

## CHAPTER 1

# Super Success – What is Coaching?

SuperCoaching is an enabling process to maximise performance, development and fulfilment.

*Graham:* Early on in my coaching career, I landed one of the world's leading management consultancies as a client. They asked me to present at their next annual worldwide partners' conference, a daunting task in front of such an analytical and demanding audience.

I carefully prepared my slides, in the full knowledge that they would never be as good as theirs. I also intended to give a coaching demonstration, to bring the process alive, if anyone was willing to volunteer as a coachee. It wasn't long into my presentation that one of

the partners raised his hand. Hoping and expecting that he would build on something I had said, he instead exclaimed, ‘This is all nonsense!’ I took a deep breath and asked him to say more. ‘We hire the brightest and the best. They are highly motivated and capable people. We throw them in at the deep end and they either sink or they swim. I never had any of this coaching. I learnt how to swim. This touchy-feely stuff is all nonsense. All we need to do is tell our employees what to do, let them get on with it and either they succeed or fail.’

Trying not to sound defensive, I asked the partner, whose name was Peter, if he was interested in sport. He replied in the affirmative. Thankfully, we shared some common ground. I asked him whom he most admired, and he responded, Nick Faldo. At the time, Faldo was one of the world’s leading golfers. I continued, ‘Do you believe that Faldo has a coach?’

‘Yes.’

‘What is the purpose of that coach?’

‘To help him iron out any difficulties and take his game to the next level.’

‘That is what I am talking about. Coaching in business is not just for those under-performing. It is also for the high flyers to help them go beyond where they are currently performing and to assist their learning, growth and development. It is not a soft activity. It is directly linked to explicit business needs and challenges people to think differently.’

The analogy had caught his attention, but I also knew that just talking about coaching was unlikely to be as effective as experiencing it. I decided to take a risk and asked him if he would be willing to be coached there and then. There was an air of anticipation. I felt I'd taken my life into my hands. How was he going to respond? To give Peter credit, he agreed and sat down in front of his peers. I said the only way it would work would be for him to put on the table a real issue that he was wrestling with. We contracted the partners to confidentiality and proceeded to spend the next 20 minutes working through his issue in front of a captivated audience.

At the end of the session, I asked Peter for his observations. He said that he would never have believed that somebody who didn't know him or his situation could have provided so much value with a major issue that he had been struggling with for several weeks. More importantly, he said that he now had a completely different view of what coaching was. Peter had previously seen it as a remedial activity to correct under-performance. He described what happened as a radical paradigm shift whereby he now recognised that coaching was predominantly a non-directive method of working with people to enable them to tap into their own capability and, in the process, to find ways to perform more effectively, to resolve issues and to learn and grow. He put it better than me!

Over the years, there have been a variety of coaching definitions used, including:

## SUPERCOACHING

Unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance.

Whitmore (1996)

The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.

Downey (1999)

Meant to be a practical, goal-focused form of personal, one-on-one learning for busy executives and may be used to improve performance or executive behaviour, enhance a career or prevent derailment, and work through organisational issues or change initiatives. Essentially coaches provide executives with feedback they would normally never get about personal, performance, career and organisational issues.

Hall *et al.* (1999)

A collaborative, solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee.

Grant (2000)

A coach is a collaborative partner who works with the learner to help them achieve goals, solve problems, learn and develop.

Caplan (2003)

Primarily a short-term intervention aimed at performance improvement or developing a particular competence.

Clutterbuck (2003)

The overall purpose of coach-mentoring is to provide help and support for people in an increasingly competitive pressurised world in order to help them:

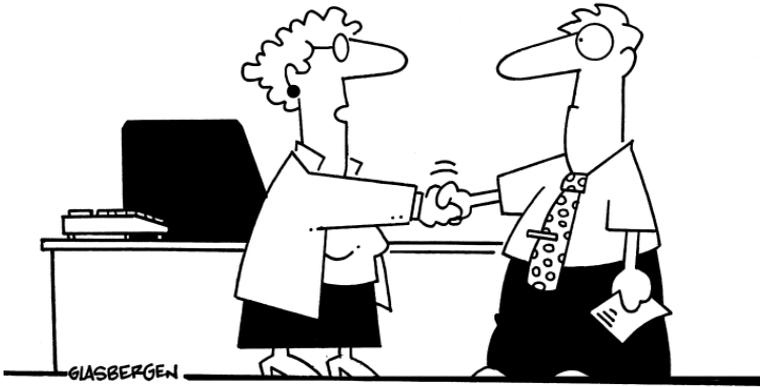
- develop their skills
- improve their performance
- maximise their potential
- and to become the person they want to be

CIPD coaching courses definition (2004)

Source: Chartered Institute of Personnel and  
Development (2004)

### Our definition is:

Coaching is an enabling process to increase performance, development and fulfilment. SuperCoaching differs from coaching in that it maximises performance, development and fulfilment through achieving measurable results in alignment with explicit business needs. A Super Coach differs from a coach in having the experience and capability to ensure value in every coaching interaction and in enabling people to go beyond what they thought was possible. This chapter discusses the core elements of SuperCoaching in order to build understanding for leaders, managers and coaches.



**'You're being promoted from Ordinary Guy to Ordinary Guy Who's Been Here Awhile.'**

## VALUING PEOPLE

Valuing people is essential for achieving high performance within an organisation.

*Graham:* When I take up a new assignment I always like to read the company literature, annual reports, recent press coverage, internal strategy and culture statements in order to place coaching within the context of the business. To this end, prior to starting coaching the CEO of the Europe, Middle East and African division of a global manufacturing and services business, I agreed that I would speak to the global CEO and COO, who were based in the US.

