

# Mentoring for Change

executive mentoring, life coaching, values management, storytelling

Welcome to the Mentoring for Change newsletter.

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Best wishes



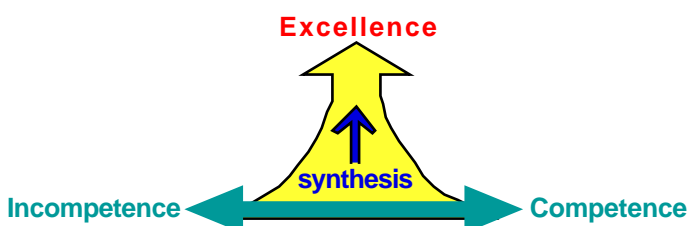
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forward this  
newsletter to  
others who might  
enjoy it.

## Conscious Incompetence!

There is a lot of talk in organisations about competences - as in "High Performance Management Competences" and so forth. Being competent is of course very important - we need to have the skills and motivation necessary to do our work. But there is a paradox: if we are never willing to be incompetent then we can never grow, develop or change, nor will we ever achieve excellence.

A recent article in Fast Magazine (Jan/Feb 2000, pp 232-4) uses Bob Dylan to exemplify this. "Bob Dylan is an incompetent musician. From year to year, from concert to concert, there's just no way to be sure that he'll deliver exactly what you're expecting. Sometimes, he blows the world away with his insight, his energy, and his performance. Other times, he's just so-so. And, unlike a truly competent musician, Dylan never delivers a song the same way twice. ...No, Dylan isn't competent. But he is brilliant."

Similarly, if we are over-attached to being competent then we may become adequate coaches, managers or whatever. But, if we want to become great coaches or managers, then we need to be willing to feel and be incompetent, to go into uncharted territory, and to risk getting things very wrong. This points to an important principle of personal development which is that we develop by a process of integrating or synthesising



constituents of ourselves. So, in this case, we start off incompetent; then, through dint of experience and study we develop competence and leave behind incompetence; and then we move beyond competence to a place where we integrate competence and incompetence into something greater than either - excellence.

This integrating or synthesising process is shown in the diagram below. It is an idea which comes from the field of Psychosynthesis (so called because it teaches how we can synthesise our psyches, make ourselves more whole, and so fulfil ourselves).

## Inner Leadership and Psychosynthesis

Psychosynthesis is a well established approach to personal, professional and spiritual development. Indeed, it is Psychosynthesis which inspired the mentoring model which I use and which I have outlined in these newsletters and on my web site. But little has been published on the application of Psychosynthesis in business. This has recently changed with the publication of "Inner Leadership" by Simon Smith (publ Nicholas Brealey, ISBN 1-85788-271-7).

Inner Leadership treats leadership as a journey of discovery rather than a set of competences to be learned. It moves away from the idea of the hero leader to bringing out the leader in each of us. A central part of inner leadership is knowing ourselves sufficiently well that our personality becomes a resource which we can use rather than a tyrant that controls us.

One of several ways of developing our inner leadership that Smith discusses is through working with our "constituents". These are like miniature personalities -

## What is Success?

A useful coaching question to ask when trying to help someone take a wider perspective on their life is "what would you like your epitaph to be?". A similar question was asked by the market research organisation NOP on behalf of the magazine Resurgence. In February, a balanced sample of 1000 UK adults were asked: "Which, if any, of the following types of people would you most like to be remembered as?" and evoked the following responses:

•A kind person	36%
•A good parent	32%
•Someone who made the world a better place	17%
•Intelligent or creative	9%
•Others/Don't know	4%
•A wealthy and successful business person	2%

The results point out the great divide between popular myths of success and our underlying, long term ambitions. Despite living in a society where business and material success is portrayed as the guiding principle, 85% of the respondents want to be remembered for what they give to each other, their children and the world.

It is, in part, this discrepancy between what society values and what individuals value that is driving the growth of the mentoring and coaching, even in the business sector. People are seeking ways to live and work which not only provide for their material needs but also for their need to do something that has a deeper meaning, and that is based on who they are as people rather than on what they have achieved. (More at [www.resurgence.org](http://www.resurgence.org))

each has its own world view, self image, set of body postures and gestures, feelings, words, habits and beliefs. Transactional Analysis uses an approach which focusses on just 3 constituents - Parent, Adult and Child. Smith's approach provides the flexibility for people to choose the constituents most meaningful to them - they might have names like Attila the Hun, the wise man, the pleaser, Donald Duck, the controller, Lilith, the critic, the perfectionist and so forth. Working with the parts of ourselves can be a hugely creative process whereby we transform a group of warring and fractious constituents into an integrated and aligned personality which supports us in our journey. Inner Leadership provides a map and guide for this journey. Highly recommended! (more at [www.inner-leadership.com](http://www.inner-leadership.com)).

## A Better Way to Change?

The pre-eminent approach to creating change is to look for what isn't working and change it. For example, if my car breaks down and I call someone out to look at it, I expect them to find what's wrong and fix it so that I can get on my way as soon as possible. When an organisation seeks to create change it does so by deciding how it would like things to be and then deciding what has to be changed to get there. This problem-based approach to improvement has proved hugely successful and has underpinned the scientific revolution which over the past few centuries has driven the development of the sophisticated, technology based society we live in.

So, when faced with helping people to develop, this problem-based approach has often been the chosen approach. And the approach does work with people, at least in the short term. But it has two dangers:

- 1) it plays to people's weaknesses - they are being asked to change by getting better at something they are not good at
- 2) it devalues people - it treats people as half empty glasses rather than half full ones - it gives them tacit

feedback that they are inadequate rather than able.

But there is another approach. Rather than focussing on what's not working and finding ways to make it work, this approach focusses on finding what is already working and encouraging more of it. This principle is beautifully demonstrated by the story of Elliot Coleman's Gift (newsletter #9) and it is also something every parent knows how to do. With babies and young children, we effortlessly use this "appreciative" approach, praising their every attempt to walk, energising what they are doing well. And then at some point we switch to helping them learn by telling them what they're doing wrong, not what they're doing right. Used with adults, the appreciative effect has much the same effect as it does with children - it builds their confidence, motivates them, encourages them to learn, and helps them find and express their uniqueness. We should do more of it!

## Events

July 3-6 2000. The 3rd Annual Coaching & Mentoring Conference, London. Linkage International, Email: [conferences@linkage-international.co.uk](mailto:conferences@linkage-international.co.uk), Tel: +44 (0) 20 8943 3763.

September 13 2000. Next School of Coaching Coach Training Programme starts (10 days over 3 months). Tel: +44 (0) 141 352 5000. Email: [GMacDonald@indsoc.co.uk](mailto:GMacDonald@indsoc.co.uk)

November 23-4 2000. The 7th Annual European Mentoring Conference, Cambridge. Tel: +44 (0)171 235 3505; Fax: +44 (0)171 235 3565 Email: [helen@management.org.uk](mailto:helen@management.org.uk)

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