



Old School, New Approach

When an individual is set in their ways, the coaching has to be flexible and responsive, and finding a way of working together is essential. With care and understanding, established behaviours can begin to change very quickly. This is the story of the first session.

The Background

E is an 'Old school' style professional, respected for his experience and technical knowledge, with many stories to tell and respected as a 'good teacher' -in certain situations. E's style is very 'tell' with little interaction, and colleagues and managers have avoided facing the difficulty of helping E to adapt his style to changing cultural and interpersonal challenges. As a senior colleague said:

'I have to admit I've always tended to leave E alone to just get on with it'.

However, a professional review clearly showed that E's skills had fallen short of the new emerging standards and approach. The feedback and report were clear - in order to retain his qualifications E was going to have to adapt. It was agreed that as part of his development E would be offered some independent coaching.

The Process

E was very upset and concerned by the review process. Consequently, as a plan for the first coaching session E and the coach agreed that the coach would shadow and observe E through a series of normal interactions.

'Yes I'd really like that, I think it would be good, I know I have to change but I just couldn't see what the review was looking for.'

E's style was clear but he missed several opportunities to flex his approach to changing circumstances and his 'talkative, tell' style of interaction failed to engage some clients whilst others clearly found benefits.

A debrief after the shadowing allowed E and the coach to reflect. E talked at length, affirming the reasons for his approach. Slowly however E was coaxed to be open and honest in his self assessment.

'I think I talk too much – I guess I don't listen.... well yes it's true, I work better with older people, ...

I really have difficulty with some of the younger people....my education was 'chalk and talk' – and I guess that's how I handle people.'

The Outcome

This was a significant moment, E's approach changed and he began to see what he needed to achieve.

The conversation concluded with an agreement to continue the coaching sessions, E agreed to practice a few simple interpersonal skills to develop his ability to engage and influence.

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The second session would allow E to see some different approaches first hand, as the coach would step into E's role, allowing E to observe and give feedback.

At the close of this first coaching session E had moved from a stressed and threatened individual, side-lined by colleagues, to someone keen to engage in his development, open minded to new ways of interacting and with a vision of the benefits he could achieve.