



# **A learning team approach to executive recruitment, coaching & consultancy**

## **DPS5200**

A project submitted to Middlesex University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Professional Studies

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September 2011

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## **i Acknowledgements**

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There are a number of people to whom we must pass on our grateful thanks for their help and support throughout this project.

First, our project adviser, Dr Pauline Armsby, who guided us through the DProf programmes of DPS4520 and DPS4561, and then into our first draft of this project. We wish her well at Westminster University. Second, to Dr Peter Critten who took over the supervision of our work at this point, through to completion, and who made an invaluable contribution to our learning, to whom we are most indebted. Thirdly, we thank our external consultant, Prof David Clutterbuck and, post-viva, our external consultant Dr Sarah Corrie for her detailed and engaging feedback and advice. In addition, we must thank: the former DPS4561 Module Leader, Dr Paul Gibbs; the Dean of the Institute for Work Based Learning, Professor Jonathan Garnett; and Dr Annette Fillery-Travis, Director of the MProf and DProf Programmes. Finally, to Stephen Watt for all his administrative help with the entire DProf programme.

We would not have a project were it not for the many participants who agreed to be case studies or to receive questionnaires, be they Chief Executives, Human Resources Directors, candidates and/or coachees. Given the anonymised nature of these, you know who you are, and we thank you. Thanks must also go to the colleagues we interviewed and who gave us feedback.

Finally, we would not have been able to undertake this project without the support of those at home, so heartfelt thanks to our family and friends for putting up with us spending hours at the lap top and in the library instead of spending weekends with them.

## ii Abstract

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### **A learning team approach to executive recruitment, coaching & consultancy.**

This project has been undertaken jointly by Michael Smith and Rebekah Gilbert, two recruiter-coach-consultants who through their company, Griffonage, work as a complementary and permanently learning team, providing bespoke assistance to companies that wish to develop the performance of their executives throughout the life-cycle of their careers. This cycle (Figure 1) can be described as a portfolio of services, the elements of which can be undertaken singly or in any combination, as and when required.

Figure 1 – portfolio of services offered by Griffonage

Because of Michael's background, recruitment focuses on the high-technology industries, but with the other elements of the portfolio we embrace all sectors of the UK economy. Given our backgrounds, and the needs of the market, we approach our work from a combined psychological, physiological and business perspective which is underpinned by an increasing understanding of human behaviour engendered by our coaching study and practice. It is delivered in a learning team environment designed to maximise primarily the benefit to the client and secondly to ourselves. This is a critical aspect of both our style of operation and continuing professional development (CPD).

This project studies how our learning team approach has benefitted both ourselves and our clients, and could be of potential advantage to our professions.

The methodology adopted was action research because, like many coaching approaches, it is problem-focused and looks for improvement by all

concerned. Additionally, it requires active participation by the researchers, and reflection on their own personal outcomes, with a view to learning. It is written up in the form of case studies.

Data collection was undertaken by a mix of desk and field research, including observations and discussions on each other's work, the maintenance of personal journals, and interviewing and surveying candidates, coachees and clients.

Following analysis of the data, plus critiquing and testing by the authors, their supervisors and peers to ensure the minimisation of group-think, we believe the outcome is a description of our learning journey and how it could be utilised by other professionals with mind-sets suitable for a learning team approach.

### **iii Cover note on joint submission**

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Michael and Rebekah are both business partners, and uncle and niece. We work together on every recruitment, coaching and consultancy assignment for our company, Griffonage. Neither of us have set roles in the business, other than Michael tends to focus more on outward-facing business development, and Rebekah more on research and administration. Each makes an individual contribution to all assignments, because the process is more spontaneous than prescriptive, and each learns during the assignment to the benefit of the client and the team.

Each practitioner has been equally involved in this project; often with Rebekah making a first draft following detailed discussion with Michael, then Michael considering it carefully, making changes, additions and further suggestions, Rebekah and Michael together reviewing the outcome and then, when both parties are happy, submitting the draft. Finally, with comments being received back from our supervisors, the redrafting process has continued until the final submission before viva. Following this, amendments have been made to accommodate the examiners' conditions.

As a learning team, we have commented on our experiences and reflections in each case study, and in Appendix 4. The learning curve for both has been steep, but perhaps greater for Rebekah, who came to coaching and recruiting fresh, unlike Michael who is more experienced. Our principal methodology has been action research, which is why we have taken the approach of learning from experience and each other, reflecting upon it, using this new learning in our next experience, reflecting upon it, and so on in a continuous upward cycle of improvement.

# **Chapter 1 – Aims, objectives & background context**

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## **1.1 Aim of the project**

This project has seen three iterations of aims: at the outset they were to (i) understand the market in which we operate; (ii) devise a model to operate in that market; and (iii) become better recruiter-coaches. During the mid-course of the study they were simplified to: understanding (i) the context in which we were operating; and (ii) how our services could be improved for the future.

Finally, we have refined the aim of the project to one: explore and develop a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market.

As a result of undertaking this project and its inherent experiential learning opportunities, we believe we can demonstrate that not only have we developed our understanding of learning teams, but we have also utilised them to enhance the output of our services to the benefit of client, participant and practitioner-researcher over and above the standard framework of recruitment, coaching and consultancy.

## **1.2 Objectives of the project**

In order to achieve our aim we recognized we would need to meet the following objectives arising from our research questions:

- Determine our terms of reference (see paragraph 1.2.1).
- Understand what a learning team is, its advantages and disadvantages, the challenges in creating one, its applications and empirical evidence of performance (via the literature review and case studies), how we stand as one, how we compare against others, and how we can improve (via project findings and conclusions).

- Demonstrate what executive search, coaching and consultancy are (via the introduction and literature review).
- Identify our theoretical perspective (via the introduction), and design an appropriate, focused research project which utilizes a suitable methodology; know our sources, collect data, analyse and evaluate it (through the methodology).
- Recognise when we have achieved our aim (through project findings and conclusions), and ensure that our candidates, coachees, clients and peers can see that improvement and the potential benefit to them (through project findings and conclusions).
- Disseminate our findings to our professional community (through the recommendations).

### 1.2.1 **Terms of reference**

In order to achieve our aim - to demonstrate that not only have we learnt, developed and grown by utilising a learning team approach to our work, but also that our candidates, coachees and clients could do the same to operate more effectively - our project research has been conducted in the following environment.

Practice:                   The undertaking of executive search, coaching and consultancy.

Sectors:                    The aerospace, defence and automotive industries.

Level:                      Senior executives (directors to plc chairmen, including Human Resources Directors (HRDs), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Managing Directors (MDs)).

Demographics:          Those working in these industries (overwhelmingly white, middle-aged, middle class men).

Geographics: UK-based companies (that may be UK, US or European owned) and their overseas subsidiaries.

Context: The 2008-2010 global recession and aftermath on the above industries and areas of professional practice.

### 1.2.2 Chronology

Table 1 - Chronology of project

<i>Date</i>	<i>Action</i>
Spring 2008-Summer 2008	Completion of review of learning.
Summer 2008-Spring 2009	Completion of the background research for the project, and approval of project plan.
Spring 2009-Spring 2010	Project data gathering phase.
Spring 2010-Summer 2010	Review and writing-up phase of project.
Summer 2010 - Autumn 2010	Final redrafts.
October 2010	Submission of project.
January 2011	Viva.
Spring 2011 – Summer 2011	Conditions revisions.

### 1.3 Contextual background to the project

In order to understand the background to this project, we set out the following information for the reader.

#### 1.3.1 Who we are

##### 1.3.1.1 Michael Smith

With a 20 year career in the RAF, which included responsibility for all people, legal and financial issues on several bases across the UK, plus being a tutor at both the RAF College and the RAF Staff College, and later a personal advisor on HR financial policy to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Chief of Defence Staffs at the UK MOD, Michael was approached to join an international management consultancy and specialise in Board level remuneration policy and strategy.

It was the breadth and depth of people-related issues he had gained in the military plus his high level exposure in Whitehall, and his concurrent and continuously developed management and administrative skills that, coupled

with six years of management consultancy to industry and its associated introduction to the commercial world, provided the foundation for Griffonage.<sup>1</sup>

The idea behind the business in those early days was to create, and then develop, a boutique senior management recruitment company that would take full advantage of Michael's skills and experiences as described, with a particular focus on the aerospace and defence industries. Motorsport was added later when the transfer of technology between aerospace and that sector gained momentum.

After many thousands of hours of interviewing around the world for such companies such as GKN, Hunting, ITT, Jaguar, Lucas, Raytheon, Rolls-Royce, Serco, Smiths and Umeco it was suggested to Michael that he include executive coaching in his portfolio of business activities. Consequently, to ensure he gained an appropriate professional qualification he undertook a work-based Master's Degree in Executive Business Coaching with the University of Chester, the latter stages of which enabled him to develop the concept of a new senior recruitment+coaching service that was, eventually, to form the basis of the new Griffonage approach, this DProf project and, therefore, Griffonage Consultancy Limited.

### **1.3.1.2 Rebekah Gilbert**

It was at this stage, in late 2006, that Rebekah discussed with Michael, her uncle, the option of joining him as a coach (in wellbeing and voice). Her background was very different. Having studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music and graduated with honours in 1993, she completed a Master's Degree in Arts Management at City University in 1994 (with specialisms in HR management and music management). She was working as a

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<sup>1</sup> When seeking a company name Michael wanted a single word that people would ask 'what does that mean?' and thus remember. Griffonage is an Anglo-Norman word meaning 'scribble'. Michael's RAF Branch was Secretarial, nicknamed 'scribblers'. With each recruitment or coaching assignment 'scribbled' notes were taken in discussion with the client company. The logo relates to his being a Liveryman of the City of London, and the Griffin is an heraldic beast within the City's Armourial Bearings. Finally, the Griffin, which is the offspring of eagles and lions is the defender of its master's interests; and we hope too to defend our clients' and coachees' best interests.

professional concert singer, concert promoter and orchestral manager, running an orchestra that she had co-founded in 1991, working predominantly in central London, with appearances on the newly founded *Classic FM*, and at festivals and venues in the South East.

Taking a career change in January 1999 she spent a brief time in the Civil Service (ONS & DCMS) before entering the Greater London Authority in May 2000, working as AdC to the leader of a political group on the London Assembly. In October 2002 she was offered the post of Chief of Staff/Office Manager to a Shadow Cabinet Minister at the House of Commons, where she remained until joining Michael full time in April 2008 (having worked with him on an ad hoc basis around her House work the previous year). She was also an elected London Borough Councillor and served on the London Fire Authority (LFEPA) from 2006-2010.

When not working at the House, Rebekah gave private voice coaching lessons to clients through her company Viva Voce. She also trained as a massage therapist, undertaking diplomas in anatomy and physiology, business and professional conduct, holistic, sports, and on-site massage, plus stress management. With these qualifications she established Viva Wellbeing and began to take on a number of private clients, and also develop her interest in wellbeing (she gained a Royal Society for Public Health level 4 Diploma in Nutrition and Health in May 2010 with honours). Initially, these were the core skills that she was able to bring to coaching with Griffonage. Her political experiences were also more subtly incorporated in her approach with business leaders, where she was able to demonstrate a contemporary input to the debate.

### **1.3.2 What we do & how we do it**

Michael and Rebekah's approach to running Griffonage has evolved over the period of this project and gone through a number of iterations as a result of study.

### **1.3.2.1 The evolution of the Griffonage approach**

Search, colloquially referred to as head-hunting, is that element of the recruitment industry which concerns itself with more senior appointments, such as functional directors, chief executives and Board members generally including non-executive directors. Search consultants identify a select number of individuals whom they feel might be suitable for a role, and approach them directly, due to their specific industry, technical or business expertise (Pastor, 1997). Stereotypically, they are usually in a stable job, but open to a conversation about promotion, new challenge and, for the more senior amongst them, company equity.

Michael's experience of search was firmly established in the aerospace, defence, logistics and automotive/F1 industries and grew over time from middle-ranking recruitment to senior executive 'head-hunting'. He maintained his take on a standard search model (Clark, 1993):

- a company would contact the search firm and discuss the assignment;
- the search firm would employ a researcher to find a selection of appropriately qualified and experienced candidates and present the list to the head-hunter;
- the head-hunter would long-list candidates to interview, and do so;
- and a short-list of candidates would be presented to the client.

Michael, now with Rebekah, believed this approach not only offered insufficient depth to match the needs of the client, but was also risky for businesses at a senior executive level. Michael and Rebekah believed an improved service could be offered to the client if they understood more about the candidate: their EQ as well as IQ; their soft as well as business and

professional skills; their behaviour styles and business cultural fit; their lessons learnt, and career aspirations.

Cognisant of this, Michael learnt from the CEO of Lockheed Martin UK that, in the USA, the corporation sometimes used psychologically trained executive coaches to meet their senior short-list candidates and provide feedback on their suitability for a job. These meetings were short, conducted in a conversational fashion (because many senior people object to being 'psychoanalysed' as they may perceive the process) and consequently limited in value; but they were a step forward, and apparently avoided some serious mistakes. Thus, if a recruitment interview was conducted by a business coach experienced in understanding people's behaviours, then the interview result would be more meaningful for both potential employer and candidate.

Michael had witnessed triad coaching related to training during his MA (one coach, one coachee and one observer) and it was only a small step to realise how much more effective it could be if this two-to-one approach was applied to recruitment interviewing (see coaching-style questions under 'recruitment' at 1.3.2.4 below). Additionally, if the same two recruiter-coaches went on to provide post-placement coaching to the recruit, continuity and rapport would be maintained. Working as a team, they could combine the roles of interviewer, business coach, career consultant and wellbeing coach as required without the need to introduce new parties. They also had the benefit of two different but complementary sets of skills and experiences, genders, ages, and similar values and beliefs. As well as saving time and money for the client, this combination also allowed for a much broader context of interview and a more holistic approach for coaching interventions.

Michael and Rebekah undertook desk research on numerous other search and coaching companies in the UK to see what they offered. There were a number of search houses that delivered specialist sector knowledge, worked specifically with senior executives, and provided some coaching (albeit with

different providers than the recruiters). We also identified coaching companies that offered executive coaching, frequently for leadership development, stress management, outplacement, career mentoring, talent management, coaching for teams, and training. However, we could not find any who integrated search and coaching in the manner we did.

Of those companies that did offer both recruitment and coaching, they appeared to operate in silos; i.e. they employed recruiters and they employed coaches, but not combined recruiter-coaches, especially with the latter being complementary business and wellbeing/voice coaches. So, if a client required more than one service, the executive was passed from one person to another: recruiter to executive coach, to wellbeing coach, to voice coach, and so on. This meant that it was difficult to build up and retain trust, rapport, and an accumulating level of knowledge and understanding regarding the coachee. Important information had the potential to be missed or even lost.

In early 2009 we presented our approach to the Board of a high-technology company, and also to an experienced marketing professional, for comment. As a result we refined and simplified it. Later that year we were offered two consultancy opportunities to assist long-term clients with their HR problems. Following careful consideration, we decided we could incorporate consultancy alongside our offering of executive search and coaching.

Michael already had six years' experience of management consultancy, with particular reference to all things HR. According to PwC, one of the country's largest professional services organisations, the core fields of HR consulting are: human capital (including reward, incentive schemes, talent acquisition and management); health & benefits; mergers & acquisitions (including culture fit); communication (including employee surveys); retirement; and outplacement. Consultants are hired to provide external and, therefore, objective advice and specialised expertise alongside various tools and approaches suitable for individual clients. Michael felt that, not only was he able to deliver this through the medium of Griffonage, but that as the various

approaches to consultancy can be thought of as lying somewhere along a continuum (at one end is the expert who provides advice or assistance to the client; at the other is the facilitator who focuses more on the process of consultation itself), rather akin to the directional to non-directional spectrum of coaching delivery, it would be most suitable.

In 2010 we talked with two recruitment consultants, one who runs his own, bespoke, recruitment company, and the other who was previously a life coach but currently worked for a specialist recruitment firm. This gave us a useful insight into how other recruiters operated. Finally, we attended two annual conferences for the European Mentoring and Coaching Council to learn more about the wider field of coaching. Consequently, we decided the purpose of our coaching would be better served by a mind-body approach (cognitive, psychological and physiological) which would also influence beneficially our search and consultancy.

The origins that underpin this combined psychological and physiological approach arise from sports coaching. For example, physical fitness is only one of the building blocks of outstanding performance. Successful sports performance is a combination of physical fitness and psychological skills training (PST). The goal of PST is to have the brain and body working together (Hodge, 2005). Hodge also recognizes that PST is for 'normal' people who have to deal with an 'above normal' level in the 'abnormal situation' of competitive sport. Rather than focus on what is wrong and how to treat it, PST focuses on what is right and how to use it. Thus there are great parallels with executive and team coaching, whereby good business people are often under pressure to deliver excellent results.

The 'sports psychology' example is also evident in music. Of particular interest to Rebekah, given her background, was Green's adaption of Gallwey's *Inner Game* theory (1986). The physiology of performance can be superseded by the psychology of nerves and self-doubt with 'performance interfering thoughts', a strand of cognitive behavioural coaching. Interestingly, Orlick's (1997) wheel of excellence for athletes was also

transcribed by Talbot-Honeck & Orlick (1998) to aid mental skills for top classical musicians. Grant (2008) feels that the expertise of sports and performance psychologists has received relatively little attention in the executive coaching literature; however, sports and performance psychologists Lydia Levleva and Peter Terry March (2008) do outline synergies between sport and business.

For actors too, there is a realization that the functions of the mind cannot be separated from those of the body - the theoretical basis of Alexander Technique (Leibowitz & Connington, 1990).

The founding charter of the World Health Organisation describes good health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing'. In naturopathic medicine, wellbeing is governed by three elements in constant flux – your biochemistry (i.e. your nutrition and environment), your physical state (i.e. posture, fitness and breathing) and your psychology (your past and future issues, your relationships and stress) (McManners, 2004). This was also recognised by Albrect (1979:30):

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is becoming embarrassingly obvious to most scientists – but not especially to most physicians and psychiatrists – that all diseases have both psychic and physiological components. But subdividing professional practitioners along the arbitrary lines of 'mind' and 'body' makes it virtually impossible for them to develop an integrated methodology for treating the entire person. In this respect American medicine may be at least 50 years behind such countries as Japan, where physicians treat the patient, not the disease.

We still appear to be behind the times when consultants are having to write "Wellness must be inseparable from business objectives and long-term mission" (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007:07). It was also noted post-recession by Tyers (2009) that employers were accepting that improved wellbeing had positive implications for staff efficiency and, ultimately, the profitability of their business. Academic studies have also shown this to be the case, including Short et al (2010), who used two groups (one experimental and one control group) of third year undergraduate psychology students to investigate how peer coaching improved their wellbeing, and Lennard-Cross (2010), utilising a methodology of action research and

questionnaire (again with one experimental and one control group) on the benefits of coaching, especially in terms of self-efficacy.

Finally, Maxwell (2009) notes that the personal and the professional are deeply intertwined in the coaching conversation, and attempts to compartmentalise these by either coach or client are unrealistic: Coaches must therefore be prepared to work with the 'whole human' whilst maintaining a focus on the agreed contract.

Consequently, we decided there was both evidence from the literature in favour of a mind-body approach, and from the markets when speaking direct with companies.

However, the environment was in a state of flux due to the global recession.

### **1.3.2.2 The environment**

In April 2008 when we commenced our doctoral review of learning, the world had been talking about recession for some time, but little had changed. House prices had rocketed to their peak, employment was stable, and order books were full. Within six months, however, the global economy had plummeted to a situation not remembered since the great depression, and governments the world over were bailing out industries and banks.

In brief, the UK defence industry which, in 2008 turned-over £35bn and employed 300,000, some 10% of all UK manufacturing jobs (SBAC, 2009), waited nervously for the Strategic Defence & Security Review in 2010, whilst providing support for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The automotive industry went into free-fall, and commercial aerospace and business aviation saw order-books cut, an example being Boeing whose profits halved in the first quarter of 2009 to \$610m (Robertson, 2009).

During this project, unemployment in the UK continuously rose until February 2010, when it reached 2.5m (ONS, 2010). This obviously had a severe impact on the executive search market. The top six companies saw net fee

incomes drop dramatically and it became much harder to attract top talent to new jobs because they wanted to remain in stable employment for the duration of the recession. (Executive Grapevine, 18/07/09).

Post-recession, many companies across the board were leaner and more focused than before, and executive search had to follow suit. Clients expected more value for money (REC, 2009), “better service, more flexibility, better defined candidates and quicker response times” (Executive Grapevine 2009/10:295), whilst at the same time demanding new fee structures, moving away from the traditional 33% (Executive Grapevine 2009/10). More appointments went on-line, and head-hunters were largely brought in when the role in question was very senior, the brand was not known or misunderstood, if there were few candidates, if it was a confidential or covert search, or if it was urgent and there was not the time and resource for an HR director to do it themselves (Executive Grapevine 28/04/09).

In their August 2009 member survey *How is coaching and mentoring faring during the recession?*, the CIPD suggested that companies were maintaining, and in some cases increasing, the amount of time and money they spent on coaching; with only 20% reporting a decrease. Many coaches were also supplying outplacement coaching to redundant executives.

### **1.3.2.3 Theoretical underpinnings & coaching perspectives**

At the outset of their journey, Michael and Rebekah knew nothing about learning teams (although without realising it Michael had partially used the concept as a military staff college tutor) and their knowledge of coaching approaches, the psychology behind coaching, and the theoretical underpinnings, were limited. The idea for their new approach had evolved almost entirely through experience and listening to their candidates and clients. Thus, further academic enquiry on theoretical underpinnings was necessary.

In addition to all the books listed below by Rebekah, Michael had also read a number of other key texts for his MA in Executive Business Coaching:

Goleman (1996) on emotional intelligence; Kline (1999) concerning a thinking environment; Peltier (2001) and Bluckert (2006) on the psychology of coaching; Lee (2003) on leadership coaching; Clutterbuck & Megginson (2005) on creating a coaching culture; Megginson & Clutterbuck on coaching techniques (2005); and Hay (2007) on reflection and supervision.

Rebekah, coming with experience of wellbeing and voice coaching, knew nothing of executive coaching so started with the basics such as Whitmore (2002) for the GROW model, and Downey (2003) on his development of GROW and the T-Model. Of particular interest was Green's (1987) *Inner Game of Music*, based on the work of W T Gallwey, because it was a helpful tool in performance coaching; previously she had worked predominantly on the physiological side of performance, but things fell into place when reading this book about mental preparation. She was also reading: O'Connor and Lages (2007), Zeus & Skiffington (2000), Starr (2003), Hawkins & Smith (2006), Hardingham et al (2004), and Jarvis et al (2006) as general histories of, the case for and how to, coach; plus O'Connor (2002) and O'Connor and Lages (2004) on NLP coaching; Biswas-Diener & Dean (2007), Linley & Joseph (2004) and Linley (2008) on positive psychology and Cooperrider et al (2008) and Lewis et al (2008) on appreciative enquiry.

In the main, however, these were books about 'how to coach' rather than academic underpinnings. Consequently, we started to read such books as Passmore's (2006) *Excellence in Coaching*, Palmer & Wybrow's (2007) *Handbook of Coaching Psychology*, and *The Complete Handbook of Coaching* by Cox et al (2010) which provided us with a much greater depth of understanding on the what, why, and how underpinning coaching, especially in relation to psychology.

Because there were two of us, with different skills and experiences, and because coachees come with a variety of needs and circumstances, we were attracted to 'managed eclecticism' as outlined by Megginson & Clutterbuck (2009) and Clutterbuck (2007). They made the case for not remaining rigidly with one style of coaching, but using many to meet that

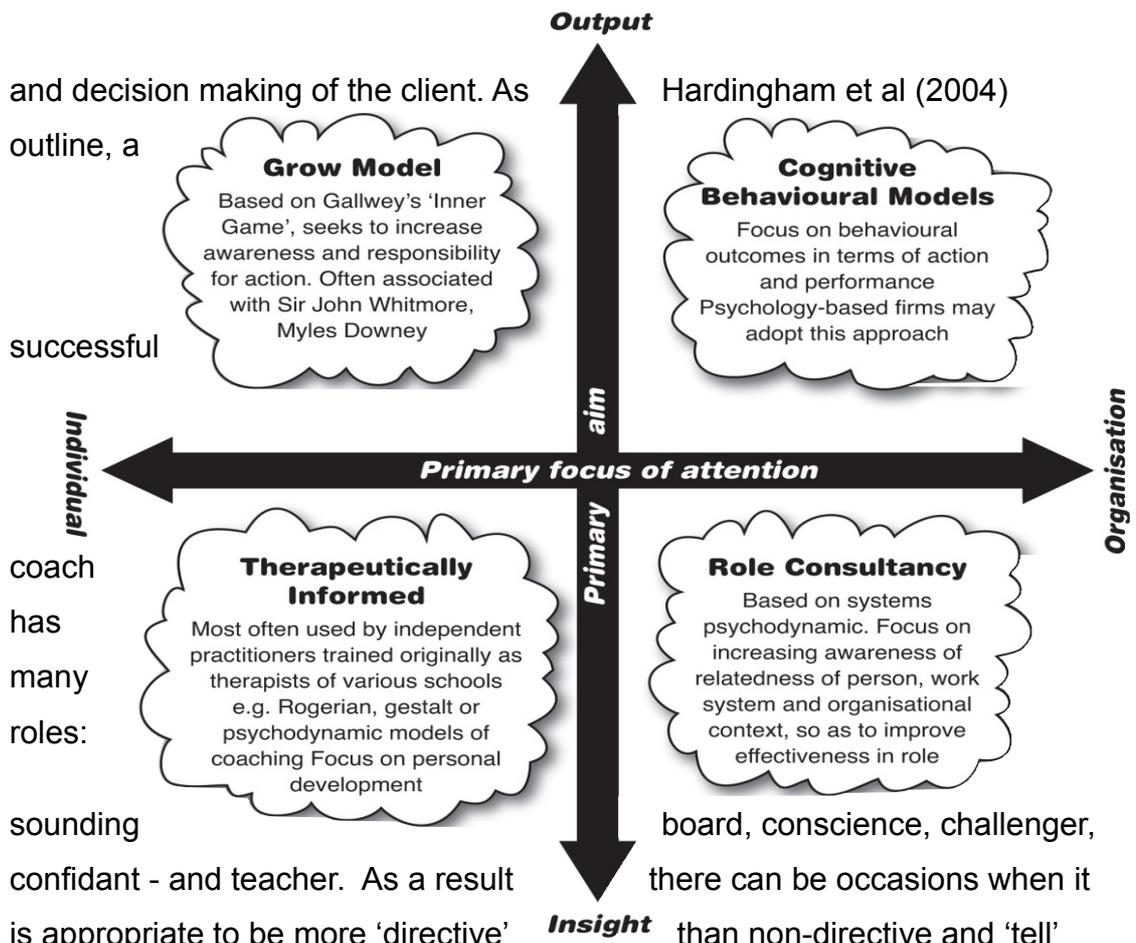
variety of needs. Later, however, we recognised the inherent risk in this approach if taken too far – the potential for lack of depth - and realised the importance of using perspectives that were, at least, not going to conflict:

We believe in the value of a well-formulated philosophy that incorporates one, two or more theoretical perspectives that do not clash in terms of their main assumptions. Such a foundation could withstand a pull in a different direction from the inspiring variety of other well-supported perspectives on coaching. It would be able to support a 'managed eclecticism' in terms of tools, techniques & knowledge that the other approaches offer (Cox et al 2010:420).

Consequently, we sought to incorporate an appropriate range of coaching perspectives that were sufficiently varied to accommodate the majority of needs and situations our coachees were likely to encounter, but not to overload or conflict ourselves. Our sympathetic but pragmatic and practical attitude to people and, therefore, our way of professional practice meant that we wished to embrace a person-centred, positive approach that enabled the identification and fulfilment of the coachee's agenda (not our own), looked-for solutions, took account of the system within which the coachee worked, was highly relevant to the business point of view, but could also deal with inhibitions, perhaps from the past and, if the requirement was there, enable deep reflection on how an individual wished to live their life. Furthermore, working with the whole person, mental and physical, private and business life, because all of these interrelate, it was important we also incorporated an understanding and practical knowledge of physiology, psychology and business practice as already mentioned.

Finally, whilst recognising the value of being able to move up and down the directive scale, so providing expert advice and guidance as required, our style of coaching and, therefore, of search and consultancy as appropriate, would be firmly based on facilitating the thinking, exploration, empowerment

Figure 2 – Roberts & Jarrett's Four models of coaching (2006)



and decision making of the client. As  
outline, a  
successful  
coach  
has  
many  
roles:  
sounding  
confidant - and teacher. As a result  
is appropriate to be more 'directive'  
rather than 'ask'; for example,  
information. This led us to an  
borrowed from each of the  
board, conscience, challenger,  
there can be occasions when it  
than non-directive and 'tell'  
when imparting factual  
eclectic approach that  
quadrants of Roberts &  
Jarrett's four models of coaching (figure 2, as Roberts & Brunning, 2007).  
The primary aim of the coaching intervention is shown on the vertical axis,  
and the horizontal axis indicates whether the primary focus of the coaching  
is on the individual or on the organisation. The information is gathered in  
'clouds' to show these are not rigid but clusters of types of coaching  
interventions. To this we added our own elements concerning wellbeing and  
business.

Remembering the lesson of potential superficiality and dangers of managed  
eclecticism, as cited in Cox et al (2010), we chose the following theoretical  
perspectives to concentrate on.

## **Positive psychology**

Gable & Haidt (2005) suggest that positive psychology (PP) is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions. Consequently, coaching has not only been described as a natural home for PP, but also “a rich new terrain for coaches, a landscape we have hardly begun to mine” (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007:210). This newness is evident in the works, less than 20 years old, of Seligman (1992; 1994) and Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2002), said to be the founding father of positive psychology (Haggblom et al, 2002), who recognised that the knowledge and expertise applied to dealing with mental illness could also be utilised to enhance positive mental health (Seligman, 2002). The foundation of this psychological approach is based on the works of Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1951; 1961). Positive psychology is now being taken into the world of work through transformational leadership (Sivanathan et al, 2004) and positive organisational practice (Henry, 2004).

The PP coach views the coachee as a whole and emphasises strengths, positive behaviours and purpose. This creates building blocks for the coachee to develop and improve performance (Kauffman & Scoular, 2004).

Recognising the attributes of PP as described above, and the fact that by far the majority of our clients are successful business people, PP is at the heart of our approach to coaching because it relates most closely to the positive manner in which our clients either undertake their lives, or wish to do so. Additionally, because it is our attitude to life as well, the client can relate to us, and believes we can to him, thereby helping to build rapidly rapport, trust and confidence. Successful business people are results and improvement orientated.

Furthermore, with those coachees who do have a self-esteem issue, and some do but they attempt to hide it with a coping strategy, or for those recruitment candidates who are either a little nervous or have not been

interviewed for some time, being positive aids an upward spiral of improved performance and life satisfaction; encouragement by a teacher, coach or peer generally results in a greater output by an individual than through negative feedback (Kauffman et al 2010). An example of this was used during an interview in case study three.

However, experience has taught us that because we are frequently dealing with senior people, recognition of their status is important (Odendhal and Shaw, 2002). Additionally, questions calling for answers that put control, autonomy or rationality into doubt, if only implicitly, may be experienced as threatening (Schwalbe and Walkomir, 2002). When this is the case, we focus on a business-orientated approach to start with, with the coachee in his 'comfort zone', and introduce the psychological foundations of our work once trust has been established.

### **Person-centred coaching**

Like positive psychology, person-centred coaching (PCC) is based on the assumption that people have the capacity to grow and develop. Taking this view further PCC suggests when inner potential is released people are able to become more autonomous, socially constructive and move forward generally. The client is regarded as their own best expert (Joseph, 2010).

Developed by Carl Rogers (1951, 1961), and well established in counselling and psychotherapy, PCC is not concerned with curing or repairing, but facilitating the self-determination of the client by providing the right social environment so that they can move towards more optimal functioning. Three essential elements of this environment are that the coach is integrated in the relationship with the coachee, that he experiences unconditional positive regard for the coachee, and that he not only experiences an empathetic understanding of the coachee's internal frame of reference, but also communicates this to the coachee (Joseph & Bryant-Jefferies, 2007).

A practical issue here for us is that because PCC is non-directive, and many first-time coachees are used to dealing with consultants as expert advisers,

the coachee may become frustrated because he is not presented with a ready-made solution. Such an approach would appear to be at odds with the description of our typical clients in the PP section above; however, it is important to remember that PCC is an attitude not a technique (Joseph 2003; Levitt 2005). Furthermore, it is particularly well suited to career coaching, especially in regard to the manner we conduct it, which frequently involves assisting a client not just to discover what they really want to do in their working lives, but how they want to take their life forward as a whole; this is because person centred coaching respects the right of self-determination by others (Grant, 2004). We were able to use some aspects of PCC in case study two.

### **Solution-focused coaching**

Solution-focused coaching (SFC) is light on theory (O'Connell & Palmer, 2007). It aims to be minimalistic in its concepts and interventions following Occam's principle that "it is vain to do with more what can be achieved with fewer" (Russell, 1996: 462).

Like PCC, SFC sees people as their own best expert. Giving centre stage to the coachee's skills, strengths and knowledge, the coach stretches, clarifies, supports and empowers the coachee to design their own solution (O'Connell & Palmer, 2007). The emphasis is on the coachee defining the desired future state and then constructing their pathway in both thinking and action to achieve it (Cavanagh & Grant, 2010). For these reasons it sits very well with PP, and with the future focused, goal directed spirit of not just the mind-set of our typical clients as already explained, but also the spirit of coaching itself.

Spending little or no time on the cause of the problem but looking for a solution, because often the more a coachee talks about a problem the more entrenched they become, the coach helps the coachee identify the simplest and easiest path to a solution, and then identify patterns of behaviour that support the solution/goal. SFC focuses on how a coachee thinks about a problem rather than on the problem itself (Cavanagh & Grant, 2010). We, therefore, find it particularly useful where the coachee has no issues from

the past that have a bearing on the matter under discussion; and with teams who need quickly to build a way forward for the future. It is also useful in recruiting when working with a client on what problem the new job role will solve for their company.

### **Cognitive behavioural coaching**

Occam's principle (i.e. parsimony) is also followed in cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC), which is an integrative approach combining aspects of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem solving techniques to help coachees overcome practical problems and deal with emotional, psychological and behavioural obstacles to performance, change and goal achievement. In doing so it enhances wellbeing and helps prevent stress (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007). So it is particularly relevant to our mind-body approach to coaching.

There are two basic premises of CBC: a coachee may have under-developed problem solving skills, or may not be able to apply those they have when under pressure; and the way a person feels or behaves is largely determined by their beliefs and their appraisal of a situation. The coach helps the coachee improve their problem-solving skills, become aware of their thinking and how the consequent behaviour affects others, and develop plans for the future. (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007). The ultimate goal is for the coachee to become their own coach (Neenan & Palmer, 2001).

A particularly pertinent situation for Griffonage is its use in presentation coaching where it can be used to counter the critical inner voice (Downey 2003; Green 1987) which works against self-esteem, thereby turning negative thoughts into performance enhancing thoughts. A new study in Sweden on the use of CBC, using interpretive phenomenological analysis with the dual aim of adding to the small quantity of literature on evaluating the CBC approach in coaching and investigating the 10 participants' experience of CBC in the workplace, has recently been undertaken by Gyllensten et al (2010) which showed coachees found it useful to eliminate unhelpful thinking.

With our particular interest in wellbeing and stress, CBC is often a pertinent approach for us when dealing with, for example, anger, a classic response to stress by many more executives than they would like to admit (Greener, 1996). Furthermore, Williams et al (2010) advocate its use in team coaching to reduce stress and enhance performance.

### **NLP Coaching**

In short, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is the study of how language affects how we think and therefore our actions (O'Connor & Lages, 2007). Despite NLP's cognitive behavioural roots (Beck, 1976; Linder-Pelz & Hall, 2007), the originators, Bandler & Grinder (1975), made no commitment to theory, but described it as a meta-discipline, the core activity of which is modelling, not coaching.

The principal assumption underlying NLP (which it shares with constructivist psychology) is that whoever we are and whatever we do there is a consistent internal ordering and structuring of our perceiving, thinking, feeling and behaviour, and that by modelling the processes and patterns used by 'experts' these can be copied and adopted resulting in consistent results (Grimley, 2010).

The NLP coach assumes that the coachee's internal processes are psychologically channelled by the way in which they anticipate events (Kelly, 1963) and that this anticipation is a function of their experience of the world and the 'mind maps' (their perception of the world as influenced by their experience, beliefs, values, assumptions and sensory systems) they create as a result. Furthermore, that because each person's map determines feelings and behaviour, unrealistic maps can restrict choice and result in problems. The aim of the coach is to help the coachee modify or replace these maps with more useful ones (Bandler & Grinder, 1975).

Like PCC, NLP coaching takes the view that people are their own best experts to make change (Bandler & Grinder, 1975). The goal of NLP

coaching is to maximize a coachee's resourcefulness and increase the choice they have in a given context. Fundamental to NLP is goal setting (O'Connor, 2002; O'Connor & Lages, 2007). Goals need to be stated in the positive, based upon sensory evidence, be measurable and owned, wanted by the coachee, and be something that really accords with the beliefs and values of the coachee. The key to NLP coaching is to increase self-awareness to the extent that the coachee recognizes that, whenever they do not know how to move forward, it is only because of the way they are interpreting the world (Grimley, 2007). Evidence of this application can be seen in case study seven.

Recognising the NLP presupposition that the mind and body are part of one system (Grimley, 2007), plus the points above, we believe NLP fits well with the Griffonage holistic view, underpinning positive psychology, and goal-orientated approach. Consequently, even though evidence for the success of NLP is largely anecdotal, we have incorporated a number of NLP techniques into our 'portfolio' to be used as appropriate. Examples, which further demonstrate the eclectic roots of NLP, are: Perceptual Positioning which derives from Gestalt; and the Meta Model which, in large part, is based on Grinder's understanding of Transformational Grammar, something he described "as the single most pervasive influence in NLP" (Bostic St. Clair & Grinder, 2001:66). Evidence of our use of perceptual positioning can be seen in our eighth case study.

### **Psychodynamic & Systems Psychodynamic**

Psychodynamic coaching can trace its roots to the theories primarily developed by Sigmund Freud, in particular the assumption that there is a part of mental life that is hidden (the unconscious) and affects people in ways they are not aware of. Psychoanalytic theory, which resulted from the original work of Freud, proposes that particular aspects of our experience become unconscious as a way of protecting us from anxiety and pain. With this in mind psychodynamic coaching is based on a way of understanding how these mental forces operating in and between individuals and groups affect their thinking and behaviour (Roberts & Brunning, 2007).

Systems-psychodynamic coaching is an extension of this approach which, by including open systems theory, takes account of the effect on the individual and group of the system they operate within, and vice versa. We find this approach, usually integrated with appropriate others, useful in leadership coaching, when the coachee, often a senior executive, has to think about himself, his team, and his company systematically in the round. Because of the significance of role (the pattern of ideas in the mind by which one organises one's behaviour in relation to a specific situation (Grubb Institute, 1991)) in this coaching process it is often referred to as role consultancy.

The cornerstone of psychodynamic thinking is the assumption that there is an unconscious, and the focus of the psychoanalytic approach to coaching is on helping the coachee address, understand and harness some of the unconscious drivers of their situation. The psychodynamic coach creates a space for the coachee to revisit difficult emotional territory in a safe environment in which thinking rather than reacting can take place so as to enhance awareness of self and circumstances thereby opening up options which before were hidden. We have shown examples of using this in case study seven.

Many other traditions share an interest in the unconscious, such as transactional analysis and Gestalt and, in practice, coaches borrow ideas from neighbouring traditions, but it is the psychodynamic approach that is most consistently focused on unconscious emotions as the primary blocks to psychological development (Lee, 2010). Lee goes on to suggest that the psychodynamic approach is most useful when allied in an integrative way with approaches that emphasise strength and possibility, such as positive psychology and solution-focused coaching. We would agree with this; hence our inclusion of these three in our 'portfolio' of perspectives. However, it is most important to recognise that coaching is not therapy, so the coach should not attempt to surface deep unconscious material, or directly interpret it.

We find a psychodynamic approach can be particularly helpful when a coachee wishes to develop better interpersonal skills (because they are often unconscious of how their behaviour impacts on others). From our experience an important point to remember here is to ensure that, because we are dealing with coachees who wish to appear (even if they are not) positive and capable leaders, we utilise psychodynamic coaching in a fashion that does not appear psychoanalytical, but practical and business-like. Involving systems in this approach often helps because, to an extent, it can depersonalize the situation.

In summary, based on the researched evidence above, we believe these six theoretical underpinnings share the following: the coachee is viewed as a whole, with an emphasis placed on the positive; the coachee is their own best expert, and has the ability to grow; the coachee's strengths are emphasized; and they are helped to be resourceful and find their own solution(s).

When researching systems-psychodynamic coaching we were taken with Brunning's (2001, 2006) six domain model that illustrates the connections between person, role and organisation (see figure 3, over). Having arrived independently at our own approach to search, coaching and consultancy, this model inspired us to consider representing our related coaching portfolio as a tree (figure 4) with its roots being our respective skills and expertise combining together to form the trunk which, in turn, led to the branches on which grew our related services, linked together by those branches, and available to our coachees in whatever order or quantity they required. And, like a tree, this approach would continue to grow and mature, in our case and that of our coachees, by being a learning team. This then inspired us to produce our portfolio of services, as depicted at figure 5.

Figure 3 – Brunning's six domain model



Figure 4 – Griffonage tree



#### **1.3.2.4 Defining the Griffonage approach**

As has been described by the journey above, when we started this DProf project we had a collection of ideas that were not fully formulated. It took the experience of this project for us to recognise fully what we had and how we could best deliver it. Not until the completion of this project did we realise it was the portfolio of services illustrated below, and the manner in which they are related, that Griffonage could offer to the market, both in any appropriate combination and separately. In essence, this portfolio reflects the potential life-cycle of an executive's career and can, therefore, be described as follows:

Figure 5 (as figure 1) – Portfolio of Griffonage services

In detail, the services we can now offer are as follows:

#### **Business**

- Because there are only two of us we limit the number of client companies we assist so as to maximise our quality of service and focus. This has the added advantage that we minimise the potential for conflict between our clients' interests. We also have a self-imposed ethical principle of not recruiting from our respective clients.
- For recruitment, we work as specialists with specific aerospace, defence, automotive and logistics companies because we have discovered that the market prefers the level of industry knowledge this brings to the assignment. However, with coaching there does not appear to be a market need for such a depth of industry expertise so we offer it across the board.
- As part of a recruitment assignment we undertake post-placement coaching with the successful candidate. This increases our understanding of clients and demonstrates a continuing commitment to them. This is the start of our life-cycle of services.

- Prior to each assignment we conduct a detailed discussion with the client to ascertain how best we can assist, and to agree the sought after result; this covers the company's aims, circumstances and culture. Against this background it is important that both parties agree the need for the assignment and, if it is recruitment, the appointment in question. If it is coaching, that the company and individual objectives do not conflict, how the assignment will be conducted, and its outcome evaluated. Such a process adds to our long-term understanding of the company.

## Recruitment

- Always seeking to provide the highest possible level of service, when recruiting the most senior people to a business we make all approaches ourselves rather than employing a recruitment researcher to do so.
- Recruitment interviews last at least two hours, as opposed to the industry average of 30-60 minutes (Newhall, 2009). This allows a greater depth and rigour of questioning.
- Using coaching-style questions where appropriate, for example: “How did your team feel about your approach as their leader?”; “What lessons did you take from that experience into your next role, and how did you apply them?”; “What made you take that decision, and would you do it differently next time, and why?”; or “How can you see yourself using that experience in the role on offer?”. This approach helps gain a better understanding of the candidate’s mind-set and behaviour. It also allows the candidate to consider carefully if the job being discussed is appropriate for them, that it matches their career ambitions, and suits their family circumstances.
- All recruitment interviews are undertaken by us both working together. This allows one to interview and the other to observe, alternating as appropriate, thereby gaining more information than one recruiter operating alone. At the end of each interview, a discussion takes place between us to consider the candidate in depth and, for our own developmental purposes, how we conducted the interview and what we had learnt from it.
- Reports submitted to the client contain an emphasis on not just the candidate’s suitability in terms of skills, experience and relevant achievements for the role, but also on their behaviour, attitude and overall mental acumen to undertake the appointment successfully. To place the wrong, senior individual in any job can be not only damaging

financially in the short-term, but may also impact on the longer-term company strategy or culture. Thus an element of risk management plays a crucial role in senior recruitment.

- Michael's many years' experience have taught him that whilst psychometric assessments can, in certain circumstances, be most valuable, they do not always get to the heart of a recruitment candidate's motivation, rationale, needs, values, beliefs and, perhaps most importantly, behavioural patterns. Additionally, the conduct of such assessments is frequently seen as derogatory by very senior executives. Coaching knowledge, therefore, becomes an essential element of our recruitment technique. This is because, on the one hand, psychometric assessments measure a candidate against a norm amidst a range of probabilities, and on the other, a standard interview does not go into depth regarding an interviewee's personality. Recruiters who are also trained coaches, who understand business, the company, and the appointment in question, as well as thinking and behaviour, are able to make their approach much more relevant to the client.
- Following interview, we ask short-listed candidates to prepare themselves for a meeting with the client, by undertaking company research, self-analysis and benchmarking themselves against the appointment. Their written findings, with their permission, are incorporated in our report to the client. This preparation is seen as highly beneficial by clients and candidates alike. They feel it is unique and helps differentiate Griffonage from all other recruitment organisations. It also provides a more in-depth and targeted analysis of how a candidate would approach the role in question over psychometric assessments.
- Every recruit receives 12 hours of post-placement coaching, now known as 'on-boarding', over their first six to eight months. Ideally, this forms part of the company's induction programme. With an estimated

one in 25 workers leaving a new job within days and 19% within the first six months, and with only 30% of executives happy with how they have been inducted, using a coach or mentor to allow new senior executives to 'hit the ground running' can be highly advantageous (Braid, 2008). That they already know the coaches as their recruiters saves time in establishing rapport and trust. Additionally, we come to the coaching having already gained a higher level of knowledge of the business through the recruitment process than is likely to be the case with a newly-appointed external coach.

### **Coaching**

- All coaching assignments are undertaken by Michael and Rebekah together, regardless of subject because, almost invariably, a coachee will need to discuss a subject, or number of related subjects, that call upon our combined expertise and knowledge. Examples might be: a business problem that has its roots in a domestic issue; poor diet, lack of exercise or unbalanced work-life styles impacting on behaviour at work; nervousness about giving a key-note speech and how to prepare for it both psychologically and physiologically; or developing the interpersonal skills for someone who has been a technician all their life and has now been promoted to management level. Our combined psychological, physiological and business approach, plus the fact that we are of different ages, genders and backgrounds, enables us to provide a far greater range of assistance (and advice when appropriate) than one coach alone, and negates the need to arrange future coaching sessions with additional coaches. We are aware, however, that at this increased level of engagement, not only is mastery of practice needed, but that by addressing complex personal and professional development, coaches must adopt the hallmarks of professionalism and work within evidence-based agendas rather than untested, built-on, spurious ideas (Fillery-Travis & Lane 2006).

- Every coachee's agenda is different: they may require a short session on voice coaching; or a lengthy programme to assist them into a leadership role. Moreover, not every coaching session has an equally balanced mind-body element; but the important principle is that the facility is always available and ready for use. In some sessions one coach may spend more time observing, noting nuances and taking notes, in others both may participate equally – the process is whatever is best for the coachee at that time in their life.
- Our knowledge of the recruitment industry is a considerable advantage when conducting outplacement and career coaching.
- Finally, we come to the contextual example (team coaching) of what is at the heart of our approach to everything we do – team learning. Following the 2008-10 recession we are increasingly being asked about team development via the medium of coaching and facilitated dialogue. That coaching is a more popular option to meet the emerging needs of organizations over the traditional one-size-fits-all training was also recognized by Fillery-Travis & Lane (2006). In this we have been attracted to the writings of such people as Michaelsen & Black (1994), Clutterbuck (2007), and Thornton (2010).

### **Consultancy**

- Coaching is a most effective way of facilitating rapid learning in a change situation, and long-lasting learning and change only occurs when, through empowerment, the learner owns the outcome; these are the principles we base our HR consultancy on. Moreover, when the assignment involves a group or team we also utilize, as appropriate, all the factors underpinning our approach as described earlier in this chapter.

