



In this issue of Coaching Matters, we welcome Eunice Aquilina to the i-coach faculty. Eunice has left the BBC after nine years where she was instrumental in building an internal

coaching service. Eunice shares with us how coaching started for her and what she will bring to her new role. We also explore how two South African organisations are using coaching to develop

leadership capacity and interview Paul Barber, therapist and coach, to learn more about his views of practitioner research and its relevance to coaching.

As you will read, the past few months have been busy ones for i-coach academy and there is a lot to look forward to in the autumn too. In July a number of our UK Certificate & Masters students attended their graduation ceremony at Middlesex University. We congratulate them on their achievements and look forward to celebrating together at our Summer Party later this month.

In September, Bruce Peltier is back in the UK to run his popular Psychology of Coaching Workshop and he will also be a guest speaker at the CIPD's annual Coaching at Work Conference.

Supervision remains a hot topic and i-coach faculty, alumni and students took part in a series of focus groups and online research survey as part of the CIPD research project into the subject. The results of their research will be presented at the September conference and we plan to share highlights with you in a forthcoming issue.

I hope you enjoy issue three and encourage you to email us with your ideas, papers and reviews for future issues.

Best wishes

Caroline

### STOP PRESS.....STOP PRESS.....STOP PRESS

We are keen to encourage debate and keep our international learning community up to date with recent research, case studies, books and other resources and welcome your contributions to Coaching Matters. If you have an opinion on the industry or would like to send in a paper or a book review, please email [editor@i-coachacademy](mailto:editor@i-coachacademy).

## Profile Eunice Aquilina



...on her thoughts about coaching, her motivation, her work at the BBC and why, after nine years, she has left to partner i-coach academy and what she will be bringing to her new role.

Eunice Aquilina is truly passionate about coaching, a passion that stems from her real interest in learning. For her, continuous learning is one of her core values; she firmly believes that learning is the key to unlocking potential, creating knowledge and opening up new experiences. Now, after nine years as a coach at the BBC, she has left to partner i-coach academy and is looking forward to working with a faculty that includes some of the key thought leaders in coaching. For her part, she is confident that she will bring her organisational and consultancy skills to both i-coach education and its consultancy arm. Working within a large, corporate and highly political organisation like the BBC means that she understands the dynamics and difficulties that coaches face. She is looking forward to imparting her enthusiasm towards learning to the i-coach students she meets.

Eunice's father didn't share the same view about learning. He felt that time spent in school or college was an inconvenience and a hindrance – a legal requirement that needed to be fulfilled. Her father's mental model of the world of work was to get out there and just do it and the experience would

be the best teacher at the 'university of life'. He believed that you made your own luck in the world and at the young age of 14 he began running his first business. That was seventy years ago and that self-sufficient, determined, independent approach to life was a template that served him well.

Eunice did not leave school at 14 but she clearly inherited her father's drive and motivation to find success in her own way. She began her working life by running a travel company specialising in holidays to the island of Malta and for five years learnt a lot about leadership, responsibility, organisation and how to get the best out of people. After a career break to start her family, Eunice returned to work in 1996 initially as a business manager with HBOS. Not long into the job, she found herself drawn to the "people side" of the role.

Soon, Eunice had moved from business manager to Human Resource Manager, working in both business facing roles and consultancy roles. Although feedback from her clients consistently indicated that Eunice was an effective HR professional whose contribution was highly valued, Eunice found the employee relations and employee policy side of the work increasingly less satisfying. For her, the rewards came from developing the people, which ultimately led Eunice to find her real passion for organisational development and coaching.

On reflection, Eunice began coaching when she worked at HBOS, although it wasn't labelled as coaching in those days. It was one-to-one work with managers, helping them in their transition phase and it was hugely satisfying. It was a role of partnerships, working with managers on real issues, helping them to think through situations and arrive at workable solutions. Whilst Eunice didn't think of herself as a highly skilled coach at that stage, the experience gave her the first taste of

the power of coaching. From then on, she was hooked.

She knew that she wanted to work solely in the area of learning and development and in particular she wanted to help others through the discipline of coaching. In 2005, in the Harvard Business Review, Peter Drucker wrote about the importance of knowing oneself in this era of the knowledge economy. Drucker said: "there is sometimes a conflict between a person's value and his or her strengths. What one does well – even very well and successfully – may not fit with one's value system. In that case, the work may not appear to be worth devoting one's life to (or even a substantial portion thereof)". For Eunice, this hit the nail right on the head – and encapsulates how she felt at the time – the feeling of emptiness fuelled her determination to take the leap and make the change. She wanted to be a coach, to work in coaching and to be part of developing what is still a relatively new profession.

Eunice has worked at the BBC for the last nine years where she has been instrumental in introducing an internal model of coaching. Eunice introduced coaching whilst working as an HR professional with Regional Broadcasting and very quickly realised the benefit of linking coaching to leadership development programmes. This successful intervention led to an invitation to join a corporate initiative to develop coaching across the BBC. That was five years ago. Today, the BBC has over 80 coaches, its own internal coach training programme, a supervision model and a process of accreditation. One of Eunice's key achievements was the development of the coaching proposition as part of the BBC's Leadership Programme, a joint initiative with Ashridge. It was a five year programme which would offer a six month leadership development programme to around 7500 leaders

in the BBC. Working with Wendy Briner from Ashridge, the coaching proposition was determined and a network of BBC and Ashridge coaches established. In one year 4500 hours of coaching was delivered to leaders across the BBC. Eunice's career at the BBC concluded at the end of May and she leaves behind a network of over 80 internal coaches who have been drawn from a wide range of managerial and professional backgrounds and who coach clients across the Corporation. What a legacy!

