



The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations

ijco

Communicating Across Differences: The Case for Becoming a Cosmopolitan Coach

June Delano

This article first appeared in the *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, 2009 7(2), 92-106. It can only be reprinted and distributed with prior written permission from Professional Coaching Publications, Inc. (PCPI). Email John Lazar at john@ijco.info for such permission.

Journal information:
www.ijco.info

Purchases:
www.pcpionline.com

2009

ISSN 1553-3735

© Copyright 2009 PCPI.
All rights reserved worldwide.



Professional Coaching Publications, Inc.

Communicating Across Differences: The Case for Becoming a Cosmopolitan Coach

June Delano

The profile of executive coaching clients is changing as organizations are reshaped by shifting demographics, economies are redefined by globalization, and world powers are realigned. Executive coaches who aspire to work in this new environment will need to stretch their skills from the basics of diversity and cross-cultural awareness to a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan understanding of human differences and geographical dispersion. This article looks at some of the forces driving this change, reviews basic models of coaching and communication, and makes a case for enhanced coaching competence to reflect the changing environment. Then, three executive coaches with extraordinarily diverse clients are interviewed about their practices, challenges and advice for newcomers to the world of cosmopolitan coaching.

In a recent executive development project in Asia, male and female participants came together from six companies in six countries, spoke at least 23 languages, practiced all the major religions and represented three generations. The four coaches who worked with them were born in four different countries, lived in yet other countries, represented two generations and both genders, and spoke additional languages. The expanded project staff added a few more countries, as well as additional aspects of human diversity.

While some might argue that this was an exceptionally diverse gathering of people, there is a compelling argument that it was a taste of a future aspect of executive coaching. There are forces at work that will ensure this kind of complex diversity in the leadership of large corporations, non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The question is whether you as a coach are fully prepared and able to work across the array of human differences that you will likely encounter in your practice.

INDICATORS OF INCREASING DIVERSITY

Global shifts in population and power

Three years ago, *Business Week* heralded “A New World Economy” in an article which described “the simultaneous, sustained takeoff of two nations that together account for one-third of the planet’s population . . . In the coming decades, China and India will disrupt workforces, industries, companies and markets in way that we can barely begin to imagine.” The impact of this change will ripple across the coaching profession as it brings whole new executive populations into global prominence.

The shifts in economic power are further indicated by dramatic changes in the home countries of the Fortune Global 500 [*Fortune*, 2009]. A decade ago, the Global 500 were mostly headquartered in the U.S., Europe or Japan. In 2008, however, South Korea had 15 companies on the list, India had seven (up from four in 2004), China had 29 (up from 15 in 2004), Malaysia had one, Russia and Brazil each had five, and Taiwan had six. Each of these new entrants represents hundreds of corporate executives with different backgrounds and worldviews than their counterparts in the U.S. and Europe.

Another source of change – the potential for regional alliances and economies – is illustrated by the success of the European Union (Europa, 2009). In practical terms, regional alliances mean greater mingling of diverse peoples. Already, citizens of the EU have the right to move freely across the EU countries. This passport-free movement now extends to 15 non-EU countries and is expected to reach further. Other regions of the world envision other kinds of alliances, and for coaches, any kind of regionalization means a wider mix of nationalities and ethnicities in their practice.

Growing diversity in the United States

In the United States, the State Department reported that 1.3 million immigrants became permanent legal residents in 2007 (Wikipedia). The Congressional Budget Office (2007) reported that one in seven employees are foreign born. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2008), half of new immigrants to the U.S. are from Mexico, the Philippines, India, China and Vietnam. The Census Bureau of 2007 reported that about a third of the current U.S. population would be considered a “minority” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Considering all these statistics, it is hard to imagine a coach in the U.S. finding work without crossing significant boundaries of human difference.

In another arena, the Human Rights Campaign Foundation – an organization that monitors and evaluates corporate policies directed at gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees – reports dramatic changes in its U.S.-based Corporate Equity Index (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2009). When the index was launched in 2002, there were only thirteen companies that scored a 100% rating; in 2008, 256 companies covering about nine million employees received the top rating.

