

Contents:

- »» Editor's Note
- »» Coaching Notes: Happy New Year
- »» Mentor's Musings - It is Lonely at The Top!
- »» Reader Feedback
- »» Events @ ISEC

Newsletter
December 2011

EDITOR'S NOTE

-- By Raj Narayan Editor

At a recent workshop on using Internet for customer engagement, the CEO of a small enterprise popped an interesting question during my presentation. "I am sold over the idea, but I have a problem. Somehow I am not able to find the required time for implementing this idea in my organization. How can you help me in his regard?"

My first instinct was to proffer some advice but good (coaching) sense prevailed and I asked him to hold his thought for a few minutes and moved on with my presentation. A few slides later, I discussed 'Impediments to Growth' wherein one of the points related to "Challenges of Delegating Authority".

From the corner of my eye, I noticed my CEO friend of the morning stiffen a wee bit. Having delved into the problem when I suggested that delegation of work has to be preceded by 'right' hiring, he perked up again and said "That's the next big problem. I can't find the right resources to share my work."

Suppressing the instinctive question of whether he had set goals for himself first, I took him back to the original problem. "Sir, how do you want the Internet to help you with customer engagement," I asked. He said he wasn't sure, but said he wanted to 'reach out' to his existing clients and new markets. "And, have you discussed this requirement with anyone within or outside your company?" I asked.

"I searched the Internet but it didn't help," he said. After the workshop, I shared some free software applications that I had used with telling effect. We parted after lunch and by evening I got a brief email: "Thank you for your time. I have realized the importance of delegating, especially things that I am ignorant about."

This New Year, let's resolve to collaborate more and grow!

MENTOR'S MUSINGS: IT IS LONELY AT THE TOP!;

-- By Krishna Kumar, ISEC Founder Director Editor

Ancient wisdom had us believe that **the higher we climb, the harder would be the fall**. Down the ages, this metaphor seldom curtailed the human spirit of reaching out for the skies and beyond. The human race has continued its upward march relentlessly with the spirit of entrepreneurship and adventure often guiding us to dizzying levels, especially when one perceives this growth from down below.

This has probably led to this modernization of the metaphor: **The higher we climb, the lonelier we get!** And, if you are the CEO of a business then this feeling should be quite a familiar one. A feeling that seems to overpower you, especially when the going gets tough and the road to nowhere beckons. This is when you badly, desperately, need a sounding board or a support mechanism that puts you back on the straight path.



One might say that the age old maxim of the tough getting going when the going gets tough might sound familiar enough but it hardly offers cheer to those in the thick of action. For e.g., what does a CEO do to make sure that the decisions made are in tune with the business goals? Worse still, how does the CEO decide that the business goals mirror the market requirement?

It is quite well known that most of the decisions taken by the top management relate to growing the business. At least, theoretically so! That being the case, what's the reality? It is believed that most CEOs tend to micro-manage their businesses and paradoxically the pursuit of growth ends up becoming the biggest obstacle to growth. How then can top-level managers ensure that they do not end up missing the woods for the trees while taking decisions?

This happens to be one of the biggest coaching conundrums that I face as a Leadership Coach. I call it the "Growth Paradox".

Interestingly the problem is not restricted to the world of business as I unexpectedly discovered one evening while talking to a lady golfer, who has been professionally participating on the Indian circuit for some years. Her regular golf coach, a good friend of mine, suggested a meeting between us to overcome a mental block that was consistently making her perform below potential on the greens. And, the downturn had nothing to do her fitness or technical expertise, I was told.

A few days later, I met up with the lady golfer, who began the conversation by stating that her "short game" was falling apart. For those unfamiliar with the sport, this essentially means that she was losing confidence while preparing to putt the ball closer to the hole. It is a familiar problem that I had worked upon in the past and was pretty certain that it could be 'fixed' in this case too. Being keen that the golfer should simultaneously focus on a bigger goal of moving up the rankings in Asia, I decided to gently steer the conversation in that direction.

Almost on cue, I sensed certain discomfiture on her part. She seemed to hold on to the view that fixing her 'short game' was the panacea for all her problems and that this was the short-term goal that she was intent on focusing.

