Staying the Course

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Sustained Behaviour, Requires Motivation

An old Japanese proverb reminds us that "beginning is easy", yet, "continuing is hard". How true that is, especially throughout the long journey that a Mentoring Programme can require.

To stay on track requires both Mentor & Mentee to remain motivated. Though they usually are at the outset, the challenge is in being able to sustain their actions, to let their relationship build and run an effective course. Motivation brings insight into the reasons that people do things. The more each knows about their "*Why*", the easier they'll find it to manage their motivation.

Strong motivations underpin the "*What*" too, foreshadowing actions that each take to ensure they together endure. They encourage, support and build the momentum. Motivation is an extension of the word "motive", which itself, stems from the Latin for "moving", *motivus*. It's the "Motives" that stimulate specific behaviours, and provide reasons for action.

A "motivated" person therefore has strong and compelling incentives to act. But what kind of "incentives" are possible, and how do they work to stimulate and drive personal action? It is helpful to address those questions at three levels; Policy, Strategy, and, Tactics.

Policy: Bring Clarity to Needs

During the 1930s, Elton Mayo shone a light on human motivations in an organisation. His "*Hawthorne Experiments*" gave rise to the "Human Relations" approach. This was a shift away from the earlier *Scientific* approach of "Taylorism", with its dominant focus on productivity.

"*What a man can be, he must be*" said Abraham Maslow. His "*Hierarchy of Needs*" in the 1950s advanced a strong psychological, humanistic, understanding. People he argued, were hardwired, and innately motivated to seek purpose, to strive for higher "*Needs*". Yet they first had to feel safe and supported, in order to advance and grow to reach their full potential.

Need Theory sat at the heart of David McClelland's work in the early 1960s too. He argued that people have three innate "Needs"; for "*Achievement*", for "*Power*", and, for "*Affiliation*". Determining a person's "dominant need", would provide deeper insights to their motivations.

Through this humanistic lens, the "Needs" provide the "Motives". In turn, the motives drive behaviours. Exploring "Motivation", thus requires a deep understanding of a person's "Needs". The more important their "Need", the more motivated a person is to take action to satisfy it.

During the 1970s, Albert Bandura developed the concept of "*Self-Efficacy*"; a critical belief, that a person could achieve their desired Outcome. People were only motivated to stretch for goals perceived as attainable; they wouldn't commit to goals seen as too tough, or, too easy. Goals had to be worthwhile enough, and, people had to believe they could master the challenge.

In a Mentoring context then, it is crucial to focus on "Important" Outcomes; the higher the desire, the higher the motivation. It's also necessary to strive for realistic, perceptible, growth. The greater the belief that the gains are valuable and achievable, the stronger is the motivation.

Thus, time invested in the formative stages pays dividends, as each Mentor & Mentee brings clarity and understanding to their own "*Whys*". Considering these at the Contemplative stage is the most effective, as it allows for full articulation and understanding during the first meeting.

Strategy: Select the Inner Most Needs

A person's motivational Needs are derived from one of two sources; "*Intrinsic*", or "*Extrinsic*".

Intrinsically motivated behaviours arise from within, and provide a deep sense of satisfaction. They drive personal action when doing something for the Self. People find them meaningful and personally rewarding; they feel in control, and fully value their own contributions. There's a hedonistic pleasure in doing something for its own sake; activities stimulate in their own way.

For instance, many pursue pastimes, hobbies, or other relaxing activities, such as walking, golf, football, knitting, or sudoku. Whether partaking or spectating, they gain deep satisfaction from the time absorbed in doing them. Almost by accident, they grow from the effort they put in. They learn new things osmotically, improve mastery of relevant techniques, and feel valued.

Extrinsically motivated behaviours arise from the outside, usually dragging people into action at the behest of Others. Delivery may bring rewards, and completion can feel good. However, where there is an element of coercion, there may just be relief; failure to deliver may have negative consequences, with associated punishment. The value arising, is often quite fleeting.

For instance, most people have chores or rituals they need to perform on a regular basis, such as completing timesheets, entering accounts, cleaning the house, or doing ironing. They require full and active participation, often provide little choice, and seldom afford measurable pleasure. The only aim, is completion without pain. There's rarely growth; nobody chooses to improve.

Strategically, is it possible that one form might be better than the other? Perhaps, though whilst both can be helpful, overuse of extrinsic motivation can be harmful. Performing only to receive an external reward can create a "*Dependency*"; people become motivated only by the "Prize". In the longer run, over reliance on extrinsics can also markedly reduce intrinsic motivation.

