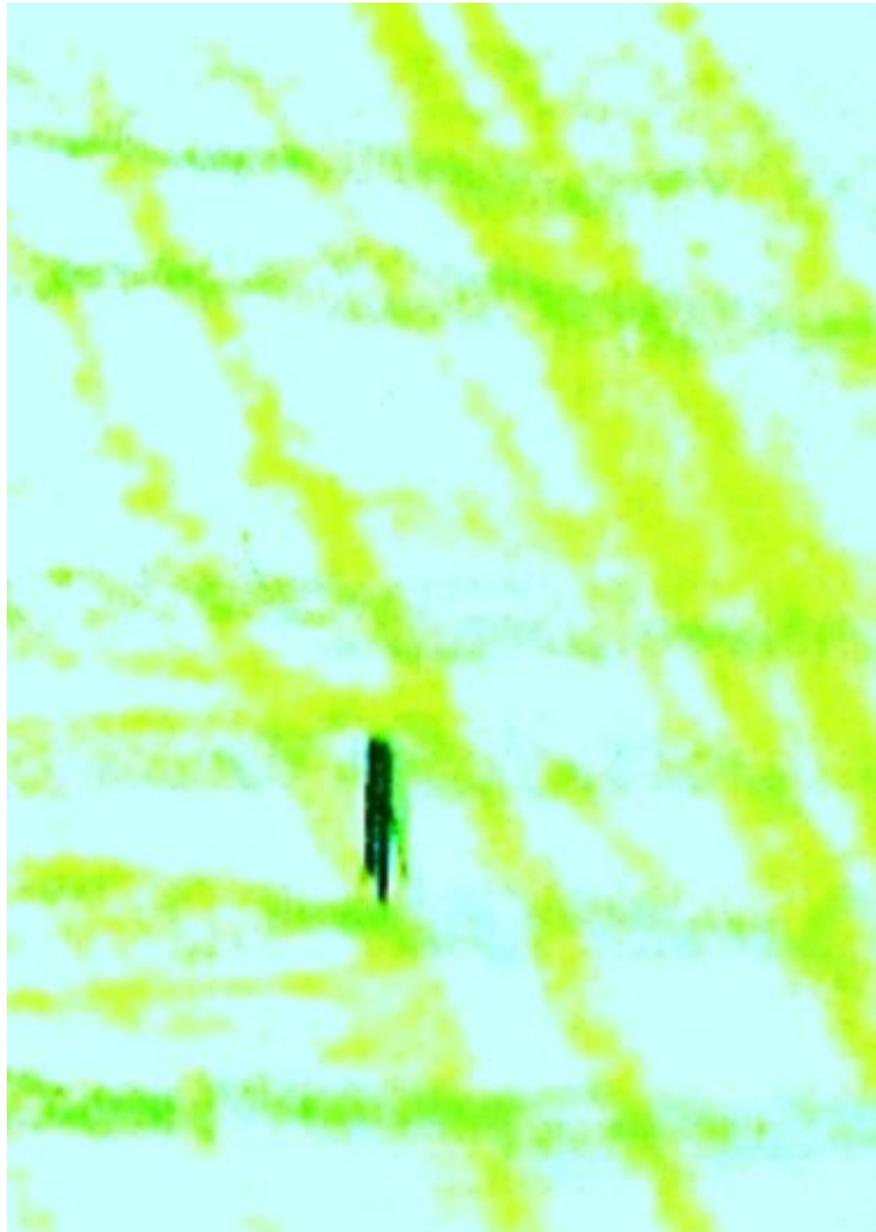


The Coaching 30: *four for starters*



Stuart Eglin Online

**The Coaching 30:
Four for Starters**

by

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Picture on the front cover is
'Dungeon Fields – minute detail, blue'
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Introduction

This small booklet is an extract from the forthcoming book, ‘The Coaching 30’. I have been coaching for nearly 10 years now, and in that time I have been particularly struck by the small revelations and epiphanies that happen in coaching sessions. Sometimes the moment of revelation belongs firmly to the client, but sometimes it’s a shared experience. The process of creating with the client some technique or approach to a problem, can be hugely energising. ‘The Coaching 30’ captures many of these shared moments, together with techniques which I have gathered over the years to share with clients, and ideas I have developed on my online blog which I began in 2003.