On the generational front, the transition of Millennials (the generation born after 1980) into adulthood is pushing hard on social and corporate norms created by Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) and honed by Gen Xers (born from 1965 to 1980). A white paper by Deloitte Consulting thought leader W. Stanton Smith (2008), “Decoding Generational Differences,” explored the multigenerational workforce in practical business terms. Smith framed a set of dilemmas facing organizations as they sort out generational issues against a backdrop of constant change, largely

It is hard enough to be an active listener with someone from your own country and culture.

When the client comes from another culture and another country, and speaks another language, the challenges will multiply exponentially.

created by the different circumstances in which each generation has developed as professionals. A study by the Monitor Group (Berenguer, Delano, & Stawarky, 2009) looked at the impact Millennials are already having on talent management systems and concluded that Millennials' unique culture will likely transform the workplace for everyone.

In general, multiculturalism may create a better working environment for non-majorities than color blindness. A study at the University of Georgia (Plaut, 2009) found that minority employees in workplaces that embrace a multicultural approach to diversity – valuing and celebrating difference – were more engaged and committed than those in an environment that was essentially color blind. That suggests that minimizing or ignoring differences is not conducive to a productive workplace. Coaches who hope to have a positive influence on productivity will need a broad and deep understanding of how human differences play out in the workplace.

For those who want more knowledge and understanding, there is a rich literature, backed by decades of research, on the many dimensions of human difference around the world. For this article, it is sufficient to say that the face of diversity will only grow more complex as a context for coaching.

COACHING AND COMMUNICATION MODELS

Coaching basics

Understanding the future demands on coaches requires an understanding of current practice. There are many well-conceived taxonomies of coaching, so selecting one is challenging. However, John Bennett and Mary Wayne Bush (2009) recently reviewed the field and defined four corporate coaching types: leadership development, performance coaching, career coaching and executive coaching. In their framing, coaching for leadership development often takes place within the context of a development program, using feedback and formal training to identify needs and goals. Performance coaching is remedial and focuses on a specific skill or performance gap. Career coaching supports clients who are facing job changes, layoffs, retirement or other major career moves. Executive coaching aims to increase the effectiveness of a senior manager and is the only type that the authors define as long-term or ongoing; the others last between one and 18 months. In this framework, both leadership development and career coaching can take place individually or in groups; the other two forms are generally individual.

Bennett and Bush identified five organizational coaching trends based on their research: 1) Need/demand for coaching increasing and changing; 2) Coaching evolving as a discipline and profession; 3) Demand for measurable impact and quality increasing; 4) Number and influence of professional organizations changing; and 5) Coaching becoming a commodity. They also mentioned the rapid diversification of the client base.

A set of coaching competencies is articulated on the website of the International Coach Federation (ICF, 2008), a global non-profit which supports the coaching profession around the world. ICF suggests four core competencies, each of which has a detailed list of behaviors. The first is *Setting the Foundation*, which relates to meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards, as well as establishing coaching agreements. Another is *Co-Creating the Relationship*, focused on establishing trust and intimacy with the client and maintaining coaching presence. A third competency group is *Facilitating Learning and Results*, which covers creating awareness, designing actions, planning and goal-setting, and managing progress and accountability.

The fourth competency cluster, *Communicating Effectively*, is most pertinent to the discussion herein of the changing expectations for coaches because of increased diversity and difference in their target audience. This cluster includes *Active Listening*, *Powerful Questioning* and *Direct Communication*, all areas that are profoundly influenced by cultural norms and assumptions.

These skills and behaviors take on new meaning in a world of highly diverse clients with profiles and backgrounds substantively different from the coach. Higher levels of proficiency will be required. For instance, it is hard enough to be an active listener with someone from your own country and culture. When the client comes from another culture and another country, and speaks another language, the challenges will multiply exponentially.