## **CPD**

- Michael and Rebekah work as a permanent learning team. The foundation for this has been the academic framework and rigour of the DProf and its methodology of action research; we will continue to support this with programmes of CPD.

### **1.3.2.5 The delivery of the Griffonage approach**

Our approach can be likened to a wave which ebbs and flows in intensity and duration as each assignment dictates. For example: (i) a private client who engaged us purely as coaches would experience one wave of a particular intensity over a certain period of time; (ii) an assignment that required recruitment followed by post-placement coaching would consist of two waves (an intense period of search and interviewing, followed by six-eight months of coaching with the candidate placed); or (iii) an assignment that involved a period of consultancy, the outcome of which was a recruitment assignment, followed by a period of team coaching would involve three waves, the intensity and duration of each being dependent on the client's circumstances. The bedrock is our growing understanding of human behaviour and use of suitable coaching and consultancy techniques, as delivered by a permanently learning team.

### **1.3.2.6 A model of practice**

Although what we offer through Griffonage is an approach rather than a strict model of practice, it was important to be aware of appropriate models of practice and how we could learn from them. According to Lennard (2010:3-4) a model is "an intellectual devise that highlights the key elements of a process and their interrelations. A coaching model refers to a framework of ideas for understanding and navigating an approach to coaching". Coaching models help practitioners think about and understand the process of coaching. As a conceptual tool, a coaching model facilitates the process of enquiry that is crucial to on-going learning about coaching effectiveness. As our services have evolved over time and through the rigour of the DProf framework, we would certainly agree with this. A model can be used as a springboard for such questions as: what are the boundaries of coaching, and

what core practices am I using? To answer such questions requires reflection. Lennard goes on to explore, inter alia, models such as Gallwey's Inner Game (1986, 2001), Whitmore's GROW (2002), Mary Beth O'Neill's (2000) system approach to executive coaching, Peltier's (2001) psychological orientation to executive coaching, Hunt & Weintraub's (2002) developmental coaching model, and Zeus & Skiffington's (2002) team coaching model.

Grant & Cavanagh (2004) discuss the scientist-practitioner model, which advocates coach-training programmes that address the theoretical and empirical foundations of coaching, providing training in sound research methodologies, and fostering critical thinking skills. Having undergone the rigours of the DProf, which has helped us enormously to understand and appreciate the theoretical underpinnings most certainly needed for executive coaching, we would agree with them.

Zeus & Skiffington (2008) state that coaching is still in its early stages of development and there is no agreed-upon, all embracing model of the coaching process and practice, although previous efforts have been based on sports psychology. Lyle (2002) is an example. They feel such a model requires in-built flexibility and adaptability so that coaching programmes can be tailored to fit the specific needs of each client and coachee. They further recognise that each coachee exists within various systems, both personal and professional and that these affect a coaching programme, as does the coachee's organisational culture, structure and business objectives. We would certainly agree with this, and hope we have outlined our empathy with such an approach above.

Witherspoon & White (1998) describe their model of a continuum of coaching roles, including skills, performance, development and the coachee's wider agenda, which could be said to be very similar to our approach; however, we have added specific skills training such as voice coaching and wellbeing, and incorporated recruitment and consultancy around our coaching services.

Manderscheid & Ardichvili (2008) have investigated a model of leadership transition, which covers a number of areas including those of specific interest to us such as recognising stress, building relationships and using structured methods for leadership development.

Models of practice have been widely used in the medical and nursing professions, with considerable discussions around evidence-based practice, including Stetler and her revised model (2001), and Charles et al (2010). The American Society of Registered Nurses (2007) investigates the biomedical model, with roots in Descartes and the mind-body dualism versus the psycho-social model for a conceptual model of nursing. They note that the application of a model in practice depends on awareness, understanding and research, and this project has aided us in this.

Models have also been constructed for team learning, such as Akgün et al's (2005) multi-faceted model involving behaviourism, cognition, and social construction, and Pawlowsky's (2001) model that conceptualizes the phases of a collective learning process consisting of four main stages that are not necessarily sequential (generation, diffusion, integration and action).

McCarthy & Garavan (2008) take this model and extend it with the inclusion of metacognition (a higher order of thinking involving active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning) for greater awareness, which is considered a vital component of team learning (Michaelsen, undated). For an excellent review of learning team models, see Knapp (2010) or Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005A).

The cultural context of a model is critical according to Yorks et al (2003) as it can: facilitate or inhibit behaviours, processes and conditions for team learning; impact on taken-for-granted frames of reference; channel or screen the kinds of input considered; and the processes of power can impact on the search for meaning and define the range of acceptable solutions.

Recognising that this is an area in need of more research, theirs is a fascinating chapter based on literature review rather than their own research.

Similarly, Cseh (2003) considers cross-cultural learning teams, and recognises in her valuable review of literature into this emerging field that although there are many empirical studies on the effects of culture on group dynamics and HR practices, there is a need for more empirical studies of the effects of cultural factors on the process of learning of cross-cultural teams.

Finally, models for team learning include Tuckman's five stages of psychological improvement – forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (1965), which Clutterbuck argues rarely happens “in such tidy, logical and clearly cut phases in real life” (2007:73). Kasl et al (1997) propose a research model for team based learning that defines the learning process as framing, reframing, experimenting and crossing boundaries. Obviously there is Kolb's model of experiential learning (1984). This is developed by Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005A) into a model for experiential learning in teams (experiential learning theory - ELT), which can trace its roots back to Lewin's T-Group model, and the seven-module Kolb Team Learning Experience (2005B). The ELT model has two dialectically related modes of grasping experience, concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience, reflective observation and active experimentation. A closer examination of the ELT model suggests that learning requires abilities that are polar opposites - the watchers favour reflective observation, whereas the doers favour active experimentation (as a team we feel we have some of each). The conflict between concrete or abstract and between active or reflective can be resolved through “learning styles.” (2005A:334) Current research has shown that ELT is useful in understanding team learning and performance and that a team “is more effective if it learns from experience and emphasizes all four learning modes” (2005A:336). This is something we would strongly agree with from experience of working with teams.

Kayes & Burnett (2006) advocates the developmental, but comprehensive normative model for team learning of five components: team-level inputs, team-level processes (shared beliefs and shared learning behaviours); team-level outputs; and knowledge requirements. We identified with this model

closely because we shared an interdependence between us, wanted to learn through experience, shared similar or complementary values and behaviours (being disciplined, dedicated to work, putting the client before ourselves, learning orientated, trusting each other) and adoption of knowledge through critical reflection and thinking.

Interestingly, Kemp (2008) argues that although many models that support coaching practice claim to provide robust and efficacious methodologies, many also make erroneous and unfounded claims within the literature. He therefore advocates that all coaching psychology interventions occur within a generic experiential learning process. Similarly Scott-Ladd & Chan (2008) recognise that Kolb (1984) and Honey & Mumford's (1995) models have not been tested by students in learning teams regarding their experiences of teamwork.

Ultimately, a model for coaching practice (and indeed executive search and consultancy) has to be of primary relevance to the client, and as each client's needs vary, so a model has to be flexible. We believe our approach can be used in a linear fashion for long-term clients, or piecemeal in whatever order for those who require specific interventions. With two practitioners with specialist but complementary skills it is also flexible in terms of the client's psychological or physiological needs.

Aware of the above models, our approach is based on: research (both that we have conducted, and from a review of literature); an awareness of coaching philosophies, particularly those most relevant to our approach to coaching and the needs of those we coach and their environments; a mind-body approach; adoption of appropriate conceptual tools to coach with (as outlined by Megginson & Clutterbuck 2005); flexibility for clients to choose from our life-cycle of services; and reflective practice – a discipline enhanced by undertaking this project – all encapsulated in a learning team delivery.

### 1.3.3 Motivation

So what was the motivation for this project, because that is fundamental to its aim? We knew we wanted to introduce a 'joined-up' approach to search and coaching delivered by a team, but we needed a research-based project to explore it thoroughly within a market context and further develop it accordingly, especially as we reasoned the 2008-10 recession would undoubtedly change market requirements and expectations. Indeed, it could be argued that the *principal* motivation was our belief that market expectations would change dramatically because of the recession and we had to find a way to be ready for that change. We did not know how they would change, hence our use of 'explore'.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, our aim has undergone several iterations as that exploration and development have proceeded. And it is definitely the case that the concept and practice of a learning team was unexpected and derived, for us, directly from the project. It was not in our minds when we originally agreed the methodology. Furthermore, the whole thrust of the project has, in a sense, changed; it has reversed. When we started, the core of the project was executive search and coaching undertaken via the medium of a team. What has evolved is an exploration of team learning and working using executive search and coaching as the medium. An approach that we are now adopting as the core of our business, and one that we believe has the potential to be transferable to other contexts.

Consequently, we have arrived at an aim *which places the learning team element first, search and coaching second*. It is: to explore and develop a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market. The hoped for result being an approach to our business that will benefit our clients, ourselves and others in a changed, and still changing, market; and one that must, therefore, have the ability to evolve and develop in accordance with market needs and best professional practice.

This project has been a journey of discovery - professionally, business-wise and personally - for both of us; and this report, which we believe demonstrates we have achieved our eventual aim, is a record of that journey....so far.

## Chapter 2 – Literature review

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### 2.1 Learning teams

#### 2.1.1 Definition

Team learning has been described by Edmondson (1999:353) as “an on-going process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of action”. It has also been described as an instructional strategy to enhance active learning and critical thinking...by shifting the instructional focus from knowledge transmission to knowledge application (Parmelee & Michaelsen, 2010). It has been conceptualised as a cycle of experimentation, reflection, communication and knowledge codification (Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003), and an opportunity to bring together theoretically based and empirically grounded strategies (Michaelsen, 1998). Team learning is defined by Ellis et al (2003:822) as “a relatively permanent change in the team’s collective level of knowledge and skill produced by the shared experience of the team members.” According to Kayes & Burnett (2006:07), team learning occurs when “cognitions, emotions and behaviours are shared amongst individuals and results in performance improvement for the team.”

It sits within a number of ‘new’ learning theories which are similar, but not the same, as team-based learning: active learning – an instructional method that engages students in the learning process and allows them to think about what they are doing; collaborative learning – an instructional method where students work together towards a common goal (largely encompassing all group-based learning); co-operative learning – a form of group work where students pursue a common goal but are assessed individually, however, the core element is a focus on co-operative incentives rather than competition to promote learning; and problem-based learning – an instructional method where relevant problems are introduced at the beginning of the instruction cycle to provide context and motivation for learning, being always active and usually collaborative (Prince, 2004). Collective learning is a phrase that can

encompass organisational, team, community and strategic learning, with the outcome being both cognitive and behavioural in nature (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008).

Fink (2004) corroborates this, stating that different authors use different terms, such as: learning groups (Bouton & Garth, 1983); collaborative learning (Hamilton, 1997; Bruffee, 1999); co-operative learning (Slavin, 1983; Johnson et al, 1991; Millis & Cottell, 1998); and team-based learning (Michaelsen, 1983; Michaelsen & Black, 1994; Michaelsen, Black, & Fink, 1996). However, despite the varying terminology, these several authors are all referring to the same general idea: dividing students in a class into small groups for the purpose of promoting more active and more effective learning.

### **2.1.2 History & evolution**

There is a wealth of information on learning teams, predominantly from America. Michaelsen cites himself as the founding father of learning teams, which is backed-up by his peers such as Parmelee (2010). Amy Edmondson is widely quoted by a number of the authors cited in this study and more, and is generally accepted by all as conducting well-researched and well-founded studies on the subject of learning teams, and in a variety of authored and co-authored settings from health (2001, 2004, 2006) to business (1999, 2003, 2007). Thus she receives many critically acclaimed peer reviews in a number of journals and can be regarded as an excellent source of information.

Edmondson feels that perhaps the best known early use of the term 'team learning' is found in Peter Senge's (1990) book, *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*, drawn primarily from the field of system dynamics which is an approach to understanding the behaviour of complex systems over time. It deals with internal feedback loops and time delays that affect the behaviour of the entire system. Also oft quoted are Argyris and Schon (1978) and their double loop learning theory. Edmondson & Moingeon (1998) make an interesting comparison of the two: Whereas Senge argues that all people in the organisation should be involved, not just top management, and that diagnosis should occur organisation-wide as a

commitment to team learning and shared vision, Argyris recognises that individuals may not have the authority to change and, furthermore, they may not have the cognition to be able to change, thanks to 'designed ignorance' whereby people are not encouraged to learn. Both Senge and Argyris view properties of individual cognition as the crucial source for creating more effective organisations, and both reflect an understanding that human cognition interprets and influences the organisation. Edmondson & Moingeon believe that an effective learning organisation should engage in both practices.

The benefits of learning teams have been studied by numerous researchers in a variety of fields including education, such as Collier (1980), Johnson et al (1991), Gross Davis (1993), and Scott-Ladd & Chan (2008), and medical learning such as: Hunt et al (2003) using empirical, experimental study based on Michaelsen's strategy; Thompson et al (2007A), using survey methodology and constant comparative analysis of medical students' responses; Parmelee (2010) comparing literature and his experience; and the advice-based paper by Parmelee & Michaelsen (2010). Also, in the field of marketing it has been evaluated through empirically-based study by both Hernandez (2002), and Bicen & Laverie (2009), who utilized a quasi-experimental study on students based on dynamic assessment theory; and improvements to metacognition through team-based learning have been published as a conference paper by Jones (2008).

### **2.1.3 Advantages & disadvantages**

Fink (2004), drawing on her considerable experience in this paper, states the advantages of learning teams are that they: transform small groups into teams; transform technique into strategy; and transform the quality of student learning. They require: time to interact; intellectual resources; a challenging task to become a common goal; and frequent feedback. As a result, teams become capable of: inspiring a high level of individual effort; challenging each other but with give and take; communication without offence; and successfully accomplishing complex and challenging tasks.

White (1998) similarly identifies that team-based learning enhances students' communication skills, group interaction and comprehension of complex tasks. Added to this, Appleby (2000), who undertook a survey of 39 employers who were willing to interview US psychology major graduates, states that employers identify communication and social skills as the most desirable skills for employees.

Parmelee (2010) concurs, with his review of literature stating that research has shown that team-based learning is associated with positive learning outcomes (McInerney, 2003; Levine et al, 2004; Dunaway, 2005; Koles et al, 2005; Vasan & Defouw, 2005), increased learner engagement and preparedness (Kelly et al, 2005; Haidet & Fecile, 2006), improved problem-solving skills (Hunt et al, 2003; Kelley et al, 2005), and better communication processes and teamwork skills (O'Malley et al, 2003; Thompson et al, 2007B).

Scott-Ladd & Chan (2008), undertaking an action research project with two teams of undergraduate management students, recognised that teams help to embed a 'community of learning', but that this is probably more productive for students testing it within the safety of a university. Also, that such endeavours have to be well organised and administered to be effective. They spend little time describing their methodology and data analysis of 164 surveys from Australian and Malaysian students, so one cannot gauge the robustness of this study; however their review systems come across as very thorough.

Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005A:330) cite the pitfalls of team learning as social loafing, group think, over-dependence on a dominant leader, over-commitment to goals and diffusion of responsibility.

Yorks & Sauquet (2003) question whether organisations learn, citing March & Olsen's (1976) argument that human characteristics cannot be transferred into organisation structures – only individuals learn on behalf of the organisation. Argyris & Schon (1978) note that some companies do not know

what individuals know. Popper & Lipschitz (1998) recognise that there is learning in organisation (LIO) and learning by organisations (LBO). For a clearer picture, however, we found Sofo et al (2010) helpful, as discussed below. This leads to a whole new study on the importance of knowledge capture for organisations. Important for this study though is Kasl et al's (1997) recognition that there are four learning modes that are the products of the relative effective functioning of these processes: (a) fragmented - individual learning that is not shared by a group and not necessarily shared with or by others; (b) pooled - where individuals share information and small groups of people learn together, but the group as a whole does not learn; (c) synergistic - where the group as a whole creates knowledge mutually, integrating divergent perspectives in new ways; and (d) continuous - where synergistic learning becomes habitual. Yorks & Sauquet (2003) recognise that the relationship between these kinds of learning and the relative roles of Argyris & Schon's single-, double-, and triple-loop learning and LIO and LBO need to be empirically explored through research; theirs is a study based on literature review only, albeit extremely well-referenced.

Edmondson et al (2007) make a deeper critique of the literature, noting that most studies to date have not clarified whether they are examining a learning behaviour or a learning outcome, and label variables accordingly (e.g. knowledge transfer *behaviour*, knowledge acquisition *outcome*).

Likewise Edmondson et al (2007) recognise that little of the literature so far has sought to solve specific practical problems (such as improving product development, enriching strategic decision making, or reducing medical errors) in which teams play a role. Although most of the research can be said to have *implications* for practice, managerial imperatives are rarely a driver of the questions and data selected in this work. Thus, the question of what team learning researchers can say to managers remains an important motivating concern. She suggests relevance should be a crucial driver of future research. Likewise, Garavan & McCarthy (2008:452-3) note that much HRD literature around collective learning has primarily focused on individual-level learning and objectified learning rather than focusing on its emergent

and intangible nature. “The objectification of learning does not sufficiently capture the complexity of learning in organizations or its essentially emergent nature at the organization or collective level. It ignores the interplay of processes at an individual, team, or organizational level”.

This is something we hope this project addresses by looking at our learning at an individual, team and business level. Garavan & McCarthy also note that learning organisation literature is problematic for academics who consider that theories should explain and describe organizational phenomena. The learning organization concept “starts from the premise of a positive relationship between organizational learning and performance, envisages best practices, and assumes that learning organizations exist because of the existence of shared learning and collective mental models” (2008:454). However, earlier literature (and one of the rare examples by a UK team) from Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) looks specifically in detail at failure, and their case study methodology is based on content analysis of interview transcripts, Janis & Mann’s conflict theory frameworks and reflection, as opposed to Garavan & McCarthy who rely solely on literature review, albeit most thorough.

Borredon et al (2011) introduce a fascinating paper on deep learning through the medium of learning teams in the French higher education system. Not only is this a review of contemporary understanding of the subject but also a hands-on experience within the system (and it comes across as a learning experience for the authors too). They note, and we think rightly, that their case makes a substantial contribution to management literature by displaying the integration of experiential learning and deep learning theory and practice, which are rarely linked. Because of this, evaluating the literature we would say this was one of the most inspiring papers we read.

Furthermore, Kayes & Burnett (2006:03) argue that there is a lack of clarity between social and cognitive learning processes and how they manifest themselves in team learning; and whether team learning occurs in the moment or over time

Van den Bossche et al (2006) recognise that teams can become divergent in their interpretation of a situation, leading to varying perspectives, and that emotional rejection of differing views can interfere with productive team behaviour, which can only be beneficial if it leads to further investigation by the team. They also intimate that the number of team members can influence the outcome; the larger the group the more potential problems they could encounter.

#### **2.1.4 Application and relevance**

According to Michaelsen (undated) the essential principles of learning teams are: (1) groups must be properly formed and managed; (2) students must be made accountable for their individual and group work; (3) group assignments must promote both learning and team development; and (4) students must have frequent and timely feedback. When these principles are in place, groups of students evolve into cohesive learning teams.

In relation to the first point, Michaelsen (undated) also states that learning teams should consist of a group of five to seven people. We were only two so how would the dynamics work? Fink (2004) states that co-operative learning recommends four or fewer people, and if we included the coachee or client as part of our learning team, because one of the end results of a coaching session should be that all parties learn – both coach and coachee - then the team becomes larger, especially if that learning is taken back to the team at work or is group coaching.

Concerning point two, Michaelsen (undated), Fink (2004) and Scott-Ladd & Chan (2008) note that there is frequent concern that some students will have to carry the less able ones because it is easier to hide in a team, which could be overcome in the classroom context with good evaluation processes. In our learning team we had one very experienced hand and one total newcomer. How would we overcome the apparent ill-balance? As discussed in Chapter four, Rebekah was on a steep learning curve but very willing to learn, so although there was a sense of carrying by Michael in the early stages, it was not through lack of engagement. Conversely, Michael was also

learning from Rebekah's areas of expertise and integrating them into his work, so that the whole became greater than the sum of its parts, a point noted by Michaelsen, Watson and Black (1989) who recognised that members of a team had to be willing to commit to a very high level of effort in their learning; and that learning teams were capable of solving problems that were beyond the capability of even their most talented members working alone.

Pertaining to points three and four, as Michaelsen, Watson and Black (1989) point out, if groups are properly formed, remain intact long enough to become cohesive teams, are repeatedly given challenging tasks with prompt and clear feedback, students then learn the content and how to use it, they learn about themselves and how to interact with others on major tasks, and they learn how to keep on learning after the course is over with significant depth. We believe we have been doing so through our learning journey when undertaking this project. Similarly, Mason (2002) recognises that learning only really takes place in action, which we believe we have demonstrated in our case studies.

Tucker, Nembhard & Edmondson (2007), who used survey and interview with staff in intensive care units, found that *learn-what* (activities that identify current best practices) and *learn-how* (activities that operationalize practices in the work setting) were distinct team learning factors. Their research showed that learn-how was associated with the internally focused learning behaviour – because of the importance of attention to specific work processes and relationships in producing change. The two practitioner-researchers in our project were open to both fields of learning, but Rebekah was unquestionably on a steeper learning curve for both.

A closely related stream of research study is *team reflexivity*, and how teams reflect upon and modify their functioning. Research on reflexivity has emphasized its positive effects on team performance (Schippers et al, 2003), consistent with other findings that show team learning behaviours to be related to team performance or effectiveness. (e.g. Edmondson, 1999).

Following on from this, Wirth and Perkins (2007) stress the importance of metacognition to recognise when current levels of understanding are not adequate. Planning, self-monitoring, self-regulation, and self-assessment are critical. Members should engage in constant questioning (e.g., What am I trying to accomplish? What is the best strategy for learning? How is my progress? Did I succeed?). We found this to be a very interesting paper, not only because it describes styles of learning, but also because it provides several frameworks to consider how to go about learning and evaluating the efficacy of the end result. This self-monitoring and reflection not only leads to deeper and more effective learning, it also lays the groundwork for being a self-directing learner. Again, both practitioner-researchers recognised this, and used discussions post-assignment and their learning journals to consider such questions.

Furthermore, Kolb (1984) describes the four key attributes for learners to be effective as the ability to: involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences; reflect and observe; create concepts from those observations; make decisions and solve problems in change situations.

Van den Bossche et al (2006) also recognise that teams bring together people with different experiences, values and knowledge, which will be more effective in problem solving than individuals. To do this adequately they must integrate these perspectives to develop a shared understanding. Their study, based on data from 99 teams of first year Dutch BA business students using a survey methodology based on perceptions utilising Edmondson's 1999 survey for measuring psychological safety, plus regression analysis, resulted in: a new theoretical framework for conceptualising learning for the cognitive development of teamwork; recognition that learning is a considered product of collaboration; an understanding that shared cognition builds team effectiveness; and the knowledge that people learn when taking risks, but feel unwilling to do so without the feeling of a supportive community (team) around them. This study also includes a well-reviewed literature section.

Analysing the literature, we see a majority is based on student learning, whereas Edmondson et al (2007) recognise that it is important to contextualise it into the business arena. Her earlier qualitative study (2002) of 12 manufacturing company teams of varying types (management, product development, service, and production) identified the different implications for organizational performance of teams engaged in *incremental learning* (improvement) versus *radical learning* (innovation). When teams responsible for innovation (e.g. developing new strategies or products) fail to learn, the organization may miss critical market opportunities that threaten future competitiveness. When teams engaged in production fail to learn, cost and other inefficiencies could threaten the organization's near-term profitability and competitiveness. However, too much emphasis on learning can compromise team effectiveness in the short-term, possibly because team learning is about generating new strategies to solve problems and team performance is about maintaining or improving existing strategies (Kayes & Burnett, 2006).

This is relevant to our work in coaching teams, because they too work as learning teams for the betterment of their business. A particularly well informed and valuable work aid in this respect is Thornton (2010) which: explores the difference between groups and teams; connects group theory to group and team coaching; introduces systems theory as a way of thinking about whole organisations; reviews, and provides advice on, teams, learning groups and supervision groups; and discusses specific problems that arise when working with groups. It is based on 25 years' experience and soundly underpinned with theory, providing valuable coaching tools.

## **2.2 Experiential learning**

No study based on experiential learning is complete without reading the canonic works of Lewin (1947A&B, 1948, 1951) or Kolb (1984). These introduced us to a much greater understanding of learning, especially personal learning and the benefits of undertaking reflection. As Kolb states (1984:304), experiential learning offers “the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a life-long process, and pictures the workplace as

a learning environment that can enhance and supplement formal education and can foster personal development through meaningful work and career-development opportunities". Borredon et al (including Kolb) (2011) recognise that deep learning comes not only from the integration of the four modes of the experiential learning cycle – experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting, but also from the double-loop process of Argyris (1999), and of Kolb's conceptualisation mode that enables the learner to re-examine previous sense-making and make a profound shift in learning that goes beyond the light of new ideas.

The experiential learning writings of Boud et al (1993) and Warner, Weill & McGill (1989) were helpful, as was Mason (2002), who states that the student has to participate in an action, not merely go through the motions. The cornerstone of noticing as a method of enquiry is trying things out for ourselves rather than taking them on trust. This is also recognised by King (2008), who writes that, for a more authentic experience, learning by being (or learning by enquiry) rather than learning by doing, offers more opportunity for exploration and self-directed learning.

Because experiential learning is about "ensuring that people can 'do' rather than merely 'know'" (Henry, 1989:28), and that we have to develop awareness and take constructive action in order to grow (Eales-White, 2003), we use this approach in recruitment, asking candidates what they have learnt from an experience to develop themselves as managers, leaders, and motivators of people, and then how they would apply that learning to the role they are being interviewed for to the benefit of their new employer. It is an enlightening approach, often sorting the 'A' list candidates from the 'also-rans'.

### **2.3 Team, coaching & experiential learning**

We believe there is a strong link between team learning, learning through coaching, and experiential learning, as cited by Griffiths & Campbell (2009:16):

The process of learning in coaching through the discovery, application and integration of new knowledge and the holistic process of developing, in fact, incorporates many distinct learning theories. The learning process in coaching involves characteristics of collaborative learning, mentoring, self-directed learning, social learning, reflective learning, adult learning, experiential learning, transformative learning, deep learning, authentic learning, action learning, inductive learning, discovery learning, powerful learning, life-long learning and accelerated learning. This suggests not only that learning is interwoven throughout the process of coaching, but that coaching provides a means of facilitating a dynamic interchange between multiple learning theories. As learning is inherently viewed as a means by which coaching outcomes are achieved, coaching practice may be improved as coaches gain a deeper understanding of the learning theories underpinning coaching.

Coaching is, in itself, a form of experiential learning. It could be described as coming under the umbrella of collaborative learning in that two or more people are attempting to learn something together; learners engage in a common task where each individual depends on, and is accountable to, the other(s). An example is Passmore and Mortimer's (2011) developmental study on using coaching as a learning aid.

We suggest, however, that coaching is a specific type of collaborative learning – cooperative learning - which emphasises positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills and group processing (Brown & Ciuffetelli, 2009), themselves excellent contributors to team building and development. Indeed, cooperative learning requires team working, and the whole *raison d'être* of the way we work is as a team.

Nevertheless, the situation is not as simple as that. With coaching, although the coach learns much about the coachee and his concerns throughout the intervention, the agenda is not common to all parties' learning – it is only that of the coachee. Operating as a team, however, we not only maximise the benefit of our complementary skills on behalf of the coachee but, recognising that people learn best in groups, do likewise for our own professional

development. We do this because we firmly believe that well managed teams, used in the right circumstances and for the right purposes, are the bedrock of a high performing organization (Clutterbuck, 2007), and Michael's experience of military teams under stress most definitely supports this.

## **2.4 Reflection and learning**

We found Sofo et al (2010) extremely helpful in understanding more about reflection and learning, especially their table on learning types differentiating between cognitive, behavioural, experiential and organisational learning. Furthermore, they go on to discuss the role and benefits of coaching in action learning and how it can facilitate a team's ability to grow and improve performance. Largely a study of the literature around action learning, they also include an illustrative (but not methodological) case study example of it in action. We found it more useful than Skipton et al (2010), who discuss the advantages of action learning in leadership development. Although one of their four cases studies was on leadership at Boeing Aerospace, of particular interest to us in our field, it failed to contextualise academically the case study. Again, Marquardt et al (2010) discuss the advantages of action learning for team development but, despite the authors' extensive knowledge, they fail to explain their case study methodology academically. However, they do set out the eight key characteristics for successful groups, which made us reflect on how we could identify with them, as set out in 3.5 below.

Reflection plays a critical role in any form of meta-learning, not least with experiential and action learning. Moon (2006) gave a comprehensive introduction to this subject, assisting us in establishing our learning journals. More importantly, Vince (2002) talks about reflection as disciplined thinking about an experience, which has definitely aided us in thinking much more deeply about our actions and practices.

Furthermore, reflecting, and in particular Hedberg's (1981) idea of unlearning, can lead to a greater need to relearn - if it does not, then reflection will not have taken any effect (Cegarra-Navarro & Dewhurst,

2006). Unlearning can also result in behavioural change, including a readiness to accept new perspectives (Hedberg, 1981; Volpentesta et al, 2008). On this journey we have certainly both engaged in behaviour change, as examined in the reflective sections on each case study.

As we have changed behaviours, so too have we changed structures (in terms of what we offer to the market) and organisational practices, assessing our limitations and opportunities (in how we offer that service), as discussed by Teece & Pisano (1998), and as outlined in 1.3.2.4 & 5 above, which came to us over the period of this project, with reflection and practice; it was not what we started with and we have learnt within our organisational context.

Because we are a team, reflection is no longer an individual activity (Sofu, 2004), but is extended to the social context making it more effective (van Woerkom, 2004), building shared multiple perspectives and a strong vision (Sofu et al, 2010). Gear et al (2003) note that team reflective practice is closely linked to the concept of metacognition and that dialogue is important so as to question the collective assumptions that organisations have created and can assist in achieving reflexivity. They propose that dialogue acts as a mechanism for analysing basic assumptions about learning and problem solving which are rarely challenged. However, Vince (2002) claims that, in practice, organisations have not been able to develop processes for collective reflection and engagement, and Gherardi & Nicolini (2001) also recognise that reflexivity as a team activity is difficult to achieve in practice. McCarthy & Garavan's (2008) study of existing literature recognises that metacognition, reflection and team learning are areas that warrant further research.

We have now adopted dialogue and reflection as part of our standard practice post any assignment, as advocated by Sofu et al (2010). That dialogue must be reflexive to recognise our mental patterns and patterns of interactions in the team that can promote or undermine learning (Corley & Thorne, 2006). We have also learnt about reflective inquiry (Argyris & Schon, 1996) as a basis to question reflective practice as a disciplined practice to

build capacity in us as individuals and for finer and more nuanced distinctions to uncover hidden assumptions (Sofa et al, 2010; Marquardt & Waddill, 2006).

King (2008) recognises that it is hard to reflect on something you have not done before as there is nothing to benchmark against, but reflection, like other research skills, is developed progressively. Our methodology of action research and applying learning from one cycle to the next helped us to overcome this.

Furthermore, we recognised that “reflection is not an end in itself, it has the objective of making us ready for new experiences” (Boud et al, 1985:34). We believe that we have learnt by doing and learnt from reflection for the duration of this project, something that is advocated by Heron (1996) writing on co-operative inquiry. This involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it, which we have done.

## **2.5 Summary**

Evaluating the literature, the key ideas arising from this review for us were:

- There are many helpful models for coaching available, suitable for a variety of coaching scenarios, but not one that we can see wholly identifies with our approach to coaching, recruitment and consultancy. From the literature, as Zeus & Skiffington (2008) advocate, any coaching model must be as flexible as possible in order to work for the coachee;
- Learning teams have been studied in action, predominantly in the USA and mainly in the classroom (e.g. Johnson et al (1991), Michaelsen (undated, 1983, 1994) Michaelsen & Black (1994); Parmelee (2010)), but a growing number of studies are now looking at learning in the workplace (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson et al, 2001; Edmondson et al 2003;

Edmondson, 2004; Edmondson et al, 2007). It would, however, be interesting to see more work in this area in the UK workplace to compare and contrast with the existing literature;

- More about learning in organisations, as opposed to individual level learning, would be of interest (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008);
- Concerns about stronger members covering for weaker ones in learning teams (e.g. Michaelsen (undated); Fink (2004); and Scott-Ladd & Chan (2008)) can be overcome by utilising the strengths of all members of the team (e.g. Michaelsen, Watson and Black (1989); Van den Bossche et al (2006);
- New ways of learning, such as active, collaborative and co-operative learning, and learning teams are being recognised (e.g. Kayes & Burnett (2006); Prince (2004)), and they can be advantageous (Parmelee (2010));
- There are positive links between team learning, learning through coaching and experiential learning, (e.g. Griffiths & Campbell (2009:16); Sofu et al (2010));
- Reflection and reflective inquiry play a critically important role in experiential learning (e.g. Sofu et al (2010); Corley & Thorne (2006); Argyris & Schon (1996); and Marquardt & Waddill (2006)).

To us this implies a need for many more empirically-based studies in the UK, in both educational and, in particular, work-based learning environments, along the lines of Edmondson's studies in the USA.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

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### **Introduction**

Although there have been a number of drafts for this project, and a shift in focus of the aims along the way, the principal methodology itself, action research, has remained consistent because we believe it is the most appropriate for our circumstances and purposes.

### **3.1 Our perspective**

If, like Gummerson (2000:18) one uses the concept of paradigm to represent “people’s value judgements, norms, standards, frames of reference, perspectives and theories that govern their thinking and action” then our paradigm would need to reflect our joint values and standards relating to ethics, perspicacity, professionalism, reaching out, willingness to learn, etc. Gummerson (2000) also recognises that paradigms can change, must reflect the rationale for the practitioners’ reasons for conducting academic research, and should be shared with their clients (which includes in our case an explanation as to why we wish to improve ourselves through learning, and thus improve our service to our clients).

With that in mind, and recognising that we need to understand our own ontological and epistemological perspectives before we can construct the most appropriate methodology for our project, a little explanation is required. As individuals we share the same fundamental values and drivers, such as loyalty, hard work, compassion, thrift, independence, curiosity, personal and professional responsibility, a love of learning, and a need for variety and exploration. Without shared values we would not be able to work together in the way we do. But, whilst we share many of the same genes, we are different people in that our backgrounds and experiences are very different; both our lives so far have been full and eclectic, and this is of value to us and our clients.

Furthermore, these differences complement each other, and it is noticeable that although we are different generations and genders the way we perceive ourselves in life is quite similar, as is our approach to life generally. The latter can best be described as: practical; results-orientated; pragmatic; positive and forward-looking in outlook; objective in terms of achieving goals, yet subjective because we deal with, and are highly interested in, people. To this can be added something that has only developed for both of us over time, and that is a wish to reflect on, and therefore really understand, why something happens. There is one other important element: a wish to enjoy the moment. Finally, we are both a mix of introvert and extrovert.

Consequently, how do we view knowledge, and what types do we regard as important for this project? Whilst we share a love of learning and a natural sense of curiosity and adventure, we are not seeking to acquire knowledge solely for the sake of possessing it – it needs to have a value to us personally. That value might be due to an area of personal or business interest, and sometimes these will overlap; on other occasions they will not. However, because we are dealing with people the value of the knowledge and experience gained over a combined 60 years of eclectic, open-minded, working life should not be under-estimated, surely part of the *raison d'être* of work-based learning and the concept of professional doctorates.

Regarding the paradigm we adopted we did not feel at any time that we came from a positivist position. As researchers we were never really external to the research, because of the element of reflection. Nor did we ever use a quantitative methodology, or technical approach to our project such as experiment. Likewise, we could not be said to have come from a post-positivistic paradigm because in our original aims we were, in honesty, more concerned with proving an hypothesis than testing one.

Constructivism had a certain appeal in terms of individuals constructing knowledge, being active participants, giving voice to experience and perception, and seeking insight into human behaviour. We particularly liked Jarvis et al's (1998:47) description of constructivism: "we come to every

situation with our own autobiographies, interpret the situation and then construct our experiences.” Interpretivism had an appeal as well, because knowledge was gained from personal experience and from the interpretation of interviews, case studies and observation; but phenomenology (although often an element of coaching) and hermeneutics were not prevalent (as explained below).

However, we did identify most strongly with critical theory because our sense of reality was being shaped over time by both the views of others and our own reflection, the self-conscious criticism of what we were studying, and our transformative aim to grow as a learning team.

Nevertheless, as the project evolved and the aim went from investigating our approach to search and coaching, to investigating ourselves as a learning team, we could be said to have come from a participatory paradigm because knowledge of reality is created from mutual understandings deriving from lived experience. It is also about change, is collaborative, and involves research on our own actions as opposed to those of others. In reality our position embraces elements of all three: constructivism; critical theory; and participatory. As Gummerson (2000:22) says, “science is a journey, not a destination; a continuing search, a continuing generation of models and concepts”.

To this end we recognised that our clients, often located in the engineering and manufacturing sectors of the economy, may come from a different paradigm (possibly positivism because of its more technical ethos) and that we must be able to look at issues from their perspective in order to understand them better.

### **3.2 Epistemology**

There is existing data on learning teams, especially outside the UK (for example Michaelsen (1994, 2004), Parmelee (2010), Fink (2004), Edmondson & Moingeon (1998) and Edmondson (2004) as quoted in the previous chapter), albeit a minimal amount concerning executive search and

coaching. To assist us, therefore, we have compared data on learning teams in fields such as education, health and business, all of which have transferable relevance to us and our aim.

With that aim in mind, alongside desk research we have produced our knowledge from experiential and work-based learning, from discussion, reflection, and journaling, and from interviews and surveys. As Bellamy (2008:89) states: "Within experiential and work-based learning the worker-researcher's knowledge is drawn from and put back into the domain of which he or she is a part, or insider – work." She goes on to argue that "narratives of experience are legitimate forms of knowledge-making," and that "learning is reinforced by the strong pedagogy of reflection ... that places the self at the centre of knowledge-making" (p.91,90). McNiff et al (2003) also make the point that action research, our chosen methodology for the reasons we will explain, ties in well with this knowledge creation because it is about how learning develops through study and how it influences the situation.

Knowledge is also created through reflexivity and an awareness of the practitioner-researcher's role in it and how they made it. Thus, reflexive action on our part helped us generate knowledge with which to act through the cases we undertook, and continue to grow as a learning team, each benefiting the other.

Our epistemological perspective could be said to have been a constructivist one. As Vico (1710) said: "The norm of the truth is to have made it." The sources and structures of knowledge related to this project are dealt with in more detail under methodology below. The conditions of knowledge are based on human reactions and perceptions and, however hard one tries, there will always be an element of subjectivity to these. Thus, the limitations of our knowledge of ourselves can only be gained through personal and interpersonal viewpoints and not through comparison or experimentation against a similar pairing as us, because we do not know of any to do so, nor is that our aim.

Our intuitive knowledge comes from the beliefs we hold and the questions we ask ourselves, and from our basic premise for establishing the business that we run and the way we run it (as outlined in chapter one). Our authoritative knowledge derives from the responses of others to our actions, and the strength of this is dependent on the strength of those sources; other authoritative knowledge comes from the literature review. Logical knowledge is our journey from the starting point to the completion of this project, and thereafter through CPD as we strive to be a continuous learning team.

Reflective practice, the ability to look back on action, paying attention to detail, and learning from it, is critical to practice-based professional learning; it is life-long learning and highly relevant to learning teams, especially those who work together for a length of time. Central to this is the integration of theory and practice and the cyclic pattern of experience (for example Argyris & Schon's double-loop learning (1978)).

How we gained this information is detailed under data collection, below, suffice to say that reflexively, we were able to look back on practice, learn from it, and implement effective change (thus our observations on ourselves and our practice affected the situations we were observing) as outlined in the case studies in chapter four. This could be said to be based on Hedberg's (1981) concept of *unlearning* where reassessment challenges what is already known, and Sofo et al's (2010:210) point that learning is "an iterative process that involves the re-evaluation, acceptance and rejection of ideas in order to allow new knowledge to develop" (in this the knowledge we are generating is the evolution of the learning team approach with executive search, coaching and consultancy). Epistemologically, therefore, our theories of knowledge gained from reflection on field work are dominant but not exclusive.

### **3.3 Methodology**

Methodology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the science of method, and the system of methods used in a discipline. It concerns the rationale and philosophical assumptions that underlie a particular study when gathering data for inference, interpretation, explanation and prediction. Or, put more simply, the manner in which research is carried out and structured, including the justification for the choice of research method(s) and why others have been rejected. We found Breakwell et al (1995), Cohen & Manion (1994), and Langridge (2004) extremely useful to advance our understanding of methodologies.

The methodology we adopted needed to be one that would provide the right framework for our aim - to explore and develop a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market – and be appropriate for our paradigm and epistemological perspectives. Furthermore, we needed to demonstrate that not only had we learnt, developed and grown by utilising a learning team approach to our work, but that our learning could be productive for others.

Having investigated the principal options, we decided that our main methodology would be action research, presented through the medium of case study.

#### **3.3.1 Main methodology - Action research**

We chose action research because, as a package, for us it was the most beneficial to our aim. As McNiff et al (2003:10) state: “In action research, the researcher is the centre of the research and the focus is on self-improvement.” It also relates to our epistemology that knowledge is always gained through action and for action. It is comparable with Heron’s (1996) work on co-operative or collaborative enquiry, with the emphasise on research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ people where active participants are involved in research.

### **3.3.1.1 History & explanation**

Action research was founded by the American social psychologist Kurt Lewin, according to Kolb (1984) and Breakwell et al (1995:310) where it is written: “The consistent theme in all Lewin’s work was his concern for the integration of theory and practice.” It is also about change through action, and has been utilised by many behavioural scientists. Its links with behavioural change are akin to coaching.

The action research approach attempts change, and monitors the results. It is problem focused and looks for improvements. It requires active participation by researchers where they have the authority and expertise to implement change, and it requires them to reflect on their own personal outcome (as does coaching and team learning). It can use the structure of planning (identifying and clarifying the problem, setting questions, etc.), acting (devising a change programme), observing (testing and evaluating the change programme) and reflecting (analysing the results and looking to take change forward progressively), which is not dissimilar to Alexander and Renshaw’s (latterly Whitmore’s (2002)) GROW model of coaching. It focuses on improving aspects of the worker-researcher’s practices.

### **3.3.1.2 Advantages & disadvantages to the project**

Appreciating that there are a number of methodologies to work with, for us action research offered the most advantages and the least disadvantages.

#### **Advantages**

McNiff et al (2003:14) write that action researchers not only “observe and describe what is happening; they also take action... to try to understand how they might improve what they are doing...They do not aim to change other people. They aim to change themselves by questioning what they are doing, evaluating it rigorously, and explaining to others how their personal development can contribute to social improvement”. To us this fitted perfectly with our aim to learn and develop from our experiences.

It is also highly practical, as both researchers are. Being practical means it is also participatory and collaborative as we were in data collection and reflective observation. Additionally, it gives a framework in which our actions can be emancipatory to ourselves and each other, thus allowing us to learn and grow (McNiff et al, 2003) and improve professional functioning and efficiency (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Furthermore, it is interpretive, and our data does come from sources that can be described as subjective.

Many of the aspects of action research are akin to coaching: self-learning; learning through change; reflection; testing ideas; taking action, etc. As described in Breakwell et al (1995:310) "In action research, the researcher acts as a facilitator... helping those making decisions come to an informed choice or alternative course of action".

It also fits with our epistemology, as the end result of work-based learning is "knowledge generation and application, as opposed to knowledge generation alone as in traditional PhD work" (Armsby & Costley, 2009:109).

### **Disadvantages**

The disadvantages are that, because Michael and Rebekah are practically minded, it may not have stretched us enough theoretically and philosophically as perhaps some other methodologies would have done.

Some authors (e.g. Burns 2000) have argued that action research lacks rigour. Isaac & Michael (1981) believe this is because its internal and external validity is weak, its objective situational, and sample restricted and unrepresented, implying that although findings are useful practically they do not contribute to the general body of knowledge. Winter (1982) argues action research lacks rigour in interpreting findings.

Additionally, because it is interpretive, and our sources are subjective, our results will not be grounded in scientific fact and experiment, but based on assumptions deriving from personal experience (a point made by Winter (1982), and Burns (2007)); there is also a danger of over-involvement by the

researcher, leading to personal bias and subjectivity (Winter, 1982). This is not to say our results are wrong, but they are based on opinion rather than something more empirical. However, as stated in Kolb (1984:21) when describing Lewin’s model: “Immediate personal experience is the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implication and validity of ideas created during the learning process.”

### 3.3.1.3 Action research application

Working from Cohen & Manion’s guidance (1994:187) we based our approach on the following framework.

Table 2 - Using action research

What is the specific issue?	Neither practitioner-researcher has knowingly worked in a learning team before, although Michael, without realising it, partially adopted such an approach as a military staff college student and then tutor. One has considerable experience of their subject, and the other virtually none. How do they grow as a learning team?
What is the specific setting?	Learning through undertaking our work of executive search and coaching and listening to those around us.
How will we gain knowledge?	Through reflection on experience, discussion and journaling (with ourselves), plus interviews and survey (with our candidates, clients, coachees, potential clients and business leaders).  This knowledge should give us evidence of whether or not we are achieving our aim of growing and learning, at what pace, and how effectively.
How will we know if we have been effective in our research and actions?	By conducting recruitment interviews and coaching sessions that we personally feel are an improvement on where we started, and that provide improved feedback from those we are working with.
How will this improve our professional functioning?	Our service to clients will improve because we will continue to learn from experience and apply that learning to the next cycle. Additionally, we will have gained academic and theoretical underpinnings on which to base our work, as opposed to guesswork.

Finally, we must be able to explain to others how our “personal development can contribute to social improvement” (McNiff et al, 2003:14) and thus benefit those we work with, both immediately as clients, and as peers in the executive search and coaching industries.

### **3.3.2 Secondary methodology - Case study**

Case study methodology is a longitudinal examination of a single instance or event: a case. It provides a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information and reporting the results. It is also an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context.

#### **3.3.2.1 Advantages & disadvantages to the project**

##### **Advantages**

We believed that case study fitted well within the main methodology of action research as it gave us a way of displaying our learning. As “the observation of the characteristics of an individual unit” (Cohen & Manion, 1994:106) we could show the actions and impact of the last cycle/case on the next one.

It would also allow real-life, real-time investigation of a phenomenon which could be explored by those participating in it; and it could showcase qualitative evidence from multiple sources.

##### **Disadvantages**

Case study does not involve the researcher in the depth of self-learning that action research does, nor does it have the scope for reflexivity. However, it does provide a format to do so when fitted into action research methodology.

Although case study provides the framework for a longitudinal study, it does not prescribe a way to go about it. Issues of importance can be overlooked without proper guidelines. To overcome this, using the action research methodology, we recognise that each case study has to operate the critical thinking of ‘plan, act, monitor, reflect’ cycle as exemplified by Kemmis & McTaggart (1982), Schon (1987) and McNiff (1988), and take prior learning into each case, drawing out possibilities for the future.

Equally, a random selection of cases may not demonstrate the best examples of learning, or extremes may be thrown up, as in Karl Popper's (1959) *falsification* theory. We were limited in the number of cases we could utilise because of the recession; however, we believe there is sufficient variety in them to demonstrate team learning.

### **3.3.2.2 Case study application**

Much has been written on the qualities of the case study, be it about rigour (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010), about combining case study research and systems theory (Anaf et al, 2007) or about multiple case study use over single case studies (Mukhija, 2010). One of the most prolific writers on the subject is Robert Yin. Yin et al's (1985) paper advocates practitioners should have five components to their studies: problem definition; research design; data collection; data analysis; and report presentation. He also notes that consideration should be given to whether the research is aimed at contribution to knowledge about practice or to theory, which we would concur with.

Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005A:349) note, based on research from Carlsson et al (1976), that effective learning teams "do not cycle through the learning process once but complete the loop of learning several times". We would gain knowledge, working within a cyclical, action research framework, by conducting a series of case studies, learning from each one and applying that learning to the next. Our initial thinking was that we wanted to demonstrate our growth through 12 case studies, especially those that could reflect our 'life-cycle' approach to executive search and coaching.

Unfortunately, because we undertook this study through the worst of the recession, and thus assignments were limited, we were only able to provide nine case studies (six on search and three on coaching) and none of these were through-life because it was not what our clients wanted at the time.

