

ideas

original perspectives on life and
business from leading thinkers

Volume no 2

CONTRIBUTING THOUGHT LEADERS

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“A mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions”

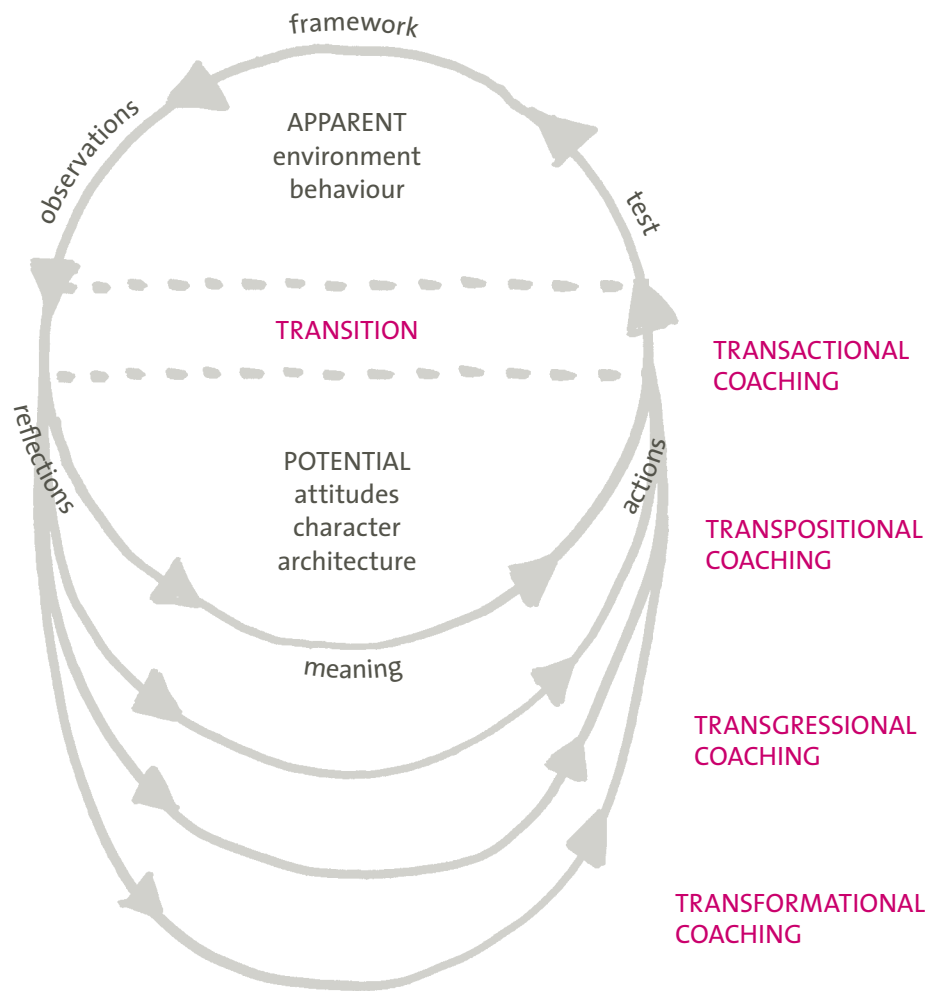
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

“Now, more than ever, our collective fate rests in the hands of leaders who decide and act either wisely or foolishly.”

Coach wisely! Masterful coaching both enables and ennobles leaders for our sustainable common good.

the wisdom of coaching
PETER WEBB

THE FORMAT MODEL FOR COACHING WISELY



THE DILEMMA OF COACHING

Socrates (469-399 BC) was probably the first coach. In debate he would engage his fellow Athenians with a series of apparently rhetorical questions. Not to win the argument, but to strive for the ultimate truth of the matter. At the time he was pronounced the wisest man in Greece, although later he was charged with corrupting the young and sentenced to death by poisoning with hemlock. Now there's a commitment to coaching outcomes!

Coaching helps managers overcome a fundamental dilemma. The dilemma of needing agreement and certainty to keep the *transactional* processes of business operating efficiently, while at the same time searching out bold and uncertain *transformational* business opportunities.

It's like gravity. Managers are more comfortable with their 'feet on the ground', where the probability of outcomes from business decisions is known, and where there is ample agreement about what to do. But the opportunities that could transform the business and create significant leverage are not to be found at ground level. They exist out in the *potential* space, far above the gravitational pull of ordinary, linear, safe and certain business decision-making.

