



The Bulletin of the Association for Coaching

January 2009
Issue 17

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WELCOME AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!



Sheree Owen



Judi Conner

As we enter 2009, how many of us have taken the time to audit 2008 and make time for planning and strategizing for the year ahead? For many professional coaches whether working with private, business or corporate clients, the consensus this year is that the pressure is on not only to excel, as our profession loves to do, but also to survive the challenging landscape that lies ahead. For this we need to be equipped! What are we planning to introduce to our clients, our workplace or our lives to help us to succeed, stay in business, stay in our job, or boost morale in our team? Everywhere we look in the media we see news of redundancies. How does this affect how we feel and show up for work as coaches?

The last few months, while preparing this issue, have seen us shift our focus onto what we can do to support those close to us going through times of change that perhaps they haven't wished for. The impact of recession is likely to affect us all in some way this coming year. So let's keep focused on how we as a profession can help and support those we provide our services to. And of course let's also make sure we make time to support ourselves!

Food for thought

Hopefully you can now take some time out, to read this New Year Bulletin and think about where you're heading in 2009. We hope that you will find the contents of this issue helpful, provoking a few thoughts in the right direction

This edition kicks off from Stateside, with an interview with acclaimed coach Laura Berman Fortgang. Those of you who attended the 2008 AC Conference back in March will have enjoyed Laura's impressive, highly popular keynote speech. For those who didn't have that opportunity, we offer a glimpse of Laura's way of looking at the coaching world and coaching trends in the USA. We also have an insightful feature by Nell McLeod on national character and why coaches should face up to cultural difference, based on research conducted in 35 countries.

People, connections & community

Co-coaching groups now seem to be a mainstay of the AC community, encouraging coaches to explore their skills and connect with local support. Alison Hodge provides us with an inside look at these forums in her article, which makes inspiring reading as she tells her personal story. Other AC news includes events scheduled for 2009 and our Regional Report, this time from the East Midlands. And on a seasonal note, there are some intriguing New Year Resolutions shared by coach on the *Word on the Street* page.

Contributions

We hope you really enjoy this issue. Please let us know what you would like to see more or less of, and feel free to contribute an article or review a book for us. Email editors@associationforcoaching.com. You can find Submission Guidelines for Book Reviews and Articles on www.associationforcoaching.com

We invite all regions to contribute events and news updates for our *Regional Report* page, details on Page 5.

We have limited space available for the Spring issue of the Bulletin, please contact Sheree for details sheree@associationforcoaching.com

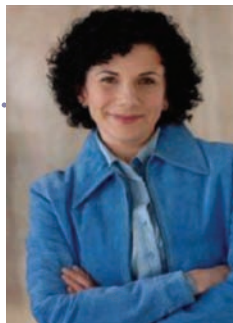
With best wishes for a happy and successful 2009

Judi Conner and Sheree Owen

Joint Editors

editors@associationforcoaching.com

Interview with Laura Berman Fortgang - Sheree Owen



A pioneer in the personal coaching field, Laura has written numerous books including Take Yourself to the Top and Now What? 90 Days to a New Life Direction. A contributing editor at Redbook Magazine, she is a dynamic speaker and has appeared on TV shows such as Oprah and Today. She is based in New York, and her clients range from homemakers and celebrities to members of the Fortune 500 companies.

What do you see happening in the US coaching profession as we go into 2009?

There will be more need for coaches than ever, but the tricky thing is that people will think they can't afford them. I believe the onus is on us to deliver coaching in new ways that will allow us to still make money whilst making it accessible to different price-conscious buyers.

In what ways are you seeing the recession impacting coaching businesses in the US?

It will be important for coaches to break away from the one-to-one only model and deliver their services in groups, in shorter segments (like one month versus three) and provide products that of course, can't replace a coach, but can serve the client until they are more solvent. Provide the client with a good experience and they'll be back for more when they can afford more. I think finding affordable ways to provide our services is a key factor.

