

Mentoring for Change

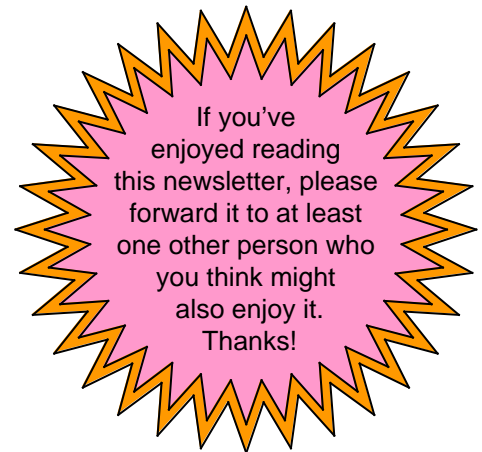
executive mentoring and coaching, values management, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter. In this issue:

- Are you a Hedgehog or a Fox?
- Playing to our Strengths
- Classic Coaching Models – Gamesmanship
- Events

Wishing you Seasons Greetings and an excellent 2002

Mike the Mentor

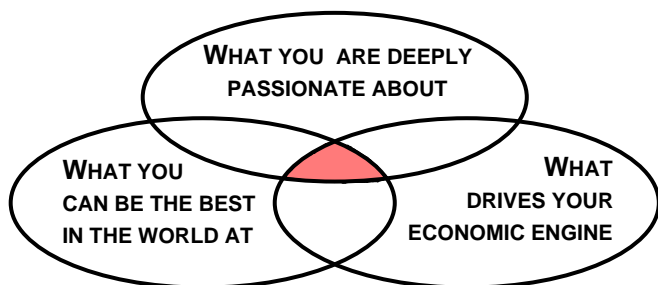


Are you a Hedgehog or a Fox?

Jim Collins, co-author of "Built to Last" which analysed what makes a company great, fell to wondering how companies become great in the first place. So he identified those Fortune 500 companies that had performed at or below the general stock market for at least fifteen years and then produced cumulative returns of at least three times the market over the next fifteen years – and investigated what distinguished them.

Now, in his recently published "Good to Great" (Random House, 2001) he has identified the key differentiating factors. These include Level 5 leadership (a blend of extreme personal humility and intense professional will) and putting "who" decisions before "what" decisions (ie, getting the right people on board before deciding on vision, strategy, structure, etc). These and his other findings were developed from his research with companies but one in particular has great relevance in working with individuals – what Collins calls the Hedgehog Concept. (Apparently hedgehogs do one thing really well, whilst the alternative – foxes – do many things less well.)

All the Good-to-Great companies had a Hedgehog



Concept – a simple, crystalline concept that guided all their efforts and which was based on deep understanding about three factors: what you can be best in the world at; what drives your economic engine; and what you are deeply passionate about:

1. What you can be the best in the world at (and, equally important, what you cannot be the best in the world at). This best in the world understanding is a much more severe standard than a core competence. You might have a competence but not necessarily have the capacity to be truly the best in the world at that competence. Conversely, there may be activities at which you could become the best in the world, but at which you have no current competence or which you're not even engaged in at the moment. As Collins says "To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence".

2. What drives your economic engine? All the good-to-great companies attained piercing insight into how to most effectively generate sustained cash flow and profitability. In particular, they discovered the single denominator - profit per x - that had the greatest impact on their economics. (It would be cash flow per x in the social sector.)

3. What you are deeply passionate about. The good-to-great companies focused on those activities that ignited their passion. They didn't seek to impose or stimulate passion but to discover what they were passionate about and pursue it.

The Hedgehog Concept is not a goal, strategy, or intention; it is an *understanding*. and this understanding

Classic Coaching Models – Gamesmanship



In Issue 14 of the newsletter I described Tim Gallwey's Inner Game approach to coaching. The Inner Game coach seeks to get their client into the focussed high-performance, rapid learning state Gallwey calls Self 2. In contrast, the Gamesman (immortalised in Stephen Potter's

"The Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship" first published in 1947) seeks to win by shifting his opponent into the self-critical, efforting state Gallwey calls Self 1 and hence destroy their game!

Potter describes gamesmanship as "the art of winning games without actually cheating". Like Gallwey, Potter works with the idea of Flow. But, whereas for Gallwey the aim is to get the player into Flow, for the gamesman the cardinal rule is BREAK THE FLOW. Potter uses an example from golf to demonstrate a gamesman at the peak of his powers.

"To break the flow of a golfer who is three up at the turn, select a moment during the playing of the tenth in the following way. This moment must be prepared for by not less than three suggestions that he is 'playing well', 'hitting the ball grandly', etc made at, say, the

second, fifth and ninth holes. Then, as opponent walks up to play his shot from fairway, speak as follows:

Gamesman: I believe I know what it is.

Layman: What do you mean?

Gamesman: I believe I know what you're doing.

Layman: What?

Gamesman: Yes. Why you're hitting them. Straight left arm at the moment of impact.

Layman (*pleased*): I know what you mean. Oh, God, yes! If the left arm is coming down like a flail –

Gamesman: Rather.

Layman: Like a whip –

Gamesman: It's centrifugal force.

Layman: Well, I don't know. Yes, I suppose it is. But if there's the least suggestion of – of –

Gamesman: A crooked elbow – (*L. is framing up to play his shot*). Half a sec. Do you mind if I come round to this side of you? I want to see you play that shot ... (*L. hits it*) ... Beauty. (*Pause.*)

Layman: Good Lord, yes! You've got to have a straight left arm.

Gamesman: Yes. And even that one wasn't as clean as some of the shots you've been hitting ...

Layman: (*pleased*) Wasn't it? (*Doubtful*) Wasn't it? (He begin to think about it....)"

can be as important for an individual as Collins has shown it to be for a company. So, ask yourself "What can I be best in the world at", "What is my key performance indicator?", and "What do I love?" Find the intersection and you will have found your unique way of making a difference.

Playing to our Strengths

So, how do we identify what we have the potential to be the best in the world at? Another recently published piece of research, this time by the Gallup organisation and based on interviews with 198,000 people, ("Now, Discover Your Strengths", by Buckingham and Clifton, Simon & Schuster, 2001) points the direction:

- those who perform the very best do so by developing their strengths as far as they can whilst finding ways to manage their weaknesses. (This may seem obvious but generally we assume that our greatest room for growth is in our area of our greatest weakness. In fact the opposite is true. Our greatest room for growth is in the area of our greatest strength.)
- a strength (ie, consistent, near perfect performance in an activity) requires certain underlying talents relevant to that strength as well as appropriate skills and knowledge. (We can of course get better at something we don't have a talent for but we won't reach consistent, near perfect performance in this activity through practice alone – we must have the

underlying talents.)

Strengths are made up of skills, knowledge and our natural talents – all of these are important but the most important is talent. Talents are recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behaviour which can be productively applied. They are innate and are what we do naturally. Examples include being competitive, curious, charming or persistent. Without underlying talent, learning a skill is a survival technique, not a path to glory.

Thus, the key to building a bona fide strength is to identify our dominant talents and refine them with knowledge and skills. You can find out your dominant talents by buying "Now, Discover Your Strengths", typing the code from the book into the StrengthFinder website, and completing the online questionnaire.

Events

February 21 2002: Next School of Coaching Accredited Coach Training Programme starts (10 days over 3 months). More at www.theschoolofcoaching.com

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