I have been championing for a long time. I also think this is such a great initiative. I do a lot of mentoring training, but it's been great to do it differently this time in the form of an animation and also webinars. I think mentoring webinar training can*

**Case Study 1 – lack of experience**

<p><b>Madia’s Story</b></p> <p>“After I finished school, I started college but wasn’t able to finish my course for personal reasons. I’d been working part-time in retail until then, so I went full-time, working at the likes of Gap and Next. Pretty soon, though, I realised that it just wasn’t what I wanted.</p> <p>I started to look around for admin jobs, but no one wanted to employ me – I just didn’t have the experience.”</p>	<p><b>What did her mentor do?</b></p> <p>Madia told her mentor that she wanted to get into financial services, insurance specifically. They created an action plan together and Madia was asked to research her dream job and identify the steps she needed to get there.</p> <p>Her mentor took her to networking events and encouraged her to speak to people about what she wanted to do.</p>
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**Case Study 2 – self-confidence**

<p><b>Bathsheba’s Story</b></p> <p>“In spite of over five years of relevant experience, I had been really struggling to get work. My work coach said that I should apply for jobs that required the university degree I had. I did that, but I just wasn’t getting any success. So I also applied for all sorts of other jobs – including factory, admin and cleaning roles – but I kept getting told that I was overqualified. My mentor saw very early that the biggest challenge to my getting a job was probably my self-confidence.”</p>	<p><b>What did her mentor do?</b></p> <p>Bathsheba’s mentor started off by asking how she felt about herself, which Bathsheba said felt very ‘human’: “She helped me to feel supported when I really needed it.” Firstly they looked at her CV and found that Bathsheba tended to downplay her achievements. Her mentor reminded her that whilst she may downplay her achievements, those who also wanted the jobs she wanted would be doing the opposite.</p>
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**Case Study 3 – update a CV and prepare for interviews**

<p><b>Nathaniel’s Story</b></p> <p>I left school once I’d completed my GCSEs and then went to college for a further three years. After that, I started looking around for opportunities. I found a work placement and then other temporary work. But once that ended, I was unemployed for eight months.</p>	<p><b>What did his mentor do?</b></p> <p>His mentor had all sorts of knowledge and experience and was able to improve his CV from a one-pager to a much better two-pager. She suggested that he take out some parts completely and instead focus on particular experiences and how they benefited him in a way that employers would understand.</p> <p>She also gave him clear insights into the sorts of things they needed to know about in an interview.</p>
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Mentoring Programme Case Study report please go to: [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/steps-ahead-mentoring-case-study-report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/steps-ahead-mentoring-case-study-report_2015.pdf)

**Success of the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme**

The CIPD know that the programme is working as nearly three-quarters (73%) of young people who have completed the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme have gone on to find employment or work experience.

It’s not just the young jobseekers who benefit from participating in the programme. The CIPD found that eight in every ten of those who took part found the experience to be a rewarding one. Mentors state that not only does it feel good to help others and see the young people go on to find employment, but it also contributes to professional development by enhancing coaching and mentoring skills. Furthermore it provides HR professionals with a far better understanding of the work challenges faced by young people. This increased understanding amongst the profession contributes to the CIPD’s vision to champion better work and working lives which starts with young people being able to access the labour market.

To date, over 3,500 CIPD members have signed up to be a Steps Ahead Mentor.

**Why mentors sign up**

The CIPD knows that members volunteer as mentors for a host of reasons, but a common theme is the impact of their own experience as it motivates them to help others.



*be perceived in the wrong way but if it’s interactive and engaging then people will get just as much from it as they would a face-to-face session”. Katherine Ray, Head of Mentoring with The OCM.*

**What do the mentees typically want to discuss in their mentoring sessions?**

Here are 3 case studies from mentees who have participated in the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme. For more information or to read the Steps Ahead

# The Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme: how the CIPD are using mentoring to help jobseekers find work (cont.)

Simon says:

"When I graduated, I was unemployed for nine months. At the time, I had no clear advice on what to do about my situation. I would have benefited from someone giving me informal help back then, so as soon as I found out about the programme, I jumped at the chance to get involved."

Katie says:

"I'd done a fair amount of mentoring in the past – although mostly within the HR profession. I felt very passionate about getting involved. With little guidance, I'd had to work very hard to gain a foothold in education and work earlier in my life – and I feel we can sometimes make it very difficult for young people to make the transition into employment.

