



ITS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

PERSONNEL TRAINER!

A seemingly stable and undisturbed ocean of self-perceived, satisfactory work performance, the receipt of a company appraisal totally belying that certainty within him and the wave of panic that followed was like a tsunami, an unseen, unexpected submarine earthquake, causing a destructive flood of internal chaos and confusion. Completely lost in a boiling sea of uncertainty, overtaken by this wave of unknown doubt and disbelief, his only panicked thoughts were..... where did I go wrong and how do I get back? The sudden change from confidence to agonising angst was almost totally debilitating. After his important public presentation the next day he felt that he had made no sense at all, wondering if the audience had seen through his guise and felt his fear and lack of confidence.

His call to me was frantic - he had to see me NOW! I was an obvious choice – I was an outsider, a non-competitor in his career but with a track record and insider knowledge of his skills and resume. Before placing him with this organisation a few years ago, we had spent at least a year searching for the ideal job that would channel his career in the right direction. And now this shock – his job on the line. We talked and searched for answers but it was obvious – he was lost in a turbulent sea and he needed a “navigator”.

Nay, it was futile to call on his personal mentor who unfortunately had his own woes and pressures to deal with, not to mention deadlines and other volcanic events that erupt on a daily basis. No – I am talking about a Coach, a professional navigator of career development and re-alignment. At the time, the concept of a career coach was foreign. Swimmers, tennis players and footballers had coaches, not marketing managers. And so, feeling a bit like a young David Beckham, less a professional pioneer than a guinea pig with a briefcase, he began his painful and perilous journey of self-discovery and reinvention. With help he identified his pitfalls and learnt how to re-align his principles and processes, to rise above his flaws and then ultimately to surpass what he had ever perceived would be his maximum potential.

Executive Recruitment | Strategic Planning | Organisational Transformation | HR Outsourcing
Management Assessment and Development | Training and Executive Coaching | Psychometric Testing

HRMC
Management Consultants

www.hrmc.co.bw

So is coaching just another buzz word or fad that will burn bright then fizzle out, like strategy and EQ? Although coaching has become widespread in Asia and countries such as South Africa, UK and the US, there is still some confusion over exactly what it is and when it is deemed an appropriate intervention. Increasingly popular for supporting personal development, eight to ten respondents in a survey last year in the UK reported that they now use coaching in their organisations, and of these four-fifths say their organisations are seeking to develop a coaching culture (courtesy CIPD, UK).

So what is coaching? Coaching is not mentoring, although this is a closely-allied field in that it provides an individual with the opportunity to reflect, learn and develop. Interestingly, the origin of mentoring takes us back to Greek mythology. Before leaving Ithaca for Troy, Odysseus entrusts his home and the education of his son to his friend *Mentor*, instructing him to "tell him all you know". So a mentor is an older, wiser advisor, often in loco parentis or in corporate terms a role model willing to share their knowledge and experience in order to help their protégée. A mentor/protégée relationship is often ongoing for a considerable period of time, even years. It is usually more informal than a structured apprenticeship and focused on the pupil's long-term development professionally, which includes career and personal advancement. Though similar to an apprenticeship in that both involve a more experienced colleague conveying their greater knowledge and understanding of the work or workplace to support the development of a more junior or inexperienced member of staff, mentoring is something volunteered in a spirit of generosity and a desire to share experience and encourage potential.

Nor is coaching the same as counselling either, although these two interventions can be highly complementary, especially if there are underlying psychological problems preventing an employee from resolving difficulties or making changes in their behaviour prior to or during the coaching process.

So although containing elements of both the above, coaching is a one-on-one process, inaugurated to focus on a specific weakness such as lack of performance or poor personal presentation, is usually of a set duration, is structured and scheduled at regular intervals and monitored and refined continually. A major bone of contention where staff training and development is concerned has for some time been the low percentage of information retention post the formal training period, often the fault of no or minimal follow-up, almost completely exonerating the trainer of responsibility. A coach, however, is directly answerable to the participant and the organisation and can be replaced if there is any disharmony or if they are not achieving the desired result. Coaches are contracted based on their reputation and skill and the coach/trainee relationship is reliant on personality, compatibility and perspicacity as far as identifying weaknesses and devising solutions is concerned, so they are only as good as their results.

One of our local parastatals deserves kudos for leading the way in rejecting traditional training methods of assessing their senior management team, and opting instead for skill-based workshops addressing specific needs as well as drawing up individual development maps, aided by career coaches, or 'navigators' – perceptive, personable development consultants who act like an employee's own personal GPS, not leading but guiding them in the right direction.

My friend not only survived his personal tsunami but is exceeding grateful he was caught in this wave of terror. With the help of his coach/navigator he found his way back to his career path again and just look where it took him - now a successful director with an international organisation and riding a wave of success, not sitting out a tsunami!;