Kate, my PA, attempted to get half-hour phone calls booked where I could quiz the executives on the busi-

ness, their aspirations and strategy for the future, and for their perceptions of my coachee. Kate came back, rather crestfallen, to tell me that she had failed to book these meetings. She explained that the two respective PAs had both said that there was no time in the foreseeable future. We assumed that this was a ‘brush off’, and that the executives did not realise the potential value of the conversations. I thus sent an email to each of them underlining the benefits to be gained from speaking.

We got no response, so Kate followed up. Apparently the emails had been received. It went quiet again. Given that the coaching was about to start, I decided to call the PAs myself, in an attempt to get some time in their diaries. This tactic worked up to a point. I got two 20-minute slots in six weeks’ time. I went back to my coachee, explained the situation, and asked him whether I was being ‘fobbed off’ or whether this was standard practice. He said that he was not surprised and that even he could never get the amount of time he needed with the leaders in the organisation.

Six weeks went by and then, on the day in question, both PAs telephoned to say that the conversations could not take place and would replacement slots in four weeks’ time suffice? I responded by saying that this was too far off and would seriously erode the value of the coaching assignment. Could any other solution be found? After some pondering, one of the PAs suggested that I send over the questions that I had been planning to

ask so that she could ride out to the airport with the executives and get their input. Thus, more than 12 weeks after my initial request, I got a diluted version of what I was seeking.

Here was a culture where the relentless task focus and permanent busyness of the top executives meant that key relationships were undermined, people felt devalued and the quality of conversation was limited, which ultimately led to a detrimental impact on performance.

This story is symptomatic of the world in which we live. In *Success Intelligence*, Dr Robert Holden, PhD, describes this condition as ‘The Manic Society’, which confuses hurry (‘speed of life’) with success (‘quality of life’). He writes, ‘The paradox of The Manic Society is that no matter how fast we go, and how many shortcuts we take, there never seems enough time. The faster we speed up, the faster time speeds up also. More haste, less time – so our perception tells us.’ People will not feel valued if no time is invested in them.

In *Re-imagine!*, Tom Peters expresses the current state of affairs in his uniquely provocative style, ‘The phrase has rolled off many a corporate lip: “People are our most important asset.” The problem: It’s mostly been . . . BULLSHIT. Subject of lip service, to be sure, and believed at some level, to be sure; but not . . . the Essence of What Enterprise Does. Not . . . the Essence of . . . HOW LEADERSHIP SPENDS ITS TIME. I don’t mean to say that most enterprises ignore the “people thing”.

Of course they don't. But there is a special meaning to the word "first", as in "putting people first". It means that "getting the people thing right" is alpha and omega . . . and every letter, Greek, or non-Greek, in between.'

For the first time, there is quantifiable proof of a direct correlation between how you treat people and financial results. Upon recently completing the largest and most in-depth global study ever conducted of the factors that accelerate or stifle high performance, The Hudson Highland Center for High Performance showed that to sustain profitable growth, you need to create an environment where people feel valued. As Susan Lucia Annunzio, the chairman and CEO of the Center, writes in *Contagious Success*, 'One of the most striking findings in our research is that hard work and high expectations do not differentiate high-performing workgroups. They are necessary, but not sufficient, for high performance. What made the high-performing workgroups stand out was that they linked respect for people with those factors. If the members don't feel valued for their contributions, all the hard work and high expectations in the world will not be enough for the group to be high performing . . . The best way to value people is to show respect by treating smart people as if they are smart people. You don't tell them how to do their job; you trust them to do it well.'

Coaching provides a tangible way of valuing people and putting them first. A coach trusts that people have

their own solutions and that they have inherent talent. He will help them realise that they matter by applying the essential coaching skills of listening, asking insightful questions, giving feedback and making suggestions. People feel valued if leaders and managers make the necessary investment of time and attention required for coaching conversations to take place.

## A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

‘I absolutely believe that people, unless coached, never reach their maximum capabilities.’

*Bob Nardelli, CEO, Home Depot*

*Ben:* Gerry was a hardened manager. He’d been around the block several times and had over 25 years experience of managing people. There was nothing that he hadn’t encountered or dealt with. I wondered how I could help. I asked Gerry why he wanted coaching. He proceeded to explain that it was lonely at the top. He believed that people saw him as having all the answers and only sought him out when they had a problem. He felt that he had to live up to this image, which only compounded the situation. He wanted to reinvent his relationships so that they could be two-way traffic and needed a situation in which he could practise. Coaching gave Gerry the opportunity to experience a relationship in which he

could express himself freely, explore ideas and make important decisions to change his current reality. He was able to take this blueprint and implement it with his direct reports, peers and customers, which added a new dimension to these relationships.

In a society where many relationships are fragmented, due to dog-eat-dog environments, fast-tracked leaders and managers, virtual teams and severe politicking, the coaching relationship has a unique place. Based on trust and respect, support and challenge, openness and honesty, the coachee is able to be himself. There is no hidden agenda. The coach has no other motive than to be helpful. This creates a ‘safe space’ for authenticity, exploration and discovery. It allows the coachee to bring anything to the table without fear of exposure or judgement.

It is extremely rare to have this type of relationship with anyone – even our nearest and dearest. Most people have an opinion that they are more than willing to share; they give their views rather than helping to clarify ours. In a coaching relationship, the overriding intention is to help. Not in a soft, woolly way, but to concretely enable an individual to heighten awareness, gain new insight and generate motivation to act.

Coaching provides the context in which the human touch can be brought back into relationships. Even when a business is going through difficult times, it is the quality of the relationships and the ability of people to connect

with each other that makes the difference. Creating an environment in which people open up and engage with each other is at the heart of coaching.

## **AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION**

The key to elicit the brilliance of human beings is through conversation.

