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Dear Reader,

I have heard people say that to find a good coach is not different from finding a good doctor, or a good therapist. It is a combination of chemistry, affinity with the style, the coaching technique. What about the cultural dimension and personal experiences of the coach? What role if any do they play? In this issue Tony Pearson, Senior Partner with LIM, interviews Diane Lennard, author of *Coaching Models: A cultural perspective*.

Enjoy the reading!

Isabel Rimanoczy  
Editor

#### Quote of the Month

*"Why do people want to be led by you?"*

Nancy J. Adler  
Educator and Author

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Issue 109

September 2009

## **COACHING MODELS: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE** **An interview with Author Diane Lennard**

**by Tony Pearson**

### **LIM News: What prompted you to write this book?**

**DL:** Interest in the field of coaching has exploded over the past decade, and to fully support their clients, I believe coaches must become aware of their own strengths and values. The focus of the book is on honing and developing one's own coaching model. Rather than relying on intuition or someone else's method, coaches need to incorporate their unique perspectives into their own

coaching models. Only then can they align themselves with clients who may have very different (or possibly conflicting) individual strengths and cultural values.

**LIM News: What do you see as the essence of a coaching model?**

**DL:** A coaching model helps the practitioner understand the coaching experience and, by extension, does the same for the person being coached. In addition, a coaching model serves as a tool for new and experienced coaches to sustain a commitment to continuous learning. When coaches continue to reflect on their models, they continue to learn. Continuous learning is crucial to high quality performance as a coach. In the book, I have included a chapter on the work of learning theorists that brings together research findings on how coaches — and the people they coach — can learn, change and improve performance.

**LIM News: Can't coaches learn about effective models in courses from the professional coaching associations?**

**DL:** Oh sure, there are established academies that certainly provide value to coaches in training. I just want to emphasize the importance of each coach developing his or her own personalized approach to the process. My belief is that to be effective, coaches must be aware of the cultural influences on their approach to coaching, their personal communication style, and the skills and unique perspectives they bring to their practice. They must be able to articulate the core values and beliefs that drive their own behavior in the coaching context, as well as their own goals and preferences. I think that the entire field of coaching will benefit from having coaches who use their models to continually improve their practice.

**LIM News: Why is this important?**

**DL:** Well, just as no two clients are the same, no two coaches or coaching approaches are exactly the same. All coaches have different cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences which they can apply to coaching. I think that when coaches bring their own insights, experiences, successes and learnings in support of the client, the result is stronger because of the authenticity of the coaches' interventions.

**LIM News: As you said the coaching profession has really exploded. Can you give me a sense of how large it is now?**

**DL:** The International Coach Federation (ICF), the largest professional organization representing personal and business coaches, now has more than 11,000 members in 82 countries. The International Association of Coaching, another professional association, has attracted more than 10,000 coaches since 2003, and Coach U has trained over 30,000 coaches in some 60 countries.

The coaching market is simply huge, and business coaching is one of the fastest growing segments of the \$100 billion training-and-development industry. Scores of organizations, from small firms to Fortune 500 corporations, have become aware that coaching can generate improved performance, productivity, communication, and working relationships. Corporations are spending approximately \$1 billion per year on executive coaching.

**LIM News: What are the key points coaches should bear in mind in developing a personal coaching model?**

**DL:** Well, firstly, I believe the coach should approach the model development process by looking at and understanding the relationship among culture, beliefs and behavior in the coaching context. It's essential to identify cultural and individual factors that influence the way coaches approach

coaching interactions, and thus, their coaching models. Coaches then must also be able to identify their repertoire of skills, preferred methods and tools, and their views about the desired outcomes of coaching.

Secondly, I try to demonstrate how coaches can use this understanding to develop their own coaching methods, apply them to specific contexts, and reflect on their interactions to refine their core coaching practices. It assists readers in making explicit the nature of their coaching approach. The field of coaching stands to benefit from broadening the range of coaching approaches offered, including specialized areas of coaching within organizational settings.

It is not always easy for a coach to conceptualize his or her model, and so in the book I describe the evolution of my own coaching model — the Performance Coaching Model — illustrating how one coach incorporates unique perspectives and sets of skills, knowledge and experience in her coaching practice. I have no illusion that it is better than other models — I just try to show how my experiences and insights led me to develop a model that fit for me, and allows me to be more effective with my clients. I also found it great fun to do!