I don't recommend lowering our prices. I think it's about giving people choices on how much they spend and for what amount of time. For example, you may still keep your hourly rate intact by coaching a group. You make the same or more while the client pays less although they are getting less one-on-one attention. If we reduce our rates, it will be hard to raise them again, even when

things improve.

What opportunities do you consider 2009 will bring for coaches? Are there key areas emerging?

There will be opportunities to support those that are still gainfully employed to be more productive in the face of uncertainty, and to provide employers with a tool for employee retention. The opportunity to work with those in transition has just tripled. Reaching them in a way they can afford is the key.

How is coaching perceived now in the US, in the business and corporate world?

In the business and corporate world it is very accepted and becoming somewhat normal.

What coaching trends do you see emerging?

I feel strongly that our culture of abundance is being threatened by a recession. This has many re-evaluating in many ways, and I think we will need to help people define what makes a meaningful life versus past definitions of success.

How would you describe the leadership style differences between Barack Obama and George Bush?

Wow. They are worlds apart! Barack Obama is a man of high integrity and honour who has a strong sense of self and of his purpose in the world. He takes the high road and believes in the better part of people. He never once reacted in his campaign to his opponents using the usual politic tactics of unfounded accusations, inflammatory

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 remarks or threats.

Bush, on the other hand, seemed to me a leader who had a lot to prove personally. His frame of reference for the world was more self-centered. In my opinion, he served himself more than he served his country. He is more fear-minded than Obama and therefore more defensive, inflammatory and reactive as a person and a leader. This has been reflected in his decisions.

When did you start coaching and why?

I started by hiring my own coach in 1990. I arrived at a painful crossroads in my life, I was facing the truth about my chosen career as an actor, not being as successful as I would have liked. I had no prospects for what alternative career I might follow. My coach helped me turn my idea of doing presentation training and corporate training into reality, but I knew I wanted more access to the depth of my 'students'. I told my coach I wanted to do what he did. I began training with HIS mentor, Thomas Leonard, by 1991. It was the perfect choice!

What makes coaching a worthwhile profession for you?

Coaching encompasses my values, my life experience, my spiritual training, and my preference for reading human potential books. I can support myself and my family while improving the quality of life for others. I get to be fully expressed personally, while doing good. It's the ultimate profession for me.

What specific frameworks and coaching tools or models do you use regularly?

I was trained at Coach University and created my own programme, *Now What?* in 2004. I don't use tools and assessments much at all. Corporately, I might call in subcontractors to do 360-feedback but that's it.

Could you share a model, framework or questions that you regularly use with your clients?

One tool that I did not learn while studying coaching, but discovered on my own, is the use of what I call *Wisdom Access Questions* (WAQ's). Questions that cause forward motion and solution, versus just being a vehicle for more information. The rule of thumb is this: are you asking the question for your edification or are you asking the question to move the client to their own clarity and solution?

Most WAQ's begin with the word 'what'.

What is stopping you?

What do you really want?

What cost does this action cause you?

What is the dream?

These are in my book *Living Your Best Life* (available from Amazon).

Could you share with us one or two of your personal goals for 2009, and your strategies for achieving them?

Raise the consciousness of hundreds of thousands of people through my new book *The Little Book On Meaning: Why We Crave It, How We Create It*, which comes out in the US in April. I have a well thought-out business plan for how to achieve this, and have recruited many colleagues and friends to help. I have already begun putting many of the pieces into motion, starting with a blog named *A Meaningful Life*, which began this past summer.

How did you develop your latest *Now What?* programme?

Before 9/11, I had decided to take on many more clients and post-9/11 celebrated this fact, since all of my speaking work disappeared as people feared flying and business went bankrupt. I could only promise 90 days of time to many clients. They were all asking:

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“Now What?” and were eager, in light of recent events, to stop dragging their feet on dreams or on changing out of an uninspiring job. Now What? 90 Days to a New Life Direction came out of those early post-9/11 months when I realized that the demand was huge. The hardest part was taking the coach, and the intuitive nature of our non-linear coaching, out of the picture and make it a programme folks could follow. Now many coaches have trained with me to deliver this tried and true product to their clients. We have products to support people, and ongoing training for coaches as well. It’s become my niche after 14 years without one!

