

The CEO Coach

Training & Management, November 2004

The second article on CEO coaching said that the aspect of intentionality was almost always the main cause of coaching breakdowns. It was about the inability of coaches to see their partners through; especially in rough weather, trying times, frustration, disillusionment and often emotionally devastating experiences. To enable a shift from soft spots to strengths, through the various states of consciousness, whereby the competence to handle different facets of life comes from a natural state of being, enabled through a process called intentionality. The aim of coaching has always been to see what one can be beyond who they currently are.

The anti-thesis would then be:

"If you deliberately plan on being less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you'll be unhappy for the rest of your life."—Abraham Maslow

Intentionality in the context of coaching never ever assures superlative success but aims at pressing forward, towards it. Despite the absence of a guaranteed and a definitive outcome, it still forms the most crucial aspect of any coaching experience.

In*ten*tion*al*ity, n. according to the dictionary is: The quality or state of being intentional; purpose; design. —Coleridge.

Right through history the exceptional have been driven by tenacious purpose.

Good, bad and ugly.

To them, intentionality is being governed by a well thought out delivery plan, in their own framework and definition of quality. Hence, it often appears to be orthodox in its features, disciplined in process, rigorous in rendition and demanding in results. It then means that intentionality aims at taking a conscious accountability for actions and motives that create a mental imagery in the minds of the ones being coached.

Intentionality has to do with the directedness or aboutness of mental states—the fact that, for example, one's thinking is of or about something.

Intentionality includes, and is sometimes taken to be equivalent to, what is called 'mental representation.'

It can seem that consciousness and intentionality pervade mental life—perhaps one or both somehow constitute what it is to have a mind. But achieving an articulate general under-

standing of either consciousness or intentionality presents an enormous challenge, part of which lies in figuring out how the two are related. Is one in some sense derived from or dependent on the other? Or are they perhaps quite independent and separate aspects of mind?

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy

Among the oft-quoted fictional character in articles and research papers, which talk about intentionality and the rigours of CEO coaching, is that of Mr. Miyagi in the movie *Karate Kid*. Perhaps the most viewed is the coaching video built around the *Karate Kid* by Kenneth Blanchard using the Hersey-Blanchard leadership model of the late sixties.

Though various other management scholars, and not surprisingly cults, have referred to the *Kid* thousands of times in their documents and coaching guides, it still doesn't tire to visit this story again for the benefit of those that missed it. Though simplistic in portrayal, the study of the coach and his partner in the movie is profound in implication.

The boy Daniel, in *Karate Kid*, is a tall young lanky lad being bullied by a bunch of strapping young lads and brawny brutes from school. In one of the mean encounters with this group, soon after a class of karate, the kid is pounded to pulp. It is at this moment Mr. Miyagi, the apartment maintenance technician, saves Dan. Impressed by Mr. Miyagi's ability, Daniel convinces him to teach him karate with the ultimate objective of getting even with the hunks and perhaps winning the karate championship. In the movie as Mr. Miyagi confirms his acceptance with a 'Uunhh', the coach's non-verbal cues appear to say...

"If you don't quit, and don't cheat, and don't run home when trouble arrives, you can only win"—Shelley Long

Thus begins the arduous and emotionally treacherous journey towards mastering karate. The first day begins with Dan, the avid learner, washing and waxing a seemingly endless line of limousines. Not cars. Limousines. When he is done, the tired and worn-out lad is shown sanding the vast expanse of a wooden floor and then painting the fencing of a large mansion. For the life of him, Dan does not understand what wax-on and wax-off, or grind clockwise and anti-clockwise, or flex up and down, has anything to do with karate. Why this nonsensical motions, with no apparent link whatsoever? He discovers much later that Mr. Miyagi was in fact taking him through the first learning stage of Directing, involving a carefully laid out plan of demonstrating, prioritising, providing here-and-now

feedback through careful monitoring and evaluation. However, at that stage not convinced that these acts of intentionality were getting him anywhere, the disheartened and disillusioned learner throws in the towel and walks off.

Quits! Gives up! Surrenders!

That is when Mr. Miyagi confronts him and takes a vicious swipe at Daniel's face. Unconsciously swinging his hands in swift self-defence, the youngster covers his face. The subsequent motions of the coach's rapid attack and Dan's counter-defence demonstrate that through the endless grind of wax-on and wax-off, he was indeed learning karate. It is in this context that George Leonard says:

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

We grow. We develop. We evolve because we willed it so. Our energy, our efforts and our purpose synthesise with each other to make the big shift happen.

Those familiar with the studies of Blake and Mouton Grid and the original works of Reddin, would be aware that the next stage of balancing, result orientation (concern for competence) and supporting (concern for the person) is the biggest challenge that any coach has to deal with. This is what Hersey and Blanchard call the 'coaching stage'.

Mr. Miyagi in *Karate Kid*, while maintaining the focus on rigorous competence building, at this phase explains the relevance of the various steps and actions, to clarify its purpose both in the immediate and in the larger context. He builds a relationship for the first time by inviting questions from Daniel and seeking to understand, while maintaining the pressures of delivery. Almost always, coaching breakdowns take place at this stage. It is estimated that about 90% do not make it beyond this point. It's not surprising Ken Loeffler, the American basketball coach says,

'There are only two kinds of coaches—those who have been fired, and those who will be fired'.

On the other hand if coaches were watchful of the fact that learners in the process of high risk experimentation could develop failure patterns which by itself could become counter productive, considerable grief could be avoided. By pacing with the learning partners and seeing the person gain competence through emotional and functional support, coaching results in the truest sense can begin to happen.

And as for the one being coached the distinction between 'willing to' and 'wanting to' begins to dawn.

As the Upanishads say

'Who we are, is what our deep desire is,
As our desire is, so is our will,
As our will is, so is our deed,
As our deed is, so is our destiny.'

Most who get past this stage are fairly competent to handle the might of demands that CEOs are faced with, corporate or otherwise. However, there is still diffidence present. Hence the coach engages in collaborative problem solving, listening attentively, reassuring and appreciating, and most importantly extending empathetic support. This is called the 'supporting stage'. In the movie, Mr. Miyagi reassures, encourages and engages in discerning Daniel's level of preparedness for the competition. On D-Day, Mr. Miyagi actually gets a black belt for Daniel to wear before he steps into the ring.

The poignant moment in any coaching cycle is the last stage called Delegating or Empowering.

Letting go.

A term often misunderstood and flippantly used.

Mr. Miyagi is far away from the ring, alone in the stands, while Daniel, the *Karate Kid*, stands by himself face to face with the competitor. The battle is mean. The stakes high. It seems the *Karate Kid*, is a kid after all and no coaching really helped. Amidst, the hooting and jeering of the crowd, with a face battered black and blue, it is then that Daniel learns 'to generate from' where Mr. Miyagi left, by demonstrating movements that were never ever taught or conceived.

A whole set of arrangements.
Delivered in absolute mastery.
Daniel is crowned victor.

Mr. Miyagi fades away.

Anand David is the founder of New Delhi-based Manford (Management Foundation for Organisational Research and Development).

Under his leadership, Manford has provided consultancy and training in performance orientation and breakthrough strategies in over 50 countries.

Today, Anand is perhaps the only CEO coach in India.

You can reach him at info@manford.org



anand david **the CEO coach**