For Eunice, coaching is clearly the topic of the moment and encapsulates a multitude of meanings which can often make it difficult for those in organisations to truly understand what "coaching" is and how it can help them. Eunice believes in the i-coach philosophy that there are multiple approaches to coaching and coaches should be able to explain their purpose for coaching, what informs them and how they work. Furthermore, if coaching is to be seen as a profession in its own right then it needs to be founded on a body of good quality research which will stand up and inform a coaching arena.

Eunice concludes: "For me, coaching is a process of inquiry. The aim is to facilitate a client's unlearning and learning, to help them to access self-knowledge so that they can make choices, grow and achieve their desired potential, professionally and personally. I also believe that coaching is a route to self-knowledge and self-fulfilment, not just for the client but also for the coach. And, as a coach, I believe that I can only take my clients as far as I have gone myself. In essence, this pushes me towards extending the boundaries of my self-awareness in order for me to be as effective as possible for those with whom I work."

# News & Reflections

## A look behind The European Perspectives on Organisational Development, Change and Coaching conference

The European Perspectives on Organisational Development, Change and Coaching conference took place on June 19th-21st when participants, including students from the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Organisational Dynamics, attended to learn more about the ever-changing work environment. The conference was aimed at all those responsible for leading in substantial change programmes, whether at the total organisational level or at the individual level, including organisational development practitioners, professional coaches and those working in HR.

Day One saw Steve Crabb, editor of People Management magazine, Prof. Mike van Oudtshoorn, and Tim Last, MD of Duke Corporate Education amongst others explore the trends of people management, leadership development and models for organisation development and change. Day Two looked at examples of best practice of organisation change and coaching drawing on experiences within organisations such as BP, the BBC and the NHS. Day

Three explored the various theoretical perspectives that inform the development of professional coaching practice and ended with a debate session on trends in accreditation and education for professional coaches.

Kay Clancy, Head of Business Change at Brit Insurance was a participant at the conference. She has been coaching for about 12 years as part of her management role and for a number of years those roles have been about making change happen in large organisations from a people perspective. As the focus is very much on the cultural and behavioural side of change, Kay has found a coaching approach to be very helpful and productive. She said: "The biggest challenges I face are that organisations imagine that people will make the changes you want them to because you tell them to. My approach is to help people reach their potential and in doing so open themselves up to the possibility that things outside of their control can also be different. I attended the event because it is the first event I have seen where the focus is on

understanding coaching. The added benefit was also to explore coaching as a route to achieving successful organisational change and to hear from a diverse group of "experts" and share learning and experiences with a group of like minded and interested people. I enjoyed the conference and will continue looking for opportunities to learn."

Keith Verizon is a student at the University of Pennsylvania. He attended the summer school as part of his course: "I wanted to get a deeper understanding of the theory and application of coaching in organisations and with individuals. I came away from the experience armed with a raft of solid, theoretical approaches and foundations associated with change as well as new learnings of coaching for successful change and a variety of approaches on coaching for success in organisations. What I learned will serve as a basic premise for continued learning in the complex and ever-changing field of coaching."

## On i-coach academy's Existential Approach to Coaching seminar...



Tamsin Slyce is about to embark on an MA with i-coach academy. In April, she attended i-coach academy's existential coaching event delivered by i-coach faculty member, Professor Ernesto Spinelli. She wanted to explore how this philosophical perspective could help frame her coaching. She was also keen to get to know the i-coach community she is joining. Here, she gives us her views...

"I was particularly exhilarated by the discussions about valuing security and insecurity as I am embarking on a career transition towards becoming an independent professional coach. In the coaching I am delivering at the BBC, I am primarily focused on working with leaders in transition. The importance of seeking a balance between certainty and uncertainty really resonated. Spinelli argued convincingly that the purpose of coaching should not be to take away insecurity and discomfort. Paradoxically, I found this both personally and professionally comforting. Like many others I have encountered, I feel "scared as well as excited" when facing major change and the existential approach seems to affirm and seek meaning in this response.

"Spinelli's ideas about making choices also provoked lively discussion and I subsequently brought them back

to my supervision group. Choices inevitably involve loss. As he put it "each choice reveals the consequence of having to let go of the possibilities of choices you no longer have." People may try to make choices that are empty of regret. Spinelli suggested exploring where they get the idea that only perfect choices are appropriate. I noticed myself placing lots of exclamation marks around my notes at this point. Again a significant seed thought had been planted which I intend to nurture for my own sake and for my clients.

"I was also intrigued by the idea that conflict can arise even where there is a close match between a person's beliefs about themselves and their experience. Spinelli explained that an issue can then arise from a client not considering the consequences of their stance and their desire to stand by their beliefs. He said a useful way to work with this is to bring the issue into the immediate relationship of the coach and client, where the coach can become representative of others. The client can explore this and then go out into their working world. Spinelli said many coaches find this too scary. In response to a question from me, he said the way forward was to practice and dissipate the mystery. Following the seminar, I have further reflected on this approach in discussion with my own coach, supervisor and colleagues. I now intend to try it with a client who I am coaching through the first 100 days of a new job.

"Spinelli talked about many - often complex - concepts. I have barely touched on the richness of the ideas and appreciate that those who wanted to explore existentialism in depth would be hard pressed to get this from a one day seminar. I remain mindful and excited by Mike van Oudtshoorn's words of introduction - that exploring the existential approach is a "forever journey".

"I wrote in my diary: "I had a fantastic time at the seminar. I am more convinced than ever that I am making 'the right' decision to pursue coaching and to pursue it with i-coach academy." That day I wore - both literally and metaphorically - a 'Tamsin Slyce, i-coach academy' identity badge. I felt good. I had taken another important step in my own transition and looked forward to the next."

