

Chapter 26

Transforming Leader Change Agency Skills and Abilities Through Emotional Intelligence Focused Executive Coaching

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ABSTRACT

Sharon Hartley is a UK-based director in the aerospace industry. Following the initial meeting and subsequent conversations regarding the use of emotional intelligence (EI) in leader development, the author was commissioned to design and deliver a bespoke EI Director Development program. Funded by her organization, Goodrich Corporation, later to become UTC Aerospace Systems, the program provided a supported six-month development strategy. Results included an increased ability to use EI and EI competencies for strategy development, and for influencing and driving cultural and organizational change.

INTRODUCTION

The success and more often failure of organisational change (OC) initiatives has been well documented and is oft heard in organisational anecdotes. Additionally, there have been various calls for those facilitating and managing OC to become evidence-based in their change agency practice (see for example Hamlin; 2001 & 2016).

Similarly, the conversation around executive coaching (EC) has moved from "does it work?" to "how does it work?" (Theeboom et al.; 2014, p.1); additionally, there have been various calls for evidence-based approaches to coaching practice (see Stober, 2010). Crucial and mercifully for practitioners, research on evidence-based coaching (EBC) suggests there is no one prescriptive way of conducting EC to bring about best results (Stober & Grant, 2006).

This programme employed a qualitative approach in keeping with Morgan's (2007) pragmatic paradigm which advocates a new basis for social research - using the most appropriate assumptions and applying the best methods to achieve the objective. It is consistent with Peterson's (2006) behaviour-based approach to EBC which asks "What is going to be done differently?"

Of course, 'to do' differently, the client needs to know where they are now and what is influencing behaviour, before creating a bespoke plan for change. Motivation is just as key, as is being aware of the journey of change – what's working and what isn't – achieved through ongoing critical reflection (Hamlin, 2016).

Leader development (LD) differs from leadership development as the intrapersonal development of leaders (Day, 2000). The focus on intrapersonal skills offers the starting point for self awareness – noted as key for LD and found explicitly in the discipline of Emotional intelligence, (EI). Higgs and Dulewicz (2016) expand, stating the completing of an EI profile tool gives that starting point for awareness, development and change when used with coaching – it is in the convergence of EC and EI this evidence-based OCD related reflective case history has its roots.

EVIDENCE-BASED OCD INITIATIVE

Director Development

The aerospace industry is perhaps not the first place you would think of as employing training, development and interventions that fall under the guise of 'soft skills'. A workforce of predominately engineers and scientists - employing lean production methods – its' focus would appear to be one of rationality, quantifiable outcomes and computable results. However, according to one senior director, leaders in such organisations face the same challenges as any other industry when choosing paths for director development, whilst driving change and improvement within the business.

Given the mainly rational focused nature of the majority of people employed within the industry - the challenges maybe even greater – Sharon Hartley, Director Goodrich Corporation

Engagement and Initial Contract

A director in an international aerospace company, Sharon and I met whilst I was facilitating a Coach Practitioner training event, on which she was a delegate. Emotional Intelligence (EI) was a key theme in the course – with particular relevance to developing qualities as a coach. This new discipline struck a chord and after several discussions she decided this would be useful for her ongoing development.

I was contracted to design and deliver a bespoke Director EI Development Programme. The results of Sharon's EI profiling tool provided the basis for the start of the programme and gave insight for ongoing discussions to build a strategy for her personal EI development. The initial meeting would be a day together with three main outcomes:

1. An explanation of emotional intelligence, its competencies and tools for development
2. Delivery of personal results from the profiling tool
3. Map ongoing EI development to identified issues and relevance to personal and professional development.

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