



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Simple Solutions to Complex Problems

The Background

A finance director of a nationwide organisation, Q had recently moved into a new region and has inherited a legacy of poor management and performance within his team. But even as he prepared to turn the situation around Q recognised that he lacked the skills and began to struggle.

Q explained

'A survey of staff opinion held just before I arrived showed very low morale, well below the rest of the organization.'

'They didn't like management and I was management. It was too easy to say or do things that were going to be misunderstood.'

'Barriers went up on both sides and we were struggling to get things done.'

Despite his seniority Q had little experience of complex 'people' and operational poor performance. As he explained: '

'I have great strengths and great weaknesses ... I've had to learn about empathy... my behaviour deteriorates as pressure increases and I know I'm not doing what I should be doing'.

The Process

It was decided that independent, objective and possibly challenging coaching would be required to enhance Q's skills and provide facilitation and support to individuals and the team.

'Coaching was an unknown quantity to me and it was easy to see it, and Chris, as a threat- someone who'd come to get me. In the event it wasn't like that at all.'

What developed was a step by step process of facilitating the team whilst also coaching Q.

Q was very open to feedback and proved keen to engage, trust on both sides was re-established.

'Chris brought some really simple but effective ideas with him.'

'He was also able to act as a go-between with opinion-formers within the team to convey what they thought; I doubt they'd have told me to my face.'

The coaching challenged Q by gently taking him out of his 'comfort zone'.

'We developed some simple approaches such as talking in person to the whole team every fortnight, even if only briefly, to give key messages and to make a point of walking about talking to people at their desks.'

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Taking a low-key personal approach seemed to make all the difference.

When we had an activity-based team away day, it was my joining-in that surprised the team (they thought I'd observe from the sideline) and this pleased them'.

The Outcome

Q's confidence continued to rise as he began to see the growing impact of a few simple changes in his own behaviour.

He concluded: '

So, if coaching is no more than pointing out to you what you can't see for yourself, Chris did brilliantly.

The best bit is that I've carried the lessons with me. They won't always work but most of the time they're a pretty powerful part of doing the job.'