In your opinion, how important is it that coaches become accredited by a coaching body like the AC or ICF?

I think it is very important. Not so much because I don’t trust the talent of a coach without it, but because I believe it is very, very healthy for the profession. We do have to help the public feel at ease with our non-licensed profession, and holding a credential is one way to do that. Also, the more accredited coaches there are, the more credibility we all have.

And the more power we would have if there was ever a country whose government tried to change how coaching works. It is a very easy and important way to secure the future of coaching. Get your credentials!

Who do you most admire in the field of coaching and why?

Martha Beck from the US, who writes for Oprah Winfrey’s magazine, is a prolific writer and a very, very smart woman. She has funnelled her unique experiences as an academic, a parent with a special needs son, a sociologist, and someone who has experienced being cast out by her own religious community, into deep insight and wisdom with which she helps others.

For new coaches starting out, how should they position themselves in today’s market place?

I don’t believe in declaring a niche. I think that new coaches need to position themselves truthfully as being new in the field, but making a point that they are committed to being the best at what they do. Thomas Leonard told me, “When you’ve coached 100 people, you’ll know what you’re doing” and that turned out to be true for me. I remember my 100th person and how quickly I was able to ask the questions that mattered. So my advice is to get really good and you won’t lack clients. Do not buy into it being a crowded market. You have to work hard to network and get those first clients but once you do, being good at it makes you stand out and build a reputation.

What are your thoughts on where the coaching profession is heading in our society, and what experienced coaches can do to move forward?

I believe the demand for coaching will continue to grow. As the global economy and the distribution of wealth changes, I believe that many will have to reinvent themselves. When there are no longer rules to rely on as to how life works, people will be looking for help redefining themselves and their lives. From an evolutionary perspective, I believe that we are evolving as a race to need a more feminine energy to heal the earth so we can all remain living on it. Male-influenced wars and competition will need the balance of female leaders and cooperative alliances to ensure stability and sustainability. An experienced coach has the opportunity to lead and influence people on this path. We raise consciousness for a living. At least, I do!

Laura Berman Fortgang
www.nowwhatcoaching.com

East Midlands Association for Coaching – Bringing together the Midlands Coaching Community

The second in our series of East Midlands AC regional events took place in October 2008 at Barleythorpe Conference Centre near Oakham. Helen Tiffany (pictured right) of Bec Development, spoke on **cognitive coaching for today's executives**.



Helen, whose energy and enthusiasm set the evening alight, generously shared her experience of coaching top talent. She presented practical models which the audience explored and could immediately apply. She also shared a case study to illustrate how effective cognitive coaching can be, when clients are “given licence” to think, feel and imagine positive outcomes, breaking free from the restrictions of their pre-conceptions and beliefs.

Working together with our colleagues in the west of the region, the Association for Coaching will be offering eight regional events a year to the

Midlands coaching community. Our next East Midlands event is on Monday 26th January 2009 (at Barleythorpe), when Rosie Mayes will speak on **team coaching**. In April, Mandy Gutsell will share her approach to **creativity in coaching**, using art, drama and music. We

will hear from Margaret Chapman in July on **coaching for EQ**, and in October from Jonathon Passmore on using **motivational interviewing in coaching**. Feedback from our resoundingly successful events of 2008 shows that our coaches want highly practical sessions, opportunities to network, and some take-away tools to use straightaway. Delivered by inspirational and passionate speakers. We will continue to offer this in 2009.

Rosalind Maxwell-Harrison, Regional AC Events Team, East Midlands

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The Inside Story – a Frank Look at Co-coaching Forums

By Alison Hodge



“So, what goes on at the AC co-coaching forums?”, the uninitiated sometimes ask. And on a wet winter Sunday morning, 18 months after I first started to host an AC co-coaching forum in West London, I thought this was as good a time as any to reflect on the goings-on at our particular group this past year.

