

COACHING FOR CHANGE • A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE • CLIMATE RESILIENCE • TAKING ACTION

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A globe of the Earth is shown resting on a wooden life preserver in the ocean. The globe is positioned in the center-right of the frame, showing the Americas. The life preserver is orange with a white stripe and is partially submerged in dark blue water. The background is a blurred view of the ocean.

Climate Consciousness & Coaching

Making the connection

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MY CLIENT IS STUCK ON DOOM AND GLOOM

The Situation:

"My client is an activist, environmentalist, and self-proclaimed "political nerd." His company is paying me to coach his impact as a team leader, but every call begins with the doom awaiting us if we don't get our collective act together. When I push us toward work issues, his energy drops 90 percent, and we can be in flatland until the call ends. I'm considering firing him, but I coach others in the company, and it would look flaky. What am I missing that could turn this around?"



By **Suzi Pomerantz, MT, MCC**

First of all, the company is your client too, not just the team leader you're coaching. Secondly, why are you pushing anything on a coaching call, ever? It's not your job as a coach to "push us toward work issues." Thirdly, why would you put up with being "in flatland until the call ends"? Isn't that boring?

When you coach a leader in an organization, you have multiple stakeholder agendas to balance: the agenda of the organization, the agenda of the hiring executive, and the agenda of your leader client. If he's bothered by a sense of dread and impending doom, give him space to voice that; let him speak into it. Help him make sense of it as best you can then connect it to what he cares most about and to what he can do, to where he can have an impact, and to who he wants to be. The good news is that you are noticing that your client's energy drops 90% when you push, so STOP PUSHING. Shift him from victim to creator.

Assuming this is a political environmental activism company where your client is a team lead, why would his energy drop when discussing his work? Is it not? If not, then how might you harness his energy for activism, the environment or politics, and

connect those passions to his work as a team leader in whatever it is his company does? Can you create a space for him to connect those dots himself and find a way to infuse his own passion and energy into his work?

Here are some magic word bookends that might open up some possibilities for you with this client when you observe his energy drop: "I notice ... I wonder." Next time you notice the energy drop, or notice the flatlands, even if you did not push or drive the conversation there, call it out by saying, "I notice that your energy seems to have gotten really low." Or, "I notice our conversation seems to have flatlined." Or, using whatever language is natural for you following the words "I notice," share your observation. Then, open it up with what you are curious about "... and I wonder if there's something else we might explore that might be more meaningful for you?" Or, "I wonder what is causing that energy drop for you? Would it be helpful for us to unpack that together?"

Bottom line: Meet him where he is, and if he seems entrenched in his commitment to being a victim, speak up and empower him!

By Craig Carr, BCC, PCC, CPCC

One relentless habit of human beings is to make internal “maps of the world” – consciously or otherwise – and then figure out how to navigate them. I first learned about internal maps from NLP, and I use the concept as a helpful framework when clients flee to their default story (also known as their comfort zone). Made up or otherwise, and regardless of the facts, people create internal maps to meet emotional, psychological and spiritual needs.

That said, as professional coaches who do our job responsibly, we do our best not to judge the merits of any particular rabbit hole. In this case, you are coaching for a business that’s paying you to reach down and pull a valued leader out of their tunnel because it’s become a strain on the company’s progress. You are straddling a fence. On one side, you’re clearing the path and firing the client; on the other, there are threats to your status, and perhaps you’re feeling a hint of failure.

It’s sticky, for sure, and you won’t solve the situation with the either/or mindset that created it. Coaching is about discovery, right? So, what if this is not about you and your coaching, but the system you are embedded into?

First, get out of your head and check in with your empathy. Where do you align with what this person says about the global situation, and where do you go numb and stop listening? Chanc-

es are excellent that where numbness happens for you, it happens for others, too. This is a leverage point to get curious about. If your client wants this job, he will have to self-manage around this dynamic, and if he is sincere in a desire to enroll allies in his map of the world, he’ll embrace the feedback.

Your job is to land this distinction and find out if he cares. It will mean speaking some hard truths, and if he gives a hoot about how he’s perceived, that’s a good sign, and you have some nuanced work to do. If he doesn’t care, then agree to end the coaching with a brief report on his disengagement with the process. If that occurs, his team members likely know more than you think about what’s going on. If you do this well, the respect for your role in the company will grow, not diminish.

The second thing to touch on is context. In other words, if the climate content he wants to discuss is irrelevant to the company brand, he’s at risk of taking up space. If the company is positioning a brand that values sustainability, healthy living, and an eco-friendly policy stance, then handling his obsession becomes more complex, and the company needs another level of feedback and insight. If what he’s addressing is essential work for the company, and there’s a problem with his voice not cutting through the noise, it will come to the surface in unintended and consequential ways.

By Victoria Trabosh, CDC, CEC

Understanding your client’s perspective is essential for improving the situation. His self identification is not merely a distraction; it is a fundamental part of his identity and motivation. Ignoring this aspect could lead to a decline in his energy, so it is important to validate his passion and help him recognize how it can enhance his leadership.

Consider these five steps for a more successful outcome:

#1 Acknowledge and Leverage His Passion – Begin each session by establishing a safe environment for your client’s concerns. Rather than quickly steering the conversation in a different direction, demonstrate genuine interest in what they have to say. For example, you might say, “Your passion is clear. How do you envision these values aligning with your work?” This approach validates their enthusiasm and encourages them to recognize how it can enhance their leadership.

#2 Align Personal Purpose with Team Goals – Many activists in corporate roles feel disconnected from their causes. To enhance his leadership, he can implement strategies such as integrating sustainability practices within his team, and upholding values like fairness and transparency. Linking his work to his life’s mission(s) can renew his focus.

#3 Empower Him with Solutions – Global issues can be overwhelming for those who seek to change the world. As a coach, your role is to help your client concentrate on making meaningful contributions in their immediate environment. Encourage them with questions such as, “What is one action you

can take this week that reflects your leadership values?” This approach promotes practical problem-solving and empowers your client.

#4 Reimagine Energy-Draining Conversations – If he expresses negative views, help him reflect productively. Ask questions like: “What’s one positive change you’ve seen recently?” or “What are your ideas for impacting your team or organization?” This can redirect his emotional energy into optimism.

#5 Revisit Your Role – Coaching involves meeting clients where they are and guiding them toward growth. Your role is to help the client connect their leadership with a larger mission, which can enhance their engagement. If the client remains disengaged after implementing these strategies, a direct conversation about expectations and boundaries may be necessary. Remember, your goal is to help the client channel their energy productively, fostering hope and motivation.

By acknowledging their passions and aligning them with their leadership, you can support the client in channeling their energy effectively, which fosters both hope and motivation. •

Are you grappling with a sticky situation?

You don't have to go it alone. Let our senior coaches give you some different perspectives to consider. Email your situation to submissions@choice-online.com and put “sticky situations” in the subject line.