However, on reflection we believe that, whilst an additional three case studies would have further refined our learning, their inclusion would have risked unnecessary repetition, and have added little of significance to the outcome of the project.

The first assignment was in the USA, and although there was one informal coaching session when the candidate came to the UK, he did not return again within the time-frame of this project; the second assignment resulted in the company changing their mind about the remit of the job, which led to a series of outplacement coaching sessions for the candidate we placed; the third was in Paris, and was placed on hold by the client, due to the recession, after short-list presentation; the fourth assignment was for a chairman, the outcome of which was that one of the \$multi-billionaire owners of the company decided to take the role for himself a year later; and the fifth and sixth case studies, although they saw candidates being recruited, it was too early to coach them before this study concluded. The closest we were able to get to a candidate being recruited and then receiving post-placement coaching, both by Griffonage, was case study seven where the coachee had been recruited by Michael, but before he had joined with Rebekah. Case study eight demonstrated several of the facets in our portfolio of services.

In terms of the 'plan, act, review, reflect' cycle of action research, it was hard to plan a coherent string of case studies, because we did not know what clients would ask us to do over the duration of this project – during a recession you largely take whatever work is offered to you, especially when you are self-employed. However, what we did undertake gave us a variety of posts to fill at various seniorities, and a diversity of coaching.

Once the 'action' commenced, we would gather data from internal and external sources, as explained below.

After the conclusion of each 'case' we would review and reflect on the actions taken, the lessons learnt, behavioural traits demonstrated, and the implications for the future, ensuring we took forward to the next 'case' the positives from our learning, along with any appropriate behavioural or practical changes (see figure 6, below).

We would know if we had been effective if we could display advances in being a learning team. Through reflection, discussion and asking each other

questions we were able to ascertain the progress we were making as a team and how this was being applied to the next assignment.

Figure 6 - Using action research to achieve the project's aim

### **3.3.3 Awareness of other methodologies**

Action research is just one of several methodologies in the toolkit of the practitioner-researcher, but it is not a panacea. Furthermore, we recognise that its use will have steered our research in a certain way. However, we decided that, for the above reasons, it was the most appropriate principal methodology for us.

There were a number of other methodologies we considered but, for the reasons briefly outlined below, did not utilise. We made use of observation, interview and survey (and to a very limited extent discourse analysis), but as a means of data collection (see below) rather than a methodology.

#### **Phenomenology**

There are several parallels between our final aim and phenomenology. According to Moustakas (1994) it is the first method of knowledge because it begins with things themselves, eliminating prejudgement, presuppositions, and knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience. It is about the essence of what one really sees, and allows the objective study of a subjective issue through conscious, lived experience and reflection. As a learning team, in order to learn we had to look at ourselves afresh, as phenomenology requires, and use reflection throughout the approach. Perception is the primary source of knowledge, akin to our epistemology. Phenomenology is also frequently an element of coaching, albeit often unspoken; and certainly is concerned with wholeness as is our approach.

So why did we not use it as our methodology? There are two reasons: first, our aims changed, and it was not appropriate to our initial undertaking of this project when the bulk of the work took place. Second, even though it was relevant to our final aim, about our awareness of being a learning team, it

was a methodology that both of us had difficulty in feeling comfortable with. It felt too intangible, and did not fit with our personal perspectives as described earlier. On reflection, however, conscious that its aim is to gain a deeper awareness of an individual's perceptions, subjective experience, motivations and limitations, phenomenology is a methodology that perhaps we should have incorporated, and its omission, with the benefit of hindsight, may have been an error.

### **Grounded theory**

Not dissimilar to phenomenology, in so much as the researcher puts aside all assumptions before looking into a subject, grounded theory arises from the data and context of a study as it progresses, rather than starting from a hypothesis or theory. In that sense it works in a reverse way to the norm of research whereby a hypothesis is developed from data collection, which is undertaken first. With our final aim in mind, grounded theory could have been a suitable methodology to use, because we were not starting with a hypothesis, but data developed from our collected observations: as Moustakas claims, "it enables the researcher to understand the nature and meaning of an experience" (1994:04). It also promotes "qualitative, contextually sensitive and discovery-based research" (Pidgeon, 1996:79). However, like phenomenology, it was a format that we found difficulty in engaging with.

### **Soft systems**

Soft systems methodology is described by Checkland (1990, 2006) and shares similarities with action research; both begin with a problem or issue to be addressed. However, soft systems methodology concentrates more on the situation, problem analysis, and solution, rather than on action. Although soft systems methodology asks its practitioners to look at the whole of the problem, unlike action research it does not look at the practitioner themselves, or require the practitioner to take action to improve in some manner. Instead, more emphasis is placed on defining what changes are needed to improve the original situation. Consequently, we took the view that it was less applicable to our project.

## **Experiment**

Experiment, as a research design is covered by Gill & Johnson (2002) and as scientific research methodology by Lakatos (1978) and Campbell & Standley (1966), but was discounted entirely because we would not have been able to operate a control group against an experimental group; to do so would have been to provide half of our paying clients with less of a service, and thus been entirely unethical.

### **3.4 Data collection**

There were two main streams to our data collection, sourced from internal data (e.g. from ourselves) and external data (e.g. from others), see figure 7.

Figure 7 - Sources of data collection

#### **Internal data**

##### **3.4.1 Observation**

When undertaking candidate interviews for recruitment assignments, discussions with clients or potential clients, and during coaching, we observed those third parties to try and gauge their reactions to what we were saying and whether their body language, voiced language, or silence intimated interest or not. We also observed each other during these

conversations, noting “how we worked in real-world settings” (Breakwell 1995:304), our behaviours, our progress or lack of it, how we reflected, and so on, which we found a useful tool because, as with a triangulated approach, we were not just listening but looking as well, for responses. We could also see how our reactions changed as we gained experience as a learning team.

One of the reasons we discounted ethnography as a methodology was because although it allows the researcher to observe the action, they do not have to act upon it. However, we believed observation, as a means of data collection, sat well with our methodology of action research because we could observe our action. According to Toren (1996:104), “the participation is as important as the observation,” and it is also about the “interaction of people in their own environment” (Racel, 1996:114).

Neither of us found observation particularly difficult: it had been part of Rebekah’s performance training for years; and Michael had used it as a Staff College tutor in the RAF, and again since commencing recruitment interviewing in 1996. We were then able to take what we had seen and discuss it post-assignment.

### **3.4.2 Post-assignment discussions**

After every recruitment interview with a candidate, client and potential client meeting, and coaching session, we took time to discuss what had happened. After initial comments, we would ask, when relevant, difficult questions, devilling into the detail of how each other really felt, and why, to ensure depth of response and real critical thinking by each party. We would consider both the positive and negative points from our actions, and how we believed we could have improved the situation at the time. This debriefing is recognised by Pearson & Smith (1985:69) as an “opportunity for structured reflection whereby experiences are used for experience-based learning”. Borredon et al (2011) state that effective debriefing increases rigour, lucidity and the questioning required to facilitate learning. Boud et al (1993) recognise that there are three key factors in reflective experience: firstly, returning to the

experience in a descriptive way, without judgement; secondly, attending to feelings from the experience, especially negative and obstructive ones, to allow constructive reflection; and thirdly, a re-evaluation of the experience to allow integration with existing knowledge, validation and appropriation. Thus, this structure of reflection also aided our epistemological perspective, especially as Usher (1993:169) points out, “the meaning of experience depends on the interpretive process so that it is both relational and contextual”. From this, according to Moon (2004), theory can be built from such observations.

We found this to be critically important in terms of growing and understanding as a learning team. Kolb said that “one’s job as an educator is not only to implant new ideas but also to dispose of or modify old ones, thus facilitating the learning process” (1984:28). In the early cases, Michael was more of a tutor to Rebekah, helping her to understand the role she played, what she did and how she could improve it. But as we grew so he too was learning from her, as ideas were sparked in coaching sessions between us, as questions such as ‘Michael have you considered this?’ were freshly posed by Rebekah, or some of her knowledge on voice and wellbeing coaching helped him to learn more about specific aspects of leadership coaching. Borredon et al (2011) also recognised that a collaborative and dialogic approach to sense-making creates new understanding and knowledge together.

Our critiques of each other started tentatively. To start with, although related and sharing many beliefs and values, we perhaps missed some points because we were being too polite. However, as we grew to understand each other even more, so the devilling got deeper, the analysis fuller and the narrative between us richer. As a result, the latter case studies could be said to possess greater analysis, demonstrating our growth and trust as a learning team. What we discussed was then reflected upon in our personal journals.

### **3.4.3 Personal journaling & reflection**

Schon (1983) in his work *The Reflective Practitioner*, talks about reflection in action – where a professional can connect with previous learning to attend to a situation directly, and reflection on action – analysis of their reaction to a situation and the consequences of it. As practitioner-researchers pursuing an action research methodology we would have to be able to do both, bringing past experience from one case to the next to demonstrate learning, and reflecting on the existing case to see how improvements could be made for the next one. Kolb's reflective model also emphasises that knowledge gained from one situation can be reapplied to the next (1984).

Gibbs' (1988) circular model of reflection takes this further, asking the practitioner not only to describe the experience, but how they were feeling during it as well. This allows them to make sense of the situation and formulate an action plan for what could be done in the future; in other words, practicing reflexivity. Rolfe et al's (2001) reflective model is simpler: what, so what, what next? The scrutiny of the situation and the construction of knowledge gained from experience can lead to personal improvement.

Reflection helps us make balanced decisions based on our experience. We both kept personal journals of our experiences over the course of the project. We noted down the actions taken, the raw emotions following these, and how we felt about what we had done and achieved – sometimes negative, sometimes positive, and sometimes ambivalent. Being reflexive and reflecting upon our reflections we were able to draw on these experiences for the benefit of our next assignment and how we would work together as a learning team on it (cause & effect).

The journals were fun to write: sometimes personal ramblings on something that had gone badly, and sometimes reflecting on something other than our Griffonage work that sparked a thought, for example Rebekah's civic work or Michael's city livery activities. They were a good discipline to use because we were recording our reflections on a daily basis and putting our experiences down in writing so that we had evidence of our work and our feelings to look back on and consider throughout the project. Whereas our

observations and deliberations after each assignment were useful 'on the spot' reflection of our actions, journaling allowed us more time to consider our actions and go into greater depth. Seeing the written word had the most impact. Journaling also allowed us to meta-reflect at the end of this project to see not only how we had learnt from one case to the next, but how we had learnt within the bigger picture of our practice and application of our services. Moon (2006:24) describes this as "exploring internal experiences" and how the meaning of an event is related to all the players involved.

### **External data**

#### **3.4.4 Interview**

In this context, interview can be a confusing term. The project contained two types of interview, but only one to gain data against the aim. The first were formal recruitment interviews carried out with candidates to assess them for prospective employment by our clients. From these interviews we would short-list a select number of people to place before the client. This was not data collection for the project; however, during these interviews we were able to practice and observe our work, and discuss it afterwards, as described above.

Second, there were the interviews to gain project data. These fell into two categories: those with candidates and coachees following their recruitment interviews or coaching sessions to ascertain their views on how we had undertaken our work with them; and those with CEOs and HRDs in the industries we worked with to gain their impressions of the post-recessionary markets for recruitment and coaching, and also their views regarding our team approach. We decided 40 of each group would give us sufficient data to work with.

However, with our recruitment candidates we soon discovered that gaining such information was better undertaken through a survey because the executives involved did not have the time or inclination to hold a 'post-mortem' after an interview, but they were prepared to provide us with feedback in writing (see below). Thus, all the information we gleaned from

them was via questionnaire. With coachees we were able to conduct face-to-face interviews.

With the CEOs and HRDs we found it increasingly difficult to gain (and then for the interviewees to keep) diary appointments. So, again, we turned to survey. However, we did manage to interview three Group HRDs, five CEOs and three former candidates, now MDs. The information gleaned was of more use to our original aims because it concerned respondents' views on the executive search and coaching markets, and our approach to them as described rather than experienced. Nevertheless, latterly it was valuable to us to notice how the responses became increasingly positive as the pertinence, quality and delivery of our descriptions and questions improved due to practice and, in particular, reflection on what we were trying to achieve, and the outcomes, as the project progressed, thereby demonstrating our continuing growth as a learning team.

#### **3.4.5 Survey**

As explained above, we were unable to conduct all the interviews, relating to the project, that we had planned.

Our first group of survey participants were the candidates and coachees. We were seeking feedback on how we worked together; and on the services we offered. We chose carefully who we asked to participate: one, because we believed it would have been inappropriate to ask some of the more senior candidates who had been rejected, otherwise that risked being perceived as 'rubbing salt into the wound' (and we had to think of our future business); two, because some of the more junior candidates, whether they had been short-listed or not, were not in a position to procure executive and coaching services and, therefore, were not best placed or experienced enough to answer some of the questions; and three, when interviewing in Paris, some of the candidates did not have a sufficient command of English to answer the questions in detail.

That is not to say we only sent questionnaires to those whom we thought would write well of us. We did receive negative feedback from some candidates, as well as positive from others. Our aim was to be humane in whom we selected, especially as we had been interviewing them for two hours or more on personal details and career history.

In the end we asked 23 recruitment candidates to participate by completing surveys; 17 replied. Unfortunately, the quality of responses from the recruitment candidates was mixed, and some lacked depth. However, we perceived a growing improvement in our service to candidates as the project progressed demonstrating, in most cases, our continuing development as a learning team. The survey questions and responses can be found at Appendix 2.

We made transcripts of our three coaching assignments (13 sessions in all) where we asked the coachees for their feedback at the end of each session (explaining why within our ethical framework and with their consent). These were useful to refer back to during the writing-up of the project findings and were a further source of data to triangulate our own findings with.

Our second group of interviewees/survey participants were the CEOs and HRDs. Having already interviewed three Group HRDs, five CEOs and three MDs, we decided we needed to send questionnaires to another 29 to gain our complement of 40, and so ascertain their views on executive search and coaching in a recessionary and post-recessionary environment. In fact, we identified 43 HRDs, CEOs and MDs to send questionnaires to, and did so. Amongst these were some of the most significant people in the aerospace and defence industries, representing both large and small companies. They covered the full range of prime contractors to second-tier suppliers and their supporting service companies, all operating on an international basis.

We only received eight replies. Such a response was not only disappointing, it was statistically of little value. However, it should be remembered that this took place in 2009, in the heat of a recession, and a survey for a university

project was hardly uppermost in most senior executives' minds. Fortunately, because our aim changed to one primarily focussed on learning teams, rather than the services of executive recruitment and coaching, this poor response proved not to be a problem. From the eight replies we did receive, we gained valuable feedback on market perception.

#### **3.4.6 Desk research**

With our original aims in mind, we undertook desk research on a number of other coaching and recruitment companies to compare ourselves with the market (as mentioned in the introduction).

We also kept a databank of quotes from the media and trade journals relative to the project, especially in terms of how the recession was affecting work. This ran to over 300 pages of information. It gave us useful contextual information, but was of less importance when we settled on our final aim. Additionally, we kept a quote bank of notes from the books and journals that we read, so that they could be easily accessed for the project.

#### **3.4.7 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis was something we learnt about late in the project, and thus was employed only to a very minor degree. It can be the object of research and a means for study, and be utilised in a variety of settings (Lieblich et al, 1998). Also, it is very much about perspective and ways of thinking about language (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Latterly we used it when we reflected on our journals, during discussions with each other, and in discussions with third parties such as clients. If a particular language was used or re-used it could be a form of interpreting our behavioural patterns. If we looked at how our use of language changed throughout the project it could give us an indication as to whether or not we were progressing.

We also recognised it could be of use in our professional practice, such as analysing candidates' CVs and comparing the language they used to describe themselves in writing with that they used when talking with us. Additionally, the use of superlatives by a candidate when describing themselves coupled with their actions at interview demonstrated an ego that

may, or may not, be suitable for the client's company culture. Also, how they described their cognition of a situation, how they viewed themselves as leaders, and so forth.

We certainly did not take it to the extent of coding or hermeneutics, in terms of interpreting text, or in its more modern context, interpreting communication. However, we were aware of the influence of hermeneutics on humanistic psychology and as an alternative to cognitivism (Rennie, 2007; Grondin, 1997), and the fact that its tenet is contextualising the meaning of action.

#### **3.4.8 Triangulation**

Triangulation is a common way to approach qualitative research, and is the use of a number of data sources to provide sufficient and robust information, thereby enhancing probity in analysis.

We believe, for the reasons explained above, that our methodologies and methods of data collection fit well together and complement each other in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. We decided there was sufficient commonality in the responses to ensure our knowledge was built on robust data.

#### **3.5 Analysis & Evaluation**

Before we considered how we would undertake our analysis, we had first to consider our aim and what we were analysing in order to be effective. Our aim - to explore and develop a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market - meant we needed to ask ourselves the following questions, above and beyond Table 2:

- Have we demonstrated the action research cycle of each case study (plan, act, review, reflect (plan again, reflect again, etc.)?)
- What was our position as a learning team at the outset of this enquiry, how did it develop and improve (if it did) throughout the case studies, and how had it developed by the end of the project?

- How have our services and ourselves changed as a result of this project?
- How do we know the above?
- Was the above disseminated to our candidates, clients, coachees, potential clients and peers?
- What learning was arising from each case study, and how did it relate to the aims? Did we have any difficulties with the process, if so, what and why? Do we concur or not with each other as a team? Have we effectively critiqued each other?
- What effect did the team learning method have on both individual and collective responsibility and accountability? How have we helped each other, and learnt from each other, as a learning team?
- Is the data resulting from each case study relevant to our aim, or do we need to re-strategise? Does it compare with our expectations, confirm, support, challenge or disprove our aims?
- How does the knowledge generated from the project relate to our epistemology?
- Are both our voices being heard? What are the third party voices saying?
- Could things have been done differently, if so, would a radically different outcome have been achieved and why?
- How can we avoid repetition, and report results?
- Have we shown incremental outcomes following each case study?
- How has the research process changed our way of practice? What do we do differently now and why? Is our practice more efficient as a result? Have we changed behaviourally and as practitioners? Has this changed the client's behaviour?
- How has practice worked alongside theory?

Once we were aware of the above, we would be in a better position to analyse constructively our data.

The framework of Michaelsen's (1994) team learning model inspired us to devise an analysis grid to help us with the questions above, showing where we were and what data we had to analyse, and when, during each case study. It incorporates a triangulation approach as a structure with different levels of depth to synthesise the data and promote greater learning and reflection. Michaelsen's model is linear, starting with preparation and ending with application. Because of our methodology, action research, and the fact that learning from each case study should impact on the following one, to reflect this we changed the linear progression to that of a cycle (see figure 8, over).

Figure 8 - Case study analysis framework – what needed analysing when and where?

### **3.5.1 Theory**

Our rationale for choosing qualitative rather than quantitative analysis was because: “Qualitative research is concerned with the qualities of some phenomenon. It is concerned with text and meaning”, which forms the basis of the material for analysis (Langridge 2004:15), whereas quantitative research “believes that if we measure things accurately enough we can make claims, with considerable certainty, about the object of study” (Langridge 2004:13).

Qualitative research is also contextual to the researchers and the researched, and is based on human behaviour and reasons that govern that behaviour. The qualitative method investigates the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just what, where, and when.

Our research relied on the interpretation and understanding of our work rather than on numerical material; it was more about meaning than measurement, it was subjective over objective, and exploring rather than testing. However, we recognised that the subjectivity of the data must be matched with objective evaluation for it to be worth anything.

Our data analysis could be described as observer impression, open (identifying the dominant messages and subject matter within the text) as opposed to prescriptive (where the context is a closely-defined set of communication parameters) as outlined in McKeone (1995), and inferential on the phenomenological. This is as opposed to coded, as content analysis or narrative analysis dictates, because we did not put phrases or words into boxes and count them. It could be argued that coding seeks to transform qualitative data into quantitative data, thereby draining the data of its variety, richness, and individual character. This we would agree with.

### **3.5.2 Practice**

We certainly looked to see where there were similarities and disparities, where key messages were coming through, and asked each other what did we really mean by a certain statement and how we felt about it, engaging in dialogue where one party perhaps had a different view to the other, to clarify our views. We also went back to the transcripts of the coaching sessions several times to see if we had overlooked anything.

By using this triangulated approach, the emphasis was then on quality and content over quantity; this was also aligned to our action research methodology and paradigm. Quality control was about being open and honest; it was pointless to promote our aim and state we had grown as a learning team when we had not, because to do so served neither ourselves nor our clients. Getting it wrong is often a more impactful lesson than getting it right.

All the data we have collected is valuable, although some has been given a greater weighting than others. For example, we recognised that some of the survey answers could be contorted by the writer to be more appealing because they wanted the job. Also, their paradigm, and their reason for participating in the survey, would be different to ours. By and large, however, this does not appear to have happened because lines of consistency in their responses could be seen. No one wanted to reply anonymously, and responses appeared genuine with both positive and negative points being made. We appreciate that some responses could have had more depth to them and, therefore, their value might be less in terms of evaluation. Consequently, we were conscious of the danger of misinterpreting such inputs; it was better not to use them, or go back for clarity, rather than make assumptions.

It was also important not to over-weight a response just because it came from someone very senior in their industry. Yes, they had respect, cogency and weight because of what they had achieved in their career; but we took the view that everyone we asked to participate had the potential to make a valued contribution.

Weighting also had to be given to data we had collected in the field because it was directly relevant to our aim. Data from the literature was certainly useful as a benchmark, and to understand the known knowns on the subject, but it was not directly related to our aim. What was taken from the literature review was predominantly from peer reviewed journals or edited publications.

In terms of how we would use our data together, Edmondson et al (2007) recognise that the extent to which team members work together is important for understanding how well they share their knowledge, skills and actions to achieve their aims. Leader behaviour and power dynamics are important factors in this, especially when asking questions and discussing mistakes. Rebekah felt that Michael, although an obvious leader, was completely willing to listen, to give her the floor to comment, and very encouraging to receive her feedback; so although there was a sense of master and apprentice to start with in front of the clients, as a learning team they were both open and equal to each other pre and post each assignment.

Ellis et al (2003) report that higher levels of cognitive ability and constructive controversy (where group think is avoided) can positively affect team learning. We avoided 'group think' in our reflection by using a combination of questioning, coaching and telling in order to explore all angles of what we had done. We would also play 'Devil's Advocate' with each other, sometimes asking uncomfortable questions to ensure we gave honest and open answers on how we really felt – this became greater and deeper as we developed as a team. We also worked closely with our academic advisor. However, it was hard to check data for accuracy because it was either what we or third parties felt, thus being inferential – there was no right or wrong answer. Consequently, we had to ensure that results were credible, transparent and plausible by, for example, showing raw data that we based our interpretations on in order that our audience could assess the worth of our findings.

We also thought it would be helpful to analyse ourselves to see if we had the right make-up to be a successful team, and used Marquardt et al's (2010) framework to do so (see table 3).

Table 3 - Eight key characteristics for successful teams, based on Marquardt et al (2010)

Key Characteristic	Definitions	Relative to Michael & Rebekah
Clear & meaningful goals	Improve team performance & likelihood of achieving its objectives on time (especially when interesting and challenging).	Aim set & agreed by both team members, which is challenging but feasible & can be suitably resourced.  The outcome has helped us to define a new format for business & is thus highly important
	Should be feasible, resourced, clear, specific, measurable, motivating, inspiring & provide direction & vision to the team (this can also aid evaluation performance).	
	Should be publicly stated & reflect common, participatory agreement.  Should be important & critical to the individual or organization.	
Explicit positive norms	Help delineate how members behave, interact & respect each other.	Values & beliefs of both team members acknowledged (& largely co-terminus). Where there are differences they are respected.
	Help to determine the level of performance.	
	Should express the group's common values & give it identity.	
Strong interpersonal and communication skills	Help promote healthy team member relationships.	Strong willingness between Michael & Rebekah for open dialogue.  Trust between team members that communication will be non-judgemental, supportive of each other, and give each other honest feedback.
	Help create feelings of trust & belonging.	
	Members should possess the following interpersonal skills: tolerance & empathy, active listening, supportive non-verbal communication, support generally, challenging & informative, ability to ask good	

	<p>questions &amp; provide feedback, negotiation, &amp; dialogue.</p> <p>Should focus on questions not statements.</p>	
<p>Competence and commitment around solving problems and performing tasks</p>	<p>Should have strong internal processes, involving all group members.</p> <p>Should consider a variety of viewpoints to understand the problem but stay focused.</p> <p>Should encourage diversity to engender fresh thinking.</p> <p>Those who ask the best questions are more valued than those with just authority (especially with complex problems).</p>	<p>Differing ages, genders, backgrounds and experiences brought to the team.</p>
<p>Trust, openness, and group cohesiveness</p>	<p>Enables greater intra-member care &amp; commitment. More support engenders less stress &amp; improved performance &amp; cohesion.</p> <p>Encourages problem solving through consensus &amp; taking action together.</p> <p>Should encourage members to share their ignorance &amp; unknowns rather than their brilliance.</p> <p>Should encourage strong bonding &amp; trust.</p>	<p>Openness, honesty and trust within the team to discuss openly all aspects of the project &amp; the business.</p>
<p>Ability to manage conflict</p>	<p>Avoids poor performance, lack of commitment, weak strategies &amp; loss of energy.</p> <p>Conflict can be healthy if handled well.</p> <p>Should encourage members to be aware of their behaviour &amp; its impact.</p>	<p>Openness, willingness to learn &amp; trust has meant conflict has never been an issue between Michael &amp; Rebekah.</p>

Shared leadership	Aids respect, trust, commitment, desire to work, open dialogue & shared common goals.	From the outset Michael, as the experienced leader, has encouraged Rebekah to question and lead where she feels confident.  Recognition that complementary skills & experiences mean we can lead on differing areas within our coaching/consultancy competencies.
	Leadership should not be confined to the few at the top but distributed throughout. Everyone is accountable for problem solving. The best questioner has the greatest influence.	
Continuous individual and team learning and improvement	Improves complex problem solving.	At the heart of this project and the drive to improve our business.  Members should be willing to share expertise & knowledge, but also be willing to learn themselves. They should be open to admitting areas for development without feeling judged.

### 3.6 Ethics

There are two ethical aspects to the project: one, how it was conducted and researched; two, that the methods used were ethical.

In terms of professionalism, and how we undertake our practice, executive search and coaching demand high ethical standards, and rightly so, because they both deal with other people's lives and personal information. Coaching cannot work if there is not total confidentiality. In practical terms it is important that there is complete agreement between all parties involved when a coaching contract is being established as to what will, and will not, be revealed to each other. We already work within the guidelines of the EMCC and the CIPD, of which we are members.

We noted McNiff et al's (2003) points about preparing and distributing ethics documents and receiving letters of permission from participants. We did this by explaining to those candidates and coachees who were to take part in our

study their ethical rights as participants. We drafted a letter to give them before any coaching or recruitment took place; it is included as Appendix 1.

All participants gave their informed consent, which means they were: aware of what we were studying and why; that they realised it would be of benefit to the researchers, the professions and, hopefully, to themselves as well; that they had been provided with sufficient information regarding the study, and agreed to take part; that participation was voluntary; and that they could leave before completion should they so wish.

Given the nature of recruitment and coaching, one of the main concerns participants always have is anonymity. With the work of Odendahl and Shaw (2002:313) on interviewing elites in mind, we recognised that “many of those interviewed enjoy considerable visibility in their communities and may be readily identifiable even when their names are omitted from published reports.”. Therefore, we took extra care to anonymise not only their names, but also any company information that could identify the participant. This is particularly the case when recruiting for, and coaching, very senior posts, such as Chairmen, Chief Executives and Main Board Directors; and even more so given that aerospace and defence are industries that not only supply goods and services at different tiers to each other, but also employ individuals who network well. Consequently, senior people can be quite easily identified.

We attended the EMCC workshop on ethics in March 2009, not only for CPD purposes, but because it was an area highlighted when we submitted our project plan for approval. This left us well informed and minded to improve our contracts with clients in the light of EMCC ethical guidelines. We were also looking to establish a round-table discussion with fellow EMCC members on improving coaching contracts; sadly this was not acted upon by the EMCC within the timeframe of this project.

We do not feel there were any other ethical issues, for example studying existing clients, because we were already working within the ethical

frameworks of our professional bodies and were not conducting our work differently than usual simply because it played a role in the DProf. We were, and remained, professional recruiter-coach-consultants throughout and were highly sensitive to this. In terms of the research process itself, all data was stored on password protected laptops and paperwork in locked files, and no data from one candidate or coachee was shared with another.

We found Duffy & Passmore (2010) a useful paper, which identifies the key elements used by coaching psychologists in ethical decision making.

### **3.7 Summary**

We believe we have devised an appropriate process for this project, and justified our selected methodology, to achieve the aim. In summary, we have used action research as our main methodology, depicted through the medium of nine case studies. This is underpinned by what we believe are appropriate epistemology and paradigm.

In order to achieve our aim of exploring and developing a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market, we have collected information from internal and external sources as cited above, and used a triangulation approach to analysis.

Diagrammatically, we see this as figure 9.

Figure 9 - Study structure

## **Chapter 4 – Project findings**

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### **Introduction**

Relating back to Table 2, we were starting this project as a new learning team, with one experienced hand in executive search, coaching and consultancy, and one novice. We would be generating data through our internal and external data sources (observation, dialogue, journaling, interview, survey and desk research), and utilising an analysis aide memoire (Figure 8) in order to gain and introduce knowledge through a series of case studies. This, hopefully, would enable us to meet our aim of exploring and developing a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market.

We would be utilising an action research cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect, and we would know if we had been effective in achieving our aim if we and third parties felt there had been an improvement on our starting position, and that we were able to impart knowledge to our profession about improving services through the use of a learning team. Thus the action research cycle would manifest itself in the case study structure as figure 10.

Figure 10 – Case study structure

In terms of meeting our objectives for this chapter we needed to demonstrate a learning team in action, the advantages and disadvantages, the challenges, application, evidence, improvement, and comparison against the literature.

The six recruitment case studies took place between January 2009 and April 2010, and covered assignments in the UK, USA & France. The three coaching case studies took place over the same period; they concerned two UK executives and one Australian, and were all undertaken in the UK. All responses to surveys can be found in Appendix 2.

#### **4.1 Case study 1**

Our first recruitment assignment, in Los Angeles in January 2009, was to find a senior vice president (SVP) to run the American division of a British technology company. The role reported to the CEO based in the UK, and the successful candidate would be a member of his top executive team. The incumbent's remit was to grow the business five-fold in five years; they would have full profit & loss responsibility. The appointment was a pivotal role for the company, with a salary of \$250k, a bonus potential of up to 100%, and the usual US executive benefits.

As with all recruitment assignments, following a meeting with the client, we drafted a briefing for our US researcher and a job specification for candidates, which were cleared by the client. After the researcher had identified potential candidates, we made contact with them by telephone, eliminating some, so as to have a long-list of people to interview. Arrangements were made and we travelled to the USA.

Patently aware that this was the start of Rebekah's recruitment career, Michael planned to lead all interviews, giving a detailed introduction to the

job and company for candidates, before questioning them about their careers and achievements. Rebekah was able to interject at any time to follow up Michael's questions, which she did. Immediately after each interview, Michael and Rebekah discussed what had happened, as described in the previous chapter, and later in the day wrote up their journals.

This format of administration and action, but with growing interventions by Rebekah, was followed for all recruitment assignments. How we actioned the assignment is described in our individual reflections.

Of the three candidates short-listed for the client (we interviewed seven in total), we asked for feedback from two of them, and received information from the short-listed candidate who was not successful. Consequently, it was not possible to obtain an objective view of our approach, simply an initial indication from one viewpoint.

In terms of our approach, he found being interviewed by two people useful: "It felt more comfortable somehow - as if while something I said might not be of interest to Michael it might still be of interest to Rebekah". However, he did not get enough involvement from Rebekah (who was still very much in learning mode). He also felt that "whilst the questioning was deep, the personality of both interviewers made it seem safe". He felt both interviewers worked well together, and that Michael's "depth of questioning and advice was impressive". The candidate found the "depth of this process was particularly necessary given the senior level of the position... and that this was a high-risk hire;" previous experiences had been "far more superficial than this process". He found the self-preparation work very helpful to get him ready for interview and intended to adopt it for his next round of senior recruitment. That he learnt something about himself in our process became a "criterion" for any subsequent interviews.

The feedback we received from the client company CEO was that he was very happy with the shortlist, and chose two candidates to travel to the UK to meet the top team. He felt that either of them could have done the job and left it to his team to make the decision that was, finally, based on personality and chemistry.

Because of the recession, there was little core activity. Thus, with the exception of three interviews at a less senior level (for case study two) I had had no prior experience of interviewing, and went straight to talking to American candidates with the potential to be an SVP.

From Michael, I learnt a basic framework for interviewing that we would subsequently follow as a team: introducing the candidate to the job and company; allowing them to talk about themselves with follow-on questions as they arose; detailed questions pertinent to the job; questions from the candidate; discussion privately between ourselves; and feedback to the candidate on whether or not they had been short-listed. Initially, Michael did the vast majority of the work as I observed and learnt from him, but as my understanding grew, so too did my involvement in the interviews.

Having observed Michael with the first candidate, I felt confident enough to ask the second candidate, who was latterly the successful placement, some questions. These related to people-management issues, something I had experience of. Questions on business-management came later as I have no knowledge of running a large or complex organisation.

Reflecting on the third interview in my learning journal, I realised that previous experience of performance and body language allowed me to observe the candidate's slumped posture and lack of engagement, which demonstrated to me that, along with the superficiality of his answers during the interview, which Michael and I discussed, he was not hungry enough for the role, and so was not short-listed.

The feedback we received from candidate four, as above, was interesting, as he noted my lack of involvement: reflecting, he was probably right, although I felt that I had asked a number of questions, in particular about his management style and how he worked with his peers; reflexively, this quantity: quality issue will have led to his perception of me. I did this because I had concerns about how he might work with a team, and felt he did not really want to answer me. What I was able to add to the process as part of the team was this uneasiness and reasons for it; interestingly, the client decided against him on the grounds of chemistry, so it was a valuable observation.

Michael was extremely tired that evening and, rather than postponing the next candidate which would have happened had he been on his own, I took the lead in the interview. The candidate had an easy rapport and, racing through the interview I was sure he should be short-listed. Later, discussing the process with Michael, I learnt: I had gone too quickly; had not gone into depth with questioning, accepting lightly what was said; had made assumptions from his answers about his management style, business development abilities, strategising skills, and sales track record. A good lesson to learn from the more experienced hand in the team.

Our next candidate looked good on paper and appeared a real high flyer. He had experience of politics in his background and Michael sat back and allowed me to use my knowledge of the political world to interview him. As King (2008) recognises, it is hard to reflect on something you have not done before as there is nothing to benchmark against. So too, because I have little experience of the business world, I found it hard to interview senior people on the complexities of it, but being able to talk on an equal footing with this candidate about political experience was a useful tool and allowed me to gain an insight into his style, personality, strategising ability, working with a wide range of people including the media, motivation and diplomacy. His answers were so shallow it was obvious he had learnt little of depth, and this ran through the rest of his interview. These answers, together with the fact that he was courting another job, meant I took against him. Even still, I tried

hard to remain objective throughout and put any doubts to one side to give him a fair chance. I found I genuinely wanted to interview him properly, but got frustrated because, despite asking him several questions about management, he just repeated himself and got cross with me in the process. Michael, in discussions later, suggested that I learn to approach the question from another angle, or ask him to give me an example.

Our last candidate was unsuitable for the post. I learnt from this experience that I am a coward when it comes to giving negative feedback, and allowed Michael to let him know gently that he would not be short-listed. Some of this personality was also no doubt reflected in my questioning of Michael post-interview when I was either too naïve and inexperienced, or too cowardly to go into much depth of analysis.

Consequently, there were a number of learning experiences from this assignment that I would need to be aware of, which are noted below.

I have deliberately reflected on the progress and outcome of this project after Rebekah has undertaken her reflection because then I can reflect on her reflection. Furthermore, recognising that our respective, and joint, lessons and development have occurred not only over a lengthy period, three years, but also against a background of considerable turmoil and challenge in respect of our private lives, our business, and our other activities, I have left my thoughts on this broader, deeper, and I believe most important aspect of my reflection – if you like, a meta reflection - until Appendix 4. Consequently, I will confine my comments at the end of each case study to what I felt I learnt at the time, and how that was progressively put into practice by Rebekah and myself as a team as the studies progressed.

Over the years I have conducted many recruitment interviews in the USA, and it is important to bear in mind when interviewing Americans that their use of the same English words, and their construction of communication, can be very different from ours. This can lead to serious misunderstandings on both

sides; something that is very important to avoid when conducting a recruitment interview. Especially as the interviewer is a third party between a client and a potential recruit which, in itself, adds even more opportunity for miss-communication.

Because this was Rebekah's first interview at this level, and in America, I felt I had a triple aim: first, to find the right candidates for the role and the client; second, to ensure Rebekah's learning; third to develop our effectiveness as a team. Such a multiple aim affected my approach to candidates. It may be that I spent too much time demonstrating and not enough time studying them. Certainly I was not able to take full advantage of the fact that there were two of us interviewing whereby when one questions the other observes; I had to hope Rebekah could at least partially observe, and here she did not disappoint. Her ability to recognise and interpret non-verbal communication, although under-developed at this stage, was still beneficial.

It was a juggling act for me and, in that respect, I was going up a rapid learning curve – trying to combine the roles in this assignment of team leader, interviewer, client representative, cultural interpreter, teacher/mentor and, at the same time, consciously (because at that stage it had not become an unconscious habit) introduce a coaching *and* team approach (both of which I was still learning). I suspect I did not always get the right balance, especially on the Sunday evening when jet lag overcame me; and here there is another lesson.

Ten years ago I could fly from London to California, conduct a meeting the same day, and then fly back the next and be ready for work. Today, at 65, I have to be more careful. I am still reasonably fit and healthy, but that trip followed by a series of interviews as just described meant that something had to give – and it was me. So, although I was recovered by the Monday morning, I should have constructed the interview programme with a break in the middle. Not having done so, Rebekah's presence and ability to learn quickly proved to be invaluable. She took over the interview as she

describes above, and it was successful. This is an important lesson which also has a significant impact on the team's professional performance.

Reflecting on the interviews with Rebekah when they were all over I believe I was too influenced by a wish to experiment with coaching style questions, thereby exploring the candidate's personality and cultural fit for the company and role, and possessed fewer theoretical underpinnings than with later interviews. The lesson here is that, with our interest in human behaviour, as important as it is to our approach, it is easy to become *too* involved with that aspect of recruitment interviewing to the potential detriment of the candidate's professional and business background, especially when one only has a limited amount of time with a senior executive. Also, that too much emphasis in this direction could be construed as unnecessarily intrusive.

There is a second, and particularly pertinent lesson, as identified by Kayes & Burnett (2006). Too much emphasis on the self and team learning aspect of the interview runs the risk of detracting from its effectiveness.

Using Wirth & Perkins' (2007) questions on metacognition as a framework, we asked ourselves: what were we trying to learn; what were we trying to accomplish from this case study; had we chosen the right strategy, and how were we progressing? Also, what elements of learning and learning styles were we deploying?

The answers demonstrated an uneven learning team: an apprentice and an experienced hand, but from whom each was able to learn something to varying degrees. It was not so much a question, as outlined in Michaelsen (undated) and Fink (2004), that one was carrying the other, and thus an introduction for Rebekah to the world of senior head hunting, and in a foreign country. It was more an opportunity to look, listen and sense everything she could possibly pick up as part of a team and make the best progress we could together. It was also an opportunity to test and develop our approach

to recruitment, which had only a limited degree of success at the outset, because we were still exploring how we used coaching-style questions.

This first case study then, as you might expect, was a starter at our aim – to explore a learning team approach. The development came through in later case studies. Did Rebekah make progress in this one? Yes, to a limited degree. However, having been thrown in at the deep end you do not become an Olympic swimmer overnight, but through practice and perseverance. For her it was more about incremental rather than radical learning, as outlined in Edmondson (2002). She felt she had been shown the tools of the trade, now she needed practical experience to learn how to use them effectively. Neither of us think she had any particular difficulties, either as part of a learning team or undertaking a new career, other than lacking confidence; and this was a result of being on a learning curve that was, in her opinion, positively vertical.

Did it compare with expectations? Certainly there was a lot of one-way traffic for Rebekah to learn. Michael's experience taught her to slow down, go into more depth, and not assume a candidate will be good at a job just because he interviews well. But she too was able to support Michael as demonstrated above, and bounce ideas in post-interview dialogue, albeit at a naive level at this stage.

Rebekah learnt from the experience to be objective, not to make decisions about a candidate too early on, and not to judge them against each other, but to recognise the potential in each one. She also recognised she could add more to the team by using past experience from performing and politics, rather than trying to match Michael's considerable business knowledge straight off. The short, rapid nature of the assignment helped her build confidence when asking candidates questions. For Rebekah, these were the key learning points to take into the next assignment/case study.

For Michael, in a different way, it was almost as steep a learning curve. There is undoubtedly a balance to be struck which we must continue to work on, and this assignment in the USA demonstrated just how many facets

there can be to such a balance: culture; language; seniority; personality; professional, technical and business expertise; track record; time; and learning, both individually and as a team. It was hard work for both of us, but with perseverance, professionalism and mutual support, we pressed ahead and carried the lessons forward to the next case study; we started to grow cumulatively.

Unfortunately, we were limited in the data collected for analyse from this case study by only having one set of candidate comments. However, we were able to use observation, discussion and journaling to collect and collate the data we found, which appeared to agree. Initial findings suggest that the benefits of having a team interview a candidate were that Rebekah could take extensive notes, thereby helping Michael later for the candidate reports, and at the same time allow her to listen and learn as she wrote. This latter point is important because Rebekah’s preferred style of learning is to write the information down.

Additionally, in a sense, the team consisted of the candidate as well; so the fact that he was able to learn from the interview experience, and utilise those lessons in his business and private lives, was of value to him. Furthermore, his learning also aided our learning in respect of the development of our team approach, so the whole experience was both collaborative and symbiotic.

Table 4 – Summary of learning for case study 1

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	1 - Basic interviewing skills. 2 - Being objective & recognising individual potential.

<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Coaching-style questions need to be asked appropriately.</li> <li>2 - The candidate can be part of the learning team.</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More confidence.</li> <li>2 - Slow down &amp; go into more depth. Do not make assumptions.</li> <li>3 - Use prior experience.</li> <li>4 - If you cannot get the answer you are looking for, ask it from another angle.</li> <li>5 - Be brave and give negative feedback.</li> <li>6 - Provide more balance to the team.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Arrange appointments sensibly given time changes in USA.</li> <li>2 - Be more balanced between wanting to mentor Rebekah, learn himself and as a team, and the interview objectives.</li> </ul>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
Understanding of the concept and its potential consequences; now need to make it a reality.	

## 4.2 Case study 2

Our second assignment required us to find a Business Unit Leader for a UK-based engineering firm's new aerospace & defence (A&D) unit. The aim of the post was to grow the business unit, organically and acquisitively, over five years. With full profit and loss (P&L) and research and development (R&D) responsibility the incumbent would have to prepare, and then deliver, a long-term business plan. The salary was £110k plus a potential 100% bonus.

For reference, our first three candidates were interviewed on the same day in Leamington Spa, which was our first ever joint interviewing day. We then undertook case study one, and returning to the UK picked up and continued with this assignment.

Although there was a job description for the role it was kept fluid during this assignment because the client vacillated over the seniority and complexity of the appointment. As a result we knew we had to interview people who were over-qualified as well as those who met the original job description; additionally, there were two younger candidates who were potential high-fliers and who may have been able to grow into the role.

Recognising this, we utilised the plan of action outlined in case study one, but also knew we had to incorporate the learning from the previous case, as outlined over. As a learning team, the plan was to become better balanced and integrated in conduct and assessment, and continue to learn from the candidate, the experience of the interview, and each other. It is important to point out here that in terms of our professional and business development, every recruitment candidate, and for that matter coachee, is an important part of our learning 'team'. Their experiences and opinions are just as valid as the lessons we draw from our own actions. Indeed, as a military staff college tutor Michael learnt as much, probably more, from his students than they did from him.

We eventually short-listed three candidates for the job: one the client felt was over-experienced; one was more of an entrepreneur, and so passed to another section of the company for a potential role; and the other was selected, as the line manager and HR Director were very happy with him. As matters evolved, however, the job changed dramatically during the recruit's first three months with the company, and so we were asked to provide him with outplacement coaching (which we did and which he stated he found helpful, using the time to consider carefully what he wanted to do with the remaining 10-15 years of his career). This was a rather 'messy' assignment,

with vague parameters, and we should have seen it coming. Clearly, the lesson for us was to clarify more effectively what the client really wanted, and a stronger solutions-focused approach would have been appropriate.

We interviewed ten candidates, and requested feedback from four; three replied. The first two, who were more experienced executives, were generally positive about the experience. Comments on the value of our team approach included: “one person can observe and test for understanding [whilst the other interviews]”, and “it was a logical delivery, with plenty of discussion, and not just a reading of the CV; plus we listened”. Another comment was that the “open style of the interview was helpful and made me think quite clearly about what I could bring to the role. It left me thinking more after the interview and I later concluded that the move was not the most logical step for me.” With this candidate we had taken a person-centred approach to what he was really looking for in his career.

Both candidates felt we worked well together as a team. One said: “The different areas appeared to be clearly demarked [sic] - there was a pause to check for understanding. Handover between the two of you worked well - Rebekah is going to cover this later, or I'll hand over to Michael now to cover xyz unless you have any questions at this stage - It felt professional without being an interrogation, but I got the impression that inaccuracies in stories would be cross-checked and tested quite thoroughly.” The other agreed, adding “The roles were very clear, but they still retained a relaxed feel to the interview”. One useful piece of feedback was that we should “not interrupt the flow by too many follow-on questions.” We recognise this could be a disadvantage of a team approach, especially if one recruiter cuts into the other’s line of questions, so here is a valuable lesson.

The third respondee was the youngest of the candidates; he was also the very first candidate that Michael and Rebekah had interviewed together. As Michael had tacitly demonstrated to Rebekah in America how to conduct an interview, so he did (for the first time) here. He went into much more depth

than usual, but spent the usual two hours with the candidate. This candidate said the interview: “felt like a psychiatric appraisal... the questions were too personal and intrusive... and the approach was inappropriate. It didn't allow me to explore the job role or my suitability, and the process actually put me off proceeding further with the opportunity” [We actually wanted to short-list him, but on reflection he turned it down]. He found the interviewers' style “too assertive, bordering on aggressive at times”, and that Michael was “too one-sided and lacked depth of knowledge or credibility to sell the actual role to me.” He would have liked more information beforehand: “Be clear about what the interview is and is not going to be. If it is going to be done 'differently' then prior warning would have been appreciated. Forewarned is forearmed.” He was uneasy about the ambiguity of the role and that it was still evolving, something the other two candidates who replied had no issue with.

From this assignment we learnt some important lessons. It was obvious the younger candidate felt deeply uncomfortable with our methods. We fully appreciate that it was a teaching session for Rebekah, and that we should have curbed our enthusiasm, taken more notice of his body language, and not gone into such depth with him; reflecting on it, however, he clearly came to his views after the event. He also felt we lacked knowledge and credibility, something no other candidate has even hinted at. However, it is interesting that the next candidate that day, who we saw straight after, felt completely different. Nevertheless, rather than treating an opinion as a rogue statistic, we take it as a reminder that all people are individuals and that some need more delicate handling than others.

Our very first candidate provided a valuable lesson: because Michael was trying to teach me, his introduction to the candidate was long. This caused him to fidget and he was clearly bored listening to information that was meant to help him. Michael took him through his career, which gave me a sense of confidence to come in with questions on his personnel management style in particular. We did use our approach of coaching-style

questions, such as how he felt about his actions, what he had learnt and what he would change, how he would approach people differently, what he aspired to, and so forth. We did discover a lot about the inner man, perhaps resulting in his discomfort. This was an example of how not to use a coaching approach in our infancy as recruiter-coaches but, as one of the youngest candidates, we wanted to understand his thinking with his CEO and his peers and the drivers for his business strategy, plus the links between them, and whether he could handle the role we were recruiting for.

What I learnt from the experience was how to frame an interview and flow questions. We worked well together, even if Michael did about 70% of the interview. I learnt how much more you could understand a person's character if you devil down and use gentle but probing questions they are not expecting, or have not experienced before. Clearly, we went too far for this candidate.

