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Behaviorally Based Coaching: A Cross-Cultural Case Study

David Noer

This article is a case study that uses an action research model to report on a multi-dimensional six-year organizational case study involving a large Middle-Eastern energy company. It articulates the unique challenges of establishing an authentic coaching relationship in a culture with values and perspectives different than those of the coach. The development of a behaviorally based coaching model, the need to surface and communicate mental models, and the challenge of imparting coaching skills to line managers are discussed.

Relevance and Perspective

Organizational coaches are often faced with the challenge of establishing helping relationships with clients who have values and perspectives that differ from their own. While these value-based cultural differences can occur within the home culture of the coach, they are significantly accentuated in some national and regional areas. This case outlines a long-term coaching project where the client organization and the two external coaches have some very different culturally derived values. In addition to these value issues, there are a number of perspectives that make this case relevant to the organizational coach.

Unique Cultural Orientation

The project took place in an Arabic culture. This culture combined high context (task is often subservient to setting and process) and high power distance (acceptance and reinforcement of distinct hierarchical power differences) cultural orientations.¹ At another, often paradoxical, level it was an engineering oriented culture with a strong belief in measurement, analysis, and documentation. Rosinski presents a useful "Cultural Orientations Framework" in which he frames these dimensions as "Hierarchy/Equity."² This combination of high context, high power distance and measurement made it a very unique and, often challenging, culture in which to engage in organizational coaching.

Development of a Coaching Behavioral Model

In order to communicate cross-culturally, it was necessary to engage in behavioral model building.

Distilling the coaching process into concrete behaviors that can be understood in diverse cultural contexts is important to future research in our field. A great deal of effort was expended in developing a behaviorally based coaching model that could be applied not only to the client organization, but also to clients in other cultures.

Facilitating Transference to Line Managers

Fundamental to the design of this project was the concept of transference. We did not want to create a long-term dependency relationship. This was both a matter of values and logistics. With the number of people involved, the geographic distances, and the complexity of the system, it was not possible to field a sufficient number of external coaches to substantially help the system. We, thus, embarked upon a strategy of training line-managers in coaching and helping skills.

Utilizing an Action Research Approach

The action research process is a cyclical model often described as consisting of five phases: diagnosis, analysis, feedback, action, and evaluation.³ In order to document and evaluate this project an action research approach was utilized. This practitioner-oriented approach to data gathering, evaluation, and action taking is consistent with the complex and dynamic interplay of individual and system and congruent with the conceptual foundations of organizational coaching.

Authentically Engaging Clients Holding Different Values

The client organization had cultural and religious values that were very different than those of the two primary external coaches. The role of women, separation

of government and business, and religious tolerance are all reflective of these differences. (In this regard, because there were no women in management, the masculine pronoun is exclusively used when describing the client organization). This project reports on the process of authentically coaching in such an environment.

Historical Context

The roots of the current project reach back to 1997 when I was serving as a coach for the newly appointed CEO. This relationship involved several of the activities that are described as “executive coaching” in Lazar and Bergquist’s taxonomy of business coaching.⁴ One outcome of this initial coaching effort was the CEO’s decision to involve his new team in the creation of core values. The value statements that emerged were much the same as those articulated by many organizations: customer service, integrity, resource stewardship, and creating shareholder value. However, the next step moved beyond simply articulating value statements. It involved responding to the question, “How would you know if someone was behaving in congruence with these values?” This led to the development of a number of behavioral measurement statements, which, in turn, were put into the format of a 360-degree feedback instrument. I served as a coach to many of the team members and a facilitator of the process during these stages. This shifting client focus is a good example of the nature of organizational consulting.

At this point the organization had a 360-degree feedback instrument that measured the degree of perceived behavioral congruence with their core values. It was “owned” by the top executives since they developed the values and the behavioral measurement statements. The plan was to administer the instrument to all executives and high potential managers (about 500 people). Once the employee received his feedback, his boss would “coach” him and help develop plans to close any gaps. Each level would first receive their own feedback, and then attend a workshop in coaching skills prior to giving instrumented coaching feedback to their direct reports. A basic assumption in this strategy was that line-managers in this organization had the ability to learn and apply basic coaching skills.

