

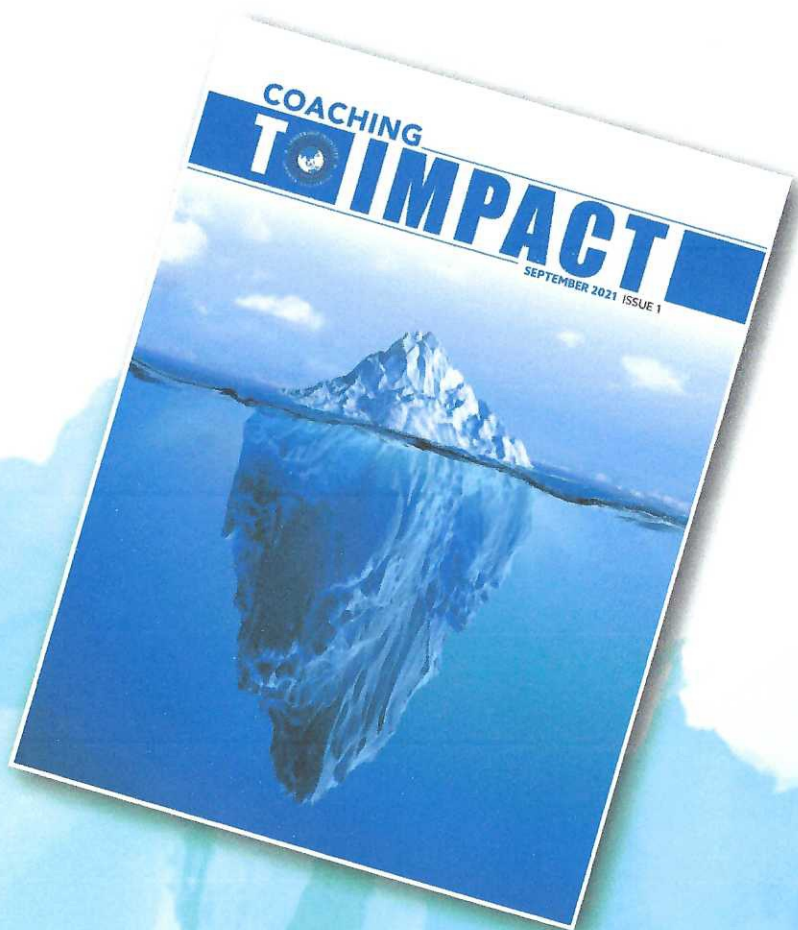
COACHING



T IMPACT

SEPTEMBER 2021 ISSUE 1





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LEADERSHIP BY COACHING

COACHING FOR WISE DECISION MAKING

How do you make important decisions in your portfolio? Do you rely on policy and procedure, or do you go by your experience? Most decisions will be a mix of the two. But there will be times when procedures aren't enough, and the issue is beyond your experience. You can't exercise your authority in the usual way. Your instructions might lead to confusion or to the wrong decision. And who will be to blame? This is when a coaching approach will be better than a managerial one.

Coaching is a type of dialogue or conversation about the problem you and your department are facing. It's different to a managerial conversation where you essentially know what to do and you just need to tell others to do it. Coaching is a shared exploration of the problem. By asking questions rather than giving opinions you draw out the expertise of your staff. This prevents you from jumping to conclusions too early. And you create shared ownership of the problem and the solution. But how do you know what questions to ask?

In my research and practice as a leadership coach over the past 20 years, I have developed a useful set of guidelines to help leaders better manage doubt, dilemma, or disruption. The WISE framework is a way of using coaching questions to enhance your leadership style and effectiveness. It covers four domains of problem exploration:

Widen your view.

Interrogate the reality of the situation.

Sense the future, which is different from gut feeling or intuition.

Eact a way forward.

How to **WIDEN YOUR VIEW** of the problem

You can never have all the information you need to make a properly informed decision. But looking at a problem from different angles does yield important insights. Here are some coaching questions you can ask yourself and others:

1. Instead of either/or, whether/or not, what other options are there?
2. What is most important to me right now?
3. In what ways could my opinion be incorrect?
4. Who has solved this problem before (Google it)?