The next two interviews gave me the experience to learn, as I did in America, to judge candidates on their merits, not against others, and to gain a sense of the chemistry needed for the client. I was also just starting to incorporate past experience to observe their voice, mannerisms and posture.

I learnt another valuable lesson with our next candidate: Michael, hoping that I had 'noticed' him sufficiently in action, said I would lead the next interview (out of the blue). According to Mason (2002:29), the cornerstone of noticing as a method of enquiry is to "try it yourself", and education is about "independence rather than training in dependency" (p.23). However, I made a mess of it, because I had not remembered the company history or details of the role well enough. I learnt from this that I am not an audio learner, but very much a visual one and need to see things written down to prompt me, not hear them. As Edmondson et al (2007) advocate, learning teams can be about learning behaviour as well as learning outcomes. This also goes for the notes I take at interview; I need to write down more about our impressions of the candidate than his verbal extensions on the CV. Michael is the opposite and can keep many things in his mind and summarise them well at the end; again both capabilities add to the team. I am glad Michael

gave me the opportunity to try, and more preparation is key. Because we were a team, as soon as he saw me struggling, he was able to take over smoothly.

With the next candidate I learnt to sit back, keep quiet and let Michael take the lead because they both talked the same A&D language, which meant nothing to me. I recognise that I need to learn much more about the industry as well as interviewing; again I was under-prepared. However, whilst they were talking, and Michael took a person-centred approach with this candidate on his career path, I was able to take notes for the candidate reports.

Michael and I spent a long time interviewing our next candidate and I simply could not make up my mind if he could do the job; there were lots of pluses, lots of minuses, and some gaps. I had my 'eureka' moment here. Rather than talk it through with Michael at the end and let him make the ultimate decision, I took a metaphorical step back and asked myself "why can I not decide, what is bothering me about him?" An obvious thing to say, but I felt it showed progress rather than letting Michael do it for me. I asked him a considerable number of questions (which by now I found quite easy) and was able to delve into his handling of various scenarios for over 20 minutes taking a more person-centred approach around his potential. Later, Michael suggested some were a bit basic, but I felt they had to be asked to help me decide about him, so he taught me how to rephrase them. I found this session immensely helpful in terms of my own initiative and development as an interviewer. Afterwards was even more interesting because I felt no, and Michael felt yes. After a lot of discussion, where I stuck to my view, we agreed to mention him to the client (who in due course suggested he talked to a member of his team looking to fill another role).

Learning from the American experience, the next two candidates were very good, but I asked enough questions to make sure this was based on fact, not assumptions. I felt Michael and I were working well together and my input was now probably 40% to Michael's 60%.

Michael used a lot of coaching-style questions with the next candidate; I felt too many, but both appeared to enjoy the interview. It did uncover the candidate's true aspiration, which was to be a coach himself, which may not have otherwise come out, and Michael used the candidate's knowledge of NLP to work with him constructively to produce this outcome. I was also able to observe that his body language suggested he was much happier talking about coaching, when his voice also became more animated. Again, as in America, one of us was very tired during the interview, this time me, but because we were a team Michael was able to lead and cover for this.

When I look back on this assignment there are five factors that stand out. First, it was initially briefed by the client at a senior level, but with a vague job specification. It was then re-briefed at a more junior level, still with a vague specification, but a lower salary.

As a result, and based on my understanding of what the client company was trying to achieve, I took the decision to provide a cross-section of candidates in respect of skills, experience and current salaries to demonstrate to the client what he could buy for his money. This brought the diversity of candidates described above, but the point is, it was really only the senior ones that could do the job the client wanted – he just did not want to pay the money.

So, we had a vague and changing specification; and a reluctance to pay the market rate. A disastrous combination that nearly always leads to failure; and it did because the compromise candidate that was appointed (and his potential manager really wanted to recruit him) failed, and we had to undertake the assignment again. That time, learning from this experience, with a clear brief, a more defined role for the new recruit, and a salary that matched the skills and experience required.

The second factor, which is an important part of the reason for the first, is the rapidly developing and changing nature of the client's business, his wish to move into completely new markets, the consequent lack of *detailed* strategy the distraction of the CEO by other issues, the recession, the lack of experience of some of his team, plus some poor communication issues from the company.

The third factor was the need to positively employ our developing ability to utilise coaching expertise and knowledge, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the candidates and their fit for the role and company; something this client finds very valuable, especially when coupled with the preparation process we put our short-listed candidates through prior to their meeting the client. The fourth and fifth were, respectively, the need to train Rebekah, and become a better balanced and integrated team so that we could genuinely start to learn cumulatively; these factors affected the manner in which the interviews were conducted.

So, having explained the context, what did I learn, first, at the macro level? It is very easy to say that one should have a clearly defined aim, and therefore objectives leading to the achievement of that aim, before commencing an assignment. But that is particularly difficult to do in the situation described above.

On reflection I believe I should have done the following. One, insist that the client spent more time with us at the beginning so that we could really understand what he was trying to achieve, gain a clear appreciation of all the factors involved, and then agree a definite way forward. This, of course, is sound project planning; but it is not so easy to achieve when the client does not really want to do it, usually because he believes he does not have the time. A classic situation where more time spent up front would have saved a great deal of time and money later on; an approach we will definitely take in the future. That said, it is important to ensure that the client does not feel he

is being criticised or taught how to run his company, because if he does he will not do business with you.

Reflecting further on this situation, now that we have gained a deeper understanding of various coaching perspectives, a solutions-focused approach coupled with open systems theory *as a background in our minds* might have helped identify what the client's company really needed at that time.

Two, each Griffonage assignment, regardless of type, should be conducted as a professional management consultancy exercise which has the clear aim of assisting the business plan, and utilises the skills, experience and relevant knowledge I have gained over the last 40 years, and attempt to keep up to date by CPD, my completion of the MA, and now this DProf.

At the micro-level, whilst the introduction of coaching knowledge and expertise can be of great benefit for the reasons explained in this paper, it requires a higher degree of subtlety than we have, up to now, employed. So does combining the roles of interviewer and teacher without making the candidate feel like a 'guinea pig'. In this latter respect I was greatly helped by Rebekah's willingness and ability to learn; I did not have to carry everything on my own shoulders. We both *wanted* to work as a team, so we were determined to make it happen.

### **From the past case study**

Although this assignment, and that in America, overlapped to a degree, the personal lessons for Rebekah from the last case study of slowing down, not judging too quickly, and asking deeper questions, were only partially starting to come through. The slowing down is a key learning theme in this study for her, and in a sense about Hedberg's (1981) unlearning – that speed does not always get the best result. Having observed the techniques of interviewing from Michael, and as White (1998) states, team learning helps with the comprehension of complex tasks, she was able to start introducing

some of these into her work, albeit at a basic level at this stage. She felt slightly more confident with this assignment; whether it was because she was gaining experience or because we were interviewing younger and less senior people who she could engage with more, she is not sure.

The personal lessons that Michael brought forward were: (1) the importance of gaining the correct balance between team and assignment objectives, and how one went about achieving both; and (2) the need to learn more about the practical employment of coaching expertise. Neither of these was fully applied or successful; but a start was made, and the benefit of working as a team was certainly demonstrated, albeit in embryonic form.

### **Overall**

Rebekah would have benefitted from better preparation in this assignment. The advantage of being in a team is that the other party can cover for this, but for her own professionalism she recognised the need to improve and, besides, being part of a team does not divorce one from individual responsibility – as Michaelsen (undated) writes, students must be made accountable for both their individual and group work.

With this assignment the team work was beginning to gel, although it would not be until case study five that the balance between us became more even. Michael was still very supportive of Rebekah when she struggled, and in return Rebekah was able to observe, take better notes and start to question more thoroughly our rationale for short-listing candidates.

One of the principal lessons from this assignment was the partial confirmation that our approach of using coaching-style questions in recruitment could work, but that it had to be used sensitively depending on the individual being interviewed. This is reflected in the triangulation of the data whereby candidates gave us differing responses. Given that we saw two of these candidates back-to-back and did not change our style that dramatically - and looking back on our journals the only difference we noted was that the first interview probably went on too long - personality clearly

played a big role in this. It may also have been a case of over-enthusiasm with our approach and again, as Kayes & Burnett (2006) point out, too much emphasis on learning can compromise team effectiveness in the short-term because team learning is about generating new strategies, and team performance is about maintaining them.

Although early in the journey, and Fink (2004) states learning teams need time, reflexively we could see that Rebekah's involvement in the research was having a beneficial effect on the team: slightly stronger dialogue with Michael regarding which candidates to short-list, making us both question why were we putting a man forward; and more notes on candidates to help improve candidate reports; but not sufficient depth of questioning yet by Rebekah to really understand a candidate, which was being left to Michael because of his experience, and thus still a lop-sided team.

So what were the lessons we carried forward to the next case study? Remembering our aim, and the methodology to achieve it, we were looking for ways to improve our practice and keep learning, and use what we brought to the partnership better. This case was a good opportunity for Rebekah to both learn by doing and from Michael, and to use some of her skills in respect of observation when assessing candidates, how they presented themselves in demeanour and behaviour, and what this might mean in terms of nerves, complacency, interest, cultural fit, and so forth.

It was also an opportunity to appreciate just how complex and demanding some assignments can be, also what can easily go wrong as well as right, and therefore begin to handle them successfully. And for Michael to remember all the lessons he should not have forgotten, and then apply them more effectively in future. As described, this case study changed the way we approach assignments; but not the approach itself, as that was proving to be successful.

Professionally, Rebekah realised that she needed a framework within which to question (which is flexible to allow exploration), but that set questions are

limiting. You know what your client wants from a candidate, and experience begins to teach you what to pick up on and read between the lines in their style and approach to the interview. The main lesson for her was to go back when something was unclear, and keep asking until she could make an objective decision.

The principal lesson for Michael was not related to recruitment, but to the development of a team and his wish to include Rebekah as an equal partner. He had worked in teams for much of his 20 years' military service and that had inculcated a sense of inter-dependence. However, since becoming self-employed in 1996 he had worked alone and, because he was modestly successful, seemingly enjoyed the freedom. But working with Rebekah made him realise how much more effectively and enjoyably he could work if he did so hand-in-glove with someone he could really trust, who shared his core values including work ethic, and genuinely wanted to learn, even if she was a novice at what we were doing. It was this realisation during case study two that really cemented his determination for the Griffonage learning team of Michael and Rebekah to be permanent and successful. That was the mind-set he took forward to the next case study.

Table 5 – Summary of learning for case study 2

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	1 – Better framing and flow in interview technique. 2 – If you are unsure about a candidate, keep questioning him, but phrase questions appropriately.
<b>Michael</b>	1 – Obtain the best possible assignment brief from the client. 2 – Treat recruitment assignments as management consultancy. 3 - Continue to improve understanding of theoretical underpinnings. 4 - Apply coaching knowledge & techniques more subtly.

	5 – The enjoyment of working in a team with Rebekah.
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More confidence - only partially.</li> <li>2 - Slow down &amp; go into more depth. Do not make assumptions – to a degree.</li> <li>3 - Use prior experience – yes.</li> <li>4 - If you cannot get the answer you are looking from, ask it from another angle – yes.</li> <li>5 - Be brave and give negative feedback – no.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Arrange appointments sensibly given time changes in USA – not relevant.</li> <li>2 - Be more balanced between wanting to mentor Rebekah, learn himself &amp; as a team, and the interview objectives – yes &amp; no, relevant to candidate.</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More confidence.</li> <li>2 – Be better prepared.</li> <li>3 – Write more wide-ranging notes based on observations.</li> <li>4 – Learn more about the A&amp;D industry.</li> <li>5 - Provide more balance to the team.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Michael’s new learning points 1-4 above.</li> <li>2 – Better observation of candidates when talking with them to read their body language.</li> </ul>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
The concept works, but it requires refinement and much more practice.	

### 4.3 Case study 3

Our third assignment was to find a general manager for the French subsidiary of an English supply chain company operating in the aerospace sector. The post holder would manage the business (on the outskirts of Paris), sell to existing clients, and develop new customer relationships. There would be considerable interaction with the parent company based in the UK. The package was €125k plus bonus and benefits. The interviews were conducted intensely over two days. Sadly, as the recession hit just after we put in our short-list, the client decided to withdraw this role.

The only variation to our plan from case study one was that we used a different researcher with expertise in the French search market. At a time of great uncertainty in the automobile industry many were looking for jobs in different, but related, areas and thus six of our eight long-list candidates had that background.

We recognised that English was not the first language of any of our candidates, and this had to be taken into account so that questions were clear and unambiguous, but without appearing to be patronising because many candidates did have a good command of the language. When asking for their permission to be a part of our study we had to be extra clear on our ethical statements to ensure understanding.

Rebekah realised from the past two assignments that, although her line of questioning was improving, she still needed to go into more depth in order to make a robust decision on candidate selection. She also needed to improve her planning before meeting candidates. This she did by spending time on the Eurostar reading and re-reading CVs, client requirements, and discussing the job with Michael. She also repeated the exercise in the evening before commencing the second day of interviews. She was aware

that the team needed to become more balanced, which meant greater involvement from her.

In turn, Michael was conscious of the multiple challenges of interviewing candidates whose second language was English, and so gaining a real understanding of their suitability for role and client, mentoring Rebekah who had never done such an assignment before, and learning himself from the experience for the overall benefit of the team. He had to do justice to the client, the candidates and Rebekah.

We both felt that the methodology of this project was helping us: first, because it made us think more about the prior learning we could bring forward from the previous case to the advantage of our next client, candidates and ourselves; and second, because it caused us to reflect more deeply on how we behaved as practitioners, and why we were short-listing the candidates that we were. Due to this being an overnight assignment we had more time to discuss the candidates and, therefore, went into even greater depth than normal about why they should or should not be short-listed. This helped refine our thinking about what the client wanted and whether we had found it, how we came to those decisions, and whether we had made best use of the information we had to take those decisions.

We requested feedback from all four short-listed candidates (having interviewed eight), and received three replies. Most of the candidates were men in their 30s, and two were more senior than the others.

Two of the three respondees were happy to be interviewed by 'a team.' Candidate FD said: "I find it interesting to be faced with a man and a woman, each having his (or her) own way to ask a question, to evaluate the answers and the candidate". Candidate ML said: "Having one set of questions by one

person, then to pursue with the other person, allows you to go deeper into the topics and also to understand better the personality of the person interviewed... It also helps to cover in one interview more points that I had experienced. The way they were delivered was perfectly clear.” He also appreciated the coaching-style questioning: “I never went so deep into the details during a job search interview in the past years. Clearly all the interview was centred on the roles I had in the different companies I was in, and what I brought to them, what were the difficulties I met, what were my successes and failures. The style of the interview was friendly and highly professional, giving confidence to talk without taboos.” However Candidate MB felt that it led to discontinuity. We needed to learn from MB’s point to make ourselves even clearer in our communications especially as he was weaker with English than the other two.

The candidates seemed to reflect our feelings and observations that we were now working together better as a team, but that Rebekah was still taking more of an observatory role. Candidate FD said: “You are very complementary. Not in the sense of good guy and bad guy. I found it interesting to be faced with a woman and a man. I had to be more careful with my answers while at the same time answer truthfully and, if I may say so, equally.” MB said: “I think Michael is more the ‘technical guy’ and Rebekah is more looking for soft skills and truth: am I comfortable with what I say; what is my management style? And so Rebekah is less questioning but more observing”. ML replied: “The interview was very demanding to me, but I felt a sense of satisfaction.”

This was the first set of interviews I had undertaken where the candidate did not speak English as a first language, so clarity was paramount, and in particular justifying a coaching-style question so as to understand more about a candidate’s personality and people skills. It was also interesting to observe and experience a different culture’s styles, mannerisms and body language in action.

Now that I had some experience and basic learning under my belt as an individual in this career new to me, it was time for the reflection part of methodology to start recognising the team aspect of our aim and objectives.

Aware from our previous learning that the team now needed to be more balanced I tried hard to partake more in these interviews than those before. I felt more able to hold my own during questioning, but not yet ready to undertake a complete interview on my own. I felt there was a blend of basic and deeper questions so as to get the best overall picture I could. I also took more subjective notes on perceptions of personality and behaviour rather than just the candidate's straight answers, so I had more information at hand for the candidate reports.

Similarly aware that we were a team, and both flagging by the end of the second day, we were able to support each other; Michael coming in with questions as I started to dry up, and I interjecting where I thought Michael needed to follow-up an answer. An example of this was with the final candidate, of whom I had concerns: I asked him how he managed stressful periods of work – a question he did not expect - and his response put a number of other answers into perspective, to the point that Michael and I agreed he was not suitable for the job.

What was most interesting as a result of this case was that, as a team, the dynamics started to change. Two days of very intensive interviews gave me the confidence to question Michael more thoroughly post-interview on the merits of each candidate. I now felt confident enough to advocate a candidate when Michael felt he was not suitable. By being able to base my reasoning on a sound, objective rationale, Michael took my points on board, reflected on his reasoning, and then changed his mind. Similarly, I took a different line to question a candidate who seemed very nervous, wanting to use a positive psychology approach to put him at his ease. Michael felt I should have put my questions in a different way, but I explained my rationale and, together we deconstructed the interview afterwards looking at how I

could have used questions in a better order, but still with the same underpinnings, so as to gain the best result.

How had I gained confidence with this assignment and, therefore, be able to play a greater part in the team in the future? By observing, listening, and learning from Michael, and getting hands-on experience as a result; plus I was now reading coaching books such as Downey (2003), Whitmore (2002), Gallwey (2001) and Green (1987), and translating them into interview techniques (whilst at the same time becoming increasingly aware that the techniques they prescribed had to match with the theoretical underpinnings). Additionally, earlier feedback was starting to come in from case studies one and two, and was complimentary of my work in parts, and Michael was giving me more and more space to interview, reflecting his belief in me that I was ready to take on an increasing role.

By now Rebekah had interviewed executives from the UK, the east and west coasts of the USA, and France, of different seniority levels, industries and professional backgrounds – and it was only her third assignment. This was some learning curve, especially as she had never undertaken recruitment interviewing before, and I was very conscious of that fact.

It was also an intriguing introduction to mentoring for me; but of course, there were important incentives. First, Rebekah was my niece, and I wanted her to succeed, both as a recruiter-coach and businesswoman. Second, she was the owner of half of the business we had created, so it was important for sound commercial reasons that she was successful. Third, because I enjoyed working with her personally. Fourth, for the reasons behind the mind-set that I carried forward from the last case study. Fifth, for all the reasons raised earlier when explaining the Griffonage approach.

I will go into depth in Appendix 4 about the developing relationship between us, and the environment in which we have undertaken this DProf, suffice to say here that, by the end of case three, she was beginning to make a contribution of value to the business, not just acting as a student; and I was

starting to learn things about myself that I had not considered before. For example, I can be much more patient than I expected, especially when I have a willing and intelligent mentee; and that after many thousands of hours of interviewing around the world, and the staleness that had set in, I was enjoying myself again.

In terms of professional and business lessons from this case, as I have interviewed in France many times before, and at this level and above, there were none of note. The lessons for me concerned team work and research. For example, the fact that Rebekah likes to take notes because it is her preferred learning style, is very beneficial for us. Having spent two years writing cabinet style minutes in Whitehall I prefer to delegate note taking. However, whilst I am able to retain a great deal of information in my head, and collate it mentally during an interview, inevitably things will be missed or become lost. Consequently, the practice we developed of Rebekah taking notes during an interview, and then the two of us discussing them in detail afterwards, produced not just a better record for the client report, but also research material for this document. We later extended this to conducting electronic recording during interviews, thereby allowing Rebekah to concentrate fully on the candidate.

Another benefit from the mentor/mentee situation was that whilst Rebekah, by watching, listening, acting, recording and discussing, learnt considerably, the dialogue in particular, helped me to learn, because when there was something new to both of us that Rebekah picked up I also learnt, and vice versa. There was an interesting personal side to this. Having been alone for so long, and self-taught, I had no doubt developed some bad practices and, indeed, complacency. Having responsibility for a mentee sharpened and concentrated the mind.

### **Team learning**

The learning team was still in the “reinforcing cycle” of improvement (Senge 2006:79) but it was starting to take shape. Now, Rebekah was not just

learning the technicalities of a new career, both of us were learning how to work together as a team. As Michaelsen (undated) said, effective team learning assignments must promote both learning and team development. Reflexively, the cause of Rebekah's learning about recruitment, and both of us as a learning team, had the following effects: the fluidity between us started to improve; we were starting to think along the same lines of questioning, without actually saying anything to each other; and we were sparking questions off each other. Furthermore, our approach seemed to be acceptable, according to the responses from the candidates, and this correlated with our thinking in our learning journals. We were: gaining greater depth from our questioning, thus providing the client with more food for thought; discussing interviews in greater detail; and questioning each other more thoroughly than before.

Fink's (2004) ideas behind the learning team – collaborative learning and being able to learn from each other in greater depth than on one's own, supporting each other, inspiring a high level of individual effort, challenging each other but with give and take, communication without offence, and successfully accomplishing complex and challenging tasks - were now becoming apparent.

Such undertakings need time, as Michaelsen, Watson and Black (1989) point out: if groups are properly formed, remain intact long enough to become cohesive teams, are repeatedly given challenging tasks with prompt and clear feedback, students then learn the content and how to use it, they learn about themselves and how to interact with others on major tasks, and they learn how to keep on learning after the course is over with significant depth. Regarding Edmondson et al's (2007) comments, we were sharing our knowledge, skills and actions to achieve our aim to grow as a team. And we were doing so in an environment of mutual support where success was breeding confidence which led to further success and enhanced enjoyment; the whole thing became a self-feeding upward spiral. This enabled us to deal with the many external challenges that arose; in particular, the effects of the recession.

Furthermore, the research process of reflection and dialogue was starting to change our approach to practice, giving it more depth and rigour. From the responses it would appear that candidates were able to see this too. The results were improved candidate reports for the client (who acknowledged to us verbally after we submitted them that he was more than pleased with our rigour), more space for the candidates to consider their options, and more enjoyment for us as we were learning new techniques on the job.

We recognised, however, that we were still on a journey because the team was not yet equal, and nowhere near fully developed. Rebekah still had a lot more to learn from Michael and from the industry; and both of us were on a steep learning curve regarding the theoretical underpinnings of our approach, and relevant literature generally. It was this cautious confidence coupled with a growing set of mutual experiences, all underlaid by a developing bond between us, that we carried forward to the next case study.

Table 6 – Summary of learning for case study 3

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Clarity of questioning &amp; explaining ethics to candidates whose first language is not English.</li> <li>2 – Reading coaching manuals &amp; translating them into practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Enjoyment gained as a mentor &amp; team member.</li> <li>2 – Action research methodology helps refine thinking &amp; questioning.</li> <li>3 – More patient than earlier years, especially with a willing &amp; intelligent mentee.</li> <li>4 – Recognising own bad practices and correcting them.</li> </ul>
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	

<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More confidence - growing.</li> <li>2 - Improve preparedness – improving.</li> <li>3 - Go into more depth. Do not make assumptions. Ask questions from different angles – improving.</li> <li>4 - Use prior experience – yes.</li> <li>5 - Improve notes based on observations – yes.</li> <li>6 - Be brave and give negative feedback – no.</li> <li>7 – Learn more about the A&amp;D industry - no.</li> <li>8 - Provide more balance to the team – improving.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Better assignment brief from client – yes.</li> <li>2 - Arrange appointments sensibly given time changes – yes.</li> <li>3 - Be more balanced between wanting to mentor Rebekah, learn, and achieve interview objectives – yes.</li> <li>4 - Observe candidates more effectively when talking with them to read body language - yes.</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More industry knowledge.</li> <li>2 - Learn more about theoretical underpinnings.</li> <li>3 - Provide balance by asking questions of depth &amp; rigour.</li> <li>4 - More confidence &amp; keep preparing.</li> <li>5 - Experience giving negative feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Continue learning about theoretical underpinnings</li> <li>2 - Michael's new learning points 2 &amp; 4 above.</li> <li>3 - All the collective points above.</li> </ul>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Operating more cohesively; team felt more gelled.</li> <li>2 – Improving flow of questions.</li> <li>3 – Slightly more balance. Good team support of each other. Sharing experience.</li> <li>4 – More confidence from Rebekah; improved post-interview dialogue with Michael.</li> <li>5 – Candidates felt more questions were covered.</li> <li>6 – Coaching style questions improving depth of responses from candidates, which in turn improved reports and client satisfaction.</li> </ul>	

#### **4.4 Case study 4**

Our fourth assignment concerned two roles: a chairman; and up to three non-executive directors (NXDs). These were required by an Anglo-American high-technology company. The client required that we concentrate on the chairman role first, but agreed that if we found any candidates more suitable as NXDs, we should present them also.

With the chairman appointment the client required that we present two US citizens and two UK citizens who, between them, reflected experience of the aerospace and defence industries on the one hand, and of the energy industry on the other. We used an American-based researcher plus our usual UK-based one for these roles. We flew to Los Angeles and interviewed four US candidates in May 2009 and, periodically during that whole year, interviewed eleven British men, plus one American working in a UK company that had recently been bought by a French company. They were all at plc chairman or plc CEO level. Most interviews lasted about one hour, partly because the candidates were very busy men, and partly because we did not need to go into their CVs in such depth because their positions, at the very top of their respective industries, meant that they had already proved themselves to a large extent; at this level it was more about chemistry with the client.

Of the four US candidates, we requested feedback from three, but did not receive any. However, we did record and type up the interviews, gaining some feedback in this fashion. The most interesting response we thought was:

I liked the approach of having two people. It's actually refreshing and different. It tends not to be the case when you talk to most search people. I found that very useful. I mean, you two, you counter-balance each other very well, so there is a clear difference in what

you're asking and what he's asking, and that's useful because it also allows me as a person to have a sense of where someone is coming from... I thought you asked some very good questions."

We did not ask any of the UK candidates for feedback, because they all gave the impression of being either too senior, or not interested in undertaking 'surveys'.

The feedback from the client was very positive. He was highly satisfied with the calibre of the four candidates we put forward and, indeed, were interviewing generally. He enjoyed meeting the candidates; however, the company owners, for their own private reasons, later decided on a different Board composition, and so the assignment was cancelled.

This case was very much a tale of two halves. For some reason, perhaps because they were slightly less senior and much more approachable, interviews with the American candidates were challenging but fun. They were some of the best I had done to date; I was focused, well prepared, professional, a performer, with concise questions in definitive chunks, listening to the answers and following them up, using coaching-style questions where we needed more information (such as how did you feel about that decision; what did you learn from that experience; how did your team view you after that event?). I had learnt from Michael to chunk-up questions (a coaching term), concentrating on one area at a time, and he commented afterwards that I was now starting to phrase questions as he would.

For the dozen interviews in the UK, I reverted back to base and lost all confidence, allowing Michael to do the vast majority of the work. Had this not been a team case, then I would not have taken the assignment on my own; I lacked the confidence, experience and knowledge to deal with such senior UK people (they included a Peer, several Knights, and at least three CBEs and, despite having worked at the Houses of Parliament for over five years, going back there I felt out of the system. That said, one of our American

candidates was a NASA Shuttle captain, but he was incredibly down to earth!).

Reflecting on this behaviour, I had never worked in a big organisation, had never recruited a CEO, and knew little of their industries. The natural ingrained assumption is 'so how can you judge a man to be capable of the role you are searching for if you do not know these things?' Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions that influence how we view the world and thus take actions. The discipline of working with them in a systems thinking environment means we bring those deeply entrenched behaviours to the surface and scrutinise them (Senge 2006). It is not just a systems thinking environment but an action research methodology too that allows us to question our actions. I can now see that if I had been as prepared administratively and mentally as I was in America, I could have been a lot better in the UK. It was true to say that none of the lessons from the previous case were carried forward here. Further reflection makes me realise that, actually, we had the upper hand because we were offering them a potential appointment which they were interested in, so there was no need to be quite so nervous.

It was a new learning experience for me, which I found particularly difficult having only just got to grips with 'normal' executive interviewing, because here we were not assessing someone, as with previous assignments, on their ability to sell, manage money or people - because CEOs/Chairmen have already proved this – we were trying to understand their personality and base our decision on that. Coaching-style questions definitely helped in order to understand the man behind the impressive CV. Kayes & Burnett (2006:03) identify the need to "clarify between social and cognitive learning processes", and I think this case was an example of both: we were interviewing a new community at the very top of their profession and had to have the cognitive awareness to do this professionally.

What I was able to bring to the team were comments on my observations during the interviews, and a depth of discussion afterwards that, prior to the earlier case studies, I would not have been able to contribute. Interestingly,

those candidates I felt I could ask a few questions of were, with one exception, those that the client short-listed himself because he felt the chemistry was right.

This was a new experience for Michael as well, and it was interesting to watch him in these interviews. He had never interviewed for a chairman before and I could tell from his mannerisms that he too was slightly nervous with the first couple of candidates. However, he got into his stride quickly as the interviews progressed, and so the questions flowed more freely, became deeper, and more relaxed. Thus, there was real group learning on this assignment for both of us. As Senge quotes, “where teams are truly learning, not only are they producing extraordinary results, but individual members are growing more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise” (2006:09). Perhaps by each giving the other support we were able to utilise the experience to learn more rapidly than had we been on our own.

We were also promoting our company, and team approach, and this assignment led on to us meeting a number of these executives again to try to initiate business with them; by that stage I had overcome my initial nerves and was able to converse with them over lunch on a much more even keel.

From both professional and personal viewpoints, I learnt a great deal from this assignment mainly because, as Rebekah says, it was our first time interviewing for chairmen, although I had interviewed for non-executive directors before.

During the first interview I was quite nervous, as I had not dealt at this level professionally for 20 years – since I briefed the UK Chief of Defence Staffs and the Secretary of State for Defence. But I had mixed with people at this level socially due to my membership of the City of London Livery so, with my understanding of company Boards and the responsibilities of their directors, it all started to come together. As I became more confident so the quality of

questions improved until it was not long before an upward spiral of improvement and, therefore, better quality interviews was being achieved.

During this assignment we interviewed the Great and the Good of the A&D industry which meant that, eventually, we had to advise some of them we could not take their candidature forward. This was the acid test for me, because it is easy to present such candidates, but a lot harder to tell those that the client does not want that they cannot go forward. I had to find ways of doing this without bruising egos (as described by Odendhal and Shaw, 2002), and therefore not destroying a very valuable contact for Griffonage.

In terms of action learning this assignment was an excellent example of where the practitioner learnt a great deal more than the subject. This was no two-way street with an equal flow in both directions. Whilst I was well aware of the theoretical responsibilities of a main board director and chairman, I had never had an opportunity before to quiz them on how they performed in those roles and, therefore, relate their experiences and skills to a live requirement. It was better than any training course because it had to be done for real, and not only was our reputation under scrutiny, so was that of our client and, therefore, our continuation as his supplier.

This was the most enjoyable Griffonage assignment I have ever undertaken and I sincerely hope there are many more to come, especially as some of the candidates were happy to recommend us to their existing companies, and even to be coached if they were appointed to our client's Board.

Team learning in this case centred on the advantage that our approach provides in respect of understanding and supporting each other. The stakes were high because we were introducing ourselves to the elite of the A&D industry. What Rebekah lacked in the UK during the front-facing element of the assignment she tried to make up for with the highest quality of observation, followed by deeper reflection and critique of candidates during the post-interview discussion with Michael. Reading about behavioural patterns, and listening to Michael regarding his experience of this, allowed her to go into more relevant depth when making an assessment.

The initial problem for Michael was that he had not operated at this level for 20 years. That said, he knew what he was looking for theoretically, but had never had to seek it from someone in such a senior position before. Moreover, in the past he had always been advising, not questioning, the Great and the Good. Nevertheless, the knowledge and experiences he had accumulated in so many different roles over the last 40 years came to his aid, and the recognition that we are all people under the surface and, as long as Griffonage operates in a professional, knowledgeable, friendly and respectful manner, we would achieve our aim. Therefore, appropriate preparation would be required, and success would build confidence and further success.

Analysing the data arising from this case was interesting because it was largely subjective. In one sense this was fitting because it was quite an emotional journey for us both in terms of trust and confidence in each other. Gibbs' (1988) circular model of reflection asks the practitioner not only to describe the experience, but also how they felt during it, so as to make sense of the situation and formulate an action plan for the future; in other words, practicing reflexivity. That plan for us was to have more confidence, in ourselves and each other, that we could successfully undertake an assignment such as this. Both Michaelsen (undated) and Fink (2004) identify that learning teams need feedback, which we certainly gave to each other in this case, but perhaps at a deeper level than before because we were

beginning to understand the psychology behind the behaviours involved from ourselves, our candidates and our client.

Cannon & Edmondson (2005) recognise that when teams responsible for innovation (e.g. developing new strategies or products) fail to learn, the organization may miss critical market opportunities that threaten future competitiveness. One reassurance from this assignment was that afterwards we were able to go back to a number of the candidates regarding potential business with their companies, and all verbally reported interest in our approach and life-cycle of executive development.

It was also useful to reflect on the methodology at this stage. Action research can be a long-range and self-correcting mechanism for improving effectiveness; it also provides the tools of reflection and self-analysis to understand your actions and how they could have been improved or enhanced. Looking back on the process, yes, phenomenology or hermeneutics may have given us a different perspective on our work, but we still felt more comfortable with action research; indeed, in this case it positively helped us to understand each other more, what and why we were doing what we did, and how we could improve upon it.

This assignment was a big step forward for both of us, individually and as a team, and we gained considerably from the reflection, practice and research involved. In particular the value of our growing understanding of the way people think and behave, and how that can be applied to best effect in an interview situation. That, the increasing confidence we had in each other, in our approach, and in our project methodology, were the lessons we carried forward to case study five.

Table 7 – Summary of learning for case study 4

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 – Improved interviewing of senior American candidates.</p> <p>2 – Stronger observational &amp; listening skills.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 – Re-found confidence to interview at this level.</p> <p>2 – Deeper understanding of the psychology behind not only candidate behaviour, but also our own as we worked ever closer as a team.</p>
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - More confidence - no.</p> <p>2 - Improve preparedness – yes in USA, no in UK.</p> <p>3 – Ask more in-depth questions – yes in USA, no in UK.</p> <p>4 - Use prior experience – a lot more.</p> <p>5 - Improve notes based on observations – yes.</p> <p>6 - Be brave and give negative feedback – no.</p> <p>7 – Learn more about the A&amp;D industry - no.</p> <p>8 - Provide more balance to the team – no.</p> <p>9 – Awareness of theoretical underpinnings – yes.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 – Awareness of bad habits and knowledge of how to correct them – yes.</p> <p>2 – Continued learning about theoretical underpinnings – yes.</p> <p>3 – Improving quality &amp; delivery of coaching style questions – yes.</p> <p>4 - Use of action learning to further refine thinking &amp; questioning – yes.</p> <p>5 – Enjoyment, and therefore increasing satisfaction - yes.</p>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	

<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More industry knowledge.</li> <li>2 – More self-confidence &amp; preparation.</li> <li>3 – More proactive role in team.</li> <li>4 - Experience giving negative feedback.</li> <li>5 - More awareness of the candidate's chemistry.</li> <li>6 - Taking the preparedness &amp; approach of US interviews forward.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Continue learning about theoretical underpinnings.</li> <li>2 – Continuing refinement and practice of team learning and working.</li> </ul>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 – Both parties have to be self-confident to be a balanced team. Supporting each other aids personal &amp; team confidence.</li> <li>2 – Questions in UK very one-sided.</li> <li>3 – Rebekah able to help Michael with pre-interviewing support, &amp; post-interviewing dialogue &amp; challenge.</li> <li>4 – More confidence from Rebekah led to improved post-interview dialogue with Michael.</li> <li>5 – US candidates generally enjoyed balanced questions from us as a team.</li> <li>6 – Coaching style questions were improving depth of responses from candidates, which in turn improved reports and client satisfaction.</li> </ul>	

## 4.5 Case study 5

Our fifth assignment was to find an interim general manager for a composites, motorsport and A&D company. The existing Managing Director had brought in a number of sales, but needed temporary help to manage their operational consequences. The company was offering, in our opinion, too small a financial package for the role and this was validated by all the candidates we interviewed. In the end, the client decided to engage a more junior and less expensive candidate presented by a local recruitment firm.

The assignment also arose just before Christmas and the client pushed for a very quick turnaround during the holiday period. This meant that we were not in a position to agree our usual terms of business and, as a result, did not profit from the assignment. Although we demonstrated that, despite the challenges set, we could rise to the occasion and achieve what the client wanted, we should not have accepted the assignment under those commercial terms.

Having learnt from previous action, although Rebekah had been to client meetings before, with this one she became much more involved in the planning of the engagement, meeting the client on more than one occasion, taking copious notes on his requirements, really listening between the lines as to what he wanted, and both of us testing our understanding and taking a highly solutions-focused approach to the brief. Really appreciating the nuances of this role helped her enormously when interviewing candidates and made her feel much more involved; it also provided a much better result to the client.

We short-listed three candidates, all with strong track records in interim management, and all provided us with feedback for this project.

They felt that the two-person interview style was helpful. AH stated that “The interview was more thorough as a result of two good interviewers, allowing time for information to be shared, assessed and then investigated.” He also felt the questions were thorough, direct and thought provoking, and were clear enough for him to demonstrate his suitability for the role. SS stated:

I have always felt that conducting interviews with two people is helpful from the interviewer’s perspective, providing they are “tuned in” to each other. While one person is presenting a question, the second person can sometimes more carefully observe the response – both verbal and non-verbal. Consequently, the second person may be better placed to pick up on aspects of the response which need further development or explanation. Rebekah and you were aligned in your understanding of the company/role and the style of interview you both wanted to conduct which resulted in the method working well.

However, BR felt that, although constructive and comfortable, more structure would have benefited him, especially if the interview had been split in two by the two interviewers who had explained what their roles were. Our rationale had been to give Rebekah an opportunity to lead an interview for some considerable time, with Michael coming in with relevant questions. From this we learnt to be more explicit with the candidate.

All three commented that we worked well together. AH stated “your research and preparation was good and you both knew what roles you were playing”. SS said:

Michael introduced both the company and role. Rebekah appeared to play a supporting role, following up the first stage of the interview which had a more technical content with some of the “softer” people and leadership questions. During the first stage, Rebekah sometimes probed my responses further with secondary questions – this worked well and could have been more frequent. There didn’t seem to be the time to fully explore the people/leadership issues and while some questions were asked I came away feeling I hadn’t answered them very well. Overall, I think future interviews would be improved upon by a more equal balance between Michael’s introduction/technical exploration and Rebekah’s people/leadership interests.

BR said it was clear there was synergy between all of us; however, he would have liked to hear more from Rebekah.

All three candidates were positive about recruiter-coaches. SS in particular said: "I formed the opinion through the interview and follow-on discussions that both Rebekah and Michael believed in, and practiced, high standards of professionalism and integrity. I also believe that you could both add value to my own knowledge and capabilities through a structured coaching programme."

The feedback from the client was that he was very happy with one individual in particular, but they could not agree a daily rate. He was also impressed that we had worked extremely fast over a holiday period to deliver what he wanted.

As if it has not been emphasised enough in my action learning, planning pays off, and it certainly did in this case. Not only with the client, but writing down an interview structure, really questioning what we were looking for, and why.

Having gone through the experience of case study four, I was much better prepared mentally for this assignment and approached it very professionally. Things I would have skipped over six months ago, were now being picked up and I listened more carefully to candidates' replies. I felt I made very nearly a 50:50 contribution to interviews, but candidates felt otherwise - Michael always spends time introducing the company and the role in depth before the interview proper begins and so this may misalign our contributions in candidates' eyes. Personally I felt it was a good, integrated, team approach. Why? Because Michael had faith in me, allowing me to lead the start of the interview, and needed to come in with fewer questions than before, so I was clearly missing less points. Having raised this view with Michael he totally agreed.

It was an interesting experience interviewing interim managers. Because they often have to play multiple roles in a company, so we could go anywhere in the interview (e.g. sales, people management, strategising, and business development) and it made it not only more challenging, but there seemed to be more depth of character to delve into.

One of the benefits of having two coaches of difference ages was that Michael was able to say to one of the candidates 'at our age, we have a tendency to tell stories, but they need to be succinct and to the point'. This is something that might be difficult for an older candidate to receive from a younger recruiter.

This assignment had strong political undertones at board level, and involved deep-seated behavioural patterns, in particular regarding the company managing director, and the group chairman who was also the owner. The owner had always had reservations about hiring the managing director and had done so only because the candidate he really wanted was not available, a second alternative would not accept the limitations the chairman placed on the role, and a third withdrew due to contractual issues. So the managing director was a fourth choice which is never a good start. In turn the managing director found the chairman difficult to work with. Over time both became increasingly entrenched in their view about the other, and this continued to undermine their relationship.

Consequently, Griffonage was contacted in the Autumn of 2009 with a request to meet and discuss the situation. As a result we were asked to produce a paper for consideration by the chairman on how we saw the situation, our recommendations to put matters right, and our predictions as to the outcomes should they not be taken up. It was agreed that we would present three potential interim managers as part of our solution. At the same time the company would seek an alternative consultancy approach (which was the managing director's preferred choice) and then take a decision on whether to adopt that, or engage one of our candidates.

However, the outcome was different again. Wanting one of our candidates, but not being able to agree terms with him, the company opted for a lower cost interim operational manager. This undoubtedly assuaged the managing director's pride, a fact that was self-evident when he stated that to do otherwise was an admission of failure on his part, but it was a compromise solution which risked only partly succeeding.

Rebekah did not want to take this assignment on. I, however, felt we should for commercial reasons. And then I made the mistake of agreeing to terms that were anything but commercially sensible. To be fair to Rebekah she has never said "I told you so" - but she was right. Either, we should have declined to be involved, or we should have held out for less risky terms of business, despite the recession.

Following up the assignment with the chairman many months after its conclusion we have been advised that almost everything Rebekah and I had predicted had come to pass. Indeed, the managing director has now left the company.

So what were the outcomes for me? First, that if Rebekah had not been with me to take highly accurate and comprehensive notes during our first meeting with the client, then I would not have been able to draft the paper, so here was an excellent example of how we complement each other's abilities and provide an overall enhanced output as a team. Second, that the document we sent to the chairman was our first attempt at such an assessment and, now that we know the outcome, I feel we can trust each other's judgement in such matters.

Third, that if we had not prepared the document the chairman would not now be advising us of how impressed he is with our judgement and prescience. Fourth, with hindsight I was far too generous with the terms agreed. The client had a problem and I allowed our need to gain the business during difficult economic times to overcome my business sense. I should have

ensured that the most important criterion of all was taken account of – Griffonage cash flow – even if the sum was relatively low. In the end all we gained was credibility – which is very important – but we lost money.

Fifth, that the value of all the coaching practice and study we are undertaking can increasingly be seen, not just during recruitment and coaching assignments, but in any situation that requires an understanding of people. This leads to the conclusion that we are now in a position to introduce another dimension to the Griffonage approach which can blend business and management knowledge with the understanding of how people think and behave, to provide the kind of consultancy advice that commenced this case.

For Rebekah a lot of previous action learning came together in this case study: preparation; interview skills learnt from Michael and from reading relevant literature (taking responsibility for 'out of class' learning); and understanding the client's needs better. This assignment brought her back to where she felt she had left case study three in terms of ability, and also in working as a cohesive team. It may have been a tipping point from "reinforcing feedback" (processes that are engines for change [e.g. learning the professional skills required to do the job, the first part of our analysis framework]) to "balancing feedback" (maintaining the status quo) (Senge 2006:79, 86). We were still not an entirely balanced team, but a much better one than when we started. Why? Because our questions flowed well, they went into more depth, we questioned candidates on different aspects of the role, and the analysis of their suitability was more comprehensive because the two of us were making an increasingly even, in-depth and knowledgeable contribution.

One of the challenges of a learning team can be that the styles of the individuals do not gel or their personalities clash, but we found ourselves working together extremely well, sparking questions and ideas from each other, listening to each other's analysis of a candidate, and being prepared

to question each other deeply on why we should short-list them; this was open dialogue, not discussion.

As a consequence, we had gained considerably in confidence and effect, but we realised that to continue to improve as a team we required more than just practice of the same things, we needed new knowledge, especially regarding group and team working, learning and development. This led us to a further study of the relevant literature, and the adoption of different techniques. It is the lessons we are learning from these, as well as those from the case studies, that we continue to take forward in an increasingly inter-related and cumulative fashion, trialling, reflecting and learning further, as we go.

Table 8 – Summary of learning for case study 5

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 – Preparation pays off. Better planning leads to a more professional result, which in turn aids self-confidence.</p> <p>2 – Stronger observational &amp; listening skills improves depth of questions.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 - Stand your ground &amp; agree sensible commercial terms before the assignment.</p> <p>2 – Comprehensive, high quality, notes led to a much appreciated report.</p> <p>3 – Consultancy can now be added to our portfolio.</p> <p>4 - We need more knowledge of group &amp; team working, learning &amp; development.</p>
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - More confidence - much more.</p> <p>2 - Improve preparedness – yes.</p> <p>3 – Ask more in-depth questions – yes.</p> <p>4 - Use prior experience – yes.</p> <p>5 - Improved note taking – yes.</p> <p>6 - Be brave and give negative feedback – no.</p> <p>7 – Learn more about the A&amp;D industry – no, but motorsport industry - yes.</p> <p>8 - Provide more balance to the team – yes.</p> <p>9 - Awareness of theoretical underpinnings – yes.</p> <p>10 - More awareness of the candidate's chemistry - yes.</p>

<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 – Continued learning about, and application of, theoretical underpinnings – yes.</p> <p>2 - Continued refinement &amp; practice of team learning and working – yes.</p>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - More industry knowledge.</p> <p>2 – Maintain confidence &amp; proactive role; balanced role in team.</p> <p>3 - Experience giving negative feedback.</p> <p>4 - Keep learning.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 – Increased knowledge of group &amp; team working, learning &amp; development.</p>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
<p>1- Candidates happy with style of interviewing &amp; recognise its value.</p> <p>2 – That we can provide sound HR consultancy advice.</p> <p>3 - May need to improve structure of interviews to help some candidates understand it better.</p> <p>4 - Independent strengths of team members lead to a collectively stronger team.</p> <p>5 - Cohesive, gelled team again due to improved self-confidence, &amp; more researched learning resulting in well flowing, in-depth questions.</p> <p>6 – That we need to learn more about teams.</p>	

## 4.6 Case study 6

Our final recruitment case study involved interviewing for three roles: the replacement Business Unit Leader role (case study two), now with more seniority; a Sales Director Europe; and a Managing Director Europe - all for the same engineering firm. The salaries ranged from £125k to £200k plus the potential for 100% bonuses. The assignments took place in February and March 2010 and were all conducted in London, with the exception of two at Farnborough.

Administratively the plan was no different to case study one; however, our team learning had taught us we needed to gain much more clarity from the client about his business requirements, which we did. Whereas we thought we had done this before now, reflecting on it, we recognised that it had been superficial compared to what we could do as a pair of practitioners, writing, questioning, observing and listening for what was, and was not, said; and being more prepared than before to ask further questions when we were unclear.

We identified a list of 13 potential candidates for the MD role. There were fewer suitable candidates for the other two roles, and so we long-listed seven for the BUL role, putting forward four, and the same number for the sales role, putting forward three. We asked for, and received, feedback from five MD candidates, and two of the Sales candidates.

All seven candidates felt that being interviewed by two people helped. Their comments included; “that it opened up new areas of discussion, helping the process on”; “that there was a better flow to the process”; that it “allowed the conversation to be more varied”; that the candidate was seen “from two different viewpoints”; importantly for our learning that “many of my answers were followed up with a why, so that the interviewers could better understand the context and motivations”; that “the combination of your questions allowed

me to demonstrate I could think out of the box and operate outside my comfort zone;" and that it "works to the client's advantage, and so to the interviewee's benefit".

In terms of the interview style and questions used, all seven respondents generally felt comfortable with them and how they were delivered: "Questions, while probing, whilst delivered in a pleasant manner"; "the style and manner allowed me to relax"; "the interviewing style was symbiotic between you"; and "I was comfortable, the interview was positively worded, professional and yet relaxed, which promoted dialogue and openness."

There were a couple of exceptions for us to learn from: "Some of the questions were argumentative, possibly intentionally... and there were a few areas of discussion that Michael shut down with statements, opinions and closed questions where a more questioning approach could have provided additional insights". The candidate also felt uncomfortable with two interviewers in an open environment, preferring one person he could have bonded with; he was conscious of being overheard in an open room.