I found that helping my mentee helped me in my understanding and it's incredibly rewarding watching somebody blossom in front of you."

Barry says:

"I've always had good experiences of being mentored during my career.

I decided I really wanted to give something back and volunteered for Steps Ahead Mentoring after hearing Boris Johnson talk about it at a CIPD event. It's one of the few things in your working life that you do because you want to, not because you have to. Much of what we all do is part of a routine or for compliance reasons. Mentoring is different – it means helping someone establish themselves on their career and life path."

To read more about what mentors are saying about the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme please go to: [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/steps-ahead-mentoring-case-study-report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/steps-ahead-mentoring-case-study-report_2015.pdf)

*"The Steps Ahead mentoring relationship, between volunteer and young jobseeker, provides a unique opportunity for the mentee to tap into the expertise and knowledge of a HR professional. More importantly, the time and dedication our volunteers put into the process can have a huge impact on a young person's confidence, helping them to feel better equipped to take their first steps into the world of work."* **Jemeela Quraishi, Development Manager, Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme.**

## Conclusion

We know that mentoring is growing in popularity and that there is a real resurgence in organisations using mentoring to develop their employees. We often think about mentoring as something that only happens within organisations where there is some form of commonality e.g. two people working for the same organisation and the organisation wanting to develop a more junior employee by pairing them with an internal more senior mentor. Whilst external mentoring exists it is less known than internal mentoring as individuals who have an external mentor tend to arrange the mentoring themselves through their network or through a recommendation. However, it is clear from the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme that mentoring has a greater reach and benefit than just being an internal organisational development tool.

What we are starting to see is organisations like the CIPD taking mentoring and applying it to address real-life challenges – challenges which directly impact organisations and the future UK workforce. They have successfully demonstrated that mentoring can be used in a different way to how we commonly think, by using the traditional approach to mentoring whereby someone who has more experience provides advice, guidance and support to someone with less experience.

External mentoring is on the increase – there are more and more mentoring organisations being set up: The Cherie Blair Foundation is using mentoring to help women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging countries; The Aspire Foundation offers women and men with a corporate or small business background the opportunity to give something back by mentoring aspiring women from the charities and social enterprises sector; Mentore founded by Baroness Karen Brady is a premium business mentoring service where internal high-potential employees can be matched with a senior external mentor; and Mentorsme which provides mentoring for small to medium-sized enterprises. Given this rise in external mentoring over the past few years, I can see this growing even more over the coming years as people realise the potential that mentoring can bring by connecting the right people together to address a clear purpose.

It is great to see that mentoring is flexible and adaptable in this ever-changing world we live in. What's always interesting is the reciprocity that comes with mentoring: people mentor because they want to give something back and when that's the core motivator then it's only ever going to be impactful and a success, as in the case of the Steps Ahead Mentoring Programme.

For more information about Steps Ahead Mentoring or if you're a CIPD member and would like to become a Steps Ahead Mentor, please go to: [www.cipd.co.uk/stepsaheadmentoring](http://www.cipd.co.uk/stepsaheadmentoring)

Please contact Katherine directly to discuss your mentoring needs including consultancy, programme design and training.

**Katherine Ray, Head of Mentoring – Professional Coach-Mentor**

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# Supervision – live or lip sync?

What does supervision in coaching and mentoring mean to you and your clients?

Here are some options:

- Development; effective practice; integrity; challenge and innovation.
  - Client-focused; a fresh perspective; creative and enabling.
  - A valued time out; a safe space for fine-tuning; increased confidence.
- Policing; nice to have but non-essential; a tick box; expensive; time-consuming; uncomfortable; of little value; boring; shaming.

In music, most people appreciate a live concert. With lip syncing, while enjoying the sound, we can feel short-changed. Creating the appearance of live singing has become an art form, with crews of technicians and IT wizardry that will make the sound better than it actually is.

This begs the question: what parallels are there here in how coaching, mentoring and supervision is being delivered or presented?

## Where are you?

Are you proactively engaged in useful, energising and meaningful supervision ('Live'), or paying lip service ('Lip Syncing')? Do you see supervision as something you have to evidence occasionally, while being more concerned with reluctant compliance over substance? Do you take the easy option with peers when necessary for tenders? Are you critical or resistant to the concept of supervision? Or are you regularly engaged in a wide range of high-calibre CPD activities, just not taking part in supervision right now?

