Mike’s Musings:  
Hints and Help from Mike Jay  
Old Normal-New Normal  

Mike Jay

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Welcome back to the musings...kind of a ring to that, don’t you think?

There are four basic strands of coaching in my view: perceptual, symbolic, affective and behavioral. If you’re a devotee of the Santiago Theory of Cognition, you’ll soon realize that it’s all cognition—life and aliveness is cognition. Why? Because our mind is embodied and not separate from matter, affection, etc. according to Descartes. Rene knew what he knew from whence he knew it and could explain. Today we know he was wrong to separate them.

Therefore, perceptual (following again Kolb’s lines of learning from the 1970’s) becomes the identifier as many people will just flat coach from an intuitive realm and no more, because of who they are. I hope to be able to add some more later on down the line in a musing or two, but for now let me make some comments on the case study.

Perhaps I should begin with the “NEW NORMAL.” As some of you might know, this “new state of affairs” as it is referred to replaces conditions in the information age such as fast company, the way it was, the ways things are, the internet economy, etc...use your favorite cliché here. I agree with some of this because I am of the firm belief that what we see happening before our eyes is NOT a cycle. Things have self-organized at a more complex level of organization and we are just beginning to uncover the sense of things.

If you’ll remember back to my first muse in the charter edition of this column, you’ll notice that the 2010 Leadership Report by The Conference Board indicated that leadership is going to have to change to accommodate the onset of complexity as we’ve never seen.

“Forget about the Next Big Thing,” he says. “The next thing has started. It’s called the New Normal, and 2003 will be the first full year of it. The New

My sense of things is that contrast may begin to reframe our dialogue around executive coaching. In the case study in this month’s edition of the journal there are a number of assumptions made and offered, many of them are excellent. Yet, the NEW NORMAL dictates an arrayed approach rather than just a linear approach. While I’m not able in this musing to fully explore what I mean here, just let me say that we’ll need to do a “both/and” rather than an either/or if executive coaching is to coalesce and self-organize itself at a higher level of complexity...by this I mean—to incorporate the array of
executive coaching that will be required in the New Normal.

As a coach trainer myself, let’s say I’ve been staunch around my principles of what coaching is and what it is not. Since my book in 1999, I’ve operated off of a definition of coaching that I’m comfortable with and support. Over that time, I’ve written a great deal about what coaching is and what it can be and I’ve come to a conclusion that coaching is basically whatever anyone says it is. No, that doesn’t change my opinion and definition, but it does embrace the issue of everybody’s right...a concept few can hold because it forces us to hold a paradox as true – both/and.

The reason I bring this to light now, is that we have to be careful about the kinds of boundaries we set on executive coaching from the practitioner’s point of view. I realize that for some of us – structure, boundaries and definition are preferences. But, one thing I’ve taken to heart is that business is going to do what is required — morally, legally and ethically, of course — to get done what needs to get done…or die. With the world becoming enormously complex, a balance between what is viewed from the outside and the inside will be in flux, usually following the forms of dissipative structures — operating far outside equilibrium to maintain its relationship with environmental entropy.

So, let me state a few ideas that perhaps lie in contrast to the conclusions in the case study:

**Executive coaches:**

Will be defined as anyone who gets hired as one.

Will face increasing amounts of individual and collective complexity.

Will become a desired co-participant in executive sensemaking.

Will become increasingly defined by the work they do and how they do it.

Will soon realize that business effectiveness is a trailing indicator.

Will regardless of their calling be required to become wholistic practitioners.

Will soon find themselves hired for reasons other than trust...as trust is dictated by similar paradigms of sensemaking and people will have to be shaken from their paradigms and an astute executive will not see trust as the key at all to selecting an executive coach...that is, if they’re ready to shake off what has them.

Are not operating in a new field, executive coaching has been around for centuries and there are elements woven into the “mind” of business that guide the BS detectors that will keep out the charlatans...no regulation needed here.

Won’t need policy and procedure manuals, although people who haven’t as yet, set clear expectations around what they have to accomplish as execs/organization will. Clear expectations, including qualitative and quantitative measurement – things business understands – are all that is required, because what doesn’t work is obsoleted in real time – I suspect according to the New Normal.

Finally, will be required to become more self-aware.

In closing, I guess I want to say that much of the world is trying to solve complex problems with even greater complex solutions, it would seem to be the way to do proceed...yet that is the illusion of what I call first tier or modernism as some might call it. Complex behavior is the result of simple rules being applied in a whole that self-organizes as more complex behavior — like non-sentient neurons swarming into a sentient mind/soul or our wonderful example of life in the whole, the lowly ant...entirely stupid — self-organizing into a sentient colony with a personality!

You can’t solve complexity by becoming more complex directly...you solve complexity by understanding the simple rules that led to its formation. It’s a field I’ve entitled Emergenics and hopefully over time, you’ll hear more about it as we discover more and more of the simple rules in the New Normal.

Until then,

**Mike Jay**
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