the school of coaching

More for Less and Better from Fewer

This surely must be the leadership challenge faced by most businesses: a strong recurring theme. Recent gains in the stock markets are said to have been fuelled by improvements in productivity and cost cutting, and few businesses are experiencing real growth. It would seem this trend is set for the next few years as Europe and the other economies of the world navigate the recession.

Leaders are facing some of the most challenging circumstances, cut backs often result in redundancies and there is a need to ask for more and better from the fewer personnel that remain. So how can we get more for less and better from fewer?

At The School of Coaching we believe that few people ever realise their true potential or experience the feeling of being in full flight, or as Tim Gallwey (author of The Inner Game of Tennis) says "in flow". We also believe that being at ease allows creativity and that relentless urgency can be highly restrictive. In his books Gallwey offers the basic equation: Potential – Interference = Performance.

How can we create, for ourselves and employees, the time to think and reflect with ease? How can we as leaders understand and recognise interference in others when in most organisations, employees are hit with successive and often overwhelming waves of change? How can we as leaders minimise, if not remove, the interference that inhibits our employees achieving their true potential?

At The School of Coaching, we work to improve the quality of conversations within organisations, which goes a long way to dealing with interference and providing an environment that stimulates creativity. We describe coaching as the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another.

What makes a great conversation?

Developing Senior Executives and Business Leaders in three key areas is paramount in creating an environment where the individual and the organisation thrive. When there is change in an organisation employees want to hear from the Chief Executive and their line-manager. Responsibility for creating an environment that stimulates rather than destroys creativity falls mainly on the top-level of the organisation.

- Leadership: Creating meaning, vision and a common purpose to engage employees.
- Management: Setting standards, expectations and goals.
- Coaching: Engaging employees in conversations about how they relate to change, and how they achieve goals, co-creating processes, creative thinking and ideas.

Basic Flow of a great coaching conversation

1. Asking what's on their minds: Create space and time to ask employees what's on their minds. Often as a Senior Executive or Business Leader we have our agenda and list of things to do. A focus only on doing, or action, quite often restricts thinking and creativity. Creating conversations to also understand and appreciate the employee's agenda is important.

> At The School of Coaching, we work to improve the quality of conversations within organisations, which goes a long way to dealing with interference and providing an environment that stimulates creativity

2. What would represent a great outcome for this conversation? Allow the employee to speak first, really understand what they have to say and only then add things that would enhance this or just merely 'play back' what you have understood. Checking for understanding in itself is very powerful in such conversations.

3. Understanding some more about what's occurring for them relative to the topic: Is there anything more to say about the topic now?

4. Generating a set of adaptive options: Challenges within organisations can be complex. Building in review and learning loops to the steps for action, involving stakeholders and interested parties are important.

5. Agreeing the most interesting next steps: Clearly doing everything may not be possible; what high leverage steps can we take that will maximise impact?

6. Reinforcing belief in the employee and their potential: Appreciation is probably the single most important factor contributing to enjoyment at work.

Please do not be fooled by the simplicity of this process: applied with genuine interest, real listening and skill it will unleash the potential of teams and individuals. Sustaining improved business results requires that we not only 'perform' but that we also experience enjoyment, learning and meaning from our work, especially in turbulent times.

If you would like to know more about The School of Coaching's suite of services please visit **www.theschoolofcoaching.com**