



# The golden coach

Executive coaching takes many forms, and each has its merits. For **Mark Bramwell**, the most effective coaching is conducted with a psychological focus. He speaks with **Business First** about the state of coaching and what sets one business coach apart from another.

**M**ark Bramwell has designed his career. While most people fall into their jobs, Mark set a trajectory that has brought him to this place, the executive coaching space, at this particular point in time.

In fact, Mark says he has known the trajectory he was taking for quite some time.

“As a teenager I enjoyed coaching in a sports environment and that led into psychology and then organisational psychology and finally into an executive coach and facilitator role.”

Having begun his career working

in consulting, senior consulting and leadership roles at nationally acclaimed consulting firms, Mark honed his expertise well enough to take the plunge into business ownership in 2007.

Bramwell Solutions was founded on three key practice areas that he has picked up not only through his private life and professional experiences, but also in building up his academic knowledge base in studying psychology to the point of securing his masters in the field.

“I went from introverted teenager to coach, so I have had different personality shifts and through that I have come

to understand the need to be comfortable interacting with people,” Mark says.

What he believes in most is empathy. And he says this is what makes him such a strong coach.

“All good coaches should be empathetic; they should have listening skills, personal skills, be insightful, be self-aware and able to give very candid feedback.”

This approach goes for leaders and management as well.

“The best coaches are self aware. The ones that aren’t as good, bring bad habits to the participants; they can be authoritarian and only hear what they want to hear. A

good coach needs to practice what they preach and thereby become a trusted advisor.”

Today, the three key areas Mark practices in as Bramwell Solutions are:

- Group training to elevate teams to the next level, dramatically increase morale and maximise productivity
- One on one coaching to develop inspirational leadership, outstanding communication skills and heightened self-awareness
- Climate and Engagement surveys tailored to specific client objectives, with comprehensive recommendations aimed at building highly engaged, capable and results focused organisations.

Psychology is important to Mark. It is what separates the coaching fraternity, which he says needs more regulation.

“There has been prolific growth in coaches coming through the system in the last five years,” Mark

says. “And there are different types of coaches, which can lead to a misunderstanding of what a person best needs.

“You have your power of positive thinking coaches, life coaches and those in executive management. Then there are those like myself who provide leadership capabilities and skills. I am not a life coach. I am an executive coach, pushing self awareness and improving personal skills.”

Due to the glut of coaches and their different fields, Mark wants to see more industry control.

“There needs to be more control in the industry and there needs to be accreditation processes to control the growing numbers and the saturation in the market.”

However that is a long way off and Mark must work to his strengths, which is his ability to engage people, to teach empathy and to ultimately help them get the best out of themselves so they can do their best for their company. What sets Mark apart

from the others is his masters in psychology.

“My coaching methodology is founded on the discipline of psychology, and concepts of emotional intelligence,” Mark says.

He focuses on ‘building participants’ awareness of their personal style, in order to critically review and evaluate how behaviours and actions are being demonstrated and executed in a variety of situations and settings’.

For Mark the key to successful coaching is ‘finding the right balance between supporting and assisting the participant, while challenging and objectively questioning a person’s self-perceptions, opinions and work style’.

Bramwell Solutions has grown significantly since he founded it nine years ago. And it has grown on those fundamental principles above.

In fact, since starting small he now has an impressive client list

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That's an extensive list of clients from across a very broad range of industries, but while he takes individual cases as unique, the way he approaches each case still focuses on those three areas of group training, one on one training, and climate and engagement surveys.

"For me it is about diversity of clients and industries. You can't be suited to just one sector. I have clients in manufacturing industries and I relate well to what can be a very direct and confrontational environment, but I can also go to corporate, white collar organisations where it can be far more subtle and at times more indirect. The key to success is diversity and having an attractive empathetic style."

In fact his website states his goal to be to: *Build more productive teams through enhanced goal setting and effective performance feedback.*

This requires dealing with various personalities and work environments. It requires him to have difficult conversations to help individuals to see the business light and prevent them from being caught in that untenable situation where you are just spinning your wheels. He collaborates, takes a pragmatic approach to growth and learning and gets to know the people he is dealing with so that he can extract the best from them.

"The level of success achieved in your career will be built around your ability to communicate and interact with others in a manner that inspires, motivates and excites," he says.

There is a YouTube video in which Mark succinctly explains the need for more comprehensive communication in an office environment. To paraphrase: "People are moving too quickly to seek a compromise as the solution to their problems. But what are the better alternatives? Imagine two coworkers walk into

their workplace kitchen together. They both want an orange but see there is only one left in the fruit bowl. Immediately they jump to a compromise solution. They cut the orange in half. But they then notice that one starts to squeeze their half of the orange to make a drink; while the other is using their half for the zest from the peel to make an orange cake. If in the first place they had asked questions and understood their different drivers and needs, they could have produced a mutually beneficial outcome. One would have had a full glass of juice, while the other could have had a full flavoured orange cake."

The message in this is to empathise with colleagues; take time to understand the needs of others and then put in place solutions to reach the best possible outcomes.

Mark's goal is to foster a keen sense of self-awareness so that individuals are able to recognise and leverage key strengths, remove performance 'blind spots' and address skill gaps.

It is his job to support and empower participants to evolve into high performing team members and inspirational leaders. And in doing so, he takes a pragmatic approach to their problems. This includes reviewing problem-solving approaches, decision-making processes, interpersonal communications, self-management and self-perceptions.

"A lot of people push back through a coaching process and say, 'But I am just one person, how can I make a difference?' You have to make them realise that everyone can be a change agent and be the drop that creates the ripple, then the wave that effects change.

"My job is to help people understand the true alignment between their goals, objectives and behaviours; that's when people realise they say one thing but do another and that's when they further realise that they have a compelling drive to gain alignment with their objectives.

Bramwell Solutions is an executive coaching organisation with a strong reputation built on being flexible enough in its



### **The Bramwell Solutions Way**

Organisations and individuals that require expertise in organisational psychology and seek to achieve significant business improvements engage Mark to:

- Facilitate high levels of trust to enable frank and critical discussions
- Assist to objectively recognise interpersonal strengths and weaknesses
- Identify the root cause of challenges
- Highlight a leader's role in resolving those issues
- Guide leaders towards creating and implementing necessary changes
- Empower people to effectively drive their ongoing personal development.

structure to ensure that clients are provided with a coaching solution that will be the most resource effective, while delivering desired outcomes.

In other words, Mark practices what he preaches; he practices empathy and teaches others to do the same.

At Bramwell Solutions, coaching is focused on building confidence and greater effectiveness by leveraging a client's strengths and addressing areas of concern. It involves a balance between supporting and assisting the participant, while challenging their commonly held beliefs and behaviours.

It is about psychology. And the most effective psychology occurs when you help people understand themselves enough that it has a positive effect on the business. **BFM**