

TEA ANYONE?

Just over a year ago, *CoachLines* interviewed champion rally driver, journalist and TV presenter Penny Mallory about how coaching had helped her to achieve two important goals – running the London Marathon and hosting a live TV chat show.



As part of our series of retrospectives, we thought we'd see what Penny has been up to since then and how the benefits of coaching are still playing a part in her life. One of the things Penny said in her last interview for us was that she "wanted to prove that I could do anything at all that I put my mind to". Well, she seems to be doing it again, in rather unexpected ways ...

"Actually it was my husband's idea," explains Penny. "After a particularly depressing experience at a well-known high street coffee bar, he thought – we're British, we drink tea, there must be a market for a national chain of quality tea shops ... and that's how **ttotal** was conceived. We'd been looking for a new business opportunity anyway and spent the next year researching, planning and raising money."

ttotal's first shop opened at Waterstones in Swansea in April this year. On offer is a selection of the finest black, green and herbal teas and fruit infusions from around the world – some have won GOLD Great Taste Awards. These are served in specially designed teapots that have an integral filter, enabling the leaves to be removed from the brew after the appropriate infusion time (you even get your own timer). Comfortable surroundings and a range of delicious cakes complete the **ttotal** experience –

the chocolate brownie also won a GOLD Great Taste Award in 2005.

The response so far has been extremely positive and **ttotal** is now planning to open a flagship store in a major town in Spring 2006.

And as if this wasn't enough of a challenge, Penny and her business partners have set up an e-commerce site – **ttotal.co.uk** – to sell their selection of teas plus a range of tea pots and other accessories on-line. The site also provides a wealth of fascinating information about tea – its history, medicinal qualities, recipes, famous and not-so-famous quotes – and of course, how to make the perfect cuppa.

"I'm afraid I get bored very easily," admits Penny. "Even though I was running a B&B business, presenting TV shows and being a mother of two young children, that wasn't enough. I don't really understand the concept of work/life balance – my work defines me. Getting **ttotal** up and running has been really exciting."

And has the work you did with your coach helped you in this latest challenge?

"Definitely," says Penny. "Quite frankly I knew nothing about the retail business, shop design or tea, but coaching instilled in me an absolute conviction that I can do whatever I put my mind to. So I've never doubted what we're striving for, even though what that means is growing a generic brand to rival Starbucks, with over 200 stores on the high street, in airports and hotels in five years time!"

... well, watch this space!

Inside this issue:

Psychometrics	2
Car phones	2
Interviews & perfume!	2
Career success & personality	3
Empathy	3
Expectations	4
Rapport	4
Positive thinking	5

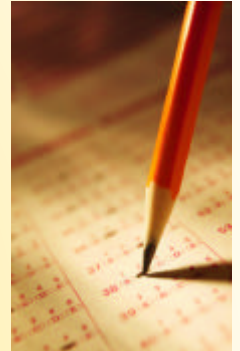
Research

Too important to be tested?

HR and recruitment professionals tend not to use cognitive testing (of mental ability) for more senior job candidates, perhaps because it is believed that this is less relevant to higher-level appointments.

However, a study reported in the *Journal of Occupational Psychology* has apparently refuted this. Researchers conducted a meta-analysis (a technique used to combine the results of multiple studies) of research dating back to the 1950s, enabling them to compare the cognitive test scores of nearly 90,000 people with their later success in terms of job performance and training.

They found that cognitive testing was a strong predictor of performance across all the different job types investigated: clerical, engineering, professional, driving, equipment operating, management and sales. In fact, it was even more effective for more complex jobs.



Driven to distraction

As Dr Christian Jarrett reports in The British Psychological Society's Research Digest, using a hands-free phone whilst driving could be as dangerous as using a handheld.