FOUR TYPES OF COACHING

Transactional coaching

This will assist in improving the manager's efficient handling of business processes, people and teams. The emphasis is on behaviour and skill development. It has just enough boost to get you into 'low-rise orbit', but not enough to prevent you falling back to Earth eventually.

Transpositional coaching

Transpositional coaching is about helping the manager to see themselves and others from different points of view. Sometimes the truth of 360-degree feedback hurts! Here's where EQ (emotional intelligence) really plays a part and gets you into a 'geo-stationary' orbit where you're more likely to stay.

Transgressional coaching

Literally, 'crossing the boundaries', transgressional coaching enables the manager to discover a new way of seeing their world – strategically, politically or dynamically. This is the profound 'ah-ha!' moment and represents the transition into the *potential* space.

Transformational coaching

At the outer limits this kind of coaching provokes a fundamental reassessment of identity and sense of meaning. The manager essentially 'rediscovers' that which was known all along. This is where wisdom emerges.

Based on dozens of case studies, hundreds of personal testimonials from scores of organisations, and diverse threads of research, it's now clear that coaching has a significant impact on people and on business results.

THE DEFINITION OF COACHING

There's no doubt coaching works. Based on dozens of case studies, hundreds of personal testimonials from scores of organisations, and diverse threads of research, it's now clear that coaching has a significant impact on people and on business results. Yet coaching, it seems to me, is still not fully utilised. It's a bit like taking the Ferrari out to the back paddock to do a bit of furrowing. I think the reason coaching is often undervalued or diluted is because it's not practised with sufficient *mastery*.

In my experience, coaching mastery elicits wisdom from clients through a guided discourse toward the 'bigger picture' – the ultimate truth of the matter (without the hemlock!).

With that in mind, I see coaching as a privileged dialogue between a client who has managerial authority in an organisation and a coach who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to shape a *journey* from one place of identity and meaning to another, from which the client can more wisely manage their own life and the organisation they serve.

COACHING FOR MEANING

Managers get things done 'above the surface' where resources and outcomes are known. Leaders encourage team performance from 'below the surface' where beliefs, values and 'sense of meaning' reside.

We all respond better to propositions and requests that readily support our view of ourselves, and we avoid suggestions that might trigger feelings of uncertainty or hurt based on past experiences. Leaders know how to manage these fundamental emotions in their teams.

At a deeper level, the stories we tell ourselves about our lives run along familiar patterns. From Homer's *The Odyssey* to American ABC's *Desperate Housewives*, we follow the archetypes and myths of ancient storylines throughout human history.

I view coaching as a narrative *journey*, starting with the visibly apparent elements of the client's domain of experience and then transitioning into a progressively deeper exploration of potential meaning, each time coming back to the surface to 'draw breath'. In this way, coaching is a search for meaning – a way of accessing the deeper motivations of clients for ethically sustainable, high-value performance.

FIVE LEVELS OF MEANING

The first two are external and apparent:

- **Environment** – the client's environment, consisting of his or her strategic thinking, the structures and systems through which he or she implements action, and particularly the establishment and defence of status.
- **Behaviour** – the client's behaviour, which involves paying attention to communication methods, relationship management and communication style. Here, the emphasis is on noticing and controlling behaviours and preventing more profound, impulsive behaviour patterns from returning under stress.

The next three levels are internal and potential:

- **Attitudes** – calls into question the client's beliefs and values, those that govern his or her life, work, relationships, whether to trust or not to trust, and how values influence choices with respect to career, money, success and power. Included here are the client's *representation systems*, how he or she sees the world.
- **Character** – this is the 'character' aspect of personality where the person's defences and unconscious beliefs (developed over their life history) reside. Progress is only possible through openness, trust, self-appraisal, and realisation.
- **Architecture** – constitutes the most intimate development of the person, beyond the defensive systems to the essential nature of human consciousness or 'spirit'. This is the cornerstone of the architecture of identity. Access to this level may be gained through deep understanding, and through the recognition of mythic narratives and archetypes that give deep insight to 'life, the universe and everything'.

We all respond better to propositions and requests that readily support our view of ourselves, and we avoid suggestions that might trigger feelings of uncertainty...