## Where am I?

These are the influences on my supervision, which I share as a way of inviting you to reflect on the influences that are shaping

your pathway in coach-mentoring.

- When I managed specialised HR corporate accounts for outplacement, work based counselling and critical incident, supervision was an essential, valued and protected 'time out' in the service of challenging work.
- During professional development as coach-mentor and coach-mentor supervisor, I have been inspired by The OCM and Eric Parsloe's passion for rigorous ongoing learning in the service of the individual and organisations. Always energetic and pragmatic, Eric steered through the sirens and the facts that lure business and coaching communities with his philosophy 'success comes most surely from doing simple things consistently' and 'trust the process.' (Parsloe & Leedham, 2009)<sup>1</sup>.
- After struggling during the global banking crisis, I then unexpectedly began managing quality and supervision for a ground-breaking 'whole life coaching' programme for 600 people living in extreme deprivation. My determination to ensure these 'clients' had the best possible coaching experience is the main reason I trained in supervision.

## Learning from experience

### The OCM

Supervision is 'safe space' with the client at the centre and a focus on the practitioner's beliefs, behaviour and self-awareness. The purpose is continuous improvement, reflection on practice, challenging perspectives, and shared responsibility for professional scrutiny and learning.

### Governance

Supervision developed in other disciplines is a wisdom pool for coaching and mentoring to draw from. Conversely, norms in pre-established formats may be constricting innovation of 'supervision process' in coaching, mentoring, leadership and OD. A preoccupation with individual well-being

and expectation of dysfunction in the 'oppressive' organisation can cloud sight of alternative systemic perspectives and consideration for the wider stakeholder group.

### Exceptional Clients

Coaches and mentors are preoccupied with different things at different times in their development, blocking line of sight to clients and personal insight. Supervision rejuvenates client connection, grounding practitioners in their values and intention to make a real difference: to tap into and enable the potential in everyone; and to change, flourish and prosper, including the collective that is the organisation.

### The OCM stance


The OCM's approach to Supervision & CPD is that both are integral to sustaining effective coaching and mentoring for the benefit of individuals, teams and organisations.

OCM Alumni begin the process of greater self-awareness, systemic awareness and meaningful reflective practice as they hone coaching and mentoring skills through robust, supervised experiential development programmes.

Proactive engagement in supervision or purposeful CPD is an indicator of a coach or mentor's professional commitment to be the best they can be for their clients. In the early stages of practice, supervision using a blend of individual and group experiences contributes to increased confidence and adds to coaching credibility. For the more experienced, supervision is a place to challenge and be challenged on assumptions, notice patterns, blind spots and to 'wake up'.

# Supervision – live or lip sync? (cont.)

*“Supervision is the forum par excellence to learn from practice. It is a reflective practitioner’s oasis.” (Carroll, 2014)<sup>2</sup>*



A safe space is essential for these benefits to be delivered. Safety and trust is built on equality in relationship, respect for differences and joint responsibility. Peer supervision, if purposeful and carefully contracted for, can support this process but may fall short, dropping into lip sync. “You supervise me and I’ll supervise you”, squeezed in here and there, is a poor substitute for a coach or mentor fully owning and actively participating in supervision as part of their CPD.

With organisations who wish to guard their investment in coaching and mentoring, The OCM has noticed a growing interest in integrated supervision services, either delivered by trained and qualified internal supervisors or blended with external provision. Corporate clients who have committed time and resources to invest in supervision report renewed focus and alignment with business purpose.

## Resistance to Supervision

The coaching industry has been discussing the value and benefit of supervision for over 15 years. Running in tandem has been the narrative of resistance – to the word ‘supervision’ and to absorbing supervision practices developed in different contexts. Coach comments presented at the 2015 Coaching at Work Conference (Bachkirova, 2015)<sup>3</sup> are recognisable phrases. Some are fear-based, and some mirror archaic but still prevalent transactional attitudes to people, which like oil in water rise to the surface during turbulence in the markets. While the professional membership bodies all encourage supervision, psychodynamic or counselling narratives have become

more widespread, which has the potential to increase resistance to organisational coaching and mentoring.