A Reality Check

Shadow coaching the top executives (coaching the coach using role plays, behavioral rehearsal, and projected outcome criteria) and observing their coaching interactions with their direct reports resulted in some surprises. Most appeared unable to maintain a client-centered coaching relationship. Common behaviors involved either engaging in long, abstract, and unclear monologues, or becoming directive to the point of making the person being coached defensive. The results of a pilot coaching skills workshop proved equally surprising. The participants were senior executives and internal human resource and management development consultants. Twelve of the fourteen participants were Arabs, two were British expatriates. Although most of the participants were able to grasp the conceptual portions of the training, most did not do well in role-plays or videotaped simulations. These results caused us to put a hold on the rollout plan and move into the evaluative phase of the action research model.

Findings

We used a number of diagnostic techniques (focus groups, participant interviews, reflective post-mortem discussions with the two external coaches, and dialogues with internal managers who had worked in western cultures). Here were our conclusions.

Unwillingness to Confront

Unlike our experience with western executives, there was a reluctance to challenge and confront behavior that was blocking the person being coached from achieving his objectives. The culture made it difficult to separate confronting behavior and confronting the individual as a person. Although, this distinction is sometimes difficult for western managers, it was significantly more pronounced in the client organization’s culture.

Power Distance Collusion against Authenticity

There were some cultural norms in regard to supervisor-subordinate relationships that we attributed to a high power distance culture. For reasons of what one executive explained as “saving face,” bosses had a difficult time establishing a helping relationship with

those they perceived as lower than them in the organization and, although we don't have enough data to be certain, probably also in the external social and tribal structure. Conversely, subordinates seemed unwilling to be clear and direct, often appearing to tell the boss what he wanted to hear. We labeled this phenomenon "power distance collusion against authenticity," and it made coaching between hierarchal levels difficult.

Confusion as to Coaching Behavior

There was confusion as to what coaches actually did. There was a basic understanding of the tasks and orientation of coaches, which was consistent with the previously cited taxonomy of business coaching. However, the managers had a difficult time articulating and demonstrating the actual coaching behaviors necessary to accomplish these tasks.

Need to Surface Mental Models

One of the things coaches do is help their clients surface and access their mental models. The two experienced executive coaches in this project took their own medicine and coached each other through this process in regard to the dimensions of actual coaching behaviors. This was much more difficult than anticipated and the lesson learned in this still remembered quotation from one of the coaches: "If we're not clear on coaching behaviors, how can we expect to teach them to our clients?"

Next Steps

In conjunction with the action research model, our next steps involved responding to our findings and conclusions. We were helped in this process by the client organization's request to slow the project and our desire to develop a model of coaching behaviors that could be applied to other organizations beyond our Middle-Eastern client. We decided on three approaches:

- * Move beyond intentions and concepts and deal with actual behaviors. This was prompted both by the cultural issues previously discussed, and our own wish to break the act of coaching into discrete behavioral components.

- * Develop a model of coaching behaviors. Kurt Lewin said there is nothing so practical as a good theory. We think a model may be even more practical. A model distills a theory into common language, a shared cognitive set, and promotes communication. This commonality is essential when dealing cross-culturally.
- * Move to more of an educational and apprenticeship approach with our client. We still wanted to use line-managers to coach employees based on the results of their 360-degree feedback, but we, and our executive clients, decided to broaden the coaching application to an overall approach to leadership. Because of the power-distance issues we also decided to do more peer coaching and develop an internal cadre of trained coaches.

Developing the Model

Although triggered by the client organization, the process of developing a coaching behaviors model took on a life of its own. Much of the stimulus for this effort was a desire for a model that would be useful to other organizations and provide a frame of reference for future research.

Core Criteria

The following five factors were considered of prime relevance:

- * It be clear, practical, and readily understandable to busy, task oriented practitioners in a variety of cultural environments.
- * It focus on skills and behaviors that have been used by successful coaches who have made a difference.
- * It be behaviorally grounded: based on concrete, observable behaviors, not on abstractions, generalities, and philosophical ideals.
- * It be easily transferable to the behavioral repertoire and skill base of non-behavioral scientists such as line managers and those trained as engineers and technical professionals.

- * It be able to be applied outside the workplace to family and friends.

Values and Perspectives

The development of the model was grounded on four values and perspectives.

- * Although the context of coaching is the organization, the center of the behavioral relationship is the person being coached, not the company, the boss, or the coach.
- * Help is defined by the person receiving the help – the person being coached – not the person giving the help – the coach.
- * Coaching skills can be learned and applied by working managers.
- * Coaching in this model is a one-on-one, not a group, relationship.

