

The International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching

Volume VI Issue 1
January 2008

A Model of Coaching for Renewal

by **Diane Newell & Mike Munro Turner**

Introduction

The understanding of and narrative about leadership has been shifting. From expecting leaders to know or find out the right way to direct an understandable and engineerable organisation, we have moved to exploring a leader's role in shaping meaning for a fluid, organic organisation. From investigation of the traits that good leaders show, the competences they need and the behaviours they should adopt, we at Jericho Partners have developed a more integral consideration of how leaders "are"- how they successfully bring their whole and unique selves to others to create insight, inspiration, and vision and ultimately change.

As our concept of leadership moves from task to identity our focus on the leader's development shifts. No longer is it enough to grow expertise, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Now we are demanding that leaders constantly review and revise who and how they "are" as well as what they do. We have named this process of growing who and how you are "**renewal**".

This is the first of two articles. In this article we seek to share our model of renewal and to relate some of our experience in fostering renewal in our clients. In the second article to be published in the next edition, we will be looking at the different stages through which leaders can pass as they travel this journey of development and how these different stages require different kinds of coaching intervention.

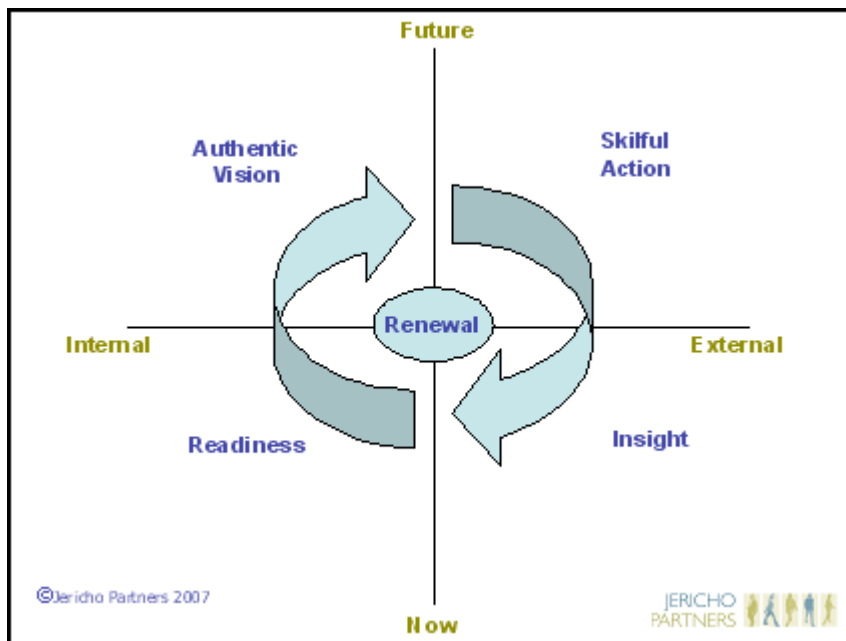
The Process of Renewal

Renewal is a process of constant change and adaptation, fuelled by the changing needs and aspirations of the individual, team and organisation and their response to changing environments.

At times individuals and organisations may become 'stuck' and so fail to renew. Instead they resist change or deny the need to change until the pain of this lack of adaptation builds to create an irresistible need to change, leading to 'revolutionary change'. These revolutionary changes are always costly, and often sudden, unexpected or explosive. Individuals may reject everything they have built in order to escape to a new future; organisations may have to lose whole cadres of people, with their experience and knowledge, in order to re-invent themselves. Renewal avoids this and allows new opportunities to be grasped; so how can we nurture it?

A Model for Renewal

Our model comes from asking questions about what supports and what hinders the growth process. We wanted something to help us to identify the skills, capabilities, mind-sets and practices that nurture individual renewal, and to investigate the ways leaders support organisational renewal through their identity and relationships. We needed something which was both change focussed and relational, and so the 'axes' of our model (pictured below) are from 'here and now' to 'future' and from the internal (I or We) and the external (You or It). These two axes create a four-quadrant map which describes the four territories where leaders of renewal work. These four territories of renewal are Insight, Readiness, Authentic Vision, and Skilful Action.



Like any model this oversimplifies and may seem to describe renewal as a linear or circular progression, whereas it is a far richer and more complex process. Although we will explore each quadrant in the model, and how each supports and feeds in to the others, we imagine the process of renewal is rather like a wheel, constantly turning or stuck. For example, if the wheel cannot turn through Authentic Vision, then no amount of additional effort in Insight will create movement.

