

Cardinal Talent

Talent Newsletter November '09



Autumn is a time for mists and mellow fruitfulness as Louise's beautiful picture of some of our local woods shows. Now that we are in the grip of grim November weather remembrance and reflection come into play too, so appropriately, we've included a piece about reflective learning.

I've been indulging myself lately and reading some historical who-dunnits by C.J. Sansom. As well recommending the "Shardlake" series as good, honest relaxation, I have found these stories very thought-provoking. Reflecting (there's that word again!) on how differently people behave and how behaviour has changed over time, I am not surprised that we adopt certain characteristics to varying degrees. Take openness for instance.

We understand that openness encourages others to get to know us more easily, helping to build trust quickly. We also know that being too

open, to the point of naivety, can be damaging or even dangerous. So, it's a balancing act, and in today's UK society, I see the scales as being fairly evenly balanced. Contrast with Shardlake's time, during the reign of "good" King Henry V111th, where an honest and openly expressed opinion about religious belief or the King himself, could cost your liberty and your life if overheard in the wrong quarters.

So, imagine if you will, being a descendant of someone who was put to death for holding out against the decreed religious view. How might that affect your thinking, persuading you to be careful about with whom and where you shared your innermost thoughts, beliefs and feelings? Consider how you might influence your descendents, especially if these oppressive conditions prevail? If others are affected similarly, either directly or by observation, before long you have generations of people who habitually keep things to themselves!

Being open with strangers and those we don't know too well, may feel like a risky business. We may not understand why this is, until we peel back the generations of thinking and habitual reasoning. I'd like to ask you how against the grain does it feel to bare all and have a blog, to appear on FaceBook or LinkedIn or Twitter when all your formative years, you were taught to "keep it under your hat"...? This piece will be on my blog, so if you're prepared to take a risk, drop a line into the discussion at <http://melarmstrong.wordpress.com>

We hope you are keeping well, making progress and celebrating your achievements

Best wishes

Melanie Armstrong
Director

Cardinal Talent Ltd

Suite 3 Victoria Court, 91 Huddersfield Road, Holmfirth HD9 3JA

Tel: +44 (0) 1484 687 587

Mobile: +44 (0) 7831 476 818

Skype: melanie.armstrong

Home Office: +44 (0) 1484 688 486

Blog: <http://melarmstrong.wordpress.com>

Web: www.cardinaltalent.com

Talent roundup

A broadly experienced Senior Executive with over 20 years management and consulting experience in the European industry. With a university degree in general engineering and business economics and an alumnus of Cranfield University his qualifications include Lean/Six Sigma Management/PRINCE2, cost accounting, purchasing and personnel management. Since 2002, within his own business he has used his hands-on general management experience to assist companies across Europe during various stages of their business development, turnaround and transformation processes into Operational Excellence.

Ref: BESE1109

An MBA qualified, trouble shooter with Green Belt 6 Sigma training, continuous improvement and comprehensive lean manufacturing skills with international experience in Europe and Russia. A proven leader & practical problem solver with automotive experience and excellent communication skills, including French and Russian, who works well with others to meet

Reflective practise

Some will know of my involvement with the **Fellowship in Manufacturing Management, Cranfield University**, as a coach since 1993. One of the major selling points of the programme is being able to offer the participants **experiential learning** or **practical work-based achievement** as the Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education entry submission document explains.

Innovative teaching strategy has been a **hallmark** of the Fellowship since its inception in 1977 and this and its contribution to the **landscape of manufacturing** in the UK was surely a **key factor** in the programme successfully achieving the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2005. It is also quite likely that the programme has surely been an **early pioneer** of **"learning by doing"**, certainly at professional management level in the UK.

The reason I mention the Fellowship, is because I want to talk about **reflective learning**. Reflective practise is one of the **key elements** of experiential learning. "The cultivation of the capacity to reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it) has become an important feature of professional training programmes in many disciplines" (ATHERTON J S (2009) *Learning and Teaching: Reflection and Reflective Practice* [On-line] UK: Available: <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/reflecti.htm>

critical deadlines. A team leader who can motivate and mentor individuals into a successful team.

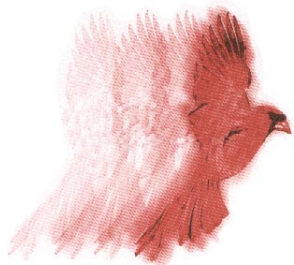
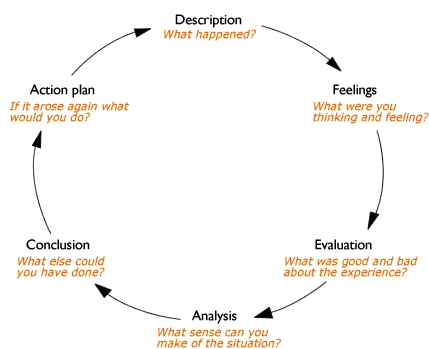
Ref: MQTS1109

International business leader able to promote growth through lean and continuous improvement using solid communication. Projects include manufacturing relocation, re-engineering supply chains, new product development & sales within FMCG, Military and Aerospace and Telecommunications. Now open to opportunities

Ref: IBL1109

Senior interim manager specialising in turnaround and growth, both UK and International, with experience across a wide range of industry sectors. In-country working experience includes; USA, China, Taiwan, Germany, Italy & France. MBO/MBI experienced.

Ref: SIM1109



Mel Armstrong is a coach & recruiter of business leaders. A degree qualified metallurgist and Chartered Engineer, with a post graduate Fellowship in Manufacturing Management, her main areas of interest are developing self awareness in business leaders and manufacturing and business improvement. She works closely with a number of private clients providing business support through recruitment, transition coaching, outplacement, psychometric assessment and career development.

Accessed: 18 November 2009).

Happily for me as a coach, it seems that the rest of the world is now catching up with what the **inspired** and **innovative** designers of the Fellowship programme knew over 30 years ago - that **encouragement** of **reflective practise** is seen as a particularly important aspect of the **role of the coach** in the **development of professionals**, either fledgling or established. Atherton backs this up "Indeed, it can be argued that "real" reflective practice needs another person as mentor or professional supervisor, who can ask appropriate questions to ensure that the reflection goes somewhere, and does not get bogged down in self-justification, self-indulgence or self-pity!"

Whether you use a **coach**, **mentor** or **teacher** to help you **reflect** or want to **get started** on your own, it's always helpful to use a **framework** to **facilitate** or **systematize** the process.

Some prompting questions can be useful such as:

1. Describe **what happened?**
2. What were you **thinking or feeling** at the time?
3. What was **good** or **bad** about the experience?
4. What **sense** can you make of the situation?
5. **What else** could you have done?
6. If it **arose again**, what would you **do?**

The questions originate from the **Gibbs Reflective Cycle** (1988), which can be really useful in making you think through all the **phases** of an **experience** or **activity**. Gibbs model describes **6 stages** to help **reflection** as shown in the diagram.

So what are the **benefits?** Reflective practise helps us to **learn** from experience. It is a form of **feedback**, which if done in a **systematic** way as outlined above can help us **improve** whatever it is we're trying to **achieve**.

Reflection may **seem a chore** to begin with, but like anything, if practised can **become a habit**. Keeping a **learning journal** or diary, through which your **daily activities** can be **reviewed** will **increase insight** and **improve learning ability** or "stickability".

Something we all need in our complex and fast-paced lives!

