

# Executive Pairs Coaching

Building robustness in key relationships



## WHAT IS PAIRS COACHING?

Particularly at Board level, the importance of a robust working relationship built on trust, confidence and good communication cannot be underestimated. Pairs coaching is an extremely effective way of building a powerful working relationship between two people. Our approach uses two coaches to work with two individuals to improve the effectiveness of their joint leadership. The focus of the pairs coaching is on the relationship between the individuals, rather than the individuals themselves which makes it less onerous, but still extremely powerful.

## WHO IS PAIRS COACHING FOR?

Pairs coaching between any two Board or executive level directors can transform not just their particular relationship, but also positively impact the entire dynamic of the senior management team or Board of which they are a part, particularly between the Chair of the organisation and the Chief Executive.

A robust relationship here has a major knock-on effect for the whole board and how it operates.

In addition, the investment in pairs coaching between two key stakeholders from different organisations where there is a need to build or rebuild trust quickly can also reap huge rewards.

## OUTCOMES FROM THE PAIRS COACHING

There are a wide range of positive outcomes from those undertaking pairs coaching whether they are in a new relationship or an established one needing to be refined.

### Typical pairs coaching outcomes include:

- ✧ Building trust very quickly in new working partnerships
- ✧ A robustness and resilience in the relationship to deal with challenge and change
- ✧ An improved level of collaboration
- ✧ Higher levels of mutual trust and respect
- ✧ An enhanced capacity to resolve conflicting views
- ✧ A capacity to appreciate and leverage both individuals' talents
- ✧ New agreed ways of working which enhance the efficacy of the relationship



My Chief Operating Officer and I worked with Baz and Lucy on how we strengthen our relationship in order better to lead change in our organisation. The presence of two coaches was extremely powerful. Baz and Lucy are masterful facilitators with complementary strengths. Watching them talk about our relationship, although strange at first, revealed to us some critical insights that we would never have seen alone. The use of two coaches and the Cape Cod Model was highly impactful and I aim to continue using this approach with my broader team.

Chief Executive



“Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It’s the foundational principle that holds all relationships.”

Stephen R. Covey

## THE USE OF TWO COACHES

A well proven and high impact form of pairs coaching uses two coaches working simultaneously with the pair whose relationship forms the basis of the coaching. Both coaches in this setup are experienced in using a particular framework of pairs coaching intervention called the Cape Cod Model. The origins of the model go back to work done in the 1960s and 1970s by Sonia March-Nevis and it has been refined since then through forty years of study, consultation and enhancement.

### Benefits for clients of using two coaches include:

- ✧ Greater progress in developing a robust relationship is achieved in less time
- ✧ 'Two sets of eyes are better than one' in being able to observe the client relationship
- ✧ At times during the coaching session the two coaches are in conversation with each other about what they are experiencing. These conversations are eavesdropped by the participants to provide a rich set of data to inform their own relationship.
- ✧ The coaches model a way of working as two people in an ongoing working relationship. This demonstration of their own working relationship has been proven to facilitate a shift in how the pair being coached interact with each other.
- ✧ With two coaches and two clients in the room, a balance is achieved and there is no risk that either client feels that they are being favoured.
- ✧ Two coaches are able to give the pair a broad range of interventions, insight and attention during the session and can handle the increased level of complexity and multiple perspectives that are at play in pairs work.

## THE PAIRS COACHING PROCESS

An email is sent to each participant requiring some reflection to some simple questions on what they personally want to achieve from the pairs coaching.

A confidential telephone conversation is undertaken between each participant and one of the coaches to solidify their desired outcomes from the pairs coaching and provide the coaches with a sense of the current context.

The first pairs coaching conversation takes place.

The first part of this conversation focuses on how each participant and the coaches will work together during this and subsequent sessions.

The remainder of the first session and subsequent sessions is used to explore aspects of the working relationship and includes practice and experimentation with new ways of working.

“ With both the Chair and myself being new in a new organisation it was important that our relationship gelled quickly and we were able to model for the rest of the Governing Body a collaborative way of working. The relationship between us has changed considerably over the period we had pairs coaching and our capacity to be more challenging and trusting of each other has been greatly influenced by the pairs coaching.

Chief Executive

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## STARR'S PERSPECTIVE ON PAIRS COACHING FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVES

### Our approach to pairs coaching is underpinned by these beliefs:

- ☆ **"None of us is as smart as all of us."** This Japanese proverb reminds us that we will be able to get better outcomes if we are able to leverage our relationships in a positive way.
- ☆ **"There is the truth as you see it, the truth as I see it and then there's reality."** There is a genuine subjectivity to how we each see the world and the meanings we give to events. When we are willing to confidently put forward our 'truth' and be influenced by our colleagues, we build a more insightful and powerful partnership.
- ☆ **"Awareness is curative."** By becoming aware of what is well-developed and less-developed in our relationship we can ensure we build on our strengths and address our weaknesses rather than be derailed by them.
- ☆ **"The road to hell is paved with good intentions."** Most of us, nearly all the time, are doing the best we can with positive intent. However, unbeknown to us, there might be unintended consequences of our behaviours and what we say. We need to be mindful of this possibility in our relationships and build the capacity to talk openly about this.
- ☆ **"Just because you're making a noise in my direction, don't think you are communicating."** Good listening requires us to maintain an open perspective and therefore be receptive to being influenced. As soon as we judge either ourselves, our situation or someone else we close down the possibility of being influenced and the possibility of gaining new insight is lost.
- ☆ **"Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to a better understanding of ourselves."** Or in other words, sometimes a person's behaviour which peeves us may well be a clue to a quality or capability we have yet to develop within ourselves.

## WHO WE ARE



**BAZ HARTNELL** is a leadership consultant with a senior commercial background who combines coaching, mentoring and leadership consultancy to increase the capacity of directors, managers and their Boards and teams to become more effective. He is a member of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council and an Affiliate of the Centre for Leadership Studies at the University of Exeter. Possessing an MBA and an MSc in One to One and Team Coaching, he undertakes Board development and executive coaching to Chairs, CEOs, executive directors and managers in various private sector and public sector organisations.



**LUCY BALL** is an experienced leadership consultant and an expert executive coach and facilitator. She specialises in working with senior executives who have major strategic or cultural change to lead in their organisation. Lucy was a manager at Deloitte Consulting's Change Leadership Practice before her current role as a partner at Ideas Unlimited - a leadership consultancy working internationally with clients such as RBS, and PepsiCo. Lucy holds a first class honours degree in Philosophy, Diplomas in Marketing and in Executive Coaching and is trained in MBTI, the Hogan Instrument, the Harthill Leadership Development Framework and the GISC Cape Cod Model.

## TO FIND OUT MORE

Please contact Starr Performance by calling **01460 239143** or by emailing **[info@starr-performance.co.uk](mailto:info@starr-performance.co.uk)**

The website, **[www.starr-performance.co.uk](http://www.starr-performance.co.uk)** contains more information on what we do at Starr Performance, including testimonials and case studies from satisfied clients.