When I took on the hosting role, I’d never even attended a forum. I’d been a member of the AC for a couple of years, and had attended the conference, but I didn’t at that stage really feel like an AC member and wasn’t even sure what I was getting for my membership. I’d read about the forums as ‘practice groups’ and rather sniffily and patronisingly thought they were for ‘other people’ – by which I meant those less experienced, less skilled, less.....oh the disdain and piety of arrogance!

So, notwithstanding my scepticism about their purpose, I volunteered to start up a group. After a conversational interview and briefing with Elspeth Campbell (co-convenor) when we discussed the ethos, purpose, approach and process from the AC perspective, we agreed that I could go ahead.

Getting involved

It all sounded very sensible and well-intended, but even at this stage I had to find my own ‘hot buttons’ for getting involved. As an independent practitioner I already have several peer and group connections that I use to support me as well as regular monthly sessions with my supervisor. So, what could be different about this activity and did it really have anything to do with my continuing professional development?

Clearly I still needed something to energise me personally. Possible ‘hooks’ included the fact that practice with others could be useful. And I like working with groups, so I could hone my

facilitation skills and track the emergence of a new group as an action research inquiry. Gosh, I might even meet some new, like-minded professionals, living locally.

And we might even be able to exchange ideas and approaches, contacts and opportunities. Oh, and heaven forbid, I might even learn something through practising my coaching, at the same time creating a forum for others to do the same!

New perspective

Well, I think we’ve now established a solid quorum of ‘regulars’. Our group includes a wonderfully diverse mix, ranging from new coaches to highly experienced coach/consultants working at senior executive level in organisations. Some have a psychology-based training, others a life coaching bias, some practise in specialist fields such as the law and media, and some are in-house coaches.

The group is never the same two sessions in a row. Every month someone new may arrive with a perspective or approach to offer and add. This element of a constantly changing group has its advantages and disadvantages. For those of us who come regularly, it’s good to get new input and energy. At the same time, a new face can slightly upset the appletart of familiarity and trust.

I sense for myself and some members of the group that it can jar to ‘start afresh’, getting to know each other and establish new ground rules, confidentiality and boundaries. But heck, I reckon a little discomfort here is no bad thing, and after all, this does mirror our regular experience with clients, especially in the organisational set-

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ting.

Structure

The variety makes for a fresh approach to each meeting, since our agenda for the evening is generally set by the participants. So, for instance, in recent months, when a coach mentioned that she wanted to develop a more 'silent', Nancy Kline style of approach her coaching, there were those who chose to join her in focusing on this style in their co-coaching practice. Another time someone introduced the idea of working with feelings and sensation rather than content. And one evening, when it emerged that several of us had come across clients with strong resistance to moving forward, we were again able to practise working around this particular challenge.

Revisiting the familiar

One issue that does concern me, and maybe others, is the wide range of skills and experience in the group. There is a "danger" that the newer people learn a huge amount from watching or being coached by a more experienced person, while the latter may not feel stretched or challenged.

I know I've wrestled with this element and one way that I deal with this for myself is comparing it to my tai chi practice. My teacher teaches amongst other things the same 'Dance of the Five Elements' every time I work with him (and that's over 15 years). Somehow, revisiting the familiar through his and any newcomer's eyes enables me to scrutinise my own practice afresh, even though the movements may appear to follow the same routine. Sometimes I don't remember this and get a bit frustrated, before finding a way to learn from whoever I'm working with.

Working hard

The 'social' element is an important ingredient for many of us and we don't have much time for this. We actually work hard at our sessions. I remark on this with some surprise at myself. Sometimes I'm very tired or distracted as the

evening approaches and practising my coaching is not what I really want to be doing 'after hours'.

For me, and I know for others, there's a great temptation, given the opportunity, to chat and exchange experiences, industry gossip, latest courses available, people's experience with different trainers and workshops, books of interest and sources of ideas. People are mostly buzzing with curiosity and interest about the coaching world in which we are working. However, once we get started on the practice sessions, there's a lot to engage with and even learn from each other!