This model has been a key framework for developing our narrative of renewal, allowing us to integrate our existing approaches into a coherent whole. It has proven to be useful with clients both as a way of describing their current position and as a generative tool allowing them to tell stories of where they could be. We have found that it helps us to tell real stories, linking concrete experiences to an overall framework, and that it is sufficiently ambiguous to allow creative and revealing discussions about the real nature of renewal that have deepened and strengthened our understanding.

Most leaders seem to have a preference for one or more quadrants, strong in Insight and Action perhaps, but maybe less developed in sustaining Readiness. We have observed that the most common preference is for Action; the least common is for Readiness. When leaders or their organisations get stuck, the tendency is to stay with what is familiar and do more of the same, rather than to work on the reality. Working around the model can help them to focus in on the source of the 'stuckness' and to release the energy for renewal.

Renewal is powered, at the hub of the wheel, by two central capacities: awareness and the exercise of will.

Awareness describes the capacity to appreciate what is, both in the inner and outer world. It is the capacity to work through perceptions, prejudices and other illusions to an observation of reality.

Awareness shows us what is; the second core capacity, Will, enables us to act intentionally.

Will is the capacity to make choices, to take responsibility for these choices; it is the capacity to be who we are and the ability to be the cause of what we do.

Few leaders explicitly focus on developing these capacities, either for themselves or for their organisations - but they are fundamental to creating effective, sustainable change. At the core of helping someone develop their Will is helping them develop their sense of Self - that part of who they are which is at their centre. The coach can facilitate the development of the Will by being a role model, by perceiving and encouraging the Will when it is emerging, and by engaging the coachee in activities which develop the Will. Examples of this might be: not responding in their habitual ways to situations, being alone with themselves, focusing their attention, delaying gratification, acting independently of their thoughts and feelings, and acting according to their personal values. The same is true for developing awareness. The coachee can notice their thoughts without getting lost in them, notice the feelings that others' actions evoke in them without being overcome by them, really listen to what someone is saying to them, and notice the images that flit through their mind during a meeting.

Awareness and Will are important in each of the four quadrants - with Awareness being foreground in the bottom two quadrants (Insight and Readiness) and Will in the top two quadrants (Authentic Vision and Skilful Action).

Insight

Renewal requires **Insight**, insight into what is and what is emerging and could be in the world. Insight is a clear view of how I or we currently impact on our environment and are impacted by it. It is an understanding of how that might change.

Leaders bring insight into organisations through their curiosity - the habit of inquiring into and paying attention to the world through a wide angled lens; of spotting and mapping its interrelatedness; of openly seeking feedback from customers and suppliers; and of hunting for others' views and practices. Good networks across and outside of their own groups bring leaders insight; trusted peers and mentors bring insight; and occasionally insight comes from reading an article or a book. Leaders share insight not only by bringing back information from the world, but by asking questions and listening to answers. New members of the team are

prized for the revelations their new eyes can bring, and new technologies, new competition and difficult customers are a welcome source of insight.

The personal practices that foster insight in leaders as individuals are habits of curiosity about how they impact on others. Insight requires leaders to develop what Peter Senge refers to as 'systems thinking' in his 1990 book the "Fifth Discipline", reading the dynamic possibilities to see how a shift in their leadership could impact on the system around them.

Feedforward and personal reflection give a wonderful opportunity for leaders to examine when they are having the impact that they desire - when are they in "flow" and being the leader that they want to be. By getting our clients to tell the story of those times from the outside (from the perspective of the 'other') they begin to develop an understanding of the social and political system they are working in - and to apply their existing 'systems thinking' skills to it. Our experience is that if clients see the social system and their own impact on it as observable and something within which they can exercise choice, they are motivated to seek new sources of information about the system and so to further extend and strengthen their relational networks.

Readiness

Insight can lead somewhere or nowhere. It can show a potential to be different, or just present an insoluble problem. For insight to lead to change there must be **readiness** to accept both the possibility for change and the power to change - open thinking and feeling. Open thinking is contrasted to closed thinking, where an insight is denied, or arrested thinking where it is seen but not recognised as possible to change. This need for open thinking explains the "rabbit in the headlights" syndrome that seems to affect people when they are put under external stress to change that creates fear. In times of threat we may recognise the need to change but we are not "open". It also explains the famous "elephant in the room" where a truth is resolutely ignored by the organisation and its leaders because to see it would require conversations that are just too dangerous, too likely to create conflict, to upset mind-sets in which the organisation is invested or disrupt the power structure. Leaders who can lower the defence barriers and create sufficient safety for the rabbits to unfreeze and the elephants to be discussed are releasing their organisation to renew.

