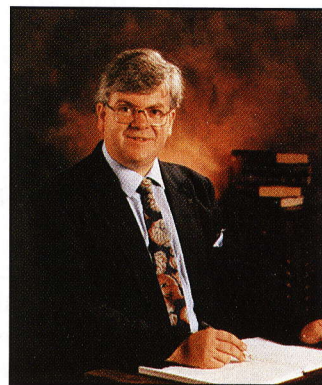


Self improvement

Are you a 'human being' or merely a 'human doing'? Dr John Clements explores Continuing Professional Development.



British executives have a problem. How do they acquire a winning edge in a fiercely competitive global market?

Computers, IT and the very latest forms of communications are often seen as the penultimate solution. Yet you do not have to be a Martian to realise that, even with so much investment in hardware, many executives are hard pressed to stay in the commercial race. Increasingly the signs are pointing at executives themselves to change. But how can they improve their performance before being faced with the next round of downsizing?

Redundancy can be a catalyst for change - but why wait until the scrap-heap beckons? The acquisition of self-mastery is a lifelong process; and the time to start it off is now.

HOW - NOT WHAT

Much of today's world hinges on externals, on things. We are taught *what* to think rather than *how* to think. The emphasis always falls on what to do rather than how to be. Being told what to achieve is almost pointless if we are not also told how to achieve it.

We fill the container of knowledge, yet acquire little skill in utilising wisdom.

Success is measured in external competencies: time, cash and man-management; communication skills; business-plan production and implementation; HRD strategies. But where, in all this, is the focus on the vital core questions?

- ◆ How do you decide the value of external results?
- ◆ Does external achievement mean greater accomplishment?
- ◆ Might our obsession with external achievement fail to address the underlying dynamics of peak performance?

INTERNALISED LEARNING

How do natural athletes fare when they become professional coaches? Well, some of them have a difficult time; for they may not have comprehended, from the inside out, how they achieved greatness in the first place. Without internalised learning, they cannot pass on to future athletes the excellence which permeated their own sporting careers.

When our lives are defined only in terms of the fruits of action, we allow the circumstances of life to define our very selves. Then, even if success happens, mastery is still missing. By default, we have chosen to "major" in minor issues.

ID
INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

The Centre for
Director Development

Directors' Development
Portfolio 1998

Actively Improving
Your
Performance

"I have learnt an enormous amount in a relatively short period of time. Extremely stimulating, absorbing and very interactive."

Carolyn McCall, Commercial Director
Guardian Newspapers Ltd

THE SEVEN KEY PATHWAYS

PERSONAL MASTERY

PURPOSE MASTERY

CHANGE MASTERY

CAREER MASTERY

BALANCE MASTERY

INTERPERSONAL MASTERY

"BEING" MASTERY

Many of us are in fact slumbering. We go about our business and relationships in much the same way, day after day. Few of us ever question where we are going - and why. Thus it may take a traumatic external event - redundancy, divorce or illness - to startle us awake!

Once this happens, we can avail ourselves of the many proven methods of facilitating positive change in our lives. A professional mentor/counsellor may be enlisted to guide and question us through new stages of development; and to provide encouragement and motivation when we falter.

Alternatively, we can initiate a CPD programme. The IoD is just one of many professional organisations which are actively encouraging their members to actively embark on this positive route to ensuring continuing professional success.

As a professional mentor keen to ensure my own commitment to excellence I have myself embarked on such a pilgrimage, and CPD has opened up my internal world to such an extent that I have discovered seven key pathways towards my own professional development.

MASTERING MYSELF

1. Personal Mastery. To do more, I discovered, I first needed to be more. Another step was an answer to the question Who am I? - How could I achieve my optimum performance if I remained in ignorance of my true potential? CPD challenged me to take time out to examine which aspects of my output might benefit from fine-tuning; and what kind of input I should solicit from others so as to evaluate myself more objectively. Initiating the process of reconciling and integrating strengths and weaknesses, though far from easy at first, nonetheless marked a quantum leap forward in my personal quest for self-mastery.

2. Purpose Mastery. Teilhard de Chardin wrote, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience." CPD helped me clarify my purpose. "What unique, meaningful contribution," I asked myself, "am

I making with my life?" This was an issue I had never before set apart the time to address; but the moment I did so, both my being and my doing became truly empowered - and remain so to this day.

3. Change Mastery. Worthwhile change in my life only took place after I had challenged my perspective of myself. The questions that catalysed the change took the form of:

What qualities developed in my life during times of transition?

What did I learn from them?

How would I prefer to have altered during those times?

4. Career Mastery. This, I came to realise, was not about merely achieving things. Rather it pertained to fulfilment. Here are the questions that guided my course:

Was I making a living whilst losing my life?

Did tasks and responsibilities expand or restrict my life?

What skills did I enjoy using for their own sake?

5. Balance Mastery. I questioned whether my personal and professional life was congruent with my principles and values. The answer: I was indeed disconnected in places, and had to re-educate my brain to heed the stress-messages that my body was sending me. The upshot: achieving more often meant doing less. Instead of working harder, I had to work smarter.

6. Interpersonal Mastery. CPD taught me that the quality of my relationships with others depended on the quality of relationship I had with myself. The moment I gave myself unconditional love, others started reflecting love back to me.

7. "Being" Mastery. On this, my self-questioning came after the painful discovery that my work and its pressures had slowly mutated me from a "human being" into a "human doing". Normalisation was urgently required. Subsequently, I have become sufficiently aware of my own mechanisms and motives to improve the quality of my performance by leaps and bounds - always keeping to the pathway of excellence, of course!

For me, then, embarking on CPD has facilitated unprecedented changes in my life. I very much hope you have initiated your own programme, and are now reaping the benefits.

If not, then you might want to pause a moment, and ask yourself a vital question:

"What's stopping me?"

Dr. John Clements is Managing Director of Creative Mentors Ltd and an international writer, speaker and trainer in the facilitation of personal and corporate change and empowerment. 01603 436658 Fax 01603 700734. E-mail: creative.mentors@zetnet.co.uk