

The Art and Science of Taking a Journey

*Why having a map and a destination is not enough to guarantee
a successful coaching and mentoring assignment...*

The name 'Greenwich' is familiar to many. From the earliest of times it has been connected with navigation and journeys. For some, the name conjures up images and memories of an attractive part of London with a large park leading down to the river with numerous attractive historic buildings by Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor - including the magnificent National Maritime Museum. For others Greenwich is remembered more as the home of the *Cutty Sark* the famous 'Tea Clipper' that plied the oceans bringing precious cargoes to London - breaking records on the way.

Perhaps the most famous connection of all is to the 'Royal Observatory' the place from where the heavens were tracked and time itself was, and still is, marked and measured: 'Greenwich Mean Time' or 'GMT'.

A recent exhibition at the Maritime Museum called '*Ships, Clocks & Stars*' focused on 'the quest for longitude' - that elusive but vital measurement needed by mariners to safely and successfully navigate their journeys. So important was the ability to track this measurement that a huge prize was offered to the first person who could demonstrate their ability to accurately and consistently measure longitude - for adventurers and explorers understood that knowing where they were at any given moment was as important as knowing their destination.



Which leads me to my current thinking.

If you would like to know more about why having a map and a destination is not enough to guarantee a highly successful coaching and mentoring assignment then please read on ...

My coaching and mentoring relationship with any client (especially at the beginning of a journey together) is founded primarily on my own position of alignment and integrity. It is the most fundamental essence of my work...

Alignment: from the French 'aligner'

1. Proper or desirable coordination or relation of components
2. Integration or harmonization of aims, practices, etc.

Integrity: from the Latin 'integritās'

1. The quality of being unimpaired; soundness
2. Adherence to moral principles; honesty
3. Unity; wholeness

By holding at all times my own position of alignment and integrity, a client will sense something to be true of me at the deepest level, even if they aren't consciously aware of what exactly they are sensing. Simultaneously, as I also hold the intention for them to reflect on the consideration of integrity and alignment, they can then begin to see in themselves the potential for their own alignment and integrity. Someone who truly desires to be that way - in alignment and with integrity - will almost always recognise a part of themselves in what I offer.

When I meet with any client, regardless of what is being said overtly, at all times I hold in my mind these two things - alignment and integrity - no matter where the conversation may take us, or what information is (or is not) given to me, these two things will create the possibilities that will encompass all the work we will do together.

From the very beginning of the process I am keenly interested in what is important to you. What are your values? What is your compass? By this I mean the internal measure that you use to navigate the rich landscape that is your life. This speaks to me about **integrity**.

Secondly, I want to find out what is the dream? This is what tells me about your **alignment**, or in many cases, perhaps your current lack of it. A dream is personal, and it can be as short as how you would ideally desire the next weekend to be, or as large as where you would like to be in 25 years - often we will work on both, with the deep drivers of identity and purpose steering us. This is the *destination*.

But the dream is *the* place to start...

Although dreams are individual and personal, they are also, at some level, universal and, at different times, the dream can be about different things. A person's dream may well change over time so I like to start with the biggest dream we can bring into focus for you, right now, as this sets the context for everything else we do together.

The dream creates the direction, and the direction will lead to the plan...the specific steps on the journey.

So, the dream is the 'where', the result that you want to move towards. The plan is the 'how', which comes a little later. Any good executive coach or mentor will of course want to work with you to establish a plan of action, but I'm not interested in that...well, not just yet, because there is a real and very important reason for addressing the dream before the reality of the 'now'.

If you don't explore the dream first, you are in danger of being a starring character in the old Irish joke:

A man who has been journeying for a while is now lost and seeking his way, finding a friendly shepherd with his dog sitting by the roadside, he seeks assistance:

'Good morning, could you tell me, how do I get to Dublin from here?'

'Well my good sir, you go down the hill and past the pub 'til you get to the old school...No, forget that. Go down the High Street 'till you reach the crossroads. No, wait, better still, turn around and go back to the river.....' then, taking a deep puff on his pipe says *'Do you know what, I wouldn't start from here.'*

Indeed, for many people, the current place is truly not the place to start from.

When I begin to engage with some clients, they would quite simply like a plan for survival because in today's workplace, we are putting such an expectation and demand on our leaders that a lot of them are now saying, 'I'm not sure I can – or want – to do this anymore.'

Therefore, it is always better to start looking at what a client *really* wants – **the dream.**

Finding out what you, my client, truly wants and desires will enable me to be certain of pointing you in the right direction, of bringing you into alignment with your deepest desires. With any client, I am constantly considering how best to facilitate the orientation; how to help you, using your internal compass to start actually facing in the direction that you want to go. How to align you with who you truly are and with what you truly want...

So if and when reality raises its ugly head and throws you off course, as it most likely will, you are aware of it, and you know what the course actually was, and you can figure out how to get back on it as effortlessly as possible.

Now we have a sense of the dream, the next thing I want to consider is the vision of the business. Whilst I do sometimes work purely with the executive, more often my work involves the executive *and* their business. This inevitably leads to the issue of working with leaders who may have a very different dream from that of the organisation they work for. This is fascinating work as here there is discordance and non-alignment. If we remain aware of those core values of integrity and alignment we are left with the question, 'which one will change?' Will it be the individual or the organisation? Which one CAN change?

In some cases it will be better for the executive to leave, because there is so much within the system and structure of the business that they are not going to be able to make any difference, no matter how hard they try. These are the constraints. The system cannot (or will not) change, and the executive cannot remain in alignment at a personal level, and so cannot maintain their integrity unless there is change. This is the conflict.

Piers Fallowfield-Cooper

Of course, even where there is good alignment there may from time to time be a short-term “trade off” where either the individual has to come first, because without it their energy or capacity will not be there and available. Or, the business has to come first, because if that leader wants to do the things they want to do, they are going to have to virtually give up their private life for the next ‘x’ months. This is a conversation we will have together, and then the client may well need to go home and talk about it, and then decide. You can choose where you put your energy, you can choose what you do, but there is always a price unless the integrity and alignment is there.

In a perfect world, which exists in fantasy only, (which is not the same as a dream) we would, of course, have alignment in both personal and business dreams. I like to think of it as a couple of high performance cars racing along. Sometimes one gets a little ahead of the other, then vice versa, but hopefully, almost all of the time the cars are heading in the right direction.

This is the kind of thing I am always holding in my mind when I am talking about the integrity and alignment of an individual. It’s essential and key to success, and hopefully, there will be that alignment; when we define the dream, both personally and in terms of the business, there will be a deep congruence and everything will come together. When this happens then we have something amazing that we can work on together, and that’s a very special place to be.

Integrity, alignment, dream...compass, map and destination...