

Does your organisation know where the pause button is...?

One of the primary values of a coaching relationship is having the opportunity to “really consider what the best option is without the pressure of time or politics”. Why do individuals value doing this with an Executive coach? Because they simply can’t do it amongst the maelstrom that exists within their organisation.

Rialto Associate Director, Michelle Lucas, explains some of the key success factors required in established a successful coaching culture

As an executive coach we are privileged to obtain an insight into many different organisations and how they operate. Of course it’s easy to observe when you are on the outside looking in, when you don’t have to survive in the organisation and your career does not depend on the benevolence of a few key stakeholders. However, from this external perspective there appears to be themes which are common to many organisations regardless of sector or maturity. With the pace of business today there seems to be an inordinate pressure to make decisions quickly, professionals are paid to have a view, paid to take a position and to propose a way forward almost “on demand”. Most organisations seem to value the “activists” amongst us – with the mantra of “do something, anything – then we can say we are working on it!”. Those who are more reflective or more consensual need to exert all of their assertiveness to take the time to “think it through” or to “see what others think”. So does all of this lead to good decision making and to good leadership? Some of the time it probably does – being “fleet of foot” and agile in today’s economy can be essential when competitors are nipping at our heels.

But is it the only style of working? Probably not. Most of our coaching clients readily attest that the primary value of a coaching relationship is having the opportunity to “take time out” to “find out what they really think” and to “really consider what the best option is without the pressure of time or politics”. And why do they value doing this with an Executive coach? Because they simply can’t do it amongst the maelstrom that exists within their organisation.

So imagine the potency of an organisation that has the flexibility to take both approaches – the ability to make good decisions in the moment and the ability to pause and consider both past and future actions in a constructive manner. Organisations we know which have cracked this duality have the skills of good coaching at its very core – genuine respect of others, appreciative listening, generating options, scenario planning and encouraging ownership and accountability at the individual level. They are goal oriented and focused about delivery and yet balance this with a longer term view that rests on the power of constructive and collaborative relationships.

Does your organisation know where the pause button is

Creating this brand of culture typically starts with Senior Executives experiencing the benefit of coaching first hand. In the absence of the coach and facing a challenge the Senior Executive will often consider how their coach would work with them and they begin to learn how to self-coach. It then becomes an obvious next step to use some of the techniques they have been the beneficiary of, with their own people. Learning how not to “give forth” with their own opinions and experiences so that their people can consider what will work best is however a skill that takes much determination. An executive will truly need to believe that they don’t have the monopoly on good ideas if their ears are to do more work than their mouths. However, as the positive impact of this appreciative behaviour gains traction we begin to see managers developing more flexible leadership styles - telling when they really need to but giving people the time and space to carve their own path. Importantly they provide the opportunity for their people to make the right kind of mistakes – those that don’t expose the business and yet generate good individual learning. Once this kind of “intelligent risk taking” behaviour occurs the more likely it is that curiosity will become driver behind management conversations. The emphasis shifts to what can be learned rather than who needs to be taken to task.

There is the potential of creating a gradual evolution whereby managers are interested in learning more than fault finding . Colleagues no longer have to worry about how they will defend their position and will start to live Covey’s principle to “seek first to understand, then to be understood” they evolve into great information gatherers and problem solvers in the process.

So the next time you are put under pressure to “make a call” yourself or to demand the same of one of your team – try pressing the pause button. How essential is it to decide now, right this minute or before the day is out? What if you believed the best outcome would be to solve the real issue and not just today’s crisis? Sure there are times for direction and action – but there are also opportunities for reflection and consideration which can easily get overlooked in the rush to meet targets. So press the pause button for a moment - how well does your organisation manoeuvre between action and reflection? If you’d like to find out more about how to get the best of both worlds then join us on one of our development events. We’ll be lifting the lid on how to create a coaching culture as well as helping those of you who already recognise the efficacy of taking a coaching approach to hone your skills still further.

Michelle Lucas will be facilitating an executive seminar in London on the 14th March 2013 to provide insights on how to successfully develop and embed a coaching culture into your organisation. If you or a senior colleague would like to attend, [please click here](#).

To find out how Rialto can help you and your organisation:
Telephone: +44 (0) 203 043 8640
Email: info@rialtoconsultancy.com
www.rialtoconsultancy.com

The logo for Rialto, featuring a stylized green and yellow arch above the word "rialto" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.