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# Bill Critchley consulting

I am an Organisation Psychologist specialising in Top Team Development, Executive Coaching, Supervision, and Complex Change.

My main area of expertise is in helping leaders to develop their organisation's capacity for change and innovation. My approach is informed both by my practical business and organisation development experience, and by a perspective on organisations as complex **social** processes. My consulting practice takes various forms, working on major change and leadership development initiatives, involving large and small group work; and coaching individuals to clarify their purpose, to stimulate creative and constructive dialogue about current issues, and to facilitate the process of change.

Prior to becoming an independent, I was a member of the leadership team of Ashridge Consulting, and worked for Ashridge Business School for twenty years. I was founder of the Ashridge MSc and the Ashridge Professional Doctorate in Organisation Consulting. I also founded the Ashridge programme in Coaching for Organisation Consultants.

## **Specific experience of coaching**

Part of most change assignments is a personal coaching element. I have coached many Chief Executives, Directors and senior managers, in their role as managers, as leaders of change, and also in their quest for personal development

I am also a counsellor and psychotherapist, and at any one time am working with four or five individuals going through significant personal change.

Examples of current and recent client work

- Coaching a number of Partners in law firms
- Coaching senior executives in the energy and media sectors
- Supervising many coaches and organisation consultants
- Facilitating/developing a number of Executive boards/ teams for:
  - A leading UK retailer
  - A high-profile charity
  - Senior teams in National and Local Government

Bill Critchley; professional accreditations:

- Visiting Professor at Middlesex University
- MBA from Cranfield School of Management
- MSc in Gestalt Psychotherapy from Middlesex University
- Member of EMCC
- Member of UKCP
- Fellow of RSA
- Associate Fellow of Complexity and Management Centre, University of Hertfordshire
- Ashridge Accredited coach

#### Publications

'Relational Coaching: taking the coaching high road', (2010) Journal of Management Development, Vol. 29 no. 10

'Second Thoughts on Team Building', (1984) Mead, vol 15, with Casey, D

'Organisations get stuck too' (1989), Leadership and Organisation Development, Journal Vol.10(4), with Casey, D

'Managing organisational change - Is it just an Illusion' (1993) Leadership and Organisation Development Journal, Vol.14(1).

'Can Organisations Really Learn?' (Dec. 1992) Directions - the Ashridge Journal)

'Lighting up Networks' (1994) Leadership and Organisation Development Journal, with Patricia Shaw.

'The Myth of Managing Change' (1996), LODJ Vol. 17 No. 2

'A Gestalt Approach to Organisation Consulting' (1996) Chapter in book entitled 'Developing Approaches to Organisation Consulting'. Routledge.

'The Role of the Change Agent' (1998) Chapter in book entitled "Management Consultancy" sponsored by IMC, edited by Philip Sadler and published by Kogan Page, London.

## My perspective on Coaching and Supervision.

*Coaching* is, in my view, a craft, and like any craft it takes a long time to learn its finer points and subtleties, like use of language, use of body, use of feelings, when to disclose and not to disclose. No theory or model, however useful, can give us this; we have to find it out for ourselves through exploration, through 'crafting'. Also, we are only at our best when we are thoroughly comfortable in our own skin, no longer needing to impress, please, get a result, get more work and so forth. I think that kind of profound confidence combined with proper humility takes a long time to learn, a lot of personal work and a lot of practice!

I see *supervision* as a critical part of our development as coaches and an opportunity to bring doubts, uncertainties, and most importantly, test what we are doing with others; we can all get caught up in the dynamics of a dyadic relationship, or broader system dynamics, and as the saying goes, 'the fish is the last to discover water'.

**Group supervision**, where it is done well, is a particularly useful form because it allows the 'supervisee' to hear a number of perspectives from fellow coaches and is less reliant on the one perspective of the supervisor. It also provides a very 'grounded' learning format for the whole group; it somewhat resembles action learning with its emphasis on learning from the real experience of colleagues, and so it makes a major contribution to CPD.

I have been an executive coach for some 25 years, and I started the Ashridge programme 'Coaching for Organisation Consultants' which has since morphed into a Masters, and group supervision is an integral component of that programme.

The term 'Supervision' has a somewhat hierarchical connotation so I think it is important that it is cast as a peer to peer relationship in which the coach seeks out someone who has long experience as a coach, and preferably as a Supervisor, and contracts with him or her to help examine and develop the coach's practice. It is therefore a working alliance between a coach and supervisor, where the supervisee offers an account of their work, reflects on it, while the supervisor **responds** to what they observe and hear. I am willing to express my views and any concerns that I may have, but there are many schools of coaching and I need to be aware of my own biases and theoretical preferences.

'**Respond**' is an important word for me; so often we use the word 'feedback' which suggests a possible judgement. In a group setting my role is to see that the responses of group members are mobilised but not in a way which overwhelms the supervisee or the group 'client', and I remain the primary supervisor.

I have taught supervision at Ashridge, developed in-house programmes for coaches and OD consultants, and I have my own supervisor, and whatever

school one comes from it seems to me that supervision has three basic objectives which were well articulated by Bridget Proctor.

- To care for and provide a 'secure base' for coaches to explore their vulnerabilities and restore their confidence and energy (the 'restorative' element)
- To explore or 're-frame' their work with clients, and to learn and develop as coaches or OD consultants (the 'formative' element)
- To uphold professional standards and to ensure that supervisees are taking into account ethical standards and principles (the 'normative' element).

My coaching and supervision practice are broadly informed by a relational philosophy, which is itself rooted in the idea that organisations are social processes, or processes of 'communicative interaction'. The figure of interest becomes the 'in-between', or reciprocal nature of interaction. A leader needs someone to lead and a victim needs a persecutor and so forth, so this is not a 'normative' or idealistic view of how I would like an organisation to be, but a realistic view that thought and action are functions of context.

As the supervisee's agenda will be defined by their organisational context, so, at a more indirect and subtle level, will my relationship with the supervisee. My approach is to pay attention to what goes on between us and our clients and to make our relationship with our client, and the wider dynamics of the client system, explicit; because it is likely that such an exploration will cast new light on the client's relationship with his or her organisation. The relationship between supervisor and supervisee is therefore seen as a matrix in which the supervisee's relational dynamics may be repeated.

**Bill Critchley, July 2018**