Psychologists at the University of Illinois asked dozens of students to sit at the wheel of a driving simulator. Whilst driving they had to complete occasional

second tasks that involved judging the accuracy of statements (speech comprehension) and repeated description (speech production). When performing either of these tasks, the students were less able to maintain a steady speed or distance behind another vehicle.

Researchers concluded that it is the *"cognitive demands associated with communication, rather than the use of the phone itself, that interferes with driving performance."*

The sweet smell of success

Research carried out in Japan must be music to the ears of perfume manufacturers – the study found that wearing perfume can make you feel and look more confident.

31 women were filmed while undergoing a mock interview. During a break, half the women were sprayed with perfume and then resumed their interview. All the women wore the same grey sweatshirts and personality tests revealed no differences between those who were, and were not, given perfume.

Afterwards, 18 students, who were unaware of the perfume spraying, were asked to rate the interviewees' body language and eye contact. This revealed that, after the break, the women who were sprayed with perfume became less nervous, for example shifting their position and touching their face and hair less often. The women themselves also reported feeling more relaxed and dominant.

Disposition and career success

Research carried out by the Management School at Sheffield University seeks to explain the relationship between disposition and career success (as published in the Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology). The findings are rather interesting:

Certain individuals are predisposed to be satisfied or dissatisfied with their work experiences and personality is related to both eventual career attainment and career success within a particular organisation.

'Neuroticism' - one of the so-called Big Five personality traits - which manifests itself in pessimism and low confidence (as well as anxiety and suspiciousness) is a key factor in impeding career success: neurotic individuals may lower their aspirations and consciously restrict their career and professional choices

'Agreeableness' - another Big Five trait - is characterised by altruism, self-sacrifice and modesty, which may lead to such individuals attaching a lower priority to personal success.

Such individuals also tend to over-concentrate on performing well on the job and overlook opportunities for career enhancement.

The most controversial suggestion from this research concerns 'Conscientiousness': conscientious individuals are disadvantaged in their career prospects and work performance is not strongly associated with career success. One reason behind this could be that highly conscientious people may focus more on managerial and administrative responsibilities, thus suppressing divergent thinking and creativity. Such individuals also tend to over-concentrate on performing well on the job and overlook opportunities for career enhancement.

Ed: this fascinating research seems to be saying, in a nutshell, that being good at your job doesn't mean you're going to have a successful career and that the kind of person you are has a more powerful influence.

We have coached a number of clients scoring

high on Neuroticism, the focus being on learned optimism raised confidence. We also regularly work with clients who believe that their devotion to the current role is bound to lead to promotion. I remember some very early career advice from a mentor - "if you want the next job, act as though you've already got it but deliver results in this one". Tricky balance!?

Empathy

Step into my shoes

According to a recent issue of *Human Givens Journal*, seeing someone else's hand being pricked by a needle causes the motor neurons at the same site in our own hand to freeze, exactly as if we had received the prick ourselves. It appears that we empathise with others' pain at a deeper, physiological, level than previously realised.



Ed: This reinforces what coaches know about empathy - it is perfectly possible to put yourself into another's shoes, to occupy their skin. We use a variety of techniques to help clients achieve this and here's an example of how powerful they can be: we coached an

experienced and well-trained medical representative who, despite her skills, was coming up against a brick wall in establishing a relationship with a key customer whom she actually disliked as a person.

We helped her to 'become' that person, to sit in his seat, watching her. As a result, she was able to realise what motivated and drove him and discovered that his need to reinforce his academic prowess was the reason for his (to her) unappealing behaviour. It brought a deeper understanding - an empathy - that she was able to use in forging a more productive relationship.

How we infer the expectations of others

As reported in *Nature Neuroscience*, a growing body of evidence suggests that we understand other people's actions and intentions by simulating their movements in the motor pathways of our own brain. Now a study suggests that peripheral sensation and proprioception (the sense of where our limbs are in space) also play a role in this process, specifically when it comes to inferring other people's expectations from the way they move.