We were recently working in a leading strategic management consultancy. The managing partner had just received feedback in a staff survey that showed his leadership style was perceived as weak. He found this difficult to understand and was distressed, given how much effort he had put into ensuring the economic strength of the business in difficult market conditions. We suggested that he needed to discover the underlying need that wasn't being met through his actions. We therefore conducted a number of interviews throughout the company and uncovered what appeared on the face of it to be an easy thing to fix. Consultants felt that he didn't really care about them as human beings and treated them as units of production. One of the main things that they were looking for was for him to acknowledge them in the corridors, in the lifts and, from time to time, to strike up a conversation.

We fed this data back and asked the managing partner

what he planned to do as a consequence. Strangely, he was reluctant to start talking to people on a daily basis, and initially put it down to his heavy workload. We challenged him to see if this was the only reason. Finally, after a certain amount of probing, he admitted that there was another obstacle. He agreed that it was a worthwhile use of his time to chat to the consultants about business and their lives, but he had gone for so long without doing it that he didn't know who people were. His reluctance was not due to his workload, but, rather to the embarrassment he felt starting conversations when he was unsure to whom he was speaking. An initial step round this was to introduce security nametags, so that people were easily recognisable. By helping the managing partner break the ice in chatting to colleagues, it led to them feeling like human beings rather than cogs in a machine.

It is ironic that most business success is dependent on conversation. Yet we live in an age where it is sparse. The pace of modern life means that we barely have time to connect. Everybody is rushing, rushing, rushing. When we do pause to converse, the potency of the interaction is often weak. Our power of listening is shallow. We listen to argue, we listen to agree, we listen to interrupt, or we listen for an in-breath so that we can jump in with our point of view. What we often fail to do is to create the space for meaningful conversations to take place.

Coaching is a uniquely focused conversation, which enables the coachee to gain new understanding and solutions. The quality of the conversation is determined by the coach's positive intention. Because he intends value to be added, the coachee will experience a qualitatively different conversation to those that he is used to having in his everyday life.

## **ENABLING PEOPLE**

The age of command and control is largely over.

There was a time, namely the Industrial and post-Industrial Age, when business could be viewed as a machine. Thus, we could disaggregate it into its component parts and, if we were sufficiently demanding, output would be guaranteed, profits made and success achieved. Businesses also tended to operate on a psychological model that said that people left to their own devices would lose motivation and become slack.

This old working model no longer applies. The JFDI (just f\*\*\*ing do it) school of management is over. Businesses are no longer seen as machines, but as living systems, which exist within a dynamic, unfolding and unpredictable world. There is now ample proof that individuals are, by nature, self-motivated, assuming that a certain set of conditions are in place in their organisations.

The enormous challenge that faces leaders and managers today is how to enable people to operate at their best in a speeded-up, constantly changing and uncertain environment, particularly where, as is often the case, a manager has less knowledge, experience and understanding of the job than an employee. This situation is exacerbated by a radical shift in expectations, where the accent on personal freedom and choice means that people resist either overtly or covertly the imposition of control over them. Any readers that have or have had teenage children will bear testimony to this fact!

Coaching is an enabling process. It fits perfectly into the world in which we now live because it is diametrically opposed to a command-and-control approach. A coach assumes that people have inherent capabilities, can learn quickly and, when correctly focused and inspired, will give of their best, even, in many cases, out-perform what they and their manager thought was possible. An effective coach enables his coachee to discover his own way of moving forward.

## **LIBERATING TALENT**

In 1997, a groundbreaking McKinsey study exposed the ‘war for talent’ as a strategic business challenge and a

critical driver of corporate performance. Then, when the dot-com bubble burst and the economy cooled, many assumed the war for talent was over. It's not. We live in an age where, in certain sectors of industry, employees call the shots – they hire their employer. The race to be employer of choice has never been hotter and an organisation that invests in developing its talent is employing a key factor for success. If it doesn't, the best and brightest will go elsewhere.

The conversation about talent must no longer be confined to the world of arts and sport. As much as discussing the immense talent of Maria Sharapova, Roger Federer, Wayne Rooney and Nicole Kidman, we need to talk about nurturing and developing the talent in our organisations. Ed Michales, a McKinsey director, said in an interview with *Fast Company* magazine, 'For many companies, people are the prime source of competitive advantage. Talented people, in the right kind of culture, have better ideas, execute those ideas better – and even develop other people better.' As Larry Bossidy, the CEO of AlliedSignal, put it, 'At the end of the day, we bet on people, not strategies.'

Looking after talent becomes even more important in a climate of constant change and uncertainty. Stable employment is gone. We're on our own. Morgan McCall noted in *High Flyers: Developing the Next Generation of Leaders*, 'Personal change is an emotional undertaking. Uncertainty, fear, loss, damage to self-esteem, intimid-

ation and humiliation are significant and potentially debilitating emotions . . . As with any weighty challenge, knowing that people care about you and will offer support, can help someone hold on, try again, get back up and otherwise persevere.’ Coaching bridges the gap. It provides the necessary focused attention, support and challenge to ensure that we continue to move forward in a positive direction.

If we take the opposite route, operating in a macho, bullying and manipulative environment, where no coaching takes place, it will have a damaging effect on our performance and health. According to Cary Cooper, Professor of organisational psychology and health at Lancaster University Management School, the most recent large-scale study of workplace experiences in the UK found that as many as one in four people were bullied at work within the last five years. He says, ‘People who are bullied may experience increased anxiety, depression, a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, an impulse to blame themselves and a sense of powerlessness.’ Where there is limited development of talent, companies will incur a high price in absenteeism, recruitment and training. Coaching is a small investment to make to retain and develop our best people.

## REALISING POTENTIAL

Is it possible for someone who has never played tennis to have a 50-ball rally from the baseline within 30 minutes of picking up a racket? Timothy Gallwey posed this question to some of the UK's leading tennis coaches in the early days of an Inner Game tennis demonstration. The overwhelming response was one of disbelief. Tim then went on to explain that by holding on to a limiting point of view, coaches might never find out the potential of their coachees because they were unlikely to create the appropriate conditions in which a new pupil could realise it. To prove his point, he proceeded to coach somebody who had never played tennis before and created such a level of relaxation and focused attention that, after 20 minutes, the coachee was able to sustain a 50-ball rally. Although the demonstration failed to reach the level of an Andy Roddick rally, Tim Gallwey nevertheless achieved a goal that the tennis coaches believed to be impossible.

