

Career and life coaching for librarians

In the June 2003 issue [p18], Mylee Joseph reported on her life coaching experience with Geraldine Barkworth. *inCite* asked Geraldine to explain the benefits of coaching...

There isn't a sports star alive that does not recognise the role of their coach in achieving success. Sure, they have the raw ability, but they need a coach to realise their potential. A life coach can do the same for your personal and professional life. Here is how.

What is it?

Life coaching is an effective change-management tool for fast-tracking personal and professional growth. Life coaching assists people to successfully move from where they are now, to where they really want to be. The process is designed to be empowering with the client committing to taking responsibility for their own choices, decisions and ultimately, success.

Life coaching has been described as a synthesis of ideas and techniques based in management, sports, mentoring, business and psychology. Many of the concepts are found in the landmark sports-coaching book *The inner game of tennis* by Timothy Gallwey which focuses on the psychology of tennis success. In a similar way, life coaching focuses on the 'inner game' of your life and career.

Life coaching focusses on the future and the 'how' of making change rather than focussing on the 'why' and analysing the past. It delivers long-term results rather than quick fixes. Creating new habits takes time so coaching is usually provided on a weekly basis over a minimum of three months. Coaching is not therapy and does not need to be face-to-face. Customising the learning process to the individual is one of the reasons why life coaching delivers effective results in a relatively short space of time.

Scenarios to illustrate benefits to library and information professionals:

Scenario 1: A middle-management librarian has been in the same position for a while and needs to stretch herself personally and professionally. She feels under-challenged, unappreciated and unclear about where she is going in life. She dreams about opening her own coffee/bookshop. Her energy levels are down, she's not having a lot of fun and she's dreading her performance appraisal.

Results: Gaining clarity about her priorities and values allowed big decisions to fall into place. Adopting a fresh perspective gave her more energy and decisive control over her personal and professional life. She changed jobs, not her profession, and started having the most fun in years.

Scenario 2: A library technician loves his job but is not getting on with his supervisor. He lacks the confidence and interpersonal skills to assert himself. He thinks the solution is to change jobs — again. He is also taking too much work home, working long hours and his personal life is suffering. It

has been two months since he has been for a jog and he hasn't had a girlfriend for six months.

Results: After reviewing old beliefs he realised his view of himself was outdated. He redefined relationships, set boundaries, and took some risks. His confidence level rose and he learnt to value his personal time. He shared a gym membership with his new girlfriend.

Scenario 3: A senior manager is feeling isolated in her position. She would really like someone to bounce ideas off; someone without their own agenda. Her responsibilities have expanded and she is breaking new ground with exciting initiatives. She is aware that she needs more relaxation and time for herself to balance the pressures of her position. Plus, she is thinking about having another baby.

Results: Her faith in herself increased as her self-awareness deepened. She streamlined her operations and raised staff performance while increasing morale. She built a small but supportive network outside her organisation and industry. She decided to make relaxation and fitness a personal priority to prepare for a healthy conception and to maintain a balanced perspective.

Improving performance at work

Workplace coaching is frequently used in organisations:

- as a management technique to support staff to take more responsibility for themselves and to enhance performance reviews, increase morale and retention
- to develop leadership skills in executives and managers
- as a performance enhancer for staff who have the capacity to excel and to lift the game of those who lag behind making it difficult to achieve increasingly tight budgetary objectives
- to assist restructuring processes including redundancies, directional changes, career planning

The 'big bang' of life coaching

Life coaching helps people to get the most out of their life and career and in their own unique way. Certainly it improves listening skills, increases focus, clarifies priorities and galvanises action. It has the added benefits of increasing self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Like any personal or professional challenge, the more you put into it, the greater the reward.

Geraldine Barkworth is a trained career and personal life coach with a background in libraries, recruitment, training and vocational rehabilitation. She specialises in working with library and information managers to achieve personal and professional goals. Contact her on 02 6685 1917 or vision@norex.com.au.

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