**LIM News: Your premise is that one's own experiences are critical to developing a personalized coaching methodology. How have your early experiences contributed to the evolution of your ideas?**

**DL:** I will try to be succinct. For as long as I can remember, my activities have revolved around learning and the performing arts. From age six through twelve, I studied in a rigorous ballet school program with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet Company. After the first two years of intensive training, I performed as a dancer in opera productions on the stage of the magnificent, old Metropolitan Opera House. It was a grand experience. Later, I graduated as a vocal music major at the High School of Music and Art in New York City, but found that singing operatic music held no personal meaning for me. My voice was not expressing my own thoughts and feelings. I immersed myself in the study of different forms of theater and dance in cultures around the world. I enthusiastically participated in creative projects, collaborating with my peers. And I was energized by the group's passionate interest in the theater.

I experienced a deep level of trust with people who shared a common interest in the arts. During and after college, I performed professionally at theaters around the country, taught acting and directed plays at schools and international leadership programs. Throughout this period, I followed related interests. I continued to learn and practice techniques for using my body and voice to express ideas, expanding my range and enhancing my ability to respond flexibly to improvisational training activities

**LIM News: So this was predominantly an arts background?**

**DL:** From my perspective, both the arts and the sciences can help us understand the world in which we live. As the American writer James Baldwin said, "The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers." The creative process is one way of understanding the world.

But this background is intermingled with my cultural orientation, beliefs, and behaviors. The use of actors' tools to try on new behaviors and practice responding to complex situations became central to my approach to coaching. Learning about learning is a continuous process for me. As a coach, I continually engage in open-ended situations that invite actions and responses in the present.

Improvisation in life — as in art — is a practice of actively responding in real time to the needs of the moment. One action leads to the next and moment by moment, the improvisation dynamically structures itself. This orientation is a result not only of my background and relevant influences, but also of my beliefs about coaching.

**LIM News: How did all these experiences help you make a connection to the business world?**

**DL:** I believe there is a strong relationship between the arts and the cognitive process of inquiry. The artistic process of experimenting with word images, sound, and movement is a form of heuristic inquiry. It involves exploring new combinations of these elements, investigating how they interact with one another, what responses they evoke or don't evoke in others. Discovery, trial and error, observation, and evaluation are essential throughout.

When I entered the business arena, I applied the metaphor of theater to each new business challenge. For example, I developed brand identities as if I were creating a character in a play. I developed strategic marketing plans as if I were envisioning how I would direct a play. I created integrated marketing communication programs as if I were engaging in virtual dialogues with diverse audiences. I strategically positioned clients in the competitive global marketplace as if I were blocking scenes with many characters, all on the stage at the same time. I approached client meetings as if I were doing improvisations with other actors. In short, I applied the principles and practices of acting and improvisation to specific work situations and to develop business skills.

**LIM News: It sounds like a lot of uncertainty!**

**DL:** Absolutely. To me the performance process involves accepting a high degree of uncertainty, variability and complexity. Responding to each new moment, to voices, and to relationships requires shifting directions as new things emerge. Based on my personal and professional experiences, engaging in and reflecting on carefully crafted arts-based activities can enhance cognitive and behavioral flexibility.

**LIM News: Can you say how is this model reflected in your own behaviors?**

**DL:** Well, I believe that our beliefs influence our behaviors, particularly the way we coach. My way of coaching is a theater-based experiential learning approach that provides practice in engaging, exploring and experimenting with action choices in open-ended situations. When people are faced with unfamiliar or uncertain situations, a dialogue between the individual's inner self and the outer world takes place. This particular kind of dialogue takes place in the context of each individual's attempts to understand and respond to or change a unique situation. It depends on three component processes: engaging in social interaction; exploring uncertainties; and experimenting with words and actions in the situation. Importantly, the coaching sessions are process-oriented and outcome-based; process precedes outcomes.

**LIM News: I can see how theater and art can readily inform communication between coach and coachee. In your experience, can all disciplines provide insights that can lead to the development of effective coaching models?**

**DL:** Definitely! I began to explore personalized coaching models in a graduate-level course on the foundations of business coaching that I teach at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business. To give students a better understanding of the coaching process, to encourage them to "own" the process, and to provide ways to continually improve their coaching effectiveness, I ask

them to develop their own coaching models. The results have been astounding. I will give you three examples of the models constructed by these MBA students.

The first one is in regard to a student with an engineering background who used a bridge ("over troubled waters") metaphor. He framed communication techniques as suspension cables, past experiences and relevant beliefs of both coach and client as smaller cables stitching the roadway to the suspension, and commitment to the goal as girders of the bridge.

