

Coaching the people rather than the problem



In many circumstances business can be like a dysfunctional family and the workplace becomes a place where people act out their dramas (roles, beliefs, ambitions). In these circumstances we need to move beyond solving problems to helping people, teams, processes and culture.

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Starting Solution Focussed

At the earliest stages of coach training, candidates are taught the GROW model as part of a solution focused approach to coaching. This has many merits and is perhaps a great place to start.

Examples of Solution Focussed models

GROW = Goal, Reality, Options, Will

PEEP = Preferred outcome, Exceptions (when is this not a problem), Existing resources, Progress so far

MAPS = Multiple options, Asking how (action) not why (philosophical), Problems into possibilities, SMART steps

SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound

PDCA = Plan, Do, Check, Act

DMAIC = Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control

However, it is also where too many finish, perhaps satisfied with questions like "How do I get more Friends on Facebook" these coaches may satisfy their clients' query but they fail their growth if they don't explore Why?

Cognitive Exploration

To understand why may require some cognitive exploration of thinking, feeling, being and examination of assumptions, patterns, perceptions, and preferences informed by experience, education and culture.

Examples of Cognitive Exploration models

SPACE = Social, Physical/Psychological, Actions, Cognition, Emotion

CLARITY = Context, Life Event, Actions, Reactions, Images and Identify, Thoughts, Your future choice

ABCDEF = Activity (event), Belief, Consequence, Dispute (change belief), Effective new response, Future focus

Psychodynamic Elements

Often to understand the present and the trajectory to the future it is useful to understand the psychodynamic elements: Our stories of home, growing-up, relationships and work help us understand what has shaped us into who we are, and key memories, thoughts, feelings, and aspirations help understand the emotions, thoughts and actions that drive us.

I often encourage clients to use stories, metaphors and analogy to explore the labyrinth of thinking, feeling and being in a psychologically safe way that allows for "what if" speculation and exploration without undermining them in the here and now.

Person Centred Approach

The person centred approach puts the client in charge and the coach listens with empathy and understanding. Occasionally they may seek clarification but the focus is on active listening rather than asking and never telling. The client decides the discussion and the direction. This may at times appear like counselling rather than coaching.

However it seems to me that although the cognitive exploration or psychodynamic approaches might appear more interventionist (with the coach partnering the exploration rather than following the clients' stream of conscious) they are still person centred because the approach is not 'solve the problem' but instead more focussed on helping the client know and understand themselves better, and grow as a result aided by awareness and choice.

Coaching and Leadership

I think there is a strong link between coaching and leadership. Partly because coaching is often used by people to become better 'Business' Leaders, but also because coaching helps people become better leaders of their own lives and circumstance.

I was therefore interested in a LinkedIn posting by Brian Cunningham, CEO & Leadership Author on the developmental progression of leadership takes us through all 10-Levels of leadership service, including...

L1 - Authoritarian Leadership... through Command & Control

L2 – Evidence-Based Leadership... through Persuasion

L3 – Coaching Leadership... through Guidance

L4 – Transformational Leadership... through Connection

L5 – Servant Leadership... through Clarity of Vision

L6 – Transcendental Leadership... through Direct Insight

- L7 – Mystic Leadership... through Direct Experience
- L8 – Awakened Leadership... through Awakening other Leaders
- L9 – Integrated Leadership... through Deep Presence and Acceptance
- L10 – Unified Leadership... through the experience of our Oneness with All.

It seems to me that we can see at Level 1 a rather mechanical approach, a bit like the GROW model, which is akin to a solution focused but command and control approach. Whereas Level 8 upwards appear better aligned to Awareness and Emotional Intelligence that may be fostered through Cognitive Exploration or the Psychodynamic

I am reminded of the book Executive Coaching: Systems-Psychodynamic Perspective by [Halina Brunning](#) which suggests that in coaching it is important to understand the Person, Role and System

- You should consider;
- The clients personality;
- The clients life story;
- The clients skills, competencies, abilities and talents;
- Their aspirations, progression and future aim;
- Their workplace and environment in which they perform;
- Their current organisational role.



