



The Big Blue Box Ltd

A Sea-Change

Real honesty and openness is essential to the coaching relationship, with an independent and confidential external coach this can be established very quickly. In the first session, as in this case, the trust enabled the coachee to say things that may not have been said to anyone else – perhaps not even a life partner.

The Background

D is the Head of a strategic operational unit providing central services to a multinational group. His role involves delivering services and innovation within a fast-moving culture. He reports to the board of Directors.

In the brief for his coaching sessions D was asked to become more assertive and confident in keeping with the expectations of his role. D's boss had described him as *'going backwards, needing gravitas and presence'*.

The Process

In the first session we looked at D's story and the current situation. He has a family and a very good social structure at home but work has tended to dominate his life, he has a substantial commute and also has to travel regularly. D seemed stressed and reactive.

'I find myself going from meeting to meeting, back-to-back, with no time to prepare or follow up afterwards. My boss is quite interventionist and a difficult bloke – he says my written communication isn't good enough and I get 'red pen' comments coming back.'

D was very straightforward and honest but was not a sophisticated 'player' in the politics of the corporate management 'game'. In a significant moment of real honesty D noted:

'I'm actually afraid to go into my boss's office, I will stick my head round the door if I have to, but usually when I go to the head office I will try not to go near.'

As we concluded the first session we developed a set of actions for D to practice, and we planned how he could change the 'game' he was playing. We developed strategies for managing his boss, understanding, preparing for and handling meetings, planning and using his time, saying no and being assertive, being 'political', being strategic.

At our second meeting just 2 weeks later D reported:

*'I've had a sea change in my outcomes!!
It's really affected my performance.'*

'I've saved a full day of my time - just in the last 2 weeks, I can say that is easily a 5 – 10 % performance improvement! I've invested a day in managing my 'Stakeholders' in my key strategy meeting. I went round to see them to talk through the issues before the meeting.'

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At the meeting, I chaired it and normally I end up with most of the actions. Well, I delegated things and I ended up with fewer actions on me – and I did them immediately.

It's had an effect on my people too – I'm now approaching them rather than just sitting in my office.

This has changed my mindset, success has made me positive. I've changed my approach, I'm managing my stakeholders, doing the work up front, preparing myself.'

D still felt he had further to go so we invited his PA and other colleagues into the coaching session to give some feedback from their perspectives. The feedback was clear and reinforced the learning that D had made since his first coaching session.

The Outcomes

About 6 months later I contact D to evaluate our coaching sessions.

'I'm enjoying it now; my life is much more balanced. I'm planning and preparing things, I've delegated real ownership to people in my team. I'm getting good at the politics too, I'm going round talking to people and setting things up before the meetings.'

D's boss also reported:

'He's in a much better place, he's stopped fire fighting, he's getting a strategic view – in the helicopter, he's doing much less detail – it's being done where it should be.

His relationships are in a better place too, he's invested in his emotional bank account. His confidence has increased and he's driving, not being driven!'