

Mentoring for Change

executive mentoring and coaching, values management, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter.

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With Best Wishes




Competing Commitments

How is it that, despite being committed to change, we so often fail to make the changes we are committed to? I have explored this issue in previous newsletters by considering the dynamic between Desire and Addiction. Kegan and Lahey provide another perspective in their recent book "How The Way We Talk Can Change The Way We Work". They suggest that, if we are not making happen what we claim to be committed to, then there must be a stronger, competing commitment to which we are unknowingly committed.

Their process for uncovering this stronger competing commitment is simple and effective and can be used with both individuals and groups. I have slightly adapted it here:

- 1) **Commitment:** Identify something that it is important to you to have or that you value, which you don't yet have in your life. Make this commitment explicit by completing the stem "**I am committed to ...**"
- 2) **Behaviour:** Given that the commitment you have just identified is not currently being fulfilled in your life, complete the stem "**What I'm doing, or not doing, that is preventing my commitment being more fully realised is ...**".
- 3) **Competing Commitment:** Given what you're doing, or not doing, what does this suggest you're actually committed to? That is, identify the stronger more compelling outcome that you are actually committed to (the Competing Commitment). Complete the stem "**I may also be committed to ...**".

- 4) **Big Assumption:** Driving your competing commitment will be an assumption that you treat as true. To uncover this Big Assumption, complete the stem "**I assume that if my competing commitment is (not) met, ...**" with how you might feel then. (If you come up with something that unnerves you a little, then you are probably on track. If you come up with something noble, you probably need to try again!)

For example:

- 1) **Commitment:** **I am committed to** managing my time better and having a better work-life balance.
- 2) **Behaviour:** **What I'm doing that prevents my commitment from being more fully realised is** working weekends, over-preparing and procrastinating.
- 3) **Competing Commitment:** **I may also be committed to** doing perfect work.
- 4) **Big Assumption:** **I assume that if** I'm not perfect, I'll be rejected.

If we then read this sequence backwards, we can see that, given the Big Assumption, it is entirely appropriate to pursue the competing commitment, and in turn to behave in a way which prevents us achieving our actual goal.

Sometimes, merely being aware of the conflicting commitments allows us to change our behaviour. If not, one way forward is to find ways to challenge the Big Assumption that drives the dynamic, for example by noticing evidence that challenges it (When I screw up, actually I don't get thrown out), exploring its origins and

Classic Coaching Models – The Storytelling Coach

Listen

Appreciate
Other goals?
Suggest

This issue's coaching model is unusual in that it is designed for a particular domain – storytelling. It was developed by Doug Lipman in his work as a Storytelling Coach (some of Doug's stories have featured in earlier issues of this newsletter) and whilst directed at coaching people to be successful storytellers, it can also be applied more generally.

Lipman uses a four-part coaching structure. In decreasing order of importance the four parts are listen, give appreciations, give suggestions, and finally meet any remaining goals.

- 1) **Listening:** Listening is the most powerful tool in this approach, its importance being emphasised by the claim that active, sympathetic listening provides 80% of the coaching benefit. Indeed, in some sessions, listening may be all that the coach needs to do. It is also the lowest risk intervention.
- 2) **Appreciating:** is the next most powerful tool. It provides about 15% of the potential benefit of

being coached and involves a slightly higher risk than does listening

- 3) **Suggesting:** which has the intention of expanding the coachee's concept of what is possible by suggesting alternatives the coachee might choose, stating personal reactions to what the coachee is presenting, or asking questions which draw out the coachee's creativity.
- 4) **Asking "What else do you need?":** Being listened to helps draw out the uniqueness of the coachee and their approach; being appreciated gives the coachee information about what already succeeds in their approach; and suggestions offer information about possible ways to improve. All that remains is to discover what else the coachee might need.

More at www.storypower.com and in "The Storytelling Coach" (ISBN 0-87483-434-1) which concludes "Our society perpetrates the great, destructive fallacy that we must always 'go it alone'. Coaching, on the other hand, is a technique for harnessing the awesome power of 'going it together'. It helps us taste the joy of living a fully supported life."

whether it is still relevant (I've been sent away to school because I'm not working hard enough), or finding opportunities to test it and see how we feel (Do a good enough rather than perfect piece of work). As we recognise that the Big Assumption is not the truth, so we free ourselves to achieve our commitments.

Coaching Research

A recent study by the Institute for Employment Studies entitled "Executive Coaching: Inspiring Performance at Work" found five main motives for organisations in introducing executive coaching:

- to support the induction or appointment of a senior person into a more senior, or different role
- to accelerate the personal development of individuals defined as 'high potential', or individuals from a minority group identified for affirmative action
- to underpin the effective implementation of organisation change, through supporting teams and individuals
- as a critical friend or independent sounding board to a senior individual
- to support senior individuals engaged in wider personal effectiveness programmes, such as 360-degree appraisal or development centres.

The study also explored what executive coaching is, what the issues are in commissioning it, and where

coaching fits in terms of management learning theory. Some particular findings included: the existence of "coaching envy" where coaching is seen as such a positive activity that everyone wants a coach; fee rates of £2000/day being not uncommon (the average UK fee rate for management consultants is £975/day); and coaches having a range of fee rates (eg, £0 for voluntary sector work to £2,500 for large corporates); The Report is available from the IES at www.employment-studies.co.uk or on +44 (0) 1273 686751 for £19.95.

Events

September 12 2001: Next School of Coaching Accredited Coach Training Programme starts (10 days over 3 months). More at www.theschoolofcoaching.com

October 29-31 2001: 4th Coaching & Mentoring Conference, London. More at www.linkageinc.com/coaching2001e/

November 15-16 2001: 8th European Coaching and Mentoring Conference, Cambridge, England. More from Allyson@management.org.uk

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