

# Coaching the coach to the next level

Philip Atkinson



We must maintain an edge in order to achieve our personal results.

In Issue 24 of *Coach the Coach* Philip Atkinson focused on coaching yourself out of a crisis. In this issue he extends the thinking to coach the coach to achieve a powerful and resourceful future.

## Introduction

Doctors make the worst patients. This analogy also holds true for coaches. Many expert and influential coaches will know the right buttons to press to motivate, stimulate and help others learn, and yet they sometimes neglect to view their own progress. It can sometimes be difficult to be an objective observer of one's own behaviour. It is also worth noting that the personal thinking, paradigms and methodologies that have brought the coach to their current level of learning, growth and achievement will not be the ones to take them to the next level.

The next level will differ for everyone, but knowing what you

have achieved up to today may not be sufficient to move you to your next stage of development. It is true that coaches can become stale. They can lose their interest and find that pursuing similar work with clients does not sharpen their edge. Stephen Covey<sup>1</sup> best sums this up in his book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by focusing on the core issue of 'sharpening the saw'.

He uses the simple analogy of cutting wood with a sharp saw to illustrate that whatever we achieve requires us to keep the tools sharp to achieve our personal results. We have to return to sharpen our tools, our techniques and our thinking in order to move to the next level.

The next level is defined for me in terms of existence, in terms of looking at life-span development. The thinking that has allowed me to occupy this time and space today may not be the thinking to take me

to the next level. The next tier in one's professional development can be seen as part of one's full development as a person. This includes developing one's intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual learning.

### Key learning points

- ◆ While coaches often help clients focus on the learning they need to achieve, they can sometimes neglect to do the same for themselves.
- ◆ Coaches who don't hone and improve their skills can become stale and lose interest.
- ◆ Coaches shouldn't rely on the same coach or advisors over a long period of time; new faces offer new perspectives.
- ◆ The belief cycle.
- ◆ Eight beliefs for successful personal growth.

It is a good idea to unearth your true beliefs by exploring the link between your identity, values, beliefs, behaviours and skills which determine the results you achieve as a coach. This simple model is based on Robert Dilts's research into changing belief systems.<sup>3</sup> He states that our identity is shaped by our values – that is, what is important to us and what we believe we can achieve – 'We do what we value and we value what we do.' Our current identity is driven very much by values and beliefs. By exploring the beliefs that empower us and exploring negative self-limiting beliefs, we can as coaches step up to the next level.

There are various approaches that can be used for changing belief systems, and coaches can apply this methodology not just to themselves but also to their clients.

By focusing on beliefs, we can reprogramme our identity as coaches, and if our mentors use this approach with us they can help facilitate radical personal change. We think of these as taking place in breakthrough sessions that allow us to break through the ceiling of self-limits to climb to the next floor.

### Quadrant 3

Quadrant 3 focuses on taking action to achieve results. This quadrant should involve taking what some describe as a 'massive commitment to do' rather than think, review, reflect and procrastinate. Here we have to take risks, to avoid self-limiting self-talk, and focus on repeatedly taking action. All action requires a huge investment in decisiveness. Indecision leads to reflection and doubt. Take action. It may not always work and give you the result you want. But you will be

aware that you are either nearer your goal or have to take corrective action to arrive at your desired destination. So if one action does not work, note what did not work and keep on trying new things. Of course, our actions should be intelligent, but not over-analysed for fear of failure, because the learning taken from our intuitive leaps of faith reflected in our actions can lead to significant improvement. This further reinforces our belief that we can achieve anything anywhere.

### Quadrant 4

Quadrant 4 is our results box. Here we learn whether or not the action worked. From this feedback we can then intelligently reflect on our current beliefs, on what worked and what did not, have confidence in our ability to deliver,

and then focus again on taking action until we get the results we want.

### Final thoughts

We are all interested in achieving results. Quadrant 4 is what we all gravitate towards, but there are many routes to the same goal. A great coach does not just evolve, but exposes themselves to new experiences and new people, whether they rely on being mentored and motivated, or follow a firm methodology or structure. Alternatively, they may seek a more reflective experiential facilitator. This depends on their own path of seeking, learning, experimenting and integrating into their repertoire of coaching styles and skills. The effective coach uses a combination of support from others and self-reflection.

*'coaches will know the right buttons to press to motivate, stimulate and help others learn, and yet they sometimes neglect to view their own progress'*

### References

- 1 Stephen Covey, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Free Press, 2004.
- 2 Howard Gardner, *The Disciplined Mind*, Penguin Books, 1999.
- 3 Robert Dilts, *Beliefs: Pathways to Health and Wellbeing*, Metamorphous Press, 1990.

**Philip Atkinson** is director of Learning Strategies Ltd, specialising in strategic, behavioural and cultural change. He is a consultant in the UK, Europe and United States, has written seven business books and published many articles, speaks at conferences and runs workshop sessions. His latest book is *How to become a Change Master: Real World Strategies for Achieving Change* (Spiro Press, May 2005).

- Telephone: +44 (0) 0131 346 1276
- Websites: [www.philipatkinsonconsulting.com](http://www.philipatkinsonconsulting.com), [www.learningstrategies.ltd.uk](http://www.learningstrategies.ltd.uk)
- E-mail [AtkinsonConsult@aol.com](mailto:AtkinsonConsult@aol.com)



## What action do you need to take in order to achieve your potential?

All of our learning can be summarised as physical, inter-personal, intrapersonal, linguistic, mathematical, visual and spatial, musical and concerned with emotional intelligences.<sup>2</sup> In order to achieve this learning, coaches need to address many issues, of which two key areas are outlined below.