Another incident involving the CEO of a mid-sized pharmaceutical company comes to my mind where he started the conversation suggesting that he had never faced failure in his life. Perceiving this to be an extremely positive and optimistic frame of mind, I considered starting him off on a goal-setting exercise that would help him broaden his vision for the company. However, much to my surprise, he pooh-poohed this suggestion and announced that his goal was to lose 20 kg of body weight. He told me that he had been obese for the past several years.

While I totally accept the fact that maintaining decent levels of fitness and good health is indeed a laudable objective, I was somewhat perplexed over the person's claim of not having failed in life and his admission of a personal failure immediately thereafter. Why was he stuck on a relatively simpler personal goal? And what made him think that the business goals were easier to achieve by comparison?

I began wondering why some of the hugely successful people get caught up in resolving smaller goals while the big picture often eludes them. What's more' many of these successful people are ignorant of this aspect of their

professional lives!

It does not have to be lonely on the top.

This is where the support of a coach or a mentor comes in handy. That being the case, why do senior business executives and CEOs sometimes show reluctance to seek the services of a coach to support them in their journey towards achieving peak performance? Is it that seeking support is in itself perceived as a sign of weakness, even if such help is sought behind closed doors and out of the glare of media and peer attention?

Coaching in the world of business is a concept that has been borrowed from the world of sport. Top class sportspersons routinely go back to the drawing board and discuss their career and progress with coaches whose sole purpose is to help them achieve their potential. In other words, coaches help them reach out for higher targets by jointly setting short-to-medium term goals for them.

Can coaches resolve the problems one faces in business? For starters, one must keep in mind that coaches do not proffer solutions to problems. They perform the vital role of supporting the person's efforts to unlock the answers that lie buried within. They help the person retain focus on some broader goals, thus providing indirect support to its meeting.

To say that both the lady golfer and CEO benefited from my coaching is wishful thinking. The summary is that in one instance, I was able to get the person to refocus on the big picture and in the other case I remain optimistic that the change will happen sooner than later.

COACHING NOTES: HAPPY NEW YEAR

Reproduced below is the opening page of "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho.

The alchemist picked up a book that someone in the caravan had brought. Leafing through the pages, he found a story about Narcissus.

The alchemist knew the legend of Narcissus, a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. At the spot where he fell, a flower was born, which was called the narcissus.

But this was not how Oscar Wilde, the author of the book, ended the story.

He said that when Narcissus died, the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears.

"Why do you weep?" the goddesses asked.

"I weep for Narcissus," the lake replied.

"Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus," they said, "for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand."

"But...was Narcissus beautiful?" the lake asked.

"Who better than you to know that?" the goddesses said in wonder. "After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!"

The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said:

"I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. "I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected."

"What a lovely story," the alchemist thought.



May every single day of this New Year reflect our joy!

READER FEEDBACK ON "TO COACH OR NOT TO COACH"

K V Hariprasad writes:

Dear KK,

Very interesting musings and follow up article by Raj Narayan (Nov 2011 News letter). I think the topic is quite relevant. Me being the PM for the team encounters many situations where I am tempted to coach the team members. However my experience has been that the "need" has to be established before coaching someone in the team- especially if they are "experts" in their field. I have learned it the hard way by burning my fingers a few times.

The key considerations I feel are:

- a) Establishing a need to coach- does the person who needing the coaching, "really need" it.
- b) Understanding the Level of coaching that is needed- Would you use a story telling approach or telling approach or directing the individual on the correct behavior. Based on the personality traits of the individual the approaches vary.
- c) Articulation of the cause effect vs what is the "right" or "wrong"
- d) Relationship with the individual- there has to have some mutual understanding and trust between the mentor and mentee.

As I mentioned a very relevant article. Thanks for putting the same.

EVENTS @ ISEC

ISEC will conduct an integrated Level One (Mentor Coach) and Level Two (Executive Coach) workshop from 01 Feb – 04 Feb 2012.

**With warm regards,
Krishna Kumar
Executive Coach & Founder-Director, ISEC**