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Coaching for Personal Innovation: The Role of Intuition

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Coaching for Personal

Innovation: **The Role
of Intuition**

By: Connie Reimers-Hild, Ph.D.





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Dear Friends & Readers:

I submitted this paper to the International Coach Academy for the partial fulfillment of their Certified Professional Coach Program. This research paper was my last requirement for graduation. I hope you sincerely enjoy and benefit from this information!

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Coaching for Personal Innovation: The Role of Intuition

By: Connie Reimers-Hild, Ph.D.
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You, along with other like-minded people, are awakening to your individual path, knowing without knowing, that something more is being required of you. You are one of the people who was born to participate in this creatively explosive time of transformation. Trust that. (p. ix)

*-Carol Adrienne, author of the
Forward for The Intuitive Way, by
Penney Peirce (2009)*

Introduction

Innovation has become essential to survival and success in the 21st Century. Globalization combined with the rapid rate of change and explosive population growth have created a need for entrepreneurial activity, both inside and outside of new venture creation, that leads to continuous innovation while considering social and environmental impacts. Entrepreneurs are needed to establish new ventures and to employ others while developing new products, services and solutions. Entrepreneurial individuals, who may or may not start a business, are needed because they are innovators who behave or act in a proactive manner and move organizations forward.

Many different structures, policies and tools are being used to strengthen innovation within organizations; however, innovative behavior ultimately relies on individuals. Research (Reimers-Hild, 2005) has shown that motivation through personal fulfillment influences characteristics associated with the entrepreneurial personality. The complexity of motivation, entrepreneurial behavior and personal innovation suggests there is a need to explore these areas in greater detail. This paper proposes 1) intuition is a key element related to personal fulfillment and transformation; 2) intuition has the potential to influence entrepreneurial behavior and personal innovation; and, 3) coaching is a key tool in the development of intuition and personal innovation.

Defining Intuition

Intuition is defined and described in a number of ways depending on the source of information being studied. The root of the word intuition is derived from the Latin words *intueor* or *intueri*, which means 'to contemplate' or 'look within' (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004). Merriam-Webster's online student dictionary describes intuition as, "1. the power of knowing immediately and without conscious reasoning" or "2. something known or understood at once."

The book, *Co-Active Coaching: New Skills for Coaching People Toward Success in Work and Life* (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007), describes intuition as, ... "a kind of knowing that resides in the background and is often unspoken. It remains in the background because, for many people, it's not easy to trust" (p. 11). At the 2011 International Coach Federation Conference, Lynn Robinson described intuition in a variety of ways:

- An "inner knowing" and "inner voice"
- A tool for quick and ready insight
- A gut feeling
- An inner compass
- A physical sensation
- when, "you know something but don't know how you know it"

The variety of definitions and publications underscore the complexity and importance of intuition. This paper considers intuition to be an essential element in the pursuit of personal fulfillment, personal development and personal innovation because, "It is a process of tapping into your deep sense of inner wisdom" (Seale, 2001).

Many of the world's greatest innovators and entrepreneurs have used their inner wisdom or intuition to realize their dreams. In his book, *Entrepreneurial Genius: The Power of Passion*, Dr. Gene Landrum (2004) identified intuition and instinct as key factors associated with success. Landrum found that many entrepreneurial geniuses are intuitive thinkers. Dr. Landrum's definition of intuition is not focused on an inner knowing but as a connection between the internal and external. Landrum viewed intuition as, "usually the internalization of prolonged observation." Examples of successful entrepreneurs who relied on their "gut instincts" or intuition to make business decisions include Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, and legendary designer, Coco Chanel.

The Importance of Intuition

Intuition is the long-lost juice of life. It brings us fluidity and joy, instantaneous answers, and abundant knowledge just for the asking. Living by intuition is an art that when mastered produces a thrill like no other. (Peirce, 2009, p. xiii)

Just as successful entrepreneurs use intuition to make decisions, individuals can use their intuitive senses as a key personal innovation tool to help clarify life directions and everyday decisions. Part of this process is distinguishing wants from musts. Wants are not necessarily musts. Wants

may be desirable and thought about a great deal; however, people do not take action on their wants. They act on their musts (Robbins, 2001).

Many people say they want a new job but never turn in any applications. People also talk about starting businesses but never take steps to grow their enterprises. Individuals talk about wanting to break old habits but never dedicate anything but thought to it. These examples of inaction signal a need for greater self-awareness and clarity. Intuition is a powerful tool that can help individuals strengthen their self-awareness while providing a path to greater clarity. A heightened state of self-awareness and clarity also helps individuals determine and take action on their musts, which increases self-confidence.