- Does the coach need a coach to take them up to the next tier?
- Can the coach independently use a methodology to confront their personal issues and take them to the next level?

### Does the coach need a coach to take them up to the next tier?

Whether the coach has a coach themselves is an issue that can make the transition to the next level easier. Sometimes it's not an issue of having a coach or not; rather it is holding on to the same advisers for too long. In life we have to seek others for advice, but we should not stick with the same mentor or rely on the same resources. We all need to seek additional challenge.

We read each week of famous sporting teams replacing old advisers with new names. Sometimes teams and individuals become too close to their coaches. Just sometimes we need to change our coach or mentor simply because we have become too familiar with them. It is unusual to see the same coach in national rugby, rowing or football teams for more than two or three seasons. They move on to new challenges. A new face always brings a different perspective. This is something that, as change makers and motivators, we should practise ourselves, and we should regularly review our mentors, advisers and coaching partners.

Coaches need to review their current positioning in their career and willingly focus on attracting the right coach for them. Sometimes coaches will ask tough questions and they may differ markedly in their personal learning style. This has to be good. It is only by exploring that which is outside one's perceptions, beliefs and paradigms that any true improvement and learning can take place.

### Can the coach independently use a methodology to confront their personal issues and take them to the next level?

We know that having a coach-the-coach relationship is a good thing for some people, but it does not work for all. Sometimes the coach must rely on their own resources to take them to the next level. Because of the nature of some personal challenges and crises, coaches sometimes decide to keep their own counsel. To be successful they need to develop a series of methodologies to support them in shaping their future.

We use a very simple development tool that focuses upon four core areas, which are best represented by the four-stage belief cycle (outlined below).

The belief cycle is so named because our beliefs determine whether or not we will achieve results. The Henry Ford quote 'Whether you believe you can or you can't, you are right!' best sums up the importance of being aware of our current beliefs and cultivating the positive beliefs to take us onwards and upwards. Our beliefs are our drivers that determine whether we can or cannot achieve a target.

If, as a coach, you hold the view that you work best with line managers rather than senior managers, you will probably find you are not offered much, or any, senior management coaching, because – unconsciously or consciously – you are not attracting the work to you.

Many of the beliefs that drive us are unconscious. Our purpose, if we are

### The belief cycle

#### Quadrant 1: belief and believe

- What action will you take to understand the beliefs that shape your behaviour and your identity?
- What do you truly believe about yourself that will support you in achieving your goals as a coach?
- What self-limiting beliefs hold you back from your dreams?
- Have you clarified your beliefs to ensure they support your future?
- Did others form your beliefs for you, telling you what to do and when?
- Are there some beliefs that would be better banished to the museum of outmoded beliefs?

#### Quadrant 4: results

- What actions have you reviewed?
- How do you measure your success?
- What signs are there telling you whether you are on course or not?
- Have you checked your flight path to your goal?
- What information on your progress are you seeking from others?
- What actions are you going to take to remove any roadblocks?
- What are you learning about yourself?
- What is this learning confirming about the positive beliefs you have of yourself?
- What learning is telling you to confront any self-limiting beliefs and remove them for good?

to grow, is to uncover our beliefs and then work on removing the beliefs that hinder us from achieving our objectives. We must then build new, powerful beliefs to act as thrusters to propel us into the future. My research from many texts suggests there are broadly eight beliefs that lead to success in personal growth, and these are outlined above.

#### Quadrant 2: your potential

- If, for just one day, you had the capability to push your personal envelope to the limits, what could you achieve?
- Have you truly assessed your strengths and what you consider to be your limitations?
- How much of your potential has been shaped by others' expectations, what others have told you to do and how to behave?
- Has the time now appeared when you can live the way you want?

#### Quadrant 3: action

- Have you creatively devised a plan of action?
- Are you sure that you have used your intuition to help that plan?
- How can you ensure that you are truly creative, decisive and ground breaking in your thinking?
- Be clear that the term 'massive action' describes what you are aiming to deliver.
- How can you leverage others to support you in taking action to deliver results?
- How can you increase your confidence in taking calculated risks?
- Who else can support you in devising a decisive action plan for change?

### Quadrants 1 and 2

Referring back to the beliefs cycle, we can see that quadrant 1 beliefs have a huge impact on our potential in quadrant 2. Although we all have a huge reservoir of potential and can learn almost anything to the degree of mastery, our beliefs both support us in our quest and propel us to the next stage. Self-limiting beliefs can also

hold us back and stop us fulfilling our potential. It is empowering to believe that our potential is unlimited and grounded by our dreams, our goals, perseverance and actions. It is not enough to think you can achieve a goal. You have to believe it with passion. You cannot half-believe it. It has to be a certainty. If you do not believe it with your heart and soul, you will not achieve your goal. It may be that your programme of what you can achieve is driven by a lot of *shoulds* imposed by others rather than a true belief in self. Often parents and other authority figures have planted these *should, must, ought* behaviours or expectations in your mind, and what you think you want is really no more than a reflection of what others wanted for you.

### Eight beliefs for successful personal growth

- 1 Everything happens for a reason and a purpose, and it serves us if we take control.
- 2 There's no such thing as failure – there are only results. If we are not getting what we want, we need to have sufficient flexibility to change what we are doing.
- 3 Whatever happens, take responsibility – know you have the ability to respond.
- 4 It not necessary to understand everything before you commit to something which is the right thing to do.
- 5 Your relationships with others are your greatest strategy to achieve results.
- 6 Make play your work.
- 7 There is no abiding success without commitment.
- 8 The more we practise, the luckier we get.