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The Need for Coaching

Today, more than any other time, the need to perform successfully has never been greater. As a result of this solitary focused activity on self we have lost interest in the people who count in our lives. We seem to be constantly focused on our own achievements and struggles to achieve our place in the sun. This leaves little time to be concerned with the needs of others.



As many of my clients say, they have no one to talk to who they can trust — no one to whom they can reveal their innermost secrets, fears, or inadequacies because they do not trust the neutrality or confidentiality of those around them.

This is why I am a coach — because I can do these things and also add my varied background experience to the package.

My job is extremely rewarding as I chide, tease and figuratively poke clients in the ribs in order to challenge them to open themselves to change.



Jean Houston, a leading pioneer in the exploration of human potential, in an interview with Larry King, asked him to think about the person who had the biggest influence on his broadcasting career, *"The person that you modeled yourself on"*.

He said, *"Horace Greeley"*.

She then said: *"Imagine that he was here. Tell him what you most admire about him."* So he did.

She then said. *"Imagine that you are Horace Greeley. What would surprise you most about broadcasting today?"*

She coached him to talk as though he was Horace Greeley giving his impressions of broadcasting today and what had changed.

She then asked him to imagine that Horace Greeley was giving advice to Larry King and coached him to play both roles, which he did.

The result was that Larry King placed himself in the shoes of Horace Greeley and articulated a future vision for himself, which he said he had not previously verbalized. His excitement about this new insight was apparent. His face relaxed and there was a new look of wonder in his shining eyes as he acknowledged the value of the experience. He then commented on Jean Houston's supposed 'séance' with Hillary Clinton that had been raging for weeks in the media. Like the experience with Larry King, she quickly removed the mystery from the controversy. All she had

done was to ask the former First Lady some meaningful questions which clarified some gray areas.

This was a superb example of effective coaching rather than the facilitator or counseling approach, often confused with professional coaching.



Recently, the head of resources at a large international company admitted to me that their policy of training all senior management to be coaches had failed. First, most of the participants believed they understood the principles of coaching and could do it without training. Therefore when they were practicing the process they listened with a slightly prejudiced ear. Secondly, they demonstrated they were not adept at listening and mostly missed the cues from the speaker, being more intent on following the tasks they had learned rather than actively listening between the lines.

The result is that even today they believe they are good coaches, but if you ask their subordinates, very little coaching occurs. Mainly, the subordinates have to listen to well-meaning advice from their experienced superiors or watch their managers demonstrate their own skills without ever having an opportunity to test themselves in a real situation with a supportive coach present.

Many managers think that coaching is simply the act of demonstrating their own superiority. Unfortunately, this action almost always produces negative results as students learn how inadequate they are in relation to the prescribed model and end up helplessly watching ‘Superman or Superwoman’ at work while being exhorted to do the same. Nothing destroys confidence faster than this process and the only solution is to leave and find new

environments and an alternative context in which to practice. Meantime the boss says things like:

“How disloyal; How ungrateful; I gave them so much training and coaching and they didn’t appreciate it!”

I often wonder how many ‘high potentials’ in businesses leave for greener pastures after tremendous resources were spent on their development. They could have given a marvelous return on investment if they had only been handled in a more professional and insightful manner.



The process of coaching looks easy when viewed from the outside. Like most skills viewed by amateurs, it looks simple to reproduce, but the reality is that it takes inordinate hours of practice to make the implementation appear that simple.

You may say this concept of coaching sounds like it has a large business focus, but the reality is different.

Small business owners need to know how to coach their staff and be coached to raise their own potential every bit as urgently as executives need to do so in large businesses. Even more, in a small business each person is so vital to the smooth functioning of the company that if they are dysfunctional or leave unexpectedly their departure leaves huge gaps in the puzzle.

On the other hand, if small business owners create an adult-to-adult culture and ‘coach’ their staff rather than try to ‘manage’ them, the employees feel, ‘this is my business’, like ‘my family’, and recognize they can contribute and self-actualize within the company rather than use the experience as a stepping stone to start their own company.



Many years ago, a dear friend of mine from South Dakota, Dr. Jerry Simmons, taught me a life-long lesson. He owned a number of small radio stations in his area and was an outstanding entrepreneur and businessman.

He said: “Terry, when you employ people, tell them right from the start”: *‘Stay with me as long as you feel you are growing and any time you feel down or depressed in your job, come and tell me. I need to know what’s happening with you and I can’t tell how you are all the time, so you need to keep me in the loop’.*”

He went on to say: *‘Any time you feel you are not growing, come and tell me immediately and we can discuss it. If we can’t resolve the situation I will assist you to find a new job outside of our company.’*

Wow! What a commitment to his people – and they responded accordingly.

Of course on hearing this philosophy, I implemented it immediately into my business and was able to create a functional, ‘humanistic’ culture in our company based on ‘adult to adult’ relationships.

AHA Moments...

- Focus on others' achievements and struggles, not ours — a great way to develop more self-confidence.
- Challenge clients to open themselves to change.
- Create an adult to adult relationship.
- Straight talk with dialogue and deep respect is better than being 'nice' or being 'autocratic'.