We have tremendous potential. Yet we also have the ability to interfere with it. Limiting beliefs is one form of interference. Other internal factors include a negative inner dialogue, confusion, a feeling of being overwhelmed, fear and an inability to focus. External distractions can include our boss, an excessive workload, a lack of communication and unclear expectations.

A useful equation when thinking about fulfilling potential is:

Performance equals Potential minus Interference

$$(P = P_o - I)$$

Our performance is our inherent potential minus interference. In other words, reverting back to the tennis court, if we have the potential to hit a great backhand, then a lack of confidence or inability to focus will interfere with our potential and mean that our performance is diminished.

Watching Goran Ivanisevic become one of Wimbledon's most improbable champions, beating Pat Rafter in five riveting sets after barely getting into the tournament, was a stunning example of what's possible if we overcome interference. Two points away from defeat, he fought back to lead 8–7 in the fifth set. He fell behind 15–30 in the last game, then fired a 116-mph ace on his second serve to tie it. He wiped his face, then asked for the same ball for his next serve. His 27th ace, and a 40–30 lead, followed seconds later. One more point and the championship would be his. Again, he wiped his face as he fought to hold back his tears. Then he double-faulted. He got the advantage again, but, once more, he double-faulted. Rafter hit a ball wide and Goran had his third match point, only to lose it again. Ivanisevic got to his fourth match point and reached back for one last big serve. Rafter hit it into the net and Ivanisevic was off, running through the cheering crowd to embrace his father.

Coaching helps to eliminate or bypass any interference

so that performance becomes closer to the inherent potential of an individual. Through the process of shining the light of awareness on the possible obstacles involved, the coachee is able to devise new, winning formulae to achieve higher performance.

## ACHIEVING HIGH PERFORMANCE

*Graham:* I had been coaching the partner of a management consultancy firm. Although Peter was only in his 30s, he had achieved a great deal and was destined for further success. It therefore came as no surprise when he was headhunted to become the UK MD for a global transport company. We explored the pros and cons of making this move and he decided to take up the offer. He also expressed a desire to continue our coaching relationship for the first 12 months of his new job and wanted my opinion as to what would work best. I suggested that the most critical time was his first hundred days in the new role, and that his future success was heavily dependent on his initial leadership impact and early accomplishments.

Before commencing his new role, we agreed that the purpose of his SuperCoaching programme was to ensure and accelerate his success. Peter defined his intended results and success measures as:

## SUPER SUCCESS – WHAT IS COACHING?

- The achievement of identified key milestones in his first hundred days.
- To develop an effective leadership style and process for delivery.
- To ensure a work–life balance.

We agreed that the targets for his first hundred days would include:

- Structure defined and decisions made on senior individuals.
- Identification and achievement of quick wins in order to establish credibility and an output focus.
- Articulated vision and culture for the organisation
- Buy-in and commitment to the vision and culture from the board, executive team and employees.
- Clearly defined 12-month goals, strategies and plans agreed with the board, executive team and direct reports.
- Cascaded communication process in place.
- Individual 12-month objectives and development needs agreed with direct reports.
- Effective working relationships with executive team, direct reports and broader network with agreed communication processes in place.

- Delivery of agreed quarterly targets and outputs.
- Optimal time usage and life balance.

With the agenda set, I asked him if he had any particular questions about how to play his leadership role and any observations he had on potential pitfalls. Peter's questions were:

- What was the best use of his time?
- What was the best way to evaluate the people in the business, particularly his senior colleagues?
- How to move away from the existing command-and-control culture?

His main observation was that it was vital to provide a clear direction and to communicate it effectively. He saw that it was important to get out and about amongst his staff in order to understand the business and for them to get to know him. I suggested that a step often missed by people in new roles was to have open and in-depth discussions with senior colleagues about how to work best together and to forge some agreements. I also pointed out that another potential pitfall would be to dive in and rescue operations which he had done in his previous role.

Thus, from the outset, Peter had clarity about what might constitute success in his first hundred days, some key measurable milestones, early thoughts about his leadership style and how to work best with others.

Having accomplished this preparatory work, Peter hit the ground running. He was perceived as a highly capable leader and a breath of fresh air. Consequently, he achieved an outstanding start, which exceeded both his and the company's expectations.

There is a strong argument that coaching should be positioned at the top of an organisation for the people already achieving high performance. Our experience in running programmes such as The First Hundred Days is that it ensures that executives receive the necessary support and reflection time to optimise their performance. It also provides a context for addressing the three key elements of achieving high performance, as shown in Diagram 1:

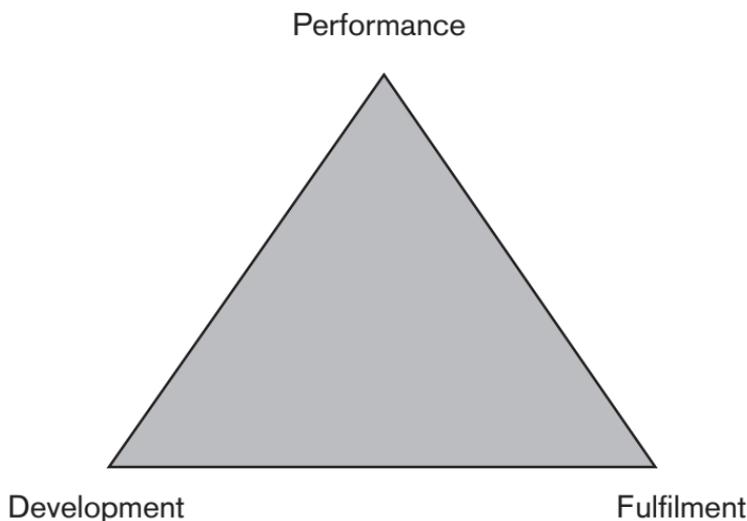


Diagram 1: High Performance

The route to sustaining high performance is ensuring that all three facets of the triangle are receiving attention. Coaching helps in this regard by heightening awareness in those areas which may not receive sufficient attention, especially development and fulfilment. The recent report, *Who Learns at Work?*, published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, showed that learning at work is now increasingly important. Research has also frequently demonstrated that people are more motivated and learn best when they see that it is relevant to their job. Coaching, with its focus on work issues and improving job performance, fits in well with this.

