

The GENIUS Coaching Model



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Introduction

Coaching is facilitating people to reach their unique potential. A coach should consider the effective management and flow of the coaching process to reach session goals as effectively and as focused as possible. Coaching creative talent needs a more innovative approach. The coach must absolutely work with the imagination and ideas of the creative individual and then help move their ideas towards a reality. Alec McPhedran, a creative sector coach and trainer, explains the simple to use but highly effective GENIUS Coaching Model for creative coaching sessions.

In essence, coaching is a fairly simple process. However, we must make sure we do simple well. At the heart of effective coaching lies good questioning, listening and the ability to clearly summarise. The challenges are building trust and maintaining a positive working and open relationship in which the coachee feels they are the focus of attention and that they are being helped and guided in working on their ideas.

An additional coaching skill is in managing the process and flow of the coaching session. This has to be timely as well as facilitating the individual to move forward. In the creative industries, in which I mainly work, it is critical ideas and solutions came from the individual being coached

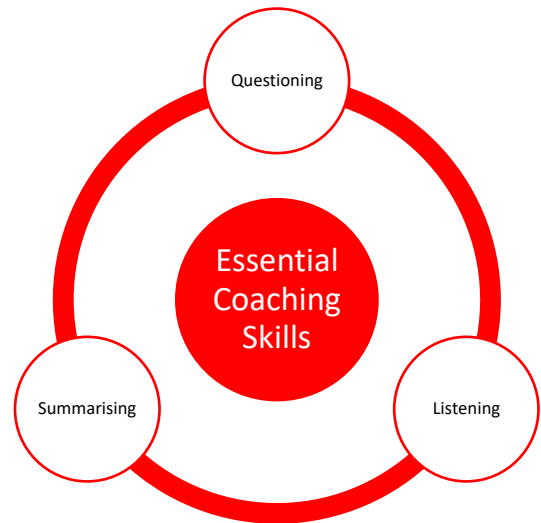


Fig 1. Essential Coaching Skills

In essence, coaching is a fairly straightforward process. However, we must make sure we do simple well. At the heart of effective coaching lies good questioning, listening and the ability to clearly summarise. The challenges are building trust and maintaining a positive working and open relationship in which the coachee feels they are the focus of attention and that they are being helped and guided in working on their ideas.

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Keep things
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simple well.”

It's their idea, it's their world and it's their innovation. As we know, in coaching it's really hard to prevent yourself from telling someone what they must do when you believe you know what the solution is. But surely that's one of the issues of coaching, "What you *believe* the solution is."

Great creative talent coaching is about working the individual. It's their imagination, their idea and their aspiration. Our job is to help turn these ideas into a reality - not the coach's reality or perceived reality. It has to be owned by the coachee. As a coach, your inputs have to be really relevant, valid and appropriate if and when invited to do so. You, the coach, act as the guide and as a facilitator of thinking. The individual has the talent. The coach's role is to get the best out of the talent.

Like most coaches, I have come across a number of really useful coaching models, including the simple but highly effective GROW model.

The common view is that the GROW model derived from Performance Coaching by John Whitmore. GROW is used to structure the flow and key elements of productive coaching session; Goals, Realities, Options and Will, as in “What will you do?” This is pretty good, particularly as an optional coaching tool but for professional coaches it sometimes might need a bit more.

We do have to remember that the GROW model is not quite as linear as the model is at times presented. An individual may often want to talk about an issue (Reality) first and from



Fig 2. GROW Coaching, Whitmore

that, we can identify a purpose, aim or goal (Goal) of the conversating. During the discussion the options might prove challenging (Options) or unrealistic so the goal may then have to be revisited. The same applies for identifying what the coachee will then do (Will) and again, timescales, people or resources might hinder the achievement of the goal so a review of Options or Goal might ne needed.