Another student who worked as a project manager responsible for implementing technology systems, created a framework for empowerment coaching informed by Ken Blanchard's situational leadership model. The five-step coaching process empowers his team to make decisions and solve problems on their own.

The third one involves a high achiever, studying in NYU's law and business joint degree program, who developed an executive coaching model specifically tailored to fellow high achievers. To address the target audience's strong need for autonomy, she emphasized client self-assessment, self-management and self-reflection.

Every model reflected the individual coach's background, style and unique perspectives. These students of coaching not only developed unique approaches, they created invaluable tools for critical reflection on their coaching practice.

**LIM News: That's interesting. So, anyone can bring his or her own insights and experiences and make them into an effective coaching model?**

**DL:** Sure. What I call 'Performance Coaching', is just one example of a coaching model. I gave it as a brief description to show the evolution of this model to demonstrate how one coach, me, used the guidelines to develop a personalized coaching model. Others' approach to coaching will arise from their own individual perspectives, skills, knowledge and experiences. Your cultural orientation will influence your coaching orientation.

Once you have developed your model, you can focus on applying it in organizational settings. You also can use it as a personalized tool for reflecting on your coaching process and practice, facilitating your learning and improvement of your coaching effectiveness.

**LIM News: What are some books you recommend in the area of coaching?**

**DL:** Well, my book which will be published in a few months, is the only book solely devoted to coaching model development. There is one other book that addresses the impact of culture on coaching — *Coaching Across Cultures* by Philippe Rosinski, which advocates for integrating culture into coaching but does not focus specifically on coaches and the impact of culture on coaching models.

I see there are three main categories of business books related to coaching: leadership coaching, developmental coaching, and general coaching.

Leadership coaching books are basically written for executive coaches who are external resources to leaders in corporations and other organizations. For example:

- *The CCL Handbook of Coaching: A Guide for the Leader Coach*, by Sharon Ting, explains the Center for Creative Leadership's framework for coaching leaders.

- *Executive Coaching with Backbone and Heart*, by Mary Beth O'Neill, describes the techniques and approach she developed to help her corporate executive clients become better leaders.
- *Executive Coaching: Practices and Perspectives*, by Catherine Fitzgerald and Jennifer Berger (eds.) offers theories and practices of executive coaching for enhancing the performance of leaders.

Developmental coaching books, written for both internal and external coaches, present their authors' developmental coaching models. Examples are:

- *Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose*, by John Whitmore, presents the GROW model of coaching.
- *Masterful Coaching*, by James Hargrove, explains the Masterful Coaching method designed to empower leaders to create "impossible" futures for their organizations.
- *Coaching Manager*, by James Hunt and Joseph Weintraub, describes the authors' coaching model that managers can use to help their employees develop.
- *Action Coaching*, by David L. Dotlich and Peter C. Cairo, presents the Action Coaching model linking the goals of individuals to organizational issues and change.

General coaching books cover a wide range of topics and provide a general overview of the field of coaching to working and aspiring coaches. Examples include:

- *The Handbook of Coaching*, by Frederic M. Hudson, providing a "comprehensive resource guide for managers, executives, consultants and human resource professionals."
- *Coaching: Evoking Excellence in Others*, by James Flaherty, takes an interdisciplinary look at coaching, the coaching relationship and a variety of coaching practices.
- *The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work*, by Perry Zeus and Suzanne Skiffington, explains coaching principles, methods, models and tools for achieving change in organizations.
- *The Coach U Personal and Corporate Coach Training Handbook*, by Coach U. Inc., presents core skills and methods used in personal and corporate coaching practice.

**LIM News: You have been generous with your time and knowledge and I appreciate it. In closing can you say when the book will be published?**

**DL:** Well, thank you for the chance to talk. It was fun. The book is scheduled to be published May 2010, by Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.




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*Diane Lennard is a coach and professor of management communication at New York University Stern School of Business. She coaches graduate students, faculty, administrators and staff, and teaches in the Management Communication Program. In her course, Foundations of Business Coaching, Executive MBAs, full-time and part-time MBAs and other graduate students at New York University develop, apply and present their own coaching models. In addition to coaching at NYU, she coaches business executives, consultants and other professionals. She can be reached at [dlennard@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:dlennard@stern.nyu.edu).*

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LIM News is published by LIM LLC  
Editor: Isabel Rimanoczy  
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21205 Yacht Club Drive, Suite 708  
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