# Diary of events

**September 14th & 15th 2006: The Psychology of Coaching, Regent's College, London.** A two day seminar presented by Prof. Bruce Peltier and Prof. Mike van Oudtshoorn that will provide an overview of psychological principles accessible to the practice of coaching and translate psychological theory into practical coaching applications. The seminar is aimed at coaches who would like more insight into the theory behind the practice and hr professionals who would like a greater understanding of some of the psychological principles underpinning the work of coaches.

**October 17th-20th 2006: Masters in Professional Coaching.** Module One of i-coach academy's Masters programme commences.

**October 25th-27th October 2006: Certificate in Coaching Practice.** Module one of i-coach academy's Certificate programme commences. For further information on all i-coach academy programmes, please contact Eunice@i-coachacademy.com.

**November 1st-3rd 2006: EMCC, Köln.** EMCC is a key event for those involved in coaching and mentoring. The 13th Annual Conference will bring together some of the best minds in contemporary coaching and mentoring to share their knowledge and expertise. For further information, please visit [www.emccouncil.org](http://www.emccouncil.org).

**November 1st-4th 2006: ICF Conference, St Louis, Missouri, USA.** The theme of the 11th International Coach Federation Annual Conference is Quantum Thinking on Human Potential Tools for the New Frontier. For further information, please visit [www.coachfederation.org](http://www.coachfederation.org).

**December 18th & 19th 2006: 1st International Coaching Psychology Conference, City University, London.** Organised by the British Psychology Society, key speakers include i-coach academy faculty Prof. Ernesto Spinelli and Prof. Mike van Oudtshoorn amongst others. The event will include masterclasses, case study presentations and skills-based sessions and round-table discussions focusing on themes including ethics, professional practice and supervision, psychometrics and coaching, competence and multi-cultural, diversity and gender coaching. Further information can be found by visiting <http://www.bps.org.uk/coachingpsy/news/5mar06.cfm> or by contacting Siobhain O'Riordan on [sgpcpom@bps.org.uk](mailto:sgpcpom@bps.org.uk). Paper submissions should be submitted for consideration by Monday August 31st 2006.

**February 19th 2007: Existential Approach to Coaching.** This seminar is aimed at professional coaches who want to learn about what the existential perspective can offer their coaching practice and HR professionals who want to understand more about how this approach can effect coaching. Leading existential author and educator, Prof Ernesto Spinelli will explore the central themes of existential analysis and help participants to understand the existential approach to coaching versus other approaches to coaching by experimenting with practical skills.

For further information on i-coach academy events, please contact [tracey@i-coachacademy.com](mailto:tracey@i-coachacademy.com)

# Interview: Inside the Mind of Paul Barber



Paul Barber is a consultant, coach and therapist and teaches group facilitation, organisational consulting and research methodology on Masters and Doctorate programmes at several UK institutions. He has recently published a book entitled, "Becoming a Practitioner-Researcher - A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Inquiry".

Coaching Matters talked to Paul to find out more about the author, his book, and his views on coaching.

## Q. So what is your background and what are your views on coaching?

**A.** I think I am primarily 'an artist' rather than 'a scientist' and a humanist who values 'the individual' above 'the system' – and that these especially inform my coaching, teaching, group facilitation and researching style.

I was at Art College in the 1960's and in the 1980's wrote about 'the art of nursing' (Barber 1987) - although as a nurse tutor was also called upon to teach anatomy and physiology, medicine and psychiatry. So although I appreciated 'Science' as a rational mode of sense-making, I was more pulled towards the mysteries of life – that stuff beyond the sensory world. I believe as time progressed, the 'Arts' for me came to represent 'a culture of life' – a robust and active engagement with 'the life force, while the 'Sciences' seemed to symbolise more a 'culture of death' – a reflective standing back from life to produce ever more information and theory.

My leaning towards the arts means that my coaching style is biased towards an expression of the human condition rather than its definition or cure. This bias feeds into my approach, which focuses upon the 'Art of coaching and researching' rather than the 'Science of coaching and researching'

Besides 'Art', 'Humanism' – which emphasises 'experiential learning', 'democratic decision-making', 'self empowerment' and 'holism' – also informs my background and approach. Working alongside humanists such as John Heron in the 1970's did much to ferment my interest in the personal politics of coaching and researching. Although I'm a Gestalt therapist, I have grave concerns about 'the politics of therapy' and the professionalisation of therapists, which means they often identify with the Society and end-up perpetuating the social and attitudinal conditions that brought their clients to them in the first place!

Humanism brings the authority back to the individual and to human experience, rather than looks to Society or systems for guidance.

And this is where Gestalt comes in, for it illuminates the 'Art of living and relating' while supporting humanistic values and inquiring in a Therapeutic Community way.

## Q. What is the Gestalt approach and how does it work?

**A.** Gestalt, a German word that means pattern or constellation, seeks to understand the human condition and group behaviour through illumination of what a person is sensing and feeling and projecting out on the world, and how they are co-creating and attributing meaning. Here information is gathered about the human condition through 'experiential illumination' and a 'felt sense' of the world, rather than through an interpretation of events and the reduction of 'experience' to its parts. In short, Gestalt draws attention to how people and groups are generating and structuring their reality.

To inquire into consciousness in this way, similarly to Zen, Gestalt attempts to cultivate an authentic relationship with the self and an authentic dialogue

with others through which to raise awareness to 'what is unfolding' and 'becoming evident in the moment' – right now. We see here that Gestalt does not represent a theoretical or philosophical discourse, but rather an ongoing inquiry into the nature of human experience which is more concerned with 'process' than 'content' – 'the art of becoming aware!'

This illumination through relational engagement has been summarised as:

**"...if a picture is worth a thousand words – in Gestalt terms an experience is worth a thousand pictures" (Woldt & Tolman 2005).**

In this context 'raising awareness' is both a research or coaching method and an educational outcome, and the coach cum researcher as well as the client are both akin to data on a journey of discovery, who through the cultivation and development of an aware and respectful relationship, inquire into the unique patterning of co-created forces that currently shape perception and behaviour.

