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Musings

By Mike Jay

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MUSING

BY MIKE R. JAY, DEVELOPMENTALIST

You might notice that I've chosen to use a new "after-my-name designation." About three years ago, I decided that what I was really doing was beyond coaching and therefore needed a new language. 'Developmentalist' is not a new term. It's been used for some time in academia and in the adult development community which you'll continue to see "conciliate" with additional fields over the next few years.

However, the reason I began with this idea for the muse is not to get you into the developmentalist frame, but to show you that if coaching is 'big' enough, then it will continue to grow and lead this conciliation. Right now, I have my doubts. Let me explain why.

While I'm not nearly the first, I've been around awhile, now beginning my 19th year as a person calling themselves a professional coach. During that time, I've seen just about everything when it comes to partnerships, alliances and federations. In large part, it's been a disappointment.

Coaching remains small.

I suppose the reason I view it this way is due to the silos that have been built up as everyone struggles for clients. And yet, I don't see the answer in a de facto standard either. So, if we can't be successful alone and we can't be successful as one together, then what do we do? Well, in my opinion as the muse, com-

petition is leading to commoditization. When and if, the coaching industry folds under one banner or standard, we're all going to be poorer in the end. Coaches aren't accountants, doctors, plumbers or lawyers, but I suppose many wish for the prestige...or do they want what prestige brings? That's the real question for partnerships, alliances and federations in my view—as the topic for this journal is sure to illuminate.

What kind of system do we need to keep from becoming a commodity?

Of course, that's not even the right question...Fooled you didn't I?

What kind of system do we need to keep from becoming a commodity?

As I've mentioned over the years in some of my past musings, our focus is on the wrong thing. The question remains, what do clients want? Do they care if we are in partnerships, alliances and federations? Do they really care if we are certified, credentialed or standardized?

In 19 years of experience, no client has ever asked me if I was certified. Certification is for coaches, not clients! What clients want and will pay for is performance. And that performance comes in all kinds of different packages. Again, we come back to the old saw...give the clients what they want.

OK, so to the point, yes?

I believe clients are going to need multiple coaches. I've spoke about this over the years as a many to one paradigm. Complexity is increasing so quickly that one person has very little probability of managing it very efficiently, effectively or sustainably alone—coaches too!

For years, I've worked among partnerships, alliances and federations, often not well, as like a number of other independent professionals, I prefer the solo flight. Yet, more and more over the years, I've been developing my collaboration muscles. Even a person as independent as I am realizes the writing is on the wall—coaching has to get big. And I don't mean through proliferation because quite frankly as a developmentalist, I've realized that MOST people don't want to be coached.

Just let me make one note on this “people don't want to be coached” jazz.

It's true and easy to see. If as people say there are around 10-100,000 coaches, if there were very many clients or coaches who had coaches the current demand couldn't be satisfied. Yet, research reports 90% of coaches make less than \$10,000 a year coaching and I would say it's lower than that in reality—averages fool us sometimes.

Earlier this year, DASH founder Eric Aronson indicated their new infomercial system would remake coaching. “The impact of this campaign will change coaching forever,” Aronson says, and after a year, there is no remake...why? Eric forgot one thing...just because you build it, doesn't mean they will come. Especially if it has to do with someone overcoming ego issues and reaching out for help. People don't want to be coached! However, people can and do want results.

Just last week, I worked in “partnership” with one of our experienced executive coaches in concert with some coaching she was doing in a Fortune 1000 company. When I asked each of the people who were in coaching, why they were in

coaching, they said, they were forced. Now, that doesn't mean they don't need it, or in most cases won't benefit from it, but essentially coaching has developed small, without demand.

Is coaching dead?

No, not by any means, but the growth curve of coaches has not matched the demand curve of supply and consequently if coaching is going to stay small, it's going to get a lot smaller.

How does coaching get big?

It grows up, out of adolescence and begins to act like an adult. We see less and less call for standardization, and more focus on creating client effectiveness, in whatever form that occurs. Coaching, unlike many of its descendents in mental health is still robust with innovation and stands to benefit from diversity rather than conformity.

You don't have to tell me how difficult it is to design a system that can on the one hand provide credibility, and on the other hand release innovation. I've been at work on it for years. Yet finally I've realized that one of the keys to coaching becoming big is the proliferation of partnerships, alliances and federations and less concentration on a de facto standard. Like consulting, coaching can't be, nor should be regulated. The 'market space' is not calling for regulation, or standards. The market space is crying out for results. When we begin to focus on results instead of how we get them, coaching will grow up...and partnerships, alliances and federations will all get better.

“Each of your breaths is a priceless jewel, since each of them is irreplaceable and, once gone, can never be retrieved. Do not be like the deceived fools who are joyous because each day their wealth increases while their life shortens. What good is an increase in wealth when life grows ever shorter? Therefore be joyous only for an increase in knowledge or in good works, for they are your two companions who will accompany you in your grave when your family, wealth, children and friends stay behind.”

—IMAM GHAZALI

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