With regard to the significance of fulfilment The Institute of Work Psychology at Sheffield University produced some remarkable research in 1998 which looked at whether the satisfaction of the workforce as a whole related to an organisation's productivity and profitability. Their findings showed a surprisingly clear link, which shed new light on the imperatives and priorities of management. It highlighted the fact that the job satisfaction of the workforce was a very good predictor of subsequent productivity, and a reasonably good predictor of profitability. More satisfied workers are more likely to control the behaviour and influence the efforts of less satisfied workers by encouraging them to aim for higher productivity. It suggested that com-

panies need to focus much more on the attitudes of the workforce in order to perform well. Coaching covers this ground by ensuring that people derive fulfilment from what they do.

## RAISING AWARENESS

*Graham:* I once coached the CEO of an Irish manufacturing company which had fallen on hard times. Gary had spent most of his first nine months in charge developing a strategy and working with senior colleagues to improve execution in both the sales force and the factories. The business was improving and, as a result, Gary recognised the need to get around, spread the word and build confidence for the future.

We decided to break his job down into its component parts and look at how much time over the next six months Gary should spend out and about with colleagues. He set a target of 40 per cent, which amounted to two days a week. I asked him to estimate how much time he had already spent going around the business in his first nine months. He estimated about 20 per cent. I wanted to check the reality of this figure to help Gary see whether his perception was accurate and to recognise how big a step he was suggesting. My concern

was that if it was too big a change from his past schedule it might be difficult to implement.

Gary asked his PA to track back through his diary and tell him how much time he had spent out of his office. She came back with a figure of 8 per cent, which surprised him so much so that he double-checked it to ensure that it was right. Sure enough, it was correct and consequently he realised that shifting from less than half a day a week to two days was too big a jump. He ran the risk of missing his target, which he realised was unrealistic in the first place. Eventually, Gary decided to set up an incremental increase over a six-month period so that he could successfully reach his goal.

The power and effectiveness of coaching comes from helping a coachee raise his awareness of his goals, current reality, possible options and action steps. In many cases the mere act of becoming more aware of what is being discussed can lead to change. By helping a coachee pause the busyness of his life and shine the light of awareness on his situation, a coach can help him to see things more clearly, resolve outstanding issues and take conscious steps forward, secure in the knowledge that he has thoroughly explored his situation.

## GAINING INSIGHT



**'You were a gingerbread man in a past life.  
That's why your boss is always biting your head off.'**

*Ben:* I hit a turning point in my life about four years ago. My wife, Veronica, said very firmly that she wanted a child. We had been married for about four years and, although children had been discussed, we were enjoying our careers and lifestyle. As a result, I'd put the idea in the background. My initial response was, 'No way. I'm already too busy. How can I put a child on top of my schedule? What about the responsibility and financial pressure?' This made little impression on Veronica and she once again stated her desire to have children, with or without me! It was time for some soul searching. I put it top of the agenda with my coach and committed to looking at it.

It was a powerful process exploring what having children meant to me; my hopes and fears and my resistance. My coach continued to probe until I realised that one of my blocks was connected to a family joke that my father had never wanted children and had always put his career first. There are some definite similarities between my father and myself, so I committed to talking it through with him to get his input. We went out for dinner and I asked him about the impression I had that he hadn't wanted children because his career was so much more important. His response surprised me. He said that he had taken it for granted that he'd have children, therefore it was never an issue. Although he was wrapped up with his work at the time, he admitted that having children was the best thing in his life.

Gaining this insight had a major impact on my decision-making. I felt a weight lift, as if I'd been given a green light. Suffice to say, four years later, having my daughter, India, in my life is my greatest joy.

One of the great values of coaching is to enable reality to be faced clearly in order to create the possibility for new insights to emerge. The capacity of people to solve their own problems and move forward never ceases to amaze us. Coaching provides the opportunity for a coachee to gain new insights into his strengths and weaknesses, what's working and what isn't, and what he

does and doesn't want. An insight is when we see something in a new way or uncover something we were previously unaware of. It is a way of seeing the world anew and can result in giving new options, providing relief, or even making life-changing decisions. Gaining fresh insight is like clearing away a fog. As we dig down to a deeper level of awareness within ourselves, realisations that may have been sitting there for a long time can become uncovered.

## CREATING COMMITMENT

*Graham:* Many years ago, I worked with a coach on going beyond what I thought was possible for myself in order to achieve some of my dreams. One of my desires was to give my family a lifestyle free from financial worry. My coach got me to connect emotionally with how I felt about my current reality of being unable to provide for my family in the way I wanted. A rage generated within me about my unwillingness to carry on with my life as it was. A passionate commitment was stirred to do things differently. That year my income rose considerably and I have never looked back in relation to giving my family what they want. At the time I set those goals, it seemed ridiculously over optimistic. However, I came to learn that, through effective coaching, the power

of commitment can be tapped into, which then unleashes the inherent ability of the coachee.

As the German poet Goethe said: ‘Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never have otherwise occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one’s favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it now. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.’

