

The CEO Coach

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The first three articles on the *CEO Coach* series talked about why *the best* get coached. The *four learning styles* of human beings, beginning with concrete experience to reflective observation to abstract conceptualisation to active experimentation. The role of intentionality. The 'wax on-wax off' method. The key distinction between wanting to and willing to. And, now the results of coaching efforts.

Some of the quoted definitions to consider in the context of leadership and coaching are: *Authenticity* - the Soul of Leadership *Accountability* - the Choice of Leadership *Intentionality* - the Purpose of Leadership *Courage* - the Heart of Leadership *Alacrity* - the Energy of Leadership

Intentionality means accepting responsibility for actions and motives. Always asking why am I doing this? Could this be done better another way?

" Coaching is a profession of Love. You can't coach people unless you love them." Eldia Rahinsonn

Coaching always involves change. Major change. Which, at most times, is unimaginable. Ask a coach about the challenges faced with change that are faced – to make the impossible the possible. One must not forget that the ones being coached, would often have already gained a considerable degree of competence and would presently be in need of an 'extra' to allow a breakthrough. Despite all the accomplishments of the past, the fact remains that there is the elusive (?), unknown (?) future that still draws them into a coaching experience. To let go their past and to embrace the future calls for change. Big change.

Do human beings resist change?

The answer that is often heard is YES. It's also believed that the older one gets, the more difficult it is to accept change. Research however shows that this is not true. On the contrary human beings do not resist change. Instead, they resist the losses and consequences of change. This is the first immutable law relating to change. 'Loss' and not 'resistance' is the key word to watch for. It could be loss of face, loss of power, loss of wealth, loss of position, loss of peace, loss of relationship, loss of familiarity, or loss of comfort. The second law is that, the initiators of change rarely experience resistance, to the same significant extent, as to whom the change is being done unto. Both these laws are applicable in any situation in which changes is an ingredient of a movement forward.

In the context of CEO coaching, the losses primarily relate to the way of doing things thus far. Be it a task, a relationship or both. The shift in behavior almost always means feeling clumsy and unnatural in the new way of being. Hence, unless the need to achieve the new leadership competence and skills is

deep and driving, no shift will begin, leave alone ever take place. If one accepts the old adage that no breakthrough ever takes place inside the comfort zone, then the formula for overcoming the resistance due to losses and endings will be true only when...

Resistance < Passion and a vision for the desired state of being + Disgust for the current inhibiting Behaviors + Magnitude and Frequency of change actions and behaviors.

The swiftest way to see meaning in this formula would be to compare the experiences that individuals have while undertaking a health recovery program, often after one major heart attack.

Resistance: is usually to the change in life style. The diet and workout regimen. Not too fast, not too slow conditions. Do not do this do not that. Freedom clipped. And so on.

Passion and Vision: is a drive to be fine again. To live one more day with respect. To be of significance yet again. The need not be dependent. To walk straight. Chin up. To have a quality of life rather than quantity.

Disgust with the hospital bed. The state of helplessness.

Maybe fear. The smell, pain and often-condescending care. Ugh! Not once more. Surely this is the second big driver. Not always is 'disgust' or dysfunctional feelings essential for breaking through resistance but it surely does play a role where such emotions are inherent to the conditions under which the change got initiated.

Actions: The health recovery program itself. Most often adhered to in total earnestness where passion and/ dysfunctional feelings are present within the person.

A consistently effective coach, in any field of transformation, skillfully handles these internal drivers - to make the big change happen. This necessitates accurately identifying these drivers within the individual's mental system and deploying them at will - as drivers and coaches within, for change and action. As Eric Hoffer, author and philosopher(1902 - 1983) puts it, "**the real persuaders are our appetites, our fears and above all our vanity. The skillful propagandist stirs and coaches these internal persuaders**". Surely there are many more internal drivers like vision, purpose, relationships, values etc. However, Hoffer cannot be far from truth, as internal persuaders, per se, more often than not, are surely better than external influencer's as the biggest coaches for change. The learning, therefore, is that all CEO Coaches have an internal coach - a shadow and a twin - to make the breakthrough happen. To work alongside through intentionality is what coaching skill all about. Intentionality as covered elaborately in the last two articles is the key to any major coaching experience. To identify areas of breakthrough and work one's way through.

"Ultimately, human intentionality is the most powerful evolutionary force on this planet." George Leonard.

Evolution. Yes, evolution. We do not evolve, because we do what we have always done and we only get what we have always got. No movement, no growth. Only gripes and grins. The need to be brilliant is a 'wanting to' activity rather than a 'willing to' endeavor. Willing to involves tenacity and doggedness. The 'never say die' spirit. Focus and purpose. It must happen, come what may. Intentionality works when one is clear about the end in sight.

Back to the coaching context of the CEO. Driven by a need to be significant, and the best, to be great rather than good, the coach then identifies areas that need coaching support and works with intent. The first step would then be to carefully observe which of the four broad learning styles, namely, Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation that the person being coached needs to work on. Having identified one or two of the styles that need support, then the coach applies Formula 7 intentionally to enable a shift.

What then is Formula 7? Beyond an iota of doubt, a myth that has gained sanctity. Teachers of yoga, music, sports etc. use it well enough. All that one is trying to say is that when something is repeated seven times or 21 times or in its multiples, a person slowly begins to shift from doing to being. The new skill developed consciously becomes an unconscious skill, so much so that person demonstrates it as a natural behavior. When this happens, then the one undergoing coaching is said to have fulfilled the primary coaching purpose. How to sustain, it is the next big question?

I throw myself down in my chamber, and I call in, and invite God, and his Angels thither, and when they are there, I neglect God and his Angels, for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door. John Donne. 1572 - 1632, British Metaphysical Poet.

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