How to **INTERROGATE THE REALITY** of the situation

Interrogating reality is considering all the different elements of the problem that might be occurring, both inside and outside of the frame of reference that you're using. However, too much analysis can paralyse you from deciding. Ask yourself and others these coaching questions:

1. What would have to be true for each of these options to be the best possible choice?
2. What's the biggest obstacle to this being the right decision?
3. What am I prepared to give up for this option to become a reality?
4. In what ways could this response fail?

How to **SENSE THE FUTURE** you want to create

I make a distinction between intuition and sensing. They're not the same thing. Sensing is being deeply aware of what the likely future might be and imagining that future. Intuition is a gut feeling. Here are four coaching questions to think about:

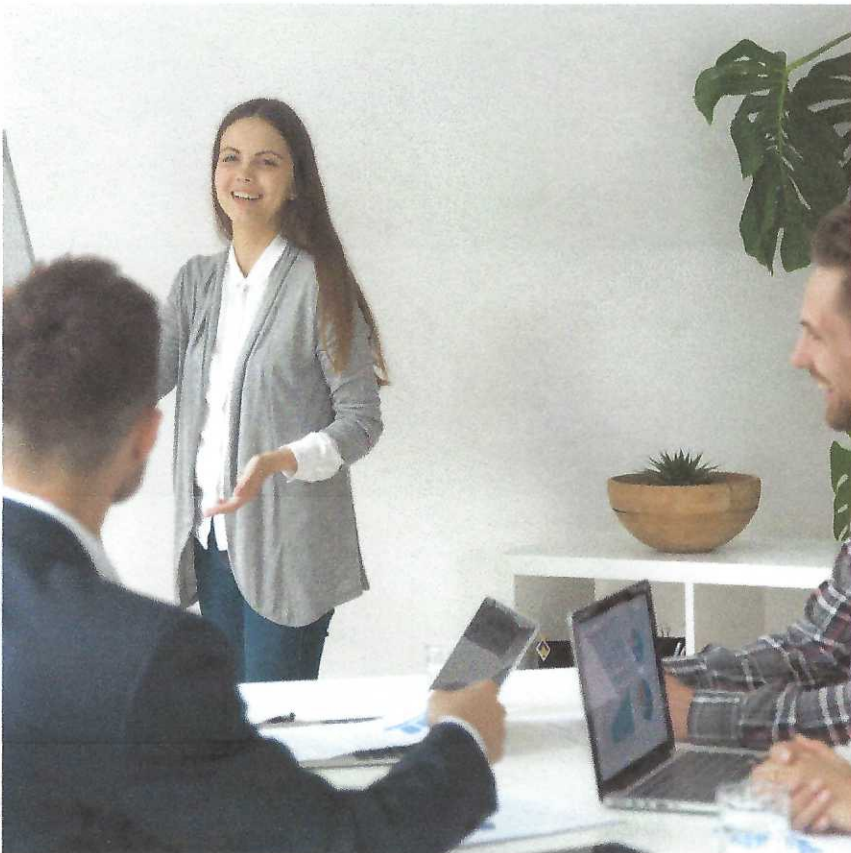
1. In the current moment and looking forward to the next two to three years, what future do I want to create?
2. Where in my own being and in my environment, can I find the seeds of the future now?
3. What is the essence of this issue? What is my deep knowing about this issue?
4. What might other people think or feel who are watching me make this decision?

How to **ENACT A WAY FORWARD** without procrastinating

This is what entrepreneurs do. They fail forward and fail fast. It's only through taking action that you learn what works and what doesn't. Most leaders would argue that it's costly to fail forward and fail fast. However, contained prototyping is a proven approach to acting and finding out what works. Here are four coaching questions to enact a way forward:

1. What can I start doing now?
2. What is an appropriate threshold for me to act?
3. In what ways can I experiment or prototype these options?
4. What can I learn from this?

The WISE framework will help you coach your staff members rather than manage them when it comes to tackling difficult decisions. And it will help you make wise rather than foolish decisions when you're dealing with unforeseen or complex situations, such as a global pandemic for example!



Peter J Webb



Dr Peter J Webb is a Director of Human Capital Consulting, senior leadership coach, and organisational psychologist with 18 years' experience designing and delivering organisation development and culture change initiatives for medium to large enterprises and government agencies across the Asia Pacific region. He is internationally recognised for his research and practice in helping leaders make wise decisions under conditions of disruption and complexity. Over the past 3 years as Director, Research and Curriculum for iCliff, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia he designed, managed and delivered executive education programs for senior executives and top teams across South East Asia.