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Newsletter
April 2010

EDITORIAL

What is executive coaching and how is it different from sports coaching? Do I need coaching? If yes, how do I persuade my organization to appoint a coach for me? Will being coached improve my career?

Executive coaches are often asked many such questions and on the eve of our launching the ISEC Coach Certification program we have dedicated this issue of the newsletter to answering these questions.

Kick-starting with an understanding of the Indian context, we have a free-flowing interview with Richard Winfield that brings clarity to this topic. We close with the 100th monkey story that illustrates how you could bring about a "tipping point" in your organization.

Executive Coaching: The Scenario in India

Professor Pawan Budhwar of Aston Business School wrote in his recent book about the changing face of people management in India. India boasts of the world's largest pool of scientific and technical personnel, but is low on problem-solving skills, concern for customer satisfaction and productivity. With people development issues assuming added importance due to India Inc's expansion, diversification, turnaround and globalization strategies, the need to develop a domestic workforce capable of taking up these challenges assumes greater importance.



Traditionally, we hesitate to delegate, do not accept authority and fear independent decision making. We're possessive about subordinates and submissive to superiors with the traditional hierarchical society emphasizing unquestionable respect for superiors – be it family elders, teachers or our bosses at work. Prof. Budhwar believes obedience is facilitated by the supposedly superior authority of the position holder and never on a rational basis. Therefore, authority in Indian companies is mostly one-sided with subordinates relying on their bosses for advice and direction.

It is into this mindset that executive coaching hopes to bring a paradigm shift. It empowers employees so that their dependency on superiors for advice and direction is cut down. They take up responsibility for decisions, thus leaving their bosses enough time to carry out more mission critical activities. Employees thus coached learn to do things more efficiently thus increasing productivity for themselves and their line managers as well.

Science fiction author Isaac Asimov said, "The only constant is change, continuing change, inevitable change; that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be."

The world of business is throwing out old concepts of stability for new ones like dynamism which places more demands on individuals and organizations. As individuals move up the management ladder, the rate at which they need to learn and adapt accelerates. So, a crucial role of the manager is to "Learn and Help Others Learn". As the old saying goes, "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and feed him a lifetime."

Author Terry Pratchett gives this quote a new turn and says, "Give a man fire and he is warm for a day; set a man

on fire and he's warm for the rest of his life." So executive coaching is not just a way to set your staff on fire, it is a transformative process that spreads through organizations, changing its very culture as it passes through.

Interview: Richard Winfield

The Indian School of Executive Coaching (ISEC) in association with the Brefi Group (UK) is launching their Coach Certification workshop in Bangalore on 23 & 24 April 2010.

Richard Winfield, founder, Brefi Group, speaks to ISEC's Managing Editor Raj Narayan on some key facets of Executive Coaching in India. Excerpts from the interview:

ISEC: *Coaching is largely associated with sports, so how does executive coaching refer to other sorts of businesses like the ITES?*

Richard Winfield: I am sure in the early days of coaching in a sport; there is a great deal of teaching goes on. But, once people have the basic skills of how to play tennis or how to play golf, the real role of a coach is to keep the focus of the individual on exactly what they are doing and how they can improve what they are doing. And that really is relevant to anything that you are doing, whether it is to organize a meeting or whether it is how you do a particular task. The purpose of the coach is to raise the awareness and to strengthen the focus on the goal of the individual. Whatever the task, whatever the business, the coaching process is the same. So, if you think of a top class sportsperson, very competent already and they know all the moves and know exactly what they should do. So, why do they employ a coach? They employ a coach who helps them keep the focus besides continually guiding them to refine their play.

ISEC: *Is coaching an entirely people development related issue? And can it be dove-tailed into other HR related activities?*

Richard Winfield: The question is really can executive coaching help with productivity and efficiency? Well, it surely can. Because coaching is to help people to not only learn new things but to learn to do things better and to keep their focus and attention so that they are constantly improving their performance all the time. Coaching is particularly valuable when attached to a training program. Because the problem with training is that however much people learn from such programs, they very rapidly lose much of their learning unless they apply it immediately. If you can apply a coaching support after someone has been through a coaching program, they you can ensure they can transfer their learning into practice and take it on board for permanence. Coaching is also particularly relevant in terms of any management relationships, especially in learning to appraise, to delegate and to support people in their work. So, coaching is absolutely a people development issue but its purpose is to improve efficiency and effectiveness and also quality of life and to reduce stress.

ISEC: *What are the results I can expect from being coached?*

Richard Winfield: In mid-management careers focus is on achieving results through a combination of people and process management. So, executive coaching can help two ways. Firstly by coaching the manager and helping him focus on what it is that he wants to achieve. This is a common thread through all coaching – raising awareness and focusing on goals. This means the manager himself will become more effective. But, more significantly, the coaching skills that the manager would learn through being coached are really powerful in helping him to achieve more through his people. And by learning to be a coach, will mean that not only the individual, but the individual's team will become more effective. Basically anything that I do, I can do it more effectively. I save time by not wasting time. I save time by focussing myself and my team on what it is we're trying to achieve. We also improve the quality and quantity of our work because we are working more effectively and raising our standards all the time. It's an ongoing improvement process.