Communication basics

Michelle LeBaron, a law professor and thought leader in cross-cultural conflict resolution, has neatly articulated the challenge of cross-cultural communication: “We make – whether it is clear to us or not – quite different meaning of the world, our places in it, and our relationships with others” (LeBaron, 2003). LeBaron has summarized the extensive literature in the field in four dimensions she believes most influence communications in multicultural settings:

Time and Space: LeBaron describes a continuum that stretches between monochronic (cultures that favor linear structure and focus on one event or interaction at a time) and polychromous (cultures in which the focus can be on many things happening at once and involve past, present and future simultaneously). In communication, this dimension of difference can be as simple as whether people speak one at a time or all at once. But it can also mean intricate and nuanced differences about the relevance of historical events and agreements, as well as the importance of current implications.

Coaches will be less and less likely to share common demographic characteristics with their clients, and communication challenges will inevitably be greater.

Fate and Personal Responsibility: This continuum captures the degree to which we feel ourselves the masters of our lives (leading to a focus on action, efficacy and achievement) versus the degree to which we see ourselves as subject to things outside our control (leading to respect for the natural order of things and the way things have unfolded in the past). Especially in coaching work, this dimension of difference can be a source of misunderstanding and frustration.

Face and Face-Saving: All cultures have some concept of face (which tends toward issues of status, power, courtesy, relationships and respect), but those concepts can play out differently. LeBaron says the primary differentiator is whether the culture is one of individualism, in which case face is about the individual, or of collectivism, in which case face involves ‘my group.’ Wide variation in the expression of face will shape the way clients talk (or don’t talk) about failures, problem relationships and conflicts with leaders.

Nonverbal Communication: LeBaron believes this is a multiplier in cross-cultural relationships because people rely on non-verbal cues when they are confused by words. Nonverbal communication involves systems of gestures, posture, facial expression, silence, spatial relations, emotional expression, touch, physical appearance, etc. Cultures attribute different degrees of importance to verbal and nonverbal behavior. A coach who expects to read the nonverbal cues of a client from another culture would need a sophisticated understanding of how people in that culture use body language and other physical re-enforcers. A practical example of this is nodding, which can mean agreement or acknowledgement or disagreement depending on the culture of the person doing it.

Since it is so important for coaches to be insightful questioners and focused listeners, the cultural divide can be particularly challenging. Gudykunst and Young (1995) describe the challenges of communicating with a “stranger” as opposed to someone from your own group. They define a stranger as someone who is deeply unfamiliar and unknown – not just personally unknown, but also culturally, linguistically or ethnically unknown.

They suggest that increased uncertainty in interactions with strangers creates higher levels of anxiety because of a wider array of possible negative outcomes. For the coach *or* client, this could mean feeling confused, out-of-control, incompetent or exploited – all emotions that will shift attention and degrade the coaching interaction. Generally these anxieties are reduced by paying conscious attention to the communication process, and by gathering more information on the stranger. In the coach interviews later in the article, there are several insights on this issue.

BEYOND BEST PRACTICES

John Sullivan, former chief talent officer for Agilent Technologies, differentiates between “average practice,” “best practice,” and “next practice” (Sullivan, 2009). He believes that traditional benchmarking – a focus on adopting best practices – amounts to little more than mimicking the soon-to-be-obsolete practices of others. Sullivan espouses an alternative, proactive approach that searches for clues to the next generation of best practices – what he calls “next practices.” Those clues, he believes, are found in other disciplines, different practice areas, and in the futurist literature.

If the current set of competencies described by the ICF are indicative of best practice, what clues are there to the next generation of next practices for coaches? We’ve already seen that the future population for coaching will be profoundly more diverse than it is today, regardless of whether you work in India, France, Brazil or the United States. Coaches will be less and less likely to share common demographic characteristics with their clients, and communication challenges will inevitably be greater.

Looking at these shifts in practical terms, Quelch and Bloom (2009) invented new categories for executives and functional experts operating in the new, globalized corporate world:

Glopats: These are people who are always on the move, tackling short- or medium-term assignments.