Center for Creative Leadership Roots

The Center for Creative Leadership has been offering leadership training and individual coaching to managers and executives for over thirty years. Participants experience a variety of assessment processes: instruments that measure leadership style and managerial and decision making processes; 360-degree feedback; small group exercises; and one-on-one sessions. They are helped and supported by a feedback coach as they work through and attempt to make sense out of the information they have assembled on themselves. Finally they are encouraged and challenged to set goals that will allow them to grow and develop.⁵ Although the context is leadership development, the process is coaching, and that coaching uses a core technology of assessment (measurement, feedback and benchmarking), support (non-judgmental facilitation and empathy), and challenge (action planning and goal setting).

Assessing, Supporting and Challenging Dimensions

Using the Center for Creative Leadership's assessment, support, and challenge concept as a frame of reference, literature was reviewed and a series of individual and focus group discussions took place with six external applied behavioral scientist/coaches. Individual sessions were also conducted with managers and staff

specialists inside organizations. The operant question was, "Do assessment, support, and challenge represent the essence of coaching?" Another way of phrasing the question was, "Is there anything a coach does that does not involve some combination of assessing, supporting, and challenging?"

Core Dimensions, Varying Contexts

The conclusion was that, although the emphasis, language and contexts vary, assessing, challenging, and supporting are the core dimensions of coaching. As an example, much of the literature on athletic coaching and the perspective of some of the internal managers indicated that motivation was a central coaching function. Behaviorally, however, motivation is a subset of challenging. Likewise, perspectives on the assessment process ranged from very structured measurement oriented standards and normed 360-degree feedback, to subjective, dialogue induced, self-discovery. The core process was assessment although the methodology varied greatly.

The centrality of activities designed to assess current performance levels, support individuals in their struggle for self-understanding and change, and challenge them to confront their issues and take action, holds true regardless of the context. Whether it is basketball or executive coaching, the core dimensions of assessing, supporting, and challenging remain constant. The balance and the methodology, however, vary. One behavioral coach in our research sample had a strong supportive style and preference. Much of his coaching time was spent on the supporting behaviors of attending, reflecting, and inquiring. Another specialized in 360-degree feedback and spent most of her coaching time on analyzing the feedback data (assessing) and goal setting (challenging). The model that emerged emphasizes balance. Focusing on one or two dimensions of the model to the detriment of the third, results in unintended and, often, unhealthy consequences.

Classic Interventionist Grounding

As we discussed this three-dimensional model of coaching with our line and staff colleges it became clear that many of the concepts and approaches to

organization development, change management, leadership development, and our conceptualization could be traced to the theoretical work of Chris Argyris. He used the term “interventionist” to describe a person who enters and organizational system to do three things (1) generate valid data, (2) help stimulate free and informed choice and (3), develop internal commitment to these choices.⁶ These concepts provide a direct frame of reference for the three coaching dimensions. Valid data equates to assessment, free choice requires support, and internal commitment is stimulated and reinforced by challenge.

Articulating Coaching Behaviors

Having established the three dimensions of supporting, challenging, and assessing, the next task was to establish behavioral components for each dimension. These components needed to be congruent with the previously indicated core criteria.

Supporting Behaviors

The supporting dimension involves creating an interpersonal context that facilitates trust, openness, respect, and understanding. Dennis Kinlaw’s Superior Coaching Model supplied the four behavioral components of this supporting dimension.⁷ These components are attending, inquiring, reflecting, and affirming. In Kinlaw’s model they are outlined as four of five critical skills in an overall model. In our model they constitute a set of behaviors for one of three coaching dimensions. Although behaviors such as listening, rephrasing, non-judgmental questioning, and creating positive expectations are commonly found in the literature of coaching and counseling, Kinlaw does a particularly effective job in framing them.

Challenging Behaviors

Challenging involves stimulating the person being coached to confront obstacles, re-conceptualize issues, and move forward with renewed energy and self-reliance. The first behavioral component is confronting. This requires helping the person being coached face and understand issues, behaviors, or perceptions that are blocking her. Hargrove presents some excellent examples in his discussion of transforming ‘rut’ stories to ‘river’ stories.⁸

The second behavioral component is focusing and shaping which involves moving the coaching interaction from the general to the specific with concrete, actionable outcomes. Kinlaw provides a good overview of the shape of a coaching interaction.⁹

The third component involves reframing, helping the person being coached examine and validate his assumptions and inferences. The concept of a ladder of inference is helpful in understanding this process.¹⁰

The person being coached should develop an increased sense of purpose, energy, and self-reliance. This is the fourth component of empowering/energizing. Witworth, Kimsey-House & Sandahl present an excellent perspective on this component when they discuss fulfillment and balance coaching.¹¹

Assessing Behaviors

This dimension involves the analytical processes that lead to measurement and goal setting. In articulating behavioral components, we were influenced by the traditional performance management process, the need to set goals based on strategic objectives, and the increasing use of 360-feedback as a developmental benchmark for gap analysis.¹² The resulting behavioral components were: (1) data gathering, (2) gap analysis, (3) goal setting, and (4) measurement/feedback.