Coaching creates commitment by impacting the will of an individual. As the coachee explores his reality, he is faced with a test of his commitment about different aspects of his life. By staying open and honest, he is able to identify any blocks that may have prevented him from taking previous action, such as cynicism, anxiety or a lack of confidence. By resolving these issues, a new level of commitment is generated, enabling him to take steps about which he had been vacillating. He is able to move from a position of ‘could do’ to ‘will do’, from ‘problem’ to ‘project’ and from ‘powerless’ to ‘powerful’.

## ESTABLISHING MEANING

*Ben:* Charles worked as a manager within an engineering department. He put in long hours and delivered the required output, but was deeply frustrated. He described his situation as comparable to being on a conveyor belt. He felt trapped by his responsibilities of managing his team, hitting his objectives and providing for a family. He was jaded and exhausted.

Our coaching sessions provided temporary relief from the relentless pressure and enabled him to address the critical issue of meaning in his life. Charles admitted that he felt confused about what really mattered to him and had let himself be dictated to by the influences around him. Through asking important questions about what he wanted, who he was, his identity, core values and the purpose of his life, he was able to reconnect with a sense of meaning.

It transpired that his core value was love, which he had never been able to reconcile with business. Through a process of unpicking what love meant to him, Charles was able to see how he could begin to translate it into his life. He started to invest more time and energy in his family. He began to take a genuine interest in the development of his people. He committed to doing a daily check-in to see how he was going to apply love specifically each day. Ultimately, he changed companies, which enabled him to become more overt about what really mattered. He started to challenge his new

manager, peers and team to broaden their focus from simply making money to making people development a key business objective.

Probably the most significant crisis in society and the work environment today is a crisis in meaning. In 2004 *Time* magazine reported that approximately 75–90 per cent of all visits to primary care doctors are for stress-related problems, with job stress being far and away the leading source. The Health and Safety Executive stated that work-related stress costs society about £3.7 billion every year at 1995–96 prices. Research from the National Institute of Mental Health in America reports that ‘Everyone will, at some time in their life, be affected by depression – their own or someone else’s.’

So many of the planks on which previously life was built have fallen away or become unbalanced. Our modern society suffers from what physicist David Bohm called ‘the virus of fragmentation’. The break-up of the traditional family unit, and the resultant broken bonds between children, adults and the elderly, are well documented and familiar to us all. Societal values are often driven by individual preferences and choices, which result in greed and selfishness. The future seems ever more uncertain and fearful. Either religions have lost their currency, or people have become more fanatical and unbalanced in their behaviour. Employment for life is a thing of the past, and people view their careers as a

series of staging posts, of their own choosing if they're lucky or, if they're unlucky, visited on them in the latest round of downsizing.

A fundamental human need, as part of a balanced and fulfilled life, is to have a clear sense of meaning. Unfortunately, many businesses seem to lose a sense of purpose, and thus meaning for their staff, in attempting to increase shareholder value. Creating a value-led organisation is not at the top of their agenda. Coaching helps companies and individuals reconnect with what is most important for them by clarifying their vision, mission and values. A coach can then ensure that this becomes the inspiration to drive both their work and life forward.

## **CREATING RESULTS AND WELL-BEING**

Many people share with us their experience of being out of control, constantly rushing to catch up with themselves and getting lost in a set of future goals. The attempt to juggle the different parts of their life in a frantic quest for some tranquillity and equilibrium leaves them exhausted. Stress levels are high, tempers are short, there is no white space in the calendar and time appears to be running out. Clients report how they struggle to get to the finishing line late on a Friday evening. They then experience the wrath of their partner's frustration as they

collapse for most of the weekend. When Sunday evening arrives, they desperately try to catch up with what wasn't covered in the previous week, only to start up all over again on Monday morning.

As Madeleine Bunting writes in *Willing Slaves: How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives*, 'Thinkers predicted that the 21st century would be an Age of Leisure; in the 1970s increasing automation even led policy-makers and politicians to worry about how people would usefully fill their time. For some, this dawning era promised abundant opportunities for human beings to reach their full potential. We would finally be freed from long oppressive hours of toil. Marx's dream of society reaching a point where people could spend the morning thinking and the afternoon fishing would be within reach of us all. It never happened. Quite the contrary: the historic decline in working hours has gone into reverse in the past two decades.'

A 2003 report by the Health and Safety Laboratory revealed that the UK workforce works some of the longest hours in Europe; on average a total of 44.7 hours a week, and that 11 per cent of people in the UK work 49–60 hours per week. In the United States it's even more extreme. A report by the International Labour Organisation stated that employees work nearly 2,000 hours per capita per year. Attempts to overcome this phenomenon have resulted in a surge of interest in achieving a work-life

balance. In 2002, a survey carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry's Work–Life Balance Campaign and Management Today revealed that one in five workers want a better work–life balance.

In the midst of this dilemma, coaching provides an opportunity for people to look at the balance between achieving results and well-being. The majority want both; great achievements, and to feel good. Yet this is a difficult balance to navigate. Coaching helps to assess whether the price of our work–life strategy is worth the return. This does not imply that coaching leads to armies of people riding off into the sunset to grow mangel wurzels in the Outer Hebrides. What it does mean is that people can constantly monitor their progress, make adjustments when required and ensure that they are successful and stay sane!

## **COACHING APPLICATIONS**

We will now look at the different applications for coaching and the main topics that it covers.

Coaching has its origins in the fields of sport and the arts. It was a matter of course that great sportsmen and women, musicians, artists and actors had personal coaches to help them achieve peak performance. It is only just over 20 years since coaching has been seen as a useful activity outside these environments. Since then,

there has been exponential growth in business, education and life coaching. *Start Ups* magazine revealed that coaching is the number two growth industry, right behind IT jobs, and that it's now the number one home-based profession.