The thirty ideas are very diverse. This booklet presents 4 of these as a ‘taster’ – if you like what you read, please drop me an email (stuart@stuarteglin.com) and I will send you the complete book as a PDF as soon as it is available. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the ideas in this booklet. Feedback is always welcome – further inspiration comes from the ideas of others.

Stuart Eglin

May 2010

1. **Inbox and Productivity Principles**

There are two principles which have helped me to increase my productivity recently. They occurred to me during a coaching session.

The inbox isn't our work

For those of us who spend a lot of time working with email it is easy to become caught up in the illusion that the inbox is the workplace. It is true that a lot of our work may come to us through this medium, but that does not mean that work is equal to and captured by the email inbox. There are other places for us, other media which we should be adopting. When we become a slave to the inbox, we lose our sense of perspective and can often not see what is important (especially if it doesn't show up in email!)

I'm more productive than I think I am

I now do a weekly and monthly review process. This gives me an opportunity to look back over a meaningful timeframe and see what I have done. I look through the diary, email, personal and work journals. I capture a summary of what I have done that week or month, and give myself a mini-report (it doesn't have to be written). These reviews invariably dig up a volume of work beyond what I would expect. They are a pleasant surprise.

So – by taking myself out of the inbox, and ensuring that I don't spend too much time each day on email, and regularly reviewing what I have achieved – it is possible to shift perspective and escape the 'busy' trap. And remember, the outputs of your regular reviews are incredibly helpful when it comes to appraisals or annual reviews.

2. Renaissance as a Strategy

This section describes a technique which I developed a few years ago as part of my PhD thesis:

This technique uses archetypes, as defined by Carl Jung. He developed an approach which made use of archetypal characters drawn from the great myths of history. He suggested that these archetypes are present within each of us, and act as guides at an unconscious level, shaping our actions.

The approach I am going to describe in this section builds on a later application of this as developed by a group in the US called Archetypal Psychologists which emerged in the early 1970s. The work of the Archetypal Psychologists was grounded heavily in the culture and ethos of the renaissance, particularly the Italian Renaissance. For example, James Hillman and Thomas Moore both make frequent references to the work of Marcilio Ficino, an Italian writer, philosopher and adviser to the Medicis. Hillman talks about Archetypal Psychology as a Mediterranean psychology – full of olive oil, wine and the heat of the sun. He develops an ‘imaginal’ view of the Renaissance. He is not interested in literalism, but rather in living in the image and what it represents. He takes the meaning and value-laden nature of the Renaissance and works with this. Let us follow his lead then, and develop further applications of archetype.

The material which follows grew out of an afternoon’s work aimed at developing an approach to a specific career development problem that I had identified.

There were a number of blocking issues in the workplace which needed resolve. In response to these problems, I developed a new model in an attempt to overcome this. It became known as “**Renaissance as a Strategy**”. The issue identified was one of sustenance in a job. The career path for NHS managers typically involves a succession of jobs changing every couple of years. This is seen as essential to ensure that the individual has a wide range of experience in different sectors of the NHS.

The challenge comes when the individual needs to consolidate skills at Director or Senior Manager level. At this level it is expected that the pace of job changes within the career will slow down. I had often been critical of this rapid turnover approach anyway, as it leaves clinical staff feeling cynical about

the impact of managers who come and go, and never seem to stay around to follow through the impact of their actions.

For this reason, I had decided in consultation with a mentor that it was important to consolidate different skills and settle into a job for longer than two years. This would present a different set of problems to those associated with frequent job change.

The model which I developed was aimed at dealing with problems of fatigue, boredom at repetition, and above all, the need to refresh the personas which evolve over time. In other words, this approach would support the need to reinvent the self.