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Coaching and Culture

No behaviour happens in a vacuum, it is always in the context of culture (real or perceived) and since leadership (and perceptions) exists within a culture then it becomes necessary to examine this. It could be argued that leadership creates or sets culture, and there are lots of 'how to' books that suggest that this is an achievable aim. However, it could also be said that culture selects leaders, either through a democratic process, survival of the fittest or circumstantial necessity.

There may be some 'chicken and egg' debate about Leadership and Culture, but we readily acknowledge the concept of cultural fit and a sense of belonging, which seem to have their roots in nature, nurture and attachment theory albeit subsequently modified by education and experience.

So coaching has to be able to take account of this, for which my go-to resource has been Spiral Dynamics with its hierarchy which also seems to start from the solution focused but command and control approach (to survival) through to what Brian Cunningham calls Unified Leadership

FIRST TIER	SUBSISTENCE LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS
2 - PURPLE	Animistic, Kin Spirit, Fear-driven, Rites, Rituals, Taboos, Superstitions, Tribes, Folk Ways and Lore
3 - RED	Egocentric, Power-Driven, Immediate Gratification, Flitz, Conquest, Action, Impulsive, Lives for Now
<i>Awakening of an egocentric self, determined to break the shackles of the family or tribe and become a powerful individual</i>	
4 - BLUE	Purposeful, Meaning-Driven, Conforming, Meaning, Discipline, Traditions, Morality, Rules, Lives for Later
<i>Awakening of a purposeful self in search of meaning in a purposeful existence and reasons why we live and die.</i>	
5 - ORANGE	Opportunistic, Success-Driven, Independent, Materialistic, Consumerism, Success, Image, Status, Growth
<i>Awakening of a pragmatic, independence seeking self who challenges higher authority and scientifically tests possibilities</i>	
6 - GREEN	Communitarian, Affect-Drive, Transparent, Egalitarian, Feelings, Sharing, Caring, Communal
<i>Awakening of a sociocentric self who strives for belonging, acceptance, and to discover spirit, inner harmony, peace</i>	
SECOND TIER	BEING LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS
7 - YELLOW	Integrative, Systemic, Flow-Oriented, Natural Systems, Self-Principle, Multiple Realities, Knowledge
<i>Awakening of an inquiring interdependent self who no longer needs approval, yet can collaborate when appropriate</i>	
8 - TURQUOISE	Holistic, Collective Individualism, Macroview, Cosmic Spirituality, Earth Changes
<i>Awakening of experiential self who seeks ways of being that use knowledge to restore natural harmony and balance</i>	

Of course there shouldn't be a surprise here because all the different models have the same denominator: people.

From Structure to Process: Third Generation Coaching

Most businesses are somewhat like a dysfunctional family and the workplace is often where people pick a role and act out their drama. This is why coaching can be so valuable to change.

My recent reading of [Dr Darren Stevens](#) suggests to me that the first and second generation of coaching was structurally on fixing problems (problem people, problem products, and problem procedures) by using some of the formulaic models above.

Third generation coaching appears to be more about process, how we think rather than what we think, how we behave rather than what we do. It might be simplistically be phrased as *'it aint what you do but the way that you do it'* or compared to the saying *"give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"*

The essence is the development of the person rather than the resolution of the problem.

About the Author

Tim Rogers is a consultant, coach, IoD mentor and mediator. His public sector work included project manager for the incorporation of the Post Office and Ports of Jersey, and project director for the Health and Social Services Governance Review. He now focusses on coaching people and teams delivering change.

Contact

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Self-help resources here ThinkingFeelingBeing.com/clientresources/

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#consulting, #coaching, #mentoring and #mediating to support people through
#change

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Useful Reference to [Dr Darren Stevens](#)
<https://cognilibro.co.uk/research.html>