Action and personal fulfillment are both required to turn wants into sustainable musts. One of the first actions steps is using intuition to truly clarify musts and make them essential. Musts need to become critical for survival, success, well-being and sense of purpose. Turning a want into a must ensures that time and other resources are dedicated to making a must happen while feeling a sense of greater personal fulfillment. According to Maslow's (1965) definition of self-actualizing individuals, sustainable action and change are more likely if personal fulfillment is part of the process:

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them—some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy there disappears. (p. 110)

Self-actualization can lead to “peak experiences” characterized by individuals dedicated to achieving their true musts. When focused and dedicated to achieving their must, individuals experience a sense of overall well-being, purpose, creativity and personal innovation. In order for true self-actualization to occur, individuals must listen to themselves, be honest with themselves, look within for answers and ultimately take personal responsibility for their actions.

Many of the entrepreneurial geniuses examined by Landrum (2004) acted in a manner similar to what Maslow describes as a self-actualized individual. They felt a strong internal sense of what they needed to do and pursued their individual path with passion and persistence. Many of the entrepreneurial geniuses took calculated risks and experienced numerous setbacks. Rather than giving up, they learned from their

experiences and continued to pursue their calling. They were entrepreneurial individuals who adopted a cycle of personal innovation.

The dynamic cycle of personal innovation has the potential to separate wants from musts while providing individuals with new experiences and opportunities. The journey is typically characterized by ups and down as well as opportunities and challenges. Because people take action on their musts, challenges inevitably occur and are part of the process. Research (Webber, 2010) has shown that challenges and struggles can lead to joy and personal epiphanies that lead to greater self-actualization and more peak experiences. Individuals must take the time to process challenges, learn from them and move forward with greater understanding and clarity about the “musts” they want to experience during life. The cycle of personal innovation appeared to repeat itself many times with the entrepreneurial geniuses studies by Landrum (2004).

Ultimately, the cycle of personal innovation itself is fluid and dynamic. As life changes and epiphanies occur, musts will change as well. Innovative individuals are comfortable with listening to their intuition and making necessary changes in direction. They realize life is in a constant state of flux and have the ability to be fluid. Further, their changes in direction lead to a sense of personal fulfillment, heightened awareness, new challenges and new opportunities.

Intuition and Coaching

Intuition is an important element of entrepreneurial behavior within organizations. It is also an important trait for managers (Agor, 1988), executives (Agor, 1986; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004), innovative research and development professionals (Glaser, 1995), entrepreneurs (Landrum, 2004) and coaches (Whitworth, et al., 2007). The literature clearly identifies intuitive awareness as an important asset for people living and working in the 21st Century; however, identifying and developing intuition appears to be a far more difficult issue. Just as intuition helps coaches better interpret information from clients (Whitworth et al., 2007), coaching is a key tool in the development of intuition and personal innovation.

This paper defines coaching as, “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (International Coach Federation, 2011). Coaching is a powerful tool for personal transformation and clarity. According to research by De Haan, Bertie, Day and Sills (2010), many clients experience incremental transformative changes through personal realizations during the coaching process. Personal realizations are often times emotional experiences that can strengthen self-confidence. Intuition is important in the personal transformation process. According to Maslow (1971), intuition is linked to self-trust, self-

confidence and ultimately self-actualization:

For experientially empty people, including a tragically large proportion of the population, for people who do not know what is going on inside themselves and who live by clocks, schedules, rules, laws, hints from neighbors (i.e., other-directed people), this kind of trigger provides a way of discovering what the self is like. There are signals from the inside; there are voices that yell out, "By gosh this is good, don't ever doubt it!" We use these signals as a path to teach the discovery of the self and self-actualization. The discovery of identity comes via the impulse voices, via the ability to listen to your own guts and what is going on inside of you. (p. 152)

Conversely, individuals who ignore their intuition tend to struggle with their decisions and choices because they have not yet discovered or chosen to listen to the signals coming from within themselves. They have not clarified their musts and wants and are typically not experiencing a true sense of personal fulfillment. Making what they feel are bad choices can lead to regret and erode self-confidence. Not developing intuitive awareness may also perpetuate limiting thoughts and underlying beliefs. Landrum (2004) noted, "...passion, hard work, intuition and tenacity all played a key role in the great entrepreneurial successes" (p. 358) while also bringing forth a connection between underlying beliefs and intuition:

The “I can't because” syndrome is a symptom of an inner acceptance of the status quo. The “I can't” becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that signals acceptance and denies “I can.”
(358)

People who choose to follow their intuitive senses find themselves in a flow of life that is characterized by coincidence and synchronicity (Landrum, 2004; Peirce, 2009) and a greater sense of personal fulfillment. Clients who learn to develop their intuitive skills may also become more effective in their relationships (Whitworth et al., 2007).