For services which are solution and future-focused, and at their best life-transforming, the time spent chewing over ‘supervision’, unable to move out of habitual behaviour, implies stasis in the industry, something stagnant or stuck, with only the few generating original ideas and approaches.

There is a paradox in coaching. Coachees and mentees are encouraged to challenge themselves, build on and draw on their strengths, openly disclose their anxieties and concerns and be honest with others about their behaviour. Warts and all disclosure is encouraged in order to become more effective, creative and innovative, to adapt and change for the better. However, their coach or mentor may be cruising along on auto pilot, falling well short in prioritising their own development: paying lip service to principles of professionalism; delivering on the words, but not the actions.

## Supervision Live or Lip Sync – Winners and Losers

The obvious losers are the clients or potential clients: caveat emptor – ‘let the buyer beware’.

There are a highly-talented silent majority within the coaching and mentoring field: professionals working for change in organisations which are not viewed as dysfunctional and in need of corporate therapy. Instead, these coaches see the workplace as a living, exciting, complex, and uncertain environment and the better for that. These are individuals who are capable of connecting organically with what is needed to have a lasting impact, who have chosen to set their own

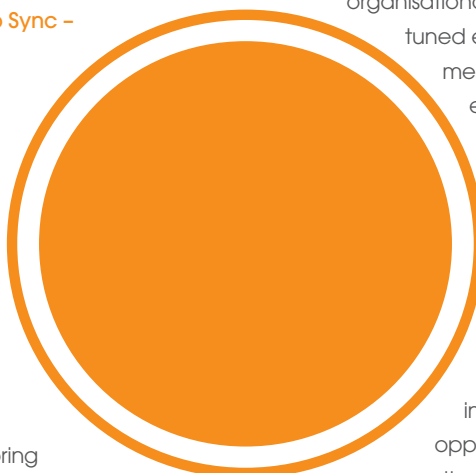
‘professional’ bar high for supervision and CPD. Only ‘Live’ – or real – will do, even if it is challenging, scary and sometimes really hard. Supervision for them is a chance to review and improve their performance: simple as that. It is a process they are actively engaged in and are shaping to meet their needs.

Despite codes and guidelines, individual coaches and coach providers will choose to take the easy option – to lip sync. After all, it’s there and others are doing it, so why not? Corporate service buyers, however, are starting to notice the difference, especially in companies where governance, quality and ethical practices are paramount. A coach provider who said publicly during an open space ‘unconference’ in 2015 that he would not take coaches off income-generating work to take part in supervision sounded an alarm for the corporate clients in the room with him. As experienced coaches and internal supervisors themselves they are well aware of the challenges faced by organisational coaches. Finely-

tuned ears heard the hidden message: lip sync is good enough for clients.

Fortunately there are more positive signs that supervision is viewed as a “complex skill set, with significant value in terms of delivering opportunity for reflective practice, insights and new perspectives, and for assuring the delivery of good-quality coaching.”

The first study to examine the views of Australian coaches on coaching supervision was reported in the International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, in an article by Anthony Grant (2012)<sup>4</sup>. It offers evidence of real interest in supervision for the benefit of coaches.



### Why coaches seek supervision

- 19% as a sounding board
- 19% it develops coaches' ability
- 17% it helps assure quality
- 15% for personal development and self-awareness
- 4% it is required by professional body

### Perceived barriers to supervision

- 35% can't find a good supervisor
- 32% too expensive
- 16% too time consuming
- 13% not required by clients

### Towards Professional Mastery

What are the indicators of an individual's commitment to live supervision and how does the client discover this? Turning to a different industry, we can find a clue to illuminate and answer this question.

A coach or organisation that has a real commitment to 'Live' supervision or CPD in coaching and mentoring is equivalent to the artisan or master baker. Finding no value or nutrition in mass-produced, packaged bread, however well-intentioned and convenient, the baker invests time and energy in something that is significantly different. Created through individuality, vision and passion for the product itself (bread), the baker sets about to revive nutritious, organic, high-value, wholesome bread using naturally occurring yeast in the environment. The artisan process uses a natural self-starter that makes it all happen.

But how do clients know who is and is not an equivalent artisan coach or mentor? Those who are actively committed to development and growth are able to provide clear and original evidence of their experimentation, learning, adaptive practice and outcomes from their Live supervision and CPD.