The issue then, was identified as:

'renewing the self so that tiredness of old views can be overcome.'

The tiredness of views encompassed two perspectives – the views I was holding about the work, and the views others were holding about me. The model would use two key approaches:

- Specific highly visible actions
- Persona shifts in archetypal mode

The first step, identifying specific highly visible actions, is a fairly standard approach to profile raising. It amounts to finding the things that count and doing them! This involved working through the key objectives for the year, mapping them to the critical “must do’s” and then setting out a manageable number of key tasks that would create visibility.

The second approach complements this, and aims at tackling the problems of ‘close-down’ generated by the archetypal interplay within the work place. Over time, the members of a team build up archetypal maps of each other. By this I mean that they expect each other to behave in particular ways, and adopt specific aspects of their own archetypal cast in response. Thus we get interactions within constrained scripts. This can be useful for creating stability and predictable work environments. It is counter-productive though when the group needs to respond to changing situations.

The approach I developed is aimed at achieving a shift in the archetypal script.

In order to carry out persona shifts, the individual carrying out the exercise needs to interrogate their own interactions and look for archetypal traits. Thus, within my own workplace I was aware that I adopted a 'puer' archetype on a frequent basis (the 'puer' archetypes is the eternal youth, the boy who doesn't grow up), particularly in interactions with my manager, who would adopt a mother archetype. This was useful in some aspects of our interactions, but it was creating some limits that were proving unhelpful. Being the only male within a team, I was also working very heavily from an anima (the man's inner feminine side) perspective in order to blend in with the prevailing culture. I was using this archetype when interacting with colleagues. This was beneficial a lot of the time, but it had its limitations in some situations within the team, and was problematic in interactions with individuals from other teams. I was becoming type-cast!

The 'persona shift' identified first then, was the need to shift from the 'puer' perspective to a different aspect in interactions with my manager. What would have a dramatic (and positive!) effect for all players involved? It would be important to avoid head-on conflict.

There were a number of possible options to adopt. For example, an interaction using the anima (feminine aspect of the male) with my manager could significantly shift the basis of the interaction. It could also be worth looking at the senex (wise old man), or aspects of the shadow (submerged negative aspects of the self, that are denied at conscious level). There was also scope for using my own mother complex to interact with the mother complex in my manager.

Clearly, the options around the anima and mother complex might be productive in interactions with the manager, but would not shift things forwards with other members of the team. However, before jumping to conclusions, it is important to proceed to the next step.

This involved use of active imagination, taking a specific incident and testing out different archetypes with it to speculate on the outcome. This was attempted. Clearly, to be most effective and least contrived, a number of archetypes needed to be adopted.

In testing out the model, I adopted the senex and anima voices to support interactions. Over a number of months the nature of the dialogues between the manager and myself shifted. This changing of patterns takes a little time, but it can work well in situations where there is a need to shift the context, particularly where there are problems with conflict. The effect on the self of this type of exercise can be a form of forced or induced individuation. Old habits die hard, but they do die over time.

There's a lot to unpack here, but I hope it gives you a taste of this approach. It's difficult to convey the power of it without actually getting you to do it. Just try it and see.

It may sound like some other approaches (hey, there's nothing totally new in the world) but it does differ from many. For example, Edward de Bono's technique using Six Thinking Hats is very commonly used in management development. The difference between that and the approach I am advocating is that de Bono's approach is very much in the external world, whereas the use of Archetypes is internalised, drawing from within. They are both valuable, of course, in different situations.

3. Networking: some key ideas

We get nowhere in life without interactions with other people. They are the source of dialogue to develop new ideas, they help us to get things done, they can be the key to fulfilling our dreams. Above all, it is through our connecting with other people that we bring ourselves to the world – and that is so important because the talents within us are what we have to offer through living our lives.

This is why I want to cover some ideas about networking. It's a skill, not a natural attribute. We talk about it as though it is something which is inherent in some people. 'Are you a good networker?' is a question people often ask. But like many things it is a skill which can be developed. Often people think of networking as being all about how we build up contacts and make best use of them. This is like thinking of a car as a place to put petrol. It sort of misses the point!