Practices that boost readiness are those that promote emotional awareness, confidence and open, positive thinking. Adopting an "appreciative" or "solution-focussed" practice is powerful, as are any meditative or reflective practices that promote understanding of our own emotions and fears, and how they might be blocking us.

Our experience of working with leaders in the UK and Europe is that they are typically more action oriented than reflective by nature and/or training. Many leaders believe that they should be emotionally self-sufficient, able to ignore or analyse away their own emotions in performing their leadership role, but they do not prioritise developing emotional self-awareness and self-mastery. Most leaders are time-stressed and reflection, especially self-reflection, can be seen as a waste of time that could have been spent in accomplishing a task or in communication with others. Their mental and emotional fitness are often addressed only when they are creating visible difficulties, and rapidly ignored again once coping mechanisms are in place.

A coach can enhance readiness by asking questions about how their client feels, how their emotions impact on them and by encouraging habits of self-reflection and self-observation such

as journaling, Visual Landscaping (a practice developed out of metaphor theory by Human Ecology Ltd) and inner dialogue. We encourage leaders to see their interior being as a great potential source of strength, worthy of investment, rather than a self-indulgent distraction from the 'real' exterior world. However, we believe that coaches must respect their client's mind-sets and values - it is not our role to create readiness, or push clients into changing a mind-set. Rather, by being with our clients in an aware and open way, we can help them to build readiness for themselves.

Authentic Vision

Gaining **Insight** has given us a clear sense of the reality we seek to change; developing **Readiness** has freed us from our past and conditioning. Now we clarify what it is we are seeking to create and what change it is we want to make happen - that is we identify our Vision of how things could be. This vision must be rooted in reality and so is strongly linked to the Insight phase. It must be authentic in that it is a vision which moves and motivates us. Giving voice to this vision can be a profoundly creative and exhilarating process as pent up energy is released as we find a vision that expresses something of who we are and are becoming. In constructing authentic vision leaders use creative or imaginal practices and skills to effectively externalise, to represent an idea or feeling in a way that has authenticity and resonance. Story telling and meaning making are key skills in developing and communicating vision. Authentic visions give voice to the emerging story in a poetic way and allow others to weave their own stories into them.

Despite the interdependencies of vision and insight, they are different and both are needed for renewal. In the early 90s, NatWest Bank's leaders developed what was called a 'First Choice Vision'. This vision was presented to the Bank in a Business Scorecard format and expressed as: NatWest to be first choice for customers (ie customers would bank with NatWest), first choice for investors (ie a high share price), first choice for staff (ie a preferred employer), and first choice for quality (ie have high quality business processes). In fact, this was not a communication of vision but of a set of measures of whether the vision was being achieved - a part of Insight. As a result, the Bank's leaders did not share a vision of what this 'first choice ' bank would be like and their intention to give the Bank direction and vision failed, probably contributing to NatWest's subsequent acquisition by Royal Bank of Scotland.

The purpose of a Vision is to give a clear sense of direction and destination and, by being authentic, to provide the motivation to move forward. Steve Jobs, when first CEO of Apple, famously spent a long time trying to recruit John Sculley, then CEO of PepsiCo. According to Sculley himself Jobs ultimately successfully evoked Sculley's motivation by asking "Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling sugared water or do you want a chance to change the world?"

Skilful Action

The action phase is concerned with transforming vision into the actions needed to bring about that vision in the world. It therefore moves from vision to the goals necessary to achieve the vision, to the strategies necessary to achieve the goals, to the action plans to implement the strategy, to actually taking action. It is in this quadrant that much of coaching, in particular performance coaching, is carried out.

It relies on instrumental skills, on intelligence, energy, determination, flexibility of mind and competence. Skilful action requires a real focus on performance, on using yourself as an instrument to portray a message, to create an impact in the way that you intend. Kouzes and Posner in their recent book *The Leadership Challenge* call leadership a "performance art" in which the instrument is the self.

