



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Getting Onto The Front Foot

The case illustrates the dramatic effectiveness of the external, independent coach – asking the right questions in a spirit of confidentiality, openness and trust; and facilitating real ownership of, and recognition for the solution.

In this case, within minutes of starting the first coaching session the confidentiality and openness enabled a critical insight to be gained by a Board Director.

The Background

To achieve clear leadership in an organisation, an effective balance of influence between Board team members is essential. D has grown into the new role of Operations Director in a small but well-established creative business. Reporting in to her colleagues on the Board, D is responsible for the administration and day to day running of the business, allowing her fellow directors to focus on clients and projects.

In taking up her role she had relied upon the guidance of existing staff and colleagues. Lacking a comparable professional background in Finance and Accounting, HR and IT, D was not confident enough to respond, to balance or guide her fellow directors in collective decision making in Board meetings. Her self-confidence was being eroded and her stress was increasing as felt she was not providing sufficient value to her colleagues, and was struggling to make things work.

D described her situation;

'I'm always feeling on the back foot, I need to grow and develop but I have no one to grow from.'

The Process

In our first session D presented the management information (MI) which she was responsible for preparing for the Board meetings and was the source of much of her anxiety. Simple questions enabled D to recognise that the information was neither sourced from a corporate accounting system, nor consistent or accurate, yet its systematic existence on paper, and historical development by a previous director had given it a credibility that D was unable to fully disprove.

Concluding the first session D noted:

'Clearly the wool has been pulled over my eyes, I'm really angry with myself for not having the courage to speak up about this, I wish I'd trusted my gut feelings – I'd always felt that something wasn't right!'

The Outcomes

An action plan was drafted for D to systematically address the operational imperatives. Coaching allowed D to take ownership of her role, her development and growth, and to establish a basis by which confidence can be further enhanced. D recognised the need to learn

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to trust her instincts and have the courage to challenge. She recognised the importance of working as an equally influential member of the team.

By our third session D declared:

'I'm all fired up!

I've got the finance project going, I've taken on some resources to do it, I've explained the problems to the board and they are fully supportive of it – and really pleased that I found this out. I've even delegated some things, we've got a new marketing role started and I've joined a networking group for further support.'