Globals: People in this category move around the world on medium-term assignments.

Regionals: These are people who accept short-, medium- and long-term assignments within a geographic region and/or at a regional headquarters.

Mobile Local Nationals: These are functional experts and general managers prepared for cross-border task-force memberships, short-term projects and training assignments abroad.

Rooted Local Nationals: These are functional experts and general managers tied to their home base.

For coaches, it may be useful to see whether these categories – or entirely different dimensions created by a virtual workplace or social networking – are encompassed in their practice. With greater differences, the coach will need a more sophisticated cultural repertoire than someone working with a homogenous client base. In the latter case, coaches need to at least meet the “best practice” coaching competencies and have a basic ability to work with diversity. For the former, however, coaches will need to raise their personal and professional bar – perhaps embracing what I am calling *cosmopolitan coaching*.

Communicating across cultures is hard work as the coach and client deal with language, non-verbal cues and different worldviews. Further, the coach will need an incredibly high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, as well as for inevitable communication errors and glitches.

THE CASE FOR COSMOPOLITAN COACHING

Todd Pittinsky, professor at the Kennedy School of Government, uses the term *alloghilia* to describe those who embrace – and are drawn to – people and cultures other than their own (Pittinsky, 2009). Pittinsky coined the term from Greek roots meaning ‘love or like of the other’ when he was unable to find an antonym for prejudice. According to Pittinsky, tolerance is not the opposite of prejudice - only the midpoint between prejudice and positive intergroup relations. Pittinsky’s research, conducted around the world, has identified key elements of *alloghilia*: ability (believing the other group is intelligent and wise), kinship (feeling connected and close to members of the other group), admiration (having a high opinion of the other group), socializing (interacting with members of the other group), and trust (believing the people in the other group are dependable and moral).

These dimensions of *alloghilia* offer a possible set of next practices for coaching. It will not be enough to have tolerance – or even understanding – of the cultural beliefs and worldview of your clients. Hunter and Yates (2003) would call that *parochial cosmopolitanism*, as practiced by people who travel widely but remain within the protective bubble of their own culture. Working with people very different from you calls for true cosmopolitanism.

Paul Hopper, writing about globalization (Hopper, 2006), suggests that it provides an opportunity to think beyond specific environments and societies. His argument is that while national identities will not disappear, the emerging web of multiple identities, allegiances and citizenships will blur country-specific identities.

Hopper also says that new skills and coping strategies will be needed to function in the new environment creating a cycle in which we learn about different cultures and societies and in turn expand our knowledge and widen our horizons, allowing us to further explore the “other.”

Jason D. Hill (2006), a seminal writer on cosmopolitanism, talks about the importance of being able to “forget where we came from.” Hill advises aspiring cosmopolitans to let go of their cultures of origin to make room for other ways of seeing and being in the world. He and others argue that cosmopolitanism is the balance or antidote to the “tribalism” that often lies behind armed conflict, hate crimes and political turmoil.

David Hollinger (2006) writes that cosmopolitanism is based on recognition, acceptance and eager exploration of diversity. He urges people to absorb as much experience as they can while retaining their capacity to function. Timothy Earle and George Cvetkovich (1995) believe that pluralism favors the maintenance of rigid, tight group identities and strong community ties, while cosmopolitanism favors wide, overlapping, loose communities. Coaches could be an

enormous help to individuals seeking to become cosmopolitan, but only if they themselves have embraced the “other.”

INSIGHTS INTO COSMOPOLITAN COACHING

Given these definitions of cosmopolitanism, it will take a certain kind of person to practice coaching in this framework. Suspending cultural assumptions is difficult and requires awareness of self and a deep personal confidence. Communicating across cultures is hard work as the coach and client deal with language, non-verbal cues and different worldviews. Further, the coach will need an incredibly high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, as well as for inevitable communication errors and glitches.