So, here are a few ideas and questions about networking to push the thinking into some of the mechanics and principles of the activity:

Who is in your network?

Think broadly about this. Not just people who are close friends or colleagues. Improve your skills at collecting contact details for people. To get you started, use a mind map (or spider diagram) to set out the people who you are in contact with. Each arm of the map reaching out from you at the centre can be a domain or area of your life e.g. family, friends, work colleagues, people with common interests etc. Work on this for at least 30 minutes. If there aren't at least a hundred people on this mind map you haven't thought deeply enough!

It's an obvious point, but do make sure you get contact details when you meet people. Don't miss an opportunity. Use your business card if you have one (if you don't, then get some!) And it is always important to follow up the swapping of cards with an email to build the link. If possible include a question to get dialogue going.

Do you have an effective network planning tool? Is it backed up effectively?

There are many ways of managing a network. I use Microsoft Outlook's Contact Database to capture my network contacts. It means that I have details with me at all times as I use a blackberry. It's a great way to capture people's contact details as well as snippets of useful information about them if like me you have a poor memory. The database should be backed up so that system failure (i.e. your computer dies) doesn't mean that you lose all your contacts.

Do you review your network regularly?

I go through my network at least once a month, looking for people who I need to get in touch with to ensure that I am keeping regular contact. It takes maybe five minutes to just skim through all of the names A-Z and check for anything that jumps out at me. I usually come away from this with a few people I should drop an email to, or phone. And I may see someone in there whose details need updating.

Do you archive dormant contacts, and do you capture all contacts no matter how fleeting?

A network needs to be up to date. The regular review helps you to keep it current. It's also worth looking for people in the network who you haven't been in contact with for some time. If there is no good reason to make contact now, archive the contact. Don't delete it – you don't know what is just into the future. You may have a reason to contact them which you are not aware of now. And let me say it again - try to capture contact details whenever you can. A business card, a phone number or email address. I input them into the database as soon as I can.

Who else should be in your network?

Take regular opportunities to review your network and think about potential gaps. Then take proactive steps to fill those gaps.

Do you have a worthwhile contact to make?

Effective networking is not about what you can get out of people, it is about what you can give. People are naturally suspicious of the “salesman” type

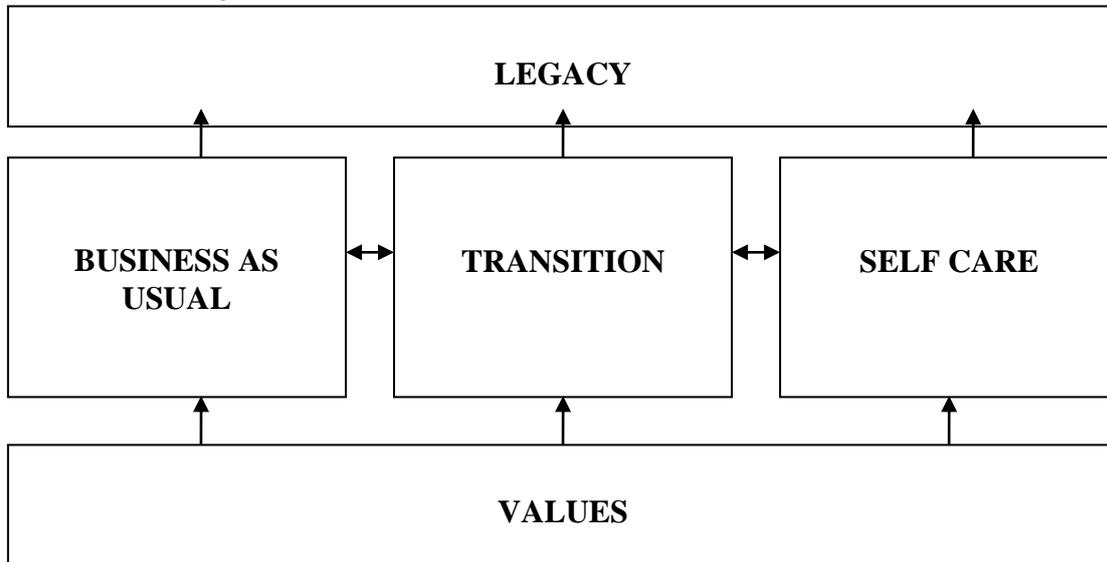
approach to marketing where there is a pitch either explicitly there or implied. For effective networking it helps to begin by thinking about what you have to offer before you make the contact. That helps to maintain integrity in relationship building.

