

Transformational Training & Clients for Life ***By Gary Stebbing & Jon Denoris***

“Lot’s of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down”
Oprah Winfrey

This is the second of two articles on the concept of “Transformational Training” and “Clients for Life”. Although we recommend you read both, each is written so that it can stand alone independent of the other.

Successful one to one training is fundamentally based upon creating exceptional client relationships. We are going to explore with you, the thinking, behaviour, actions, and skills that are the basis of these concepts; how do we move from a transactional approach, to a transformational approach in our work. We know the best consistently work to discover new ideas and creative ways to become exceptional practitioners.

Intention Vs Technique

“Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion”
Martha Graham

Transformational training and helping clients succeed is not about techniques or a series of steps to success, it is fundamentally about intent. The success comes in how you go about what you do, in your unique way, and with your unique personality and characteristics. What we are proposing, you cannot fake, if you’re intent is not genuine, somehow, somewhere it will come through in your communication with your clients.

What’s In A Name

The range of names or titles we use in fitness is like a proverbial deck of cards, practitioner, specialist, coach, trainer...etc. no wonder the public (our client base) is confused. Although it is not for us to re-define these labels we believe that there is a common link that runs through the blood of successful fitness professionals, that is the ability to provide skilled help. Transformational trainers are skilled helpers!

The Thinking

Transformational training requires a unique mindset, the ability to interact with clients in a unique way, the ability to 'touch the clients world'. The great news is that the skills and thinking to create transformation are not genetic; they are available for all of us if we wish to develop them.

Listening

Are you a good listener?

Whenever we pose this question at seminars or workshops, as you might imagine the room is full of exceptional listeners. We beg to differ, good, let alone great listeners are few and very far between. Great listening sends the message "you matter" to your client.

A fundamental of listening is attention, that means being present engaged and focused. According to Nancy Kline (2004) "The quality of your attention determines the quality of other peoples thinking"

How many of you could write down the eye colour of all your clients?...How much attention are you really paying? Are you really a good listener?

Questions

Questions are not just about fact finding, they can help build rapport and even change emotional states. Initial client meetings are an excellent place to begin reviewing our questioning abilities. Far too little emphasis is given to this meeting and its importance in the overall success the client achieves. Too often we rush the process, pay too little attention to the client and jump in assuming we understand; after all we are the experts in training and the client has their kit bag at the ready and their chequebook on the table...who can resist its magnetic pull! Skilled helpers understand the importance of questions in all they do; they understand the value of listening, attention and noting the cues both verbal and non-verbal in the answers.

It might be useful to consider it this way, "the answer is sitting in front of you, it lies inside the client, your job is to help them find it, not to find it for them"

Perhaps the best advice we have come across is to consider "*What is the best question I can ask right now?*" (Kline 2004)

Vision

This is not 'simply' asking the client what they want to achieve. It seems obvious to us all that the training a client performs should be

goal centred. We have no doubt you are all well versed in setting goals with a client, whether they be SMART or otherwise. Our problem is that most times goal setting or creating the vision of what the client wants is rarely explored in any significant or useful depth. Transformational trainers massively improve the understanding of what is driving the client and use a range of skills and techniques to explore with the client many of the elements of their goals.

Helping clients create a crystal clear picture of where they are going and exploring the reality of what is required creates a wonderful opportunity to establish and build the relationship. It allows the client to begin taking responsibility and increases the probability of achieving objectives. Two excellent techniques to research and consider are the use of timelines and future interviewing.

Responsibility

Hopefully you have all have achieved wonderful success with clients; the question we ask you is who was responsible for that success? How often in sport does the coach or manager soak up the plaudits when the team is playing well, only to shift responsibility to the players when failure or problems occur. Many trainers enjoy a client's success as their own; yet blame the client when things have not gone well. In the clients for life mindset the client is responsible for their results, the trainer is a resource they use to help them achieve their goals.

The Relationships

“Whenever two people meet there are really six people present. Each person as they see themselves, each as the other sees them and each as they really are.”

William James

Recent times have seen a shift of emphasis from IQ to EQ to what Robert Holden refers to as RQ or relationship intelligence. Simply, we must develop the ability to interact with our clients to create an effective relationship, in a word develop our **interpersonal skills**. Much is written in this area yet many trainers continue to believe that it is more technical skills that will make them successful, not so. There are huge ranges of resources out there to help you; we have included one or two in our reading and reference list.

The second and much less discussed is our **intrapersonal ability**. By this we refer to becoming aware of our own behaviour, abilities and thinking. Do you regularly seek feedback from colleagues or clients on training? Do you compete with colleagues or complement them on their excellence? Do you regularly have your training observed and assessed? When a client is unable to learn an exercise, is it because they can't do it or you can't teach it?...

Fitness is wide open to health fraud and like all immature fields, suffers from insecurities. The concept of critical thinking may be new to many in fitness but is fundamental to our development if we wish to gain credibility with clients, be revered as professionals, and become exceptional at what we do. We must examine not only our own thinking but also the information we are presented with (such as this article) constantly. Too often we are vulnerable to lively or persuasive presentation and fail to look deeper at the subject matter.

A transformational trainer constantly strives to develop inter and intra personal abilities.

The approach we propose is not a quick fix or an easily defined formula or series of steps; it is a lifetime commitment, a journey. We are practising fitness if you will, seeking constant improvement. Perhaps we should view our sessions with clients like a martial artist might view the dojo or as Timothy Gallwey puts it *“Every day we go to work in The Greatest Seminar on Earth”*

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References & Recommended Reading

Nancy Kline (2004) “Time to Think”

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