There is little than can be done about the latter point, unless the client is willing to pay for the hire of private rooms for interviews, and it is normal practice to interview in open spaces such as the Institute of Directors and at hotels. The questioning style was, however, something that must be adjusted.

Another candidate felt the questions were fine, but a written rather than verbal brief before the interview would have been more helpful to ensure he was offering the right information.

One candidate recognised the value of discussing his EQ: "I believe that many people going into these senior roles do not have a clear understanding of the importance of EQ, and it is positive that this was a major strand of the interview... i.e. not just that the person was suited technically. EQ would play

an important part in this role”. Another respondee said the questions were “a mix of functional and emotional adequacy for the job”.

Another appreciated feedback on how he came across and on his personal characteristics, something several candidates commented on that they rarely received from head hunters.

On recruiter-coaches, one said: “If the client’s perfect candidate could not be found, the recruiter-coach was well positioned to coach someone and address any gaps to satisfy the company aspirations and the individual’s development needs.” This was a perspective we had not considered at the outset of the project, and it was a sensible suggestion.

One respondee felt that the questions focussed on too obvious indicators of success, experience and learning, and that there was little discussion on some other subjects. This was an interview that Rebekah led for a long period and, although these are questions she regularly asks, she felt they were answered indirectly through other responses he gave and that the interview did not need to be protracted to ask them directly.

There was a generally positive response on how Michael and Rebekah worked together: “Seamlessly”; “observation was done in an unobtrusive manner”; and “two people who know each other well, and who gave the impression of having worked together for a long time”.

Overall, this was very useful feedback for us, showing that, although nearly two years of recruiting together had developed a helpful approach, and that we were clearly working well together, we cannot be complacent and that lessons can still be learnt. We need to be more sensitive of individuals’ learning and interview styles, and pick up on these more quickly so that they feel more comfortable – clearly some earlier action learning had lapsed.

The feedback from the client was that he was very happy with the BUL and Sales Director short-list, but he decided two more candidates from a different

industry sector to compare against the MD short-list would be helpful. It is not uncommon to go back to the market for a few more candidates, especially for a company that is undergoing rapid evolution in its thinking as this one was.

Through experience, observation, listening, questioning and reading, I now felt not only confident to do my job but work as an equal with Michael in the team. Questions generally flowed well, we gelled and the response from candidates was generally more positive. With some interviews I found I had been going for over an hour before thinking I should let Michael in for some questions. I also had my first experience of turning down a candidate, which is never pleasant but a good learning experience, wanting to be humane and as positive as possible. We even used some discourse analysis with this case: One candidate used words to describe himself like 'exceptional' and 'outstanding' throughout the whole CV; he also included a rather old picture of himself on it, making him look younger than he was. He was clearly a man who thought highly of himself, and during the interview it was all 'me, me, me', and the mannerisms were off-putting too – the use of his hands in a dismissive way, and the inflection of his voice. It was very clear that the chemistry with the client would not work, so Michael and I agreed the line I should take that would let him down gently. Rather mischievously I wanted to be the one who did the rejection because I felt he would take this worse from a woman than a man. Naughty of me I know, but when someone's looked down their nose at you for 90 minutes, one is only human as a result! I probably did not do enough fluffing for his ego to start with and came to the point too quickly; consequently, Michael came in with some positives, so I still have a lot to learn.

We viewed these three assignments as extremely important, especially the MD and Sales Director roles. Not just because of their considerable significance for the client's on-going strategy, but also because of the client's significance to ours, especially as they enjoy a particularly high brand profile.

As a result, we both put a great deal of effort into this case; a fact that was magnified by the need to conduct them concurrently, whilst also undertaking a major consultancy assignment for another client. Additionally, we had spent approaching two years dealing with the debilitating effects of the recession, both physically and mentally. Consequently, I suspect I tried just a little too hard at certain times during this case, and I think this is demonstrated by my occasionally erratic performance. There were times when I was extremely grateful we were a team.

With the above in mind I must admit I was disappointed by the client's view of our MD short list. We put forward four very high quality people ranging in salary from £125k to £235k (against a remit to find someone who would accept a salary of £150k to £200k) and they came from some of the most respected companies in the industry. As the client had briefed, "find me top quality people with fine track records and the appropriate skills and attitude", we believed we did. What he did not emphasize at the time, and I blame myself for not giving this fact more weight, was the degree of importance he placed on their ability to work in a £50 million company as opposed to a much larger one.

The reason I did not was because the client had explained that the growth of the business should take it to at least £100 million in four years, and then he was potentially looking to one of these candidates to replace him and continue the company's growth as a plc. Therefore, in my mind, the candidates had to have already shown such *potential* and gained the necessary understanding (not responsibility) otherwise they would not be able to achieve what I felt was the point he emphasized over all others.

Following discussion with the client, one of our four original short-list candidates was seen by him (the most expensive!), we found another, and then returned to the market to find up to four more from two other industry sectors that particularly appealed to the client. Interviews with us, and then with the client, progressed and then the client made one an offer which was accepted. However there are important lessons.

One has already been highlighted by Rebekah, and I cannot reinforce that enough. Although we believed we thoroughly understood the client's real needs before commencing this assignment, we should have checked back regularly to make sure these did not change as the assignment progressed. But there is a deeper issue here. It is important we learn how to handle this type of client - and his situation - which is complex in terms of business strategy, how he communicates, the experience level of the team around him, and the politics he has to handle regarding the company owners. This is where our coaching knowledge and expertise can be of great assistance.

These six cases had proved a challenging yet engaging learning journey, for Rebekah in respect of a new profession, and for both of us in respect of creating a new, and continuously developing, team. We now felt we were working more cohesively, enjoyably and productively than before. Why? Because we were successfully bringing together different but complementary skills, styles and perspectives that, through joint observation, interview, reflection and discussion, were enabling us to develop, via a more balanced and streamlined approach, a more comprehensive picture of a candidate than before. There was by now greater faith from Michael in Rebekah, and more faith in herself, to do the role. Now she was bringing in observations about body language, performance, posture and so forth from her previous careers as a matter of course, and appropriately combining these with interviewing, whereas before she was unable to do both.

As a consequence, Michael was able to let Rebekah lead an interview in the sure knowledge that she would handle the situation in a most professional fashion and, therefore, allow him to sit back, metaphorically, imagine the candidate in the role, and really explore whether that extra something was present that would truly enhance the client's business. Whilst this can, to a limited degree, be done working alone, it is much more effective when working as a team of two that functions seamlessly with shared minds. Such

reflection during an interview, which is impossible alone, adds considerably to the interview's effectiveness.

Senge (2006:74-5) describes systems thinking feedback as "a reciprocal flow of influence; every influence is both cause and effect, and by tracing the flow of influence one can see patterns repeating themselves". Rebekah now felt much more part of the process, and her line of questioning was having an effect on the outcome of the interviews and the candidates themselves, as demonstrated above with overt questioning on prior learning. This, in turn, was impacting on the candidate's decision on whether or not they wanted to go forward. Senge (p.77) also goes on to describe how structure "causes behaviour", and here the structure was being brought into play by our intentions and actions. We could now see that how we structured interviews was a basic outline that was fluid enough to go off and explore new avenues through our actions where we thought it would bring a greater result. Similarly, that by having an understanding of coaching's theoretical underpinnings, these could be used in a recruitment setting pertinent to the behaviours, styles and general disposition of the candidate to help him deliver the best interview he could (and therefore gain for us a better understanding of him as a potential employee) through our actions of taking the most positive, provocative, empathetic, solution-focused, or visual line of questioning suitable at that moment.

In Rebekah's opinion (which Michael does understand but does not agree with) there were times when she felt she had been utterly useless as a team player, totally reliant on Michael, either out of ignorance or non-preparedness; but to counter-balance that there were other times when we had supported each other, especially in the cases abroad. We now realised that by both of us taking responsibility for learning, and becoming more balanced partners, the effect on the Griffonage team was profound. Not only did we present a more professional face to those we dealt with, we also gained a much better outcome, and our willingness to employ the new knowledge we were acquiring in a continuous learning fashion meant the dynamics of our team also continued to improve.

Clutterbuck (2007:125) describes a learning team as “a group of people with a common purpose who take active responsibility for developing each other and themselves”, and we believe this is what we have done as a result of this project. We have also set ourselves up as a learning organisation to “continually expand our capacity to create our own future.” (Senge 2006:14).

Table 9 – Summary of learning for case study 6

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 – New found self-confidence that she can conduct an interview for an hour or more.</p> <p>2 - Be wary of asking too many coaching style questions.</p> <p>3 - Make sure the candidate gets questioned on obvious points, even if you have picked up answers indirectly, to make them feel comfortable.</p> <p>4 - Discourse analysis has role to play in interviewing.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 – Do not try <i>too</i> hard.</p> <p>2 – Make sure you really understand a client's needs at the outset, and then check during the assignment to ensure we are aware of any changes.</p> <p>3 - Apply behavioural psychology to clients as well as candidates.</p> <p>4 – Able now to trust Rebekah's abilities, and therefore the value of reflection during an interview.</p>
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - More confidence - yes.</p> <p>2 - Improve preparedness – yes.</p> <p>3 – Ask more in-depth questions – yes.</p> <p>4 - Use prior experience – yes.</p> <p>5 - Improved note taking – yes.</p> <p>6 - Be brave and give negative feedback – yes.</p> <p>7 – Learn more about the A&amp;D industry – yes.</p> <p>8 - Provide more balance to the team – yes.</p> <p>9 - Awareness of theoretical underpinnings – yes.</p> <p>10 - More awareness of the candidate's chemistry - yes.</p>

<b>Michael</b>	1 – Increased knowledge of group and team working, learning & development – continuing.
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
<p>1- Candidates happy with style of interviewing &amp; recognised its value. Client happy with report as a result.</p> <p>2 - Much improved assignment briefs from the client led to better understanding of their needs; the need to check for changes during an assignment.</p> <p>3 - Gelled, cohesive team; strong line of questions.</p> <p>4 - Must be sensitive to candidate's styles &amp; alter our style of questioning accordingly.</p> <p>5 - More comfortable with our styles &amp; experiences relating to how we operate together.</p> <p>6 – The importance of applying our increasing understanding of behaviour to clients as well as candidates.</p> <p>7 – How to work as an effective, continuously learning, team.</p>	

#### 4.7 Case study 7

Michael placed SM at Director-level into an A&D company just before Rebekah joined him. The first of SM's four-hour post-placement coaching sessions took place in June 2009, followed by another in July 2009, and one in September 2009. *Therefore, they took place before case studies five and six.*

Even though we had requested it SM did not give us any prior indication of what he wanted to discuss in his coaching sessions, nor had we received anything from his HR Director.

At his first session, expecting him to talk about his role at work, Michael asked SM if he had any burning issues to discuss (and therefore clear his mind before the session started in earnest); SM mentioned a problem with his son. This was colouring his thinking about everything else and was of great importance to him. His HR Director was aware of the problem. Initially, MS took the lead in a person-centred direction, showing the three essential elements of this theory: that the coach is integrated in the relationship with the coachee; that he experiences unconditional regard for the coachee; and that he not only experiences an empathetic understanding of the coachee's internal frame of reference, but also communicates this to the coachee, which SM appreciated, as mentioned below. He combined this with CBC which brings together cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem solving techniques to help the coachee overcome a practical problem and so develop his own way forward.

Rebekah followed this to a degree, pursuing the line that if SM questioned his son about why he was doing things, he might get more response than simply telling him to do something (probably against his will). She then asked, "what would help you get through this?" Michael took the reins and asked SM to explore the options, which also touched on his work. Rebekah came in with some points and, remembering what Myles Downey had said at

the EMCC conference in a coaching demonstration earlier in the year about asking what is interesting, she did so, because, according to Downey, it stimulates a better response than 'what is important?' After a few questions (because it was getting too text book) Michael was able to take over, as a more experienced hand, and lead SM through his choices, asking him to quantify and think deeply about his long and short-term options.

After a break, Rebekah resumed by summing-up so far, and then asked him where he would like to start; he said with his son. She asked: "If you were sitting there now, and were your son, what do you think the most pressing things are in your life? You are thinking as him now." Michael came in later and, adopting a psychodynamic approach, asked some deeper questions of SM, which was rather an emotional journey. He also employed the Gestalt and NLP exercise, perceptual positions, having first explained purpose and conduct. This was followed by a blend of coaching from both Michael and Rebekah. Rebekah closed with some wellbeing advice for SM, including a classic relaxation technique and talked about the importance of breathing. She also gave him some advice on diet and alcohol, as well as the importance of exercise, especially during a stressful situation. Michael drew the session to a close relaying to SM that it had been more counselling, plus professional and practical personal advice, than coaching. We did this because it was obvious SM needed to share the load; he was close to his breaking point and, in his own words, asked us to tell him what to do.

In the second session, having reviewed the outcomes of the first, SM wanted to discuss time management as he was under pressure to spend more quality time with his family. Here we adopted an approach based on the GROW model coupled with brainstorming (Osborn, 1963).

Rebekah asked him some initial questions in order to understand the situation, but then looked to Michael for his input, realising later this was because she was looking for answers to help SM (and got stuck because she failed to find them initially) rather than coaching them out of him. Michael took SM through an exercise to break down how SM would like his week to

look; Rebekah added questions about how his working wife's diary would impact on the scenario. This developed into a very close working relationship by the three of us, bouncing questions off each other's last ideas and testing SM's options, until SM was happy that the programme he had built would give him the result he wanted.

During the remainder of the session, Michael predominantly covered ground regarding SM's confidence and chairing skills. Issues started to emerge behind these concerns that we all worked on. Later, Rebekah was able to add practical suggestions based on her previous experience of chairing meetings. She also advised SM on an old sports injury that was causing him pain, a suitable exercise regime around this, good posture, and some diet tips. The session was a good example of (i) where we moved up and down the directive scale of coaching including advice as appropriate, but ensuring that the coachee reached his own, tested, outcome; and (ii) where the combination of psychological and physiological approaches helped the coachee in one session.

Following a review of earlier meetings, the third session lacked focus because SM had little he wanted to discuss. So Michael took SM through a 'visualization' exercise regarding his career, which he hoped would help SM focus; it did and SM discovered that his true vocation may lie in a completely different role. This was based on the NLP theory that, if people are their own best experts to make change and the goal is to maximize a coachee's resourcefulness and increase the choice they have in a given context, then SM would become more aware of what he really wanted which accorded with his beliefs and values. We discussed how he might go about achieving that, but it was too much of a pipe-dream to think about there and then. During this Rebekah found it hard to concentrate because to her it felt unconstructive, and that everyone was wasting their time because there was no commitment from SM to make such a change.

SM then started to tell us about a skills matrix he had devised for his company. After a few questions from Michael, the matrix gave Rebekah an

idea about how SM could test his potential new career direction. She ran through a series of questions and ideas for a trial run. Suddenly the dynamic changed and everyone was more engaged. It was a very good example of how an idea floated by the coach can have a beneficial effect; it also drew Rebekah back into the team environment. She did this of her own accord and, as Michael has commented to her many times, she has a definite knack of coming up with lateral thoughts that prove most valuable; another example of the benefit of working as a well joined-up team and combining the coach-consultant approach.

SM gave us lots of valuable feedback as a coaching team. In the first session he found us sensitive, and felt we managed the intervention well; however, he wanted more from Rebekah. He also commented that we took a lot of time and care with him, which he found positive.

With the second session, SM recognised that Rebekah made a greater contribution, with space to explore her strengths, and that Michael brought a wealth of experience. He also liked our approach and the male:female dynamic which helped him to think about his wife's perspective as well as his own.

You do have very different styles of working, which I think complement each other. Rebekah, you've been helpful, very approachable, bringing the feminine side of life, and that perspective brings a balance from the testosterone, male-driving business perspective we all live in. Michael, you provide direction and leadership. You're very straight talking but understanding, direct, depending on who you talk to, and where I am, I appreciate that. You ask me to think about things, challenge, it makes one think and look outside where you are... I go away from here with a very positive attitude from the sessions we've had.

He had a tangible plan at the end of the session: "I think you are a good combination together. I feel quite relaxed about being able to talk to you about myself."

SM's summary comment was:

The sessions have taken me, to coin a phrase, on a journey. We've covered an emotional family situation, my social, emotional, and domestic sides, dreams, the whole spectrum of things was there. You've given me challenges to look at, decisions to make

over the next couple of years, and ideas as to what I can set in motion to get there....The sessions were quite hard work at times... and intense – being questioned, encouraged to think differently... You pushed and I need that. I felt I could trust you because I wouldn't go through those exercises if I didn't want to do them... To have such coaching is valuable. I see these sessions as very positive.

In the first session, I felt slightly irked that just as I had a run of questions going that needed one more interjection, Michael came in with a different line. I felt confident enough to carry this off, but did not have the chance. Michael did this because he felt I was not experienced enough, and probably rightly so, and also that the client was quite emotional at this stage. I realised that what Michael did, he felt was for the best, and that I should have been bolder for once. I also learnt from watching the perceptual positions exercise run by Michael.

At the end of the second session, I felt that I had not done that much coaching; however, reflecting on the transcript I realised that I had asked many questions, and that although some of these were a bit text-book, it had given Michael a platform to go further and deeper, which better aided the coachee. This demonstrated that the dynamic between the two coaches was still developmental, but showing signs of potential. It was really starting to gel and we were working organically because the session was not planned.

Finally, I realised in the third session that coaching was much easier with an aim, and I felt demotivated when the session was not buzzing. I had spurts of inspiration, but they usually needed two or three steps from Michael beforehand to set them up.

I felt I needed in coaching, as I did in recruitment, more confidence and more knowledge so as to be an equal partner. By being bolder I can make a greater contribution.

For me the assignment with SM was a most rewarding and instructive one, and really a superb assignment for Rebekah to cut her teeth on. Four years previously, when I had undertaken the classroom element of the PG Cert in

Executive Business Coaching that eventually led to my MA, I was introduced to the concept of emotional states, how they affect our capabilities, and the fact that states always have an emotional component. O'Connor (2002) spends a chapter on the subject in his *NLP Workbook*. He makes, I now recognise with experience, many relevant points. This is part of being aware of oneself, something the coach must encourage within the coachee, *and themselves*, if any meaningful coaching is to take place.

That, of course, is easy to say; but for someone who spent 20 years in the military hiding his emotions because they were regarded as 'unproductive in an officer', difficult to relate to. Nevertheless, as I look back, with less cultural pressure, and therefore, possibly, less prejudice, I realise that one of the reasons I left the military may well have been because my EQ was in conflict with this 'façade'.

Nevertheless, whilst a high level of EQ is extremely valuable for a senior executive it must be controlled and channelled. This is where its combination with business and management tools is of great help. One only has to look at the basic GROW model, which starts with awareness of self and circumstances, and takes a systematic approach to discovering, and then planning towards, the eventual solution, to realise this. And perhaps why the GROW model is the start point in the careers of so many coaches.

Since I have been coaching I have become aware that I am far more empathetic than I first realised, and maybe this case study brought that out in a productive way; certainly it was a most valuable demonstration, and learning environment, for both of us. Here was a live example of how a highly competent, rational and experienced, senior executive who had negotiated £multi-million deals around the world could not think clearly because of a very serious problem within his family – and that in itself, was an example of how one's private life can impact so profoundly on one's business/professional life.

Also, that by understanding and relating to his emotional state we were able to communicate with him and help him devise a solution to a situation that, when he first arrived, was completely subjugating him. This is no exaggeration, otherwise why the cry for help in his comment “just occasionally you need someone to tell you what to do”? As O’Connor (2002:73) suggests “There are no unresourceful people, only unresourceful states.”

I had heard about such a situation in the classroom, and read about it in the literature, but had never personally experienced it. Now both of us did, and we had to deal with it. This is probably why I interrupted Rebekah’s flow of questions when I did. I was concerned that the emotion so obviously pent up in SM would result in his breaking into tears (there were already strong physical signs that this was about to happen) and I wanted to save SM’s pride. I admit, however, I should have done it more gently for Rebekah, and that is an important lesson for me as we continue to build our team.

From the above, and the rest of the case study, so many other lessons can be drawn: the significance of genuine trust between coach and coachee; the manner in which the coach can help the coachee change a negative state into a positive one, and then use that as a platform to break down what appears to be an insoluble problem into its component parts, and then systematically deal with each; the importance of combining compassionate understanding with systematic, logical steps which, as far as most of our coachees will be concerned, they can relate to their business lives and, therefore, a way of thinking they are comfortable with; the importance of being able to change from coach, to counsellor, to confidant, to consultant and so on, and then blend them together in the right manner for the moment; the significance of the case study as an excellent example of action research and experiential learning; and the value of combining the natural, as well as trained, abilities of two complementary coaches of different ages, genders and experiences.

With these sessions, on reflection, we both realised some good team work had taken place, both helping each other, and that our approach was more balanced. Importantly, here were demonstrations that the team was not just Rebekah and myself, or even us and SM, but his whole family in terms of what learning he took from these sessions back home.

There was still considerable scope to learn, but it was another step in the right direction.

We would like to include an epilogue. We have kept in touch with SM and are delighted to report that the situation with his son, which had been on-going for many years, has now resolved itself to the benefit of all parties. Consequently, we would like to think that, in our small way, we helped two people change their lives for the better. That is the real value of coaching!

For these sessions, not only was Rebekah learning from Michael, we were both undertaking a lot of reading, and employing past experience – in Rebekah's case on wellbeing, and in Michael's on people and business management and parenthood. Our approach changed over the sessions as Michael felt increasingly confident to allow Rebekah more time to work with the coachee. For Rebekah there was no problem in learning the material, there was just a lot to take in, and that only embeds with practical experience. For her, these early coaching sessions were about taking book learning into the real world and having to adapt it on her feet.

The methodology for our coaching sessions did not work as well as it did for the recruitment ones because there was a definite plan for the latter (to find a candidate) and they were generally more linear. The coaching assignments all ran concurrently and, when coachees had no immediately recognised (by them) issues for the session, it was hard to plan ahead. This is where, with the benefit of hindsight, it might have been better to use phenomenology instead.

Table 10 – Summary of learning for case study 7

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - Coaching is easier when the coachee has a clearly identified aim.</p> <p>2 - Able to put book learning into practice.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 - A good case study to employ several coaching approaches &amp; techniques in an integrated fashion.</p> <p>2 - Able to relate to emotions &amp; apply empathy productively.</p>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - Be bolder &amp; more confident.</p> <p>2 - Keep learning from research &amp; experience.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	<p>1 - More understanding of a wider range of theoretical underpinnings.</p> <p>2 - Growing confidence in Rebekah's ability as a coach.</p>
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	

- 1 - Styles & ideas gelled well together.
- 2 - Able to spark ideas from each other.
- 3 - As a team we could move along the directional to non-directional scale as required given our blend of styles and experiences.
- 4 - Coachee found the sessions helpful because he liked the combination of the two of us working together, and the fact that we were both able to contribute.

#### **4.8 Case study 8**

As a group finance director, AS, an Australian who was now working in the UK, had worked to sell a company, and then take a year's paid redundancy. He came to Griffonage because we were the only company he could find that offered a blend of physiological, psychological and career coaching. His remit for taking us on was to: evaluate his career to date; look at where he wanted to go with his career; and improve his live-work balance and wellbeing generally.

AS took us on for the whole year. There were nine full sessions: the first in June 2009; the second and third in July; the fourth in August; the fifth in September; the sixth and seventh in October; the eighth and ninth in November. There were subsequent telephone sessions with Michael on recruitment, and face-to-face updates with us both at the IOD.

Our first session established rapport, and AS told us his life story and his expectations of coaching. We asked him to undertake a self-analysis exercise to help him understand what he was looking for in both his career and lifestyle. Rebekah found she was able to add practical suggestions throughout the session. These were inspired by books she had read recently, but none of them were cribs, just ideas that came to her on the spot to help the coachee. Examples included how he could build frameworks to work out his ideas, and ways he could evaluate his strengths and weaknesses, which we have now incorporated into our career coaching workbooks. The

coachee found this helpful, and Rebekah found it rewarding, but it was more tell than coach.

Michael and Rebekah found they were now able to bounce ideas from each other, underpinned almost by telepathy, because the micro details had obviously not been planned. This was, perhaps, an early indication of the coach-consultant format, whereby coaching and consultancy techniques could be used to assist the coachee, something that, although she had no experience of, Rebekah felt more at home with than pure coaching, because problem-solving felt more natural to her than questioning.

Session two largely focused on AS's domestic situation, which was affecting his decision making. Michael led this person-centred exercise, which also called upon psychodynamic coaching, because Rebekah had no experience of undertaking a session of this emotional depth, although she was present throughout. He used the meta mirror (Dilts: 1990) exercise after explaining its purpose and conduct. The exercise involved AS in the first position, his wife in the second, the third from a detached perspective, and the fourth, the relationship of the third to first positions. This proved to be successful because AS began to gain an understanding of what his wife's point of view probably was, as opposed to what he *assumed* it was, and the way their respective reactions affected each other.

Michael had asked AS to address his answers to Rebekah, so as to involve her. As a result, she felt very awkward during this session, describing it as being like a voyeur in the room. She did make a few interventions later in the session, but was told by Michael during the break that these were premature. AS was happy to have both coaches in the room and, indeed, added at the end that he would have liked more from Rebekah (she did, however, conclude with breathing and relaxation techniques to help AS relax during these stressful times). It was a good opportunity for her to learn from observing a full perceptual positions exercise.

With positive feedback from AS on the last session (and another example of how a small team can help an extended team, e.g. what was learnt in the coaching session was taken back to family life), session three built on AS's self-assessment. We had asked AS previously to undertake a metaphor exercise which involved the coachee writing his life story to date as a play, and then projecting it into the future as he sees it (Megginson & Clutterbuck 2005). It can be a very valuable tool to help bring matters to the fore that have not previously been considered, and to look at subjects from different perspectives. Michael and Rebekah played an equal role in talking him through this and, reflecting on the transcript, Rebekah was surprised at how much of a role she had played.

There were times when Rebekah felt that some of the questions Michael asked about AS's early childhood were too deep, but she felt less voyeuristic than previously because she was much more involved, and because AS said he was comfortable with the style of questions. Although there were times when Rebekah tried to move him on, because she thought it was becoming too detailed, in his own words the process was helping AS to understand how he had become the person he was today.

Clearly her learning from the day was to be more patient; however, a number of her questions were more mature, less leading, more inquisitive, and building on coaching techniques from Downey and Clutterbuck. There was a good synergy and flow between the two coaches and the coachee throughout.

Session four looked at AS's financial situation, and how much the new job would need to pay for him to maintain his lifestyle. This was led by Michael with many interjections from Rebekah (from a practical, female, housekeeping angle). Rebekah was again concerned about the psychological depth to some of Michael's questions regarding AS's personality, and started fidgeting for him to stop. Listening to the tape of the session afterwards, however, she realised that she had not given it much time, again reflecting impatience and less experience of coaching.

In session five we discussed how AS would market himself in respect of finding his next job. This was very much Michael's forté and Rebekah observed. Unlike other outplacement coaching clients of his age, AS seemed to lack a sense of urgency, and we were concerned that he would not achieve his objective in the timeframe he had set himself. The moment had arrived for a reality check; Rebekah made herself tell him, gently but firmly, that this had to change. It was a good lesson for Rebekah to have to say something unpleasant, but it was well received and AS stated: "I need that sort of feedback, thank you." It also made her feel more in control because, although Michael did a large chunk of work on 'going to market', she had planned the meeting in advance and helped AS map out the rest of his session; she also used past experience as a tool for AS to market himself – imagine you are a politician, what would your manifesto be to sell yourself to your voters?

This session was more career consultancy than coaching, with the two of us providing information from a recruiter's perspective, which AS understood and welcomed. Rebekah concluded the session with a folder on sleep and relaxation she had prepared for AS. For the next session, she gave AS a large amount of material on diet and asked him to undertake a food diary for a fortnight.

AS had worked hard in preparation for session six, and was ready to start applying for new appointments, which was discussed. After a break, we concentrated on diet. Rebekah enjoyed this and surprised herself about how much extra she now knew about healthy eating following revision for her diploma in nutrition. AS went through his food diary, and Rebekah was able to provide some additional pointers to help him improve further, by using a coaching approach rather than pure tell.

Based on an advertised appointment, session seven was a mock interview for AS. Rebekah wanted to make this session as general and generic as possible so as to give him broader interview practice. Michael and Rebekah

had agreed a format beforehand on how they would go about the interview, and she had thought of some questions in advance but, on reflection, realised they were too vague. Rebekah opened with some very general questions that she hoped would give him scope to express himself and his experience, and Michael came in later returning to some to extract more depth. At the end of the session we gave each other feedback. AS commented on how calm Michael's voice was, and how suitable it was for the situation. This made Rebekah realise that the style of questioning was something she had taken her eye off, and must revisit. Following on from the mock interview, we agreed to undertake presentation coaching in the next session.

In session eight Rebekah realised, as she went through vocal exercises, that it had been quite some time since a client had asked for such coaching and she felt rather rusty; as a result she rushed the session. Whereas previously she had adopted a coaching approach to healthy eating, she reverted here to too much 'tell', and not enough 'ask'. After the session, Rebekah worked on her old voice notes and completely revised them. She also learnt from this session that clients learn better through coaching, and doing something themselves, than by being told what to do - an important lesson.

In session nine we again discussed AS's domestic situation, and Michael used the perceptual positions exercise, making it very person-centred, because AS had previously found it helpful. Although Michael led for 65-70% of this session, Rebekah felt much more comfortable this time, because we took the approach that if AS was running a business, how would he manage this issue?

Further updates continued with AS in person and by telephone, and during the latter Michael advised him on some more pertinent roles to apply for, and on how to make a good impact during those he had been short-listed for.

AS told us he was happy with the pace of the sessions, that he appreciated the 'homework' tasks given, which were exactly what he wanted, and that he saw the value of reflection. He felt he had come a long way since the first session and had made real progress.

With regard to us, he thought there was a "seamless balance" to our delivery. He appreciated the time spent over his beliefs and values, which he felt helped him understand himself much more deeply. This enabled him to consider, and decide, what was important in his life now and in the future, some of which was a surprise to him. He felt that we worked well together, and he found our approach to coaching provided a very rounded picture.

Learning in this case study arose not only from putting coaching theory into practice, but also from using a coaching approach in situations where I had previously 'told' people what to do: wellbeing and voice. I felt more comfortable veering towards consultancy, but using a coaching approach. Wanting to help, adding in comments and ideas for solutions, or practical methods of approach, came more naturally to me than coaxing these out of people, probably due to my natural impatience.

I greatly enjoyed undertaking exercises within my areas of expertise (voice and health) and felt less comfortable outside these areas (e.g. psychology and pure coaching). Nevertheless, this case study was a welcome wake-up call that I cannot afford to be complacent about vocal presentation.

As with the recruitment case studies, I recognised that rushing less, and planning more, was beneficial to all concerned. Again, my natural impatience, although helpful to get things going, means that I can lack the depth that coaching clients require.

Overall this assignment was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate our approach of working together on a number of career life-cycle issues that Griffonage assists with. The above is just a brief outline of how we went about it and the tools we used. Both of us were able to make valuable inputs for the benefit of the coachee, not only using our respective areas of expertise – transition and wider executive coaching in particular from myself, and voice and health coaching from Rebekah – but also to weave in AS's personal life as well as his career, which he appreciated greatly, to the point where he was able to use outputs from the coaching sessions, primarily intended for his career benefit, in a domestic situation. With this latter aspect in mind, the assignment was an example of how an executive's business and private lives affect each other and, therefore, frequently require attention together.

How has this case study informed and improved our practice? The first point to make is that this was the assignment where the Griffonage approach really proved its worth because it combined all of our areas of expertise: recruitment knowledge; outplacement expertise; career counselling; psychologically based coaching; wellbeing; presentational skills; and management and business consultancy. Furthermore, because several of these were required in one session, some with Rebekah leading as the 'expert', and some with Michael, but both supporting the other, it was an excellent vehicle to help develop, and demonstrate, our ability as a learning team.

It was also the assignment that, taking account of all the relevant lessons from the previous case studies, caused us to think deeply about how best, for us, to deliver coaching in terms of the balance between a directive and non-directive style. The subject of coach as expert advice-giver is controversial. On the one hand, some coaches, such as Whitmore (1992) emphasize a non-directional, ask-not-tell approach; others, such as Goldsmith (2000) take a more directional stance and emphasize robust feedback and advice giving. We suggest the issue is not which of these

approaches is right or wrong, but which helps the coachee reach their goals, and is the most appropriate at any specific time within a coaching intervention. Furthermore, our approach is not so much ask versus tell, but coaching supported by relevant consultancy tools delivered in a variable ask to tell manner.

A good example of this flows from Rebekah's earlier comment concerning the delivery she feels most comfortable with. If she were operating alone, her style would probably result in a markedly directional approach to coaching, and at times that has a definite value; however, if used exclusively it risks being counter-productive with certain coachees. Nevertheless, because we work as a team, and Rebekah can see the value of Michael's less directional approach (albeit that he does blend this with a consultancy style as appropriate) the combination seems to work very well. Indeed, we deliberately take advantage of this more directional aspect of *both* our personal styles (because Michael shares it as well, albeit to a lesser extent) to introduce ideas that are then carefully considered by the coachee and ourselves as an extended team. This might not work if either of us had a strident manner of delivery, but we do not, or had not learnt to rein in our natural impatience, but we have. And it would certainly fail if either of us was extreme or inflexible in our views, but we are not.

The fact it is that by matching an infinitely variable directive to non-directive style coupled with consultancy tools and business experience we play to our respective – and combined – strengths; and the clients like it. They do so, so they tell us, because it is a business-like approach, which is comfortable territory for them, but combined with understanding, respect, gentle prompting, expertise, knowledge – and time to think without being pressured. Furthermore, they like the fact that we think like business people, but also *understand* people. With all of this in mind, therefore, we are now of the opinion that this approach to coaching, which can equally apply to consultancy and recruitment, is the manner in which we will work in the future.

Reflecting back, we have not only developed our own approach to coaching, consultancy and recruitment, but also our own *style of delivery*. A style that is built upon the core of our ability to work, and continue to develop, as a genuine team - mutual respect and trust; an ingredient that, if it were missing, would cause the Griffonage approach to fail. This was the learning we carried forward to our ninth, and final, case study; coupled with the equally important lesson that each of us was dependent on the other for success – a reality that was tested by the recession, and not found wanting.

Before moving on, there was a physical output that arose from this assignment - a new tool. AS took a suggestion from Rebekah, worked on it as part of his 'homework', and produced a most valuable matrix with which to conduct self-analysis of his skills, etc. This, with AS's permission, we have now adopted for outplacement coaching and career counselling. Also, as we write this report, AS has advised us that he has accepted an appointment as an international Group Managing Director, and wishes to discuss with us a coaching programme for one of his company managing directors; a highly satisfactory conclusion to this assignment, and a very positive evaluation of our approach.

Finally, with methodology in mind, continuing from 4.8.4, we questioned whether action research was as right for coaching analysis as it was for recruitment. With this case study we believe it was because we could learn from the previous session, as demonstrated above, and make improvements for the future. The cycle of plan, do, observe, reflect, means that we were aware that, on occasions, what we were doing required improvement, not only for the benefit of the coachee, but also for our own professional development and satisfaction. By looking at the bigger picture of what we were trying to achieve with our aim, how we grow and work together, and the outcome for our third parties, action research feels right with by far the majority of our case studies.

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Not to be complacent about voice coaching.</li> <li>2 - Knew more than I thought on nutrition coaching.</li> <li>3 - Consultancy is more of a natural style for me than coaching.</li> <li>4 - New techniques, such as meta mirroring.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Another good case study to employ several coaching approaches &amp; tools in an integrated fashion.</li> <li>2 - That the Griffonage approach, with its complementary elements, is ideal for a coachee such as AS.</li> </ul>
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Be bolder &amp; more confident – generally yes</li> <li>2 - Keep learning from research &amp; experience – yes</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - More understanding of a wider range of theoretical underpinnings – increasing.</li> <li>2 - Growing confidence in Rebekah's ability as a coach – yes.</li> </ul>
<b>What needs to be taken into the next case study?</b>	

<b>Rebekah</b>	<p>1 - Coaching gets better results than telling.</p> <p>2 - Be more patient, allow the coachee to dictate the pace of the session.</p>
<b>Michael</b>	Build on the team lessons below.
<b>What have we learnt as a team?</b>	
<p>1 - Individual styles &amp; ideas gelled even better together.</p> <p>2 - The development of our coach-consultancy combination; and our own team approach &amp; style of delivery that in future will underpin all our recruitment, coaching and consultancy work.</p> <p>3 - That the Griffonage approach is a good vehicle to develop &amp; demonstrate our ability as a learning team.</p> <p>4 - That each of us is dependent on the other for success – a reality that has been tested by the recession and not found wanting.</p>	

## 4.9 Case study 9

JP is the HR Director of an engineering company. In his late 30s, he is a first time director, having come from being an HR manager in larger firms. He is leading his small department for the first time without someone more senior in HR to advise him.

This first of three sessions with JP took place in November 2009. Never having been coached before, JP was unsure what to expect, suspecting it to be more psychiatrist's couch. Keen to learn from it, however, his aim for the first session was to encourage better communications throughout the top team, using appraisals as the main vehicle to do so.

After much questioning, Rebekah, who had tried patiently to coach ideas from JP, and working with the person centred coaching view that the coachee is his best advisor, asked if there was an easier option to think about. Suddenly it clicked for JP and he came up with a solution. It was a light bulb moment that changed the dynamic, not only of the session, but also for Rebekah in respect of executive coaching; it was her breakthrough. Michael then led for a section, taken over by Rebekah with lots of how, who, by when, and what else questions. Michael then helped JP think through the pros and cons of his emerging plan, which was taken over by Rebekah who helped JP complete his list of actions. JP replied: "I really like that now. I've got something tangible to go and do, as a grand masterplan." Michael finally reinforced what JP had to do post-session.

(The second and third sessions took place during the early months of 2010 and involved the implementation and conduct of the plan devised during the first session, how the challenges that arose could be dealt with, and the successful outcomes built on.)

JP felt it had been a very useful session, commenting:

It was good. What happens along the journey is that you have dots and you make connections that you haven't seen before. It is good having two people, it's sort of less intense than having one. The combination as well is powerful. I don't want to get too personal here, but I think personally, having a male and a female, and I hesitate to say this Michael, but of differing ages, because you'll never alienate anyone that way will you? You grow accustomed culturally to different people having different perspectives, and I think that works very well as well... The interaction was very good actually, I think the chemistry must come together from doing it a lot I imagine. You seem to intuitively know which of you will be better at different sections. There are certain exercises that Rebekah would do better than Michael, and vice versa, and you intuitively seem to sense which one will handle which bit better, so that works well too.... What's so clever about this is, because you know my boss well it's that much easier. If we were talking about my boss who you'd never met, it would be much less insightful, wouldn't it? So in that respect, the head hunter/coach link is good.

Reflecting on the session together once the coachee had left, my initial thoughts were that I had not made as equal amount of input as Michael, but looking back over the transcript later, I realised how my interactions had caused a pivotal change in direction of the session and, as a result, brought about a much better outcome for the coachee. We now felt like a coaching team. As Senge (2006) notes, because people really grow through a learning organisation, the results are more sustainable and they are prepared for the on-going journey.

As a team, we bounced ideas off each other and the coachee, interweaving them with questions, all of which propelled the session along, thereby helping the coachee come up with solutions. I knew I was coming in with some ideas too quickly, but thought a perceptual positions exercise would help in the early stages of the session (I asked the coachee to imagine he was his old boss, acting as a mentor to JP and how he might tackle the problem). I also tried the T-Focus approach of Downey. We now realise that between us we have a lot of coaching tools to hand, and we are both learning when it is appropriate to use them and adapt them.

I felt I had done more tell than coach but, in fact, what I had done was to dress up 'telling' in the form of several questions; and if they were leading, it was well disguised. Certainly, from the client feedback we are receiving, our developing style of blended coaching-consultancy is beginning to work. The

coachee not only goes away with a tangible result, they own it, have a will to do it, and gain the benefit of additional ideas from the coach-consultants.

The only downside from our point of view, as with any coaching intervention, is that the coaches never see the end result in situ (i.e. we can help formulate a direction of travel, even experience some of the journey, but never enjoy, at least not first-hand, the arrival.).

The conduct of, and outcome from, this case study has caused us to consider another possible application of the Griffonage approach, and that could be, to our knowledge, the unique role of 'external mentor'. Our thinking is as follows. We could combine the role, and therefore skills, of the external business and wellbeing coach with the traditional role of the mentor (who, internally, provides advice and guidance to a more junior executive) and the expertise of two HR professionals and consultants in what we might describe as 'an external mentoring service for new HR Directors'.

Such a service could be of considerable benefit to new HR Directors such as JP. Furthermore, it would introduce a potential buyer of our services to the full benefit of the Griffonage approach. However, this concept would only be truly successful if the company we were working for had been a Griffonage client long enough for us to have gained a deep understanding of its business plan and culture; one like JP's where we have placed many of their senior people. That inside knowledge would be essential so that we could position our professional knowledge in the context of the role and company as a mentor does.

Our learning from this case study was predominantly how well we gelled as a pair of coaches, and how well we gelled with the coachee after the light bulb moment and then were all bouncing ideas from each other so coming up with a tangible plan. We all learnt from the experience in a variety of ways. JP became part of the team.

Table 12 – Summary of learning for case study 9

<b>New learning from this experience</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - One well considered idea can make a dynamic difference to a session.</li> <li>2 - Able to use more coaching tools.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	Our services could include acting as external HR mentors.
<b>What learning, collectively, was carried over from last time?</b>	
<b>Rebekah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 - Be bolder &amp; more confident – generally yes</li> <li>2 - Keep learning from research &amp; experience – yes</li> <li>3 - Coaching gets better results than telling - yes</li> <li>4 - Be more patient, allow the coachee to dictate the pace of the session – to an extent.</li> </ul>
<b>Michael</b>	Build on the team lessons as previously described – yes.

**What have we learnt as a team?**

- 1 - Way of working together and with coachee gelling excellently.
- 2 - Coachee engaged with both coaches, felt a positive chemistry, and liked their different but integrated styles and experiences.
- 3 - Complete trust in each other to coach.
- 4 - The coachee is part of the team.
- 5 - Reinforcement of team lessons from previous case study.
- 6 - We have arrived as a genuine learning team. We must now maintain this continuous development.

#### **4.10 Summary of learning**

The overall aim of the DProf learning outcomes is to advance the interests of the candidate and the candidate's professional area. As Mason (2002:01) recognises, professional development is about becoming more expert and is "a form of personal enquiry to broaden and deepen professional sensitivities to notice and act". Kolb states that the experiential learning model links education, work and personal development (1984), and we have certainly learnt a great deal about the professions, and the industries within which we currently operate. As a result, we believe we have achieved our aim of exploring and growing as a learning team because we have developed not only an approach to, and style of, working but also a highly effective learning team. Sometimes this is demonstrated by individual learning that has benefited the team, and in other cases where working together has given us ideas and a better understanding of what we are doing, how we are doing it, and why.

In summary, the learning resulting from the nine case studies is as follows.

##### **4.10.1 Rebekah**

I learnt about two new professions and how to undertake them. I learnt from Michael to devil down more in interviews (in particular cases 1 and 2) and not accept superficiality from myself or candidates, and to rephrase questions if I was not gaining the result I was seeking. I realized that, if you do not know, keep questioning until you do (case study 2). In addition, I have learnt how to incorporate existing learning from 'tell' into coaching and coaching-consultancy (case 9), and utilize my performance experience in recruitment in terms of candidates' presentation and body language (cases 1 and 6). Nevertheless, however much one has learnt in the past, I recognize it can be forgotten and must, therefore, be kept up to date (case 8). Other past experiences from politics were useful (cases 1 and 8).

I recognized that the best strategy to learn is through a mix of observation, dialogue, hands-on experience and reading. I realized I am very much a visual learner and not an audio one, and that by nature I am more of a

teacher than a coach; hence the preference for consultancy rather than pure coaching. However, I now appreciate that coaching helps the third party learn more and feel more empowered than straight telling; imparting knowledge can be done through questioning (cases 8 and 9). I now fully recognize the need to prepare better rather than rushing into things (in particular case study 2).

Michael has introduced me to the private sector and how to work with senior people within it, especially areas new to me such as A&D, logistics and automotive. Also to this world overseas (as in cases 1 and 3).

In terms of personal reflexivity, my background has involved people in a people setting (e.g. working with constituents in the public sector, the human resources and equalities aspects of the London Fire Authority, looking after musicians in an orchestra and their audiences, and so forth), as opposed to Michael who's background has been one of people in a military or business setting. My focus has been more on those things that I particularly value, such as live-work balance, implications for those around the coachee or candidate (his wife/partner and children), and a balanced role fit, rather than the harder edged side of business, which is equally important, but which I have less experience of.

Thus my past experiences could be said to have softened the shape of the research output. If anything the research has shown me that I still care more about people and their wellbeing than profits, and that companies who value the former generally do better at the latter in the longer term – something we both agree with.

Reflexively, I have also recognized that my style could have resulted in a very different outcome for our candidates and coachees had I been operating alone. For example: my impatience with psychological underpinnings in case study 8 could have led the coachee to think less deeply about himself; and my desire to solve problems rather than let the coachee do it could have meant case study 9 came to a conclusion

regarding the way ahead that was based on less facts had Michael not worked on these first. Thus, I believe I have become more aware of my approach to professional practice, understanding how I feel in certain situations, and the limitations of my understanding and practice. Equally, recognizing the personal values of Michael, and his wish for me to learn and to help in that learning, have impacted on his actions within the project and the building of our business.

Finally, the study and practice of experiential learning has been illuminating and of great value, rather than rushing through life and only thinking as far as tomorrow. "If you can't learn from experience, what else is there?" as Rosencrantz said to Guildenstern in Tom Stoppard's play.

#### **4.10.2 Michael**

At the same time, I have learnt about being a mentor (all case studies, especially the earlier ones). To start with, whilst I had a very willing and quick to learn mentee, it was doubly demanding because I had to think of the client and candidate or coachee as well. Also, unlike most mentor:mentee situations within a company, the mentee had no knowledge of the business of the company or its clients. Furthermore, to make my learning curve even steeper, we were attempting to build a future learning team – something we knew little about – which, unusually, combined the mentor and mentee. This was made easier, however, recognizing the value of Van den Bossche et al's (2006) point that where there were different views and divergent interpretations by each team member, they could be used positively through dialogue with each other rather than debate; and that different experiences, values and knowledge are more effective in problem solving than by individuals working alone.

On the other side of the coin, like most mentors I had learnt a great deal from the mentee, not just in respect of her areas of expertise such as wellbeing and presentational skills, and her personal capabilities, values, behaviour, likes and dislikes, but also, by trial and error, how to build a genuine team. Again, we not only know how it should be done from book

learning, and the benefits when successful, we have put it into practice, and learnt precious lessons as we progressed. Lessons were learnt and tested during very demanding economic circumstances. As our new business continues to grow, and we are increasingly asked for assistance on team development, this lesson is particularly pertinent to our project aim. There were definitely times of 'unlearning' for me resulting in behavioural change by accepting new perspectives from Rebekah (Hedberg 1981).

Finally, from the mentor:mentee relationship, I had learnt a great deal about myself that otherwise would not have surfaced, and even if it had I would not have had the responsibility to take on board those lessons and apply them to the benefit of my mentee and the team we were creating. I could have done what so many people do – ignore them and carry on with the same old behaviour. Being a mentor in this situation has been a very valuable aid to my continuing professional and personal development.

There were four particularly important business lessons for me. The first concerned ensuring that we, *and the client*, really understood the *need* behind a recruitment assignment. Clarity of aim, and then agreed conduct thereafter, plus continuing communication, are essential. These are facts that I know only too well, but I did not apply them as well as I should, so I let down myself, Rebekah, and the client, even though the latter's behavior did not help (case study 2). We put matters right in case study 6 (which linked to study 2), but it should not have happened at all.

The second lesson concerned our poor commercial handling of case study 5. Again, I should have known better; but I let my judgment be clouded by the pressure of not losing a client in difficult economic circumstances. We won't do that again either; and it is most fortunate that we were able to assist the client in the way we did, and particularly that our predicted outcomes if he did not take the course we suggested, came to pass. In a sense we covered ourselves in glory, but it was only good business with regards to reputation. And whilst reputation can help gain clients, it does not pay the bills.

