

Executive Coaching - the Importance of Being in Flow

This discussion focuses on the concept of flow and its role in the executive coaching process. This concept albeit an ancient one, is unused in most executive coaching programs primarily because its application is not fully understood. This article identifies what flow is and provides practical techniques for integration into the executive coaching process.

I once heard a great analogy for the human experience that most executive coaching professionals will identify with. It compares us to a spring coil. The natural state of a spring coil is when it's fully distended. When its compressed it's under pressure and pushes back to get to its natural state. When we are under pressure with life's challenges and demands, we are like a compressed spring coil, out of our natural state of being at ease. In the state it is difficult to function at our best and we often feel drained and unfocused.

As executive coaching practitioners we know that many executives spend most of the time compressed, out of flow and feeling stressed. Flow is when things seem effortless and when we are not resistant to what is. It's when we immerse ourselves in the experience with no judgement and expectations. It's when we embrace fully and accept the moment as being perfect the way it is even though it may be challenging. Flow is about letting go and trusting that our actions will make the difference in accordance with our intention.

Being in flow is when we're doing what we enjoy, using our strengths, following our intuition and focusing on present moment actions. It is also when we align ourselves to the outcomes we want and ensure that our thoughts, speech and actions are congruent to these outcomes. Anything outside of this creates a pressured spring coil.

With these flow factors in mind the executive coaching professional can guide the coaching conversation on the how flow can best be integrated and to make it part of the way the client operates in his or her environment. As with any change process the first key step is to identify any resistances to this way of being. Without buy-in the executive coaching process cannot progress.

The next step in this executive coaching process is for the client to articulate the benefits of leading or managing in this way. What styles, behaviours and activities would change and how could flow be integrated into the team or organisations culture? What would the new expectations be and how is sustainability promoted?

Because the concept of flow is new it would be prudent to introduce it subtly first and for managers to role model flow behaviour. Once people can observe what it looks and feels like their acceptance of it will flow with less resistance.

What we can say for sure is that the power of flow is in its simplicity and moves people towards achieving success in the best way they know how to reach it.