Gestalt works by attempting to bring three components together. First, it attempts to practice what Buber (1951) calls 'inclusion': an existential position which is open and sensitive to novelty, curious about the human condition, suspending of judgment and alive to uncertainty:

"Cultivating my uncertainty to me means two things: First, I have to stay aware all the time that I am uncertain in regard to my attribution of meaning; I deal with a positive, desirable and delightful feeling that reminds me of the interpersonal reality of which I am a part. On another level, this can provide me with a feeling of security, for it tells me I am in touch with reality. My uncertainty becomes an aspect of my internal support system. It warns me not to attribute meanings one-sidedly and reinforces me to regard my client as a partner in the therapeutic process" (Staemmler 1997, p45).

Here as a coach I pay attention to what is 'becoming' as much as to what is obvious. Second, in order to encourage 'whole-hearted' and meaningful inquiry I attempt to convey understanding through the cultivation of a genuine, congruent and authentic presence founded on interest and concern. Third, I endeavour to develop a communication style which is:

**"...committed to dialogue, surrendering to the between. This is a form of contact without aiming, with truth and healing emerging from the interaction rather than from what is already known..."**

(Yontef 1996 p 94).

Emergent coaching of this nature is best performed through the medium of a transparent relationship which emphasises, witnesses and illuminates 'existence' while bracketing-off abstract theoretical explanations and 'cause and effect thinking'.

Gestalt does not represent a philosophical discourse but rather a philosophy for living, which stresses that a person, group or organisation cannot be understood in isolation from their dynamic cultural, social and physiological network – their total field.

So at root, Gestalt is an art of relating guided by the 'wisdom of uncertainty' and 'what is currently becoming' that stands for creativity, contact and experiential wisdom founded upon the authority of the 'lived experience'.

As for what Gestalt can achieve:

By following the movement of a person, group or community's 'continuum of awareness' – moment to moment focus – we begin to appreciate what is of greatest need or interest (being brought to the fore) and what is contextual (left to melt into

the background). In this way, by attending to the inferences, assumptions and values exerting influence over current behaviour, and to distortions and limitations of awareness, emergent coaching in the Gestalt tradition creates a picture of a person or group's immediate experience, as they move within reach of the contact-zone of others.

In a Zen-like way, Gestalt represents 'process' rather than 'content' and the generation of meaning through 'contact' rather than 'interpretation':

**"I consider this blend of existential and Zen philosophy, this organismic personality theory, and this phenomenological experiential style of working to be the necessary and sufficient conditions to define the Gestalt approach. I don't define the Gestalt approach by techniques"**

(Smith 1978 p 74 quoted in Smith 1996).

So this is my approach and this is how it developed within me.

## Q. Can you say a little more about how the Gestalt approach differs to an Existential Phenomenological one and what it might offer i-coach academy students and alumni?

**A.** This is an excellent question, which draws me back to the transpersonal. If I take some the 'existential givens' that Gestalt would challenge, perhaps this is the best way to illuminate the difference. At root existential philosophy may be suggested to grapple directly with 'meaninglessness' and 'extinction', a meaninglessness it sees as arising from in-authenticity and a realisation of the extinction that awaits us all in death. Although as a Gestalt practitioner I commend the championing of authenticity, I view the universal field as housing its own 'intelligence' which I attempt to open myself to, be guided by and listen to. In this way I seek to be guided by the 'intrinsic intelligence' of a so-called 'fertile void' rather than seek to overcome a meaningless universe. In this way a Toast respect of nature and entertainment of the 'soul' and 'spirit' as part of the holistic human field enters my Gestalt approach. I do not believe nor disbelieve so much as keep the questions forever open. For instance, in my coaching I may ask in an attempt to contact the transpersonal – which I define as unknown and unknowable influences over and above the self – "If your soul (or essence) chose this life before you were born, what lesson has it possibly set for you?" Or, "If we entertain the notion of Dharma that we all have a unique gift to give to humankind, what might yours be?" In this way I see the philosophical approach and valuing of phenomenological inquiry as differing between a Gestalt and Existential approach to coaching. Simply, the Gestalt approach has few if any 'givens' and looks to the unique moment and intelligence inherent to 'co-created relational field' of coach and client to generate purpose and meaning.

As to what this approach has to offer i-coach students and alumni? Well, a truly experiential quality research approach which venerates a truly holistic approach to coaching which allows meaning to manifest through intimate contact and dialogue.

## Q. What motivated you to write the book?

**A.** At one level this book arose from my own practitioner-research and reflection. It was like my own self-generated supervision of what I was doing. Also, I was irritated at my more emergent process and person-centred approach being put down by other academics who taught research and saw my approach as flaky, and by coaches who prescribed outcomes in the mode of authoritative therapists rather than walked alongside their clients.

*continued overleaf*

So here we glimpse the political intentions of my work, to pay homage to the 'unknown and unknowable' – the transpersonal as it were, and my desire to open up a wider dialogue about the usefulness of a gestalt approach to coaching, research, teaching and all else in life. Guess I'm a convert!

**Q. Who is it aimed at?**

**A.** Anyone who works with people or wishes to inquire into themselves and the reality they are co-creating with others – all the people facing professionals. For coaches, I believe it will be of special use to those coaches who wish to research their practice such as those in the i-coach academy learning community and to illuminate where they excel, as well as those one-to-one coaches who want to move into team-coaching and organisational development.