Invigorating

So, why do people keep coming along to these sessions, I ask?

People are enjoying engaging with other professional practitioners. We don't often get the chance, outside training programmes, to practise and receive feedback. It can be invigorating to watch others coaching and experimenting with new approaches.

Eighteen months on I've noticed that we 'regulars' are taking more risks in the way we participate in the group, and the ways we challenge ourselves and others in our coaching. This feels great.

At the same time, with the whole accreditation process moving on apace, what part does this forum play? Can we each gauge our learning and improvement? Are we each becoming more professional or competent? I don't know in scientifically measurable terms, but my sense, based on observation and feedback, is that this process is enriching and developmental at a variety of levels for each of us.

Passion for learning

As to my early scepticism, I'm aware that to some extent this still exists but it feels more healthy and is probably a product of my own

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issue around 'belonging' or 'not belonging'. I remember my first reaction years ago when someone mentioned a 'learning community'! Aaaagh! And now, here I am co-creating one, participating and engaging with some wonderful colleagues who share my passion for learning and keeping our practice fresh.

For me now, the forum serves an important purpose in building a supportive network for professional exchange, practice and friendship. It does not replace my supervision, where I have dedicated 'me' time to explore and reflect intently on aspects of my work that the forum with its time boundaries and purpose does not set out to offer or provide.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of people's engagement with our forum is that when I suggested that we should have a celebratory Christmas drink at the end of our December forum, it met with a resounding offer from everyone to bring a bottle and nibbles! A good chance, not just to socialise, but to reflect on the group's development, and how we collectively take the group forward into 2009.

***Alison Hodge** is an executive coach, organisational change consultant and facilitator, and a coaching supervisor, based in London. She has an MSc in Change Agent Skills and Strategies, a diploma in supervision, and is an NLP Master Practitioner.*
alison@alisonhodge.com

Word on the Street: What Coaches are Saying About their Resolutions and Predictions for 2009...

► *President-elect Obama's journey has been particularly inspiring for me. His story shows we can achieve most things with determination and perseverance. As I set my goals for 2009, I focus on Obama's words and I say to myself 'Yes I can'. Bring it on 2009!*

Anthony Onabanjo, Peak Coaching Ltd

► *I see 2009 as a Year of Possibilities. In order to get what we want in life, we have to be willing to receive it when it appears, and in order to do that we have to be open. Often, the opportunities and people we want to draw into our lives elude us because we are unconsciously blocking them out, either with our defences, or with tunnel vision that causes us to not see them when they appear. We can take action by exploring and softening our barriers, and expanding our vision to encompass new possibilities.*

Karen Whelan, Change Coaching

► *My personal goal in my coaching is to become more attuned to my clients' emotional world and to enable them to build their own awareness of how this affects their choices and actions. In my own life I am going to try to live more 'lightly' on the planet, consuming less and contributing more.*

Su Kingsley, STRAD Consulting

► *My resolutions are firstly, to demonstrate and model resourcefulness, flexibility and a positive mindset! Secondly, to hold fast to our ethical values and boundaries - even when work may be in shorter supply. For example,*

to continue to decline work where a conflict of interest presents itself. I predict that coaching will need to become even more focused on using contact time well, organisations will continue to develop internal coaching, and will drive for value for money from external coaches. We will need to keep relationships at the heart of what we do and to continue to build strong alliances.