A key skill

It's difficult to overstate the importance of networking. Relationships between us are what makes the world go round. The process of networking is at the heart of this. The first step of making the initial contact is something I used to find really difficult, particularly at networking events, conferences, seminars etc. I found a way round this by introducing myself and asking a quick question about the other person to get them talking about themselves. After a few goes at this it felt more and more natural. It has helped me to really enjoy the networking event.

4. A Working Model for Handling Change

The model which follows was developed in a coaching session with a client who was experiencing a process of massive change for the organisation that she was leading.



At these times it is often difficult to see ‘the wood for the trees’. One can easily feel overwhelmed with the volume of work that needs attention, and confused as to the priorities. The model identifies three pillars of activity – business as usual, transition, and self care. The model applies equally to issues relating to the organisation as a whole and to the individual working within the change process.

The first pillar is the essential activities which the organisation needs to address to keep going whilst change is taking place. It is important to stay focused on this if organisational and individual performance is to be maintained.

The second pillar addresses the activities that need to take place to create the transition to the new. This may involve setting up time limited task groups, a wide range of organisational development activities, helping people to adapt to the change, offering key support.

The third pillar is important because it acknowledges the fact that it is all too easy to forget our own needs as leaders of change. Addressing self care ensures that needs are met, and resilience during the change is maintained.

Above the pillars sits 'Legacy' – the need to ensure that the organisation looks at the things which it has been doing in the past that need to be retained – either as activities or as tacit knowledge. Ensuring that we capture the legacy is a way of maintaining respect for the work that everyone has been doing. I am not saying here that Legacy is the reason for the change. But I am saying that if we are going through disruptive change processes, we need to capture the legacy as we go, so that we don't find ourselves re-inventing things in 12 months time that we lost in the chaos of transition. It's also important in taking people with us that we are really clear about the value of what has been achieved and that we celebrate that.

Below the pillars sits 'Values'. We work from a value base which determines how we function on a day to day basis, how we make decisions. It is important to stay in touch with our core values as we lead people through the change to ensure that we maintain integrity and are able to take people with us on the journey.

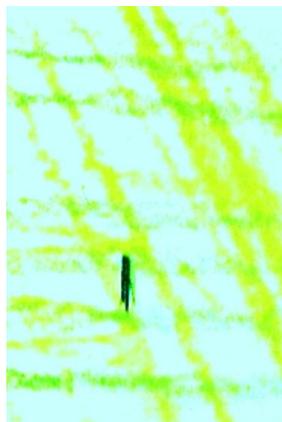
So, that is the model. How does it work? It helps us to see that there are activities in each of these boxes that we need to give attention to. In order to take things forward with balance we need to be mindful of activities in each box, so that we do not neglect any particular area.

The model builds on the work of William Bridges in his book 'Managing Transition', and on the work of Stephen Covey in 'The Eighth Principle' which looks at the importance of leaving a legacy.

The coaching client I worked with on this model found it really useful to orientate herself as she worked through the change process.

It helps to keep looking at the model and ensure that each of them is being given the appropriate attention.

COMING SOON



“The Coaching 30”

30 tips and techniques to use in coaching, self development and everyday practise. Available Winter 2012. Please send an email to stuart@stuarteglin.com if you would like to receive a copy when it is published. The PDF is free, a paperback copy can be bought.



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