Mike’s Musings:
Hints and Help from Mike Jay
Towards a Holistic Approach
In Executive Coaching

Mike Jay

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Towards a Holistic Approach
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The theme for this particular issue of the journal is framed around “personal issues in executive coaching.” I’m writing this with an ear to misinterpretation of my remarks, but writing nonetheless. In my opinion, it is impossible to separate the person and the executive, just as in Descartes’ error; it has become clear that mind and matter are inseparable.

Towards that end, let me see if I can contribute to the multilogue. In the graphic on the next page, I’ve taken liberty with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory to add “Results” and created a tetrahedron I believe it’s called. I’ve mapped its faces with the six factors of climate represented by Daniel Goleman in the “Leadership That Gets Results” article featured in Harvard Business Review a few years ago.

In the graphic, which is a snapshot, we note that the person, their behavior, their environment(s) and results are inextricably linked. To me, it’s impossible to separate the person and the executive in terms of identity, purpose, intention or action.

Now that we’re here, how does the executive coach manage the delicate equilibrium that is often easily shattered with an improper approach?

I’ll show you how I manage it, at least one of the ways. Perhaps it will serve as an adequate example to illustrate that it might be possible to maintain a professional approach without crossing fragile boundaries.

Over the years, I’ve developed a model called RCAP or Rubik’s Cube Analogy Protocol.

I’ve created what I believe is at least an attempt to take a holistic or perhaps even an integral approach to managing the personal issues in executive coaching. Here’s the short version:

- 4 domains of effect
  - Personal
  - Professional
  - Business
  - Network
Bandura
Social Learning Model
Where these effects are viewed through four perspectives adapted from Kaplan and Norton’s Balanced Scorecard Approach:2

- 4 perspectives
  - Internal
  - External
  - Financial
  - Developmental

Across dimensions of time:
- Past
- Now
- Near
- Far

A graphic of the RCAP is provided on the next page of this journal.

The bugaboo for me is the past. When we deal with personal pasts, we’re treading in gray areas. However I think the historical past for the organization, the business or network are areas of fertile ground for executives. Obviously, the personal past has warning signs that speak to being skilled in referral when the past remains unresolved and continues to sub-optimize the present in a dysfunctional manner. Just writing about it raises the hair on the back of my neck because it remains subjective as to what constitutes dysfunction. And, as noted by many authors, this remains an area of contention in executive coaching.

With that being said, let me close with how I’m able to work with executives using RCAP.

1. Most executive issues occur across domains, perspectives and dimensions of time.
2. When we listen or observe the executive, we can identify the scope, scale and complexity of the executive’s capability to deal with multiple domains, perspectives and dimensions by using a model like RCAP.

3. We can notice what the executive’s “position” becomes in relation to the personal, professional, business and network effects, perspectives and how they locate those issues or positions in terms of their time perspective.

4. As a coach using dynamic inquiry, we can probe areas which may not be showing up on the radar that may appear to hold opportunity when objectified.

While not being able to separate the person from the executive’s role, by taking a holistic or integral approach, I believe the executive coach can service the executive personality, without crossing boundaries.

For more information about integral from my point of view, visit http://www.whatisintegral.com.

Mike Jay

Endnotes


Rubik's Cube Analogy Project
Resource Center for Professional Coaching in Organizations

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