

Coaching at Work Annual Conference

Maintaining Momentum:

Coaching and Mentoring in a VUCA world

6th July 2016, London

Coaching
at Work

Coaching at Work Annual Conference

6th July 2016

Holiday Inn, Bloomsbury, London

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University of Southampton Leadership Circles

Professor Peter Smith, Janice Donaldson
and Eve Turner

6 July 2016



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We can make our minds
So like still water
That beings gather about us
That they may see, it may be,
Their own images,
And so live for a moment
With a clearer, perhaps even with a
fiercer life
Because of our quiet.

William Butler Yeats





Overview

- What are leadership circles?
- The challenges working within Higher Education – including changing external/internal pressures
- The pyramid structure and how it works
- Running a circle
- The evaluation to date, and how it links to change across the institution
- Any questions?





Why are we here?

We've all experienced university – directly as students or indirectly through family and friends

But what goes on 'behind the curtains'?

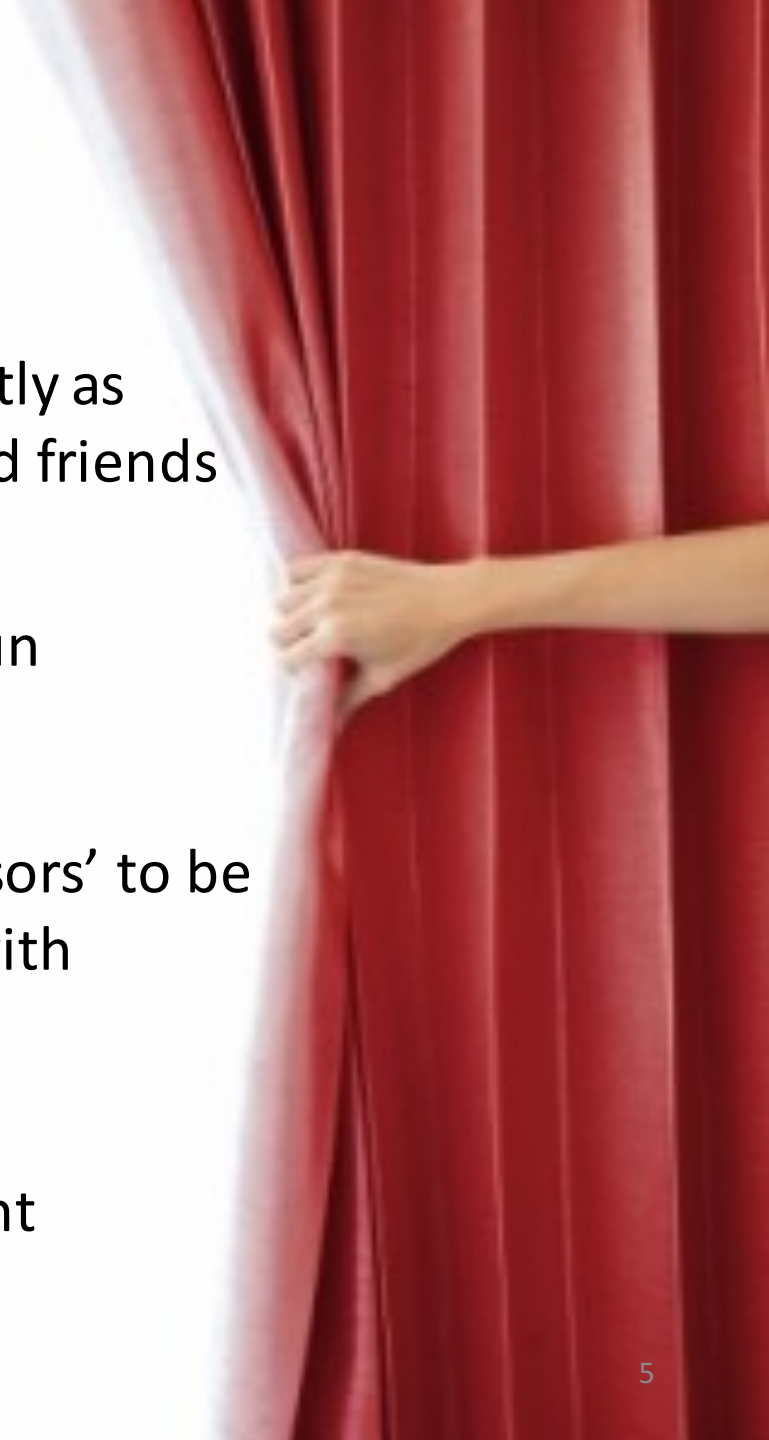
- What it takes to make a University run

Question

- How do you teach 'esteemed professors' to be leaders, be collaborative and work with Professional Service colleagues?