Two patients who suffered from the rare condition of lacking any peripheral sensation were shown a video of a man lifting different boxes. When the man was given correct information about the weight of the boxes, the patients were able to correctly judge whether each box was light or heavy. However, when the man was occasionally given wrong information, the patients were unable to judge from his movements whether a box weighed what he had expected.



The researchers believe that the patients' lack of peripheral sensation affected their ability to activate or sustain a mental simulation of the lifting movements they were watching ... "to judge mismatches between action preparation and performance in others, one has to access subconscious sensorimotor programmes".

Ed: Coaching for Success clients will know the exercise we do in which they move and sit in a different chair or stand in another space, either to find out more about another person (as in the example of the medical saleswoman) or indeed about themselves in an imagined or desired situation. This study explains why this exercise is so effective at providing these insights.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery ... even for computers

In a recent study of what's known as the Chameleon Effect, researchers at Stanford University examined the social effect of mimicry, which occurs when we rate other people who mimic our speech or actions more favourably than those who don't ... even if we are unaware of the mimicry.



Fascinatingly they found that this Chameleon Effect still occurs even when the other person is a digital image not a real human being!

69 students wore a virtual reality helmet that displayed a 3D image of the head and shoulders of a 'digital agent', speaking for 195 seconds about a proposed campus security policy. Half the participants were shown an agent that mimicked their head movements precisely, but with a four second delay. The agent seen by the rest of the participants did not mimic them at all, but instead moved its head as the previous participant had.

Afterwards, all the participants (except for eight who had detected they were being mimicked and were excluded) answered questions about the agent and what it said. The digital agent was considered more persuasive and likeable by those whose head movements it had mimicked.

In one rather disturbing conclusion, the researchers suggested that digital mimicry could be used to manipulate or persuade - for example in on-line chat rooms or in video games.

Ed: Anyone who has worked with us on the skills of developing rapport will find this work no surprise at all!

Positive thoughts

Countless studies have examined the effect of negative psychological states on the production of the 'stress hormone' cortisol, but few have looked at the effect of positive psychological states.

So, in a study by the City University of Hong Kong (as reported by the *British Psychology Society*), saliva samples were taken from 80 healthy adults, six times a day for two days. All were asked to complete questionnaires about their mood, particularly optimism/pessimism, over the last month and day.

The researchers found that a generally positive mood during the last month was associated with lower cortisol levels over the whole day, even after controlling for good or bad mood on the test day.

Ed: Coaching has always taken a positive approach: we focus on unlocking potential. And optimism itself can be learned through coaching. If, as this research suggests, optimism also lowers the production of cortisol, with a corresponding positive impact on stress levels ... what are you waiting for!

Coaching for Success Ltd.

Releasing your potential.

Sheldon House
3 Plomer Hill
Downley
High Wycombe

Phone: +44 (0)1494 473504

Fax: +44 (0)1494 473504

Email: coach@coachingforsuccess.co.uk



Web:
www.coachingforsuccess.co.uk

Merry Christmas

Finally from all of us at Coaching for Success we would like to wish all our clients, customers and contacts a very Merry Christmas.

We value your business and have thoroughly enjoyed working with you.



WE LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING
YOUR SUCCESSES IN 2006!

About us

Coaching for Success provides executive and personal coaching that helps individuals perform to their maximum potential.

Our corporate client list covers a range of industry sectors, including pharmaceutical, retail, finance and construction, and high profile names such as Laing, AstraZeneca, KPMG, Abbott and Marks & Spencer.

Our coaches work with company personnel, on a one-to-one basis, enabling them to recognise the choices and opportunities available to them, to make decisions about career and personnel development and then to create and implement a plan of action designed to achieve success.

We deliver a comprehensive coaching service by combining approaches in three key areas:

- ? Personal change techniques – Cognitive psychology, NLP etc.
- ? Counselling – careers, stress management and change management
- ? Advice - health, fitness and nutrition