The third lesson arose from case studies 2 and 6: the value of using our knowledge of human behavior gained as coaches when dealing with clients. There is no doubt about it, this increasing understanding of human psychology, which underpins our three areas of service – recruitment, coaching and consultancy - is such a valuable asset with *all* aspects of our business.

The fourth lesson concerned the construction of an assignment which involved back-to-back interviews, especially many time zones away from the UK. It must take regard of the physical and mental energy required so as to ensure the most professional conduct; timing and recuperation are important.

With psychology in mind, a cautionary lesson here for both of us, and in particular for me with my keen interest in psychology-backed coaching, is the importance of ensuring its subtle and covert use during a recruitment interview (case study 2) so as to gain the best result.

Another important lesson for me in respect of recruitment involved the interviewing of prospective chairmen (case study 4). Here, my much earlier experience of advising such people came to my aid, plus my social background and general professional expertise, but I was nervous to start with, especially because of the significance of the assignment to Griffonage as well as to the client, so the successful outcome was a substantial boost to my confidence. This assignment also reinforced the need for sensitivity in handling elites; to have made a mistake with that would have had equally damaging consequences.

Regarding coaching, the lessons here for me have been legion; not just from the case studies themselves, but in particular from the desk research. My eyes have been opened to a raft of theoretical underpinnings, philosophies and techniques that, until I undertook the project, I was only vaguely aware of. Indeed, many of them, especially the lesser-used ones, I had not even heard of; and even those I had, I knew only superficially. This has been one

of the great benefits of the DProf project for me, especially as it underpins everything that Griffonage is built on.

Coupled with the above, however, is the recognition that we cannot be masters at everything, otherwise we risk superficiality, and so an important lesson here is to focus on a select number of underpinning philosophies, really understand them, their associated techniques and application, and then utilize them singly or in combination, as best befits the coachee, their situation, and their need at the moment.

The final lesson for me flows from the comments above concerning mentoring and, at the same time, trying to create a learning team from the mentor and mentee. There were conflicting factors. On the one hand I really wanted Rebekah to be an equal partner and, having taken that decision, encouraged her to be so in every way I could. On the other, like her, I am very independent. I was also used to working alone for the previous 12 years, something that had been successful and, although lonely, made sure the control of any situation was in my hands. It took me some time to relinquish that control, and it is to Rebekah's credit that she recognized this and allowed me the necessary space. If this crucial learning by us both had not taken place there would have been no team. But it did, and it is probably *the* most important lesson to arise from this project for both of us. The trust between us that has arisen from it is the core and foundation of how we go forward together successfully.

#### **4.10.3 Team**

In addition to the team lessons referred to above, we highlight the following.

Not to be too enthusiastic with a new approach, especially when candidates are sensitive to such things (cases 2 and 6); to apportion each section of a recruitment interview as much as one can in advance so that the candidate understands the shape of the interview (case 6 in particular); and not to be impatient when a coachee needs more time (case 8).

Furthermore, that to concentrate too much on the learning to be gained from team working can have a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the team task (case 1).

We also learnt the value, not only of action research methodology, but of reflection in aiding us learn more about ourselves, why we do things, and how we can improve them for clients, and for our own personal and professional satisfaction. Our coachee in case study 8 also learnt the value of reflection through our interventions, and that prior learning when applied appropriately to a current situation can often be most valuable, even if that learning stems from a totally different environment.

As a result of this project we have become even more aware of the ethical considerations of recruitment, coaching and consultancy. We ensured all project participants were comfortable with our methods. We have been able to incorporate these approaches into our business and uphold even higher ethical standards.

Additionally, we have learnt that the team is not just Michael and Rebekah, but all the people involved directly, and indirectly, in an assignment. With recruitment not just the candidates but also the client; with coaching not just the coachee or coachees, but also the immediate manager and the company representative, and possibly the coachee's family as well; and with consultancy, whoever is involved overall. The involvement of these individuals will vary, but they all contribute to our learning and, if they take advantage of it, their own. This leads us to the significance of systems, and how they impact on the individual, the team and the organisation - and vice versa.

Then there is the effectiveness of our *style* of delivery, which we describe as coach-consultancy (case studies 7, 8 & 9). It has been a substantial output from this project, and something that takes full account of, and contributes to, our working as a learning team.

Finally, in terms of being a learning team, as far as the literature review is concerned, we believe we have met Edmondson's (1999) expectations through reflection, questioning, and feedback. From Parmelee & Michaelsen (2010) that we have applied our knowledge throughout the assignment, and considered the theory and then experienced the practice (Michaelsen 1998). We shared our cognitions, emotions and behaviours so as to improve team performance (Kayes & Burnett 2006) and, most importantly, changed our collective level of knowledge and, as a result, improved performance (Ellis et al 2003).

#### 4.10.4 **Disadvantages & dangers**

The pitfalls of team learning according to Kayes, Kayes & Kolb (2005A) are social loafing, group think, over-dependence on a dominant leader, over-commitment to goals, and diffusion of responsibility. We do not believe we experienced any of these. We also believe we managed to avoid Kasl's (1997) fragmented and pooled learning modes for synergistic and continuous learning.

Different educational levels in a team could cause frustration between members at the rate of learning; groups that are too diverse (e.g. from differing cultural backgrounds who have had no experience of working within a global team and, therefore, cultural norms (Yorks et al 2003) or too similar (e.g. too many Alpha males competing with each other) - these were not issues that we experienced.

The disadvantages have been that, had we started as a more equal pair, early candidates and coachees may have received a better service from us; and that, for example, Michael may have been able to add more to a session without having to concern himself so much with Rebekah in the early stages. Another disadvantage is that we were only two, whereas Michaelsen (undated) states that learning teams should consist of a group of five to seven people. More people in our team could have brought wider experiences and alternative ideas to the application of a learning team approach for recruiter-coach-consultants. Nevertheless, to a degree this is

ameliorated by the fact that when undertaking an assignment there are always more people involved than just Michael and Rebekah as commented on above. However, it is worth noting that Van den Bossche et al (2006) recognise that the number of team members can influence the outcome and the larger the group the more potential problems they could encounter.

The danger could have been that one personality did not share space or ideas with the other, dominated an interview or coaching session to the exclusion of the other, was overtly negative or indecisive, or did not allow sessions to flow. However, as described, because of our will to support and learn from each other, and our recognition that to do so was fundamental to our overall success, this did not happen.

#### **4.10.5 Professions**

In chapter three we mentioned data gathering from interviews with CEOs, HR Directors, Managing Directors, previous candidates, and potential clients. This was of greater importance, as mentioned in the methodology, to our original aim; however, because of its relevance to the post-recessionary context of our aim we have included the most salient points learnt from these interviews and surveys below.<sup>2</sup>

Head-hunters who provide a deep knowledge of senior recruitment, pertinent advice when constructing an assignment brief, an appreciation of market trends, a substantial and relevant network, and sector insight, can all be of great assistance to the client. Similarly, a long-term engagement with the company, and a willingness to stay involved, are particularly valued.

Search firms really need to listen to clients' requests and not just send a scattering of candidates from old databases. Clients require a genuine understanding of their needs. This means effective questioning and careful attention to detail during briefing meetings; something better undertaken by a team of two than by one recruiter alone.

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<sup>2</sup> Survey results are set out in Appendix 3. Interviews with clients were written up as notes afterwards as opposed to verbatim, hence they are not recorded in the appendix.

A team who undertake the whole job from start to finish is likely to achieve a better result than an individual recruiter who hands it down to a junior; not only does the client benefit from the senior team's experience, but handing jobs down has the potential for important facts to be forgotten or missed.

Personal chemistry and cultural fit are very important at this level, and a head-hunter needs to be aware of this (with two people interviewing as a team, greater awareness of dynamics, style, discourse, body language, behavior, and so forth, can be observed than by one person alone who is both asking questions, and taking notes).

References are frequently poorly checked by head-hunters; so one CEO engaged another firm to do more thorough checks (a team of recruiters could offer this service as part of their package to companies).

Although some would disagree, largely, coaches who understand business are of more value (to business clients) than those who do not (and a team can bring more past experience to an assignment than just one coach's experience).

Most companies appear to engage their coaches through recommendation rather than on qualifications (again, within a team, two coaches can spend more time on networking than one alone).

Several interviewees mentioned that their senior executives really valued coaching, especially in relation to bringing teams together and then developing them. With a large team, in particular, this is a task more easily, and effectively, undertaken by two coaches working hand-in-hand.

Another interviewee mentioned that several of her senior executives would not take kindly to being told their presentation style was poor, but if such advice was given through the medium of coaching, it could be better received (something that our mind and body approach can help with).

To conclude, by learning from, and with, each other, plus continuously researching our market place and undertaking co-ordinated professional development, such as this joint DProf, we believe we have created not only a more effective approach to recruitment, coaching and consultancy than is currently available in the market, but that its style of delivery is, according to our clients, most effective for them.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions

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### 5.1 Framework

The aim of this project was to explore and develop a learning team approach to executive search, coaching and consultancy in a post-recession market.

Our terms of reference were to investigate this journey within the boundaries of our industries and seniority levels, demographics, geographies, and post-recession climate, during the period of Spring 2009 - Autumn 2010.

Within a methodology of action research, we used data collected from observations, dialogues and learning journals, as well as surveys, interviews and desk research, to learn and grow as a team of practitioners. From this, we also had to ensure that our level five learning outcomes had been achieved.

Our outcome is largely one of self-analysis looking at how the journey has improved our work and our working together, and that some of these experiences may be of benefit to our peers and, indeed, other professions.

### 5.2 The benefits of being a learning team

So what are we doing differently now than before? Section 1.3.2.4, defining our approach, grew as a result of this study, and we certainly did not start with all these services.

We also recognised through reflection that what we thought we were doing at the start of the process was superficial compared with how we operated at the end. In substantial terms, what do we now do so differently than before? Through growing as a partnership, *in essence what has changed has been the quality of what we do*, largely because we keep going back to it through this framework asking ourselves, what could we do better?

### **5.2.1 Recruitment**

One example has been improved written material. Client briefs are now much more comprehensive, detailed and related to the real need of the client company. We learnt in at least two of the above cases (2 and 5) to pin down the client so as to truly understand what he really required. When he was spending that much money on a new member of staff, let alone on the overall recruitment cost, at the end of the process he would have forgotten that our initial meeting went on half an hour longer than he had diarised, but he would not forget an inappropriate short list of candidates who had been miss-sold the job by a search team that did not understand their remit.

From this we were able to provide much improved, and therefore effective, briefs to our researchers and our candidates. Why were we able to do this? Because with two of us, one could write notes as the other questioned the client, and two minds are usually better than one, so Michael would remember something that Rebekah had forgotten to ask, and vice versa. Rebekah tended to concentrate more on the 'pastoral' side of the appointment in terms of role fit, live-work balance, softer skills, and management techniques; whereas Michael, not oblivious to these points, was also interested in the business outcomes expected of the role. Overall we were able to question the client more fully than perhaps one search executive could.

Because we learnt about the theoretical underpinnings to coaching as we progressed through this study another example has been, in our opinion, an improvement in the quality and depth of our recruitment questions. What we thought were 'coaching-style' questions at the outset were often too enthusiastically, incorrectly or naively asked (case 2). Learning to appreciate the nuances, listening to feedback from candidates, and getting the balance right, helped improve these.

Such questions helped us establish, for example: how candidates have gained their skills and experiences, developed their personal competencies, learnt from their previous roles, and carried the lessons forward to the

benefit of themselves and their employer; how they could apply those lessons to the role under consideration against the background of the client's circumstances, needs and culture; how those experiences changed them as professionals, managers and people; what qualities they look for in people they work with and for, and those that report to them; how they handle different types of people and situations; how they can apply their skills, experiences and competencies in different ways to add previously unrecognised additional value to the company and themselves. The list is almost endless; it is aimed at not just placing the right person in the right company and role, but also, at such a senior level, at finding that extra something that raises the average to the excellent for both client and candidate.

Additionally, the candidate often learnt something about themselves in the process (cases 1 and 4 – interestingly both Americans). This was because, as a team, we explain the rationale behind the self-preparation work we ask candidates to undertake before an interview with the client. This, in turn, helps them learn more about themselves and why this next career move is right, or wrong, for them; and at such a seniority level a wrong move can have a substantial career, family and financial impact on an individual, as well as a damaging effect on the employer which, in itself, can reflect back on the reputations of the candidate and the head-hunter.

As a result, the client received a more comprehensive and in-depth report at the end of the search process, with more information about the candidate's behaviour, people-management skills, aspirations, and what they were looking for in terms of challenge, future advancement, and employer culture including senior management style; all critically important at the level we recruit at (as demonstrated by the candidates and clients in cases 3 and 5, and verbally from clients in our latter assignments). Again this worked better with a team approach largely because of the reasons above in terms of questioning, listening, writing-up and covering each other in any gaps.

Additionally, in discussions afterwards, two closely co-ordinated interviewers also remember more about the client requirements than one person alone, and they can question more deeply as to why a candidate should be short-listed rather than applying the 'gut feeling' of one recruiter (in particular cases 2 and 3). This immediate post-interview questioning between the two of us also benefitted candidates. It would appear from recruitment interviews - case 6 and mentioned in feedback after completing case study 8 - that candidates are rarely given feedback after an interview with a head-hunter on how they performed; to do so helps them learn for the next interview.

Candidates also seemed to approve of our approach to, and delivery of, recruitment interviews, with 82% of responders stating that two interviewers working as a team generally put them at ease, feeling "comfortable," "safe," "relaxed" and "refreshing" (cases 1, 2, 4 and 6). All bar one of the candidates who replied to our survey said they felt we worked well together as a pair of recruiters.

The quality of our dialogue post-interview improved immensely over the period of this project. At the start, Rebekah would defer to Michael's experienced judgement, but soon learnt to, respectfully, ask questions and devil down as to why he came to that conclusion. Similarly, Michael could suggest that Rebekah slowed down, really thought about the issue, and so provided depth and reasoning behind her opinion. This led to the provision of higher quality candidate short lists, carefully considered and critiqued, than if one recruiter had been working alone.

When two interviewers do work together, particularly in the totally integrated fashion we do, then one can support the other, especially if one is ill or tired but, being self-employed, still has to work (cases 1 and 2); or where one has more experience and confidence than the other (case 4). This team working can also help ethically, if one is feeling under par, the other can remind them of the professional expectations placed upon them.

Finally, a combined male and female team can often cover more ground, and pose questions from different perspectives to candidates (and coachees). Because there were two of us, sometimes it was easier for one of us to ask certain awkward, but necessary, questions. Michael might use his age (cases 3 and 7) or Rebekah her gender (cases 7 and 8) to gently make or probe a point in an interview (or coaching session) that may have been too difficult for the candidate to respond to if coming from the other. Although it has never happened with us, if a candidate, or indeed a coachee, does not gel with either Michael's or Rebekah's personality, rather than wasting the entire session, they can at least work with one or the other of us.

### **5.2.2 Coaching**

As we learnt about our practice, so we improved in its implementation, gaining an increasing understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and how to make further and better use of the many techniques and tools involved as applied to both our own, and each other's, specialisms. A diverse but complementary team can be more beneficial for the coachee in terms of the greater number of areas that can be attended to than one coach operating alone; e.g. psychological, physiological, business, personal, performance and leadership (especially cases 7 and 8). Additionally, two coaches working synergistically as we do can soften the experience for the coachee, making it less intense (case 9).

From our survey of recruitment candidates, 13/17 liked the idea of recruiter-coaches and 15/17 saw a role for a life-cycle of executive development, including coaching and career counselling. Recruiter-coaches who have already recruited the coachee not only understand the client's business environment, aim and culture, better than a coach going in cold, they are also able to establish rapport and trust more quickly because of their earlier role as recruiters (cases 7 & 9). In addition, as coaches they can help develop limitations in the successful candidate's abilities if they had not been able to find the perfect match against the person specification (case 6) – something we had not considered before this project.

### **5.2.3 Consultancy and facilitation**

Regarding consultancy, like everything else we now do, we have developed a way of working that takes full advantage of our respective strengths and, at the same time, helps each of us to learn. A significant effect is that we not only see the impact on our own performance, but also how that impacts on the other, and therefore the team as a whole. Thus the team increasingly improves in effect and result, substantiating the saying that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.

Furthermore, by utilising our growing coaching knowledge and expertise during consultancy assignments or, conversely, our consultancy expertise during coaching assignments (case studies 7, 8 & 9) we believe we have developed a style which is both effective and comfortable for our clients. This has added considerably to our model of practice. Regarding consultancy there is a partial similarity here with the findings of Borredon et al (2011) whereby French professors, as learning managers responsible for newly created learning teams, found their role reversed from 'the teller of all things' to facilitating their group of students.

Turning to group facilitation, Michael takes the natural lead in asking questions, and 'managing' the participants and their agenda, as is best suited to his style, whilst Rebekah writes notes, and makes quiet observations to Michael. It is very difficult for one person to both lead and note, especially if the client wants a written brief afterwards, so facilitation is a perfect use of teamwork.

### **5.2.4 Business**

In terms of conducting business, whilst Michael, for example, was dealing with current clients, Rebekah was able to research potential new ones, knowing what fields Michael wanted to work in, but also suggesting new options that she found along the way. With a team we had a current and future business development programme which one person, who is also a practitioner, would not have the time to undertake alone. Rebekah, for example, was also able to point out researched industry news items whilst

Michael was finessing a brief or calling a client, so keeping the team up to date whilst Michael ensured the team was generating business. Both Michael and Rebekah were able to research information on current and potential clients and share it, meaning they attended meetings armed with more data than one recruiter-coach working alone might be able to collect.

The research process also alerted us to the fact that our initial contact with HR Directors concerning coaching was weak, and that we needed to put into place better protocols to involve them and so understand why the company wanted an employee coached.

Ultimately, many recruiters, coaches and consultants work alone, especially if they are self-employed. We all experience de-motivating, demoralising periods when work is no fun. However, working as a pair can help to spark one into action, give the other a pep talk, or be a shoulder to cry on, which you do not have alone. It may be lonely at the top of a company, but it is even lonelier when you are a company of one. When you are self-employed a learning team environment makes work less stressful and more stimulating, challenging, innovative, nurturing, communicative, exploring, and supportive.

### **5.2.5 Academia**

As researcher-practitioners, the benefits of being a team were that we could bring more data to this project than possibly one person alone, share and discuss information, enhance the academic learning by considering and questioning it together, learning from each other, supporting each other, commiserating and celebrating with each other, and generally gaining more benefit and enjoyment than if we had been alone.

Nevertheless, there were obstacles to overcome. One example was our different writing styles. Michael comes from a formal, trained, background of briefs for the MOD and Government, and Rebekah from a more journalistic experience, writing local and national press releases for politicians. So we had to find a way to write this paper that ensured our individual as well as

joint 'voices' were heard in a clear and uncluttered fashion. Inevitably this involved compromise; but because the project was fundamentally about creating a learning team we, quite literally, learnt from each other, taking advantage of each other's strengths, and made it happen.

### **5.3 How did we come to these conclusions?**

Through triangulation, and trying to ensure all voices have been heard, we believe we have selected the most relevant data for our aim. In by far the majority of situations both the internal and external data have agreed with each other, and they have compared well with expectations in terms of an improved output to third parties from when we started.

Relating back to the summary of the literature review at 2.5, as Edmondson et al (2007) noted, there is little research on learning teams in the workplace (especially in the UK), as opposed to the quantity of information on using learning teams in education, and we hope this study has added a little to that. Where there are empirical studies on the benefits of team learning in all environments (e.g. Edmondson 1999, Van den Bossche et al 2006, Solansky 2008, Marquardt et al 2010) they, like this study, are generally positive.

We recognise Michaelsen (undated), Fink (2004), and Scott-Ladd & Chan's (2008) concerns about varying abilities in teams, but by helping each other learn we have not had a problem with this. We would concur with Griffiths & Campbell (2009) and Sofo et al (2010) that there are positive links between team learning, learning through coaching and experiential learning, as we hope we have demonstrated above. We have also experienced the enhancement of learning through reflection and reflexivity as noted by Sofo et al (2010), Corley & Thorne (2006), and Marquardt & Waddill (2006).

Finally, we recognise that there are numerous coaching approaches and underpinning philosophies and theories, but by taking the approach we have, of a managed range of complementary theoretical underpinnings, coupled with business expertise, a wide range of complementary experiences, and the willingness to be flexible, we believe our approach has been, and will

continue to be, beneficial to our candidates, coachees and clients, as advocated by Zeus & Skiffington (2008) and, at the same time, has created a mechanism for us to learn continuously. Consequently, we believe our study confirms that a learning team approach in work, whether in our professions, or any other, is more beneficial than attempting something alone.

#### **5.4 Efficacy**

At Table 1 in 3.3.1.3, at 3.3.2.2, and at 3.5, we made references to how we would know whether we had been effective in this study.

- We have used the action research cycle in our case studies, learning from previous experience and carrying it into our next case study.
- We believe that the case studies have demonstrated that we have both grown in our understanding of and ability to be a learning team, despite having different start points in terms of knowledge and experience. We believe this is reflected in the responses from those we have worked with as well as client feedback.
- This experience has certainly changed our working practices for the better, especially as we are receiving growing interest from the market about our work (and in new areas of industry) since undertaking the study.
- Both our voices have been expressed throughout the project.
- We have increased our knowledge through practical undertakings, dialogue, reflective journaling, by research, and by studying the literature.

#### **5.5 What could we have improved?**

It is undoubtedly the case that if we had been able to undertake a team coaching assignment then the project would have been improved. To have been able to put into action with a third party the team learning we had undertaken ourselves would have further enhanced our learning.

Unfortunately, the first budget that suffers in a recession is training, and no client was prepared to engage us in that respect at that time.

However, now that training budgets are no longer quite so constrained we are starting to experience post-recession team coaching assignments. The attraction for these companies is that we can not only help them develop learning teams, but we are one ourselves, so we practice what we preach, thereby enhancing our credibility considerably. This is something no coach can do alone and, for all the reasons indicated in 5.2, cannot be undertaken by a loosely connected group of coaches.

Finally, if we were to undertake a similar project in the future we would give more consideration to the preparation and conduct of the methodology.

## **Chapter 6 – Recommendations & transferability**

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### **6.1 Replication**

Should companies wish to establish coaching, learning teams, they might like to consider the following:

- Which areas of the business would benefit the most from this approach? Who best within those areas would advocate the change? Which personalities would work best together? What training would be required (including an external coach to initiate the team learning process)? What metrics would measure success? How such collaborative working could reduce the cost of external consultants and, when external consultants were used, how employees could best learn from and with them during the assignment?
- This last point could develop into a quasi-team, consisting of internal and external participants, both learning from each other on an assignment (the external learning more about the culture and practices of the company, and the internal learning from the consultant's experience). For example, this could be particularly pertinent when an HR director was working with an HR/recruitment consultant and developing a new induction process following a recruitment assignment.

Should individual practitioners wish to replicate a learning team approach to their work, we would recommend the following:

- Taking time to consider what they wish to achieve, both in the short and longer term; what their areas of expertise are, and that they wish to follow as professionals; where there are gaps in their knowledge that another practitioner could fill, and what CPD would be advantageous; what complementary expertise and knowledge they are seeking so as to provide a more comprehensive or extended service to their clients; what personality the other practitioner(s) should have in order to work

well with them; and whether they are looking to work with a more experienced partner, or someone newly trained.

- Establishing a jointly agreed methodology of practice is important so as to be operating from the same framework. So too is agreeing the ethical, confidentiality and professional standards they will practice, which should be agreed at the outset to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.
- Agreeing the practicalities of partnership working: whether they can be based as a virtual team when not with clients; how many hours they wish to work; a fee structure and overheads; respective responsibilities; workload share; and communication.
- Deciding the markets or sub-sectors of their professions they wish to specialise in, or whether they wish to be generalists.
- Selecting which professional body, for example the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, Associate of Coaches, etc., would best represent their interests.

Should our peers wish to replicate a learning team, we recommend that the following attributes would be advantageous and, therefore, should be considered:

- A male and female combination can cover different perspectives and draw out different lines of questioning in recruitment, coaching and consultancy.
- Different ages can help make third parties more comfortable, combining a (hopefully) wiser, older head with the enthusiasm and energy of someone younger. They can also act as mentors to each other in respect of generational and background differences.

- Different but complementary backgrounds can bring more experience and expertise to a team, thereby providing greater relevant breadth and depth to clients and coaches. For example, in our case, Michael's interest and expertise in the psychological side, and Rebekah's in the physiological.
- When dealing with either the psychological or physiological, it is important to remember that, unless the coach is also a qualified psychiatrist or physician, they could be seen to be 'messing with people's heads or bodies'. Therefore, they should know the limitations of their practice, and where to stop and hand over to an appropriate professional. Any concerns raised in such a session should be referred back to the coaches' supervisor.
- However the team is formulated, an awareness of behavior is important because it helps to deal with communication, and therefore learning and performance within the team; and with clients in respect of how they will respond to various coaching theories and practices, and the general direction and effectiveness of an assignment.
- A form of accredited qualification is advantageous, especially in terms of understanding the theoretical underpinnings to, philosophies of, and tools for, coaching.
- Different personalities can benefit the outcome more. For example, the more outgoing, extrovert personality of Michael helps with sales, networking and engaging with people; and the more introvert nature of Rebekah gets on with the research, notes, preparation work, and so forth. Good people-handling skills are essential in such a people-orientated business.
- Similarly, whilst working with a coachee, the coaches must be perceptive regarding when to use directive or non-directive

approaches, and which will be of greater value to the coachee as a result.

- Working together at all stages of an assignment, in terms of thorough planning, thorough application, and two-way rather than one-way reflection and review, benefits the outcome.
- The personalities must be prepared to be a full learning team: flexible, open-minded, taking advice from each other and their peers, taking constructive criticism, and giving each other space to try (and fail). All voices in the team must be listened to with respect; if there are differences in terms of values and beliefs in the team, the reasons must be respected. A willingness to undertake continuing professional development is also advantageous. There must be a good chemistry between both coaches. As D'Andrea-O'Brien and Buono (1996:04) describe it: "Team learning is the ability of members to share and build upon their individual knowledge so that their collective knowledge enables them continually to improve team performance as well as to discover, develop and implement completely new ways of doing business."
- Where cost is prohibitive for two recruiters/ coaches/ consultants to work together, virtual communities can be established along similar lines of peer support, as long as the open mindset discussed above is present. Where the wider benefits of two experienced practitioners can be demonstrated to a client (e.g. reduced risk of re-appointment, added on-boarding, enhanced retention, etc. in respect of recruitment; less time spent with a pair of coaches who can cover wider ground, thereby eliminating separate appointments with a number of specialist coaches; and broader expertise from consultants), the cost issue lessens.

## **6.2 Additional relevance to the field**

Although this project has been based around our learning, we believe it has relevance to other fields. The following, therefore, are some further thoughts arising from this project that might be of benefit to any individual or organisation, be they operating in our professions, or in others, where performance can be enhanced through team working.

- The above information may be a starting point for external coaches who wish to work together to expand their practice. They may not have a psychological and physiological perspective each, but perhaps one is a life coach and the other a business coach; one a speech and language therapist, another an actor for enhanced presentation skills; one an HR specialist, another an occupational therapist for enhanced wellbeing in the workplace; one a venture capitalist, another a business coach for enhanced coaching for self-employed entrepreneurs – and so the list goes on.
- Similarly, we suggest this information could be of value to head-hunters and recruiters who wish to bring more to their profession and their clients by working together as a team rather than individually. For example, the way we operate provides the client with increased information regarding the candidate's skills, attributes and behavioral style than psychometric testing (which cannot be specific to the company and role, but only generic) and traditional interviewing, thereby helping reduce the risk and retention aspects of a new hire.
- Utilising a learning team approach within HR departments, especially in large and global companies, may enhance the quality of services that are provided and be more cost effective than working in silos of 'learning and development', 'recruitment', 'talent management' and so forth. It would certainly aid succession planning by working with teams cross-departmentally. It may also help HR teams better understand the consequences, and drivers, of their work in relation to the business

plan. Likewise, this approach could be adopted for internal coaches to work as teams across a company, and by manager coaches within the same and different departments. If undertaken correctly all these suggestions would increase communication, and therefore understanding and so effectiveness, within an organisation.

- Two search consultants from different, but appropriate, backgrounds could help to improve cross-cultural recruitment, especially when a company is moving into (for them) new territories, such as emerging countries, different or developing markets. Although the employment of two people may be expensive for the client, where there are particular difficulties encountered, experiences required, political or cultural sensitivities to be respected, the long-term investment by all parties might well be worthwhile.
- Two coach-consultants can improve their offering of facilitation and/or team coaching to a group of people, not only because they double the attention given to the team members, but as one works, one observes and notes, thereby improving both the delivery of the facilitation or coaching and the quality of any ensuing result.

Given the limitations of the data on learning teams in the business environment, as opposed to within education, and to an extent on learning teams in the UK as opposed to the USA, we hope this study will contribute some new knowledge to the work of coaches and head-hunters, and encourage them to think outside of their paradigm with a view to improving further their professional performance, and therefore business results and personal satisfaction. Furthermore, to do so may well encourage them to consider additional challenges, thereby enhancing even more those outcomes.

### **6.3 Epistemological reflexivity and further study**

The aim of the study was to look at ourselves as a learning team and how we grew and developed as one. Obviously this limited the scope of the study. As Edmondson et al (2007) state, there is less data on learning teams in the work environment, and other researchers may be interested to study this aspect of learning teams.

Furthermore, to a degree the methodology we adopted has limited the scope of the study, and given the analysis of the data a certain steer, which has been discussed above. Should future researchers wish to study themselves as a learning team, a different methodology may produce an interesting and alternative stance on the subject. For example, a more anthropological study could have put the researchers in a more objective observational position than with this study

Finally, although the UK economy has emerged from recession, recognising the very turbulent and uncertain global economic situation as we complete this report, it would be interesting to see how the learning team approach has been advanced in, say, five years' time within business.

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# Appendices

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## 1 – Ethics letter to candidates & coachees

Dear ...

Michael Smith and Rebekah Gilbert are undertaking Doctorates in Professional Studies at Middlesex University's Department of Work-based Learning. They are looking into their unique approach to conducting recruitment and coaching assignments and how it benefits candidates, coachees and client companies over other approaches currently in use.

Their basic premise is that employing two inter-related recruiter-coaches working together, each with their respective but complementary areas of expertise (one psychological and other physiological) rather than a single coach, or series of coaches, for each coachee offers a greater scope of experience and expertise to the coachee, thereby enabling him or her to use each session to cover more (usually related) areas in more depth at any one time than is possible with one coach alone or series of coaches.

In addition, when undertaking recruitment assignments, that by employing the knowledge and expertise gained through professional coaching not only can a more detailed picture of the candidates be obtained on behalf of the client, but also the candidates themselves can gain increased insight into their reasons for applying for an appointment, the strengths that they can bring to the role, and how they wish their careers to develop. The overall result being a much increased likelihood of placing the right person in the right job and company thereby markedly reducing the risk involved to both parties.

In order to demonstrate their findings, Michael and Rebekah will be writing a number of case studies based on professional coaching and recruitment assignments. We would like to invite you to participate in one of those case studies.

Everything discussed will be thoroughly anonymised. We will take copious notes during our meetings, but the end result will delete your name and any references from which your identity could be assumed. Likewise, professionally, we will keep all records secured, and our academic work in addition to our professional work similarly secured and protected within data protection rules.

Each case study may involve a single recruitment interview, or such an interview followed by a series of coaching sessions. We would like to work with you in whichever respect is relevant so as to demonstrate the benefits of our method and ascertain if and how it could be enhanced. Should you at any time wish to withdraw from the study you would be free to do so,

although we would ask your reason for doing so in case we have, inadvertently, for example, caused you offence, or you feel uncomfortable with the study in any way, or for personal or business reasons.

You will have the opportunity to read the case study in which you are involved should you so wish and, if you require us to make any changes, we will endeavour to do so.

There will be no difference from taking part in a professional recruitment interview and/or coaching session; our interviews/coaching sessions will be conducted as normal. All we ask is that, after the recruitment interview/coaching session you provide us with full, frank and open feedback on how you felt it was conducted, whether you felt comfortable during the interview/coaching session, whether you met your personal (and company if relevant) objectives, whether you felt the session was a benefit, details of areas in which you felt we could improve, and so forth.

We operate within the ethical guidelines of both the Chartered Institute of Personal & Development and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, of which we are members.

Should you wish to talk to us about any element before the recruitment/coaching session, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## 2 - Survey responses from recruitment candidates

All candidates were approached by email, with the following information:

Dear....

### A Joint Doctorate in Executive Recruitment & Coaching

You may remember when we met we mentioned that we were undertaking a joint doctorate in executive recruitment and coaching with Middlesex University. Our research project is looking to establish whether using two interviewers and taking a more holistic approach to the interview (based on our coaching experience) is of more benefit to both the client (in providing him with a more comprehensive picture of the candidate) and the candidate (to help him more fully understand the job and how it suits his strengths and career aspirations).

We fully appreciate that the interview was [a while ago], and that you are very busy, but we would be extremely grateful if you were able to answer a few questions about the process, which would then be of considerable help to us in gathering data for the study. Naturally, when the study was complete we would provide you with a copy of our findings.

If you are able to participate we would ask you to answer the following questions in as much depth as possible providing full and frank feedback. Additionally, we would ask you to include details of those areas in which you feel we could improve (they say you learn best from your mistakes so please do feel free to be honest!).

We operate within the ethical guidelines of both the Chartered Institute of Personal & Development and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council, of which we are members. We will ensure that:

- All data will be fully anonymised and treated with respect.
- All data will remain confidential and secured on password protected computers, and notes will be shredded.
- No information will be passed back to an employer or third party.
- Differences between company and personal views will be acknowledged.
- Participants are free to read what we have written about their case and will receive a de-briefing about it should they so wish.

The end result is likely to demonstrate the pros and cons of our approach and contain little or no personal data about the source of the remarks, so you can be assured of complete confidentiality in what you write.

If you feel you are able to help, we would be enormously grateful and very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours  
Rebekah Gilbert & Michael Smith

Questionnaire for the joint doctorate project of Michael Smith and Rebekah Gilbert.

Middlesex University, 2009/10.

We would be grateful if, after you have stated yes or no, you could elaborate as to why.

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

NAME / SIGNED:.....

DATE:.....

## Case study one

### RH

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I think it helped. It felt more comfortable somehow -- as if while something I said might not be of interest to Michael it might still be of interest to Rebekah. Hard for me to separate the process from the personality of the two interviewers, however. Rebekah felt "safe" but I sure that is partly a function of Rebekah.

If I were to criticize, it is that after the initial interview, I don't recall any involvement of Rebekah. Don't know what I expected, but something. Am I forgetting something? My recollection that perhaps Rebekah could also have asked more questions during the interview.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Yes. While the questioning was deep, the personality of both interviewers made it seem safe.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

Absolutely. The self assessment that I was asked to prepare caused me to think though my whole career; it was especially interesting to consider what I had learned from various successful experiences and other that were less so. The further refinement of how each experience might be relevant to the hiring company caused even deeper thinking about each experience. While completing the self assessment took 8-10 hours, I didn't mind because I felt I was somewhat of a long shot for the position and that the more the hiring company knew about me the better a chance I had.

As a side effect, several of my family and friends found it extremely interesting as most of it was unknown to them. Sure, they knew where I had worked and my titles, but my son and my best friend, for example, had no knowledge of most of the detail in the self assessment. Almost makes one think that everyone should write a "biography" for one's loved ones.

While I've been effective hiring manager, I intend to add this type of questioning to any interviews I conduct in the future. While I already discuss

experiences with candidates, I've not always asked what was learned, why it was important, and how it might apply to the subject position.

Finally, completing this questionnaire is causing me to re-reflect on what I want at this point in my career!

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Yes. First, partly because of the suggestion that I detail how each experience in the self-assessment would be relevant to the hiring company. Second, because the job would have been somewhat of a stretch because the company's business is quite different than that of any in my experience. While "stretching" is a good thing, taking such a job must be weighed carefully.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

Hmmm ... none leap to mind beyond what I've covered above and below.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Haven't been interviewed much in the past. But those I can recall were certainly far more superficial than this process. I think the depth of this process was particularly necessary given the senior level of the position combined with the fact that the company wanted to expand into a relatively new area, and so this is a high-risk hire.

When I recruit for any but the most junior of positions, I always require three interviews with me, typically one-two hours each. As short as this really is, my impression is that it is much more than is often done; I believe in depth.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Very well I thought. Michael was generally quite responsive and I found both Michael and Rebekah very congenial. Most of my experience was with Michael and I was impressed with the depth of his questioning AND his advice.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

It was OK. While I had to discover most of what I could about the company on my own, perhaps this was part of the "test", and, in any event, high tolerance for ambiguity is required at the level of the position for which I was considered. I was especially grateful for the details (both orally and written) regarding the next steps and the self assessment.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

I would not have stated this before this interview process, but learning something about myself will now be a criterion for me for a successful

interview. Beyond that, 1) gaining an accurate picture of the company and the position on my side, and 2) having the recruiter gain an accurate picture of me and being able to communicate it the hiring manager are the main outcomes I want from an interview (beyond being put forward to the next stage).

**10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?**

In this case, I do not believe I did very well with the visit to the company. Day one was understanding the company through meetings with several executives and a tour, followed by dinner. Then the morning of the second day I made a presentation. This did not leave me much time to reflect on and incorporate what I had learned from day one into my presentation, and this was compounded by jet lag. When I returned I reflected further and followed up with some ideas. The constrained time during the company visit would reward a candidate who understood the existing business of the company better than I did and could therefore react more quickly to the day one discussions and tour.

(At the end of the second day, the CEO said words to the effect that "I think you are what we said we wanted [in order to get much more deeply into aerospace and defense]; now we have to think about whether we really meant what we said, including that we are open to a candidate without substantial mechanical background." [The "hot, oily, whirly bits" as he put it.] I don't know the successful candidate's background, but I suspect it was closer to the company's existing business than mine.)

**11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?**

An outstanding idea! At this level I think a coach is most useful, and the in-depth knowledge that the recruiter gains of the successful candidate through this process should enable the coach to be highly effective very quickly and therefore help the successful candidate start the job more quickly and successfully.

**12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?**

Yes. And I've had some formal coaching in my career, although not enough.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

NAME /SIGNED: RH

DATE: July 11, 2009

**Case study two**

AB

**1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.**

On balance I think it helps - it means one person can observe & test for understanding and it means you can "spell" each other. The key is to prepare

who is covering what and not to interrupt the flow by too many follow on questions

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Don't remember feeling at all uncomfortable - so by definition must have been comfortable. If my CV had gaps or areas I wanted to avoid I might have been less comfortable.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

I think the conversations were open and straight forward - particularly around the key subject of where in the organisation the role sits. That did make me think quite clearly about what I could bring as it was clear that the interviewing team needed enough data to debate this with the client.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Not really - in UK manufacturing it is difficult to plan a career path and follow it these days (sadly), so career development is more about being open minded to opportunities. The key questions are always "what new challenges / experiences / opportunities will I gain from this opportunity?" and, "How does that compare to the challenges / experiences / opportunities will I have if I stay put?" - at that point if it is interesting you look at that against the risks & rewards from moving.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

[Left blank]

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

The interview for my current role was bizarre (after the first interview with the consultant) - at one point I found myself interrupting the interviewer (now my boss) to make sure I was actually getting to make a point or two so that he had something to discuss with the CEO if asked for any details about my background! Quite possibly the most excessive example of making up your mind in the first 15 seconds I have ever come across - This was also a two handed interview with the other interviewer now being my HR Director (always a difficult call for the interviewer here) who added very little - although that was probably sensible in the circumstances.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Different areas appeared to be clearly demarked - there was a pause to check for understanding / opportunity to tidy up any details from the note

taker / listener. Handover between the two of you worked well .....  
"Rebekah is going to cover this later" ..... "I'll hand over to Michael now to  
cover xyz unless you have any questions at this stage". It felt professional  
without being an interrogation, but I got the impression that inaccuracies in  
stories would be cross checked & tested quite thoroughly.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you  
with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with  
Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

Nothing comes to mind, apart from more financial data if it is in the public  
domain - I can get that through work, but don't feel that it is ethical

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside  
from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that  
success?

Enough information to take a view of whether or not the candidate & the  
client are a good fit for each other at the first interview. In a normal market  
(i.e. not now) I will get 1 or 2 unsolicited head hunting calls a month (less  
those filtered by my PA) - I typically only follow up on one or two a year -  
and I don't want to take 3 or 4 days out of my holiday getting down to a short  
list or deciding it's not the right company. For the client it's a very big  
decision though - so they want as much certainty as possible.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

More realistic client expectation on what the type of candidate he was  
seeking was likely to want in return.

11 If you had gained the role, would you have been prepared to be coached  
by us? Please explain why.

I thought the rapport & trust was good - and I am pro-coaching.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career  
counselling service?

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and  
Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: AB

DATE: 6th May 2009

**JM**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

In itself I didn't feel it had any real bearing on the process and I would expect two interviewers.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

I didn't feel comfortable with the questions and style, it felt more like a psychiatric appraisal. After the interview I felt the questions had been too personal too intrusive and without my prior consent to that line of questioning. I felt I was drawn down a line of questions and answers that was inappropriate to the situation and my interest in attending the interview.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

As stated above the line of questioning didn't allow me to explore the job role or my suitability. The process actually put me off proceeding further with the opportunity.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

I did potentially consider a more long term view but the lack of definition around the job role left more questions than answers. Subsequently this ambiguity and lack of clear strategy lead me to decline to proceed.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

The questioning and follow on communication was for me too assertive bordering on aggressive at times.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Positive - clear view of the job role, organisational fit and strategic positioning of the business.

Negative - Travelling long distances to attend, lack of continuity in follow up communication.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Mixed views, professional image and excellent 'sales' technique, the interview was too one sided and lacked depth of knowledge or credibility to sell the actual role to me. I had little to no opportunity to explore the role and organisation.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

Be clear about what the interview is and is not going to be. If it is going to be done 'differently' then prior warning would have been appreciated. Fore warned is fore armed.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Gaining an honest appreciation of the opportunity, having the opportunity to portrait myself honestly and appropriately.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

Clearer indication of interview style, the objectives and exclusions.

11 If you had gained the role, would you have been prepared to be coached by us? Please explain why.

Difficult to say, I suppose if I had taken the role then I would, by definition have bought into Griffonage. I would question if the style would suit me though.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I think its a fine line attempting to combine them without stepping over the line of personal coaching.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

Signed: JM

DATE: 2nd June 2009

\* \* \*

## **DB**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I think it helped the process. It provided for a more relaxed feel to the interview. Although it is very important that the roles of the interviewers are clear and there is a good balance of questioning from each. I found the interview with both Michael and Rebekah to be appropriate for the role being discussed.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

I felt comfortable. You have to expect that the interviewer will need to know personal details and career history to determine suitability for the role; so this was expected. The delivery was logical, with plenty of discussions around past roles; prevented it from just being a reading of the CV. I felt Michael and Rebekah listened to me and the interview was enjoyable.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

Yes. The interview style was very open. This was partially due to the fluidity of the role in question, and also due to the willingness of Michael and Rebekah to discuss my suitability for the role and the company's future strategy. The interview was allowed to take a different direction to that probably anticipated, by allowing me to participate in the suitability discussion. Something that is usually discussed after the candidate has left the interview.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

I did yes, helped by the open style of the interview. It left me thinking more after the interview and I later concluded that the move was not the most logical next step for me.

**5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?**

I found myself wanting to get involved with developing the strategy of the company in question. I couldn't quite see where they were going but felt I could make a valuable contribution. Unfortunately, I found it difficult to picture myself in the role and I would have been frustrated not being involved at a strategic level. I guess this came not just through the style and type of questions but also from the thought provoking discussions led by Michael.

**6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.**

I have attended panel interviews before, but these have either come across as staged or even worse unprepared. An interview is just as much about developing a short term relationship that fosters open and honest communication as it is a review exercise against set criteria. I don't think I have ever experienced a negative experience, probably because I'm proactive in developing a good rapport in the early stage of interview. The most positive experiences have been when the rapport is successful and where a common interest or acquaintance is identified.

**7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.**

If I recall, Michael and Rebekah worked very well together. Michael introduced and set the scene. Rebekah led me through my career history whilst Michael observed. Then Michael opened up the discussion to a wider view of possibilities and my suitability. Roles were very clear but they still retained a relaxed feel to the interview.

**8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?**

No, I can't think of anything more I could have been provided with. I think the candidate will do their own research on the company and the recruitment consultant if they are genuinely interested. Michael and Rebekah had the balance of information about right considering the fluidity of the role.

**9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?**

I would also measure the success of the recruitment interview by the quality of the resulting relationship with the interviewees. I've experienced not being successful with an initial interview but subsequently being approached for a different (better) role by the same consultant and being successful. Ongoing contact with recruitment consultants is a good measure of the success of that first interview.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

There was only one down side and that was the location. We struggled to find somewhere in the hotel that was private and when we did it was not ideal due to the sunlight. The level of personal detail expected to be discussed and potentially confidential detail about the role do need to be considered.

11 If you had gained the role, would you have been prepared to be coached by us? Please explain why.

Yes I believe so. I've not experience coaching at any stage of my career and the experience would have been interesting.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

Something I have not considered before. I'm sure there is a need, although finding the right coach that covers the different roles and disciplines within a career path would be challenging.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

Signed DB

Dated 6<sup>th</sup> May 2009

### Case study three

ML

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

It was not the first time for being interviewed by two people but generally it was alternated questions. In fact, I think that having one set of questions by one person then to pursue with the other person allows to go deeper into the topics also to better understand the personality of the person interviewed

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

I felt comfortable with the style and I did appreciate it. Having two people with different sensibilities could help to cover in one interview more points that I had ever experienced. The way they were delivered was perfectly clear.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

I will highlight the specific question about problem solving situation that I have faced. I never went so deep into the details during a job search interview in the past years.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Clearly all the interview was centred on the role I had in the different companies I was in and what I brought to them, what were the difficulties I met, what were my successes and failure.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

The style of the interview was friendly and highly professional giving confidence to talk without taboo.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

I would say one negative before with 2 persons in front of me, the one I should replace and the HR director. I felt that the interviewers were not going into deeply the topic and I had the sensation that decision was already taken.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

The Interview was very demanding to me but I felt a sense of satisfaction giving true faces of my personality and my professional skills.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

I think no.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

An Interview that could answer to the simple: do we have the right candidate to put forward?

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

I think it's not linked to the interview itself but the "post-treatment" and feedback of the company was not on time. 2 weeks for a feed-back it can be OK, 2 months it's not serious and in another period company takes the risk of not taking the best candidates because they have found something else.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

In the case of my several recruitment by external recruiters to the company (2 cases till today) they all said that they will coach me for future needs. I did not happened. I think it could be useful.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I think it could be a very good thing.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

NAME / SIGNED: ML

DATE: June 12th, 2009

**FD**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I would rather say neither. Although it may not be usual to face two interviewers, it certainly is not the first time an interview is carried out by several persons. In my professional life, I have very often been faced with several "opponents", people finding strength in numbers. Therefore I am not surprised by this interview methodology. I find it interesting to be faced with a woman and a man, each having his (or her) own way to ask a question, to evaluate the answers and the candidate, its own approach to finding answers. Personally, I feel better in a pressuring atmosphere rather than a cool one, especially in my professional life.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Comfortable. I seem to remember that there is a saying: no question is indiscreet, only the answers. If I don't like or wish to answer to a specific question, I can say so. The interview by two people allows the questions to be more rapid, not letting the candidate relax too much.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

Certainly, I try also to learn what are the expectations from the questions, the way they are asked, or more generally from the speech of the other person(s). To be more precise regarding our interview, I think you were very helpful in outlining the qualities you may find in the candidate which correspond to the mission you have to fulfill. I guess also that some of your candidates are pretty shy to speaking of their qualities...

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Being in a period where I am in a "changing mood", I have had plenty of time lately to think about my career path, and my future plans. That plus the unexpected which life offers or brings to you, and the basket is pretty full.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

[No response]

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Positive: my first job: one interview.