The Triangle Coaching Model

As a result of our research in articulating the three sets of coaching behaviors, we formulated the triangle coaching model. This model conceptualizes the process of coaching as a client centered, helping relationship with three, equally important dimensions. Each dimension, in turn, has for behavioral components. In order to promote clarity in cross-cultural applications of the model, a clear and unambiguous definition of each component was necessary.

Supporting Definitions

The supporting dimension involves creating an interpersonal context that facilitates trust, openness, respect, and understanding. The four behavioral components are:

- * Attending – using body language, voice tone, eye contact, and physical setting to reduce defensiveness and create an open, trusting coaching environment.
- * Inquiring – asking questions to elicit information, clarify perspectives, and promote understanding.
- * Reflecting – promoting clarity and demonstrating understanding by the coach stating in her own words what she thinks the person she is coaching is saying or feeling.
- * Affirming – communicating that the coach believes the person being coached has the ability to learn, change, or develop.
- * Goal setting – helping the person being coached develop concrete plans to meet desired objectives.
- * Measurement/Feedback – establishing criteria to assess progress against goal achievement and developing mechanisms for feedback of behavioral changes.

Applying the Model

Challenging Definitions

The challenging dimension involves stimulating the person being coached to confront obstacles, re-conceptualize issues, and move forward with renewed energy and self-reliance. The four behavioral components are:

- * Confronting – helping the person being coached face and understand issues, behaviors, or perceptions that are blocking him.
- * Focusing/Shaping – moving the coaching interaction from the general to the specific, toward concrete, actionable outcomes.
- * Reframing – helping the person being coached examine and validate her assumptions and inferences. This involves helping discover alternative interpretations of the data used to form conclusions.
- * Empowering/Energizing – helping the person being coached develop an increased sense of purpose, energy, and self-reliance.

Assessing Definitions

The assessing dimension involves analytical processes that lead to measurement and goal setting. The four behavioral components are:

- * Data gathering – collecting information that will be of use to the person being coached.
- * Gap analysis – utilizing differences between the current reality and the desired future state of the person being coached to develop action plans.

The initial stimulus for the model was the need to ground coaching concepts in unambiguous behaviors that would be robust enough to withstand cross-cultural applications. Because of the concomitant desire of the primary coaches in the project to develop a set of behaviors that would ground our own coaching and teaching practices in other cultures, the project moved beyond the client organization. However, during the developmental phase, a number of concurrent activities (executive coaching with a small number of top executives, refinement of the 360-degree feedback instrument, and coaching skills training for a limited number of internal consultants) continued in the client organization. As we began to interact with the client around the developing model, it became clear that an assessment instrument would be helpful. This led to the development of the self-assessment instrument we now call The Coaching Behaviors Inventory.

Behavioral Measurement, Creating an Inventory

Items were generated that reflected the behavioral manifestations of each of the twelve behavioral components. Thirty items were distilled from an initial item bank of over fifty. Two pilot instruments were tested using a variety of rating scales and various combinations of items. A current program is underway to further test the internal consistency (reliability) of the scales within and between cultural sub-groups.

The inventory has ten items relating to supporting behaviors, ten for challenging, and ten for assessing. Anchor points for the self-assessment scale range from (1) “I almost never use this behavior” to (5) “I almost always use this behavior.” Scores on each item are summed for the ten items making up each scale. The maximum score of 50 indicates that a coaching

dimension is almost always used. A score of 10 indicates a dimension is almost never used.

An Expanded Coaching Skills Workshop

It was obvious that because of their power-distance and high context orientation, client organization managers needed a great deal of practice in coaching behaviors. The self-assessment instrument became the centerpiece in a workshop using videotaped role-plays, case studies, and real-life coaching issues.

