



The Big Blue Box Ltd

'This Is A Game Changing Moment!'

The Background

S is an expert in his field, academic in style, he now finds himself in a new role and expected to be a leader within an assertive, growing global brand.

As his manager reported at the briefing:

'S has been in his role for a long time and pretty much always reporting to the same person.

The working environment has changed: he now reports to me (a person he would have seen as an equal level before). His business area has expanded rapidly through group investment.

S now has managers reporting to him globally each individually more experienced than he is.

S's management style has not adapted and I am hearing rumblings from the customers that they aren't happy with the support they were receiving from S's department'.

The Process

In our first meeting we talked through S's story, covering his family, his education, interests and his career to date. It was clear that S was destined to have the role he now occupies since his childhood, for him this was the perfect job. But the organisation clearly expects him to achieve more.

We discovered some significant challenges. S has been affected by the leadership style of previous managers – giving him a fear of failure 'deep inside', a risk aversion, and a confidence issue –

'How do I know if I am doing a good job – I want to please and do well', and a lingering question about 'did I stand up for myself'.

As we talked, in a very honest, confidential and challenging conversation, so S began to recognise the situation and the opportunity that he could grasp. He was very open to feedback so, for example, I told him that I had observed how many times he prefaced a remark with: 'I'm sorry ...' – both apologising for and contradicting himself.

He paused for reflection. *'This is a game changing moment!'*

At the beginning of our second session S reported '

The [first] session really made me stop and think!...

The homework you gave me – to go and talk to colleagues and get some feedback - told me that they see me as a 'worrier' and someone 'into the detail'... they say I'm really 'task focused' because that was how we are measured...

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It made me step back and consider my leadership and strategy... my team has changed and become more senior... I need to let go of the detail...

I need to learn to manage contradictions and uncertainty... to conduct the orchestra... not be task driven... I'm excited... I've been looking out for instances of leadership...'

We brought one of S's senior leaders into the conversation to assist with clarifying how to behave at this new senior level that S was entering.

*'You will **** up! ...others will do things differently... you are the nurturer... listen, advise, conduct! ... stop, think and take time ... take confidence from the fact that people like you...*

You worry too much... it's OK to not be happy all the time... don't be concerned about people's perception of you.'

The messages were clear and resonated with S's emerging clarity of purpose.

We discussed a few simple models to give S some structure around which he could construct his new way of working. In particular we discussed Emotional Intelligence as a simple 'road map' to guide him on his journey, starting with Self Awareness and Self Management.

In our third session S was clearly grappling with a change of style and habits, working hard to let go of the detail and manage a growing workload.

Some further specific guidance was appropriate, in particular with regard to 'managing upwards' – an area where S had been in difficulty previously.

For our fourth session S's direct manager and sponsor joined us.

The Outcomes

Coaching often has an impact on the people in contact with the coachee. In this case there was clearly some significant learning for S's manager who actively supported the process and met with us in the final session for a debriefing,

His manager's reflections were:

'So why didn't I sort this out myself? During the many conversations with S I was not convinced that he felt he could be honest with me, so I would get the "this is what you want to hear response". I felt a neutral third party could help unlock S.'

Your approach obviously worked for S, he wanted to talk straight away and straight away he was talking about what he had learnt and applying what he had learnt.

So at the end of the course S felt very motivated in his job again, I appreciated how to manage S more effectively and I must be honest, learned lessons I can apply to other reports, we talk more freely.

Having just read my notes there are some things I need to remind myself to be doing as well'

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And for S himself, these were some of his reflections.

The overall process has been very enlightening indeed in certain aspects outstanding.

Clearly making the time to focus on this was key to me as I find it very easy to be very busy on everything and needed the 'prod' to focus on the key priorities.

What is clear to me is that the coaching is only the very start of a long journey.

Chris's style is intriguing in that although he has a wealth of experience to draw upon, it felt like he helped me come to an outstanding outcome without leading or preaching.

This is particularly important to me as it was truly coaching.

Chris spoke enough to start the ball rolling but allowed me to come to my own conclusions on what is or is not important However he challenged appropriately where he felt I had missed an important point. A great listener and thought provoker.

We agreed to meet again in a few month's time to review S's (and his manager's) progress.