Negative: a recent one where I went through eight interviews (some of them with several persons), and after having selected a shortlist of two, they could not choose and went through the whole recruiting process again, looking for new candidates.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together. You are very complementary. Not in the sense of good guy and bad guy. I found interesting to be faced with a woman and a man. I had to be more careful with my answers while at the same time answer truthfully and, if I may say so, equally. But again, I like the challenge of not having the time to take a breath between two questions.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

No

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Rather than successful, I would prefer meaningful or a "teaching interview". In other words, I thank you to delineate for me at the end my + and my - compared to your requirement. That did not happen very often in my brief recruitment history.[François DR] Whether successful or not, at least I can learn from it.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?  
No particular comment

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

Frankly, I don't know, as I do not have any experience in coaching. Shouldn't the coach belong to the recruiting company in this case ? Otherwise, the coach can help a person wishing to change his professional life to better identify his + and -, and work on them. But is it possible with a specific target in view? Again and frankly, I don't know.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I'm sorry, I am not familiar with "through-life". Do you wish to know if I want to orientate my career towards recruitment? Or if I wish to employ the services of a coach at this point in my career?

In the second case, right at this moment, no. As I told to Michael, I am in the process of starting a new job in the \*\* Group on beginning of June. How it will evolve, please consult the oracles and let me know if you have any kind of answers. If it does not work, yes I may wish to go through a Coaching and career counselling service.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

NAME / SIGNED: FD

DATE: May 23rd, 2009

## **MB**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

For me, being interviewed by two people always hinder the process when it's at the same time. First, you have to give consideration equally to both of them, that means to look at them. So you lose the contact with each of them alternately. Then questions come from different ways and not with the same "spirit", you need to understand each person mind switching from one to the other continuously. And the rhythm is quicker so you have less time to control yourself (breath better, think better). I answer not only from my experience with Griffonage but also with other experiences.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

In that particular interview with Griffonage, the style was very good, being sure, as a French native, that I understand the questions. I thought that it was exactly what I imagined regarding English people = being "smooth", taking time and very polite. What I could call a discussion between gentlemen.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

It has been very hard for me to understand exactly the job because the core business was not very clear.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

At this step of the recruitment process I think very little to the future. I just try to convince that I'm the right man in terms of experiences. Career path, future plans come only after this interview analysing the information I get.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

Nothing special I feel quite comfortable excepted regarding the core business of the company.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

I just mention my last interview. I had one person on my left and one on my right. Questions of both of them were very different, one wanted to have information step by step, and the other questioning more about the feelings.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

I think Michael is more the "technical guy" and Rebekah is more looking for soft skills and truth: am I comfortable with what I say? What is my management style? And so Rebekah is less questioning but more observing.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

In that particular case, the brief regarding the job could have been more precise regarding the products of the company, the way it runs etc ...

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Having a short debriefing regarding our strengths and weaknesses in front of the job, helping to imagine other job possibilities.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

See 8.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

I don't feel very comfortable at that. The main challenge for me in a new job is to create the good conditions with my manager.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I can see the role during very positive during the first months to ensure that's everything is OK and helping the recruiter to know better the company for other positions.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

NAME / SIGNED: MB

DATE: 02 JUIN 2009

## Case study five

**AH**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I felt being interviewed by two people helped the process. This was in my mind due to two good interviewers. I consider that the interview was more thorough as a result of the two interviewers, allowing time for information to be shared, assessed and then questioned/investigated.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

I felt very comfortable with the interview style. The questions were thorough and direct and thought provoking.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

The questioning helped bring clarity to my view of the role and how my experience was suited to the opportunity in question.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

The interview did genuinely make me think more about my career path than some other interviews I have had. The questions regarding a portfolio careers and or interim career as well as what motivates me money or job satisfaction were questions that in the interview setting made me think out of my normal box.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

Body language during the interview.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Positive experience is when the interview is over on reflection one thinks that it was a thorough process where all relevant aspects of one's experience is reviewed and the position in question is fully explained and all of my questions are answered. One then gets honest feedback about if one's skills and experiences and capabilities match the role/organisation and a view on if one is to proceed further in the process.

I have had a many good experiences as outlined above where I and the interviewer(s) are fully prepared and there is engagement from both sides. My initial meeting with Michael and Rebekah would make it in to my top ten.

Negative experiences are when the interviewer seems disinterested or interested but as the gate keeper he does not fully understand the brief so one has a “feel good” interview with a negative outcome sometime in the future. I had a telephone interview for a major fortune 500 company. The interviewer asked only a few brief questions and then cut my questioning down. It had a negative outcome.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

I think you two worked well together, as your research and preparation was good and you both knew what roles you were playing. Also see some of the comments above.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

No.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

At the end of the process one feels like the interviewer asked the right questions to understand me, my experience and my capabilities and I was prepared to answer all their questions. Even if the outcome is negative i.e. one does not progress further the feeling of one could not have done any more to convince one’s self and the interviewer that the role was the right one for me. I equate it to a sporting event where one trains and plans how to win and so long as the preparation and execution were good one feels content that there was nothing more that could be done if one loses which lessens the disappointment. One also learns from each good interview experience.

Honest feedback from the interviewers about one’s suitability for the role is also key. A successful interview should end with a definite yes you will be progressing or no this is where the process ends because..... explanation from the interviewer. This way there is no ambiguity or unrealistic expectations raised.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

In this instance I do not think there was anything else that would have made the experience better apart from a more private setting but that is just being picky, I do not think the setting had an impact on the experience.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

So long as the relationship is good, open and honest there would be no problems.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

Yes. I was fortunate enough to be a guinea pig in one of my previous companies where we were looking to develop the senior management team. I experienced some coaching and development and I know it helped me. Even though I was a sceptic at first. Good coaching can bring the best out of the leader who in turn can develop his team.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

Signed AH

Dated Dec 09

## **BR**

1. I thought that the two person interview process was constructive. However, it would have been better, if there had been more structure. I wasn't aware, or informed, as to how the interview was to be conducted and I wasn't at all sure, who I should have, or needed to, direct my replies to. It would have been better I think, if it had been split into two distinct parts.

2. At no time did I feel 'uncomfortable' with the interview process, although I was 'unclear', as to what specifically, both interviewers roles were supposed to be.

3. I wasn't 'challenged', by the interview in any way. As my opening reply says' it needed more 'structure'. I felt that it was me, who was in control of the process and not the interviewers.

4. No. In a word. I made a decision many years ago, that the only person who would ever be responsible for my 'career path', would be me. In that case, I don't seek a 'career', as I already have one. A role / job, either interests me, or it doesn't and I get turned on or off to a role based upon the information I get by meeting people.

5. The only thoughts I generate in meetings like the one we had are - 'do I fancy this role?' - 'can I do this job?' - 'do I want to do this job?'. These are my own motivators.

6. I expect before I meet an interviewer, that he or she, has prepared, as I have. Have they fully read my cv? Do they understand what I can offer / bring / deliver to a client? If, during the interview process, it becomes apparent to me, that the interviewer has not put in any effort to understand me, then my attention span shortens dramatically and I will lose all interest. This is a pity, as it deprives us both of an opportunity to make money and it's a disservice to the end client from the interviewer.

7. Overall, it went well and it was clear there was synergy between all of us. However, I would have liked to hear more from you.

8. Michael, through a series of telephone calls between us, had prepared me very well as to the role and the environment within the client's organisation, so I was more than happy when I arrived for the meeting.

9. My CSF's (Critical Success Factors) from the interview, centre not on if I get the assignment or not, but more on the relationship that I can forge with Griffonage. If I don't secure the assignment, then it is important to me, that I interview well with you. To the point that you will confidently consider me for other roles that you will be asked to fill at some future stage.

10. I refer you to my comments regarding 'structure'. However, on the whole I am not at all critical of the meeting. My comments are intended to add value, which I hope they do.

11. I welcome it.

12. Possibly. I am a mentor myself.

Signed BR

Dated 29/12/09

## **SS**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I have always felt that conducting interviews with two people is helpful from the interviewers perspective, providing the interviewers are "tuned in" to each other. The reasons for this are that while one person is presenting a question, the second person can sometimes more carefully observe the response – both verbal and non verbal. Consequently, the second person may be better placed to pick up on aspects of the response which need further development or explanation. Rebekah and you were aligned in your understanding of the company/role and the style of interview you both wanted to conduct which resulted in the method working well.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

When in an interview situation there is always a degree of uncertainty due to the fact that, no matter how confident you are, you do not really know what the interviewers are truly looking for and whether even if you have the sought after characteristics and qualities, the interviewers will perceive that you have them. Other than this, I was at ease with what I wanted to say and how I wanted to present myself. This wasn't influenced by the interview method chosen.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and

type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

I'm not sure I fully understand this question, hence this is my best shot at it. No, the interview style didn't make me think more thoroughly, neither was it a hindrance. I don't believe that different questions would have aided me in terms of suitability assessment.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

No

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

- a. Being interviewed by two people generally will result in a more thorough interview
- b. It gives the interviewee a greater challenge but results in a more balanced assessment

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

A significant chunk devoted to competency assessment using examples to support the response given by the interviewee has many benefits including being able to explore the theory that if the competency exists, it will have been used to good effect.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

The interview was led by Michael who introduced both the company and role. Rebekah appeared to play a supporting role, following up the first stage of the interview which had a more technical content with some of the "softer" people and leadership questions. During the first stage, Rebekah sometimes probed my responses further with secondary questions – this worked well and could have been more frequent. There didn't seem to be the time to fully explore the people/leadership issues and while some questions were asked I came away feeling I hadn't answered them very well or presented myself as someone who understood and promoted a high standard here. Overall, I think future interviews would be improved upon by a more equal balance between Michael's introduction/technical exploration and Rebekah's people/leadership interests.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

I don't believe so

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Coming away with the feeling that I had presented myself well and provided accurately aligned responses to the questions posed. Additionally, that the

flavour of interview was more of a discussion punctuated by occasional changes of direction rather than a ping pong game of questions and answers.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

Partially answered in q.7 but on the whole the experience was terrific. I appreciated meeting you both and I particularly enjoyed the occasion of a trip to London and the venue of the Institute of Directors.

11 If you had gained the role, would you have been prepared to be coached by us? Please explain why.

Yes, I formed the opinion through the interview and follow on discussions that both Rebekah and you believed in, and practiced, high standards of professionalism and integrity. I also believe that you could both add value to my own knowledge and capabilities through a structured coaching programme.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

I believe there is a role for leadership coaching/counselling but I have been on the receiving end of such counselling which was not particularly good. There are many people offering this service – the quality of the coaching/counselling plus differentiation are keys aspects of developing this successfully.

Finally, I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their project within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

Signed SS

Dated 31 January 2010

## Case Study six

OT – MD candidate

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

Helped. It ensured the interview was as comprehensive as possible and it brought variety to the discussion.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Comfortable with the interview style. Questions, while probing, were delivered in a pleasant manner, and I appreciated the candid feedback at the end of interview on how I came across.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

Yes. The reason being that many of the answers that I gave were followed up with further questions, e.g. 'why', to better understand context and motivations. In terms of allowing me to think more thoroughly about being suited to the role, the details given regarding the company and the key players and their characteristics were particularly valuable.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Interview covered these as comprehensively as possible in a first interview, and certainly the line of questioning allowed this to be explored.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

Feedback on how I came across, and particularly personal characteristics, was appreciated.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Negative experiences have been when I have come away from the interview without any feedback on what the interviewers thought.

Positive experiences have been when there's been an open dialogue about the potential fit between the job and me.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

You worked well together. Although I expected that the second person would be observing while the other led the questioning, the observing was done in an unobtrusive manner.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

I think the balance was about right. As mentioned in answer to question 3, the details given at the interview regarding the company and the key players and their characteristics were particularly valuable, but I don't think that this level of detail would have helped before the interview.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

A constructive dialogue to determine the potential fit between the business' needs and the individual's needs. Given that this was only the first stage, I would say that it was successful.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

Nothing I can think of.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

I think it's a good idea. The interviewing time is time invested in getting to know each other and build trust. As a result, the recruiters should be better prepared to deliver relevant coaching and the successful candidate should more quickly benefit from it.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

In principle yes, particularly as an independent source of advice. I'm not sure, however, how the service would be funded, and how the service provider and individual would get connected.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: OT

DATE: 7th March 2010

**GS** – MD candidate

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

GS: Yes. It seemed to help open up new areas for discussion sometimes, or bring a new focus, and sometimes help the process along more than with a single interviewer.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

GS: Yes, although some of the questions were argumentative - possibly intentionally. I felt I was able to explain my experience and skills well, however I think I was allowed to ramble on at one point near the start.

Having said that, there were a few areas of discussion which Michael shut down with statements/opinions and closed questions where a more questioning approach could have provided additional insights.

On an unrelated point, I felt more uncomfortable having two interviewers in an open environment than I would have been with just one. Sometimes it was a little noisy and I had to ask for some questions to be repeated. Sometimes it was too quiet, and made me overly conscious of the topic of discussion.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

GS: No. I'd come prepared with thoughts about what I could bring generally, and would have found a way to deliver those thoughts irrespective of the style of questioning. More background on the job itself would have helped me prepare better for the interview.

I felt that the approach was a little stilted at times and didn't get the best from me. In other interviews I have bonded more with a single interviewer and we have had more of a conversation rather than a formal interview, and I feel that this has allowed me to better communicate what I could bring to a role.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

GS: No. I'd already thought this through well in advance of the interview

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

GS: It was a very interactive interview. It was hard to respond on the spot to how I would rise to the challenges of the role, and some advance notice would have helped.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

GS: Positive experiences seem to have come mainly from when an interviewer spent time describing the position, the company and the objectives of the role at the start of the discussion. This allowed me to identify the most relevant parts of my experience to cover in the interview slot, and also manage to organise the interview as a discussion around my transferrable skills. Less positive experiences have been with interviewers that were interested only in previous occupations, with little understanding of what transferrable skills I could demonstrate and how they may be of use to the client.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

GS: Overall, well. I was a little confused about the roles that you were both playing. At one point it seemed like it was going to be good cop/bad cop, but never quite got there. At other times, although Michael had said that he would be a passive observer, he jumped in with questions, or clarifications to something that Rebekah had said. To me, this seemed like it undermined Rebekah's role a little at that specific point of the proceedings, and seemed to disrupt the flow on occasion.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

GS: I believe that any interviewer should be most interested in what transferrable skills (or assets) I can bring to the job. Perhaps my previous experience has been sufficient to get me to the interview, and can be used to derive evidence-based responses to substantiate transferrable skills - however I would prefer a competencies based interview. So - I would have found it helpful to know more about the role in advance, particularly the strategy of the company, but mainly about the competencies required to successfully fill the role. (I would rather have the opportunity to talk to and give examples of transferrable skills rather than have an interview attempt to second guess them for me based on a short meeting!)

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

GS: A successful interview would be one that provides feedback following the meeting - either verbal or written -which can be used to improve interview performance, and allows the candidate some understanding of why they may not have been fully suitable for the role.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

GS: I believe that I understand why I was not suitable for the role. I would really have welcomed some interview technique feedback!

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

GS: I think that it's a great idea, especially if recruiting someone for a promotional role, or a role in a new industry. Such a role may also provide a helpful back-channel to the Board or CEO where any settling-in difficulties - such as differences in working style - could be indirectly floated

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

GS: From time to time yes, but not as a permanent backdrop

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: Dr GS

DATE: 4 March 2010

**MC – MD Candidate**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain. There seemed to be a better flow to the process, with no difficult gaps, the questions also seemed to be more appropriate to the previous sets of comments. I would assume that each interviewer was also looking for different aspects within the context of the interview.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Comfortable with interview style. For executives who generally sit on the other side of the table talking about oneself and being concise with answers is not an easy process ( my case I have not sat through interview process in over twenty years).The style and manner employed did allow me to relax although the interview process is difficult to assert ones true personality

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

The interview was direct and pertinent questions were raised, I prefer this direct style. I have gone into interviews previously not sure if I wanted the role on offer, the type of questioning employed I am sure would have made this obvious. An example from my interview would have been .....was I willing to give up my pursuit of getting my own company , this was stressed on three occasions. With the role on offer I was convinced prior to the interview if offered I would take the role and therefore was able to answer quickly and honestly ....any doubts would have been obvious to the interviewer

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

Having had a career break as such, the interview didn't bring up any issues that I had not previously thought about or encountered. I am quite flexible and issues with regards location ,hours of work etc are areas that have been addressed in previous roles.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

I believe that many people going into these senior roles do not have a clear understanding of the importance of EQ and I thought it positive that this was a major strand of the interview...e.g. not just was the person suited technically. The role I was interviewed for EQ would be as important if not more important than IQ

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

I am sure that through the interviewing process there is a time that the interviewer knows that that the interviewee is not appropriate for the role, this could be two minutes in or two hours in, I felt that the team were interested in me and my ability to do the role all the way through the interview ...this may not have been the case if it wasn't then it didn't show ...therefore positive in this case. I have been in interviews where you know it just process, for anyone this would be annoying, it is even more so when you have had senior positions and recognise it as process.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

I believed both parties got what they required out of the interview, the role the aspirations of the company were explained clearly and I hope I gave a good account of what I could offer ....especially in the post interview work

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

I am not sure if there was more information that could have been provided.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Being successful is obviously the main point, but also if the interviewers got a true understanding of the capability of the interviewee so that post selection, either another role could be forwarded or suggestion /advice on the direction the interviewee needs to take to pursue his/her next role.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

A timing plan or incremental feedback or early feedback if not successful. This I am aware is reliant on others and having been on the other side you are not aware of all the issues that arise in people's job search. Once in a senior role again, if I am in a recruitment phase I will ensure that a robust schedule is communicated from outset

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

I think that having a coach is beneficial ..having experienced the difference a coach can bring to ones own performance I am in favour. Smiths Group used coaches for the senior positions, mine was the Smiths EQ teacher/coach therefore I considered myself fortunate. Having started to develop a relationship through the recruitment process both parties have got partial buy-in.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service? Seven months ago I would have said no, but having gone through all aspects of career review I have changed my mind. Most senior execs in the corporate world tend to be solely company focused, not the greatest networkers and generally let their career evolve.

Question who does a company MD talk to about career ...your cant talk about careers outside the organisation and even good companies like Smiths were generally not focused on internal career development. I have talked to VCs, Rec Consultants, Friends plus my previous coach and I am still following multiple directions this may be positive but having someone who knows your strengths and weaknesses and also know what's going on in the market would be of benefit.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SINGED: MC

DATE: 12th March 2010

**AW – MD Candidate**

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

Helped. Allowed conversation to be more varied and different styles of questions meant that a broader perspective could be achieved.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Focus on what was learnt from each career step was a little repetitive. I felt this type of question could have been varied a little while still obtaining the information required.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

In some respects yes, but since no detailed brief was received prior to the interview other than verbal communication it was difficult to understand whether I was offering information that was relevant to the actual role.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

No. These considerations have always figured highly in any assessment of a new opportunity.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

I felt that most of the questions focussed on the more obvious indicators of success and experience. For instance there was little discussion on the development of people, the relationships with customers and stakeholders or the development of a positive workplace environment.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Negatives when it is obvious that the recruiter has made pre-assumptions on the candidate and their suitability either positive or negative.

Positives when the recruiter has the perception to assess the candidate and look beyond the CV

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Seemed to work quite well. The need to break off for discussion was a little disconcerting but probably better to be able to give immediate feedback.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

A written brief with more detail on numbers etc would have been useful. Also some better indication of what the client is looking for.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Both recruiter and candidate being satisfied with the process and the outcome even if this does not mean a move to the next stage.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

I would have preferred more privacy in the discussions. The IOD is a busy place with the added danger of being recognised.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

I would have to feel comfortable that we could interact in the most productive way. This would only be possible after several discussions and the development of trust and confidence.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

Yes, but my only caveat would be that the mentor would have the capability to move with the client as their career progresses and the challenges change accordingly.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: AW

DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010

**JS** – MD Candidate

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

I believe it can only improve the process both from the point of seeing a particular candidate response from two points of view and for each interviewer to approach the interview with a slightly different agenda.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Totally comfortable. Interviewing style was symbiotic between you both.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

My own view on job suitability for senior roles is that you need to assess ability to think out of the box and to operate out of comfort zone. The combination of your questions I think achieved both.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

The questions were searching and had there been any hidden agenda and/or lack of thought re family plans then these would have come out!

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

I think the result was a mix between both functional and emotional adequacy for the job.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Positive interviews are where there has been some thought to the interview plan prior to interview. The majority of interviews aren't well researched which leave the interviewee wondering what was trying to be learned from the process.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Seamlessly!

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

I hope you found that I had researched the role adequately and as such the interview worked for both parties.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

Success measured by ability during interview to demonstrate character, strengths and experience in context. In my case, I think you "got me" and

from my perspective, regardless of the outcome this was a successful interview for me.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?

The tea wasn't great!

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?

What a great idea!

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?

Yes – though the business model needs some thinking through – who is the client?

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: Assume digitally signed by JS

DATE: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010

**JM** – SD Candidate

1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.

Helped. I think having two people at interview, works to the clients advantage, and so to the interviewees benefit. It ensures while one is talking the other can think about the responses being offered and maintain direction in the interview to ensure as complete a picture of the candidate can be built up.

This is not entirely different in our customer meetings where, to fully understand requirements, timescales, customer hot buttons etc. and to ensure we provide as full and comprehensive a brief as possible I will often take a well versed Engineer or Programmes person along. It makes for a more thorough assessment.

2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?

Comfortable! I suppose understanding perhaps the remits of the two interviewers at the outset may have helped but I don't think it detracted from the process. I felt at ease with the two interviewers, felt that they were there to assist me and consider the client's needs.

3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?

Yes it did, as we went the interview with the questions and explanations and clarifications as to the needs of the role I was better able to consider this against the skills I exhibit in my current role and specific actions I've taken in my past careers.

4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.

I was thinking about my career path in more depth than several previous interviews hence my attendance. Key factors there for me were the skill requirements, the company aspirations, the dynamics of operating in a smaller Organisation, location and travel demands. The meeting afforded the opportunity to explore the role & assess the impact on the family and myself. It also gave me the opportunity to assess the dynamic of a 'small' high tech organization and its ability to be more dynamic in working and responding to customer needs.

5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?

The style & type of questioning struck me as one that would extract as much useful information as possible for the client & provide as much clarification as possible as to the requirements. It struck me that this was a reasonably effective manner of filtering potential candidates to leave the strongest.

6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.

Positive experiences I've received at interview is the knowledge that I felt I was a successful candidate, I had the skill sets that were being looked for and believed I had the relevant competencies, and ability to learn, to fulfill the new role.

Negative experiences in the past have come from encounters the interviewer didn't really know what the company was trying to achieve and so what to recruit for. Another 'frustration' came from a capability based interview some years ago, where the skill set they appeared to be looking for in fact didn't match the true role that the interviewer was looking for.

7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.

Mike did most of the prompting and clarification while Rebekah gauged reactions and managed the 'check list' to fill the picture of the candidate, myself, for the client and prompted for more information where it was helped provide greater detail.

8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?

Yes, I would have liked a better understanding of the role and the requirements of a candidate. Also a more detailed portfolio of the company, its growth aspirations and where it's developing those currently, its perceived strengths and weaknesses. That said, in some respects not having all of the

information as to the role and the aspirations of the Company allows a less prepared and therefore more dynamic appraisal of the candidate.

9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?

The 'take aways' that the knowledge, contacts and capabilities I have are a good fit with the company and the input that I possess the desired skill sets and that the company is prepared to invest time and effort in those skills that it believes I need to enhance or develop to satisfy or exceed the needs of the role.

10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?  
Possibly a brief on the roles of the two interviewers.

11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach? Positive. The aim of the recruiters is to find the closest match to the clients needs, and therefore have a better 'handle' on that than anyone else other than senior Cosworth management. Hence, assuming that an 'off the shelf' candidate with the total package – unlikely for a new entrepreneurial role such as this – cannot be found, then they would be well positioned to coach someone and address any gaps to satisfy the company aspirations and the individuals development needs.

12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service? Yes. In effect this is common in many larger companies and is achieved through a range of courses attended by the individual throughout their careers. For instance, Thales assesses individuals skill gaps on an annual basis and training schemes are available to develop and hone those skills.

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

SIGNED: JM

DATE: 15th March 2010

JB – SD Candidate

We would be grateful if, after you have stated yes or no, you could elaborate as to why.

**1 Did being interviewed by two people help or hinder the process? Please explain.**

*I feel it helped. One to one interview can sometime take longer for both parties to “warm up”. It also helped to cover a wider spectrum for the interview process and give the benefits to have 2 minds focusing on the interview for the feedback.*

**2 Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with the interview style; in particular, the type of questions regarding yourself personally and your career, and the manner in which they were delivered and received?**

*I felt quite comfortable with the interview style. All questions were positively worded. Professional and at the same time relaxed atmosphere to promote dialogue and encourage openness to such extent that I agreed the role I really want is a GM/MD opportunity although I was interview for a Commercial role.*

**3 Did the style and type of questioning make you think more thoroughly about what you could bring to the job and how well suited you were for it? If yes, please explain in detail. If no, please indicate if you felt the style and type was a hindrance and why. Alternatively, could we have asked you different questions to aid you in this respect?**

*Yes it did. Questions on the type of activity I would undertake to meet the requirement of the role combined to questions about previous roles made me think more about the position. A short description of the day to day activities of my current MD position, the freedom and the broad range of activities covered by the role made me realised that perhaps I should not settle for a narrower role too quickly. Saying that, being 1 month into my 6 months notice may push me to do so to ensure continuity of employment and income.*

**4 Did you think about your career path more than perhaps other interviews have in the past, and the implications of taking the role on you/your family/your future plans, or not? Please explain.**

*Yes. It made me realise that I should focus more my searches on what I really want to achieve. When I suggest that the Commercial manager role would be a way into the company to position myself for the Director role within 5 years, the feedback “can you wait that long” helped my thought process.*

**5 What other relevant thoughts did the style and type of questioning generate?**

*A balance between what I want/like for my next role (MD/GM) and what I need to secure due to my current circumstances (continuity of employment and income).*



*Should the later prevail due to timing conditions, it made me think more about the type of role I should go for to add to or strengthen my current skill set.*

**6 Please give examples of previous positive and negative experiences of recruitment interviews you have received.**

*Negative: going through the CV nearly line by line. No feedback.*

*Positive: valuable / useable feedback.*

**7 Please explain your view on how we worked together.**

*To summarize: as a team. Harmony comes to mind. 2 people who know each other well and that gave the impression to have worked together for a long time.*

**8 Could we have done more to prepare you for the interview, or supplied you with more information, either beforehand or during the interview with Griffonage? If so, what would you have liked?**

No.

**9 What would be your definition of a successful recruitment interview (aside from being put forward for the next stage)? How would you measure that success?**

*Aside from "you are through the next round", getting valuable feedback.*

**10 How do you feel the whole experience could have been improved?**

*Nothing comes to mind at this stage.*

**11 How do you feel about the recruiters also being the successful candidates coach?**

Where the recruiter has an in-depth knowledge of the company the candidate go to, it would certainly help to ensure optimum contribution from the candidate, especially in the initial months. More generally, please see below.

**12 Can you see a role for a through-life recruitment, coaching, career counselling service?**

*Yes I can. It would facilitate the process of thinking about long terms goal, provide feedback on what the next role (and the one after) should be. In an ideal scenario, the same person through the whole career of an individual. Mentor generally provides that support but they may not have always the complete skill set to achieve maximum potential.*

I give my consent for the above information to be used by Michael and Rebekah in their thesis within the ethical guidelines as outlined.

### **3 - Letter to & questionnaire responses from HR Directors and CEOs**

Michael Smith & Rebekah Gilbert are working on a joint doctorate in professional studies (DProf) in international recruitment and executive coaching with Middlesex University, which we hope to complete by 2011. We have given it the title: Towards an holistic approach to through-life executive recruitment and coaching: a psychological and physiological perspective. We hope to demonstrate that the Griffonage model of recruitment and coaching is an improvement on existing services. By this we mean:

- Recruitment of senior executives is underpinned by a coaching approach, looking at candidate's behavioural and cultural fit with a company, and taking considerably more time with candidates than many recruitment houses;
- Recruitment is followed up with post-placement coaching to ease the candidate into a new environment and aid his induction process;
- That by understanding and building long term relationships with the companies we recruit for, we are more able to help the candidate in his new role, and thus we do not operate in silos as other recruiters do, by employing separate coaches to undertake this work, but we personally will see through an assignment as recruiter-coaches;
- That we can build on these relationships and work with individuals after their post-placement coaching, should the need arise;
- That we are able to offer a wider range of coaching other than purely executive coaching, for example, wellbeing and stress management coaching, leadership coaching, business development coaching, presentation skills coaching, and so on;
- That we offer a very personal and bespoke service to clients, candidates and coachees.

We have so far completed our accredited previous experiential learning (APEL) and our research proposal and methodology. We are now endeavouring to collect data for the project and have discussed this with our course supervisors, one of whom is Professor David Clutterbuck, an eminent academic on the subjects of coaching and mentoring.

The project has three aims:

- To understand the current and likely post-recession marketplace for recruitment and coaching in the A&D and automotive sectors;
- To develop an effective model for senior executive recruitment and coaching; and
- To reflect on our progress and learning as recruiter-coaches.

To this end we would be most grateful if you could spare some time to consider the following questions, and your answers will be most valuable to our research.

We operate within the ethical guidelines of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Chartered Institute of Personal and

Development (CIPD). We would be more than happy to discuss these with you in detail, however in outline they are as follows:

- All data will be fully anonymised (unless the interviewee is happy to be credited) and treated with respect.
- No information will be passed back to a company or third party.
- Differences between company and personal views will be acknowledged.
- Participants (be they coachees, candidates, or stakeholders) are free to withdraw at any stage, and this will not affect the service we provide to them in any way. We would, however, ask their reason in case we were at fault and could thus learn whether we, as recruiter-coaches, had caused them to feel uncomfortable with the work, or whether their withdrawal was for personal or business reasons.
- Participants are free to read what we have written about their interview/ case and will receive a de-briefing about it should they so wish.

We would be grateful if you could sign the document, agreeing to take part in this data collection, and to let us know whether you are happy to be quoted directly, or whether you would like the information you give us to be completely anonymised.

I.....(please print) am happy to take part in the research project by Michael and Rebekah and am content with the ethical guidelines within which it is being undertaken. I am happy to be quoted/ would prefer my information to be anonymised (please delete as appropriate).

Signed.....Dated.....

**AM (CEO)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

A. Quality of network and previous track record of placing candidates who have been successful in their role.

1. Ability to help the client clarify the brief and add value to it.
2. Ability to advise on market trends, competitor action
3. Organisation reputation

I would normally go about selecting the target firm by previous contact or by referral.

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

A. I think all three methods will continue to be of value depending upon which segment of the market they are addressing. On-line databases will continue to be of value for technical specialists and middle to reasonably senior management but in the selection of board level appointments it is not just ability and track record which is important, attention also has to be paid to issues like chemistry and cultural fit. This by nature requires a more personal service.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

A. I don't believe that there is a simple answer which can be applied across sectors. I think the needs of the smaller business, post recession, are still ones where costs need to be tightly controlled and therefore there is likely to be little in-house capacity to manage the process and deliver the outcome. By contrast a larger plc is more likely to carry a bigger overhead where the search role may be one purely of identification. Going forward I believe that the recipe for success in search firms will be to specialise in a particular market sector and develop a strong brand around that. I think it is going to be much more difficult for the number of 'generalists' that currently exist to be able to continue to develop their business because of general pressures in the economy.

4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

A. I would prefer a small retainer, middle size success fee on appointment and a bonus paid after the candidate has been successful in role after one year. This gives the search firm an ongoing need to help the candidate be successful in their role post appointment.

5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

A. What I believe personally is that it is very important is to employ a firm that has a detailed knowledge of the sector and the key players within it.

6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

A. In my own case I prefer personal contact with short frequent meetings over coffee say every six weeks.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

A. I think psychometric testing is important for businesses that are well developed and have a predictable culture and footprint because it gives a consistent model of candidate. At a more senior level I do not think psychometric testing is appropriate because of the reasons explained earlier. I don't have a particular psychometric model that I favour because each model that I'm familiar with has its own particular advantages and disadvantages.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

A. My experience of working with search firms at an executive level has generally been good. However, that said one can always identify when a particular consultant is looking for a longer term relationship as distinct from a one off assignment fee. My best experiences have been when the firm has been keen to follow up on the success of the candidate and has been willing to offer ongoing consultancy to help the candidate be successful in that appointment. The worst experiences have been where the firm have clearly not been able to deliver what they promised on appointment and used a number of market related excuses to explain their position. Generally speaking the experiences I have had have been average to good where companies have had an adequate understanding of the business and the brief. I have often found the way of measuring how successful the search is likely to be is the amount of time invested by the search firm in the company even before its appointment. Indeed, it is that process of engaging with the company and adding value to its thinking that sometimes creates the need for an assignment which follows later.

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

A. We have been offering coaching for senior executives for some three years and they are delivered by a combination of internal and external resources depending upon seniority or specific need.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

A. I always work with coaches by referral from people who have worked with them before. It is very unlikely that I would go with somebody new even if they came highly qualified because in my experience in a people related business it's about being able to anticipate whether a coaching style would be appropriate to the target candidate.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

A. The majority of our coaching has been orientated towards developing an individual's people skills and management abilities. It is quite distinct from training that might be delivered for commercial or technical purposes. We evaluate the effectiveness by reviewing the individual's performance rather than a formal review process annually. However, generally speaking the number of people taught by this process is quite small and therefore the senior executives are able to observe any changes in behaviour. In my experience it's very difficult to do a hard return on investment assessment although I would be delighted to be proved wrong!

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

A. Again I think it comes down to the willingness of the company to invest time with the senior executives so that the purpose of the advice and the type of ideal candidate is clearly understood. In my experience companies often go for a candidate, which was slightly outside their original thinking simply because some aspect of that candidate has attracted them. So, I think the investment by the company in helping the customer through the thinking process in advance is one which will both develop the relationship and ensure a more predictable outcome.

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

A. The least successful approaches have been ones where the coach has tried to shoe horn an off the shelf approach rather than spend sufficient time to try and understand the business and therefore its candidates needs so that something more specific is developed.

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

A. The short answer is yes I can see a very considerable advantage. As I have tried to indicate a continuing relationship with a company that is not only able to find you suitable candidates but indeed is also able to help develop them in post is clearly a company which will understand your business and its needs very well. As a consequence I would be more willing to commit to a longer term commercial relationship.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

A. I think perhaps when we next meet we could discuss a few thoughts I have on how to take advantage of topical items in order to assess emotional intelligence.

16. Any other comments?

A. No

\* \* \*

### **AC (CEO)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

- Knowledge of the market
- Experience of the particular level of appointment
- Chemistry between firm and client
- Value
- Terms and conditions

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

A. I do see the need for these companies post recession. They are an important part of the recruitment process. They complement other forms of recruitment.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

A. Keeping up to date with their network and the market and being able to offer 'flexible' terms and conditions.

4 How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

A. There appears to be an unwritten rule that the search company would extract a percentage fee of the starting salary for their efforts. There is not much to discriminate between companies. I would prefer to see a fixed fee based on time involved and the quality of their services.

5 How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

A. It may be important, but it depends on the candidate search. Some of my most successful appointments have been through my own contacts, not through search companies.

6 How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

A. Communication is very important and direct contact is the preferred method. I would expect good written reports explaining the process and the style of recruitment. At minimum I would expect a weekly update, but it is too diverse to give specific timings. In most cases the content of candidates' reports is adequate.

7 Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

A Yes in certain circumstances. An example would be if there was a very close contest between candidates. The obvious disadvantage is that some people do really well on test others do not.

8 Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

A. This is a very difficult question to be completely objective. The best experiences have always been where the candidate has proved to be very successful – and you don't really know that until after the appointment! In every successful case they have been close to the business and have understood our requirements. I have had more bad experiences than good ones over the past nine years.

9 Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

A. Yes in my company we had senior level coaching. We had a combination of internal and external coaching. They were always individual programmes.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

A. In looking for coaching companies I have relied on my group HR director to provide the basis of the coaching process. In truth our experiences with coaching companies has been limited so I am not qualified to offer a constructive reply.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

A. The value is measured in terms of their career development. In most cases where they are exposed to coaching, they have benefited from the advice, discussion and support. Universally, they have enjoyed the experience. Quantifying this value is impossible.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

A. By understanding the needs of the business. What we are trying to achieve and how they can support these aims. They clearly should have knowledge of the sector dynamics.

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

A. Mostly positive, but there are limits to the benefits which can be delivered through coaching. Unless they understand the business need then we would not employ them! They have used a variety of approaches including some detailed analysis work which is proprietary to their own company and which could not be shared. Results have, in reality, been mixed.

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

A. I am not sure that at this point in development of our business that the Griffonage model would be appropriate. I certainly see the advantages and I certainly understand the benefits, however, we are already using two

companies on senior career development and I am not sure that we could use a third.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

A. It is a comprehensive method of approach and one which would certainly be successful in the right business environment. I see no reason to enhance the current offering at this time. As the business develops then continuous improvement is always important.

16. Any other comments?

A. No.

\* \* \*

**MJ (VP)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

A high degree of success in obtaining the correct fit of person to the job specification and the company. (I don't want to recruit twice)

Confidential (I don't want competitors to know what I am doing)

My company, like many other functionally structured companies, does not allow contact between the executive requiring the recruitment and the recruiter until the last 2 or 3 candidates, and maybe not even then, therefore the recruiter has to be able to get through the functional structure in order to understand the brief fully by engaging and questioning the client's requirements.

Here HR select the search firm, so the executive has no input into the selection of the search firm.

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

Yes I see the need for search firms particularly in the more senior appointments and where specialist skills are required. I do not see a trend to move in house, I see more of a trend for specialization, hence the need for recruiters. This said the use of the internet is expanding rapidly, this wide audience invariably produces a large number of candidates a good deal of which are often unsuitable, hence this data needs to be sifted by specialists.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

The search firm needs to be aware of all of the current methods of acquiring candidates and be capable of using them when necessary if not through their own resources through affiliations with others. An international perspective is becoming more and more important. They obviously need to understand not only the assignment but also the culture of the client company. They somewhat obviously need to build a relationship with their client company HR function and ensure they remain at the top of the preferred suppliers list.

4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

Transparent, with as few incremental payments as possible, with the exception of a success payment, e.g. 10% on appointment of the recruiter, 70% on the candidate commencing and 20% after one year's employment.

5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

There is obvious merit in employing a sector specialist due to their knowledge of the industry in which they work and presumably their contacts, but it is also very important not to become too specialised to the point of being constrained as new blood often needs to be brought into a sector, to introduce new ideas and revitalise the sector. Therefore I would look to a recruiter to be associated with other sectors.

6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

Regular contact before and after the assignment is valuable but not to the extent where it becomes intrusive. A phone call is valuable or contact through a trade association or other similar mechanism is useful. During the assignment I like to have progress reports at regular intervals and or mutually agreed mile stones and to determine which are to be face to face, e mail or by phone.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

Yes, I think that psychometric testing is useful, as it gives an indication to the candidates profile and often is helpful in constructing questions to determine if the candidate will be a sound company fit but I would caution placing too much emphasis on this as the only method as it is dependent on the evaluator, the candidate knowledge of the process, but above all the is no substitute for a well constructed interview.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

I cannot answer with specific negatives to this question, perhaps I have been lucky or maybe it is because I have always taken the time to ensure that the recruiter had a good understanding of the brief, business plan, culture etc or at least I thought I had. The only area where I have had problems is with

engineering positions where we were trying to recruit a skill which was non-existent at the time (systems engineering).

However there is a growing trend within the HR community to offer an all embracing service to the executive to enable more time to concentrate on the respective discipline, this often manifests itself in distancing the executive from the HR processes, in this case recruitment. This distance can effect communication and a lack of clarity often appears which can lead to inappropriate candidates being put before the executive although is not the direct fault of the recruiter blame can and does fall in the recruiter's direction, thus protecting the HR professional. Personally I do not believe there to be any substitute for direct contact between the executive and the recruitment agency.

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

No, coaching is not used (this company don't believe they need it) but mentoring is used extensively and within this company there seems to be a fine line where the definition of mentoring finishes and coaching begins. Internal resources are used, mentors are both from within the same or outside of the mentees discipline but are always in a more senior position by at least 2 levels. Before becoming a mentor, the mentor has to become qualified through our company courses.

Our company offer both coaching and mentoring, the later was sourced internally but coaching was sourced externally to a specialised company and was confined to a few senior executives.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

Coaching is very personal between the coach and the individual, and almost the only influence the company has in the process is in the choice of coach and coaching company and even here if the candidate does not develop a rapport with the coach the company has selected, then value will be lost.

A good coach does not need experience within the industry but does need to be a good listener, evaluator and from the limited information that is given within the coaching session, be able to frame good insightful questions that are thought provoking for the candidate. A coach needs to do a good deal of research outside of the interview with the executive.

Our/mine need for coaching was to develop a better and more rounded executive, to give the executive a means of bouncing off new ideas in a safe environment.

Our coaches were developed through recommendation and the use of a specific company that provided coaches.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

In general a company will only embark on coaching if there is an individual who they have identified as a star, very rarely in my experience is coaching used as a means of improving a poor performer, although there may be exceptions. Coaching is often used as a means to help the executive to a more senior position with the organisation; this in itself is a measure of success for the process and company. Without this process the individual may move on to gain a more elevated position and the company lose a valuable asset.

Provided there is a rapport between the executive and the coach the executive will gain benefit and this will in turn impact the team. The main benefit will manifest itself by the executive gaining confidence and stature, not necessarily knowledge.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

The company needs to evaluate, with the executive exactly why they both wish to embark on the coaching route and clearly differentiate it from mentoring. This process will produce a number of specific goals which can then be discussed with the coach, dependant upon these goals an evaluation process can be developed.

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

From a personal stand point, I referred earlier to the definition in our company between mentoring and coaching was a fine line; I feel that Goal, Current Reality, Options and Will, is more of a very useful tool for a company mentor. It does provide a structured approach, which is a useful standardisation within a company for mentors/coaches.

The coaching company we engaged used a multiple approach and one that was tailored to the company and individual needs. This could only be carried out after we had spent a considerable time bringing the coach up to speed with the company business and the coach carrying out a deal of research. This in my view was a success as we retained a senior team over a very difficult period and 3 of the individuals have gone on to be senior leaders in other industries, providing cross sector experience.

However as a cautionary note we did employ a coach who had just written a book which was used to the exclusion of all other data, this individual did not last long (beware the Guru).

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

Simple answer Yes. With a through life approach becoming more important in all aspects of a product offering then it seems logical to adopt a similar approach to recruitment, providing that the offering is tailored to each of your client needs.

The recruitment and coaching approach at the search / interview stage, better replaces or supplements the psychometric test and gives a far more personal approach to the client and candidate alike. All too often on starting with the company the newly appointed executive needs to be able to discuss acclimatisation with someone he trusts if that someone is one of the people on the interview team then trust should not be an issue, which also leads the way forward to further coaching support. Finally with your focused client approach which is deliberately limited ensures you have an in depth knowledge of and rapport with your client base

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

Your focus on Automotive and Aerospace gives you adjacent sectors, however with continuing globalisation a connection with the USA maybe considered an advantage, by developing some international networks.

16. Any other comments?

No

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## MF (HRD)

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?
  - a. Knowledge of and accessibility to the industry and competitors for the competencies we seek. This would include a thorough understanding of the market place and the key players
  - b. Understanding of my business and its culture to ensure that the individual we target will 'fit'.
  - c. Competitive cost structure based on performance in terms of cost, quality and delivery.
  - d. A robust selection process.
  
2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?
  - a. We are part of a large company and have well established recruitment teams in each of our divisions. We are currently establishing a recruitment shared services centre that will have a global sourcing arm. In the future the choice of sourcing media will be made at the centre.
  - b. For those more senior or more specialist roles there may still be a need; be it quite small.
  
3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?
  - a. By fulfilling the criteria in answer 1.
  
4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?
  - a. They should be based on results in various stages, normally initial assignment, short list, offer and continued satisfactory employment after 6 or 12 months
  
5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?
  - a. It is important to employ a company with knowledge of and contacts within the particular sector. This will depend on the specific role. The alternative would be use our in house resource.
  
6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.
  - a. Contact should be agreed when the assignment is agreed. The frequency and method should also be agreed at that time. Although important, recruitment is not all we do and contact should not be invasive.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

a. Although time consuming and expensive to maintain qualification, a mix of interview, psychometrics and assessment centres are shown to increase the validity of the selection.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

a. It went well when the company provided the right person for the role without interfering too much with the diaries of senior people in my business. When we out-source a task we expect to use experts who will deliver on time to cost and quality.

b. It was less productive when the company failed to keep in touch as agreed, the short list was too long or too short, the cost were high and some were hidden, the company were too invasive on senior people's time, the short list took no account of the culture of my company and the successful applicant did not fit in to our culture.

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

a. We offer coaching to our senior people in conjunction with in-house development programmes and 360° feedback. These are externally sourced at a Corporate level.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

a. Technical competence

b. Cost

c. Geographical coverage

d. Company cultural Awareness

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

a. Assessment within our appraisal process and/or more 360° feedback. I am not aware of the results overall as this initiative has covered all senior executives and above across the whole company.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

a. I do not think it can without using a measurement tool such as 360° feedback.

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

a. In my experience the success of coaching has been mixed. Normally people will modify their behaviour when feedback is shared and corrective actions have been identified. There are some people whose behaviour does not change and some where the organisation will accept no change to retain performance.

b. I have had experience of using the GROW model but I have not had the exposure to current programmes.

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

a. I have not been in a position to experience the model.

b. It is a novel approach and may be relevant in special circumstances. It is an approach that appeals technically but may be less popular with the line manager who wants quick results with no debate. It also sounds like a costly way of recruiting a person when our knowledge of the business and market may lead us to the right person anyway.

c. Griffonage do not fit into our corporate model but may be relevant locally for specific role, yet to be identified.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

a. No

16. Any other comments?  
a. No

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**RC (HRD)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

Understanding of the needs of our candidates  
Providing a high quality of candidates  
Length of assignment  
Cost

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

There is still a need for the use of search firms, but only at the senior executive level. Increasingly organisations are looking to outsource the transactional stages of the recruitment process.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

See 1 above.

4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

Less up front, more on delivery.

5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

This is not a high priority for us – service delivery is the key, but accept that for some specialisms this is the norm.

6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

Telephone and email contact is fine. Would expect a face to face meeting to talk through the short list candidates. Have already fed back my views on the format of the candidate reports. I expect to see a standard format CV, with interview notes/comments from the agent on matched suitability against the assignment post.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

Yes, but only as a guide. As a business we use SHL & Myers Briggs and sometimes Thomas International.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

Worst experience – working with an agent that asked to attend our interviews with the candidate, just in case the candidate did not answer sufficiently!

Best experience – working with Heidrick and Struggles on an MD recruitment assignment – from start to finish the assignment was professionally handled; taking the brief for the job spec/role, interviewing key management staff about the person spec, providing a comprehensive short list, carrying out market benchmarking, psychometric testing, competency based interviewing, job role interviewing and final presentation.

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

Yes, when identified as a career or personal need we provide counselling/coaching to all levels of staff. Although this does not tend to be used by very senior execs, who may receive this as part of their personal development. We also provide a senior development programme that offers this as part of personal development.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

Selection of firm will be based primarily on personal recommendation or previous experience/work with the organisation.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

Personal feedback from the individuals receiving the coaching, in some cases this has meant retaining staff at work, rather than them taking sick leave or leaving the organisation.

Obvious positive change in working style/methods/behaviours. We have not had a wide experience of coaching but the few staff/mgrs who have experienced it have found it a positive experience.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

[Left blank].

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

The current organisation that we work with has also provided us with localised training for supervisors in the work place and they have worked with us on other training programmes over the years. They are therefore familiar with our way of working and the nature of our staff, consequently, they have provided an appropriate coaching service. They use a multiple approach and various tools including NLP.

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

Having only had one experience of recruiter-coaches, I can only comment that this single experience was appreciated by the individual concerned, but I have not seen any noticeable difference in performance from the individual concerned.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

[Left blank]

16. Any other comments?

[Left blank]

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## **DB (MD)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

1. Reputation and ability to attract quality candidates.
2. Ability to understand the true business requirements for the role and to prepare a brief that provides a potential applicant with the right level of information to attract their interest.
3. Be competent and proficient as an ambassador for the company when interviewing potential candidates.

4. Provide an objective and detailed selection process that only puts forward candidates meeting the agreed criteria.
5. Recognise the delivery of the service does not end on the day of a candidate's appointment and that there is some responsibility for the success of the appointment over a reasonable period.
6. Transparent fee structure based on successful placement and performance over defined period.

Selection would be made based on the ability to meet the above criteria, appropriate fee structure to the role and my confidence on the firm delivering.