**Q. What do you hope i-coach readers will get from your book?**

**A.** The text's experiential approach is designed to encourage the reader, to:

- develop an appreciation of inquiry as integral to living;
- expand his interpersonal sensitivity, inquiry skills and personal awareness;
- identify facilitative strategies for illumination of the human condition;
- build upon their powers of critical reflection, imagination, courage and curiosity;
- foster a dialogue between himself and reflection upon his own practice;
- develop an holistic model of inquiry that addresses multiple levels of reality;

I hope readers will use this work to inquire into and to profile their own practice, will be alerted as to 'where' and 'upon what' to focus to enhance their facilitation style, and will come to appreciate authority of conscious and unconscious phenomena and acquire the mind-set of a practitioner-researcher.

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**And what Dr Peter Critten, i-coach academy graduate and principal lecturer at Middlesex University Business School said:**

"I very much endorse Paul's observations in the interview above. Eighteen months ago I was looking for a text on research for my DProf students which took a more person-centred and reflective approach to research appropriate to the values of the DProf. As Paul's comments confirm, Paul comes from a therapist background and his views on 'practitioner research' very much resonated with me. At the same time I wanted a text to be used by all professionals reflecting on their practice – i.e. the kind of students we are now attracting to our programmes based around and accrediting work based learning. I therefore worked with Paul to ensure that the text spoke just as much to the reflecting professional practitioner as well as the therapist.

"From a coaching perspective I believe this book will be particularly useful to coaches who are reflecting on their practice and seeking academic accreditation, for example coaches pursuing the MA and Doctorate programmes run by i-coach academy. What I believe Paul's book will do is encourage coaches reflecting on their practice to, in Paul's words, 'pay attention to what is 'becoming' as much as to what is obvious'; this might allow them to be more open to the models and processes they espouse as part of their practice and, in what Paul calls 'an authentic dialogue', reflect on their appropriateness as their relationship with their clients deepens and changes. In my work with all professionals reflecting on their practice I will certainly recommend this text as a way of helping them position themselves within their own field and context as practitioner researchers.

"As Programme Leader of the newly launched Doctorate in Professional Practice at Middlesex University Business School, I am currently reviewing the way we run the programme drawing on insights from Paul Barber's book as well as from Jack Whitehead's concept of 'Living Theory'.\*

"In my view, the DProf requires a fundamental shift in mindset which places the 'practitioner researcher' as both subject and object of their own inquiry. In my experience, students have difficulty grounding themselves sufficiently in the values that are at the heart of their professional practice. Paul Barber's book, I think, can help them position themselves at the centre of their own practice.

"But there is another dimension of Paul's book which is just as significant. The subtitle of the book is 'A Gestalt Approach to Holistic Inquiry' and a gestalt perspective as to what is the 'figure' and what is 'the ground' seems to be of special value particularly to coaching practitioners.

Figure refers to 'what momentarily peaks and currently holds attention in the short term' while Ground' refers to 'the background or cultural milieu and long term structure from whence a phenomenon emerges' (Barber 2006 p37). For me the 'ground' also relates to the 'context' within which operate key stakeholders with whom the practitioner researcher has to continually engage

while at same time keeping an eye on what Whitehead calls their 'living theory' which will be constantly informed in the dance between 'figure' and 'ground'.

"Finally, a humanistic and ethics theme runs throughout Paul Barber's work and this, I suggest, will have a particular meaning for students undertaking the i-coach academy programme in Professional Studies as they inquire into their own practice and its implications for others."

\* Whitehead, J. and McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research Living Theory: Sage*

**Case Study**  
**Banking on Raising Standards**



Standard Bank Group (SBG) is one of South Africa's leading financial services organisations and has a foothold in seventeen African countries and 21 countries outside of Africa

Despite a run of good years, the turn of the millennium raised a number of concerns within the organisation. When the bank successfully fended off a hostile take over bid, it discovered that the leadership profile of the bank was perceived to be 'old-style' rigid, and instructional. This prompted the bank to undertake 360 leadership development assessments of its senior leaders and this perception was confirmed.

In addition, in 2004 and 2005 the bank slipped down the ladder of South Africa's Best Company to Work for Survey™. The CEO, and his executive team, were clear that the people issues needed to be resolved if business results were going to be sustainable into the future. Preliminary stock taking revealed that leadership development activities were being undertaken on an ad hoc basis; coaches were being hired without reference to any framework and in an unregulated coaching market that has no professional barriers to entry and no quality control safety nets.

At the same time, the Bank wanted to fast track the careers of young black managers, to challenge the apartheid legacy and fulfil the pledges it had made in the 2003 Financial Sector Charter. By signing the Charter, Standard Bank is committed to black economic empowerment through employment, procurement, service delivery and share ownership within a time frame.

**Action Plan**

Since 2005, Helena Dolny, Director of Leadership Development, Coaching and Mentoring in Personal & Business Banking at Standard Bank and an i-coach MA graduate and Khatija Saley an i-coach certificate student have been focused on designing a solution to address the challenges the Bank has been facing.

Recognising the need to invest in its employees to resolve the problems it was facing, the Bank made two decisions. It would spend approximately twenty million pounds to revamp an old training college into a Global Leadership Centre with a world-class curriculum and staff, and it would develop and implement a comprehensive coaching and mentoring framework to meet the needs of its wholesale, retail and insurance units. For Standard Bank, leadership development and coaching and mentoring are seen to relate strongly to each other – the "everyday glue that will secure the return on investment on formal leadership development."\* The Mentoring programme will be available at all levels. Designed on the basis of best practice research; it will be mentee-driven and the relationships will be off-line. One unique feature is that the training has a dual purpose, designed for a person to take on both roles, either as a mentee and/or as a mentor.

Designing the coaching intervention was challenging and Chris Lombard, Group Director for Learning and Development approved Helena's request to draw in Dr Caroline Horner of i-coach academy to assist in setting in place the best coaching framework. A three-tiered framework was proposed and accepted.

