

What could an Executive Coach do for an Association Football Manager?

A Commentary

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INTRODUCTION

Trust is surely at the heart of any relationship, but there are at least two different relationships discussed within Jenkins' article, viz: the trust between coach and coachee, and the trust that develops between two ordinary members of the public as part of a growing, mutual relationship, uncomplicated by external status.

TRUST

Where there is a context for relationship framed by functional/organizational/professional requirements, the relationship (even before the parties meet) has boundaries of expectation. These can both enhance and hinder the growth of trust – if time passes and the coach stays inside the boundaries, then the coachee develops trust - unless something more significant happens to harm that trust. If time passes and the coach moves outside the boundary all may not be lost – provided the coach is aware and then manages the expectation of the coachee gracefully. In that process, the coachee may need to change their reality and to facilitate that, feel 'cared for' in that process.

In these professional settings, the coach is limited by receiving more personal information (emotions, intentions, etc.) than it would be appropriate for the coach to match and share with the coachee. This skewed boundary-setting helps set the coachee-expectation to allow for this largely-one-way building of 'relationship'.

In normal relating with others outside the functional/organizational/professional setting, we have more freedom for success (and for failure). The sharing of personal information is expected in this context and information fuels the growth of that relationship. The sharing or 'investment in the other' may be both in similar 'dimensions'; for example, passions for football; or disparate: for example, one person shares their passion for collecting stamps and the other reciprocates by expressing their desire to own a limited-edition cartoon. In each case, both parties are making emotional and informational investments in the other – offering privileged information in a spirit of trust. Provided both parties honour this code and keep the

information confidential, the relationship has potential for further investment and growth. Where one of the parties is at the boundary of their own willingness for growth with the other, they typically set covert limits on the further expansion of expression into new dimensions - the relationship becomes based upon existing areas of investment only. If the other party pushes against these limits of expression and expectation set by that party, beyond the already-established areas of sharing, then trust may be quickly lost by that party, leading to a rapid falling-out. I have set out [1] seven 'trust factors' which, if ignored, also lead to rapid free-fall of trust and possible fall-out.

CATHECTATION

Normal relating between people, where rapid, can create the energy for projection [2] or cathectation, where one party projects emotion, traits and intention onto the other (as if they belonged to the 'other') and where these may not actually exist. This is a 'falling in love' trait, out of sensible reason. It often leads to sudden withdrawal by the receiving party. In other cases, two people may willingly compromise their 'sense of self' by jointly cathecting towards one another in a psychological collusion. This can stay non-sexual, but physical contact is just one further development of mutual investment and since 'reality' is largely suspended by both parties, along with any tacit, cultural boundaries of control, this physical dimension may also be explored.

Cathectation by the coachee in professional settings also occurs. Sometimes the qualities of attentiveness, reflection and caring of the coach are uniquely high in the experience of the coachee. Sharing and investment of emotion and intentions by the coachee may be considerably more than ever experienced with partners, friends or family. Sometimes this trust and sharing starts within a very short period of meeting the coach. The coachee may feel loved, projecting these feelings onto the coach as if true and stimulating also inappropriate expression, personal enquiries or expressions of care.

AUTHENTIC CARE AND CHARACTER

In the coaching relationship, the speed at which trust is assumed and develops in the coachee can be startling. For example, I am called upon often to coach those deemed to be un-coachable by their peers. Of course, nothing can happen until the coachee trusts me. That period may take four hours or as little as eight minutes. I have for example been called in to provide coaching awareness training and 1-2-1 coaching to a major, international board for the sole purpose of introducing one 'problem' director to my care. In this case, about twenty minutes into the first session, the individual suddenly spewed out a diatribe of his weaknesses and failings in respect to the organization (that he cared deeply about, but had been partly undermining). My belief is that authentic care and character of the leader can enable this to happen. As Leider [3] says, it is character that builds trust.

Another practitioner who exemplifies rapid expectations of trust is Frank Farrelly. Working as a psychiatrist with patients in long-term dysfunction where other psychiatrists had failed to make any breakthrough, he started to get results using what he came to define as 'provocative therapy' [4]. Any observer of Frank will see that the client rapidly gets drawn into a cocoon of 'safe-space', which Frank has described

as coming from his heart. The clients invariably answer, when asked, that they were unaware of the audience or paraphernalia (and sometimes laughter) during the session. Exposure to Frank led me to define Provocative Coaching [5] as a specialist area of coaching. My own evidence from facilitating master-classes in executive and life coaching are invariably the same: the coachee is so internal in focus that they are unaware of time or the audience, even laughter. These examples are a special sub-set of professional 'caring and development' work with people that is assisted by holding the person in largely self-reflective experiences that focus on their own learning. As a result, their outside awareness and internal questioning of the relationship are practically zero.

CONCLUSION

Longer term relationships, even by those limited by a professional coaching within a football club, needs another level of continuing authenticity and investment (of interest rather than openness of personal emotions, intents etc. by the coach). This is surely assisted by an authentic mindset where the objective of caring for the other is paramount? The tools of such investments are more than adequately described in the seminal work of Carnegie [6].

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