### Where are you now on Supervision?

Are you a coach who wants to thrive, adapt to changing contexts, and connect with your clients organically, co-creating the right conditions to deliver effective coaching and mentoring? Then now is the time to let your voice 'sing live' loud and clear.

Step up – reflect on what you have done or will do at different stages in your supervision. Discover what works best for you. In the meantime this might be useful.

*From Lip Sync to Live – before, during and after supervision/CPD*

#### Before - warm up

- What do you want out of supervision, individual, group, or CPD?
- Reflect, decide and own your shared responsibility to make it happen.
- Carve out time and mental space to tune into who you are and what wants to be heard.
- Notice and welcome any sensation or emotion as you anticipate connection with others.

#### During - relax

- Sense check regularly and notice any insight or subtle shifts in the moment.
- Offer and seek feedback.
- Remain open to difference in style and experience.
- Notice excitement or discomfort as you approach your learning edge and stay there.
- Hear when the client voice is silent – consciously bring client/s in and give them space.

- Be clear on exactly what learning you will take away.

#### After - appreciate

- Notice what came up as well as any new or different insights following the session.
  - Prioritise, note and take action on what needs attention in your work or in yourself.
  - Celebrate and take credit for connecting with your practice, client progress and highlights.
  - Take your own metaphorical bow.

'With unfailing kindness, your life always presents what you need to learn'<sup>5</sup>

*'With unfailing kindness, your life always presents what you need to learn'*  
Charlotte Joko Beck in Chodron (2001)<sup>5</sup>

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# Managing your own coach-mentoring business: some tips

*The OCM is privileged to work with and develop talented coaches, some of them within organisations, and some of them hoping to start their own professional coaching businesses. We love to hear stories of how alumni have made the transition into coaching full or part-time. Jerry Gilpin completed The OCM Advanced Diploma in 2006 and started his own business in Bristol in 2007. He now works one day a week as a coach-mentor-supervisor for The OCM, as part of his mix of work. Here he shares some principles and tips for branching out on your own as a coach-mentor.*

OK, so you've got your coaching qualification from The OCM, a telephone and a laptop. Your employer is offering you a generous redundancy settlement as part of a restructure. Or you've discovered that coaching is the one thing that makes your heart sing and you've thrown in your other job. Or you've moved areas because of your partner's role and don't fancy going full-time inside an organisation if you don't have to – or one of a hundred other scenarios. So you take the plunge.

**Day One:** you are sitting at an empty desk in your home office (well, the dining table), with a half-empty filing cabinet, a mug of coffee, some coaching books and a few contacts in your address book. Suddenly it all looks a bit overwhelming. Here are some principles it might be good to remember.

## You are the product

And you always were – you just forgot that. You got used to being paid to fulfil a role, or provide answers or expertise, and unless you're quite unusual, you started to assume that you were paid for the solutions you produced or functions that you fulfilled. But you were always the product: the amazing mix of skills, experience, character, abilities

and gifts that makes you 'you'.

It can feel very exposing to start with – it is, but it's liberating, too. You are completely in control. There's no-one else to blame or to take the credit. So what will people see and hear and meet? What *is* that product? What impact do you want to make, and how will you make it? This means thinking about your self-presentation: your dress, your business card, your website, the way you show up, your professionalism.

If you're the product, and you're a coach, everything about you should say 'coach' in some way: it means being you, at your best, at the service of other people's development and growth. So start on Day One by developing that calmly assertive self-presentation both personally and in terms of the way your business is presented to others. It will help others to see what and who you are, and it will help you believe in yourself as a coach.

(And by the way – there are products you can sell, as well. Psychometrics, 360's, assessments and so on all say 'here's someone with useful skills and qualifications' to your potential clients).

## You are your only resource

This is the same point, put another way. Develop your own belief, and as part of that process, invest in yourself. Set some money aside to spend on your website and your stationery by all means, because you do need that stuff, but spend more on developing your own skills and furthering your own learning. Get regular supervision (of your business as well as of the small amounts of coaching you are doing to start with) – it will be an invaluable support and challenge. Keep learning. I've always tried to gain one new qualification or skill a year, for example. This increases what I can offer, and it keeps me fresh and modelling learning to my clients.

