

The Forton Group

7 billion individuals;
1 human race

Coaching & Coach-Training
across cultures

the
Forton
Group



 **ACTP**
Accredited Coach Training Program
International Coach Federation

The Professional Leadership
Coach Training Programme:

The four Regional Directors of the Forton Group are widely travelled, with a track record of coaching and training coaches in North America, UK & Europe (including Eastern Europe), and Asia Pacific, including Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand. We live and work in some of the world's most diverse cities and have trained many of the world's most successful and experienced coaches for over 20 years. A question we are regularly asked is how coaching and coach training is different in those different cultures. This paper reflects our approach, based on our experience to date.

Despite our differences, human beings are more alike than we think or consciously know; yet people tend to start from a position of difference. We believe in the abundance of humanity we have in common. This is not to disregard or disrespect difference; rather it is a position of 'deep respect'.



We also believe in the importance of leadership: not from a position, rather as an opportunity to step forward from wherever we are to make a difference; to take responsibility and be accountable. Leadership coaching is a way of supporting people to be successful: for themselves, the people they work with, their organisations and the society they work in.

Organisations with good leadership recognise that they can release the full potential of all their people, when they embrace diversity. Others fail to capitalise on this rich opportunity: for some this is a 'difficult' conversation. It is also important for leaders and coaches working across cultures to be sensitive to difference and the impact it may have.

What is unique the Forton Group's is that we celebrate diversity as strength and build upon it. We see six pillars, or needs, that underpin diversity issues and support people leading diverse teams.

1. Our need to understand our mental map
2. Our intrinsic motivation
3. Our desire to achieve
4. Our emotional intelligence
5. Our need for flexible leadership
6. Leading with our strengths

Most importantly, new research about the human brain provides evidence for the importance of creating trust between each other as human beings. The way we base decision-making on our feelings is shown to be more important than the rational/analytical factors that people previously believed were important. This foundation of trust underpins all of these pillars.

1. Our need to understand our mental map

Mental models are different in different cultures and assumptions made about behaviour, communications, gender, team working and leadership need to be explored, both in ourselves and others. Coaches need to understand how culture impacts on the coaching relationship and how particular approaches may need to be adapted. Even more importantly, coaches and leaders simply need to learn how to embrace, and be comfortable, with difference: whether different learning or communications styles, or ways of behaviour.

Jung'sⁱ work on archetypes shows us that the way we get our energy, the way we think, feel, explore options, and make decisions is different: not good or bad, better or worse, just different. Following various attempts to make his work into psychometric formulae, he insisted, towards the end of his life, that archetypes "are not mere names or even philosophical concepts. They are pieces of life itself - images that are integrally connected to the individual by the bridge of the emotions." Diversity is more than difference between cultures; it's recognising that every individual is unique.

Joseph Campbell'sⁱⁱ work on myth shows that these archetypes also show up as common stories told across cultures, notably in leadership and the 'hero's journey'. Like Jung, Campbell also resisted systematisation: "Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed." Hence our approach is to celebrate, rather than analyse, culture and how it impacts on us as individuals, especially how it supports us achieve our purpose.

From a coaching perspective, we know that culture is fundamental to an individual's mental map. For example "Asian organization cultures are different from Western organizations. Executive coaches may assume that coaching processes, which work in the West, are universally applicableⁱⁱⁱ."

In the Forton Group's Professional Leadership Coaching model, this is the 'Field' or world of the client and culture is a 'Structure' within the Field: invisible, but just as real as any physical structure. However, we would argue that it is the underlying attitudes and assumptions, cultural or otherwise, that need to be questioned, rather than coaching 'processes'. For example, 'contracting' between coach and coachee is a process, but it is the nature of the 'coach/coachee' relationship that needs to be explored, to raise self-awareness and to ensure alignment of expectations between them.

In our model there are a number of Principles from which the Coach is expected to operate. The Principle of Partnership, based on profound respect for the coaching client, and the Principle of Trust in the coachee's capabilities are two key elements. The model focuses on a number of Skills of which open questioning and deep listening are vital to successful coaching.