*continued overleaf*

1. On-the-job performance coaching to be available to all those who carry out performance appraisals. This type of coaching may be more skills orientated and may be more directional in style.
2. Coaching aimed at building cultural and organisational alignment. There are three components at this level: team coaching, training delivering coaching tools for managers and peer coaching training based on Nancy Kline's Thinking Partnership methodology.
3. Executive Coaching for leadership development. This is more complex, requiring a greater depth of coaching skills. The desired outcome is a shift in identified leadership competencies and the focus of the coaching is on behavioural change.

As Standard Bank had been hiring coaches on an ad hoc, word-of-mouth basis, i-coach academy also worked with Standard Bank to introduce a three part screening process to enable

the institution to identify which coaches had the desired non-directional style.

The screening was a three part process and more than 100 coaches took part.

### The Process

**Part I:** coaches filled in a biographical/technical questionnaire which allowed for some filtering on criteria such as coach specific training, coaching experience, appropriate level of coaching experience, indicators of professionalism i.e. being coached, being supervised, evidence of continuous professional development.

**Part II:** coaches took part in a telephone interview which ascertained the process used by the coach and gave the first indication of their preferred style.

**Part III:** coaches attended an assessment day in which they presented themselves and their coaching framework and model (i.e.

the i-coach academy framework), undertook different roles in demonstrations as coach, coachee and observer, and had the opportunity to debrief the panel on their day's experience.

The experience was a first in the South African market. Most coaches offered positive feedback, and indicated what a useful exercise it had been.

There have been beneficial spin-offs from the process for the bank. Today, it is accepted that there is a "preferred-buyers" list of coaches and that they have all passed the screening process. Involving different business units in the assessment process has also helped to enhance the level of understanding of what coaching is and is not.

### Launch

Mid-2006 Standard Bank is poised for take off. Its Global Leadership Centre will launch its new programmes in the last quarter. In August, the first 500

mentors and mentees will log their details into an electronic matching system. 21 coaches are already on the preferred buyers list and the process continues so that the bank creates a pool of coaches who are diverse, experienced and non-directional in their approach.

Helena Dolny is looking forward to the next few years and monitoring the impact that these changes will bring. Along with the CEO and other directors, she is particularly keen to track the changes in ratings of Leadership Competency, Investors in People and Best Company to Work For.TM

\*Carole Gaskell. Full Potential Group. U.K.

## Feature Focus

### How Old Mutual Employee Benefits are using coaching to leverage high performance leadership



OLD MUTUAL

As one of the largest insurance companies in South Africa and one of the largest financial institutions in the world, Old Mutual is an organisation that recognises and values its employees and recognises the importance of investing in ongoing leadership development towards building a sustainable, growing business

In 2005, the Organisational Development team in Employee Benefits at Old Mutual had embarked on a culture change programme within the division, some 20 months before they turned to coaching. In March 2005, some 120 line managers had taken part in a leadership programme, Leading from the Peak, which underpinned the culture change programme. Like many organisations, Old Mutual strongly believed that any culture change that takes place within a company is driven by changing the way leaders lead. Whilst the leadership development programme had inspired many of the attendees, the business leader, Eric Le Roux at Old Mutual felt that there was an opportunity to enhance the leadership behaviour change and that the company had not seen a significant change from "old economy" to "new economy" leadership practice.

Le Roux turned to Barbara Ferreira, Strategy Implementation manager who is currently completing her MA in Coaching with i-coach academy to discuss how one-to-one coaching could help to shift leadership behaviour significantly and serve to enhance the culture change programme. Ferreira believed that the Leading from the Peak programme had inspired participants and positively encouraged executives to highlight their strengths and shadows. However, for some, it had not effectively supported them to translate this awareness into behavioural change or support the embedding of the new behaviours achieved. Coaching could be one way to address this.

With the mandate to experiment with 1:1 coaching to enable further shift of leadership behaviours and embed behaviours following the Leading from the Peak programme, Ferreira enlisted the support of Dr Caroline Horner, director of i-coach academy to work with her to test this assumption with a group of middle managers within Old Mutual's Employee Benefits division.

Together they identified some guiding principles for the initiative which were seen to be critical success factors:

1. Open to all - One on one coaching opportunity had to be offered to all delegates who had completed Leading from the Peak.
2. Self-selection into the process was essential. Pivotal to the success is the adult learner taking responsibility for their own learning and development. The high performance leadership framework underpinning high performance cultures also supports this principle.

3. The effective matching of client and coach is essential.
4. The need to establish and effectively communicate a purpose and context for the coaching initiative which was strongly linked to the culture change programme and the strategic goals of OMEB
5. The need to create a measurement system up front - i.e. create awareness for all parties concerned that the effectiveness of the coaching initiative would be measured

### The coaching offer

All 120 leaders who had completed the Leading from the Peak programme across South Africa were offered the opportunity to participate in the coaching initiative. They would be given five 1:1 coaching sessions of approximately one hour over a six month period. To participate, they needed to self select into the process and attend a briefing workshop. They would also be actively involved in selecting the coach they worked with and required to provide feedback on the process and their coaching goals to support evaluation of the programme. 50 leaders selected themselves into the process.

### The journey

Having pre-vetted and selected some 11 coaches, Ferreira and Horner ran two briefing workshops for the leaders preparing them to get the most from the coaching. These sessions aimed to ensure there was a common understanding of what to expect from coaching as opposed to mentoring, the organisational purpose for the work and how confidentiality would be managed. It also gave leaders the opportunity to meet coaches and hear some of their individual coaching philosophy and approach to support them in their decision about which coach to work with. Coaches were given a 10 minute opportunity to share their philosophy and approach with the whole group and over lunch clients were able to interact with coaches 1:1.