Answer

- You don't! You create an environment for them to teach themselves!



The challenges of Higher Education and VUCA

Internal factors

- Independent thinkers, trained for critical questioning
- Cultural differences
 - Academics and professional services
 - STEM and non-STEM faculties (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths)
 - Silos when we need collaboration
- ‘Failed’ change programme – suspicion prevalent, healing needed

External factors

- £9k student tuition fees – students as customers
- Central government funding withdrawing
- Fierce global competition for international students
- “Doing more for less”



Setting the scene





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Leadership Circles – The History





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Evolution of circles for Southampton

- Coming in from outside higher education
- Change process failed, suspicion prevalent, healing needed
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor prepared to support and role model – time for leadership
- One circle ran with identified talent – future senior leaders
- Next steps – how could we scale this and make it sustainable?
- Eve Turner!!





What is a Leadership Circle?

- A space and time for reflection, challenge and support
- A mix of academic and professional services staff from across disciplines, that become future networks
- A place of equality – everyone's input is equally valued, no-one dominates and people listen without interrupting
- A place to provoke deep discussion, exploration and reflection on real leadership issues in a creative and safe environment





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A way of being.....



“I pin my hopes to quiet processes and small circles, in which vital and transforming events take place.”

Rufus Jones (1863-1948)
Quaker and Professor of Psychology & Philosophy



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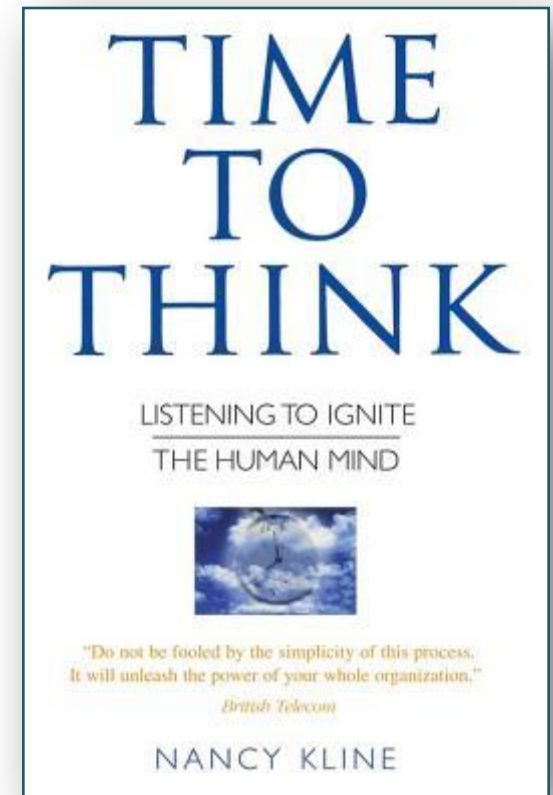
Introductions – how our leadership circles start

- Name and role
- What is going well in your life and/or work right now?



Time to Think – Nancy Kline

- The quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first
- If our thinking is good, our decisions are good, our actions are good, our outcomes are good



10 components create a Thinking Environment

We consider:

- What these mean for us in our circle
- How we want to be with each other, in our circle so that we get the best out of our time together and each other (our ground rules)
- The concept of “freshest thinking”





Eve's role – to develop

- A self-replicating pyramid scheme (designing myself out asap)
- A tight/loose model – a strongly modelled framework, with content decided by each circle
- The central importance of agreed 'ground rules'
- The underpinning principles of the ©Thinking Environment
- Tools to work in pairs, trios and whole circles
- Topics and themes based on:
 - Understanding/leading yourself
 - Understanding/leading others
 - Understanding the organisation





