

## Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter.

As a part of the ISEC community, you are receiving this newsletter providing access to the world of executive coaching. A newsletter that we trust will introduce you to concepts for improving managerial performance, challenge your thinking and excite your imagination.

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### EDITORIAL:

In our introductory message you read about the concept of Executive Coaching and the urgent need for offering this service to Corporate India. The Indian School of Coaching is excited to be at the forefront of an initiative that hopes to meet this requirement.

What is the Indian School of Executive Coaching (ISEC)?

Over the past decade and a half, the pace of growth in Indian businesses has been faster than the speed at which business schools churned out graduates. As a consequence, while a large class of professional and technical workers is being developed the executive ranks are stretched thin.

Typically it takes a whole generation to train effective modern management. As a result, companies are relying on younger people to take on management roles. And supplement these people with candidates who might have been overlooked in the past. The bottom line is that there is a race for scarce managerial talent. And notwithstanding the stellar technological innovations of the past two decades, a simple truth remains: "It is the people that make businesses."

ISEC'S goals include creating awareness about Executive Coaching, training and certifying coaches within the guidelines established by the International Coaching organizations and to offer Executive Coaching services to Indian companies.

I am also delighted to introduce Richard Winfield founder of The Brefi Group (UK) who are ISEC's global content partners. Richard Winfield's CorporateCoach newsletter has a huge international readership.

Richard will be a regular contributor to our newsletter and also the lead faculty for ISEC's Coach Certification programs that we will launch in April 2010.

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### ARTICLE: LOSERS CAN BE WINNERS TOO!

Imagine that you are participating in a knock-out tennis tournament. If you are a tennis player this would sound rather a routine event, but wait...there's a catch. The tournament rule of progression is inverted. In every match the loser (yes, the loser!) progresses to the next round and the winner is knocked out.

Imagine also that you are the local tennis champ and entered the tournament before knowing the changed rule. You have been told about this new rule a short while before your match and you are now contemplating the best strategy to employ.

On the one hand you need to win to maintain your standing as the best player and on the other hand you realize that winning the match would knock you out of the tournament. What would be your strategy for the match? Equally what is your opponent's strategy as he is also playing by the same rule?

You have the choice of playing badly to ensure that you lose. It is possible that your opponent would also choose the same strategy and the match would end up as a series of intentional mistakes and, while you might progress to the next round(s), you are unlikely to obtain any satisfaction from your playing performance. Or, you might decide to win, maintain your standing as the champion player and not progress further in the tournament. But, the fact your performance was not rewarded in the conventional sense would likely make you unhappy.

Effectively, therefore, you lose whichever strategy you select?

Busy high performing executives in the business world face similar decisions many times in a working day. The problem is that most often they do not realize that the decision-situation is as simple (or complex depending on how you view it!) as the one described earlier. And at the end of a busy day, if they were to take stock of their decisions they would recall that many times the end result was distributed between "losses" and "wins."

But, corporate executives are measured on the quality of their decision making and it is necessary to have greater wins than losses. To resolve this dilemma, let us return to our tennis champion and assist him in selecting a match strategy.

Imagine, that you – the tennis champion – decide to change your mind-set and no longer look upon the match as a lose-lose situation. Instead you decide to go out, play your natural game and irrespective of the real outcome consider that you have won. What is the likely outcome? Once the pressure of winning in the conventional sense is removed you will discover that you are actually enjoying the game.

In his early twentieth century masterpiece, "As a Man Thinketh", the novelist James Allen captures this situation aptly in this couplet:

Defeats are steps by which we climb  
With purer aim to nobler ends;  
Loss leads to gain, and joy attends  
True footsteps up the hills of time.

In actual fact, when players were placed in this tournament situation many of them claimed that they had played the best games of their life. In some respects the description of their feelings during the game coming close to a state that athletes describe as "playing in the zone."

In technical terms this state is also known as the Flow state – a state where the person is totally absorbed in his task, where distractions are excluded from the consciousness and the joy of undertaking the activity is its own reward.

We may now ask ourselves, what can the busy corporate executive learn from the experience of our tennis champ?

He can learn to cultivate his thought process so that he believes himself to be in a win-win position, whatever the decision-situation. In the process he will find himself gradually working in a state of flow. A

state where there is no difference between work or play, defeat or victory. A situation best summed in this short poem attributed to the Zen Masters.

The Master simply pursues excellence,  
in whatever he does.  
He makes little distinction between,  
his work and his play,  
His labour and his leisure,  
his mind and his body,  
His education and his recreation,  
his love and his religion,  
He hardly knows which is which,  
for he is always doing both.

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Krishna Kumar is an Executive Coach and  
the Founder-Director of ISEC, India



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## **CORPORATECOACH : A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD WINFIELD**

A couple of summers ago I broke my wrist on a cattle drive in Montana.

On my return to Birmingham I was referred to hospital to have the break re-set and a titanium splint inserted. My big worry was that I would be detected every time that I went through airport security on my international travels. Fortunately, that has not occurred.

What I really appreciated about my treatment was the way my surgeon, Simon Tan, related to me. I consider myself a professional, and obviously a surgeon is a professional, too.

However, in this context I was a patient and normally that is how I would feel I was being treated. In this case, though, I felt honoured as a fellow professional. The attitude that Mr. Tan took towards me, the respect and the trouble he took over explaining all the details of the break and the treatment, all took place on a one-to-one adult basis.

I hope, and believe, that this special health service worker actually treated everybody exactly the same. Recently I was flying from Phuket to Bangkok. A Thai lady was sitting next to me with her young son. She asked me whether I had been on holiday and explained that she lived in Hong Kong and was returning home. There was something very special about how this stranger addressed me. Once again it was as if we were equals – worthy adults who might have known each other for years.

Not only did this conversation honour me, but it indicated great self confidence and self esteem on the part of the lady.

I was very struck by this short interaction. A couple of adults treated me like this when I was a teenager. The difference is subtle but significant.

I have been pondering since what is the difference between these interactions and normal conversations between adults. How can I honour and respect people when I meet them in the way the Mr. Tan and the lady from Thailand did to me?.

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## PARABLES TO PONDER:

Parable 1:

Vivek Paul (President and CEO of Wipro Technologies) from an elephant trainer.

"The best advice I ever got was from an elephant trainer in the jungle outside Bangalore. I was doing a hike through the jungle as a tourist. I saw these large elephants tethered to a small stake. I asked him 'How can you keep such a large elephant tied to such a small stake?' He said 'When the elephants are small, they try to pull out the stake and they fail. When they grow large, they never try to pull out the stake again.'

"That parable reminds me that we have to go for what we think we're fully capable of, not limit ourselves by what we've been in the past."

Parable 2:

Anne Mulcahy (CEO of Xerox) from a customer.

"When everything gets really complicated and you feel overwhelmed, think about it this way: You gotta do three things. First, get the cow out of the ditch. Second, find out how the cow got into the ditch. Third, make sure you do whatever it takes so the cow doesn't go into the ditch again."

"Now, every time I talk about the turnaround at Xerox, I start with the cow in the ditch. The first thing is survival. The second thing is, figure out what happened. Learn from those lessons and make sure you've got a plan in place to recognise the signs, and never get there again."

What advice have you received? Please [send it me](#) for sharing with other readers.

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**With warm regards,**

**Krishna Kumar**

**Executive Coach & Founder-Director, ISEC**