Linda Aspey, Aspey Associates

► *In 2009 I intend to encourage my clients, and myself, to be gentler with ourselves; to make more decisions based on gut instinct, instead of trying to persuade ourselves to do things which go against our intuition; to say 'yes' to potential opportunities instead of hiding behind the fear of being unable to deliver what's required; and to fully 'show up', committing ourselves to engaging with and sharing our talents with the world.*

Julia Barnickle, JB Creative Life Coaching

► *This year I am going to master relationship marketing. Coaches connect people, and we can turn this aptitude into an effective business development tool. Without advertising, we can develop a distribution network with an abundance of revenue opportunities, requiring only that we support, enrich, and enliven those relationships at every touch. This professional services type of approach to relationship management will differentiate me in a crowded marketplace. Many of our clients face the same challenges, so I can productize it, and coach it as a framework for my clients!*

Bill Brand, ThinkFeelKnow

Coaching for Sustainability

Most large organisations are making moves towards sustainability, integrating ecological and social factors into strategy. New research carried out by consultancy Article 13 has revealed the critical role coaching can play in the shift towards sustainable and profitable business.

Coach Neela Bettridge, co-author of this research with Andrew Outhwaite, comments “true sustainability now requires far more than mere consideration in business strategy. We can now see truly innovative companies successfully using coaching as a means of leading an internally-generated business revolution, recognising the link between personal development and sustainable development.”

The research found that leading organisations are embracing the opportunity to drive innovation through shifting their culture, and the values and mindsets of employees. Those that are still focused purely on technical fixes and policies are missing an opportunity to leap ahead of their competition.

The link between ‘inner’ (personal development, organisational values and culture development) and ‘outer’ (organisational, business, sustainable) development is real and critical to organisational success.

But, few organisations know how to effectively facilitate and benefit from those inner shifts.

Coaching is a powerful and effective way to accelerate leadership development and the adoption of new values and culture. It fosters innovation and new behaviours and systems that can enable ‘outer’ development of organisations and society towards sustainability. Organisations that aren’t encouraging this type of interaction with and between staff are missing a crucial piece of the sustainability puzzle.

New, peer-to-peer and collaborative approaches to coaching are being used to accelerate leadership development, enhance performance and embed sustainability. Choosing the right form of coaching is critical to realising the benefits of the activity at an organisational level.

Sustainability provides a compelling context for executive coaching and leadership development, and is likely to be increasingly adopted as an explicit orientation by many coaches.

For more details or a full copy of this research, contact **Fiona Banyard** of Article 13 on fionab@article13.com

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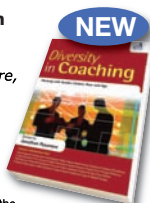
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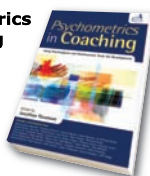
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National Character: Why Coaches Should Face up to Cultural Difference

By Nell McLeod



Should we just accept people as individuals, or can we understand them as products of their culture? Studying national character can be complicated, and controversial. Despite this, Australian psychologist Norman Buckley felt that the subject was particularly relevant in the business world, and should not be ignored. Having travelled extensively in his work as a consultant and author of the personality measure Facet5, he is often asked by coaches “How should we change our approach when working with multi-cultural teams?”, and he wanted to find a definitive response.

The validity of ‘national character’ is of course highly debated. It is often written-off as defunct and concerned only with negative stereotyping. In today’s highly sensitive, politically-correct world, discussing national character may seem like dangerous territory, and it certainly can be when entered without tact. No-one wants to offend, and no-one wants to be misunderstood. However, for those working in a multinational environment, cultural differences can seem apparent and, to some, the demand for sensitivity can prove frustrating.

Differences

Buckley approached his research head-on, yet with an open mind as to the outcome. “Brazilians are different,” says Buckley. “I know that because they told me so. So did the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Lithuanians. But are they? And if so, in what ways? And do these differences mean anything? In fact, it seems every nation claims to be different. I’ve travelled to about 35 countries and not one of them has claimed that they were the same as everybody else. They all say they are differ-

ent.”

This assertion certainly indicates that people take pride in their perceived differences, and underlines Buckley’s belief that there is nothing wrong with recognising difference, especially if it improves working environments. And where issues consistently arise in a multi-cultural workplace, he asserts that open discussion on the subject is fundamental to coaching success.