THE FORMAT OF COACHING

There are lots of ways to conceptualise the process of coaching, usually with clever acronyms. Sir John Whitmore popularised GROW more than a decade ago (Goal-Reality-Options-What). Not to be outdone, I've developed my own – FORMAT! This is a cyclical model of coaching narrative which *transitions* from what is *apparent* to what is *potential* and back again:

- **Framework** – this is the most visibly *apparent* domain of the client's experience – the context, the current conditions he or she faces at the moment. The key question here is, 'What's the story?'
- **Observations** – the next step is to focus on what the client is seeing in the present situation. What takes their attention? What behaviours are they aware of in themselves and others? The key question is, 'What do you notice?'
- **Reflections** – this is the *transition* space between what is external and *apparent* and what is internal and *potential*. Now the client explores their own awareness and interpretation of things at the *attitudes* level of meaning. The key question is, 'What do you value, and why?'
- **Meaning** – the most profound realisations and understandings take place at the levels of *character* and *architecture*. The client is encouraged to review their story from *transgressional* or *transformational* perspectives. The use of myths and archetypes can help connect the client with their deepest sense of identity. Here is the Socratic question, 'What is truth (in this situation)?'
- **Actions** – to retrieve value from these understandings the client must contemplate *potential* actions – what might be possible to do about the situation. This is *transitioning* back to the 'real world' and the key question is, 'What are your options?'
- **Test** – now it's time to 'prototype' the suggested action steps, to consider the practical implications of each action and what obstacles might need to be overcome. The key question is, 'Which of these actions will work?'

At the top of the cycle the client goes back into the 'framework' of their story with new insights and actions. And this, in turn, draws the dialogue back into observations and reflections for deeper understanding of meaning. Depending on the nature of the relationship between the coach and the client, both may be prepared to spend longer periods of time at the deeper levels before returning to the 'apparent world' with fresh insights and realisations.

THE MASTERY OF COACHING

Coaching should be the jewel in the crown of every consultant and every manager's toolkit. Never underestimate the power of artful dialogue in the service of finding wisdom in leadership.☺

... coaching is a search for meaning – a way of accessing the deeper motivations of clients for ethically sustainable, high-value performance.



Jennie Vickers

JENNIE runs JV Initiatives, a creative thinking consultancy based in Auckland, New Zealand. The company aims to make a difference by being different and focusing on new ways of doing business, including training in creativity and innovation, e-learning, problem solving, public speaking and legal management.

Jennie's key strength is living and working as a 'whole-brainer'. A right-brainer by nature, preferring communication, innovation and creativity, she has spent the last 20 years in legal and business roles in firms and corporates in New Zealand, the UK and Australia, developing and practising left-brain skills.

An Advanced Buzan Instructor, Jennie brings unique skills to teaching, combining an understanding of the needs of organisations, legal and business acumen, logical thought and discipline with a creative flair, energy and talent for communication.

Jennie has a Master of Management, DIPBA, and BA Law (Honours) and is a practising lawyer in New Zealand.

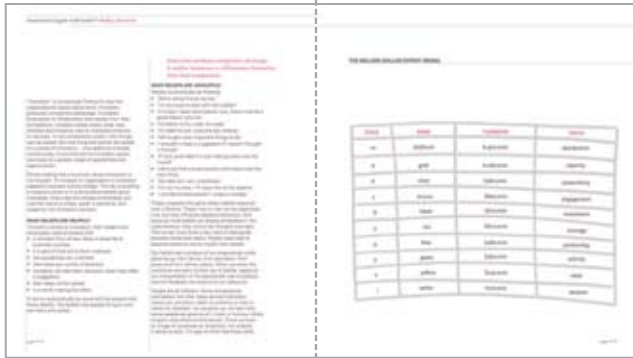


Peter Webb

PETER is the 'coach's coach'. He mentors consultants, managers, and coaches in skill mastery and getting leverage from coaching, helping them to create enduring change in teams and organisations and increase sustainable demand for services.

Peter's company, Intentional Training Concepts, specialises in leadership effectiveness in the Asia-Pacific region. He holds degrees in economics, organisational psychology, naturopathic medicine, and coaching psychology with peer-reviewed publications in coaching. He is also an invited lecturer on 'coaching in organisations' at the University of Sydney.

Over the past six years, Peter has spent thousands of hours coaching managers, executive managers, directors and partners across a diverse range of commercial and government enterprises, and trained hundreds of consultants, coaches, and managers as coaches. His highest intention is *eliciting wisdom in leadership for planetary survival*.



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