Rather than create a hypothetical model of the cosmopolitan coach, I separately interviewed three practitioners who appear to push the boundaries of diversity and human difference in their work. Following is a brief description of each coach and excerpts from their interviews, clustered by question. Table 1 shows the demographics of their clients.

Mai is a Vietnam-born Californian who works with executives in the U.S. and Asia. Trained as an engineer, Mai has a graduate degree in Organization Development and is a certified professional coach. She has been a coach for twelve years and now teaches new coaches through the Coaches Training Institute.

Tim is a family therapist who has been coaching for about 20 years and now works primarily with top managers of corporations and non-profits. Born in the U.S., he has lived and worked in Jamaica and has clients from around the world. He has 20 years experience in the field.

Leng is a former pastor and Harvard MBA who practices with an executive clientele. Originally from Singapore, Leng lives in California and travels constantly in Asia, Europe and the U.S. to work with clients. He has been a full-time coach for seven years.

Table 1. Percent of coaches’ clients who differ from the coach

Dimension of Difference	Mai	Tim	Leng
Race	99%	25%	90%
Gender	50%	35%	50%
Nationality	99%	25%	90%
Sexual Preference	20%	10%	70%
Religion	80%	75%	60%
Decade	85%	5%	35%

Q: What kind of difference between you and the person you're coaching has been most challenging?

Mai: A long time ago religion was the hardest for me. My belief is in a person's potential and how responsibility is in their hands. I had clients whose belief was that they should be the underdog, the sinner, because having their own power would be competing with God. Over time, as I healed in myself, I figured out how to work with it. Now, the most challenging difference is the level of emotional maturity in a person's thinking. It's hard to coach someone who has a constant need for external validation.

Tim: The hardest difference is when people have a very different expectation of coaching or of what kind of help they need. If someone expects me to come in as the expert, and they're really invested in it, that's difficult. In terms of demographic differences, I'm pretty comfortable because of my clinical practice, which is very diverse. I do find it's actually harder to work with someone who's more like me than someone who's different because I'm more susceptible to them pushing my buttons.

Leng: Age is the most challenging, possibly combined with the same nationality. An older Chinese man is very different from me. The biggest stretch is in hierarchical difference. Their meaning making is quite different because they've grown up with an historical and familial difference. They were part of an independence struggle when the economy of Asia was bare knuckles. Their leadership style is command and control. The important thing is that I know what's happening. I'm not in a fog; I do know, so I can do things to bridge that gap.

Q: Tell a story about a time when you were acutely aware of the differences between you and your client.

Mai: My first high-tech client was an engineer who was very methodical, who always wanted to go to work and get things done. Every idea from me was met with a "no," and it was very scary and hard for me. Eventually what I learned was that he was a true engineer; everything had to be taken apart, looked at and understood. So I gave him an idea and told him to take it apart, examine it and reconstruct it as he saw it. I worked through his mechanical, engineering way of seeing the world, and we finally made progress.

Tim: There was a time when a client's past experience led to a very different way of looking at what's risky and what's important in life. He was a social activist from a Latin American country who made leadership decisions

when he was young that could have been fatal. In terms of coaching him in a Western corporate setting, I was constantly aware of the way he experienced the risks of his job; performance, whether people liked him, where it would lead. None of those things were particularly provoking or high risk for him, so how could I create the sense of urgency needed? It might have been a secondary effect that came from being Latin American, but I wasn't sure about that because I've seen other Latin American leaders who did care about those things. Or it could just be about something that happened in childhood. In any case, I don't see coaching as an endeavor in which I'm bringing expert knowledge to bear. I see myself as a facilitator who helps people tap into *local* knowledge they hold: personal, community, culture. I facilitate a process where local knowledge can be brought to bear. It's about being strategically curious in order to help co-create a path forward. It's not about me delivering a solution, but rather about engaging someone in a productive conversation.