The International Coach Federation (2011) definition of coaching, “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential,” highlights the importance of helping coachees maximize their potential. Intuition is a tool that can help people strengthen their personal potential in a number of different ways, including increasing self-confidence, self-trust and self-actualization. Strengthening personal potential leads to personal transformation and innovation. If intuition is used in this process, personal fulfillment and sustainable transformation are more likely. Intuition plays a critical role in the process of personal innovation, and coaching can strengthen intuitive awareness.

Coaching for Intuition

Intuition coaching can be a powerful personal innovation tool because intuitive awareness helps clients approach life from a perspective that includes their inner and outer worlds. Intuition coaching helps clients approach life from their innermost knowing characterized by self- confidence and personal fulfillment. Coaching for intuition can help people realize what personally fulfills them while resolving inner conflicts that come from not listening to the “gut instincts” or inner self.

Coaches can utilize other tools to help clients strengthen their intuitive awareness. Sadler-Smith and Shefy (2004) suggest journaling as a tool to develop intuitive awareness because it can be structured and evaluated over time. Analysis of journaling can help determine a variety of different issues related to the development of intuitive awareness, including whether or not and how often intuitive insights occur. Robinson (2011) also suggests a number of different intuition development tools, including:

Take a Break: Get out of the situation and use meditation, writing and reflection, visualization and nature to provide answers from the inner-self.

Focus on the Heart: Place hands on the heart and bring key issues or questions into the mind while asking, “What do I need to know?”

Sleep On It: Think or write of the issue or question before going to sleep; pay attention to dreams and think about the answers received.

Do a Gut Check: Ask inner-guided questions, such as: Does this feel right? Or, is more information needed?

In addition to the above coaching tools, coaches can use powerful questions to help clients explore their intuitive insights. Example questions include:

- What is the first thought that comes to your mind?
- How did that situation feel?
- What is your “gut instinct” telling you?
- What thoughts, ideas or dreams keep coming to you again and again?

The main purpose of these tools is to help clients increase their intuitive awareness and sense of purpose by looking inside of themselves for answers. Coaching is a powerful tool for deep introspection, and coaches have the ability to help clients on their journey towards greater personal fulfillment and potential by utilizing intuition-coaching techniques.

Conclusions

Innovation is essential to organizations, industries and individuals; however, to innovate without purpose is not enough. Intuition is a key element associated with personal fulfillment and should guide individual innovation. Coaching can help develop intuitive awareness through using tools such as powerful questions, journaling, mediation, visualization and focusing on the heart. Intuition coaching has the potential to help clients become more self-aware, self-confident and self-actualizing. Coaches can help clients more fully “see” and “experience” life from within, which can be a powerful development tool characterized by personal fulfillment, personal transformation and personal innovation.

Part of personal leadership and innovation is self-discovery, which requires introspection and the ability to see the unseen. It is an intuitive process:

Thirty spokes converge upon a single hub;
It is on the hole in the center that the use of the cart hinges.

We make a vessel from a lump of clay;
It is the empty space within the vessel that makes it useful.

We make doors and windows for a room;
But it is these empty spaces that make the room livable.

Thus, while the tangible has advantages,
It is the intangible that makes it useful.

Lao Tzu
Tao Teh Ching (p. 23)

As the reading from Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching* illustrates, sometimes it is necessary to shift perspectives and address limiting beliefs. For many, a shift in thinking is necessary to notice the importance of all parts of a wheel, cart, vessel or a room. The same is true for the individual development. People must consider both the inside (or inner-voice or intuition) and outside (the physical world in which people live) and then personally innovate to make the necessary changes in their life. For example, many may marvel at the colors of a beautiful vase while it is the empty space on the inside that provides functionality. Individuals can learn to see that the outside and inside are both required give the vase value and purpose. The unobvious may ultimately be the most important.

Intuition is a tool that can help people see and experience a holistic life that is created from both their inner and outer worlds-a life fulfilled. Perhaps one of the most famous innovators of the 21st Century summarizes the importance of trusting intuition and living a personally fulfilling life:

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma-which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

-Steve Jobs, 2005 Stanford

Commencement Address

" Only you know what is the driving force within. To throw off the shackles of your imprisonment, find your passion and pursue it-no matter the consequences." (Landrum, 2004, p. 359)

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