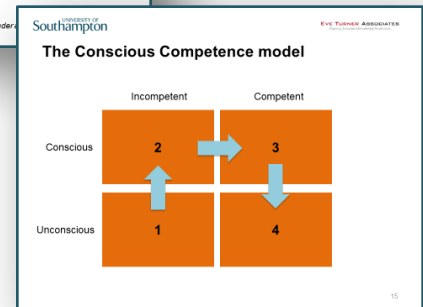
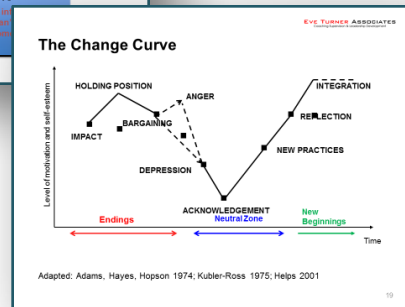
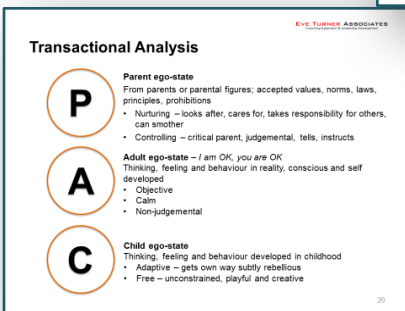
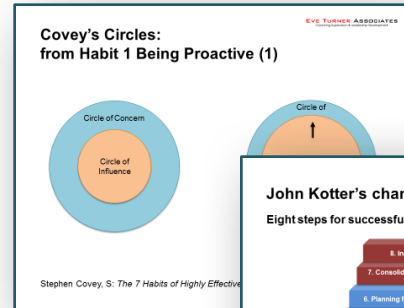
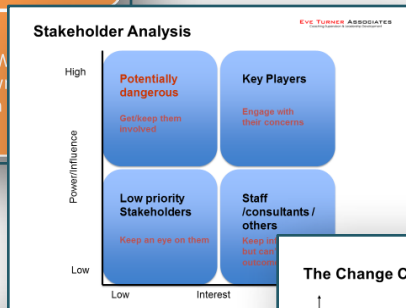
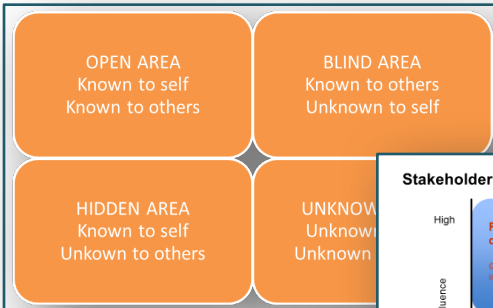
Role of Leadership Circle facilitator

- Keeps the circle on course
- Models the tone and a non-threatening environment
- Encourages active participation from all members – modelling the idea that we value everyone equally
- Models curiosity without having ‘the answers’ – enables others to talk/think for themselves and come up with their own answers
- Maintains flexibility so participants bring issues that can be topical/critical aligned with the session purpose



Some techniques

- Pairs, triads, whole circle
- Other approaches



Examples of ice-breakers

Some simple questions:

- What's been your most memorable moment since we met in (month)?
- What's the one thing no one at the university would know about you that you are willing to share?!
- What is one thing you are most proud of having achieved at home or at work (since we last met)?
- Who's the leader you most admire and why?
- What is the most important take-away you need from today?



Evaluation – has it worked?

- Changes in meetings across the University
- New ideas
- Increased respect
- Allowing equality of contribution
- Talent management aspects – promotions of members to the top tier of leadership
- Collaboration – understand each others' perspectives (academic or professional services)

Facts & figures

70 people have taken part in a circle
885 hours invested by participants
30 trained facilitators
Several promotions – including Peter!



Evaluation: quotes from participants

I found the circles incredibly useful in having a chance to step away from my job and discuss the “bigger picture”.

Having a bit of funding to create a good environment...and provide tea/coffee and croissants or cake. Creating the right environment is important for the circles to work.

As a result of the Circles we are working much better as a team and it has had a profound effect on my working life.

It was helpful to draw participants from across the University so that the discussions could be open and non-threatening.

Exceptionally positive and rewarding...it is an iterative process helping people to solve their own problems in their own way.

Participative training rather than instructor led, with few concerns with level or hierarchy, has led to improved decision-making through a more democratic process...and made a deep change.



Summary and the future

- Initial circle of 10 people
- Pyramid scheme created with members of the original circle trained in facilitation
- Those members co-facilitate a circle in pairs of academics and professional services staff
- Circle members recruited – facilitators meet each person first to ensure it is the right development opportunity
- Benefits – freeing thinking and changing culture
- Now drawing in expertise from around the University (Business School, Psychology, Health Sciences)
- Jungle drums/calling from the hills!



Practical applications

Please break into pairs and threes and consider... How might you use this in your practice or organisation?



Reminder of the key principles: speak for an appropriate length of time, no interrupting, listen with attentiveness



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Any questions?



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Contact us

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