Leng: It was the first time I worked with Saudi bank executives in a small group. I was bowled over by the challenge of connecting and there were quite a few behaviors that perplexed me. They talked across each other; were playful and competitive, and they were physically large. Their idea of self-disclosure was as if they were doing a script of themselves pulled off the shelf – telling me all the proper things. I was feeling bored. I did do the confronting piece; tried to get them to look at themselves; but I didn't wait long enough. Others butted in and spoke for the person. The second time I worked with the group I just took my authority, rather than being collaborative. This time they disclosed after I explained the process, asked them to raise their hands to agree to it, and then pointed out when they were not doing what they agreed to do.

Q: Have you ever had a coaching failure that you attribute to demographic differences?

Mai: I had a woman who was about 20 years older than me. She was lonely, not in a relationship and really wanted to be in one. I was in a stable relationship. She was older, but not as successful as me and wanted to learn from me. It turns out she also had depression and was working with a therapist. It's hard to know which of all those things was the barrier, but I had to admit I couldn't help her.

Tim: I think I've had some coaching failures that can be attributed to demographic sameness. The clients are people with life experiences so similar to mine that I can get hooked by their issues and sometimes lack empathy. It's so easy to think "been there, done that" and move to a place of judging.

I had clients whose belief was that they should be the underdog, the sinner, because having their own power would be competing with God. Over time, as I healed in myself, I figured out how to work with it.

Leng: There was an African-American woman who attended a coaching workshop. She came and learned a lot, was very excited and then hired me on as a coach. The failure was that I didn't understand and honor enough the place that ambition played in her life. She saw me as a three-time Ivy League graduate and that was very important to her. It represented her aspirations for her family. I was coming in a more collaborative way to create a learning space and it didn't have the direction she wanted. She was in an achieving, success-orientation mode, with great hunger and drive to achieve the very best of middle-class America. I found myself strangely at a loss and we stopped after the first contract.

Q: What are the most important qualities for a coach who is working across demographic boundaries?

Mai: The most important thing is to not assume that we know. There is a way we diagnose people very quickly. Yes, we're often right, but I think we box clients in too soon. We can misunderstand. For instance, look at the power distribution difference. If someone is afraid of authority, we can, with Western eyes, misinterpret them as not a leader in the making. They may need help overcoming that in a way that is different from Western people – helping them find the path to overcome in their own way, of their own making. When they come from another culture, the unlocking of that person is different. So slow down the diagnostics.

Tim: They should have a love of things different, a true curiosity and love for exploring difference. People who are different probably have finely attuned antennae for people who don't respect them, so you can't fake it. Plus, it's important to know what you don't know.

Leng: Wanting to help, having good humor, curiosity, and an appreciation for difference. We make meaning so very differently. I once coached somebody who was transgender and it took me a while to ask the right questions. I was embarrassed to ask, afraid of appearing ignorant or naïve. But you have to find out facts. If you're working with a Chinese person, were they born during or after the Cultural Revolution? If they are Singaporean, what school did they go to? If transgender, how are they doing with the hormones? Always do your research and get the facts.

Q: What advice do you have for coaches who are just starting to work with people from other cultures and orientations?

Mai: I've been surprised that underneath all the diversity, there's a commonality. It's a huge paradox, because you

can't go to the commonality first. You have to begin with the diversity. You have to learn their own story and version of the world, their nuances and beliefs, but not get trapped in it with them.

Tim: Make sure you actually live and fully immerse yourself in some culture that is entirely different than your own. That full immersion experience cannot be replicated. Expose yourself to art and literature produced by people different from yourselves, so you have a felt, intuitive sense of some of the experiences people might have and a reservoir of stories and metaphors to draw from.

Leng: Pay attention to those moments in your own body when you feel "we're tracking; we're aligned" and pay attention to those moments when you're not tracking. Find other people to talk with about it; as a pastor I knew to talk to other priests. Psychologists talk to each other, but as a coach starting off, I didn't do it. Now I do.

My hypothesis when I interviewed these three coaches was that they would exhibit characteristics of allophilia and cosmopolitanism. My reasoning was that they were working successfully across so many boundaries that they must have a sophisticated set of cross-cultural communication skills. Clearly, the hypothesis was correct for all three, despite their very different professional training and backgrounds.