A big part of the resource you have is your self-confidence, so set yourself up to win: set

those achievable goals that we know work for our coachees. Have a clear target which will stretch you but you genuinely believe you can reach. You might set this in terms of income, but that's not the only way: you could aim to work with a specific number of individuals in your first year, or to work for a set number of hours a month, or simply have a set number of meetings with people in a week. And when you do complete work, gather feedback which you can use to build your own sense of self as a coach, as well as to use in marketing to new clients. Nothing beats 'X is a great coach and has helped me change my life'!

It is good to avoid being under huge financial pressure to sell. Starting any small business is a challenge, so go into coaching with a clear sense of what your resources and limitations are – see the business-y section below.

As a coach you should have a good awareness of your own personality and potential pitfalls: manage yourself in the way you know will be best. If you (like me) are so independent that you can get isolated, think about how to make a commitment to a group (perhaps by working as an associate). If you tend to fritter time in conversation, don't choose to rent a desk in an open-plan office...and so on.

You are also your only marketing resource. Gather and use good feedback from clients. Get recommendations on LinkedIn. Pay attention and respond to contacts from people you know (and even more, from those you don't know). Networking doesn't have to mean breakfast meetings (though it can, if you like that sort of thing). It can just as well be a quick call to that colleague you always enjoyed working with 10 years ago to catch up over a coffee and allow them to remember what a great coach you are...



### Your skills are real and valuable

You've learned how to create a learning space; to listen; to question; to bring perspective to your coachees' situations; you may have specialist skills of other kinds. It's hard to believe to start with, but who you are and what you embody is real and valuable, and you need to charge appropriately. If you, like me, work in a number of different contexts, the same work will have different rates in those sectors. But in each one, raising fees once you have started is much harder than lowering them, so start out at an appropriately high level. Sometimes if you quote too low clients will believe that you must be a poor coach. You can always negotiate down if you have to. And if you've built a solid rapport with the sponsor, you will have the time and space to do that.

Work out what it costs to be a coach, and make sure that your lowest rate at least covers that. In 2014 I worked out that it cost me over £30 per hour of face-to-face work to run my by then well-established business, including all the things above like supervision, office expenses, learning and development, and travel costs. And I also discovered that it was taking me over three hours to deliver that one hour of face-to-face work, given preparation, reflection and travel time: that needs factoring in. Your skills are real and valuable: charge appropriately for them.

### Your resources are limited

There are only so many hours in the week, just as there are only so many pounds in your bank account. Manage the drive to say 'yes'. This can be rooted in anxiety and the desire to be liked as much as in wanting to meet clients' needs. If you haven't done so already, learn to use your diary as your best

friend. Set sensible limits that enable you to get to and from meetings and allow space to reflect on and prepare for meetings. Diarise the important things, not just the urgent ones or the income-generating ones: most coaches would rather be with people than doing their admin but that needs regular time, too. So does networking, going on courses, reading, learning your craft...

### You are running a small business

Sole trader or limited company, the reality is the same: there is business to attend to. Start by identifying a vision and some clear values and principles, and work these into an initial business plan that you could show to a business bank manager. And then be business-like by:

- Starting with a defined amount of capital to invest in making this business work (it doesn't need to be a huge amount).
- Separating business and personal finances so that you can see what the coaching business is doing.
- Paying yourself monthly: you should be paid for working on the business, not only for face-to-face work, which in the end is just one part of your business (although the most important one by far). If necessary, start with small amounts - then you can give yourself a bonus if things go well.
- Saving up more than enough to pay your tax bills and VAT if you decide to register (and remember VAT will raise your prices by 20% to any clients who are not VAT registered): use a separate account so you're never caught short on this.
- Getting an accountant if you feel you need one - but tax is not so hard to cope with as long as you have kept the good records that an accountant will ask for anyway. I simply have online bookkeeping software and do my own tax (though I could probably avoid some tax if I did pay someone else, I actually don't mind paying tax).
- Budgeting - especially for your own CPD

and supervision: this is arguably the most important outgoing you have.

- Ensuring you have public liability insurance to assure clients.

### You are a coach

So be one, the whole time. As a coach, I've found (surprise!) that the two things that really matter are doing good work, and building relationships. Questioning and listening and reflecting back, and challenging where necessary, enables you to do both of these things; so does stepping in where there are gaps and needs. So say 'yes' rather than 'no' to work; work at the edge of your own comfort zone, just as we encourage coachees to work. Go above and beyond what your client might expect whenever you can. Offer more as part of your 'normal' offering than clients expect. Above all - let people experience coaching in who you are. Build a network of people who have experienced that - other coaches, potential clients and partners.