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

This depends on the level of the role being recruited, the timescales involved and the internal resources available. My experience is that internet and local advertising creates interest but rarely delivers quality. So-called 'specialist field recruitment' firms rarely do much more that attract a greater number of applicants in the specialist field. I do see the need for specialist 'search' firms for more senior roles.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

The criteria in question 1 would be the important drivers in delivering the service.

4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

I guess in an ideal world payment would only be based on results. This being; the quality of short list, final appointment, performance and longevity in the role. I have past experience with being presented with a weak short list with invoice and this is difficult to justify and has led to the introduction of my pre authorisation of such agreements.

5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

This depends on the role. For an engineering or commercial appointment then sector specific can make the process a lot easier. For Finance, operations, HR and other support functions this is not so important.

6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

I'm quite comfortable with recruitment firms maintaining contact with me outside of an appointment. I recognise there is a need to gain an understanding of business trends and views of the market ahead. Frequency 6 monthly and by phone or email.

During an assignment I would expect to be kept informed of progress against an agreed timing plan. Again by phone or email. Presentation of shortlists should be face to face with full verbal and written briefs on each candidate.

After an assignment I would expect the firm to maintain contact to assess performance of candidate and discuss any concerns for at least three to six months.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

I don't normally use psychometric testing for recruitment. Maybe I prefer making the judgement about suitability through a face to face meeting. I'm sure hidden concerns could be identified through such tools that prevent the wrong appointment being made but I don't have the experience to comment further.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

As you would expect experiences do vary considerably. The best experience was the recruitment of a Plant Manager. The selected agent was experienced in recruiting at this level, knew the automotive market and had access to good candidates without direct advertising. The job description was translated into an accurate brief with appropriate company and organisation introduction added. The short list had quality applicants with written briefs and a short video taken at the first stage interview. The selection was not easy but successful.

A bad experience is here and now. Using a 'specialist in field recruitment' firm for a HS&E Manager's role. Job description was not properly understood and not translated into a brief. Poor quality candidate list with just one worthy of interview. Had to request a written brief on the candidates to supplement the CV. No capability / knowledge testing of short listed candidates despite being a 'specialist' in the HS&E field. Short list selection was based on impression i.e. 'came across well, think he will fit in'.

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

Coaching is not offered to all senior executives although specific training is offered against development plans. For aspiring Directors we are using a training specialist for 'Management Development' training which includes one

to one coaching sessions. The training programme has also been modified for Cell Leaders / Managers as a 'Leadership Development' programme which again includes a number of one to one coaching sessions.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

I don't have experience of being coached myself so I can't really comment on the value or criteria for selection. The development training referenced above includes coaching but was not selected specifically for this purpose. Its value will be under assessment.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

So far the feedback on the coaching sessions has been positive from most employees involved in the development training. Some employees have struggled with talking openly about their experiences and feelings. It is too early to assess its value.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

N/A

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

More assessment with the training provider would be required to answer this.

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

Having been interviewed by Rebekah and Michael together I have seen the benefit of two different styles working well together. However, this inevitably increases the cost to the client company. The benefits of coaching through the early days of appointment may offer some benefit to the candidate in addressing concerns early on but I would want to understand how confidentiality to the candidate conflicts with reporting to the company. Longer term coaching privately funded or linked to training makes good sense but linked to a search company could be concerning to a client.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

The model is comprehensive and without following the process as a client I can't offer further improvement suggestions at this stage.

16. Any other comments?

None.

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**SN (CD)**

1. In priority order, what are the most important services, and qualities in terms of delivery, you look for when engaging a search firm; how would you go about selecting that firm?

- a) The ability to thoroughly understand clients' needs.
- b) The ability to help clients to 'draw-out' unstated requirements/factors and even improve their own understanding of the requirement.
- c) The ability to establish and maintain a pool of high calibre candidates to enable a rapid start to a recruitment campaign.
- d) The ability to conduct first stage interviews to screen applicants and build a short list of best candidates.

2. Post-recession, do you still see a need for search firms, or do you see the work involved being conducted in-house and/or with increasing use of on-line recruitment, or by any other method?

- a) There is an argument to say that there is a greater need post-recession, on the basis that there are more job seekers with a wider range of capability, hence a greater need for effective initial screening.

3. Assuming you see a continuing need for search companies, how can they best enhance your senior recruitment process?

- a) Engage early, ensure a good understanding of the company's needs in the short, medium, and (for very senior appointments) long term.
- b) At a senior level, it is likely that our ideal appointment is not currently considering a career move. So a well established network within our industry sector is essential.

4. How would you like the search company you engage to calculate, and construct, their fees?

- a) Usually a success based fee is appropriate, ideally this should be structured to reflect a full fee dependent upon retention of the candidate for an agreed period. Potentially, full fee could also be linked to candidate objectives?

5. How important is it to you to employ a sector specialist search firm, and why? If not important, what alternative would you find more attractive, and why?

- a) Like many sectors of industry, the defence industry (particularly the engineering domain) operates in accordance with its own paradigms

and norms. Whilst I wouldn't rule out bringing in people from other sectors and so benefitting from cross-sector experience, I think the best starting point would be with a search firm who understands the 'home' sector.

6. How do you expect search companies to keep in touch with you before, during and after an assignment? Please consider frequency and style of contact, content of candidate reports, etc.

- a) Before an assignment, a regular newsletter could be appropriate, but I acknowledge these may not be as effective as more direct contact from the search firm's point of view.
- b) During an assignment, frequency of contact will depend upon agreed timescales and the seniority of the post.
- c) Face to face meetings are appropriate at the outset and possibly when the final shortlist is presented.
- d) After the assignment, a 6 month follow up would be appropriate unless a coaching/development assignment is linked to the recruitment.

7. Do you see a value in psychometric assessment? If so, please explain. Also, do you have any preference for a particular assessment product? Conversely, do you see any disadvantages; if so please explain?

- a) Definitely an advantage, although not necessarily as the primary decision making tool. These types of resources are better utilised to give an indication of potential strengths/weaknesses to be emphasised or addressed during the initial period within the new role.
- b) I have used both OPQ and OAD tools and have seen these work to good effect.
- c) Disadvantages would arise if training in the use of the tool and interpretation of results was inadequate.

8. Please describe your best and worst experiences of working with senior recruitment companies? In doing so please explain why you thought they provided a particularly good service or why they failed to meet your expectations. (For example, do you feel they understood your business plan, and the business need for the recruitment? Do you think they understood your company culture and business style? Did they understand your talent management programme? Did they understand your sector? Were they able to add any HR guidance?) Please indicate how many good and bad experiences there were.

[Left blank]

9. Do you offer coaching to senior executives in your company? If so, for how long have you done so, and for what purposes? Also, are they internally or externally resourced, or a combination of both such as manager coaches internally and external coaches for specific purposes?

- a) We operate a group wide development scheme based upon an extensive set of core competencies. The scheme includes use of assessment centres, development sessions and mentoring/coaching,

and operates at several levels from junior management right up to plc board level development.

10. How would you go about selecting a coaching company? What do you look for in a coaching company, and what is your primary need for coaching? What are your criteria for assessing coaches in terms of experience, qualification, previous clients worked with, and so forth? This question applies to both the creation of a pool of executive coaches and, if that is not the way your company operates, then the selection of individual coaches.

- a) Currently, coaching and development is well resourced within our company.
- b) If I were looking to select a coaching company previous good personal experience with a particular firm would be my first driver, thereafter I would consider recommendations from industry contacts.
- c) Qualifications in this field do not appear to be particularly well recognised as yet, but could at some point be a good indicator.

11. How do you evaluate the results of coaching? Has it been of value to the business, to the individual, to the team? If so, please explain.

- a) Tricky question – as the benefits/objectives of the individual are not necessarily aligned to those of the business. I think it is up to the company to agree a clear terms of reference at the outset, but to be flexible enough to accommodate a different direction which may arise from the coaching assignment.

12. How can the coaching company assist you in developing a worthwhile assignment evaluation process?

- a) Ensure the client company is fully aware of the nature of coaching (as distinct to training), and ensuring the company is prepared to accept a result that may not be aligned with initial expectations but nevertheless may benefit the individual.

13. What has been your experience, positive and negative, of working with other coaching firms or individual coaches? For example, have they understood your business need for coaching? What results have been achieved? What could they have done better? Have they used a singular approach such as GROW, or a multiple approach using various tools and philosophies.

[Left blank]

14. Given the explanation of the Griffonage model above, how does this fit with your requirements for recruitment and/or coaching, and can you see a benefit to it? (For example, can you see a benefit of two recruiter-coaches working as a team? Can you see a benefit of a coaching-based approach to interviewing as described? Can you see a benefit of 'through-life' recruitment and coaching? Can you see a value to the Griffonage combined psychological, physiological and business consultancy approach to coaching, and so on?) Please feel free to add any comment you consider relevant.

- a) From personal experience, the two-person team can have an advantage but will I believe depend upon the individual, and may lose

the one-to-one coach to coached relationship that is of vital importance.

b) Separate sessions with the two-person team may be more beneficial.

15. Are there any ways you feel the Griffonage model could be enhanced to add value to your business?

[Left blank]

16. Any other comments?

[Left blank]

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### **PB (CD)**

1. Recruitment, especially appointments at this level is an expensive and “high risk” activity, both for the company and the individual tasked with the recruitment. As I am sure you are aware, this latter point is not lost on many executives. The things I look for are: strong reputation for getting it right (with both recruiters and candidates) backed up with demonstrable track record, recommendation from people whose judgement I trust, a keen interest to ensure that the right candidate is selected, a deep understanding of the market, a keen interest to understand not only the company’s objectives & goals, but also those of the recruiter and well as the company’s culture. All this can be boiled down to a “de-risking” of the process.

2. In short, I see the need for search firms continuing. More firms are trying to carry out this level of recruitment using in-house resources, but invariably this fails. I have witnessed this during my time at this company. In-house teams do not have the reach that search firms have and almost certainly cannot move with anywhere near the same agility. For these more senior appointments, I cannot imagine using an on-line facility to conduct such a “high risk” process. Firstly, I would need to feel confident that the candidates had fully understood the role, the expectation and the company’s culture. This can only be done personally. Secondly, I would also only wish to meet those candidates who truly met the requirements laid down and from personal experience, in-house teams have failed in this regard and I cannot imagine an on-line service aiding in this.

3. I believe that questions 3 & 4 are inextricably linked. So with your consent, I’ll respond to them together. I know that you will already appreciate that one of the biggest vulnerabilities in recruitment is ensuring that the successful candidate settles into the role and begins to perform

as quickly as possible. It can be intimidating for new recruits and therefore their fears, concerns, etc. about the role or fitting in with the company's culture, etc. after they join are not always shared with their immediate "manager". This can obviously be quite damaging for the company (as it affects performance), the candidate and the recruiter. The success of the candidate in the role is all important and a level of "after-care" for both candidate and recruiter is necessary to ensure a successful outcome. I believe that search firms have a responsibility in this respect as it is their screening process that the recruiter is mostly relying upon to ensure that the candidates presented for final interview have been fully vetted and indeed, fully understand the company; its values and culture, and the expectations of the role. Most senior executives are not necessarily good interviewers and will most likely be unable to get below the surface of prospective candidates to get to know them fully during the process, and thus ascertain their suitability for the role. While I recognise that the recruiter cannot absolve him/herself from all responsibility for recruitment, they need as much help from professionally trained people as can sensibly be afforded. For me, the search firms fees need to be modelled in such a way, that part of their fee is tied to the ultimate suitability of the candidate for the role and that they take a continuing (for a sensible period, anyway) interest in the progress of the candidate. This way, a risk and reward mechanism is enacted benefiting both recruiter and the search firm. Fees would clearly need to reflect the additional effort required.

5. The answer to this is very straight forward for me; significantly. As a business development/sales director, two of the principle aspects you require in any candidate are their network of contacts and knowledge of the market. Without these, their period of "minimum effectiveness" is extended exponentially. As commercial director, I would be happy to draw candidates from other sectors, but there would be limitations, e.g. a different public sector market would be acceptable.
6. I do not believe that there is any set formula, however I would expect that initial contact would be face to face to ensure that both the recruiter and search firm get to know each other and particularly the search firm come to fully understand the requirements of the role and all other characteristics associated with it. This cannot be done effectively using remote techniques. Everyone likes to understand the progress being made with any project, so depending on the nature of the appointment and the length of time allocated/expected for the assignment I would

expect a regular update. This update, I personally would prefer by phone, interspersed with the odd e-mail.

7. In short, in limitation. Psychometric testing has a role to play (my own experiences are Myers Briggs & NEO), but must only form a part. It will not, by itself, single out the only suitable candidates, as these tests can be “fooled”.
8. Fortunately, for me personally, I have only had one bad experience and that was in the instance of assisting one of my colleagues; who latter very much regretted the appointment. The individual (who was finally appointed) was totally unsuitable for the role. The search firm made precious little effort to understand the company’s culture, the characters with which the individual would be working, the nature of the role and its expectations and his track record in the industry. The role was one that required (amongst other things) a degree of customer interaction, good people management & leadership skills and working as part of a team. It subsequently came to light that this individual had significant customer relationship issues, had significantly over exaggerated his achievements and had difficulty working in a team environment!!
9. In my last firm, the simple answer is no. The firm that I worked for before that; did. It took the form of external support, but it was not a company policy, it was entirely at the discretion of the Divisional MD/CE. The intention was that was supposed to help us as exec.’s grow in our role, improve the interaction between the exec.’s; however as time progressed it became of a channel for communication between the Divisional MD/CE and the exec.’s concerned and vice versa. I am sure that was not the intention.
10. This is something that I have never had to do, nor have any experience other than being a recipient of such services. But if faced with the challenge, then my responses to question 1 would most likely similarly apply here.
11. Please see my comments at 13, below.

12. I would suggest that the coaching company would be able to more successfully understand the candidates and their suitability for the company & role in question. It is with this in mind that I would look for the coaching company to advise me on what characteristics the recruitment process would need to exhibit to improve the likelihood of only the most suitable candidates coming forward through the process to meet the recruiter. This would give the recruiter greater confidence in the outcome being successful.

13. I have only experienced exec. coaching once before. Initially I found the coaching to be most useful. It was clearly aimed at helping a new team come together to work as one in a harmonious fashion, ensuring that each was performing a role that played to their strengths. The coaching explored individual weakness as well as perceived team weaknesses. It enabled to explore our thoughts, concerns, test ideas, personally address some of our own development needs etc. in a confidential and "safe" environment, which was most useful and beneficial for the individual, team and company alike.

14. The simple answer is yes to all of the above. This would be a premium service that I would suggest could have a strong appeal to MD/CEO's recruiting at the most senior levels within their organisation.

15. Sorry, but I have no further comments.

16. No further comments.

**In addition to these surveys we also interviewed the following:**

DM – HRD of a £multi-Billion plc in the aerospace & automotive sectors.

AC – HRD of a £multi-Billion plc in the aerospace & defence sectors.

MS – HRD (L&D specialist) of a £1 Billion plc in the services sector.

KH – HRD of a UK MRO (maintenance, repair & overhaul) company.

PL – CEO of a £1 Billion plc in the defence & services sector.

JC – CEO of a global aerospace & defence logistics company.

JR – CEO of a European aerospace logistics company.

AD – UK CEO of a global aerospace & defence company.

BF – CEO of a global aeroplane constructor.

AJ – former candidate, now MD of an international logistics company.

DP – former candidate and coachee, now UK CEO of a global avionics company.

SN – former candidate, now Sales Director of a US logistics company.

#### **4 - Authors' reflections**

We are uncle and niece, and so share some important common values and beliefs, such as both being open-minded, having a willingness to carry on life-long learning, and being receptive to constructive criticism. However, it is only since 2004 that we have really known each other, and thus there are independent elements within our perceptions and behavioural patterns. There are also differences in age, gender, background, experience, and skills.

Conducting recruitment, coaching and consultancy assignments as a complementary pair allows us to research, interview, evaluate, prepare reports, administer, test opinions and reasoning, provide feedback and so forth together, as a learning team. It also enables one of us, during sessions, to question, listen, observe and propose, whilst the other listens, observes and takes notes, thereby reducing the risk of something important being missed. Since undertaking this project we have also implemented an immediate de-brief after every session so as to gather details, facts and thoughts together, thereby ensuring our reports are as comprehensive and robust as possible, and our future advice and assistance is as appropriate and effective as it can be.

Furthermore, the diversity between us, combined with working holistically as a complementary pair, has the added advantage that we are both continually learning about each other's area of expertise, with one area often underpinning the other, and assisting each other with what we need to understand jointly, thereby continuing to enhance our effectiveness as a team.

We have learnt that each of us has areas of strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, but that, to an amazing degree, where one of us has a

limitation, the other compensates for it. This operates very much both ways. Arguably this project was an experiment, and like all experiments it carried a degree of risk. For example, that we were only compatible on the surface; that as our independent natures and views emerged we would disagree over fundamentals; that our different experience levels and interests would lead to a lowering of standards, or lack of credibility in the eyes of clients; and most important of all, because it is the foundation on which our approach is based, we would realise we could not work together as a team, let alone a learning one.

Categorically, this has not happened. We have been tested in the fires of recession. Not only have we developed an approach that utilizes all our various skills, experiences, likes and interests to best effect on behalf of our clients and ourselves, we now realise we have become like two sides of the same sheet of paper when conducting our business. Both of us support and enhance the other, demonstrating that the whole is most definitely greater than the sum of its parts.

Additionally, the process has clarified the manner in which we wish to live our lives as a whole, with both of us making some surprise discoveries, but against a background of increasing trust and respect, without which no true partnership can flourish.

Moreover, our approach to coaching has changed; indeed, we would suggest matured. It is now based on an appropriate range of coaching perspectives that are sufficiently varied to accommodate the majority of needs and situations our coachees are likely to encounter, but do not overload or conflict ourselves. Furthermore, working with the whole person, mental and physical, private and business life, because all of these interrelate, we also incorporate an understanding and practical knowledge of physiology, psychology and business practice.

Finally, whilst recognising the value of being able to move up and down the directive scale, so providing expert advice and guidance as required, our

style of coaching and, therefore, of search and consultancy as appropriate, is firmly based on facilitating the thinking, exploration, empowerment and decision making of the client.

What we have learnt professionally, as a pair of recruiter-coach-consultants, as researchers, as business people, and as a learning team, is detailed in our respective reflections that follow. Suffice to say here, and in summary, that we have ended the project, indeed, the whole DProf, a lot wiser and more effective than when we commenced it.

### **Rebekah's reflection**

Had I even heard of the phrase 'due diligence', let alone knew what it meant, before I left my job at the House of Commons to work in Griffonage, I may have thought twice about leaving! Because, for the duration of this project, I have been on an immense learning curve regarding A&D, recruitment and coaching. On more than one occasion I thought long and hard about whether I had made the right decision, so alien was this world to me, my knowledge and experience, my characteristics and my personality. However, I have carried on and learnt a great deal from the experience that I otherwise would never have done and I hope this has benefited the practice that Michael and I now go forward and offer.

#### *What have I learnt about business?*

Working with Michael and undertaking the DProf has made me realise how lucky I am to have had so many opportunities and learning experiences during this project, largely due to Michael's contacts, and that I must extract the good things from these and take them with me on the rest of my journey. To receive a guided tour by the Chief Executive of the Airbus factory and see wings being made by advanced engineering. To travel to Los Angeles in January and May 2009 to interview for a senior VP and a potential Chairman. To visit Paris in March 2009 and interview. To go to Shrivenham, the UK Defence Academy, in June for a day and see the new ideas and academic thinking being developed there. Furthermore, to be invited as guests to an open day at Cranfield University to talk with MBA students in November

2009. In December 2009, to visit Lola's HQ in Cambridgeshire and see racing cars being tested, not to mention other defence things that, well, one cannot mention. Similarly, to have a guided visit by the Head of F1 at Cosworth to see their F1 engines being constructed.

And generally, being on the road selling (not something I profess to be any good at or like particularly, which is why Michael does it so much better), getting meetings with the CEOs and HRDs of Britain's most important A&D companies. Each was a different character and each had differing personnel needs, and we were able to play to our strengths and be adaptable, with our knowledge of different tools and techniques of coaching and how they inter-related to recruitment. It was hard work but a wonderful opportunity.

In terms of learning needs, this has helped me to understand better the private sector, having previously worked in the arts and the public sectors, by listening to and interviewing senior businessmen and women in the engineering and technology industries across the UK.

*What have I learnt about recruitment?*

I started this endeavour lacking the knowledge and experience that Michael had. In terms of recruitment, I started from nothing, but seemed able to build up confidence and learning more quickly than coaching, perhaps because it is more structured, i.e. there is a person spec and a company style that you are aware of.

Michael has taught me a great deal about interviewing, demonstrating text book interviewing styles at the outset of this project and allowing me the scope to try it for myself, supporting me when I've dried up. I have also learnt from experience, by reading, and by undertaking this project.

I have written a considerable amount about my learning in this field in chapter four, suffice to say as my experience and learning grew, so too did my confidence, and awareness. Being a team helped immensely, as we worked to each other's strengths and supported each other's weaker points.

*What have I learnt about coaching?*

I struggled much more with coaching, again starting with no experience. Voice coaching and wellbeing coaching (and I suspect the same with the average sports coach) is very much about telling people what to do, not coaxing it out of them. In the early to middle days I frequently dried up, unable to think of questions, probably because we were undertaking more recruitment than coaching during the recession. As a result, I was very tied to the book, to the GROW model, and the basics for the start of this journey. I am also, as I reflected, not a natural enquirer, which made it twice as hard to get started.

I appeared to develop a sort of coach-consultant approach, where you take the principle of coaching, but also help the client with ideas and suggestions, which came much more easily. My natural impatience meant that I was not very good at sitting with a coachee for half an hour while they worked out what seemed blindingly obvious to me and ended up looking for the solutions and telling them. Luckily, when I did interject with ideas, our coachees seemed to appreciate them, as they also appreciated the depth that Michael went into with his coaching questions, so that they fully understood what it was all about.

We had an excellent session at the European Mentoring and Coaching Council's AGM in April 2009, learning several different techniques; metaphors in particular interested me, delivered by Dr Daniel Doherty. We also had the privilege of listening to Prof David Clutterbuck and to him agreeing to be our pre-viva advisor. His books on coaching have provided excellent reading and some helpful ideas and tools to use in coaching sessions.

In terms of my overall learning needs, I now recognise more coaching tools and methods than when I started the project, and how to apply them in a variety of circumstances. We have worked with coachees from different backgrounds and with different needs and treated them all as individuals, not

just someone getting a standard, off-the-shelf, coaching package. I have tried very hard to improve my listening skills and use coachees' and candidates' responses to move the conversation on, or question more deeply, as appropriate. I recognise that my coaching skills are nowhere near as honed as Michael's are, but to be able to offer advice on the physiological/wellbeing side of our practice and assist Michael as and when I can with the more psychological-based approach to business coaching means I will grow in my depth as a coach over time. This enables us to give an holistic service to our clients and more scope than perhaps they would do with a single coach.

*What have I learnt from the experience of the DProf project that has aided other activities in my life, and vice versa?*

I was a London Borough Councillor from 2006-2010, and in March 2009, I was asked to attend a school in my ward (a comprehensive with over 1,000 boys from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures) which was holding an 'employers day', giving 14/15 year old boys their first taste of being interviewed for a job and giving them constructive feedback. There were around 50 people from local businesses also invited to interview the boys. This was an opportunity to test my ability at interviewing skills solo, and it was a challenge to be engaging on a level that they could understand without being patronising and keeping their interest, being clear in my line of questioning, making questions flow logically, and making the questions relevant to their limited 'life' experience to date. We had a list of prop questions, but I only referred to these at the end of the session in case I'd forgotten anything. I was able to use coaching-style questions to a limited degree, bearing in mind their age, about how they felt about things, what an experience had taught them, what they'd learnt about today's experience and what they'd learnt about themselves. They were, on the whole, eager to learn and picked up on their strengths and areas for improvement.

As well as being a London Borough Councillor, I also sat on the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority from 2006-10 and chaired the Human Resources and Equalities panel for two years (2008-10). This gave me an

opportunity to learn to chair meetings, teaching me to listen fairly across the political and officer spectrum and to involve staff support groups whenever they have something to contribute. It has also taught me a little on how to work with union representatives as well. I've learnt to summarise the contributions in order for the clerks to draw up actions; to keep meetings short but meaningful; to ask for reports to come back if I'm not happy with them; and to draw up a future work plan with officers. This in turn has allowed me to better understand coachees who want to discuss chairmanship skills.

In September I was also able to use my experience from coaching when the Chairman asked for the equalities unit to be disbanded, because equalities should be mainstreamed into all departments and every fire station, and not be seen as some ghettoised Cinderella department. The head of equalities was clearly upset by the disbanding of her team, but the Chairman wanted it to happen. I was stuck in the middle as chairman of the HRE panel. I tried to use coaching style questions in order to give the Head an opportunity to make her case – “where do you feel it adds value across the organisation?”, “can you see any areas where equalities can be mainstreamed?”, and so forth. I spoke to her privately after the meeting to reassure her that we all thought she was doing an excellent job, and ask how could we best manage the human side of things, and how we could get the message across? Also emphasising that this was in no way about budget cuts, it was actually about increasing the representation of equalities across not only the HQ but every fire station in London. We agreed a way forward.

From this I learnt how valuable a coaching approach can be in such a situation to give others the opportunity to demonstrate the need or value of something. I found myself as the balancing force between politician and officer, wanting to take forward a political steer but at the same time manage the human aspect and impact this would have.

What I had learnt about recruitment, and my former experience at the House of Commons working for an MP, taught me something towards the

experience of sitting on the selection panel for her replacement when she retired. Having sifted the CVs, I got my shortlist and compared this with other members of the panel and we agreed a group shortlist to be discussed at CCHQ in November 2009. Because this was done by local consensus I felt certain that some good candidates got lost in the system, perhaps because other members of the panel had not had my professional experience in selection. My lesson from this was, as I stuck out for one candidate in particular, who then got selected for another seat the week before our selection was, make sure you have a damn good second candidate on your list!

In September 2009 I also surprised myself at quite how much I knew about media handling, when talking to an engineering company PR man, and was able to give considerable advice on working with and handling the media, identifying the message, having a media strategy and so on. All of this has come from my experience in politics at a local, regional, central and governmental level.

I have also brought my political learning into coaching sessions, asking coachees to think of running a campaign, what their strategy would be, how they would market themselves to their voters etc., which is a metaphor that most of them can understand and engage with, and which turns out to be quite a useful tool in getting coachees to think about themselves in terms of personal marketing for recruitment selection.

In terms of overall learning needs, this knowledge of the public sector and government has enabled me to converse at a senior level with CEOs interested in politics and government, and my experiences within them have given credence to the comments I can make about these sectors. I have knowledge on chairing skills, handling people at many levels, working in a political environment, and working with the media, that I can feed back into my work with Griffonage. At the same time, my growing knowledge of coaching and recruitment has aided me in my external activities. I feel this

has made me a better practitioner because I can bring depth in a variety of fields to my role, as a recruiter-coach-consultant.

*What have I learnt about experiential learning?*

In my last meeting chairing the Human Resources and Equalities Panel of LFEPA there was a paper on fast tracking of candidates into middle management roles. The officer recommendation was to pass this paper. Because I now have knowledge of what experiential learning is, and its benefits, I was able to bear this in mind when reading the paper. It gave me concerns that insufficient time had been allowed for the bedding-in of knowledge gained through experiential learning. Not only did I (and a fellow Authority Member) go against the officer recommendation and also political recommendation (which can be dangerous in a political career), I also took the matter up with the Head of HR, the Head of Delivery, and the Head of Training after the meeting, questioning them for about 90 minutes, where it was resolved to extend the period of training and learning significantly.

Had I not done the DProf, I would not only not have known about experiential learning, but nor would I have had the academic evidence to back up my concerns. I feel the end result was: more clarity of thinking for the officers involved; a better training programme for candidates; and probably a better result for Londoners. Because of all that I have learnt with the DProf I felt very strongly about this and was prepared to leave under a political cloud if need be to change the result, which thankfully did not happen!

In terms of overall learning needs, I hope this has demonstrated that I have taken experiential learning to heart and used it in a practical way. I also feel it shows some academic rigour because, by preparing for the long meeting with officers after the panel, I was able to ensure every detail had been fully considered.

*What have I learnt about my business partner?*

I know that Michael has had to accommodate me in his practice, which he has run single-handedly for 12 years before we became business partners.

Having operated on your own for such a time takes courage to bring in a partner and he has been very patient to allow me time to listen, make mistakes, and learn.

Michael and I have improved as a team because we have gone from Michael leading for most of a meeting, to me contributing more and more. We also spark ideas off one another – as one questions, so the other thinks of another appropriate question, because we are on similar wave-lengths.

Michael is very good at summarising, and also picking up on certain words that candidates use, which is a helpful ability to have in this game.

I have also learnt that Michael is a complete workaholic and I feel guilty on the odd day when I am not doing something relative to Griffonage. However, what I have learnt from my previous experiences has contributed greatly to our practice.

In terms of overall learning, I have certainly achieved a greater understanding of how industry, recruitment and coaching works, courtesy of Michael. I now have a better understanding of the psychological side of our practice and we can, therefore, offer a broader holistic service than simply one coach specialising in one area and the other in something else, and never the two meeting. Now, although we do not try, or claim, to be experts in each other's specialisms, we are able to back each other up and assist each other better than when we both started. As a learning team it is now greater than the sum of its parts.

*What have I learnt about myself?*

Throughout my life there has been a natural tendency to rush into things, jump in at the deep end, not take in fully what I listened to, and not plan ahead. Because I am vaguely intelligent and able to wing things, I recognise that I do not plan things because I can get away with it when it's something I know about; when it's new to me, like this business, I need to plan much more!

I have always had a desire to learn, but thinking about this, it is not so much to learn but to experience – to travel the world and experience as much as I possibly can within it, to keep moving on, and to try something new. Perhaps there is some hidden unconscious thought that, like Mozart, I might die young and therefore want to do everything I possibly can in life. Although, as I hit 40 in the last year of research for this project, stand down many of my extra curricula activities, and move out of the Smoke, there is a wish to calm down and take life at a steadier pace.

My natural bent is as a doer – to administer, to manage, to chase up (some would say nag!), be practical and complete things. I am not, by nature, an enquirer or a salesman - I have a 'live and let live' mentality and, as long as people aren't hurting others, then it's up to them what they think and how they get on.

Because I charge through the corridor of life opening doors – that's good, how interesting, fancy that – moving on and opening the next one and the next one, deep thought and reflection are not something I have ever given time to before. This course has made me stop and think more about what I do, why I do it, and how I do it. It and the coaching have made me think more about who I am, my style, and my thoughts.

These reflections have made me think much more about who I am. I realise I am someone who is quite introverted (although as a musician, performing to hundreds of people did not bother me any more than performing to two men and a dog, because it was not you so much as the music they came to listen to). In truth I prefer the company of animals more than people, but I do enjoy imparting knowledge to help others live a healthier life (hence the wellbeing) and help where I could as a Councillor. I have four passions in life – animals, the arts, the environment and architecture (or damned-awful buildings in the wrong place, cruelty to animals, the abuse of our environment by the human race, and knowing that the arts and music bring so much more to life than a couple of hours entertainment of an evening); I also feel very strongly about

equalities, especially gay rights, having grown up in an arts environment. This does not, however, mean I give myself a heart attack every time something comes up in the News and am pretty laid-back about most things. I also much prefer to be at home, and all that good housekeeping involves, plus working in my community, than commuting back and forth to London or elsewhere in the country.

In terms of overall learning needs, I feel I have taken reflective learning to heart. It was something I had little time for both in theory and practice, but I can now see the relevance of it. This is most obvious in that it has helped me to better understand the person I am, my strengths and weaknesses, and where I am best placed to help, or hinder, the business.

Not only do we have complementary specialisms in terms of psychological and physiological knowledge, we also complement each other in terms of front-facing, sales, industry knowledge, and behaviour traits knowledge from Michael, and quiet backroom, writing-up, administration and research from me. The academic rigour of this project has also made me take more time over my output, ensure it is the best it can be, rush less and plan more.

I have been motivated to finish this project so as to improve the work I do with Michael at Griffonage and to be a better team player, and to widen my experience of coaching and recruitment: I certainly feel that has been achieved.

Where do I want to take my learning? I enjoy greatly all aspects of wellbeing and encouraging a healthy, but not martyr-like, lifestyle. To this end, I have learnt from this project that approaching wellbeing from a coaching rather than telling perspective helps clients take ownership of their lifestyles because they are empowered to make choices for themselves. Therefore, understanding more about behaviour and why people make the choices they do, will greatly aid this.

### **Michael's reflection**

As I stated in Chapter Four, a particularly important aspect of this section will be my reflection on Rebekah, especially in the light of how we have worked, and developed together, as both individuals and a learning team. However, as I also suggested, I believe it is, first, important to describe the context within which this project, indeed, the whole DProf, took place.

### *Context*

When we commenced in the Spring of 2008 we were not aware of the impending commercial disaster that was about to befall us just a few months later, and I do not just mean the recession. To understand this it is necessary to go back to when I established Griffonage as a recruitment consultancy in 1996. At that time my strategy was to build a modest portfolio of clients that I could service alone, but was sufficiently large to spread risk and create opportunity. By early in the next decade I had achieved this, and then one client, that was growing rapidly and internationally, asked me if I would consider a retainer agreement based on an annual rolling contract. This would give me security of cash flow, so I accepted. However, whilst not precluding me from working with other companies, the client in question required more and more of my time, and there was only me to service his needs. As a consequence my client portfolio began to shrink.

By 2005 I had achieved all the financial goals I had set myself in 1996, and was looking to diversify into a portfolio of activities; hence my decision that year to add coaching to recruitment. The decision seemed correct at the time because the market was booming, I had a long-term agreement with my principal client, who had now agreed to a two-year rolling contract against his four-year expansion programme, and so I was well set to build a combined coaching and recruitment business launching coaching on the back of recruitment. All I needed was a partner; and Rebekah proved to be ideal.

Then, in the Spring of 2008 there was a change of top management with our principal client, followed by their refusal to pay any of our invoices which eventually led to an out-of-court settlement just before Christmas. By that time, of course, the recession was well underway, companies were cutting

back dramatically on their recruitment budgets, and coaching, whilst being talked about, was difficult business to gain rapidly by a new entrant to the field, especially in a recession.

The following year was not easy. The previous eight months of 2008 had drained my financial resources, but the settlement solved that problem and left enough to fund the development of the business that is now built around the Griffonage approach. Perversely the time 'freed up' by the recession allowed us to undertake the DProf which, as explained in Chapter Five, also enabled us to plan, test and refine our business model much more thoroughly than if we had been working flat out on client assignments.

So, whilst the DProf was commenced against an uncertain commercial background, the project that followed in 2009/10 was undertaken against an even more uncertain backdrop, both commercially and, increasingly, financially.

Furthermore, our private lives were particularly busy. Rebekah was deeply involved as a London Borough councillor, and member of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority; and I was responsible for the planning, and subsequent delivery, of one of my City of London Livery company's tercentenary celebrations which involved a thanksgiving service in St Paul's Cathedral, a luncheon at the Guildhall with Royalty present, a Grand Ball, and a banquet at the Mansion House. But we persevered, on both the DProf and Griffonage, with one aiding the other, and slowly both began to grow.

Fortunately recessions do not last forever and, in a way, this latest one has done Griffonage a great deal of good. We now have: a totally new business model, built around a thoroughly thought through and tested method of operation (the Griffonage approach) that we believe is capable of meeting not just existing market needs, but also adapting to emerging ones; an increasing client portfolio based on a permanent business development programme that aims to reach, and then maintain, about 20 long-term clients, whilst being very conscious that new clients must continually be

sought to replace any that, for whatever reason, do not remain with us; and the foundation of a very high level and well recognised professional qualification, which will be followed by a permanent research programme coupled with a similar CPD programme.

When I reflect back, not just over the DProf, but since I decided to add coaching to my portfolio of activities and, therefore, commence this academic journey with a PG Cert, there has been an incredible amount of change, challenge and opportunity, the last three years of which have been against a background of substantial adversity. But it has been worth it. Considerable achievement (and associated experiential learning) has been gained, and I have changed personally. When considered overall it has been a remarkable success story because we are now well placed to meet the market's emerging needs, and those of Rebekah and myself in terms of our business, professional and personal requirements. However, it has not been without associated stress and worry; and frankly, I would not have wanted to go through it all without the courage, loyalty and support of Rebekah.

#### *How I believe I have changed*

It is often said that coaching is a life-changing experience. Well, coaching in particular plus, with Rebekah, creating this new business and undertaking the associated DProf against the background described, have had a profound effect on me; and I feel much better for it. For the first time in many years I am now really enjoying what I do. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, I gain great satisfaction and enjoyment from working with Rebekah; and this is something I look forward very much to doing for many years to come. Second, like all professional coaches, I attempt to apply appropriate techniques to myself, and one that I find I am now starting to do automatically is place myself in the other person's position. This is very difficult for most people to do, but when one can it often produces a revelation. It is amazing how problems just seem to diminish, or even disappear, when one understands the other party's reasoning and objectives, and then you work with them to arrive at a solution acceptable to both. This

is not compromise, it is clarity of communication and therefore understanding, the lack of which is frequently the cause of a problem.

Additionally, although the last three years have been stressful, and I am a naturally rather intense person anyway, I now realise that 'life is just too short' to carry on like that. Rebekah, who is naturally more easy-going than I am, is an excellent role model in that respect.

Furthermore, whilst that intensity, coupled with a behaviour that Rebekah has termed as 'complete workaholic', has been of immense value to us in coping with the challenges of the last three years, I now recognise that, if taken too far, especially in combination, they can be damaging to myself and those around me. Like Rebekah's impatience, they have a definite value, but they also need to be channelled and managed towards achieving specific aims.

It is with this thinking in mind, and the very important realisation that I no longer need to drive so hard to prove myself, something I seem to have been doing since the age of 19, I now recognise if I ease back a little I can actually achieve better results, and therefore gain more satisfaction and pleasure.

This realisation, coupled with a recognition of the value of looking at everything from different perspectives, has enabled me to take stock of where I am in life, what I have achieved so far, what else I would like to do, and how I would like to go about it. I hope I am becoming increasingly broad in my thinking (without losing focus), more relaxed, and more 'comfortable in my skin' as it has been described. This does not mean I should relax to the point where I become complacent, even lazy, as that is totally against my nature, but it does mean I no longer feel I *need* to work 24/7; I now realise I can work a lot smarter and, therefore, make space to enjoy many of the things that life has to offer.

So, whilst I will always enjoy working (as long as I am mentally and physically able) I feel my attitude towards it is changing. I now look forward to undertaking challenge not just to prove I can do it, or to increase my bank

balance (although that is always useful) but because what it entails interests me and, at the same time, helps other people. This is one of the reasons why I find coaching so rewarding; it can change people's lives as demonstrated in Case Study Seven. New experiences, continuous learning, exploration and adventure, variety and fun are now becoming much more important to me; and for this realisation I have to thank, in no small measure, Rebekah. It is very true to say that I feel I have been given a whole new lease of life; something (how surprising) some of our coaching clients of a similar age say to me say when we help them realise that life does not end at age 60, but there is still a great deal more to achieve and enjoy, one just needs to view matters with a different perspective.

In a sense this DProf journey with Rebekah has been just such a career and life coaching intervention for me; and the first stage of successful coaching is self-awareness. Something that is essential for the coach as well as the coachee if the coach is to fully assist the coachee, and gain from the experiential learning inherent in the intervention.

I have also surprised myself in finding that I have become more patient and pragmatic than I used to be. Rebekah may criticise herself for her impatience (although, as she and I have discussed, this behaviour can be turned to advantage if managed and channelled appropriately by both of us) but she is very pragmatic, and that has often made me think again. So here is another example of how we have benefitted each other.

#### *What I have learnt in terms of business*

To start with I have re-learnt, with a vengeance, one of the most important business principles – never become too dependent on one client. I have also found that I am able to interview, effectively, the most senior people in business and, to my surprise, that they naturally assume I can be of value to them. This does no harm to one's confidence whatsoever; but because one is working at such a high, and often a very critical, level where one mistake can spoil everything, complacency never creeps in.

A particularly important output from this project has been the opportunity to recruit, and talk with, plc main board members, including chairmen, chief executives and non-executive directors. I never achieved this with the 'old' Griffonage, and working at this level has not only increased our professional knowledge and standing, it has also opened many doors that I was never able to even knock on previously. Whereas in those days I had started to accept that Griffonage would never be able to operate at the very top of the profession this project, and the approach that provides its core, has not only taught us that we can, but it has also enabled us to move Griffonage to a higher level of business.

### *The advances professionally*

There are two that stand out above all others. First, the development of Rebekah and I as a continuously learning team – the foundation and core of our approach, and one that we firmly believe can be taken advantage of, not only by other members of our professions, but in many other business contexts.

Second, the improvements we have made to our services in terms of quality and effect now that the Griffonage approach is operating in its entirety. To see a concept become reality, and then be proved not just to work, but to be markedly better than the manner in which such matters were handled before, is most rewarding. But it is also very important to recognise that nothing stands still, and therefore our approach's ability to evolve and adapt will be critical.

These two advances are, of course, totally synergistic, with each leading to, supporting, and continually developing, the other.

As far as personal professional lessons are concerned I feel it is most important I continue to learn how to blend coaching with consultancy and recruitment, and use the knowledge of all three, and their associated techniques, to assist each other and, therefore, the client at any particular moment in time. This means that our action research, as part of our CPD,

must never stop; and the Griffonage approach is an ideal mechanism for that.

One particular area that the project has helped me with markedly is the philosophies and psychology behind coaching, and the connection between thought and behaviour in respect of coaching and, by extension, our approach to recruitment and consultancy. This is particularly pertinent because, as Peter Bluckert points out in his *Psychological Dimensions of Executive Coaching* (2006) “coaches require a certain level of psychological skill and competence to operate effectively across the wide range of assignments likely to come their way.” He terms the foundation of this competence “psychological mindedness”. He goes on to say, and our experience with those senior executives who have experienced coaching increasingly supports this, “Purchasers of coaching increasingly see psychological mindedness as the top level competence they seek in executive coaches, along with business knowledge and coaching excellence.”

This importance, plus our wish to continue developing, as David Clutterbuck describes it, ‘managed eclecticism’ as far as coaching approaches are concerned, has led me to study an appropriate range, in terms of extent and content, of psychological underpinnings and coaching approaches as described in Chapter One. In particular: Positive Psychology; Person-Centred; Cognitive-Behavioural; Solution-Focused; NLP; Psychodynamic and Systems-Psychodynamic. Furthermore, I am now extremely interested in the psychological as well as physiological causes and effects of stress which, therefore, continues to enhance the wellbeing aspect of our coaching. To that end I am creating a compendium of psychological underpinnings to coaching and stress with associated descriptions and techniques to act, in conjunction with Rebekah’s complementary manual on wellbeing understanding and practices, as a source of coaching and teaching material for Griffonage.

An equally important area of development for me has been, of course, that of group and team learning. Coupled with coaching philosophies and approaches, learning in groups and learning teams have been the most significant areas of my professional advancement during this DProf both in terms of knowledge and application.

*Consequently, where do I want to take my learning?*

Undoubtedly, I wish to continue to learn more about the psychological background to coaching and learning (with each being integral to the other), especially in a business environment; this applies to both individuals and teams. However, as it is important for Rebekah to learn more about my areas of expertise, so it is that I learn about hers, so that we can continue to develop as a learning team, thereby operating to maximum effect and adapting to any requirement appropriate to the service we provide.

*Experiential learning and academic rigour*

These two, of course, are not necessarily related as I now realise, because experiential learning is something we all partake of, in a myriad of ways, during our everyday lives, even though we may not be conscious of it. However, it was the emphasis on this subject by the DProf programme that brought home to me its power and value, especially if it is undertaken in a structured manner suitable for what one is trying to learn and achieve. Hence, the connection with academic rigour, something I was introduced to by my MA, but did not fully appreciate until undertaking this DProf. Furthermore, whilst action research was a concept I had also been introduced to in my MA, it was only theory; this DProf made me apply it, and therefore learn about it, properly.

It was my military staff training that drummed into me the importance of agreeing a clear aim before attempting any project, and then undertaking appropriate research and review. Nevertheless, being a naturally impatient person, and always, seemingly at least, under time pressure, reflection was something one did very little of. There was always something else of importance to move on to, usually under pressure from a more senior

individual. However, undertaking this DProf, with its core of learning cycles, has not only reinforced to me the value of reflection, but also introduced me to, and helped me understand the value of, reflexivity, a habit which Rebekah and I have now established, both individually and together, as a fundamental element of our team learning.

### *Rebekah*

Finally, the subject of reflection brings me to Rebekah. As she indicates herself, this is one of the principal lessons for her, both professionally and academically. What I have been most impressed with, however, has been her tenacity and determination when climbing what has been an incredibly steep learning curve for her, especially within the particularly severe economic climate involved. Yes, she has been helped by me; and yes the discipline of the DProf helped, especially with its fundamental importance to all aspects of our developing business; but she only wobbled twice, and then she quickly pulled herself together in her usual fashion, and again applied maximum effort. Undoubtedly there were times when she was an example to me; and it is very true to say that we could not have achieved all that we have, and will continue to do, without each other. It was, and is, a genuine team effort.

A further important lesson for Rebekah, and in some degree for me, has been the significance of patience, not just during a recruitment interview or coaching intervention, but in business overall. We have both been subject to a lack of it at times, and it is very interesting to note how we have assisted each other in this respect. We can very helpfully play each other's 'devil's advocate'. As suggested earlier, impatience can be turned to advantage if handled wisely because neither of us likes, nor has the luxury of being able, to waste time. Consequently, this behavioural trait we both share, coupled now with our increasing appreciation of reflection, enables us to maintain the pace of our many activities, with both of us commenting, maturely and constructively, on the work of the other, thereby continuing to learn and improve as individuals and as a team.

Another factor concerning Rebekah which I must comment on is her honesty with herself; it is very apparent in our conversations, and in her reflective remarks above. Nevertheless, I believe there are times when she is, just like me, too hard on herself. Rebekah will tell you that with her it stems from her life-long training as a classical musician – you must always strive to do better – and her naturally competitive nature. For me, it probably stems from that drive to prove myself, if only in competition with myself.

However, I now realise that such demand on oneself can be counter-productive if taken too far. And whilst both of us will always strive to achieve and do our very best, always going that extra mile, I learnt some time ago that I can only do my best, and that we cannot excel at everything. The secret is to excel in our chosen fields, and keep pushing their boundaries whilst, at the same time, exploring others because, as my reading during this project has taught me, most of us utilise no more than 40% of our abilities. The trouble is we do not normally recognise our potential abilities, and that is where coaching can help.

As this DProf has progressed Rebekah has probably found some of those natural limitations, but she has also discovered new areas for her to develop and excel in, such as nutrition. Furthermore, she has come to terms with the fact that none of us can excel at everything, but that if she re-directs the energy involved she can be extremely good in areas she may have previously avoided or had not even thought of, especially if she takes time to consider them in depth rather than, as she puts it, “charging through the corridor of life, opening doors, saying that’s interesting, and then moving on to the next one.”

Rebekah regards herself as a “doer” – she is not a nag – at least, not with me. She also describes herself as a backroom girl; and she is certainly very good at that. So much so that when you combine her abilities with those of mine, particularly in a recruitment, coaching or consultancy situation, the end result can be excellent. A perfect example of this was when we facilitated a strategy development meeting, lasting two days, for the senior management

team of a British based, but Canadian owned, aerospace company. It was demanding stuff for both of us, with Rebekah recording everything said, and me facilitating the thoughts and decisions of the team. It would have been impossible for either of us to have done that alone, but together we achieved, in the words of the client, a most satisfactory result; indeed, he has engaged us for a series of further facilitated meetings.

Throughout this Reflection, and the case studies, I have tried to demonstrate not just what we have learnt, but how we have developed, and will continue to develop, together, thereby creating a genuine learning, flexible and highly effective team which benefits our clients, ourselves and, hopefully, our professions. That, I believe, we have done. One only has to look back over the last three years to see how far we have travelled; but it is merely the beginning of a journey. The really exciting bit starts where this paper stops. As in life as a whole it is important to enjoy the journey, because the destination, like taxes, is one of the two certainties of life. The point is that, like Morecombe and Wise, if one of us is missing, the act just doesn't work!