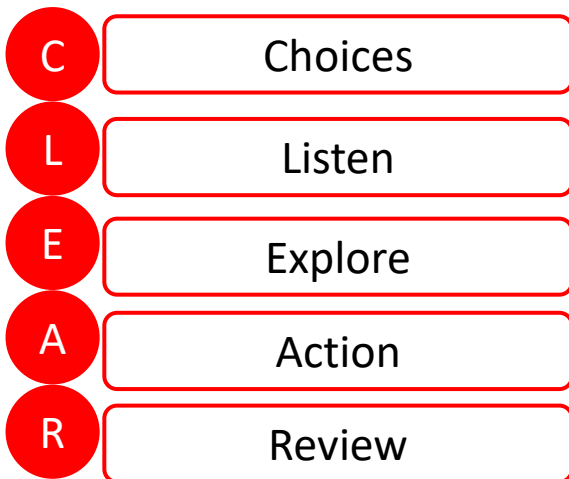


Fig 3. CLEAR Coaching, Hawkins and Smith

Another useful model is CLEAR, developed by Peter Hawkins. In their book “Coaching, Mentoring and Organizational Consultancy: Supervision and Development,” Peter Hawkins and Nick Smith explain that “CLEAR” stands for: Contracting, Listening, Exploring, Action, Review.

CLEAR benefits from careful management of power and inclusive questioning as well as focused and patient use of listening skills.

CLEAR is helpful in major transformational coaching. In coaching creative talent, it’s about getting their idea moving towards a living visual, auditory or sensory based thing.- an idea into a reality.

Working in the creative industries often has me having to work with additional techniques when coaching creative talent. Creativity, innovation, managing new aspirations and ideas that need turning into a reality.

That’s the amazing and exciting challenge in creative talent coaching. For me, a new approach was needed to help inspire and push my clients.

“The amazing and exciting challenge in creative talent coaching.”

The GENIUS Coaching Model

GENIUS coaching developed following a chat with a pretty cynical script-writing friend. She felt coaching had its place but most definitely not in the world of 'creative people'. Her previous experience of being coached while working at a leading broadcaster had been helpful but only in career progression and not on her desire to be the best in her field of telling stories. A number of coaches had not been able to really meet her creative aspiration. This made me think about myself, my own ability to go further than I had been before with people and therefore how could I meet her challenge?

“
Taking them
to new and
exciting places”

Yes there are excellent coaches who are very focussed on pushing people but are we held back with the SMART objective format? Are we sometimes held back by our own feelings if moving out of our own comfort zone? Her point was do we really push people past their boundaries? Was I really helping by agreeing to a coachees initial objectives or was I really stretching them, taking them to new and exciting places, sometimes scary, in their ambition?

Over the following months I revisited my coaching sessions, the processes I was using and depending on subjects, the results we were getting. Goals were being achieved but I was wondering could it have been wider reaching, more challenging – truly daring to be different.

The GENIUS model of coaching evolved after testing it out on some knowing victims with mixed success. I was particularly influenced by Jenny Rogers, author of *Coaching Skills, a Handbook*. Jenny mixes coaching fantastically well with Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP). Essentially neuro (thoughts, linguistic (words) and programming (behaviour).

The value of NLP in coaching is the added blend of visioning end goals and what success looks, sounds and feels like, care with use of language and testing the energy to achieve things.

The use of NLP in creative talent coaching really helps people who are up for a new adventure that opens their mind to great new ideas, concepts and opportunities that at times seemed truly off the wall. But importantly, this approach was motivational for a creative person. With some, it did make them feel uncomfortable – too different, feeling unsafe and vulnerable.

My learning was that you had to work with the aspiration and the reality of their ambition in their style but equally as important was to check in on their comfort levels. Again, I had to make sure it was not about my ambition or my preferred coaching style or creative thinking techniques.

In essence, coaching is person centred and that's where the GENIUS Coaching Model began to take shape.