Measuring up

To analyse the topic, Buckley used his Facet5 advanced personality measure. A web-based tool, it measures an individual’s personality in terms of five factors: Will, Control, Affection, Energy, and Emotionality. These factors are referred to as ‘bi-polar’ which means that high and low scores aren’t good and bad, just different. Measuring at the low end of Affection, for example, doesn’t mean you aren’t affectionate; you just display affection in a certain way. To highlight this, the five factors are broken down into a further 13 sub-factors. This helps to create a clear, graphic image of a person’s personality, which can be laid-over and compared to that of other people.

The results can be extremely detailed, but will also attribute your personality to a general ‘family’ of behaviour – the ‘Facilitator’ family, for example. This tool is perfect for use in different countries, as its cognitive approach measures personality without being notably affected by culture, which is, of course, the whole point! It’s an individual-focused tool, rather than a survey, but it adapted well to use

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in this correlation study.

This was a huge study, involving 50,000 participants across 22 different countries. Individual personalities were measured, collectively forming a profile for each country. The correlations displayed by each nation cannot be denied.

Contrasts and similarities

Germany came out as assertive and principled, but also flexible. This is in contrast to Japan, which was accommodating and collective, but also highly self-assured. Ireland displayed altruistic, fun-loving tendencies, but could be seen as lacking confidence. Other noticeably extreme measures include Hong Kong and Korea, who tend towards low levels of assertion, and also display private and reserved behaviours. The United States is not far behind Germany with its strong will, and the Netherlands falls right to the bottom in the control stakes. As for the Antipodes, it's a mixed bag of altruism and flexibility, along with self-assurance and a strong need for control. The UK gives us no great surprises, sitting neatly in the middle of most measures.

Perhaps the most interesting results come from the similarities. The strongest behavioural allies are formed by the UK and New Zealand, and Australia and Ireland. Interestingly, Japan stands alone. It is not for this article to suggest how these similar behaviours have arisen, but shared ancestry has been put forward as a possible cause.

These results highlight popularly recognised 'context' issues. 'High context' cultures are often custom led, such as China, while 'low context' cultures are more direct and less concerned with hierarchical boundaries, such as the USA. Some coaches may already be familiar with the difficulties of working between very different cultures and Buckley's results go

some way towards explaining where these problems stem from. If Koreans are slow to assert themselves, they may feel more comfortable conducting business through rules and customs. This could well be at odds with the Australians, who are not only laid back, but also highly confident – this suggests that an Australian business could ignore a Korean business's way of working.

Custom and upbringing

Yet maybe working internationally is not the biggest issue here. As a coach, you may be more concerned with working *multi-national*ly. Buckley's study is, in the end, not concerned with individual differences, but cultural ones. (Though he does point out the necessity to keep an individual's personality in mind – of course, not all Chinese people are shy, and not all Americans are bold!) While behaviours need to be dealt with person-to-person, key differences in cultural upbringing could prove very important. For example, a problem could have more to do with how a person is used to doing business, than with their personal issues around needing to be in control.

This study clearly underlines the importance to coaches of cultural awareness. Above all, it makes clear the importance of promoting cultural awareness within teams. When each individual understands the contrasting cultures within their team, friction and uncertainty can be avoided, or at least reduced. For example, an individual from the UK could be offended by the perceived abruptness of an Australian, while the Australian could be frustrated by British vagueness. Similarly, the high-context French could feel patronised by the low-context Americans, who are used to clarity and precise explanation.

Cultural diversity can undoubtedly be an asset to be encouraged, but understanding each other's 'rules' must surely be a prerequisite.

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The difference between the eastern and the western worlds' conduct within meetings highlights this point very well. A business meeting in the UK, for example, will often act as a forum for debate and the exchange of ideas: an environment in which decisions are made. In China, it is more likely to be a place where previously-made decisions are officially recognised. In this example, one culture's way of working could be an insult to the other. Perhaps a Chinese business visitor to the UK would need to be made aware of the lack of formality in British business meetings, whereas the Briton in China would need to understand the importance of custom in Chinese culture. Buckley's study underlines that if a multicultural team isn't performing, it's just possible that the problem could be cultural rather than personal. And in order to understand a team, we must first understand its culture.