After the session, clients emailed Ferreira with their first, second and third preference of coach and she worked to match coach and client as much as possible, on client preference.

Clients were asked to share their goals for the coaching and to review progress of those goals over the six month period. How this data was to be collected and who would have access to that data was also shared during the briefing session. The rationale for collecting data was to demonstrate the

continued overleaf

value of using coaching and data would be collected from clients, coaches and client's team members/peers. No individual would be identified when sharing the results with the organisation but themes with respect to the goals being chosen to work on, organisational issues and themes arising in the coaching would be.

Coaches were also asked to attend a briefing meeting where they were able to ask questions about the organisation, the purpose for the initiative and details of the Leading from the Peak programme. Some had not experienced the tools and processes used during the programme and so it was important to ensure they were familiar with these tools and shared a common language with clients.

With the process in place, clients were encouraged to contact the coaches and make their own arrangements about times, venues and dates. This is in keeping with the principle of the client taking responsibility for managing their learning.

Halfway through the process Ferreira and Horner ran a review session with the coaches to assess how the process was going and to gather key organisational issues for feedback into the culture change process.

The formal feedback process was carried out 2 months later once all coaching sessions had been concluded. This was contracted in the initial briefing session and involved

- a. Self assessment of learning from the clients.
- b. Feedback on learning from coach to client.
- c. Clients could request a 360 degree feedback from peers and subordinates on observable leadership behaviour changes during the period.
- d. Feedback from the clients to the coaches about their coaching experience.

### What did the coaching focus on?

Clients brought the following issues to coaching. Most focused on the agreed purpose to support them to embed leadership behaviours congruent with the organizational culture which had been highlighted through the leading from the peak programme. These included

- communication skills within team and across departments,
- performance management skills to deal with poor performing members of the team
- conflict management to ensure a healthy working environment
- achieving a work/life balance,
- improving assertiveness
- Aligning personal goals and values with organisational expectations
- Understanding management versus leadership
- Setting boundaries.

There were some goals which focused more on personal career transitions and mid-life transitions.

## Key learnings

### Setting the Context and Purpose

- It was critical for the coaching initiative to be framed within the larger organisational design context; in this case the culture change programme. This provides structure and shared meaning for all participants.
- Despite the briefing and written documentation explaining the difference, there was still confusion about the difference between coaching and mentoring which impacted on clients' expectations of the coach and the coaching process. They were surprised the coach did not consult or problem solve for them. Clarifying expectations of the coaching process is key.
- It was critical to ensure coaches were well briefed on the purpose and context for the work and were familiar with the tools and content used on the leadership programme to share a common language with their clients and keep the coaching on course.

### Building commitment

- The adult learner must be able to self select themselves into the learning process and select their own coach. This supports the learn to take responsibility for their own learning and development.
- The clients were able to set their own goals within a broad context of leadership development so the learning experience was personally relevant and meaningful.
- Each client was allowed to work at their own pace over a six month period.
- Participation in a briefing session and a face to face meeting to select the coach was essential. Those who missed the workshops were allowed to select a coach from a coaching profile but this was not effective.
- When matching didn't work the offer to select another coach from the pool did not work. We need to acknowledge that choosing another coach after an initial unhappy experience is not easy to do. It is advisable to build in a consequence. There were a number of clients who scheduled sessions with their coaches and then didn't attend them or cancelled at the last minute. This was very disruptive to the process and begs for some kind of consequence to be set down.

### Process design

- One on one coaching should be provided closer to the leadership development programme, in this case, Leading from the Peak for impact of coaching to be optimised
- timing for such an initiative is crucial, long gaps between sessions are not optimal for learning
- A minimum of 8 – 10 sessions should be provided for effective learning and growth.
- Having an independent coaching co-ordinator was useful when anyone needed some support or assistance.
- The interim report was useful so that corrective action could be taken where necessary. The coaches also appreciated the support and insights this gave them.
- Having a review process at the end of the initiative was important as measurement focuses everyone's efforts and increases the learning opportunity.

## Conclusion

Ferreira is confident that the company is slowly recognising that coaching is an effective leadership development tool and will be a tool that will be offered more widely to employees within Old Mutual. Whilst some individuals have confided that they were sceptical about coaching initially, they have found the experience to be life changing and have made significant shifts in their leadership practice.

Participants felt that the sessions were too few but nevertheless "gave them time to discuss things other than direct work", "we could discuss real problems and how best to deal with them", "it forced me to make the time to step out of routine and question my own development needs", "it made me aware of various issues which I've never considered before", "the sessions came at a time when I had just started managing a team. The coach also shares my values and views and is from a corporate background so understood."

The coaching sessions made the clients realise that "I am on the right track in terms of management but need time out to read up and study some more up-to-date techniques", "it enhanced my interpersonal communication skills – how to motivate and improve relationships with team members; coaching techniques; greater appreciation of diversity; greater self-awareness", "being able to talk about critical work and personal issues is a purging process", "I need to slow down, complete tasks before moving on to the next, prioritise and focus on key deliverables".

The coaches also felt that five sessions were not enough and that the sessions should take place off-site to avoid distraction. They felt that the clients would benefit from on-going coaching for longer periods of time, executive support and involvement in the coaching process to instill a culture of coaching within the organisation.

The coaches found that the clients were very open, honest and reflective, more so than in other organisations where they had worked which may be a direct result of the culture change programme.

Coaches appreciated "the client's energy and commitment in exploring opportunities for improvement as a leader and professional", "it was open, constructive give-and-take. We made progress every session because both parties were dedicated to it", "effective co-ordination, personal support for coaches and linking to the models covered in the leadership training", "the clients were open to the process", "client's commitment as a leader to his team. He was willing to extend himself out of his comfort zone and adapt his leadership approach."