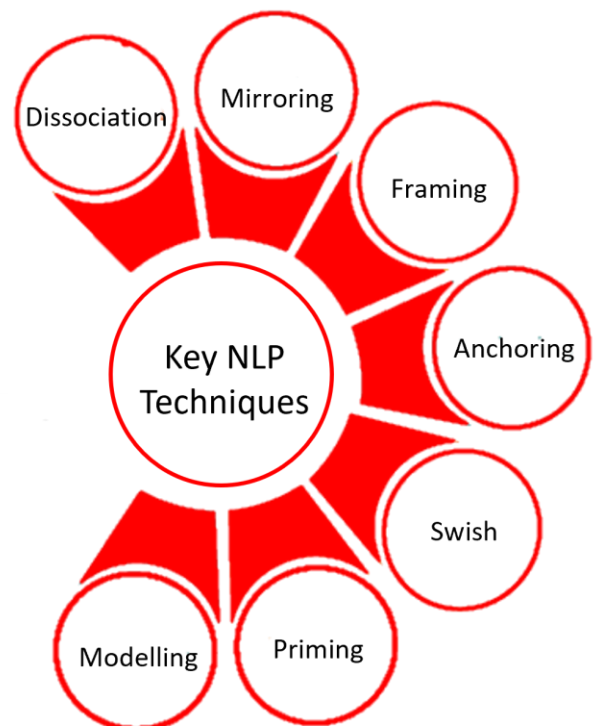


Fig 4. Neuro Linguistic Programming Techniques

The GENIUS model came out, probably the result of a fire, aim ready strategy. It's now one of my favourite models, particularly when working with exciting creative talent. GENIUS coaching is simple. GENIUS is a guide to running a creative talent coaching session to help THEM develop THEIR creative ideas.. It's yet another useful model for coaches for their toolkit. It does draw its inspiration from the likes of GROW, OSKAR and other coaching models. Simple is good but the skills is in doing simple well.

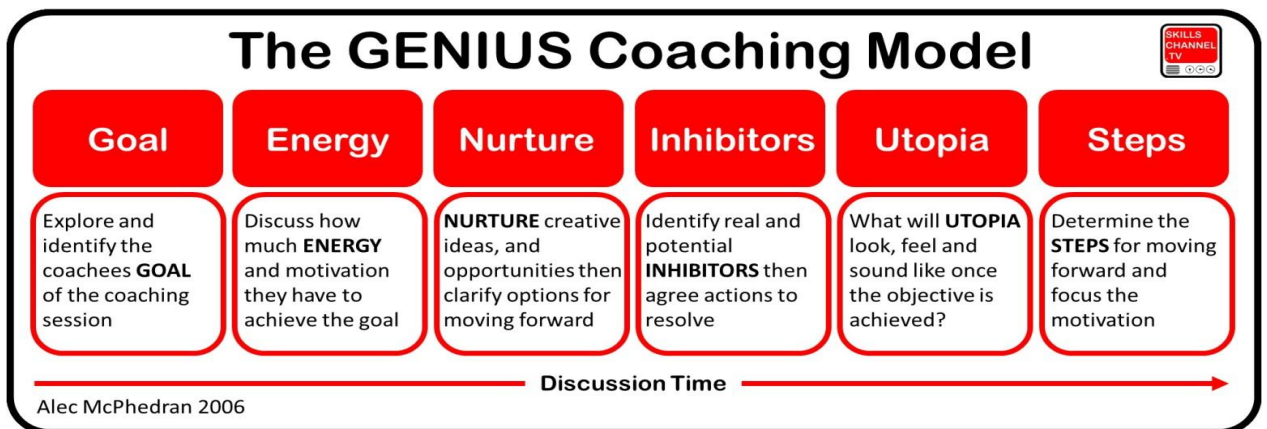


Fig 6. The GENIUS Coaching Model, McPhedran



Goals

The first step of the GENIUS Coaching Model is to set the **GOALS**, a rather obvious starting point. We know the goal, purpose or aim is critical for a number of reasons but primarily it provides us with the reminder of what it is we are working on, what needs to be achieved. It makes sure all future conversation is relevant to achieving the goal.

With GENIUS coaching, there are three types of goals to consider.

1. The *Aspirational Goal* of the overall coaching programme or contract. What will we have really achieved at the end of the coaching programme? This should be highly ambitious, breaking into new territory for the coachee and aspirational.
2. *Session Goals*. That is, what do we need to achieve by the end of each coaching session that directly supports the aspirational goal? At the end, we review what we set out to work on.
3. The third set of goals are the *Action Goals* or Steps. As a result of the coaching session, what does the coachee need to do by the time we next meet to achieve the aspirational goal?