It can be resourceful to consider how intrinsics and extrinsics link. Extrinsic motivators typically bring in new resources and capacities, such as visibility, influence, wealth, title, decision-making, and opportunity. With appropriate framing, they can afford possibilities for use in the service of intrinsics, to help achieve greater personal growth, value, and fulfilment.

Extrinsic motivators may indeed provide some of the "*Means*". However, strategic linkage allows for answers to the more relevant question; to what "*Ends*" can they be best applied?

In a Mentoring context, motivations primarily surface from growth choices made early on. Note how this underscores the importance for initial discussions intent on mapping out a heading. Though external motivators can arise, it is preferable to limit them to those that are necessary. Rather, dialogue is best geared toward intrinsically driven motives; to identify the best "*Ends*".

For instance, a Mentee may struggle to stay motivated where they join a Programme only because it is offered, or because their organisation requires it. Decisions that emanate from "*Necessities*", often indicate a reliance on external motivators. Joining to change jobs, or to switch careers also reflect external factors. Motivations may slip, as a Mentee has little control or influence on these things. The challenge is to reframe these into more valuable "*Means*".

In contrast, a Mentee will more likely sustain motivation when performing activities they value, such as choosing to focus on a stretch goal, working on a project that builds relevant new skills, or, deepening skills in an area they currently enjoy. Decisions that emanate from "*Possibilities*", often indicate internal desires. Doing things out of curiosity, desire, and liking, all tend to be motivating. These tend to be highly satisfyingly valuable "*Ends*" that stimulate in themselves.

Tactics: Act in Ways that Support Intrinsic Motivation

To "Get" an effective Mentoring relationship "On Course", requires both the Mentor & Mentee to work on sustainable, motivating goals. Those goals need to be important, provide realistic stretch, and be driven by internal needs. Having a deeper sense of purpose helps focus the relationship over the Mentoring period, during the regular meet-ups, and, the review sessions.

"Staying on Course" requires regular, detailed attention to the interaction & dialogue. Both learning partners will use "Motivators", i.e. do things to raise the energy levels and enthusiasm for action. Yet, both know how intrinsic & extrinsic motivations work differently too. So, they will also need to consider the type of "Motivators" to embrace, as well as the ones to avoid.

From a motivational standpoint, anything that helps to build competence in, and give confidence to, their partner will be interpreted as positive. Choosing motivators that enhance skills mastery, stimulate autonomy of action, and build personal *Independence* will work. It is also constructive for each to choose actions that helps the other to stand on their own two feet.

In a Mentoring relationship, the most effective (and most cost effective) "Motivators" tend to revolve around communication; how people communicate, and, how they choose to feed back.

For instance, when a Mentee shares a core goal, they want to know they've been "*Heard*". They also like to see their "*Choice Acknowledged*", and, feel they hold a "*Valid Viewpoint*". Actively listening and engaging in dialogue is motivating. It shows real Respect, which is a powerful force, especially in an Asian context, where "*Face*" issues can sometimes surface.

Complimenting your partner during dialogue sessions on the progress they've made, works well too. Unexpected external praise is a great reinforcer of behaviour. Occasionally, it can make sense to encourage exploration of a goal, and to challenge whether it can take more stretch. Showing confidence in the Other person's ability to achieve more, is usually taken positively.

Finally, providing unexpected gifts of "Wisdom" in advance can be a powerful interaction. It reinforces the view that the Other person is heading in the right direction. They will also treat it as an unexpected reward, and your insights may also help them in their quest to achieve a goal.

In summary, Motivators that reinforce Intrinsic actions are intensely powerful. They energise Others, and help them to feel in control. In contrast, motivators that regularise expectations of external rewards are best avoided. They create *Dependencies* that can reduce inner motivation.

That said, it is OK to provide unplanned external rewards, in unexpected ways, and at irregular intervals; everybody loves an unanticipated occasional treat. Finally, make sure the whatever that treat might be, the size of the reward is concomitant with the scale of the achievement.

Drawing Down the Curtain

In the next Article, we'll look ahead to the end state, to reflect on how to bring the curtain down on a long run relationship. We'll jump ahead to consider whether there is life ever after, and, think about how appropriate ways to *Bring Formal Closure to a Mentoring Relationship*.

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