



Sherpa Strength: The Newsletter of Executive Coaching

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Coaching with a Fresh Perspective

By Brenda Corbett

Think of every person you have coached. What did they need to hear? What did they get from you?

I thought it would be a great idea to write about a fantastic breakout at our 6th annual Sherpa Conference. The program was called “DiSC and Sherpa Tools.”

We began as everyone broke out in D – I – S – C groups, getting ready to help the rest of the participants to understand key coaching tips when working with their profile.



Here’s what happens. We fall into ‘ruts.’ One of two things occurs:

First, we might coach everyone in the same manner, using the same tools, and believe that they ‘hear’ us. We can tend to believe that everyone needs what we’re comfortable with doing. Second, we use a variety of tools and techniques, but sometimes fail to adapt our coaching to our client’s communication style. We need to change our words. It helps if we customize our message.

These two habits stifle our coaching abilities. We get stuck and don’t even know it.

Here is your challenge:

- Use your client’s DiSC to its full potential.
- Understand quite clearly what each DiSC profile really means.
- Know the value of the DiSC for you as a coach.
- Change your movement, tone and wording based on who is in front of you and what they need.

Here are some examples:

Mark is a chief financial officer. He is a high D/high C. Mark wears inappropriate Hawaiian shirts to work. What are you going to say? How do you bring it up? What are the correct words that allow Mark really ‘get it’? What makes Mark acknowledge a need to change?

My question to him was, “What is the impact on business when you to wear that shirt at a board of directors meeting?” (Remember direct, straight and to the point.)

He immediately stopped in his tracks and said, “Wow, I never thought of that, they probably think I am an idiot.”

Stacey is an executive assistant, a high S/C. She wears only grey to work and works for a high-powered Fortune 100 executive. He wants her to represent him every day; however, he does NOT like her wearing grey. What do you say to her?

My question to her was, “What do people think when they see you? What do you want them to think?” (Remember assumptions and respect.)

She replied, “I always thought they didn’t see me because they always come to see my boss; but you are right. I can’t believe I never thought of that. I think I will try and wear more suits. Do you think that would work?” The discussion continued on that topic.

This is all about you, the coach, thinking differently and coaching differently, depending on who you are coaching. Sounds obvious; but friends, we don’t do that. Here are the coaching tips that the participants in the breakout came up with, I love them:

Sherpa DiSC Coaching Tips
from the 6th Annual Sherpa Coaching Conference (2011)

Five tips for coaching a ‘D’:

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1. Be prepared.
 2. Walk in with purpose and confidence.
 3. Be on task and stay on point.
 4. Establish milestones and expectations up front.
 5. “Be brief. Be brilliant. Be gone!” D’s have high “B.S.” antennas.

Note: Invite D’s to challenge their thinking.

Five tips for coaching an ‘I’:

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1. Restate the obvious and address their tendency to wander – we call it the kabuki dance.
 2. Keep the engagement focused and confirm their accountability.
 3. Offer sincere encouragement and charas.
 4. Ask powerful questions to encourage them to focus and go deeper.
 5. Connect non-verbally and remind them of QTIP.

Note: Invite I’s to a safe and sincere environment and stick to the three-sentence rule.

Five tips for coaching an 'S':

1. Respect their thought process and behaviors (e.g., need to take notes, ask questions for clarification, etc.) and the speed of their reflection and responses.
2. Explore when their decisions or opinions may be based on their own assumptions. (They're kings & queens of assumption.)
3. Slow down.
4. Break-up homework assignments; provide details; offer "bite-size" or concise/discrete pieces of information.
5. Exhibit genuine interest in who they are.

Note: Invite S's to consider that their need for getting along / teamwork may minimize their effectiveness in meeting goals and implementing practices.

Five tips for coaching a 'C':

1. Provide clear explanations. Make sure they understand you and you understand them.
2. Give the facts. Avoid "spin." Explain from beginning to the end.
3. Be patient and persistent. Do not denigrate the quality of their work.
4. Review your recommendations in a systematic and clear way.
5. They tend to be detail-oriented and will notice your mistakes.

Note: Invite C's to explore what they need to understand: the process or next steps. Ask questions such as, "What other information do you need? What else would help you understand?"

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