

James Butler's Newsletter #1 September 02

It is now nearly a month since I left Biffa to work in my coaching practice full time. In the weeks leading up to my departure I had conversations with a lot of you about my new business and we agreed to keep in touch. I have spent the last few weeks adjusting to working from home and setting up the business and I am now ready to let you all know how it is going.

I am sending this to everyone I can remember who expressed an interest in what I was doing. I propose to produce a newsletter on a monthly basis developing the themes introduced below and keeping people posted on how things are going for me. Initially, I will send this to the same list of people. If you would like to be removed from that list, please click Reply and just type "unsubscribe" in the body of the message. I know how much e-mail everyone gets and the last thing I want to do is burden you!

This message contains the following:

- What is Coaching?
- How does it work?
- How did I get into this?
- Some Basic Coaching Ideas

Because Coaching is still relatively new to me, I am very excited by the possibilities it opens up and the positive impact it can have on people's lives and I want to share it with others. I do not, however, want to evangelise or ram my passions in other people's faces. Please allow me to share some of what I have seen in the last few months and see whether any of it interests you.

What is Coaching?

Coaching is a form of consulting, a coach helps you or your company to:

- Solve problems
- Define and reach goals
- Make decisions
- Achieve balance
- Realise your potential

The key distinction between a coach and a consultant is that coaching is about the client developing, formulating and implementing their own solutions: the role of the coach is to provide a safe, objective but accountable framework for the client to work in.

Coaching is not counselling or therapy, it is about resolving the past where necessary but focussing on developing the future, in an action-oriented relationship between coach and client.

People who use coaches should not be seen as weak, or failures. In fact, quite the opposite. Most people who use coaches are already successful, they just seek someone to work with to improve them or take them to the next level - in the same way that Tiger Woods still has a golf coach, despite being an all time great golfer.

People work with a coach for a number of reasons: to set better goals or to reach their goals faster; to become more financially successful; to design and live the perfect life; to simplify their life; to reduce stress and many, many more.

How does it work?

Coaching can be done face-to-face, but is mostly done by telephone. Sessions are usually 3 times a month, for 45 minutes. The client prepares for the session by identifying what they want to work on that week, as part of an overall strategic format agreed at the start of the relationship.

The coach is there primarily to listen. They will ask pertinent questions and with the client will get to the source of any symptoms or issues, or identify who the client needs to be to achieve their goals. The coach will positively reflect what is happening with the client, endorse them and develop them to become more able to achieve success, however that is defined. The coach may introduce concepts or techniques that will be of use to the client, but will not instruct on how to run their lives or business.

Between sessions the client works on specific actions agreed on the call, and others that occur to them, and the weekly accountability generates momentum to overcome procrastination and make the steps to achieving the client's potential. Meanwhile the coach is seeking materials, contacts or other extras that could move the client forward.

How did I get into this?

I have always had an interest in self-development and a goals-driven attitude to life. Over the last two years I became aware of coaching as a phenomenon sweeping the US and growing fast in the UK. I tried it myself and it had a great impact on me. I then realised I had many of the skills to do this myself, and I got a real buzz from seeing people realise their potential.

I started training with the leading coach training company - a US firm called Coach U - in January and started coaching clients formally in April. I am now ready to coach as a business and decided to leave the exciting world of packaging and waste and build my business.

I work from home, which brings great flexibility to my life, and I am building my client base until I have a full practice. I have longer term plans (you would expect a coach to do so!) on where this business can go in the next few years, but at the moment I am happy to be learning and enjoying the connection with people from all over the world who want to improve their circumstances in some way.

Some Basic Coaching Ideas

Many people find it hard to connect with what coaching can do for them, which is understandable for such a new profession. To help you get an idea of how this works, I have included two simple exercises that are often starting points for changing a client's life. I have been through these exercises myself, and used them with clients.

Exercise One Eliminate Tolerations

I love this one, because the impact can be almost immediate. In our lives we all have things that annoy us, drag us back and generally introduce 'sludge' into our system, reducing what we can achieve. Clearing this sludge can leave us greatly energised to move on to achieving bigger and better things in life.

I ask clients to list 20 things they are tolerating, or putting up with, right now. These can vary enormously - a dent in the car, a cupboard door that won't shut, a PC that crashes all the time, a friend who is negative or abusive to them, a pile of ironing, an untidy house - whatever causes them to sigh or tut every time they see it or think of it.

I then challenge them to deal with 5 of those 20 this week. Tidy the house, water the plants, get Molly Maids to do the ironing, invest in new equipment in the office - I don't want them to overwhelm themselves, but I want them to get rid of 25% of those things they listed as holding them back.

As they deal with these issues, the client can soon see the positive energy released the next time they look at the empty ironing basket (which they can now find because they've tidied up!!). We then move onto the next 5, with the new energy they have found!

Exercise Two Where can you go with a coach?

A common starting point for coaching relationships is for the coach to pose the following four questions:

1. What is your perfect life? Where do you want to be? What is it you want to achieve? This can be broad and encompass everything in your life - your partner, your work, your home, your family etc, or it can be specific - I want to publish a book or climb Kilimanjaro.
2. What is your current situation? How is your current situation different from that perfect vision you set out in 1?

3. Who do you need to be and what do you need to do to get from (2) to (1)? What blocks do you need to overcome, how do you need to change, what do you need to do?

4. What can you do in the next week to move towards (1)?

This allows them to crystallise their direction - they can then either work on them themselves or talk to their coach in order to move forward.

What next?

I hope I have shared with you some knowledge of what this new profession can bring. This is not about hard sell, I just felt this was a way of responding to the many requests for information I've had over the last six weeks or so. Many of you have asked how I get clients, and I have wondered myself sometimes! I am developing a web presence, doing some advertising, and working on some other PR work. But the main way coaches get clients is by referral - from existing clients or other contacts. So if you speak to anyone who might be interested in coaching, please give them my name or forward this e-mail. Or if you think it might suit you, get in touch for an initial chat. If I am not right for you or them, I have many colleagues in the coaching community who I am sure could help.

In about a month I plan to produce another e-mail like this, with less general information on coaching and more specific titbits from what I will learn over the next few weeks. I hope you will enjoy what I send.

To make you smile

Some people have said I am famous for my humour (they neglected to mention whether it was good or bad!), so I'll end with this joke, courtesy of TodaysChuckle.com.

Jacob (92) and Rebecca (85) are all excited about their decision to get married. They go for a stroll to discuss the wedding and on the way go past a drugstore. They go in and Jacob addresses the man behind the counter: "Are you the owner?". The pharmacist answers "Yes". Jacob: "Do you sell heart medication?". Pharmacist: "Of course we do." Jacob: "How about medicine for circulation?". Pharmacist: "All kinds." Jacob: "Medicine for rheumatism?". Pharmacist: "Definitely." Jacob: "How about Viagra?". Pharmacist: "Of course." Jacob: "Medicine for memory?". Pharmacist: "Yes, a large variety." Jacob: "What about vitamins and sleeping pills?". Pharmacist: "Absolutely."

Jacob turns to Rebecca: "OK Sweetheart, we might as well register our wedding gift list here."

Thank you for reading this far and I hope we can remain in touch - please remember I now work from home on my own, so it is never a bad time to call and chat!!

Warmest Regards

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