ISEC: *How does an executive coach help me to take correct decisions at my workplace?*

Richard Winfield: Well, that's the key role of an executive coach. The coach's job is two-fold really. One is to raise the person's awareness and the second is to focus them on their goals. We do this by asking them good



quality questions. Really helping individuals to focus on where they are and where they'd like to be, and to identify for themselves really how to get between the two.

ISEC: *Does the coach need a broad understanding in order to guide me through a variety of industry segments that I'm likely to be employed with?*

Richard Winfield: The role of a coach is to guide you through the process of decision making. It is not to guide you to the answers. The answers come from you as the client. We help you with the process. There is a school of coaching which says that actually this is a purely generic skill and you don't need any experience or background in these areas at all. There is something to be said about that. But, in practise, an executive coach is someone who understands business and industry and has had enough experience of life themselves to understand where they are. And they should have lots of other skills in addition to just the ability to follow through a coaching program. So, really any coach should be able to guide you through any situation but an executive coach is one who has got additional experience that will help them to do that.

ISEC: *Can someone take up executive coaching as a career option? How can one convince the leadership to accept the offer of coaching mid-management executives to the next level?*

Richard Winfield: Clearly if you want to offer your services as a coach, you need to have the skills and the underpinning knowledge and the purpose of coaching workshops is to provide both the knowledge and experience and repeated practice. Coaching is rather like a sport. You can learn how to do it from a book. You can follow the diagrams and learn the tools. But, that doesn't make you a sportsman. It doesn't make you a competent cricketer, footballer or a golfer. It's the same with coaching. We can teach a whole lot about coaching and give you practice and experience but it takes a lifetime to become a really competent coach. I've read that for most skills that it takes 10,000 hours. And it is a long term process if you want to be a competent professional or master coach.

ISEC: *What are the various levels of coach certification?*

Richard Winfield: So, what are the various levels of coach certification? As a general principle, there will be something called an associate who is somebody in training. This is followed by the equivalent of a professional coach who is someone who has proved that he understands the basic coaching skills and has got reasonable practise and has worked with clients. The next is the Master Coach which takes many months and a great deal more experience. The specific thing about the coaching workshops that we at ISEC are offering is two-fold. One is that they are very business-orientated and they involve quite a lot of management consultancy skills in a coaching context. And the second is that they are specifically designed to meet the needs of the International Coach Federation and International Association of Coaching. The candidate knows that they are getting relevant coaching that is benchmarked to international standards. The first two-day program is a dual purpose one. It is the beginning of the career training and also a complete workshop for a line manager who wants to use coaching in their business and I am convinced that in the modern environment, knowing how to coach is a real benefit if you are just a manager.

ISEC: *How can one convince the leadership to accept the offer of coaching mid-management executives to the next level?*

Richard Winfield: If you want to take up a career as an in-house coach, that's a longer term deal you need to do with your HR people. The advantage of being an in-house coach is that you can focus on coaching, whereas when you are an independent coach, much of your time is focussed on sales and marketing of your own business.

Coaching Notes: The story of the 100th Monkey (A Quantum Leap in Behaviour)

This is the story of the Hundredth Monkey and in it is an underlying message that might bring about a change in your organization. Read on...

The Japanese monkey Macaca Fuscata had been observed in the wild for a period of over thirty years. In 1952, on the island of Koshima, scientists were providing monkeys with sweet potatoes dropped in the sand. The monkeys

liked the taste of the raw sweet potatoes but they found the dirt unpleasant. An 18 month old female named Imo found she could solve the problem by washing the potatoes in a nearby stream. She taught this trick to her mother. Her playmates also learned this new way and they taught their mothers too. This cultural innovation was gradually picked up by various monkeys before the eyes of the scientists.



Between 1952 and 1958, all the young monkeys learned to wash the sandy sweet potatoes to make them more palatable. Only the adults who imitated their children learned this social improvement ... other adults kept eating the dirty sweet potatoes. Then something startling took place. In the autumn of 1958 a certain number of Koshima monkeys were washing sweet potatoes - the exact number is not known. Let us suppose that when the sun rose one morning there were 99 monkeys on Koshima Island who had learned to wash their sweet potatoes. Let's further suppose that later that evening the hundredth monkey learned to wash potatoes ... THEN IT HAPPENED. By that evening almost everyone in the tribe was washing sweet potatoes before eating them. The added energy of this hundredth monkey somehow created an ideological breakthrough!

But notice. A most surprising thing observed by these scientists was that the habit of washing sweet potatoes then jumped over the sea - colonies of monkeys on other islands and the mainland troop of monkeys at Takasakiyama began washing their sweet potatoes. Thus, when a certain number achieves an awareness, this new awareness may be communicated from mind to mind. Although the exact number may vary, The Hundredth Monkey phenomenon means that when only a limited number of people know of a new way, it may remain the conscious property of just those people. But there is a point at which if only one more person tunes in to a new awareness, a field is strengthened so that this awareness is picked up by almost everyone!

Your awareness is needed. You may be the "hundredth monkey".

(Please note that this story, taken from the book, "The Hundredth Monkey" by Ken Keyes Jr., is not copyrighted).

Readers Comment:

Srikanth Gopalakrishnan (Fusion HCM Development, Oracle IDC) - The sandbagging article was awesome. Just loved it! Does bring a completely different perspective to what could be categorized as success from an individual's standpoint. Thanks for sharing.

(Readers are welcome to [mail me](#) your comments for publication.)

With warm regards,

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