Mai, Tim and Leng relish the challenges and learnings from working with people very different from themselves. They are acutely aware of the nuances of difference between themselves and their clients, and they regularly reflect on and process their experiences, individually and with others. These coaches work at being cosmopolitan and culturally savvy; they don't take it for granted. As Leng said, they do the research. An implication for other coaches is the importance of constantly refreshing your skills and challenging your own assumptions.

As you read in their comments, Mai, Tim and Leng's skills were earned through mistakes: incorrect assumptions, misread cues, misunderstood contexts and inappropriate responses. Their willingness to step into, rather than away from, their mistakes seems to be a key element of their success. It would be reasonable for a coach to limit the boundaries of their practice after experiencing these kinds of missteps. The fact that these three chose to do the opposite is a sign of allophilia – a love of difference so strong that they are willing to work very hard at it.

An interesting question that arises from the interviews is whether, after immersing yourself in cross-cultural relationships, the hardest people to coach become people most like you. Tim eloquently expressed this, and both Leng and Mai hinted at it. It would be an interesting topic for another time.

I do find it's actually harder to work with someone who's more like me than someone who's different because I'm more susceptible to them pushing my buttons.

Finally, the three interviewees were notably comfortable in their own skins. None of them hesitated to talk about their shortcomings and mistakes; all of them were eager to reflect on their experiences. Their combination of confidence and humility seems likely to be a fundamental prerequisite for being a successful, cosmopolitan coach in a profoundly diverse world.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a time when most coaches worked with people whose background and experience were much like their own. That cultural and social resemblance facilitated ease of communication and certainty about the effectiveness of the dialogue. Now the world is changing and the pool of coaching clients is growing profoundly more diverse. A coach will be much more likely to work with people from different origins and worldviews, and all that difference will bring with it communication glitches and moments of deep uncertainty.

In the face of this changing client base, coaches will want to expand their emotional and intellectual repertoire. The competencies which are expected of good coaches today will continue to be important, *and* there will be call for a new, heightened awareness – a variation on what is known as the *new cosmopolitanism*. The cosmopolitan coach will be recognized by the depth of their cross-cultural experience, their self-awareness and their eagerness to communicate across differences.

Cosmopolitan coaches will practice with *allophilia*: reaching out to people of different persuasions and searching for unknown truths. They will be able to suspend their own cultural and social judgments so that they can be of help to *strangers*, all the while maintaining their center of balance. These coaches will be extraordinarily skilled at holding and reconciling multiple views of the world without losing their own identity. They will, in Pittinsky's terms, believe that people different than them are intelligent and wise, they will feel connected and close to them, they will admire them, socialize with them and see them as dependable and moral.

The transformation from a good, professional coach to a cosmopolitan coach will be challenging. It is not easy to stand in another's shoes and look at the world through their eyes. In fact, it is astonishingly hard, and inevitably results in personal distress and discomfort. In order to be of help, the coach will need to undergo the process of discovery and change that they seek to facilitate in their clients. And, as is true for so many clients, the changing external environment will probably make it impossible for coaches to continue practicing as they have in the past.

The competencies which are expected of good coaches today will continue to be important, and there will be call for a new, heightened awareness – a variation on what is known as the new cosmopolitanism.

