

“ . . . Coaching can transmute into something truly superb if coaches can become expert at two processes.

One is giving stunning, nearly serene attention to your client for much, much longer than you have been accustomed to do. This will mean reinterpreting your job as coach. You are not primarily a Vesuvius of analysis and advice any more. You are to be a Thinking Environment for your client. That will mean listening so well that your client is directed back to their own thinking over and over. Even if they expect your advice, you will be most effective if you keep them doing their own best thinking first. After that has happened thoroughly, you can tell them what you think. They will hear you better than anyway. And if you are very good at being a Thinking Partner to them, you may not, except for any information they may lack, have to tell them very much.

The second process at which you will need to become expert is asking Incisive Questions. When executive coaches have trained in this they have invariably reported great success, sometimes even excitement, after they have made use of Incisive Questions with their clients.

One acclaimed executive coach I know, Tina Breen, said in an interview recently:

‘The danger with coaching lies in the perceived need for the coach to appear brilliant, to be seen to have all the answers. When coaches are focused on looking wonderfully clever, they do not listen long enough. They summarise and interpret and direct far too early in the session.

Coaches need to realise that the brilliant person is the client. The coach’s job is to help the client discover that. The real expert on the organisation is not the coach, however informed and experienced they may be.’

A Thinking Environment gives the client space to find out what they already know and to think of new ideas themselves, ideas that will work.

. . . . Ironically, by bringing out the brilliance in the client, you as coach will be seen as the brilliant one.”

*Nancy Kline, Time to Think, 1999*

# COACHING

“Coaching aims to enhance the performance and learning ability of others. It involves providing feedback, but it also uses other techniques such as motivation, effective questioning and consciously matching your management style to the coachee’s readiness to undertake a particular task. It is based on helping the (client) to help her/himself through dynamic interaction – it does not rely on a one-way flow of telling and instructing.”

*Max Landsberg, The Tao of Coaching, 1996*

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.

. . . if a coach can help a player to remove or reduce the internal obstacles to their performance, an unexpected natural ability will flow forth without the need for much technical input from the coach.”

*John Whitmore, Coaching for Performance, 1996*

“The brain that contains the problem probably also contains the solution.”

*Nancy Kline, Time to Think, 1999*

“Being a coach is like being a taxi driver - ‘so where do you want to go?’”

*Robert Dilts*

“Questions should follow the interest and the train of thought of the (client), not of the coach. If the coach leads the direction of the questions he will undermine the responsibility of the (client).”

*John Whitmore, Coaching for Performance, 1996*