That is not to say that skilful action requires leaders to be falsely something other than they are. Successful post-modern leadership is authentic and poetic - true, but deliberately crafted. Goffee and Jones in their recent book *Why Should Anyone be Led by You?* call this leadership performance "being yourself with skill". The leader who puts on a good show at corporate events, but whose actions and decisions give the lie to his espoused beliefs will soon lose credibility and trust. The leader who strives to act in a way that gets approval, or has positive impact, but which runs counter to his beliefs will be subject to enormous and damaging tension. The leader who cannot use his emotions appropriately will founder under stress.

The practices that support skilful action are those that build mental and physical energy and personal dexterity. Developing a range of emotional intelligence skills allows a greater flexibility of response and strengthening emotional antennae allows leaders to become more skilful in choosing the most effective response.

Just as there is a resonance between insight and vision, so there is a resonance between readiness and action. We have to have sufficient freedom and readiness within ourselves to be able to act with focus, courage and impact in our outer world.

A circle or a spiral?

Renewal is a process of growth; we are changed as individuals or organisations by it. Each cycle of renewal, every turn of the wheel, brings us to a new way of being. At times these changes may seem minor - they strengthen us and broaden our perspective but our mind-sets and operative values remain the same. At other times the cumulative effect of renewal seems to bring us to a moment of transformation, a new mind-set, a new relationship with the world.

Our observation is that, although remaining consistent in form, renewal has a very different impact on the individual at different levels of development. Coaching for renewal with clients in different levels requires different approaches and capabilities from the coach. We would like to explore this in more detail in a subsequent article.

The need for rest

A key lesson from Gestalt for this renewal model has been the need for rest. Without rest, a moment in which we contemplate what has been achieved and experience the satisfaction of it, we cannot expect to sustain the renewal process. This seems almost amoral to some of our busy, achievement driven clients. An invitation to just "enjoy the moment" sounds "well off the floaty end of the pool" as one client put it. However, most clients are happy to engage in telling stories of successes, reliving the moments, however short, when they did relish completion. As they do so they become animated, they experience positive energy. If we can help them to recognise that energy, and extend that into their personal practice and their practice as a leader then they and their organisations benefit enormously.

Renewal not revolution and the end of 'heroic' leadership?

Failure to renew in organisations and in societies leads to 'revolution' as the pressure to change becomes so great that the only way out is to discard the status quo, throw out all the old thinking (and in organisations often the old structures and managers), and start again with a new model and new answer. Revolution is costly to individuals, organisations, and societies - and it breeds and feeds a dependence on heroic leaders who 'rescue' us.

Renewal is a less dramatic process of practice, discipline, balance and integration. Pressure for change comes from discordance, a lack of adaptation to changing conditions and perceived opportunities to do things differently, to be different, and to think differently. Long before the pressure to change reaches crisis proportions it is noticed and understood. It isn't denied, or blamed on the external, or seen as an unavoidable consequence of things beyond our control. Indeed, it is recognised and welcomed as the process of co-creation in action. It can still lead to powerful, fundamental change, but it does so with far less drama.

This can, paradoxically, be a problem. The narratives of our organisations can be fixated on heroes, tales of disaster and rescue, of villains defeated, and prizes snatched from the hands of our enemies. Some organisations seem almost addicted to the drama of revolution and can't understand leadership without it. The discipline of renewal can seem rather dull in comparison. We have noticed that where top leadership in an organisation is focussed on renewal this need for drama seems to die out quite quickly, but leaders in drama driven organisations may be constrained by the expectations of their stakeholders to deliver dramatic effect which undermines the practice of renewal. This is leading us to work increasingly with the culture and understanding of leadership in organisations, as well as coaching in its practice.

In this article we have shared our model of coaching renewal and outlined some of our experiences in fostering renewal in our clients. In our second article to be published in the next edition, we will be looking at the different stages through which leaders can pass as they travel this journey of development and how these different stages require different kinds of coaching intervention. We will also reflect on the implications of our model for coaching practice.

About the Authors

Diane Newell and Dr Mike Munro Turner are partners in the leadership coaching organisation Jericho Partners. They can be contacted via their website www.jerichopartners.co.uk. Diane has been a leader in a variety of organisations, and is an experienced leadership coach delivering change at the individual, team and organisational levels. Mike has been working to improve the performance of leaders and organisations for over 13 years. As "Mike the Mentor" he publishes one of the UK's premier coaching newsletters read by 1600 coaches and HR professionals across the world.