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choice

the magazine of professional coaching

the Whole coach™

Marketing, Management, Mastery and Magnificence

What Does it Take to be a Whole Coach™?

The Magic of Strengths-Based Coaching

Get Rid of the Fear Factor in Feedback

8 Tips to Expand Your Business



By Ronnie S. Grabon, SPHR, BCC

Wearing Two Hats

The key to Whole Coach mastery

Beyond my coaching work, I have been teaching leadership and career in an MBA program for the last four years. As I teach, I find that I wear two hats and work to help my students do the same. Even though my official role is as an instructor, the first hat for me is coaching. Given the material that we are working with, my professional obligation is to ensure that the concepts we work with in class meet the developmental goals of the students and are used appropriately outside of the classroom. When discussing type preferences, it is critical that students understand how to apply the concept of preference to their own development, don't use it for selection purposes and that no one leaves the class wondering if they can really be a manager given an introverted preference.

With the second hat, I am thinking about how the students will apply the information to benefit the organizations they work in and the people they work with. During the class, I ask the students to wear both of these hats as well. How can they use developing a life vision to benefit their own future, and how will they use that material to coach their employees? If values are important to the development of each student, how do they apply that concept to creating ethical organizations and allowing their co-workers to be true to their own values?

To be a 'whole coach,' we must also wear two hats. Wearing one hat, we are fully client focused: how does each coaching conversation serve the needs of our client? Wearing the other hat, we reflect on how that same coaching conversation affects us.

In the university, with 70+ hours of work over 14 weeks I understand that not all the material will resonate with everyone, so how do I ask my students to prioritize the topics we cover? Are these the same topics that I would prioritize in my coaching practice? I believe the answer is yes. The three topics that I would prioritize for



both students and coaches are: learning agility, reflection and resilience.

Learning Agility

Deciding on this as one of the 'big three' came as a surprise even to me. I began with the assumption that self-awareness, values or vision would take my vote for most important. Learning rose to the top in thinking about the process that we, as coaches, are engaged in – the process of reinvention. Even in small ways, our clients are reinventing themselves in every session – and engaging our other hat, we are also.

Often, both coaches and clients believe we are open to learning and then end up learning what we already know. Or we take the time to read new material, but then don't apply it in our work. The process of incorporating new learning deeply includes finding methods of applying it to new situations, similar to the way we ask young students to use new vocabulary in their writing. Learning is not yours until you use it.

Reflection

How many times do our clients move from meeting to meeting without incorporating the material and experiences from one meeting to the problems of the next? How often do we do this as we move from one client to another?

Does our process include asking: What did that client

teach me? What do I need to learn or re-learn? How do I apply the lessons from that client situation to another? Or more powerfully, how did that client affect me? What feelings are arising? What experiences are those emotions connected to? Do I feel more or less competent? What material do I need to research, note do I need to send or question do I need to ask to help the client incorporate the session in a more powerful way? What tools am I using for reflection? How am I incorporating my own learning?

Resilience

Many of our clients deeply want to believe that if they can just complete their work, without major conflict, then resilience won't be an issue. Client organizations often say that work/life balance is important, yet when forced to choose between that competence or competing competencies such as results orientation or strategic vision, the latter wins every time.

Resilience is essentially equilibrium. Without it, our ability to stay grounded – to manage the ‘incoming’ and rise another day to tackle the world – is impaired. Many times, I find the lack of this competence at the base of multiple other issues, both for myself and for my clients. Have we prioritized our physical fitness, taken joy in our emotional lives, quieted ourselves spiritually, and contemplated intellectually? Without helping our clients understand how to stay rooted in this complex world and without our own understanding of how to replenish the energy we give to our clients, our ability to continue to do our work is diminished.

While none of these areas comes as a surprise, they often fly under the radar. We can get as trapped in focusing on the task, just as our clients do. To paraphrase Covey in *The 8th Habit*: being intentional about our clients and our own learning, reflecting and resilience will help us “find our voice – and inspire our clients to find theirs.” ●

I am a Board Certified Coach (BCC)

“I’ve always been an idealist. I’ve always had an interest in optimal living—developing the whole person, if you will—that which helps people to live fully.”

PATRICK WILLIAMS, Ed.D., Board Certified Coach (BCC)
and founder of Coaching the Global Village

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