2. Our intrinsic motivation

What we experience as we travel around the world is that good leadership and coaching crosses cultures. We believe that the key to successful coaching is that we are tapping into people's intrinsic motivation. Coaching taps into three key aspects of intrinsic motivation, set out by Dan Pink^{iv} In his research of motivating people, which he demonstrates crosses all cultures.

- Autonomy (self determination)
- Mastery (a journey of development and learning)
- Purpose (a cause greater than themselves)

It is important for the coach or coach trainer to be aware of the difference in the concepts of self and, by extension, personal motivations. In western society self is very much the individual; in many Asian cultures 'self' includes the family. In African cultures 'family' includes a wider circle of people, including tribal members with no blood relationship. There are also gender issues arising from 'family' expectations, with senior female executives dramatically switching roles from housewife or mother at home, to leader in the workplace.

So when teaching coaching skills, we invite coaches to explore their own sense of self and be open to different cultural and gender meanings and perspectives. This is reflected in different parts of the programme: such as open questioning exercises, in listening skills and in the partnership between coach and coachee.

3. Our need to achieve

Striving to achieve is another common factor amongst humanity; the work of Mark Murphy^v sets out some common success factors, regardless of the particular goal:

- **The vision:** painting a clear vision of the goal: a mental and written or spoken picture, an internal sense of 'control' over, an emotional connection to, and personal ownership of the goal
- **Commitment:** a sense of urgency and commitment to making the goal real and that the journey is fulfilling in some way, requiring a sense of investment (whether in terms of financial/personal/time or other resource)
- **Stretch:** willingness to learn new skills, to step outside the coachee's comfort zone to attain the goal; an acceptance of the challenge, despite its scale or scope

Most coaching models will cover some, or all, of these factors. What is interesting, from a cross-cultural perspective, is how some of these factors are impacted on by our mental maps, for example, the sense of control. However, these factors show up in all cultures: even if they show up differently. Other factors are about being ready, willing and able to envision the goal and to do what it takes to make it real.

For example, some people have a different attitude to control, such as fatalistic attitudes, or an 'extrinsic locus of control'; these attitudes may or may not be culturally-based. Supporting coaching clients to look at what they can control and influence and exploring ways to expand this are important roles for the coach.

The Professional Leadership Coaching model describes the coaching conversation as a series of 'Steps'. These Steps typically start with linking the coachee's sense of purpose to their emotional connection and commitment to the goal. The emotional connection to the vision provides inspiration; the emotional connection to available resources provides motivation and planning to build on resources and to achieve the goals, provides the optimism. Coaching in this way makes that vision a reality.

4. Our need for emotional intelligence

The emotional commitment to success is vital for achieving goals and this can come from within ourselves and from those around us. The work of Daniel Goleman particularly has shown that developing our emotional intelligence not only improves our relationships with ourself, it supports us to improve relationships with those around us and is a key factor in great leadership.

Goleman's EQ awareness and management model is vital underpinning in coach training: to raise awareness and to improve relationships:

	Awareness	Management
Self	Self-awareness	Self-management
Other	Other-awareness	Relationship management

The evidence for emotional intelligence also comes from the very exciting work currently underway in brain science. Scientists have shown (mainly through MRI experiments) that the limbic brain, which governs our feelings, our ability to trust, is also the place where we make decisions. It is not the place of rational or analytical thinking – which takes place in the neo-cortex, nor is the limbic brain the place of language, which goes a long way to explain why 'intuition' sometimes lacks the words to explain the 'hunch' or 'gut feeling'.

The Professional Leadership Coach Training Programme explores these issues throughout its modules and develops these coaching skills more fully in the Developing course onwards.

5. Our need for flexible leadership

The connection between emotional intelligence and good leadership was noted in Goleman's early works and developed with colleagues in books such as The New

Leaders^{vi}. In this the authors set out six leadership styles, showing that each has a value in particular situations. The Forton Group's approach is that leadership is context-specific, with different leadership approaches needed within organisations at any particular time. This demands that leaders are flexible in their attitude and approach and have the challenge of articulating a vision and purpose, at the same time as providing hope and stability, as that vision is being made real.

