



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Lost In The Detail

The Background

L is highly educated, working in a leadership role in a high profile organisation. She has been introduced to coaching for a variety of reasons that are impacting upon her ability to realise her potential.

The briefing from HR was compiled through the routine appraisal process, and included 360 feedback, self assessment and discussion with her sponsoring manager. L was apparently fully engaged and aware of the issues that she needed to address and engaged willingly into the coaching conversations.

The Process

With the formalities completed, our conversations began by clarifying some objectives before moving to talk through L's story so far.

Relating her story L would often fill the story out with extensive background details and history.

It was clear from her body language that there were strong feelings surrounding areas of her story. Yet at the end of the conversation, whilst we had covered the 'time line' of her story I was left feeling I hadn't quite got anything concrete to work with, that real insights hadn't been obtained and that something was missing – that the real story was lost in the detail.

L agreed that before our second session she would explore several issues, examining in particular those times in her life when she has been happiest and most fulfilled.

Our second session focused upon the homework exercises.

Responses such as:

'I don't' really know'

were gently challenged and silence maintained to allow reflection. Intuition and feelings were fed back to L to suggest that there was potentially more to reveal, and slowly the picture began to emerge.

During her childhood, praise was not lavish

'My mother used to say 'Don't blow your own trumpet'.

School was not a particularly happy time; high standards were set for academic achievement and were measured against a challenging parental benchmark. In contrast, university found L free to explore; academic and sporting success brought generous praise and recognition.

But this was tempered by control behaviour centred on dieting and eating.

Currently, L reports that her partner remarks that she clearly stressed by work issues, and L notes that she is a different person at home.

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When leading her team at work or when under pressure L's behaviours become less confident and more controlling.

Recent 360 degree feedback revealed how L's self assessment is lower than the assessment of her by her colleagues – she underestimates her competence.

Doubting her ability leads her to over-engineer solutions, to hold on to work and not delegate, over analyse issues, prepare too much detail - in order to get the right answer.

L is driven to achieve high standards, perhaps 'perfectionism', which prevents her from delegating effectively to her team. Strategically L tends to be constrained into areas of certainty, and feels uncomfortable when her role lacks clear objectives.

The Outcomes

And then later on in the second coaching session, the breakthrough came.

'As I was just talking about my feelings about my job - just then - I felt huge wave of emotion...

I haven't been able to say that I don't enjoy my job!

Tears flowed as L let her defences down and was finally honest with herself.