Nell McLeod is a communications specialist with a background in media writing. She currently works for Cambridge-based assessment provider, ConsultingTools.

NMcLeod@consultingtools.com

Further Reading

National Character Study, Norman Buckley, 2008, available from Nell McLeod on the above email

Beyond Culture Hall, T. Edward, New York: Anchor Press, 1976.

Managing Cultural Differences: Strategies for Competitive Advantage L.Hoecklin, Wokingham: Addison-Wesley, 1995.

Coaching Across Cultures, P. Rosinski, Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2003

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AC Events Schedule Spring 2009

London: The Grosvenor Hotel, London Victoria
 6:15pm – 6.45pm registration; 6:45pm -9.00pm workshop; 9:00pm

Monday 19th Jan:	Carol Wilson, Angela Dunbar and Liz Macann, BBC	“Clean Language for Business” How to stay out of your client’s way and enable them to think in a different and deeper way about what they want to achieve and what needs to happen for them to get there
Monday 9th Feb:	Seven Sulphi	“High Performance Coaching:- how being authentic can help you thrive – even in a recession” Discover the authentic you and why it’s essential to exceptional coaching results, attract more clients seemingly effortlessly and effectively differentiate yourself in a crowded market.
Monday 16th March:	Benita Treanor, Dr Ho Law and Gil Schwenk	“Supervision – What, Why How and Who?” What supervision is all about and why its importance is increasing for both coaches and organizations who use coaches. You will hear examples of how supervision can provide solutions to difficult coaching dilemmas
Monday 20th April:	Diana Hogbin- Mills	“Supporting the survivors of an economic downturn- How Engagement Coaching can help” We will provide an overview of employee engagement and explain its importance, who needs it and why

East Midlands: Barleythorpe Conference and Training Centre, Oakham
 5:30pm - 6:00pm registration and networking 6:00pm – 9:00pm workshop

Monday 26th January:	Rosie Mayes	“Team Coaching” You will learn about the role that coaching can play in improving team performance and team development.
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Berkshire: Norden Farm Centre, Maidenhead
 6:30pm – 7:00pm registration and networking; 7.00pm – 9.00pm workshop

Wednesday 11th February:	Diana Hogbin- Mills	“Supporting the survivors of an economic downturn- How Engagement Coaching can help” (see above)
Wednesday 5th April:	Emily Havers	“The Thinking Environment”

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Scotland: Aberdeen

6:00pm - 6.30pm registration/networking; 6:30pm- 8:30pm workshop

Weds 28th January:	Dr Harriet Mowat	Coaching through the Ages and Life Stages
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Ireland: Dublin

6:00pm – 6:30pm registration; 6:30pm - 8:00pm workshop; 8:00pm - 8:30pm networking

Tuesday 3rd Feb:	Nancy Kline	“Time to Think” How to allow people to turn their teams, organisations and relationships into Thinking Environments in which people at every level can think for themselves with rigour imagination, courage and grace.
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Tuesday 24th March:	Michael Carroll	“On Coaching Supervision” - presenting his perspective on the current status of coaching supervision and why it matters so much
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Ireland: Belfast

8:30am -9:00am registration; 9:00am - 10:30am workshop; 10:30am – 11:00am

Wednesday 4th Feb:	Nancy Kline	“Time to Think” (see above)
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Wednesday 25th March:	Michael Carroll	“On Coaching Supervision” (see above)
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For more information on these events check our events web pages, full details and booking options will be available 6 – 8 weeks prior to each scheduled event:

<http://www.associationforcoaching.com/event/event.htm> or email workshops@associationforcoaching.com with any questions.

Regional Report Event and News Coverage

All regions please do provide us, the editors, with updates on your successful events, for inclusion in the 2009 editions of the Bulletin: please email editors@associationforcoaching.com with your event coverage & news. Word count limited to 200.

Each Bulletin will feature updates from several of the regions in our Regional Report.