

INTERVIEW WITH DR. TONY DRAPER ON COACHING



Tony is an Executive Coach with more than 24 years experience with multinational corporations, both as an employee and professional coach.

In recent years, his work has been concentrated in Singapore, Hong Kong, India, Australia and New Zealand.

As coaching emerges in Asia, Tony has been supporting organisations with the implementation of culture change and other Organisational Development initiatives as well as the training of internal coaches. As a master facilitator, he also supports the training and development of new ICF accredited executive coaches.

Tony is based in Australia and operates his own company DraperCo. He is the Asia-Pacific Regional Director for The Forton Group.

Since Coaching is an evolving practice in India, we requested Tony to answer a few questions to help our readers know more about Coaching and its benefits. Read on to know more...

ET: What is the role of coaching in executive development?

TD: Simply put the role of the coach is to facilitate positive behavioral change in the executive. I see my role as one that supports the executive to get what he/she wants without doing it for him/her or telling him/her how to do it. This approach is very different from the approaches of trainers, mentors or consultants. The coaching relationship is based on a belief that the executive is creative and resourceful. The individual holds his/her own answers and the coach's role supports in building awareness, leverages what the individual has and creates accountability to move forward.

ET: How do you distinguish between a manager/leader and a Coach?

TD: This is a great question and one, which many will have differing opinions on. It also depends on your context. What I mean is a professional coach such as an external executive coach is a trained professional. This means a person who has coach specific training, preferably recognized by an independent body such as the International Coach Federation (ICF). Further, an independent body like the ICF certifies the coach. In Australia, for example, it is becoming the norm for organizations only to hire coaches who hold this kind of certification.

The other context is that of a leader and a coach inside an organization. Many organizations are looking to create “coaching” cultures. In such a culture, the manager/leader is expected to use a “coach approach” with staff and colleagues.

My belief is that leadership is coaching and coaching is leadership. For example, one definition is *“Leadership is about being personally successful and enabling success in others”*. If we truly want to be successful as a leader, we must be able to develop those around us. We cannot rely on telling people what to do. The leaders must draw upon the skills of coaching to support the development of those around them – i.e. enabling their success.

ET: How can organizations harness the benefits of coaching?

TD: I see organizations doing this at 3 levels. The first is utilizing external executive coaches. These coaches are used for two purposes; executive coaching as discussed above and coaching to support behavioral change aligned with corporate strategy such as supporting individuals to implement new behaviors after a training event.

The second level, which is increasing in many organizations, is to create their own pool of internal coaches. These are people working for the organization who have had professional coach training and then part of or all of their role is to coach. These internal coaches support team, leadership and career development throughout the organization. One organization I am working with has trained 60 such internal coaches to the level of Associate Certified Coach (through the ICF) and has another program of 12 people starting training next month.

The third level is through “Manager/Leader as Coach” training. There is an increasing expectation that managers develop their people and often ask them to ‘coach’ employees. In some organizations this is badly handled because they don’t equip managers with the skills required to develop, engage and motivate staff. In these cases coaching is just a fancy word for telling people what to do. Where I have seen a lot of organizations succeed is; provide managers/leaders with ‘manager as coach training’. In this case, organizations are not trying to make the managers professional coaches but they are equipping managers with skills which allow them to have more effective development conversations.

ET: What does it take to run a successful coaching practice?

TD: My first response is what does it take to run any successful business? After those things are considered for coaching, I believe that you must be clear on what you are selling. In my context as a corporate coach, I am often asked by people how I sell coaching. The truth of the matter is as a corporate coach I don’t sell coaching at all. My usual response is that I partner with the organization to support people strategy implementation. Another way to look at it is partnering to support whatever organizational development (OD) initiative the organization is trying to accomplish.

Organizations are great at creating OD initiatives (culture, retention, performance management etc) but where they struggle is the implementation. Take the simple case of rolling out Values & Behaviors (V&B).

They often hold workshops introducing the 'what' is (V&B) but miss out on providing managers with the 'how' and the 'who'. "How do they need to 'show up' or behave differently in the workplace and who they are being as leaders? This is where a coach can shine.

The key to success in my opinion is to collaborate with the client and align our solution within the organization's initiative. Customize our work so it's very fabric looks, feels and smells like the organization.

Not unlike one to one coaching, where as a coach we do not sell 'coaching' - we sell the benefits of coaching to the individual; with corporate coaching, we work with the organization on their OD initiative and provide a solution based on a range of options, which will best support what they are trying to achieve.

ET: What makes a coach fail?

This is an interesting question and again I must say there are a number of different levels here. Many coaches I know are not successful due to the running of the business. They are excellent coaches and not so good at business development, sales and marketing. Many people take coach training and may be great coaches and they haven't considered the amount of work it takes to start and run a business.

The other piece around this is with regards to service delivery. As coaches we must stick to coaching, the ethics of conduct and the core competencies. Where I see some coaches struggle is when they start mixing coaching and other types of services. When we are coaching, we need to trust the process. Coaches come from all kinds of backgrounds and some coaches are also consultants, counselors or trainers etc. I think it is OK that we offer different services within our business and we need to remain intentional about the service we are providing in the moment or situation. Therefore, when coaching we don't jump in with our consulting solutions or decide for a therapeutic intervention because it seemed right in the moment.

ET: How can coaches keep growing?

TD: The road to mastery in coaching is never ending. I will stop coaching if/ when I reach the point where I believe that I've arrived at the end of the road. The coaching profession is still very young and evolving there are new research and approaches coming out all the time. All the successful coaches I know read, take courses and continue to develop themselves personally and professionally. They also have their own coach!

ET: How do you measure impact of Executive Coaching?

TD: This is a huge area. There is a lot of good research now being done and released. This is the focus of many current PhD's in coaching. The ICF website is a good place to start. However, I will answer this with respect to my practice. I use 360-degree assessments pre and post interventions, which look at thinking styles and behaviours, rather than assessments that measure how we are hard wired. These are often linked to leadership impact and effectiveness. In other cases, I have worked with organisations with

respect to what they are addressing. We utilise the measurement frameworks they already have. This has included customer surveys, employee climate surveys, retention figures etc. In some cases these have been linked to bottom line figures in others, the linkage is more indirect. There are new tools coming out on the market.