A Mentoring and Shadow Coaching Program

A small number of client organization employees have been selected to become internal coaches. This role involves helping managers with their 360-degree feedback as well as serving as coaches to a limited number of internal clients. Those selected for this role are mentored and are shadow coached by experienced external coaches. The coaching behaviors model has served as an extremely valuable tool in mentoring these internal coaches. In particular, it has helped develop their supporting and challenging skills.

A Common Language

One of the values of a shared model is that it creates a common language. This has certainly been the case within the client organization. This is not only helpful in skills building, but in the creation of a developmental culture. This is reflected in the incorporation of the vocabulary of the model into the everyday language in the workplace. It is not uncommon to hear statements such as, "He needs to do a better job supporting," or "He is very good at challenging."

Results and Impact

What follows is a summary of the results and an evaluation of the impact of our coaching activity with the client organization. Although the project is entering its sixth year it is still a work in process, so this summary represents a point-in-time snapshot.

The Financial Bottom Line

The challenge to most of us who are engaged in organizational coaching is how to answer the question, "What's the value of this, how does it affect the bottom

line?" I'll respond both in regard to the client organization and at a more personal perspective.

There were too many complex intervening variables to do more than speculate. This project took place over a number of years within a context of significant political and economic turmoil. The invasion of Iraq, the influence of OPEC, and government influence on business throughout the region all affect the price of oil, and the price of oil is the single most important factor in the client organization's bottom line. In my opinion, too many academics and practicing organizational coaches attempt to connect behavioral interventions with financial results without considering major variables such as downsizing, mergers, energy costs, and job exportation. Attempting to justify the expenses of coaching interventions with the short-term profits of business organizations operating in such dynamic environments is usually a trap that is best avoided.

The Human Bottom Line

A "bottom line" that is central to our coaching values and is difficult to quantify is the impact on the human spirit. This involves helping people become more self-aware, congruent, and responsible for their choices. It encompasses value clarification, authenticity, and applying energy and passion to what is seen as really important. We experienced a great deal of success in this regard in our work with the client organization managers. Because of the stress of often conflicting bi-cultural roles (collegial, familial, tribal cultural values co-existing with structured, hierarchical western bureaucracy), there was a pent up demand for coaching. Once the word was disseminated that we could be trusted, there were more clients than we had time to work with.

The Quality of Coaching Interactions

Although a subjective evaluation, the interaction patterns between those attempting coaching relationships appeared much improved. Since the external consultants only made periodic visits to the client organization, they had an outsider's opportunity to assess this change. The use of common language as previously described, the increased time spent in

coaching interactions, and the increased ability of coaches to engage in confronting behaviors were all indicators of an increase in the quality of coaching interactions.

Depth and Relevance of Workshop Goals

As a result of opening up the coaching skills workshop to more levels of management, approximately 750 employees have gone through coaching workshops. Depending on the management level the duration of these workshops ranges from three to ten days. All workshops have a follow-up shadow coaching session. Participants are required to set concrete, actionable goals to apply their learnings. Because of increased attention and monitoring of the goal setting process, the depth, specificity, and relevance of the goals to the behavioral model is much improved. As an example, a goal of one of the earlier workshops was "To increase the use of coaching." A goal of a more recent workshop was, "Increase my supporting behaviors by using at least four reflections a day with my peers and use one affirmation each time I meet with a subordinate." The client is also currently embarked on a follow-on study on goal achievement with a cross section of participants.

Normative Comparisons

The self-assessment instrument has now been administered to samples in Europe and North America as well as the client organization's Arabic culture, and we are able to compare norms for the three behavioral dimensions. One interesting finding is that client organization managers self-report significantly higher supporting scores than their European and North American counterparts. However, in our videotaped workshop role-plays we have noticed that they do not behave in congruence with these self-reports. We use these normative comparisons informally in our workshops and compare their individual self-reports with their role play performance in individual coaching sessions. We plan on an in-depth review of the normative data late in 2005.

Senior Executive Orientation

Moving the top executives from their traditional directing, evaluating and controlling roles to a coaching

approach has proven difficult. We hypothesize that there are two reasons. The first has to do with the nature of senior executive tasks in this organization. This, in turn, is reinforced by the preferred style of the top executive. The second reason has to do with the cultural preference for high-power distance. Top executives are expected to be formal, controlling, and somewhat aloof. The culture seems to drive this orientation. This is not to say that they do not want to change, just that it appears to be against the grain experience for them. As articulated by one internal consultant, "They get it in their head, but not their heart!"

