

Raising the Bar: personal or corporate, chosen or selected. Whose bar is it anyway? Part 2

written by Halina Jaroszewska PCC Executive Coach

We were mulling over - you can tell that I have been having one of those conversations again with my [posh or what!] Executive Development Coach – as to what inspires or forces people to raise **the** bar, to raise **their** bar and is there a difference. What makes the difference? Where are the similarities? How does that affect the outcome?

My colleague Tina Radcliffe, Senior Customer Service Officer's feedback said thanks for the high quality of the articles. Having just quickly glanced through the latest version of the Sales Professional - nice to see an article inspiring 'raising the/your bar' certainly gives me food for thought!! Articles like this really do make me sit up and review where I am today and where I want to be!! shared Louise Wade, Operations Manager, Lloyds Banking Group Commercial Banking.

And this is how that coaching session unfolded ...

A huge leap for someone who finds it easy; a miniscule leap that is a huge challenge ... which deserves most recognition? which is qualitatively more valued or valuable? which attracts quantitatively more financially? How do we manage pass judgements, make assumptions, catalogue failure on sometimes very tenuous or strong evidence and potentially change an individual's life dramatically in a whole variety of ways?

How do we know when to raise the bar, to raise our bar? Is it when there's a crisis, or a review is on the horizon, or a restructuring is thought to be imminent, or that longed for or unexpected promotion appears out of the blue? Is it when we have a plan as to how we want our career portfolio to develop? Is it when we feel bored, stuck, undervalued, underused? Is it when we have a flash of inspiration as to what we really want to do with our life? Is it when we have a glimpse of how brilliant we truly are? Or could it be that we make a choice to get 'fit' and stretch those 'muscles'. What are the possibilities that we find ourselves in a situation that we are unable to change and in an extraordinary moment decide to choose to change our attitude to that situation?

Raising the bar is a neat phrase to, on the one hand, to play to our strengths encouraging us to do more and, at the same time, playing right into a mire of guilt for not meeting expectations let alone exceeding expectations when we feel or think we are performing at full stretch already. It could be viewed as only a great management tool to get more productivity, more performance, more effort and commitment for less.

And that would be a misconception from my perspective, writes Halina.

Raising the bar, and raising your bar, happens without doubt on many levels, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. At different times and different situations one or more may take precedence. Sometimes they are in synch and sometimes at odds with each other. How to make them compatible with integrity?

What stops us in our tracks? Rob Brown wrote in 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Networkers' spotlighting centre stage fear, knowledge, time, strategy, inertia, responsibility and attitude as aspects that need dealing with, acquiring and honing. A great place to start with these 7 to raise the bar, to raise your bar.

Halina calls them **A FIRST K**

- **Attitude** can be our worst detractor or our best supporter. The tough thing is that it is only ourselves that chooses the attitude we present to the world.
- **Fear** is simply what we label it as it has the same physiological symptoms as excitement
- **Inertia** is like being in a permanent traffic jam on the M25 – frustrating, out of communication, not in the loop, annoying, tiring, boring, not sure where you are and going nowhere fast!
- **Responsibility** can weigh heavy on our shoulders especially if we feel manoeuvred into taking it because we felt there was no choice.

- **Strategy** is crucial as a framework within which to make plans. A travel operator would be rather stuck if when you went to book a holiday you didn't know when you wanted to go and return, how many were travelling, where you wanted to visit and how you wanted to travel
- **Time** is a great excuse or an extraordinary liberator. How to use time effectively and efficiently is key? Choose to enjoy what you do and observe how time flies
- **Knowledge** is always accessible. We need to discover what it is we don't know and then pick the brains of the most successful person we know or the person whose qualities, approach, attitude we most admire

The question is how to use them to your advantage and effortlessly raise the bar and raise your bar too. And this might help ...

- **Transform fear** into excitement, into useful energy. Find out what exactly the bar is, where it is and how it applies to you and how you relate to it. Fear usually gains ground when we don't know, as it feeds on all our insecurities. Fear, which is said to be false emotions appearing real, can be debunked by looking at the facts of a situation rather than one's emotional response to it.
- **Knowledge is a powerful ally.** Be the best detective and remember to shift listening to hearing and set your ears free unconditionally.
- **Time to take stock,** time to *think*, time to *plan*, time to be creative, time to take *action*, time to visualise your self where you want to be. Thoughts are hugely powerful so be mindful of what you wish for.
- **Strategy:** how well do you know yourself? How good are you in keeping your contracts with yourself? Are you a priority? How much do you value yourself? What strategy will work for you? How can you *influence* you to carry it out to achieve the outcomes that you want?
- **Inertia: how to make it work for you?** What is the positive aspect of inertia? Maybe to provide the *opportunity* to look around and weigh up all the options before making a considered choice.
- **Responsibility for one's actions;** being responsible for and to oneself. Response-ability is a call to action. What is your response-ability factor?
- Finally our attitude over which actually we are the only ones who have control although we might sometimes like to abdicate that responsibility. We choose every moment how we are, how we respond to events and so on. To remember that out of every adversity there comes an opportunity of equal or greater value is a great morale booster especially if we also remember to look for and recognise that opportunity.

We have been raising the bar and raising our bar since we were born although we didn't label it as such nor did we find a challenge with doing it. Taking any aspect of your life, or all aspects in turn perhaps, and ask yourself where am I selling myself short, where am I in a 'settle for' mode and what am I putting up with that cuts through my values. Then look in the mirror and ask yourself very simply 'What am I prepared to do about it today in order to achieve the outcome that will raise the bar without doubt?'

W.H.Murray, mountaineer, wrote 'Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too' And the poet Goethe's words traditionally are linked to his poem and are these: Whatever you can do or dream you can, Begin it. Boldness has genius, magic and power in it. Begin it now!

Be clear as to what is the bar and what is your bar. Be honest with yourself where they match, where they are incongruent, where they challenge and where they work in partnership. What will you begin that will enable you to add value to all that you do and are? Begin it right now or soon? Your choice.

Written by Halina Jaroszewska, Professional Certified Coach with ICF (International Coach Federation)
 Outstanding Executive Coach | Chosen By High Potential Leaders, Key Teams | To Deliver Remarkable Results |
 Inspires Change Contact: 07718 658909 | halina@halinajaroszewska.com | www.halinajaroszewska.com

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