By using this three step approach to goal setting, it provides the coachee with consistency and focus for making things happen and with a clear understanding of why they need to do things. The key skill for the coach is managing and setting the aspirational goal. You should also be mindful that often creative people do tend to like going off at a tangent so the goal is great as a reminder to them of what we are trying to focus on.

Energy

Once the aspirational goal and the session goal (or goals) has been set, the next part of the GENIUS Coaching Model is to look at the **ENERGY** of the coachee. They may want to achieve something that is far reaching for them but do they really have the energy? The desire to achieve and the energy to do something can sometimes be poles apart.

Get the coachee to rate their energy levels to make this work, perhaps by giving a score out of 10. Without the genuine energy to achieve the goal, is the goal the right one in the first place?

A useful tool to use here, again thanks to Jenny Rogers, is to ask how motivated they are about achieving the goals. A rating of 1 to 10 equally helps give some indication of possible investigation.

The importance of personal energy is critical in creative talent coaching. One model I often find useful is the high performance pyramid by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (2003).

The focus of the model is the importance and connectivity in the four energy levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. The theme is not so much about how you manage your time but how you manage (and control) your personal energy. This is really helpful in probing commitment to achieving an aspiration in GENIUS coaching. Indeed, working on all four areas in some coaching sessions can have huge benefit as it has been identified that successful people grown and self manage in all four areas.

The High Performance Pyramid

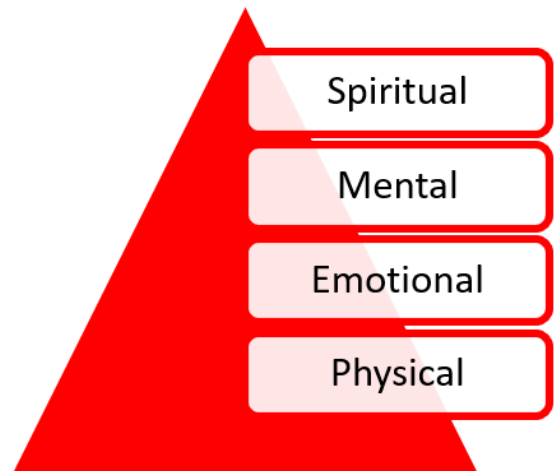


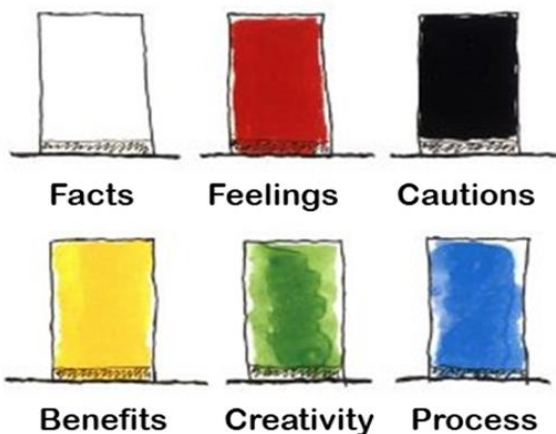
Fig 7. High Performance Pyramid, Loehr and Schwartz

Nurture

Once goals have been established and the energy levels checked to achieve them, you then need to **NURTURE** the range of opportunities and options. This is very much the Options stage of GROW. This again is where the questioning, listening, summarising and creative thinking skills of the coach come into play.

Your ability to brainstorm, to encourage creative thinking by thinking of things that are really off the wall, never been done before are absolutely critical. When nurturing ideas, this ideally should be treated in the same way as a pure brainstorming session. Pull out the ideas, don't critique too early, set the parameters linked to the objectives and work through some of the ideas.

Six Thinking Hats



This is also a great time to use challenging and creative thinking tools such as de Bono's Six Thinking Hats (data, emotion, negativity, positiveness, feel good, innovative thinking and process). Once you have looked at each idea, work through and prioritise the key actions that came out of the nurturing process.

Priority action one is the way forward. Options two, three and four – potential back up ideas. From the Six Thinking Hats model you will then be able to move into the next stage of GENIUS coaching thanks to the identifying emotions and negatives from the red and black hat discussions.