When I started out, I had the limited goals of not losing money in the first year; and of working as close to full time as I wanted to by the end of three years. In the event I made a little money in the first year and reached my second goal a little early. Eight years on, I still worry about the ups and downs in the diary even though I know I shouldn't. I've established a broad enough base of different clients in different sectors, and of different types of work, to be fairly confident the gaps will be filled when they appear. And I really enjoy the freedom; the relationships; the sense of making my own decisions and not being able to blame anyone else if I get too busy; the privilege of accompanying others in their development; and the opportunity to learn new things and continue to grow.

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# Speaker's Corner – A changing world?

Asha Singh

The OCM kindly invited me to share my view for this year's Speaker's Corner on how coaching can stay fit for purpose in a 'world' which is becoming more complex and uncertain, and how coaches and the industry itself might adapt to serve the needs of that world. What follows are my personal ideas, drawn from my own life experience and knowing, not the stance of The OCM.

I see an important opportunity ahead for the coaching industry to be in and of service to something that is larger than how we currently see ourselves - to bring forth a more universal sense of meaning. This approach often seems to grate with those involved in supporting learning and development, maybe because it is mistakenly perceived as being an expression of wanting to fix something. Instead I see it as living in an open, compassionate and co-creative dance with life as it emerges, rather than maintain the illusion that we can direct life where we choose.

Life is messy, disturbing and diverse. People – and the organisations they are part of – are living systems. We are autonomous and desire freedom. We are open (affected by and affecting our surroundings) and seek to find meaning, although we often seem to have been conditioned to live in fear. We living systems notice what we choose to notice. We bring forth worlds which are based on our own analysis and beliefs, our mental models.

Emergence – when we evolve to a higher order of complexity as a living system so that we are able to deal effectively with new, constantly changing conditions – occurs in relationship to our surroundings. Both we and our surroundings are in a state of continual flux, and therefore a state of continual emergence. So how can we really analyse or predict our behaviour or that of our surroundings?

We are observing something which is changing while we are changing ourselves.

We all know in our own little worlds how life seems to have sped up, become more interconnected and complex, chaotic and uncertain. We cannot possibly follow all the interrelationships between the different aspects of our individual and collective lives, but in an attempt to make sense and order of things, we analyse only limited aspects that are more easily identified and our thinking becomes mechanistic. Authentic artists and mystics have known this for centuries, that the 'world' in which we live is an illusion. Science has begun to find its own ways to express this.

There are many examples over time of how our understanding has been superseded by new research and knowledge. On the topic of living systems, Ilya Prigogine<sup>1</sup> won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977 for his work on irreversibility in thermodynamics. He showed how the classical laws of thermodynamics were not applicable to complex systems in a state of chaos, which irreversibly self-organise through the production of entropy to a higher order of complexity by 'communicating' at the microscopic level.

These irreversible processes are the basis of life, without which we would not exist. People may not like the idea of being considered a thermodynamic system, but we are enclosed by the 'walls' of our skin, subject to temperature, entropy, energy and pressure. All organic life can be considered in this way.

Rather than seeing irreversibility as something to be avoided at all costs, we should look deeper to see how our understanding of the chaos we seek to avoid depends on the mental models we are operating from, how there are deeper patterns of order at work beneath the chaos. Adding any kind of control mechanisms to a system far from equilibrium consumes energy that it needs to complexify and adapt to changing conditions.

We have all seen what happens when we seek

to control our 'reality', how our well-intentioned interventions in many domains can have consequences far beyond anything we could imagine:

*Standard economics is good, we have learned a lot from standard economics but it leaves out... whole networks of connections. Complexity economics... is always trying to see how small parts (like starlings in a flock)... come together to create what is happening with the economy. Each individual starling... is only reacting to its neighbours, yet somehow all those reactions are summing up to create the flock... If we see the economy as something which is vital and alive and not perfect, and we can adjust with it and re-architect it, then I think we'd be much better off.*

**W. Brian Arthur<sup>2</sup>**

Let's relate the idea of mechanistic thinking to a familiar example in the coaching arena – using the MBTI instrument. Twenty years ago, it was useful to help me understand why I found certain situations and dynamics challenging. It also taught me something about how to interact more effectively at that time with others.

