



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Teaching New Tricks To Old Or Perhaps Experienced Dogs.

We all operate with habitual behaviours, and as long as we are 'successful' we can remain unaware of the consequences of those behaviours. But we may also be unaware of the potential that could be available to us if we changed.

When coaching works, the results can be life-changing - and in this case perhaps even life saving. The key to rapid success in coaching starts with the engagement - the chemistry test.

The Background

I recently took a motorcyclist E, out for a training ride. He had been riding, accident-free for some 30 years, and used his bike daily for his commute to work. He had loads of experience and confidence but was aware that he wanted to improve his skills after having a ride assessment with the Police 'Bikesafe' initiative. He had been for some advanced training previously but the instructor and E did not get on, so this was a cautious attempt by him to reengage.

The Process

Initially we discussed E's motorcycling history, his bike and his perception of his skills needs, and then we went out for a ride. E's experience and confidence showed immediately, whilst he followed vehicles quite closely he also made full use of the flexibility that a bike can offer, his overtakes were 'brisk' but a bit risky - overtaking into a blind corner, for example.

He was clearly reacting to every situation and being 'lucky'.

Riding through town saw E following a car (looking to overtake it) that suddenly slowed and pulled in to the kerb, causing E to swerve to avoid a shunt! Later in the ride E was planning to overtake a car that was trailing a peloton of cyclists. And as E made his overtake move so did the car and again E had to swerve to avoid a collision.

We had a discussion at the roadside about **Safety**, taking in **Information**, anticipating other road users, **Planning**, **Positioning** and overtaking. All of which are basic motorcycling skills! I suggested that a simple technique to raise his awareness about what he was doing was to 'commentate' to himself – to give a running commentary on his ride. He found this helpful in making him to think about his whole situation.

We then prepared to look at the 'Smoothness' of his ride - which had not been particularly demonstrated so far. We rode a 2 miles section of beautiful country lanes and as I followed E I could see he was in a high gear, using the brakes before every corner and positioning poorly, perhaps even dangerously. As a simple measure of his performance I counted the number of times E had to use his brakes.

E was clearly still not looking ahead, taking in information, moving his position accordingly and planning his route, he was reacting to hazards and not anticipating them, and consequently his progress was neither systematic nor smooth. He used his brakes seven times.

Another roadside chat ensued.

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Then I suggested that E should follow me and watch my ride along the same road section and to give me feedback on my ride - to tell me what he noticed, to critique my ride.

At the next 'road side' chat he could clearly see the difference. I hadn't used my brakes, relying on planning and 'acceleration sense', and appropriate gearing.

So I then challenged him to change his behaviour. I asked him to ride the road again - but to do it without using his brakes.

This would really require E to 'raise his vision' - look at the road ahead and use all the available information, to set up his approach to every corner - to plan!

The Outcomes

He rode the short, twisty route again, a couple of times and improved the performance to just a single application of the brakes. His ride was smooth and even included a very impressive overtake. We had shown him a new performance possibility, extended his capability and riding style, and crucially improved his safety margin.

His smile was broad.

He moved from un/conscious incompetence through conscious incompetence and perhaps beyond into 'conscious competence'. We rode the next 15 miles to a final debriefing stop, practicing his new style and skill set and enjoyed a well deserved cup of tea.