In a business context, coaching can be applied to individuals, teams, and as a style of leadership in developing coaching cultures. It is also possible to apply self-coaching – using coaching principles for strategic and operational thinking, and co-coaching, creating a mutually supportive relationship with a colleague.

As coaching is an enabling process, it is not necessary for the coach to have advanced content knowledge in the field he is coaching. One school of thought suggests that it can be more valuable to coach in an area with no prior content knowledge because it means that the coach is able to remain objective and less inclined to offer a viewpoint. We have worked in many businesses, in many business sectors, in many business divisions, in many countries, with 'grey hairs', in education with young people, with families, relationships and in the sporting world. We would not claim to be experts in all of these areas in a knowledge sense, but our well-developed coaching skills and capability enable us to support others throughout this wide range of situations.

## COACHING TOPICS

Coaching, with its universal appeal, can be applied to almost any subject. The following are some of the most common topics that we encounter as coaches:

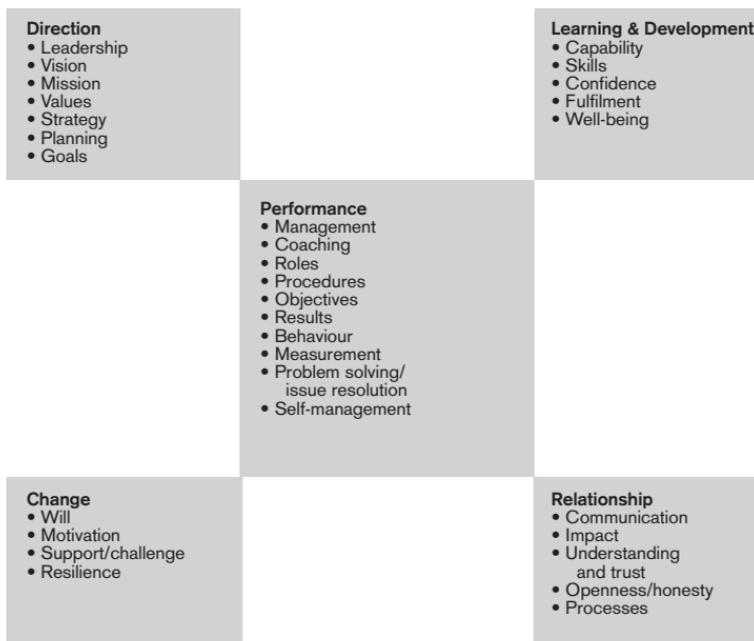


Diagram 2: Coaching Topics

**Success Coaching** is about helping individuals and organisations become more successful, more effectively. It is probably the most important topic on the list. One reason why people often feel less successful than they are is due to the fact that they have simply failed to define

what success means. It is essential for an organisation, team and individual to establish clear criteria for success. Without it we come off track and fail to recognise when we've achieved it.

**Vision, Mission and Values** Probably the two most important questions in life are, 'Who am I?' and 'What do I want?' It is all too easy to have a picture of our 'ideal' life imposed on us, to adopt a pseudo-purpose and pay lip service to values in which we don't believe. Consequently, we suffer from burn-out because we play a role in our work and life, rather than following our own personal vision. Often the starting point in coaching is to help the coachee clarify who he thinks he is and create a clear vision of what he wants; in other words what he would see, hear and feel in his desired future state. He is then able to plan a more defined route and to live a more authentic life. It's often a wake-up call for a coachee to realise that he doesn't need to suspend his vision, but that by following it he performs at a higher level.

**Performance and Personal Effectiveness** Coaching is all about helping people produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. In organisations performance issues include:

## SUPER SUCCESS – WHAT IS COACHING?

- Heightening self-awareness and self-management.
- Developing astute relationship management.
- Building strengths and mitigating weaknesses.
- Accelerating results and clarifying decisions.
- Improving execution of the task.
- Being receptive to learning and development in general.
- Focusing on new skills and capabilities.
- Increasing enjoyment and satisfaction.

Coaching has measurable goals and each session ought to achieve tangible outcomes in the area of performance and personal effectiveness.

**Leadership** Who gives a leader feedback? How does a leader know how he is perceived? How does a leader identify his strengths and weaknesses? Given the confidential nature of coaching, it is sometimes the only way in which a leader will receive direct feedback about his performance. He can gain valuable information on his blind spots by using tools such as 360-degree feedback. Using this insight, a coach can help him adapt his style appropriately to support the success of the business.

**Management** Managers need to adopt flexible approaches to meet the needs of their people. In a knowledge economy they simply cannot afford just to tell people what to do. Given that in many situations their teams have expertise and experience over and above what they themselves possess, it is essential for managers to reinvent themselves as enablers, rather than controllers. Coaching provides the opportunity for managers to re-evaluate their style and make any necessary changes.

**Coaching** In *The War For Talent*, the authors Ed Michaels, Helen Handfield-Jones and Beth Axelrod cite the fact that, ‘Every manager should be a coach, but most aren’t.’ One way of developing managers as coaches is for them to receive coaching. It provides a chance for them to explore what coaching is and what it isn’t, to receive direct benefits from coaching and to see how they can use it in daily interactions and also in formal interventions, such as annual appraisals and performance management reviews.

**Strategy** Coaching serves a vital role in pausing action and providing think time. We have almost never worked with a leader or manager who claims that he is spending too much time on strategy and too little on execution; it is almost always the other way around. Coaching enables high-level business thinking and

strategising to take place. Time for thinking and planning are crucial to success. Coaching ensures that they happen.

**Resilience** One of the characteristics of successful businesses, business units, teams and individuals is resilience, which means responding constructively in the face of adversity. It's not that successful businesses have fewer problems, it's the fact that they have developed the ability to 'ride with the punches', to see that most problems are not as life threatening as they appear and that most situations are transitory. Coaching helps to create positive meaning out of the randomly occurring events in life. Positive meaning leads to resilience, which in turn leads to further positive meaning. It is an upward spiral that enables people to overcome obstacles and improve their performance.

