

# Coaching at Work

## “p17 Three Minutes”

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A series of columns on our role in tackling the complicated economic, environmental and social challenges we face. It is a place to question, offer, share, explore, challenge, dissent, celebrate, reflect, learn and enjoy

## HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?



In our last column we reported how all the major coaching bodies now have statements like: “In service of humanity flourishing...”, “make a sustainable difference to individuals, organisations and, in turn, society” and “for the benefit of society” in their core strategies.

A question that quickly comes up when we discuss this with coaches is: “Is it legitimate to raise these big picture issues?”

We asked John Blakey, co-author of *Where Were All The Coaches When The Banks Went Down?* and *Challenging Coaching*, with its FACTS model.

“No man is an island, no coach is an island, no coachee is an island,” says John. “We can work to the client’s agenda but no client’s agenda is divorced from the systems in which they operate. ‘How would this appear on the front page of a major newspaper?’ is a legitimate question.”

There is a quiet magic in this type of question. There are other questions, too. “What will we tell the grandchildren?” is one close to our hearts. “How do you want to be remembered?” was the question central to Team GB’s preparation for the London 2012 Olympics.

We find these types of questions serve the client because:

- They shift perspective, inviting the client to look through the eyes of others, and over a different period of time
- They create awareness of the greater system. This puts the issues, actions and decisions into a bigger context. This, in turn, can create engagement, meaning and purpose
- They invite people to move from reactive to responsive, from data and knowledge-based thinking to wisdom, from stuck to innovative thinking.

All of this can serve the client, their organisation and the wider world. It’s win-win-win.

There are of course some caveats – the principles of contracting and informed consent are essential. And, as John emphasises, key in asking these questions is ensuring we are not presuming an outcome. “Coaches are built differently. For some, it’s all of our business, for some it’s none of our business. Raising awareness in this way is legitimate, but should not be mandatory,” says John.

This bigger picture thinking is gaining ground. Peter Block writes of stewardship over self-interest, and change through consent and connectedness. It’s a way that many leaders are finding attractive, especially now everything is open for public scrutiny and comment, and where engaging hearts and minds, and inspiring, are so important.

“We all have agendas and personalities that affect how we show up and how we serve”

Martin Seligman provides compelling evidence that a meaningful life – “using your signature strengths in the service of something that you believe is larger than you are” – enhances life satisfaction.

We all have agendas and personalities that affect how we show up and how we serve. These vary, and that’s OK. But if it feels right for you, and your client, then inviting them to look beyond the traditional boundaries can help them serve themselves, their organisation and their own happiness. And also everyone their work and life has an impact on and is affected by. ‘Me’ and ‘we’ both benefit, and that’s a good thing. ■

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