However, my interests then and now are quite different, and I am an expanded version of myself. I have chosen to meet my own economic and other needs by doing something I enjoy – supporting others in their learning and development – and my little business takes me to different countries and into the heart of some big organisations.

All that we  
human beings  
do, we do it in  
language.

Humberto  
Maturana<sup>3</sup>

There I come across a whole different kettle of fish from the places I wish to be. I have learned how to be effective in situations and cultures that are not my own and I often don't like, and the sources of my learning have been eclectic and unpredictable. The labels of my preferences were only the first step on a lifelong learning journey that has taken me way beyond any self-created limiting beliefs about

who I am and how I show up in relationship with others. Spend some time in deep reflection in the 'wilderness' or creative process or a Tibetan monastery or wherever works for you, and you will soon see how much bigger your Self is than any instrument can measure you to be.

Western languages tend to separate and fragment. We like to debate (from the Latin de- away from, out of + batt(u)ere - to beat), and discuss (from the Latin dis- apart, asunder, utterly + cutere / quater - to shake, strike).

**Dialogue**, however, seems to be much more difficult to accomplish. The word dialogue comes from the Greek dia- (passing through) + logos, derived from lego (I say) - one of the most important terms in Western philosophy, psychology and religion, often translated as "the Word".

Many will know the term logos from Aristotle's *Ars Rhetorica*, as an argument from reason, one of the three modes of persuasion along with ethos (moral character) and pathos (emotional appeal). I am always astounded by the way in which people often respond to the popular question in the coaching and L&D worlds of "Why do you coach?", with variations on the theme of how it helps them to get what they want from others.

I prefer 'the Word' as the sense of something universal, so that dialogue becomes a flow of meaning through us and between us, as David Bohm<sup>4</sup> suggested. The spirit of dialogue within a group of people allows them to be creative, to share things which may not have been shared before, without fear of being ridiculed, ignored, persuaded, or excluded. It makes way

for new understanding and shared meaning to emerge. This shared meaning is what we might consider culture, what holds us together. It is challenging to do, because it requires us to examine our assumptions and beliefs about who we think we are, what life is about and what we think is true.

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices... Wholeness is an attitude or approach to the whole of life...if we can have a coherent approach to reality, then reality will respond coherently to us...but nature has been tremendously affected by our way of thinking...we are producing results we don't really want, and then in trying to overcome them, we keep on producing them.

David Bohm<sup>4</sup>

I would offer then that coaches and the coaching industry could seek to facilitate a more universal sense of meaning, among all those who participate with us. They may be an individual executive interacting with colleagues, a team operating within the larger system of a department or organisation, a group of people who come together for a common purpose, an organisation within its market or arena of activity, and so on.

Coaching could be less focused on goals and plans, standards and accreditation, as useful as they are, and more on how we can contribute to creating a society which can learn, adapt and thrive in increasingly complex, uncertain conditions. This is what I mean by serving something bigger than our current view of ourselves.

We will need to be far more aware of our 'operating stance' as coaches, to know more about how nature works - in as far as we can ever really understand it - and how we learn authentically to complexify our own ability for adapting to challenging social and business conditions. We will have to rely less on assessment instruments and theoretical models which may once have been useful in a linear-thinking world that seemed possible to analyse. We will need to become more agile and wiser, so that we can challenge our personal

mental models and behaviours. We may need to seek much broader sources for our own development, so that we can really embrace diversity and embed it in our society.

I would love to see wider, deeper dialogue within the coaching industry in the UK and further afield, on how it might contribute to such important issues as inequality, employment, religious intolerance and sustainability. I work in the learning and development sphere, often in large organisations, where coaching is one element of a blended approach. Consultancies could add significant value by questioning their clients more on what it is that their programmes actually help participants learn and if it is truly relevant to what they need.

Many organisations offer well-structured, engaging, measurable programmes that tick all the right boxes on the indicators but don't prepare people for the daily world they face when they go back to work. A recent McKinsey study<sup>5</sup> reported that only 43% of CEOs felt their leadership development paths were effective. The same might be said of the education system in general. It requires courage and integrity on the part of an industry to question its own mental models, but it is possible, and not always at the expense of income. I am experiencing this first-hand. And yes, it is scary. But it's an adventure too.

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