**Behaviour** In recent years, attention has been focused on the development of behaviour, as distinct from skills. It has been recognised that the way an individual behaves in his leadership or management role is a critical determinant of the culture of an organisation and has a very significant influence on the performance and results achieved both by himself and others. Coaching can use leadership or management behavioural frameworks, as well as 360-degree feedback or

psychological and personality assessments, to enable an individual to review his behaviour and modify it where necessary.

**Skills** Coaching lends itself well to the development of skills such as running meetings, leading teams and making presentations. Specific coaching inputs include role-play, video, shadow coaching (observing the coachee in action) and introducing models, frameworks or processes. These interventions provide an opportunity to review current skill levels, to identify options for the future and to commit to action. As we will see later, they can sit at the directive end of the coaching spectrum but are highly effective in the right context.

**Relationships and Communication** It has been said that business would be simple if it weren't for people! We all have different personalities, working styles, strengths and weaknesses, wants and needs. This often leads to sub-optimal working relationships and ineffective communication. Since business consists of a series of conversations, it is vital to develop effective working relationships and communication processes.

**Understanding and Trust** Many relationships fail through a lack of understanding. Assumptions are made and mental pictures of colleagues are formed, which then

become ‘the truth’, and needs, frustrations and resentments, because they remain unexpressed, fester. Respect, trust and perceived value can only grow if we build a deeper understanding of our boss, peers and customers. Coaching can help us cut through our assumptions, develop greater empathy and devise strategies to open communication channels.

**Problem Solving and Issue Resolution** You’re probably familiar with the saying that each solution is the next problem. We all confront problems, obstacles and issues on a daily basis. Often we’re unable to see our way through this morass. Coaching helps to shine the light of awareness on to situations, starting with a broad sweep and then drilling down until an issue is seen clearly, with the underlying cause correctly identified. Many problems remain unresolved because they look too big. Recognising a first step, a ‘bite-sized chunk’ turns a problem into a project and helps us to get unstuck.

**Planning and Self-management** In 2002, Boots conducted the largest ever survey into the state of the nation’s well-being. The report identified 15 key factors that made up 76 per cent of our optimum well-being. Number one on the list was to have a sense of control over our destiny. We can handle almost any level of stress if we feel in control and able to choose what we do. Coaching enables us to play to our strengths, particularly

in difficult environments, and to learn to manage ourselves in constructive ways. We need to recognise that we can influence our circumstances rather than being controlled by them.

**Motivation, Commitment and Will** Would you rather have what you want in life, or the reasons why you don't have it? Many of us have dreams, things that we'll do one day, steps that we know we should take and 'mouldy oldies' that sap our energy. Even the most effective people sometimes procrastinate. Coaching is a useful aid to looking clearly at intentions and choosing whether or not to act. It can help a coachee consciously to take a step now, not take a step, or put off taking a step until a later date.

**Confidence** In our experience, even the most confident coachee is either different behind the mask or has moments of self-doubt. It is part of the human experience. Coaching helps people overcome a lack of confidence by resolving the issues that cause it, such as a low self-image, negative self-belief and unhelpful self-dialogue. It can enable people to take calculated risks and, in the event of failure, it allows reflection and review.

**Change and Transformation** As Anthony Muh, the Head of Investment for Citigroup in Asia said, 'Uncertainty is

the only thing to be sure of.’ Coaching helps people respond to change in positive ways, overcoming potential barriers such as scepticism, cynicism, anxiety and fear. It challenges people to make changes at times of need. Although transformation has become a rather hackneyed word in business, it can be triggered into being by coaching through the high level of intention, laser-like awareness and trust in allowing a breakthrough to emerge. This process is often outside the realm of rational thinking and emerges as a consequence of the relationship between coach and coachee.

**Happiness** More than two thousand five hundred years ago Aristotle posed the question: ‘What is the good life?’ The pursuit of happiness is enshrined in the Declaration of Independence as a basic right of all Americans. Yet as Oliver James illustrates in *Britain On The Couch*, we are unhappier than we were in the 1950s – despite being richer. Coaching is a useful environment in which to explore the nature of happiness. Sometimes we find it difficult to recognise that we are already happy; we know when we’re unhappy, but fail to pay attention to when we are. Verbalising those parts of our work or life that give us satisfaction can increase our overall sense of happiness. Identifying any blocks to happiness and finding ways to overcome them can do the same. We only have one shot at this life, so let’s at least feel good!

## SUPER SUCCESS SUMMARY

- Coaching is an enabling process to increase performance, development and fulfilment.
- SuperCoaching is the world-class practice of coaching to maximise performance, development and fulfilment in alignment with explicit business needs.
- A Super Coach ensures the achievement of measurable results and enables people to go beyond what they thought was possible.
- At its highest level, coaching is about valuing people.
- Coaching provides the opportunity for the important conversations we're normally too busy to have.
- The most effective way to liberate talent within an organisation is to coach the best and the brightest.
- Performance = Potential – Interference.
- Achieving high performance requires a balanced focus on performance development and fulfilment.
- Coaching shines the light of awareness to create new insights.
- Coaching increases the will and commitment of an individual to act or not to act.
- Coaching can be applied to a multitude of disciplines and a range of topics.

### **SuperCoaching**

#### **Exercise 1: Establishing a Vision for Coaching**

A coach believes that people have a vast capability to discover their own solutions. The starting point to becoming an effective coach is to discover your own vision for coaching. This exercise is designed to help you reflect upon your intention and purpose for coaching. As Carl Jung once said, 'Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakens.' Ask yourself, What is my intention for coaching? What are my core beliefs about coaching? Describe your five characteristics of an effective coach. Develop a vision statement expressing your purpose for coaching and desired future state. Use *SuperCoaching* to test and expand your views.