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Dear Reader,

Some time ago I was coaching an executive who was going through a transition. Due to a restructuring of his department, he was faced with having new members in his team, the mission of the team had changed – and the roles were in the process of being redesigned accordingly. Not too many things were certain, and it was up to him to find the best way through the transition by establishing a new form of operating, getting alignment with his team, and setting clear goals.

For unavoidable reasons, one of our scheduled face-to-face coaching sessions had to be cancelled, so I suggested he take the time instead to reflect and write down some of his reflections. What he did instead, was to write an email to me that was such a unique piece, that I kept it on file. I recently asked him for permission to share it with you, and he was happy to do so, as long as I preserved his anonymity.

Enjoy the reading!
Isabel Rimanoczy
Editor

Quote of the Month

"Be gentle with other people. Everyone is fighting a battle"

Philo of Alexandria

LIM NEWS



We develop your leaders while they develop your business

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Self Coaching

(Anonymity kept)

From: (Anonymity kept)
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2004 5:35 PM
To: isabel.rimanoczy@LIMglobal.net
Subject: reflections

Dear Coach,

You suggested that I take some time to reflect on my recent challenges, and, as you know, as an Introvert, I prefer to do it in writing. However, this time, instead of using my learning journal, I decided to send you an e-mail. Hope that this is OK.

Today was a difficult day. As you know I have been under stress recently, and the uncertainty about my new role, and the role of my team, and the role of each member is something that has preoccupied me. You know how it goes in corporate life - everyone is expected to perform and to know what he is supposed to do, and to feel comfortable doing it, at all times. Well, I'm not quite there right now, and this makes me feel very inadequate, but it is also something I cannot express openly with anyone here, at the risk of losing face (or career opportunities!).

On top of this feeling I've had for some time now, this morning I received the dates of our next working session with the other department heads, and I'm panicking already on what I will be presenting.

As if this weren't enough, by mid morning I had a really tough conversation with Jeff (from my team) He started venting all his frustrations about me, about the team, about others outside the team, in a very angry way. The guy was yelling at me! I could understand the reasons for his anger, and could see that it was just aggravated by lots of assumptions he was making, so I tried to stay calm and do "active listening" as you say. I offered clarifications and offered support, but he was not in the mood to accept anything. He just needed to vent. I really struggled about whether I should keep listening, or stop him yelling. (Can you imagine someone stopping by at that time? What a great image of team alignment!).

Then I thought that maybe it was a good thing that he felt comfortable enough with me, to risk expressing his anger in that way, without being worried about losing his job. I may never find out why he did it, it's not the communication style in our team, but anyway it was a pretty tough experience, and I think that you would have asked me "How do you feel about how you acted?" Right?

I think I did well, but nevertheless I felt fairly lousy. Anyway, I went to the cafeteria to grab lunch, determined to avoid any social conversation. And then something strange happened. As I was about to pay, the cashier says "How're ya doing?", and I said "Well, this is not one of my best days." He replied: "Well, probably not your worst either." My immediate reaction was one of annoyance, but his words kept pounding in my head. Was this my worst day? What days qualify for "worst?" I quickly reminded myself of a few pathetic days, days when I felt the sky was falling. The guy was right. This was not one of my worst days.

I can almost hear you asking: "Why did that comment of the cashier impact you so?", and I think the answer is that he prompted me to change my focus, and switch my perspective. He forced me to compare what I was going through with other dramas in my life. I felt suddenly lighter, better. The more I reflect on it, the more I see that I tend to magnify daily problems, and this doesn't allow me to keep in perspective what IS working, what really counts, what I value. It also reminds me of something my mother used to say: "Helping hands suddenly appear." Maybe she was right, but we have to give it a chance. If I had replied to his greeting with a non-committal "Fine", and had kept walking, I would have missed this insight.. This makes me think how many times I may have missed things, just because I try to pack myself into a box until I have solved all my problems.

As a coach, you always ask, what I learned. Maybe I learned today that instead of trying to totally focus on solving problems, it might help to try to reframe the issue and view it from another perspective. I'm

willing to give it a try.

Finally--you will be pleased to know! -- I went back into the office, and found I had received an email with an attachment from a friend who rarely sends attachments. I was intrigued and opened it. It was a piece authored by Nathaniel Branden, I don't know who he is, but I will share with you here some of the parts that hit me specially.

"It's your life so make the most of it." One of the most important ingredients in your personal development is taking responsibility for your actions. This requires that you consciously refuse to behave like a victim...or to wait for someone to save you from life's problems (Touché... I have been feeling a bit of a victim lately).

Another paragraph: "It is tempting to disconnect from our choices – to insist that someone or something is driving us to behave the way we do. Other people don't make you talk or act in certain ways" (I still need to reflect on this a little more!)

And this: "A self-responsible person recognizes that no one is coming to make life right or to "fix" things. You acknowledge that nothing will get better unless you do something to make it happen" (Hmm...this last one hits home! I can feel this is true, I realize that I haven't thought of it that way though. Suddenly I am asking myself what my plans and resources are to make things happen, to bring solutions...)

Finally: "You can become more responsible by asking yourself -What can I do? Instead of just saying "I want..." try asking yourself "What am I willing to do to get what I want?" (That's the best one.)

I can hear your question: "So, Steve, what else have you learned today?"

Well, I learned to believe in serendipity, to stay open especially when I'm in trouble. I also learned that I could be influencing more what I want, by asking that last question: "What am I willing to do to get what I want?" (Before that, I realize I need to give some thoughts and dream some solutions, so that I can go after them. I think I have been doing more mourning than dreaming, coach.)

This was a good session. Thanks for the invitation to pause and reflect and write. I also learned something else: I can get answers even when you're not sitting in front of me. May be what you always say is really true: that the wisdom is in me. But I still look forward to our next session.

Steve



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