Creation of a Coaching Culture

The middle management levels are a much more fertile ground for the germination of coaching seeds. One outcome of our efforts has been the development of a small group of very effective internal coaches who came from the ranks of middle managers. In addition to the internal coaches, the use of managers as coaches to employees completing 360-degree feedback has been most effective in the middle management ranks. As these middle managers rise into executive positions in the future, it will be interesting to see if their coaching orientation is diminished by their top management roles.

Learnings and Observations

After six years of working with a Middle-Eastern energy company on various dimensions of organizational coaching, here are five learnings and observations. These represent our perspective, are offered collegially and are not intended to be prescriptive.

Making Mental Models Explicit

It is extremely important to make our mental models explicit and share them with our organizational clients. This is useful for clients within our own culture and, based on our experience, essential for clients with different cultural norms and values. Even experienced organizational coaches need to articulate and communicate their mental models as they have a way of becoming blurred and they can make erroneous assumptions that others understand and accept them. One emergent learning for the two external coaches was

the need to share our own mental models on a continuing basis.

Moving Away from Abstractions and Generalizations

When working cross-culturally it is necessary to go through the hard work and discipline necessary to move from abstractions and generalizations to concrete measurable behavior. Again, this is important in any client relationship, but particularly useful when working in other cultural environments. One valuable outcome of our work in this area was the creation of a self-assessment instrument that allowed us to measure and compare coaching behaviors in other cultures. Another insight was that, as we worked with our client, we were continually surprised at the difficulty we experienced shedding our own proclivity for generalizations and abstractions. My hunch is that this is a professional hazard of the applied behavioral scientist.

The Power of Culture

Culture is important, powerful, and we almost always underestimate its impact on the coaching relationship. Our experience with our Middle-Eastern client has sharpened our cultural antennae and we have found previously undiscovered cultural orientations in some of our US clients. Our learning is that we need to work hard to understand organizational cultures and that we should not make too many assumptions even if we perceive that the client is part of our own culture.

The Need for Action Research

The action research model is very useful, both for the immediate project and for contributing to the field of organizational coaching. Using it in a dynamic organization is a good news/bad news proposition. The good news is that it is challenging, engaging, and oriented to ongoing, live issues. The bad news is that requires discipline, time, and it and the dynamic nature of organizations does not lend itself to rigid experimental design. We encourage our colleagues in organizational coaching to document their interventions and be more intentional in framing action research models. In that way, we can learn from each other and do a better job helping our clients.

Honoring Conflicting Values

It is our observation that organizational coaching is a helping profession. As such, we should not lose track of the need to meet our clients where they are and not where we want them to be. The axiom that help is defined by the person being helped and not the person giving help is particularly valid in a cross-cultural environment. The culture of our client had values and perspectives in regard to the role of women, freedom of religious expression, and separation of business and government that were clearly not shared by the external coaches. In order to formulate an authentic helping relationship, it was necessary to honor the values of our client and work within their cultural context, not attempt to convert them to ours. Coaches who are unable or unwilling to do this should definitely not work in certain cultures.

The Power and Promise of Cross-Cultural Coaching

In a world where all types of organizations – governments, corporations, religious sects and denominations – are becoming increasingly fragmented and contentious, a skilled coach with access to organizational leaders can be a powerful force for tolerance and understanding. A coach can help leaders examine underlying assumptions, surface mental models, and examine core values. This can lead to more humane, longer-lasting, and environmentally responsible approaches to decision-making and problem solving. In cultures where face-saving, political posturing, and navigating delicate coalitions, requires leaders to display inauthentic public behavior, a competent coach with the ability to establish an authentic helping relationship can be an invaluable resource.

The good news is that skilled coaches can, indeed, make a difference in the world. The bad news is that in addition to basic coaching skills, cross-cultural competence requires two additional ingredients: a little pain and a lot of faith. The pain involves looking in the mirror and understanding what we see. We must examine our own values and accept that they are artifacts of our own culture and may not be relevant to

other cultures. Knowing that what we value may not be equally important to others is always painful. The faith involves trusting that by helping others surface and face their own cultural values we are engaging in a process that will lead to cross-cultural bridge building and will result in less-provincial, more ecumenical, and responsible organizational decisions. Our profession has an exceptional opportunity to make the world a better place. What is needed is the courage to look in the mirror and the faith that self-awareness will help our organizational clients become better stewards of the planet.

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