

Leadership Development with Face Value

“The only way to maximise potential for performance is to be calm in the mind.”

Carl von Clausewitz

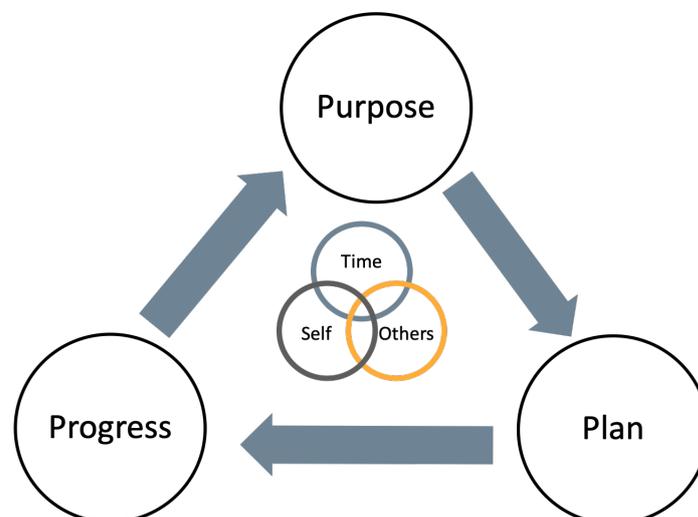
Face Value’s approach to leadership development is guided by two main influences: firstly, an interactional approach to coaching, whereby the coachee’s relationship with time, the self and others is at the centre of exploring possible future goals, weighing-up likely plans, and testing and adjusting these plans to the reality of the world in which we live. And secondly, an awareness of the neuroscience of decision-making, in particular of how all our decisions involve emotional processing, most of it taking place unconsciously, especially when under pressure.

Performance = Potential – Interference

Coaching aims to maximise potential for performance by reducing interference. Interference can be both external and internal. Clausewitz called external interference ‘friction’ and it includes the totality of ‘uncertainties, errors, accidents, technical difficulties and the unforeseen and their effect on decisions, morale and action’. The latter three are forms of internal interference, manifesting themselves in individuals and teams – the way we feel, think and behave. The negative result of friction is an unstable mind.

Coaching with Face Value Performance Psychology works by firstly providing the time for coachees to stop and think, to orientate themselves to their situation and their reactions to it. For busy senior managers and executives, having the time to stop and think can be a luxury. To make the most of the time, the coaching sessions are directive in approach, calling upon the coachees to consider three questions:

- **What do you want to achieve?** (How does your future shape your present?)
- **Who are you?** (What are your strengths and weaknesses?)
- **Who do you need to interact with to achieve what you want?**



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Answers to these questions are explored at three distinct stages in a change cycle, starting with the identification of possible future goals (Purpose), before moving to the selection of a range of options for action (Plan), and culminating with the implementation of the plan and adjusting to real-time results (Progress). For the leader, the coaching conversation considers both personal goals as well as the organisation's agenda.

Decision-making when the mind isn't calm

Face Value's approach raises the coachee's awareness of how the brain works, in particular of the two decision-making systems in action – emotional and logical. The survival-oriented, emotional-thinking brain is quick to reach a decision and it exerts a powerful influence on how memories are made. It also disrupts the logical-thinking brain and impairs working memory. When experiencing heightened emotions, be they negative or positive, the brain's ability to think logically and clearly is impeded. Options for action are seen in binary terms – fight or flight, win or lose, all-or-nothing thinking. We simply lose perspective.

How do questions improve decision-making?

The logical-thinking areas of the brain are also involved in the processing of language. The development of language has been key to human evolution, as the use of words (syntax) allows plans to be devised and communicated. By stimulating thinking in the areas of the brain involved in language processing and logical thinking, activity in the emotional-thinking brain areas can be reduced, resulting in an increased sense of calm, both physical as well as psychological.

Even when the immediate situation is relatively calm, logical thinking can still be impaired by inaccurate or unhelpful memories coming to the fore. A loss of perspective can result in individuals believing they have limited choices. Open questions that invite rich, detailed responses from coachees help to explore the accuracy of initial perceptions and add more depth to the picture.

Perspective is developed in four areas or 'domains': time, space (or scale), social involvement and probability. The emotional-thinking brain, seeing options in binary terms, can decide that a situation is happening right here, right now (rather than sometime in the future), that it is overwhelming in scale and impossible to tackle (rather than comprised of a number of parts), that the experience is socially-isolating and unique (rather than commonly-experienced by other colleagues) and definitely going to happen (rather than not guaranteed and possibly *unlikely* to happen).

With more detail, explored in a calm state of mind through skilful coaching, come more possibilities, more accurate plans and more flexible responses. Friction will still cause plans to go awry, but the individual need no longer lose perspective and lose confidence in his or her ability to take effective action.

“The enemy of a good plan is the dream of a perfect plan”. Carl von Clausewitz