This feedback serves to highlight that one on one coaching is an effective process for developing new economy leadership behaviours. Research shows that one of the key levers for creating high performance culture is the ongoing development of high performance leadership capacity. This is therefore a critical success factor for the culture change programme and one of the keystones of the organisation's new economy leadership.

# Book Reviews

## INTERNATIONAL COACHING PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW (Vol .1 No.1 April 2006)

A review by Alan Hedman, Ph D., principal of The HB Company, consultation in Organisational Dynamics and Bruce Peltier, Ph D., MBA, Professor of the University of the Pacific, San Francisco.

### Introduction

In the inaugural issue of the International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR), the founding coordinating editors, Stephen Palmer and Michael Cavanagh, describe the inspiration for the creation of this journal along with its purpose and goals. In a lead editorial—"Coaching psychology: Its time has finally come," the editors emphasize the richness that coaching psychologists bring to the field in the form of a host of psychological theories and models for growth and development that deepen the coaching relationship and provide a sound foundation. They express a hope that their journal will be the first place that authors with ideas about the psychology of coaching will submit their work.

Previously there has not been an international publication specifically for coaching psychologists to share their understanding and research with colleagues. This is likely to be a "felt need" for many in the coaching field. As executive coaches in the United States, we rely heavily on the Harvard Business Review and Training & Development (published by the American Society for Training and Development) for professional assistance and collaboration. While features in both of these publications are useful to coaching psychologists, neither is a "direct hit." The intention of the ICPR, however, is to focus directly on theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. From the looks of this first issue, it is off to a good start.

### Content

The inaugural issue contains eight papers ranging in focus from historical to theoretical, empirical, quantitative and qualitative research, practical issues and opinion pieces. While the scope of these articles is broad, there's little sacrifice of depth and thoroughness.

Several articles take on a distinctive "local" appeal, such as the formation of the British Psychological Society, empirical research on the shape of counseling psychology in the UK, and a report on a survey of Australian executives and life coaches. These essays are all well-written, but may not be of interest to all international readers.

The remaining articles address a wide range of important issues, and they are quite well-written and readable. One article discusses the challenge of distinguishing the work and professional practices of coaching psychologists from coaches who are not psychologists. Two authors try to apply the concept of return on investment (ROI) in coaching. They wisely suggest that before asking 'does coaching work?' one should be asking what is it being used for, exactly, and then design the measures accordingly.

In our opinion the strongest article discusses the issue of coaching from the perspective of psychological strengths. The authors argue that a theory based on the "development of self" can serve as an effective foundation for coaching. Our personal favorite topic was included: one essay proposes that a Rogerian, person-centered approach should be adopted as the meta-theoretical perspective for coaching psychology.

### Conclusion/Suggestions

Overall, the International Coaching Psychology Review seems an impressive entry in the field of coaching psychology. Our major suggestions would be in the area of "readability" and format. For the reader who wants to quickly find an article or determine whether or not they are interested in deeper pursuit of a topic, executive summaries would be extremely helpful. Other short, crisp features and a more truly international focus would be welcomed. The attractive, professional hardcopy and PDF format of the ICPR provides a strong foundation on which to build these improvements.

### Brief Coaching for Lasting Solutions (Insoo Kim Berg and Peter Szabo, 2005)

Norton professional books, ISBN 0-393-70472-6.

by Shaun Lincoln, i-coach academy MProf graduate from Middlesex University and Director of Coaching and Mentoring at the Centre of Excellence in Leadership.



Brief Coaching, written by Insoo Kim Berg, who co-developed Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, and Peter Szabo founder of the largest coaching school in Switzerland, is written 'for coaches who want to reduce the time it takes to provide effective coaching while making the best use possible

of resources the client brings to the table', and for clients who are seeking a coaching approach that is organized, efficient and affordable.

The book sets out a Brief Coaching approach that uses language, structure and focus to help coaching clients stay focused on their goals. Key to this approach is spending time initially to establish the desired outcome through questions such as:

'What is your best hope for this meeting? What needs to come out of this meeting today so that you can say that it has been useful for you to take the time to come and talk to me?'

This is because the brief coaching approach is very goal-driven, with clarity on what the client wants an essential ingredient. Equally important is then using scaling to co-create a road map on how to get there and using solutions-focused questions that help the client recognise resources, skills and attributes that are already getting them there.

Underpinning this coaching approach are 3 core beliefs:

1. If it works, don't fix it
2. If something worked once, do more of it
3. If it does not work, do something different

Brief Coaching is about being brief, and the book gives many examples of how focusing on what works in the first coaching session and identifying small solutions that enable the client to do more of this can lead to significant change. It gives detailed examples of questions, tips and tools that can be used in first and follow-up sessions, and uses several case studies throughout to contextualise this, and show how problems and solutions might not always be directly related. A DVD is also available showing the approach in action.

The book is an excellent resource for both coaches and clients interested in understanding more about the Brief Coaching approach and in experiencing first-hand what a solutions-focused paradigm can bring to coaching. The use of case studies gives immediacy to the writing, and the book is full of questions that use this approach and tips on how to use them. As such the book is useful for coaches already using this approach, whilst also offering coaches from different approaches insight into how a goal-focused approach works, and how they might want to incorporate aspects of this into their own practice.

Finally, it lives up to its name in that it is both brief and accessible, and provides a practical resource that coaches can return to. For coaches already using a Solutions-focused approach it offers valuable insights into how they can do even more of what works, and for coaches and clients more accustomed to a problem-solving approach it offers a more direct step-by-step approach that enables the client to work out what they want and what they can do (and are already doing) to get there.

### Editorial note:

Issue 4 will be published in November. Please send any contributions or suggestions for coaching stories you would like to read about to editor@i-coachacademy.com.

i-coachacademy