Fig 8. Six Thinking Hats, De Bono

Utopia

So, we now know what we want, how much energy the coachee has to achieve their goal, we've generated some great ideas and have identified the potential problems and the likely responses. Once all works fantastically well then... **UTOPIA**; an imagined perfect place or state of things.

This is where the coaches Neuro Linguistic Programming knowledge comes more into play. Can you get the individual to visually, auditory and kinaesthetically imagine their Utopia once the goals will be achieved? This is a powerful tool to make the end result of a coaching session feel real. It's what turns that aspiration into the reality. Visioning, recording or feeling that end goal gives the goal life. It puts Utopia in the mind of the individual.

I have even gone so far as to encourage clients to make that picture real – getting or drawing a close or true to life image and then placing it in eye sight at their desk. Weird I know but it definitely works.

For the auditory types, a short written statement always at hand seems to have the same effect. We're back to the immense importance of goals. Once they look and feel real, once we are emotionally attached to them, they will become real. Developing, writing down and imagining goals is an essential role of the coach to get the coachee to understand this.

VAK Learning Styles



Visual



Auditory



Kinaesthetic

Fig 9. Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic Learning Styles



Fig 10. Open ended questions using WWWWWH

Steps

Finally, the coaching session is rounded off by summarising the **STEPS** to be taken by the coachee. What will they do between now and the next session? Who will they talk to next? When will they have completed an activity by? How will they feel once they have completed the actions? These are developed by writing SMART (specific, measurable, realistic, agreed and timed) Action Goals and clarifying the actual steps to take to achieve the Action Goals. I guess in the good old day that was called action planning..

One of the best things about using the GENIUS Coaching Model combined with the use of NLP is that final motivational aspect. What will success look like? What will they hear or what will people say once successfully completed? How will they and others feel once the goal has been achieved? This is particularly valuable when the coachee thinks about and answers these questions. It makes it real and closer to being achieved.

When agreeing the STEPS, it helps if you use the who, what, why, where, when and how open ended question format. This clarified the specific elements of each action to help the coachee turn a creative idea into steps to achieving their reality. Again, incredibly useful rather than checking with Yes or No responses such as 'are you happy with what we have discussed?', response is 'Yes'. That means nothing. It's the details and practicality that we need to make things happen and for the coachee to clarify their ownership.

In conclusion

So there you have it. Yet another wonderful tool for coaching. The very simple GENIUS Coaching Model. It's about pushing ambition and creativity further for creative people, exploring amazing and varied opportunities and imagining the realities of what success will look, feel or sound like.

Obviously I know this model may not be perfect for some, but that's the beauty of the business we're in. If we were all perfect then we wouldn't have anybody to coach.

The GENIUS Coaching Model has been developed by Alec McPhedran Chtd FCIPD, Chtd Mngr CMI, MAC, MCMI, as a tool for people who coach; to guide them through an inspirational and wide reaching coaching session for talented creative people. Alec is an experienced international coach and speaker and managing director of Skills Channel TV, a training company for busy creative people. He specialises in one to one coaching, facilitated learning, and team development. For further information, contact 0121 366 87 99 or visit www.skillschannel.tv.

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The GENIUS Coaching Model

Goal

The individuals **GOAL** of the coaching session

Energy

How much **ENERGY** and motivation they have to achieve the goal

Nurture

NURTURE ideas and opportunities for moving forward

Inhibitors

Identify **INHIBITORS** then agree strategies and actions to resolve

Utopia

What will **UTOPIA** look and feel like once the objective is achieved?

Steps

Clarify the **STEPS** for moving forward and focus the motivation

Alec McPhedran 2006

The GENIUS Coaching Model



Alec McPhedran is a creative sector coach, facilitator and trainer. He has been in senior learning and development roles for major UK brands for over 30 years. Alec is the founder and director of Skills Channel TV, a training and development company for creative talent.

The GENIUS Coaching Model was developed by Alec McPhedran based on coaching people in the creative sector who needed guidance and clarify in turning their ideas into reality. The model offers coaches and managers a structure to guide a highly creative and productive discussion.

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