REFERENCES

- Bennett, J., & Bush, M.W. (2009). Coaching in organizations: Current trends and future opportunities. *OD Practitioner*, 41(1), 2-7.
- Berenguer, C., Delano, J., & Stawarky, K. (2009). *Catalyst for change: The impact of millennials on organization culture and policy*. Monitor Group publication.
- Hunter, J., & Yates, J. (2003). In the vanguard of globalization. In P.L. Berger & S.P. Huntington (Eds.), *Many globalizations: Cultural diversity in the contemporary world* (pp. 323-358). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Congressional Budget Office. (2009). Testimony on the role of immigrants in the U.S. labor market. Document Retrieved April 23 from <http://www.cbo.gov/publications/bysubject.cfm?cat=10>
- Earle, T., & Cvetkovich, G. (1995). *Social trust: Toward a cosmopolitan society*. Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers.
- Engardio, P. (2009). A new world economy. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_34?b3948401.htm
- Europa. (2009). The EU at a glance. Retrieved May 5, 2009 from http://europa.eu/abc/12lessons/lesson_3/index_en.htm
- Fortune. (2009). Global 500. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2009/>
- Floyd, T. (2009). Coaching LGBT professionals in the workplace. Broadcast interview retrieved May 4, 2009 from <http://www.ieconsulting.biz/index.aspx?urlname=insightoncoaching>
- Gudykunst, W., & Young, Y.K. (1995). Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication. In J. Stewart (Ed.), *Bridges not walls* (pp. 429-442). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hill, J. (2000). *Becoming a cosmopolitan: What it means to be a human being in the new millennium*, Limaiam, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hollinger, D. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism and solidarity*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hopper, P. (2006). *Living with globalization*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- International Coach Federation. (2008). *Core competencies*. Retrieved June 24, 2009 from <http://www.coachfederation.org/research-education/icf-credentials/core-competencies/>
- LeBaron, M. (2003). Cross-cultural communication. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from http://www.beyondintractability.org/essey/cross-cultural_communication/
- Magnun, J. (2009). The shift of global power. *BusinessMirror* Online Space, April 21, 2009. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://bayan-natin.blogspot.com/2009/04/shift-of-power.html>

- Pettus, A. (2006, January-February). The law of dissimilars. *Harvard Magazine*.
- Plaut, V., Thomas, K., & Goren, M. (2009). Is multiculturalism or color blindness better for minorities? *Psychological Science*, 20(4), 444-446. Published online March 16, 2009.
- Quelch, J., & Bloom, H. (2009). Ten steps to a global human resources strategy. *Strategy and Business*, Booz & Company. Retrieved April 27 from <http://www.strategy-business.com/press/16635507/9967>
- Smith, W.S. (2008). *Decoding generational differences*. Deloitte Development LLP.
- Sullivan, J. (2009). Next generation of best practices. *Global HR News*. Retrieved April 27, 2009 from www.globalhrnews.com/story.asp?sid=855
- Terrazas, A., & Batalova, J. (2008, December). The most up-to-date frequently requested statistics on immigrants in the United States. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved April 22, 2009 from <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.dfmID=174>
- Wikipedia. (2009). *Immigration to the United States*. Retrieved April 22, 2009 from http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Us_immigration

■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

June Delano

Phone: 617-543-9340

Email: june.delano@comcast.net

Website: www.thedelanonetwork.com

June Delano leads The Delano Network, a consulting practice and network of diverse executive and organization development professionals. June was previously a leader of the executive development practice at Monitor Group and head of learning and development for Eastman Kodak. June is Board Chair of the OD Network, a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, and a Director of Meridian International. Much of her recent work has been with very diverse executive populations in Asia.

Resource Center for Professional Coaching in Organizations

The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations (IJCO) is the signature publication of Professional Coaching Publications, Inc. (PCPI). In addition to this internationally acclaimed journal, PCPI publishes books on topics of interest to those in the coaching community, whether practitioner, decision maker, or end user. You can count on PCPI, Inc. to provide content that pushes the envelope — bringing theory, research and application together in ways that inform, engage and provoke. Visit the PCPI website, www.pcpionline.com, to view and purchase our growing line of products.

If you have administrative questions, please refer them to our IJCO Office Manager, at officemanager@ijco.info. For advertising, marketing and operations inquiries, please refer them to John Lazar, IJCO Co-Executive Editor, at john@ijco.info. Please submit unsolicited manuscripts for peer review consideration to the IJCO office manager at officemanager@ijco.info.

Visit Both Our Sites at Your Convenience

Journal information:
www.ijco.info

Purchases:
www.pcpionline.com