Our coach training encourages coaches to explore leadership in this way: supporting their coaching clients to be aware of their default style and to explore what works in different situations, with different personality types. This supports diversity in leadership with a focus on achieving the desired goals, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach or a focus on the 'heroic leader'.

This diversity in leadership is embedded in the Forton Group's coach training programme from the very first group activity, where participants explore and discuss different leadership styles, qualities and strengths.

6. Leading with and from strengths

The work of the Gallup^{vii} organisation, notably in the area of talent themes and strengths was based on in-depth research with a sample size of over 400,000 respondents. The basic premise is that it's easier to be successful when you build on someone's innate strengths, rather than from trying to 'fix' weaknesses. From this 34 'talent themes' were identified, with further research uncovering four 'domains of leadership strength' and the four basic needs of followers:

- Trust
- Compassion
- Stability
- Hope

Appreciating what each individual needs to be successful means both appreciating their strengths, and leading from one's own. This demands a diversity of leadership styles: responding to the needs of the situation and the person.

The coach needs to look at the culturally-based leadership tradition, *and* at the more specific leadership needs within the context of the coaching conversation.

As our Regional Director in Asia-Pacific, Tony Draper, points out:

Gallups four domains of leadership strengths:

1. **EXECUTING**- Achiever, Arranger, Belief, Consistency, Deliberative, Discipline, Focus, Responsibility, Restorative
2. **INFLUENCING**- Activator, Command, Communication, Competition, Maximizer, Self-Assurance, Significance, Woo
3. **RELATIONSHIP**- Adaptability, Developer, Connectedness, Empathy, Harmony, Includer, Individualization, Positivity, Relator
4. **STRATEGIC THINKING**- Analytical, Context, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, Strategic

“There is a strong guru-shishya (teacher-student) tradition in Asia. This means the coach is expected to bring wisdom to the coaching. This is stronger than in western cultures so a successful coach in Asia must be prepared for this. Therefore, to remain true to core coaching competencies the coach must learn to bring the wisdom to the conversation while leaving the coachee at choice.”

The Professional Leadership Coaching model describes these as ‘supporting skills’. The coach also needs to support exploration of what personal leadership strengths the coachee already brings, as well as those qualities the coachee may need to bring to the specific situation. Leadership coaches need to be open to the concept of a strengths-based approach and support what already works within any given situation, culturally or otherwise.

Conclusions

The fundamentals of coaching, core competencies and training, as set out by the International Coach Federation, run beneath the cultural radar. These are basic to human nature and needs across cultures. If we are listening deeply to the individuals we work with, asking open questions and operating from a place of respect we can successfully address the issues faced by coaching clients globally.

The difference for both leaders and coaches is in their cultural awareness and the impact of culture on peoples thinking, behaviour and approach. Armed with this the leader or coach is more effective in enabling successful outcomes in others. The Professional Leadership Coach Training Programme, accredited by the International Coach Federation, addresses these needs in a sensitive and positive way.

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Tony Draper PhD., Helen Caton Hughes MA, Bob Hughes PCC, Cynthia Calluori PCC

References and suggested further reading:

ⁱ C. G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious" in Jung ed., *Symbols* p. 87 with acknowledgements to Wikipedia, accessed 8th March 2011.

ⁱⁱ *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell, p. 249, Fontana, 1993, with acknowledgements to Wikipedia, accessed 8th March 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Excerpt from the work of Lina Nangalia PCC and Dr. Ajay Nangalia PCC. www.globalcoachtrust.webs

^{iv} D. Pink, *Drive, The Surprising Truth about what motivates us*, Canongate Books Ltd, 2010

^v HARD goals

^{vi} D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* and D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis & A. McKee, *The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results*, Little, Brown, 2002

^{vii} Books published by the Gallup organisation include ‘Strengthfinder 2.0’, Strengths-based Leadership, and ‘How Full is Your Bucket?’. See www.strengths.gallup.com for details.

P. Rosinski, *Coaching Across Cultures: New Tools for Leveraging National, Corporate and Professional Differences*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2003